THE RUPTURE OF MODERNITY :
A PARADOX FOR THE EMERGENCE OF DEMOCRACY

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Introduction

How can we define modernity? As a concept, it is so confusing and relative and has been categorized, identified and associated to several aspects such as ruptures, changes and transformations. As a differentiating term, it acquires further importance from the historical context of its origin and separation from "pre-modernity", along with the improvement or resurgence of the spirit of democracy.

For some people, modernity is considered a project; however being a project, it must have a purpose or aim, a beginning and a possible end. What would then be the purpose and the end of modernity? Has the time arrived to move beyond the modernity project? Or is the project of modernity still valid?

Many objectives and questions will guide the essence of this essay. I do not pretend to offer the reader precise or accurate information about all the events occurred since modernity took shape. My intention is, in a general perspective, to determine the similarities between pre-modern and modern societies, by establishing a relationship with the most influential systems of values and principles of each period and at the same time tackling elements such as the historical context, concepts, characteristics, causes and consequences of the subject.

From the point of view of Agnes Heller, Ferenc Feher, Alain Touraine, Niklas Luhmann, Carlo Viano and other authors, we will identify and point out the converging factors between modernity and democracy, emphasizing the actual forms and manifestations evidenced in the referred societies, where even mythology and tradition play a transcendent role, although with different perspectives.

For the Greek philosopher Plato, it was important that human beings could experiment "social welfare" in order to know how to differentiate justice from injustice. This is precisely another topic to discuss: the social justice and its different levels of expression in these societies. Our interest

is focused on a reality characterized by the permanent debate between the democratic and the modern, generating and leaving at sight numerous paradoxes that evidence a logical distortion among "what to do" and "what is done", or in other words "theory and practice".

Pre-modernity: the origin of modernity

According to the chronicles of time, human history could be divided in two epochs, each one of them characterized by typical societies. These periods are: "pre-modernity", which could be historically located from the beginning of recorded thought until the mid 1600's, and "modernity", the time since then (Hoffman et al, 2005:3-4).

Pre-modern societies were based on the configuration of politics as a divine principle, and decisions about the collectivity belonged to the patrimony of the "chosen" people. Social order was "ruled" by religion (God or a Supreme Being), nature, blood, heritage (legacy) and tradition, as something sacred to be eternally transmitted from one generation to the other (Gil, Leopoldo 2002: 19).

In the same way, the social position of a person born under a specific stratum used to "anticipate" the role to be developed during the rest of his/her life: the slave is born in slavery; the free man is born free, so both must keep their "predestinated" role. Common people did not have access to the divine except through the "intermediaries", who often held positions of power. So, there was a direct connection of "reason" and divinity, as the conception of rules and order. People had very little means to make sense of the world around them, and so they explained the world they lived largely through myths; thus the unknown became known, in a sense.

All these elements imply that possible events happen in the infinite legal course of nature; the "Supreme Being" is manifested through and in the traditional mentality of the individuals, as a sign of the end or the end itself (Granada, Miguel 2000: 456).

The pre-modern process recognizes, at the same time, the discovery of the real face of nature: not just infinite, but homogeneous or lacking of a "cosmic hierarchy", presupposing the recognition of the earth as a heavenly body and of heaven as the endless mean for the free transit of stars and planets (Ibid, p.457). In addition, the "future of pre-modernity" or the transition to the "modern" would bring about revolutionary effects in the religious, but also civil and intellectual points of view, as it was in the case of "secularization"[1] that the truth becomes attached to, and the rupture with tradition.

As Thales of Miletos remarked, the pre-modern spirit world was "full of Gods". There is no unique and transcendental sense of order for all things, but each one of them has its own reason of existence (the origin), its own God, or its own "particular magic" (Rubert De Ventos, Xavier 1998: 157-165).

The transition to modernity

During the pre-modern period, many diverse forms of "government" existed: empires, feudalism, patrimonial and absolutizing states. In the middle ages, the vassalage and the patrimonial policy were political systems of divided authority. Under the shadow of the *ancient regime*, political power and authority were more personal and centralized.

The evident superposition of the rules and the claims of the "society" caused strong disagreements, wars and conflicts in all the systems. Indeed, medieval feudalism tended to fragment because it was a loose structure of mutual obligations based on a hierarchical network of interpersonal relationships. As a consequence, the resulting society overlapped with groups, conflicting loyalties and legal systems. All these newly diverse and separate forms of government were eventually transformed into absolutizing states. The confrontation of power between the monarchy and other figures of society originated popular rebellions against the authority and conflicts between the church and the state.

Absolutizing states emerged since the processes of transformation evidenced in the different segments of society, prepared the soil for the political evolution of "power" into the period of the "modern state": the transition to "modernity".

Jürgen Habermas, one of the most enthusiastic defenders of modernity, claims that the word "modernity" or "modern" was used for the first time in the late fifth century in order to distinguish the present, which had become officially Christian, from the Roman and pagan past (Habermas 1983: 3). This transition from the old to the new, essential for the concept of modernity, is re-introduced, according to Habermas, each time the consciousness of a new epoch formed itself through a renewed relationship to the ancients (Ibid, p.4). In this sense, modernity becomes the process of replacing old precepts with new and dynamic knowledge, or "*The Age of Reason*", just like the famous book Thomas Paine published in 1794, which summarized the spirit and trend of the modern era, elevating the role of science and human reason over religion.

The post-modern and never-ending debate

As previously remarked, for some intellectuals modernity begins from 1650, but for others with the "Storming of the Bastille" on July 14th 1789, ending two centuries later with the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989). Since then a new period called "post-modernity" appeared, which cannot be seen only as a historical period after modernity, but also as a dominating trend inside a belated modernity. It is a time for a recount or re-evaluation; that is why post-modernity is also called the "critical inventory of modernity" (Feher, Ferenc 1996). Other scholars like Niklas Luhmann (1997) sustain that the proclamation of post-modernity had as a positive consequence, at

least, the corroboration of the fact that modern society lost confidence in its own descriptions of modernity, defying knowledge and revolutionizing a new wave of discussion.

Several debates of modernity vs. post-modernity have frequently appeared, as for many authors the latter belongs to the former; while others consider that post-modernity represents the end of modernity. In this respect, Carlo Viano illustrates how modernity is a concept of self-reference through the following example: the Greeks considered themselves "modern" compared to the Egyptians, and in the same way, members of the Alexandrian School[2] with respect to classical artists, and so on (1993: 175). So here, the modern settles on a background of "decadence" or "pre-primitivism"; being modern is being better than before, breaking out with something left behind, promoting the real transcendence of "modernity".

Modernity cannot be understood if not visualized from the context of its origin; it must be seen as a product of history, preceded by a pre-modern arrangement. However, assuming this last element as a *sine qua non* condition of modernity is not enough to explain the similarities and differences of such complex realities. According to Agnes Heller, the first known chronicles about the appearance of modernity came after the Jew-Christian model, which sustained that the "last stage", that of "salvation", was the best. Philosophers saw all humanity as gathered under the same heaven, preparing themselves for the end of days (Heller, Agnes 1992).

Nevertheless, modernity had its great appearance in the last century of the Roman Republic until the last part of the first century AD. The first attempt of modern rupture became evident in Athens, where the political, cultural and economic aspects of the phenomenon emerged simultaneously, contrary to the disphasement that occurred in Rome. But the real dynamic of modernity manifested completely during the age of the Renaissance (Europe). The natural pre-modern device was replaced by a social modern arrangement, maybe provoked by a diversification of the ethnic and political life of the continent. Heller considers that the French Revolution was the symbolic starting point of modernity, with the declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen.

Opposed to the pre-modern, now modernity could not be represented by the simple and classical outline of the hierarchical pyramid, and for the first time in real history, those of the upper level got their own legitimacy, not the legitimacy of "God": the power or authority was not anymore proclaimed from divinity but from those of the bottom level of society.

Features of modernity - relevant aspects

Pre-modernity, modernization and of course "modernity" are some of the various concepts frequently employed in present times, but also mostly at the beginning of a new century. However, what is the most precise

moment to be referred as the legitimate beginning of modernity and what are the main features of this manifestation? In order to respond, at least in a general and partial way, some characteristic elements of modernity must be determined, according to the theoretical perception of Luis Villoro (1992).

Although the term "modernity" has several meanings, through the ages it has been used to identify or announce new changes and transformations of societies. Put in another way: "modern" implies both the age of history following the Middle Ages (400-1500 AD), as well as the way of life and thought distinctive of that time (Ibid 1992:8).

The modern age includes a wide lapse of time, full of difficulties, internal transformations and contradictions. It must be understood not just as a basic and transcendental system of thought, but as a mentality, an attitude...a state of mind (Ibid 1992: 8). On this issue, Villoro summarizes the six most important aspects of modern thought (Ibid 1992: 86-91):

1. Modernity begins when man becomes a rational recognizer of the position of the rest of the creatures...choosing his own perspective: mankind turn thoughts into actions of freedom, necessity, possibility, transcendence, reality... Each man chooses himself, establishing new parameters and proclaiming his own law. From then, individualism establishes itself as a predominant feature of modernity.

2. Culture and history are achievements of humanity itself. Man's destiny is to "create" a world based on his own "image and likeness".

3. The world around (i.e. the environment, the society...) becomes a subject of interest and analysis.

4. The "world" is considered a moldable concept, a transformable issue due to the influence of arts and new technology. It is there to be organized, measured, structured, reformed, destroyed and rebuilt by the power of human reason. Modern thought brings the notion of emancipation but also supremacy.

5. Modern thought puts its faith on reason and establishes the empire of instrumental and methodological rationality, that is, determining and calculating the most effective means for the realization of certain aims.

6. Finally, the sense of all the things (including man himself) has been asserted or "discovered" in a certain extent from the perspective of nature, conceived as a "secondary world".

Modernity can be defined in many ways; however, most authors agree that the concept involves, among other things, a "rupture" manifested by means of sociopolitical, economic and cultural changes and transformations. Modernity is the rupture of the sacred world, divine and natural, with the world of reason and secularization (Antoine, Guercy 2001).

As a consequence, in the modern world, religious elements are put aside and practically "replaced" by science. This secularization of the religious image of humanity, this disenchantment also remarked on by Max Weber (2003), interpreted modernization as a gradual process of rationalization

directly implying desertion, a radical break and questioning of traditional and religious values. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber explains that these paradigm shifts have inaugurated a more rational understanding of events as people began to rely more on scientific investigations as the way to find the truth. This ultimately resulted in a decline of the use and belief in magic, God, and myth and a rise of secularization and bureaucracy.

Dialectics and reason establish a breaking point with tradition, as modernity "rebels" and all the existent regulations, showing secularization as profane and rebellious (Habermas 1983: 90). On the other hand, rationality succeeds over the old schemes, and modernity comes to be characterized by a separation between objectivity (as a consequence of reason) and polemics, according to the laws of nature and subjectivity (Gil, Leopoldo op. cit. p.19).

However, the secularizing trend of modernity does not reach all societies, neither does it develop in the same way, provoking a complex relationship between religion and politics. Critical questioning of existing things (the established arrangement, existing concepts, paradigms, etc.) intensifies, and legitimation becomes self-reflexive in order to achieve new deductions or significative references for the future. In addition, the levels of knowledge and participation are highly increased along with the right to decide the ruling authorities in the public sphere, and the access of women to education and the labor market, as new precedents of democracy,

breaking with the "pre-modern" world.

In the new modern arrangement, all the individuals are now "born free", having equal opportunities with the possibility of performing several tasks and responsibilities voluntarily. In addition, norms and regulations emerge with a democratic point of view as a result of people's disagreements.

A new stage in the radicalization of the modernist consciousness was reached when a recent historical epoch called "modernism" (to which Habermas assigns "the idea of modernity") emerged in the course of the 19th century. According to this scheme, post-modernism comes next, not only as a particular style, but also as a distinct historical period. Whatever happens in it is necessarily "post-modern".

Although secularization has been considered one of the most important achievements of modernity, the French Revolution was the basic starting point that intensely tried to avoid the emergence and division of social classes of the consequent political order of that time (Heller, Agnes 1992).

On the other hand, "charisma" becomes a pure element of mediation in the political sphere, based on the personal identification of an individual with other recognized as a "leader" and followed by the majorities (Feher, Ferenc 1996). This situation reminds us of Max Weber when he referred to the despise of people for politicians, adding that it is better that we despise them rather than to be despised by politicians (Weber, Max 2004).

The clear division between the "State" and the "Society" produced by the eradication of the monarch's figure released a confusing sense of

liberation where people did totally different things in both areas. In the beginning, the division of labor produced a peculiar group of people doing things in a different and adverse way than traditionally in society, mostly due to the diffusion of democracy (Feher, Ferenc 1996). In this sense, the "State" could be described as divided from society and, at the same time, in opposition to it. Nevertheless, the State represents society on the base of an abstract, delegated and impersonal power, taking actions on behalf of the society concerning all the decisions in which the society seems to have the "will", but not the capacity or time necessary for these purposes.

Once the monarch associates with the notion of popular sovereignty, the general interest or, in Rousseau's celebrated term, the "general will", it becomes entangled in the intricate and complex processes of public debate and decision-making (Rousseau 1968).

Another remarkable political invention of modernity was the "social question", the essence of socialism, working as an important link between "state" and "society", addressing individuals as well as local and national governments, awareness of the circumstances in which the working classes were working and living expanded. Without the proclamation of the Universal Human Rights of Man, most of the problems of the "social question" would have been considered as sufferings and injustices of the human condition, not requiring much attention from governments and politicians. This is what turns the social question into a cyclically debated problem that can never be solved.

Modernity is a continuous and dynamic system driven by the ideology of development, its needs and implications. In the same way, the history of modernity reveals that the "solution" to every social problem generates a new one, producing a sort of permanent cycle. Since its origins, modernity evidences a predominant quest for liberty, but also a gradual experiment of absolute domination, as in many totalitarian regimes.

On the other hand, as mentioned previously, the theme of modernity versus its possible successor, "post-modernism", becomes one of the central topics in the recent philosophical debate. These discussions are mostly concerned with the origin, nature, characteristic features and future of both movements (periods) in Western culture. When disputing these issues philosophers are divided into two main groups: those who defend the "incomplete project of modernity" (i.e. Habermas) against the attacks of post-modernists; and those who advocate the post-modern condition, like the French intellectual Jean-Francois Lyotard.

Lyotard's perspective might be summarized paradoxically saying that modernity can be preserved only by the negation of itself. Doubt and critique lie at the very center of modern consciousness. Post-modernity, thus, re-presents a moment of perpetual self-negation, which makes it intimately a part of modernity. However, post-modernity is by no means a final point, culmination or completion of modernity. This basic standpoint leads to a harsh critique of modernity and especially of the project of the Enlightenment (Lyotard 1991).

Nevertheless, in a particular way, we can conclude this section by highlighting some of the most relevant characteristics of modernity:

- Autonomy and personal auto-determination before any form of subjection (resistance to chaos).
- Absolute trust in human reason and free will.
- A predominant "scientific" and "technological" mentality (intellectualization).
- Science and technology change the way of thinking and feeling of people.
- A proliferation of "culture", "concepts" and "ideas".
- The impetus of secularization.
- A rupture with tradition and the emergence of a sense of freedom.
- The emergence of "universalism" or the trend to a global unification.
- Extreme rationalization or radical questioning of things.
- The ideal of progress based on self-improvement and the achievement of "something better".
- A deep transformation of social, economic and political models and paradigms.
- The quest of control and domination over reality, and the autonomous development of individuals.
- A pragmatic mentality, focused on efficiency, profits, competitiveness; the cult of work, etc.

For more information on these issues, please see the scheme located at the end of this article ("*Modernity & pre-modernity in comparative perspective*").

Modernity and mythology: the transcendence of pre-modernity

In present times, mythology and myths have served to represent or designate some unbelievable and probably unreal events; however, in antiquity they had an objective and dynamic transcendence, directly related to reality.

Considering that modernity tends toward the absolute negation of any kind of transcendence, we can say that mythology (seen it as a transcendental meta-language of symbols and meanings) is not acceptable in modern times. As some authors agree, modernity is: rationality against subjectivity, dialectics against passion or feeling, and even science against religious and mythological issues. In other words, reason triumphs over feelings, passions and subjectivity, magic and religion (Antoine, Guercy op. cit.).

In principle, every myth had the purpose of offering a probable explanation to the phenomena or manifestations of nature and the cosmos, such as the cycles of seasons, day and night, life and death, historical events, etc. However, regardless of its origin (i.e. Greece, Rome, Egypt...), mythology has acquired and preserved a didactic and moral role in our

societies for generations. The emergence of the modern age breaks with traditional patterns, proclaiming a revolution to the end of myths, as the central axis of modernity (López Gil, Marta 1997).

It is appropriate to remark that the "denial of mythology" (as a reality associated to human behavior as well as a civilizing element) does not start precisely with modernity but with the birth of western philosophy in the sixth century BC. This negation intensified also during the 17th-19th centuries as a result of the development of the sciences, producing a substantial eradication of mythology from human thought. However, as evident even in present times, myths remain part of societies because they represent the memory of humankind: a sort of collective heritage (Antoine, Guercy op. cit.).

But what exactly is a myth and what is its relationship with modernity? When we speak about myths, we mean all the irrational, unreal, fabulous, sentimental, passionate, subjective, primitive, imaginary and negative things, so to speak. The role and importance of myths was formulated by pre-modern societies, that is to say, by human groups where the figure of the myth tends to be the very foundation of culture and social life. For these societies, the myth expresses an absolute truth because it narrates a sacred story, a revelation passed on from ancient times through various generations.

The most essential and operative definition to understand the phenomenon of the myth is expressed as an original event of divine arrangement, whose intention is to give sense to a significant reality in order to spread it and reveal it. Every society and/or culture has laws, institutions, places, customs, figures, symbols and especially significant elements closely related to community life. Each one of these elements acquires a value, defining the role of importance that fulfills the myth, with the explanation of the divine origin of things and institutions and responding to the reality of man in the world.

According to G. Antoine, despite the evident downfall of the mythological legacy of some cultures, others (i.e. Africa) have survived and adapted themselves to the changes and influences of the modern world. In any case, mythology tries to answer three essential questions of humanity that still remain unanswered and that conform the existential reason of the "myth of modernity":

. "Where do we come from?"

. "Who are we?" and

. "Where do we go?"

It would seem that the modern world has been deprived of myths, due to the strong influence of science and reason; however, from a personal point of view, the world just tends to ignore them. It is in this sense that the human being, in his permanent questioning of things, is able to respond and face the challenge of the hunger for the quest of new knowledge and explanations by the justified creation of new "modern myths", a product of the existential need of man.

Therefore, we could deduce that the modern world is not rich in myths, but certain mechanisms reveal their existence in one way or another in our societies. Among many cases, I will identify and refer to some of them related to the cult of supremacy, sacredness, and democracy as "modern myths" based on the attribution of symbolic and unreal "virtues", both to people and to particular events.

Myths are related to supremacy when famous and important personages of society, according to their achievements and merits, are called and even honored as "gods". An example is the case of the Brazilian soccer player Edson Arantes Do Nascimento (also known as "Pelé"). The same holds true for the Argentinean Diego Maradona, both at one time considered "gods of soccer".

Sacredness, on the other hand, keeps relation with the death or physical disappearance of religious and even political leaders. Not only do their bodies but also their graves, discourses and other belongings become "sacred" and honored with huge demonstrations of respect and deference. Some examples are Pope John Paul II, Mother Teresa, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong and others (Pye, Lucian W. 1997).

Democracy also has been referred to as a "goddess". An illustrating anecdote could be found in the case of the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, culminating in the *Tiananmen Square Massacre*, where a group of Chinese students rebelled against the communist regime of that time, setting up a ten meter-tall statue called the "Goddess of Democracy"

(MacFarquhar, Roderick 1993). Later in 1990, a 225-foot radio ship outfitted by Chinese dissidents and their supporters to broadcast messages on democracy to China, was given the same name (Antoine, Guercy op. cit.).

These examples reveal us how mythology is still present in our times, though transcending in a different perspective, like a *symbolic element* of important value, linked to patriotism, ideals and citizen interests in the course of history and the dynamics of life and civilizations.

Modernity's dynamic

From the perspective of Agnes Heller, modernity asserts and reasserts itself through negation, as a permanent element of the modern social arrangement, where dialectics - along with reasoning, as well as the rejection and diversity of opinions - become the basis of modernity's dynamics. Modernity can maintain its identity only if several things are constantly changed, and at least certain things are continuously replaced by others (Heller, Agnes 1992: 4).

Modern people do not acknowledge limit, they transcend it and challenge the legitimacy of institutions. They criticize and reject them, questioning everything; and by doing this, they support rather than destroy the modern arrangement. The facts and events that once were lethal for all the pre-modern arrangements, keep the modern ones alive.

In other words, modernity's dynamic survives in the way that changes imply questioning of things (prevalence of science); new challenges appear; legitimacy of institutions is defied and new alternative solutions emerge in response to the new changes.

The above mentioned can be identified as "dynamic justice", an essential mean of modernity, focused on querying and testing the standards, norms or rules of society. Heller states that justice is claimed in a dynamic way by replacing "unfair" arrangements with new or more adequate alternatives (Ibid, p.5). The practice of dynamic justice appears in pre-modern societies usually in times of crisis and conflicts, most frequently whenever new social arrangements replace older paradigms.

In modernity, however, dynamic justice is generalized in three ways. First, no institution is beyond limits, as every single one can be tested and found unfair or unjustified. Second, everyone can raise a de-legitimizing claim. Third, all arguments one can have on behalf of an alternative, recourse to freedom and life as general and universal values (Ibid, p.6). In the modern world, dynamic justice is the best example of the dialectic and rational character of societies.

The beginning of the paradox

The social arrangement is meant to denote the constant framework of, and the mechanism for, the distribution and re-distribution of freedom and life chances alongside the whole social unit that is to be maintained and reproduced. This can only be done by means of "asymmetric" and "symmetric" reciprocities (Ibid, p.9). For Heller, all pre-modern social arrangements are based on the patterns of asymmetric reciprocity while the modern ones focus on the opposite model (symmetric reciprocity). This does not necessarily mean that either the asymmetric or the symmetric model is nonexistent in one or the other society, as both models can be manifested, but one of them must constitute the fundamental or prevalent ordering principle. Democracy was an absolute exception within the framework of asymmetric reciprocity, because the asymmetry was rather widespread, all-encompassing and pervasive, being present in almost all the representative pre-modern social arrangements.

In pre-modernity, social arrangement is linked to daily life and the relation between genders and classes (hierarchy). To be born into one social stratum rather than into another was always a misfortune from the perspective of the newborn, but he or she must fit in with the conditions of his or her birthplace. There is no choice but to accept "predestination". The slave is born slave, the freeman is born free man, and both should become what they are and behave in the proper way for the rest of their lives.

As pre-modern societies were "stratified", if a person was born in a particular stratum this would determine the function to be performed during his or her whole life, contrary to modern societies or the modern arrangement (Ibid, p.10). Pre-modern societies were stable, balanced and

resistant to chaotic situations, as long as the minimum life conditions were granted.

The paradox of modernity begins when Rousseau inaugurates a new revolutionary vision for humanity when he remarked that "all men are born free, yet they are still everywhere in chains" (Rousseau, 2004: 49). This waking call to freedom expresses that all human beings come to the world with plenty of liberty, but then become prisoners by the "chains", or limitations, of society[3]. In respect to Rousseau, Heller states two possible interpretations. One implies a prevailing influence of the pre-modern order even after the emergence of modernity (pre-modern vestiges in the structure of the modern arrangement). The other says that only under the condition that everyone is born free can everyone turn his or her freedom into everyone's slavery[4]. Social differences tend to be absent in those communities where everyone is born into a "free" condition, as stratification into states disappear, and no social hierarchies are established on the level of everyday life. Conversely, in the modern world hierarchies established at the level of specialized institutions; the functions performed by individuals in fact determine their roles in the social hierarchy.

Agnes Heller states that norms and rules must be applied permanently and continuously to all the members of a society or community (equality for all). The essence of treating everyone according to his or her role, status or "rank" is a global idea of justice in pre-modern societies, in opposition to the modern world, where treatment should be done - at least in theory - according to their personal merits or contributions (Feher & Heller 1989).

Actions occurring in any society can be considered as fair or unfair only if they can be compared and classified, taking equality and inequality as two elemental values and referential patterns of justice. In this sense, Heller makes a clear distinction between dynamic justice (previously seen), and "static justice" (the opposite condition), saying that in static justice rules and norms are just accepted and approved as is, with no further questioning; but in the dynamic structure, those rules and norms are questioned and verified before any formal acceptance (Ibid). For instance, the requirements of justice in pre-modern societies were not so frequent, as evidence of the static justice described by Heller.

The premise of "equal freedom for everyone"; that is, equal opportunities of life for all, must be the last principle by which justice or injustice of norms and rules should be measured. Therefore, not the equality, but life and liberty (freedom), must be the absolute values of modernity. When people show disagreement to the inadequate application of rules and norms, they are indeed demanding equality of life chances, and at the same time, equality of their liberties. Therefore, we can identify that social justice has a close relation to the life conditions of people (Ibid, p.205).

Modernity's pendulum

In a parallel and complementary direction, Ferenc Feher (1996) refers to "modernity's pendulum" as a scheme of modernity's dynamic, which can be understood from two essential points. First, the "pendulum" can swing only in a world where modernity makes its way through, in a universal way (globalization); although in most parts of the world nothing more than the structure of the model has been applied and not necessarily this dynamic is acting in such a scale. The pendulum's oscillation is not cyclical; it does not repeat and never completes the phase, but it moves forward, crossing into completely new areas (the advance of modernity). Second, the "arrival" of modernity implies the relative separation or isolation between the State and Society, where the latter has a relevant role.

 For that reason, the main impulses that make the pendulum work come from the society, and hence the fluctuations of the referred dynamic. The movements cannot go further that the "energies" of those producing the impulse: the individuals want to reach their horizon, so they tend to generate the impulses in that direction. The "horizon" indicates not only a direction but also a limit that once it has been reached, can push new impulses towards other directions.

 For example, in the development of contemporary societies, the pendulum's movement can reflect the oscillations between the desire to promote social equality and the desire to promote individual liberty in the form of reduced taxations or other kind of benefits. Nevertheless, unlimited development cannot be found anywhere, as personal (human) aspirations have always a limit, delimited by our position in the global sphere, which defines also our horizon. Even the dream of crossing the borders of our horizons could be a risky choice, a leap into the void (Ibid).

The constant negation (questioning of established rules, dialectics, etc.) and self-interrogation to the changes and transformations of society are the revolutionary elements that help to keep the pendulum in oscillation; otherwise, it would imply "pre-modernization", retrocession or suicide of modernity.

Modernity & democracy

The topic of democracy, as with modernity and in connection to it, has been discussed broadly in numerous sources; let us examine and analyze briefly some of these statements:

The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defines democracy as "a form of government in which the people have a voice in the exercise of power, typically through elected representatives; by means of democracy the people are supposed to exercise sovereignty by themselves, without intermediation of any representative organism" (2006).

The concept of democracy itself has a socio-historical connotation that has been acquiring particular characteristics during the course of history. For example, Alain Touraine (1997) considers democracy as connected to modernity where a rational subject emerges to formulate universal principles, laws, and rights that recognize and preserve the liberty and equality of individual subjects. Modernity for him is a secular condition, so that free subjects are forced to discover and create their own laws, institutions, and social forms that will preserve their freedom and enhance their well-being.

Following the outlines of classical social theory, Touraine sees modernity as involving both growing rationalization and differentiation. For democracy, this leads to a growing rationalization of the state and the political sphere, as well as to a growing cultural diversity in which conflicting groups want to express their cultural aspirations and protect their interests in the political sphere. Democracy today must reconcile these conflicting tendencies, promoting spaces for public participation and action while preserving individual differences and diversity.

Touraine argues that individual rights, liberties, pluralism, and the basic principles of liberalism must be part of a democratic society, based on the production of subjects who resist domination, practice self-esteem, and recognize the subjectivity of others (Ibid, pp.122-125). The dual challenge of democracy is to protect individual liberty and rights and cultural diversity, considering democratic culture and the recognition of others as subjects and actors, as well as mutual understanding and communication (Ibid, p.196).

In essence, cultural diversity and the recognition of the human rights of the citizen are the most important elements that allow and constitute a fair definition of democracy. As we know, in ancient times, permanent questioning and refutation, diversity and disagreement were socially "destructive" (Heller, Agnes 1992:4). For this reason, democracy transcended as a unique and exceptional political scheme through the history of pre-modern states; nevertheless, it has a fundamental role and has evolved in accordance to the modern states.

Hannah Arendt (1998) describes some characteristic elements of democracy that are closely related to modernity:

. The need - responsibility of decision-making (theory of power).

. A set of rules, specifying the people in charge and procedures in processes of collective decision.

. Consensus in the adopted decisions (participation, majorities, etc.).

. Levels of agreement in the decision making process.

. Masses play the leading role in democratic societies (transition into a Nation-State condition).

Within the democratic sphere, Arendt considers humankind from a viewpoint of the actions of which it is capable, though identifying some problems and paradoxes that still affect modern societies in the time of globalization. Consequently, as human progress increases through

technology and science, we increase our dependency on these issues, becoming less equipped to control the consequences of our actions (Ibid, pp.179-198).

The evidently democratic systems of modern societies rule the future according to factors of risk as part of the decision making process and as consequences of it. Therefore, risk is one way to anticipate the future and "describe" it in the present because by considering risk, it is possible to choose between several alternatives. In democratic states, pluralism enables new lines of discussion. At the same time, liberty of association and freedom of speech must be two fundamental conditions for the adequate performance of the democratic systems (Bobbio, Norberto 1984:5).

Democracy could be also defined as a result of development, or even both terms considered as synonyms. Consequently, many Latin American societies do not know a real democracy, which is nothing but a collective creation. Developing countries do not need presidents without clear policies every four years; they need national and tangible plans of long term development in order to rule the behavior of the powers of the state and achieve a real interaction between the state and society while decentralizing authority and turning institutions into efficient organs. This is the base for a real representative democracy.

Democracy is a choice, not a fatality; its influence creates a sense in which responsibility is not exclusive of the private and public sectors, nor of institutions or the civil society. Democracy must be founded in a project of social implication; it has to be not only national but also "universal", promoting the liberation of men from the controversial, tricky and fake ties of society. In this sense, I consider democracy the result of modernity, not the way to it.

Emergent parameters of democracy

For Alain Touraine, democracy is determined neither by participation nor by consensus, but by the respect to liberty and diversity (1997:35). This particular aspect lays not only in the laws but also in a political culture of equality. Equality then implies the right of every individual to choose and rule his or her own existence (individualism), considering on the other hand, the implications in favor of rules and moral aspects in the social sphere.

Liberty (freedom) and equality can be contradictory to some degree if both are "pushed" to the extremes. However, when the above mentioned concepts are pondered as combined or joint values, a democratic system will develop with complete efficiency. Both elements become distinctive features that distinguish democracy from other political systems.

Being free of limitations in a society, we are free to act; however, when the action occurs, there is almost always another individual affected and, sometimes the effects are detrimental. This is the point where the excess or

abuse of power can bring the worst consequences. In other words: "among individuals as among nations, the respect to other people's rights is peace"[5], or as quoted by Leslie Lipson (1985), "my right to swing my arm ends where my neighbor's nose begins". In any case, our liberty of action will be delimited by a social obligation, a rule, norm or simple ethics, as individuals, no matter their condition, have the right to be protected. Obviously, liberty in a negative sense contradicts with its positive way when both are considered absolutely.

As with liberty, equality also has different connotations, being mostly oriented to uniformity and proportionality. It is important to distinguish and recognize the limits of excess (abuse), as it is necessary to establish controls based on human values: mutual respect and a civic consciousness. Indeed, the dynamic justice of modernity was generalized in several ways, one of them being the fact that the arguments in favor of an alternative are founded on liberty and life as universal values.

Democracy is and must be a dynamic system; it is not perfect but can be continuously improved; it will all depend on the value and the intention attributed to it by society. The transition of democracy into modernity is justified by the need to recover the viability of the democratic project in large and complex societies of the present time. Nevertheless, in chaotic situations, representative democracy and the cultural and institutional decadence have introduced new elements and alternatives oriented to overcome the "weaknesses" of contemporary political systems.

The participation, in any sense, is also a radical element for the real consolidation of democracy, which has been evident throughout the course of history. Many authors remark that even in present times democracy has gone through critical situations, just as the "project of modernity". The question at this point should be to what extent the changes occurring in the democratic sphere have been a consequence of the interest of men to reform society and its implication in benefit or prejudice of the citizens' rights. Indeed, democracy weakens when the benefits, promises and citizens' rights become hindered or crushed by the system. Therefore, the existence of some adopted reforms that tend to undermine the condition of the individual as a social entity is evidence that sometimes modernity restricts democracy.

In recent years, another point of discussion has been about the future of democracy; however, the content of this "next stage" and its emergent model could be very enigmatic. For this reason I believe   that democracy must continue focusing on the consolidation of participation as a fundamental principle of its ideals, and trying to satisfy the terms of cooperation between the individuals considered as free and equal in a society. Part of the solution requires that citizens establish consensual agreements centered on a fair and stable system of established commitments, mutual respect, freedom of opinions and reciprocity, in order to guarantee social unity and political cooperation.

The intention of our politicians and representatives must be guided

towards the accomplishment of the role they have been designated to by society. This implies promoting a democratic system of participation and consensus in the decision making process, with several purposes and reachable ideals such as welfare, equality, respect to civil rights and recuperating the trust of those who placed their hope through suffrage. Only by means of the identification of the above-mentioned ideals will democracy be reaffirmed in humanity.

To conclude this section, I will mention the most important aspects that summarize the convergence between modernity and democracy:

- Both concepts cannot be understood without considering the historical cotext.
- Modernity is a means that facilitates citizenship, opening the doors for the exercise of political rights. The conformation of citizenship and the guarantee of a better demonstration of political representation are additional fundamental bases for the existence of democracy.
- Contrary to pre-modern societies, people of modern societies tend to disagree at a higher level, which is a real manifestation of democracy.
- Modernity, just as democracy, facilitates the offering and adoption of new alternatives of social life and welfare.
- Freedom of association and opinion emerge as essential aspects of modern democratic systems.
- Modern societies are a typical example of dynamic justice, another element of democracy.

- As stated by Agnes Heller regarding social justice, in modernity, norms and rules must be applied to all members of society in a permanent and consistent way. On the other hand, Touraine says that the aspect of equality frequently determines the consequent dynamic culture.
- In modern democratic systems there is an evidently frequent questioning of the aspects and paradigms inherited from pre-modernity.
- Finally, as with democratic systems, social hierarchy is established at the level of specialized institutions.

Conclusion

Modernity seems to be a contradictory and essential experience; along with its great attractive feeling, celerity, animation, the speed and the endless movement of the individuals and their mentalities, modernity also shows disintegration and isolation.

On the other hand, the reconquest of history can become a road leading to human progress and development, filled with a sense of general welfare in a democracy based on the real participation of citizens. Still at the beginning of the twenty first century, we hear about the "unfinished" project of modernity, demanding more democracy, emancipation, self-realization opportunities, but also better and advanced methods; namely, more of all that once was promised for a "future" that never turned into a present reality.

Both in human and technological terms, society is described by means of the projection of its future. Modernity goes beyond a post-modern phase, in a sort of unfortunate and paradoxical transition from reality to a "virtual reality" lacking conclusions or practical answers in benefit of the masses that everyday contribute to the movement of the "pendulum of modernity". In this sense, and in order not to make this essay longer, I would like to conclude by noting the following aspects:

Habermas, as referred by Heller (1992), mentions modernity as an "unfinished project", which could be an appropriate term to mean that the project will never end, or else it would imply the extermination of modernity and the performance of its pendulum. In addition, trying to stop the oscillations of the pendulum would be equivalent to the paralyzation of modernity.

In fact, the oscillations are not cyclical; they do not replicate and never complete a full phase, in a movement that reflects the advance of modernity while crossing into completely new spheres. Individuals must produce all the necessary energy to generate the impulses to keep the pendulum's movement[6], at least with the hope of demanding a better society based on equality, welfare and other important principles of the real democracy.

It is probable that the dynamics of modernity will be reduced with the course of time; what is not possible is that modernity itself will survive without dynamic justice and the role of institutions. Institutions have to provide stability and simultaneously offer the possibility of constant change as well as renewal. They also have to introduce a framework for the good life and welfare based on equal access to individuals.

Nevertheless, we cannot predict if modernity will be able to survive; and even if it does, how and for how long. The confirmed transition from the actual stage to the "post-modern" will reveal someday the definitive course of the trend. On the other hand, mythology and tradition have transcended through the ages, although in different aspects, being present in modernity by means of relevant and sometimes unconsciously accepted myths and other manifestations.

Today, globalization and technological innovation have certainly contributed to reduce the physical distances, but on the other hand, paradoxically we are living more isolated and distant from others, as common sense "vanishes" and individualism predominates over moral values, revealing part of the "*dark side of the moon*".

Finally, as Touraine and others have remarked, democracy must be understood primarily as the recognition of the other's rights; this will be the most essential key factor for the efficiency of an authentic democratic state.

Modernity & pre-modernity in comparative perspective

The following comparative scheme describes and summarizes the main aspects of both periods, according to the previously mentioned aspects.

Pre-modernity	Modernity
A society of subjects (dependency and hierarchy). Men had a "predestined" role for life and only a few were privileged.	People are born free. In principle, no man is another man's property (slave).
Social arrangement based on asymmetric reciprocity. An arrangement defined by "God" (divineness), nature, blood, heritage and tradition.	The model of symmetric reciprocity defines the social arrangement (relative equality).
Limited or precarious attitude toward sciences.	Predominance of science.
Little questioning of social schemes, beliefs and traditions.	Faster changes, implying more questioning (legitimacy of institutions).
Pre-modern societies were homogeneous and uniform.	Modern societies are less uniform (more people tend to disagree and discuss).
The concept of "citizenship" was exclusive for the "privileged" people.	People acquire a "citizenship".
Societies stratified "naturally".	Social hierarchy is established at the level of specialized institutions.
Establishment and follow up of traditions, managed as social obligations.	Rupture with tradition and creation of new traditions.
Limited and restricted social life.	New alternative proposals of social life and welfare.
Consideration of status and hierarchy.	More consideration of merits and achievements.
Relative stagnation of societies.	The dynamics of civilizations and culture.
Mythology prevails over reason, offering an explanation to the origin of things.	Reason defeats mythology, although myths transcend from a different perspective.

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1 Secularization refers to the process through which religious thinking, practice and institutions lose their religious and/or social significance. The concept is based on the theory, held by some sociologists, that as societies become industrialized their religious morals, values, and institutions give way to secular ones and some religious traits become common secular practices (Encyclopaedia Tiscali 2008).

2 It refers to a Platonic school that flourished in Alexandria for three centuries until the Arab conquest in 642 AD.

3 This conception comes very close to Max Weber's "Iron Cage".

4 Therefore, it seems that freedom is still conditional and not yet absolute in the new "modern arrangement".

5 Benito Juarez (Mexican President; 1806-1872).

6 In other words: to generate the demands for a better future for the individuals.

THE RUPTURE OF MODERNITY:
A PARADOX FOR THE EMERGENCE OF DEMOCRACY

LUIS M. CANCIO

The critique and evaluation of the project of modernity seems to be one of the most debated and contradictory topics of our times. Amazed by the achievements of science and technology, and intrigued by the future of the humanity, we are living in an age of disenchantment, where the triumph of reason over faith and tradition has degraded "pre-modern" schemes and the divine does not rule the world anymore. Consequently, the dynamic of modernity awakes in a paradoxical way, as the world goes "global" but societies and individuals chose to isolate themselves from each other. Myths and tradition are inadvertently accepted, transcending as an old legacy in the minds of people and the structures of democratic states. On the other hand, the spirit of democracy survives through the choices that masses make to defend their rights for a better social condition and equality. A cyclical story with no apparent happy ending repeats: the emergence of a "new age" sprinkled with old precepts, along with the institutionalization of democracy in a world dominated by contradictory issues in detriment of the individual.

Keywords: Democracy; disenchantment; modernity; social justice; mythology; tradition.