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Human Societies Facing Globalisation

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Abstract: The “rationalising process” (Max Weber) stands out for the whole societies of the world, as an economic, social and political ideal to reach. The traditional societies are devastated. Some emerge successfully and claim for a new international order. But this model has dropped into crisis. Economic crisis goes on with a social and political one. The world needs governance which must be ruled by ethics, not only markets, taking into account the unequal level of societies.

Keywords : rationalising process, cut-throat competition, Western societies, universalism, crisis, overaccumulation of capital, individual recognition, services, modern institutions.

For the first time in their history, human societies are confronted, at the same time, at the same moment, to a same phenomenon: contemporary capitalism in its world extension. This capitalism results from the development of advanced industrial societies, namely those of Western Europe and United States of America. If contacts have yet taken place for at least five centuries between Western countries and the other societies of the world, through goods exchanges, sacks and violent actions (slavery, wars, invasion, settlement), to-day, it is, in an apparently pacific way, through productive system exportation that they are settled. Violence comes from the fact that the productive system, through the capitalist labour force use shakes the whole social organisation of the societies in which it penetrates.

According to our reading of Marx’s writings (1818-1883), capitalist globalisation, in its productive and financial dimension, would give solutions to the crisis of over-accumulation of capital resulting from general downward trend of profit rate in industrial branches, emergence of service needs in the production and the society, from which research for new sectors of activities (the services) and geographical displacements of capitals springs. The capitalist system globalisation to-day leads all non-European societies to the same rationalising process that, according to another reading of a sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920), was observed in the Western societies during the past centuries: specialisation of activities and rationalisation of way of thinking (institutions, laws, arts, music), disenchantment of the world, calculation and individual independence. This rationalisation allowed the settlement of industry and modernity. It is thought to be in crisis to-day in Western countries as at the same time it is supposed to put in crisis all the societies engaged in the same process.

Our paper aims to show several dimensions of the global economy: 1) the rationalising

process in European societies; 2) different dimensions of the crisis in the traditional societies; 3) needs for diversified ways adapted to the diversified world.

I. The rationalising process in Western societies :

Contemporary globalisation is boosted namely by the United States and Western Europe. It is capitalist, productive and financial. It is supported by a representation of the world and social organisation forms.

A productive and financial globalisation

The Western society – we shall namely think of the French one – in which we have lived until a yet recent period, was industrial. The general downward trend of profit rate in industry (saturation of some sectors related to solvent demand, workers' struggles) diverts capitals to more profitable sectors (services and privatising them) and other territories (relocations). It finds solutions in services and globalisation. It appears as a solution to the overaccumulation crisis of capital. The production of services is the logical continuation of that of goods. Those ones, to be produced, more and more need services (research, looking for new needs and new markets, quality, supplies, innovations). Information and communication technologies have facilitated their development at work in the evolution of industry and society. They allow their multiplication and their long distance delivery (call centres, bank and insurance services, cash machines, correspondence sales). But the society has also developed in its needs (education, health, accommodation, leisure, complexity and risk management, individual needs). Labour force exploitation has been extending, from goods to service production in advanced countries, and from industrial countries to traditional ones, for goods. The expansion of the whole capitalist productive system over the world induces needs for raising capitals all nationalities.

Finance, freed from every constraint, becomes the means of competition and control of the economic life the running of which moves away further and further from social needs to profitability and efficiency calculation. Markets become the regulating way of the world with the American money, the dollar, as a means of world governance. A general disorder results in the inadequacy between true economy and stock-exchange.

II .Values and norms supported by global capitalism

Global capitalism is also supported by a representation of the world. In its base, capitalism is linked with individuals freed from any personal dependency and corporatist or religious networks, in order to make out a labour market in which the labour forces can move freely. The consequence is an apprenticeship of individual freedom and aspirations to emancipation in every field. On these values and in political struggles, the modern nation is

built, inhabited by people experienced altogether the same history, with the same rights, with the will to live together in spite of divergent interests conflicts, and with that of asserting their political sovereignty facing other nations. By globalising, capitalism destroys the political and territorial bounds of the nation, emptying it of its capabilities of solving its inhabitants' problems and of acting, through national representatives and through the State, on its future, allowing the world market forces to inform about the production needs and its volume and its quality. Social and/or solidarity are replaced competition between individuals and nations.

Besides those values, capitalism brings along an organisation model depending on a specific logic (freeing and exploitation of labour force, competition and domination, profit). This model sprang from the development of Western societies marked by an exceptional social and historical experience (rational knowledge, nature mastering and victory over fate, recognition of individual as a value and the aim of evolution, political democracy). Modern political, economic and cultural institutions have emerged from social conflicts that progressively are regulated by a State related to a nation characterised as a historical community with a proper culture; a collective consciousness and a political sovereignty. This State draws its legitimacy from universal suffrage.

This model has turned into a crisis. The national State is emptied of its function of allowing nation, its culture and democracy to be realised and so to solve conflicts by its own. The crisis is global. To be efficient, solutions should turn on all its dimensions, because the economic crisis is associated with a moral, social and political one. Nevertheless, as it is, the Western model stands out as most efficient for all the traditional societies which penetrate into its sphere of influence and domination.

The crisis of traditional societies

The impact on these societies is rough. Not only they are without resources but their culture is not appropriate to face the situation. If all human cultures are equal because they conceal intelligence and sensitiveness, they are not equivalent facing modernity. These societies are unsettled by the norms and values exported by capitalism, in the forefront of which there is labour which is becoming a main axis of every society.

Labour and work and their unsettling consequences

The new international order lies on making labour force compete with one another and on convenience that capitalist firms find in the territories where they export their factories, through profits they expect to extract, by relocating according to opportunities, and thus, carelessly as for the destructions they induce in their origin or reception countries. The industrial organisation, in Western countries, has reached a highly segmented division of tasks allowing replacement of men by automated machines, so that work divided into sections has become the usual norm in current consumption goods industries. The exportation of productive systems has become possible in unskilled and low-waged work countries. Thus, in a direct way, work acts on traditional societies. With differences in

tempos and uses related with their departure level, these societies are being engaged in the same process of freeing labour as the developed societies did when they opened to modernity. In the traditional societies, work does not appear as a great unified function, as an exchange of activities between individuals and the groups amidst a basic social function which constitutes a larger community. It is rather a collection of different trades embedded in near relationships, or kinships, neighbourhood or village links, tightly structured by conventions and rituals. In these conditions, labour does not move freely and has no exchange value. The market labour does not exist in traditional places but where it is developed, in towns, around foreign or national capitalist firms. It destroys the feeling of membership and solidarity, giving way to a cut-throat competition between status-less and defenceless workers. The labour, in capitalism, through its organisation and its discipline, the way by which it is recruited based on interchangeable individuals, independently of their membership or their identity, forms the crucial factor for destroying all the traditions which chain up individuals in taboos (the caste system for example) and personal obligations which are at the base of social relations in these societies.

The capitalist work lays down its iron discipline to populations, whose activities are embedded in uneconomic finalities, having another sense. By work, we mean work process. It implies the constitution of material and mental infrastructures, among which behaviours and abilities specific of capitalism (rationale, for example) constitute the efficiency of technical realities. With work, that is to say a productive activity, a consumption way of life is introduced, supported by new aspirations and behaviours (comfort, imitation, self representation, individualising). The more or less intensive penetration of capitalism and the following social disintegration unsettle these societies the structural hierarchies of which are upset as well as the regulating mode and the way of living. These societies are passing through an irreversible transition to the European mode, without having, for most of them, either the time or the means necessary to reach it.

In this transition, some societies collapse, as it happened, in the New world, during the XVIth with some Indians' when they met the dawning capitalist work, explaining the import of African slaves. Those which have some chance to go through are those who own something alike Western countries: a tradition of a bureaucratic State and a social organisation structured by a common history and cohesion delimited by recognised boundaries.

Of course it is very schematic to gather in a same set the whole traditional societies, as it is with the Western ones. But perhaps, more than for the latter, by traditional societies we mean extremely dissimilar cases, from societies looking for their territorial, ethnic, social, cultural, and national cohesion, to old societies endowed with strong territorial and political structures, mentioning in passing societies briefly qualified as tribal. For convenience, in this presentation we shall deal with two types of societies.

The traditional and pre-industrial societies

In this group, we can distinguish two subgroups. The first one, endowed with a slight tradition of state intervention, through decentralised political authorities, internalises capitalist needs, by creating a modern economic space, limited to that of the foreign firms which are relocated on its territory, with the constraints of the capitalist work organisation (intensity, low wages, lack of job security), directly or indirectly suffering the implantation of world-wide capitalism (India). The other, endowed with a strong tradition of a bureaucratic, interventionist, hierarchical State, either for infrastructures either on economic activities themselves (China), while leaving them some freedom of action, try to act on the great capitalist powers, through their money on the foreign level, and on the inside one, to put in place social laws responding to new labour and work conditions (employment code, welfare).

Those two categories of societies derive directly from a harsh confrontation with the West, the one following a systematic exploit through colonisation, the other by the alienation of its political and economic sovereignty through lion's agreements with the Western governments. These agreements promoted the creation of free zones, exemption from customs duties, and sometimes heavy tributes. The recovering of their sovereignty, during the XXth century, does not solve problems related to the historical process of their constitution as modern nations, based on universal suffrage, and namely the habits of peaceful negotiations rather than violent interventions, either from the State either from peoples. The constitution of nations, in these countries, differs according to their history. For the ones, nations appear as cultural, linguistic or religious communities, linked by decentralised and more or less loosened relations, delimited first by princes and kings against by the coloniser. For the others, they appear as multinational societies organised by wars and conquests, unified by a wide-spread and strong civilisation, a way of life, with a majority population. But for all of them – this situation is to be found in many other traditional societies whose populations had not always found the opportunity to adhere explicitly to modern concept of nations (the will and the choice to leave together, a common aim, democratic discussion) -, centrifugal forces, which have always existed in the past, stand a good chance to waken up, under the Western model and the Western policy pressures. As a matter of fact, this model, through work and consumption, proposes search for individual success, cancellation of solidarity values, more conveniences, and, at the same time, abolition of boundaries. If this model becomes dominant and if the mother society fails to give its member means to keep abreast of it, - (except if it succeeds to counter-balance this aspect by stressing the pride to belong to a common bright civilisation), then the centrifugal forces could break the barriers built around nations on traditions, culture, religion and/or tongue, but not on democratic will. Economics tends to be more important than politics.

In the second group of societies, social and mental structures appear to be impediments for their integration in a system of norms imposed from outside. They are

numerous of them to be still looking for coherence between identity and territories.

The disintegration of traditional societies at a speed and violence a hundred times greater than that of Western Europe whose disintegration process took some centuries, is accompanied to-day by absence or lack of economic institutions (labour market, norms allowing mastering corruption, dispersal of individuals without social laws, free actions for firms without employment code) adapted to the new situation. The reactions encountered among populations are evidence of tensions and contradictions of this integration, on the one hand, refusal of structural changes coming from capitalism (political rights, recognition of minorities, women's emancipation) or difficulties to have them accepted. On the other hand, the search for the Western way of life (goods and services, namely health, Western conveniences) without means. But, as a matter of fact, poverty, social disintegration or wars, constitute the daily fate for the majority who becomes, thank to the new technologies of information and communication, more and more conscious of the gap between the Western model and their own reality.

Needs for diversified itineraries according to diversified levels

The efficiency of this model stands out for the whole societies of the world, as an economic, social and political ideal to reach. The traditional societies are devastated. Some emerge successfully and claim for a new international order. Two major constraints appear. On the one hand, the world must face a collective problem: global warming. On the other, it is within areas composed of equivalent levelled nations, an existing, being-built or being-extended reality, and not in that of global markets, that development policies and cooperation agreements between areas can be applied.

In Western countries, services need cooperation and public financing and not maximum profit and competition.

Confronting with alien cultures of other societies engaging a modernity process, the Western countries are not untouched in their values and institutions. Already, the industrial revolution which gave the bourgeoisie the political power produced a counter-culture from the industrial proletariat. From a private point of view, other values than the bourgeoisie's were set up. For example, marriage or rather free union relieved of hypocrite business and trade. From a public one, it is other criteria than profit, care for security and not risks which hit the workers first. In the centre of these changes, one finds struggles to control work, its use and the share of its results. This control more and more needs to take two dimensions into account, on the one hand, the workers' training level the acquisition of which lies on the internalisation of a social, scientific and technical legacy. On the other hand, the equipment level and its complexity exact a higher level of organisation and knowledge of the society itself.

These requirements are linked with the nature of the capitalist society which is a service one, demanding high technological equipment and a competent staff, endowed with adaptability. This type of society needs the capitalist regulation mode to be broken.

The contemporary capitalism, as a result of a long term evolution of the Western European continent, is in a relative coherence with its institutions, its norms and values and its social structures. Solutions to its crisis must be found in its resources and its contradictions. Until now, the disintegration of the old order is not replaced by a new one.

Capitalist globalisation questions the alternative instant possibilities. In industrial countries, wild relocations exhaust creative and long term development resources taking them away from their economic base. Indeed, whatever mighty the information and communication technologies should be, near relationships are necessary for the scientific, industrial and environmental cooperation between subcontractors and principals for quality control, tests and norms, guarantee term and security, knowledge transfer which needs common values, language and habits

If these societies are better armed to face a world-wide competition, they suffer disintegration the consequences of which are until now badly quantified. Already, a part of their population is getting poor, social links get loose, their society being undone. As a regulating institution, the State's role diminishes in the economic field as for main balances, in the political field as for compromises between adversarial interests. Nevertheless the State, with national boundaries, remains, for the moment and still for a long time, a best adapted means to represent a society built on a common culture through a history among conflicts but also among solidarity. That does not mean that that sort of institution should preserve the same content or maintain the same geographical limits. Its integration in a wider community will obey the monopolisation law, following the sociologist, Norbert Elias, according to whom small unities tend to be absorbed in wider units endowed with legitimate authorities. This movement will be done all the easier since it would be negotiated so that the old unity 's values should be integrated or at least their traces could be found.

In the short run, the integration would succeed all the more since concerned entities are similar. For France, its integration area is Europe, but this latter, heterogeneous in its development level and its cultural habits, should demand to be divided into some equivalent levelled areas. The regulating tools will be the national States, as far as there will not exist a supranational State, a banking and financial policy, as well as an industrial policy, public service development, as a base of the life of the XXIth century.

The emergent societies.

The same argument, with adaptations, is valuable. There many differences among these societies. As the Roman empire exported its laws and its civilisation, so capitalism carries what is its core: a free labour force – at least its trend – and separating activities (economy/politics, public/home, religion/law), rational calculation instead of individual exchanges for the profit of each other (at least what is believed by each other), marginalisation of gods and priests, elimination of clans and tribes, a rational behaviour.

It is in that historical confronting that we understand what Huntington named “the

clash of civilisations” without giving the word any precise content. Nevertheless, everything makes us believe that the joint presently irresistible thrust of capitalism into these countries and mass aspirations for goods and services will induce another way of thinking and living. That is what we can observe here and there in several countries in which industrial location appealing to female workers introduce possibilities for women to perceive some different future. But of course, that situation can cause men’s reactions because of the risks of the lost of their domestic and political power in the long term. Religious actions could be interpreted, for a part, as the answer to the upheavals born from the contact with the Western model. “To get Western machines without Western ideas” seem to be the general reaction to identity defence. Is it possible?

As a whole, in a more or less long run, and according to their history and their culture, the traditional societies will have to get institutions adapted to social relations such development induces because it is based on highly developed human and material forces: sex equality, democracy, recognition of individual rights, so as to use every one’s capabilities. The outside impact would be perhaps the opportunity to move and change.

The adoption of the Western model does not mean the suppression of all the cultural differences. Separating the public sphere from the private one is an obligatory stage in the process of modernity. It will unify exchange behaviour between individuals, states and nations, on the rationale base which will be the only way for dialogue between cultures diversified by historical experiment. What is particular to each culture will be driven back to private life, this one meaning the domestic life, but also the local or national life.

But Western ideas also can have reached their limits in stressing individualism and rationality. In a great number of disciplines, for example philosophy or medicine, arts, there are mutual discoveries. Rationale does not exhaust all the understanding of the world.

In the other societies

In some societies, social and mental structures, poverty and lack of all resources are impediments to integration in a system of norms and values laid down from outside. Capitalist regulation, with its cut-throat competition extended over everything and everywhere, meets societies whose poverty is so deep that suicidal violence is the only answer to the despair it generates. In feudal societies, charity and compassion, resulting in reallocating cereals extorted to peasants (taxes of all sorts, forced work) restored justice and social peace a little, during starvation periods. They did not change much the destiny. Nowadays, fair trade, humanitarian actions, gifts and different informal exchanges, alleviate the situations, but do not reverse them. These societies need a very long term help, in all dimensions. Without forgetting ethnics who go on living very far from the development problems but suffer from a wild deforestation coming from development policy of capitalist greed. They need international protection.

Global governance could be only multi-centred, in order to leave peoples who need time able to adapt themselves to new demands. After all, Western Europe, before opening to

world competition, took time to prepare themselves behind trade barriers. Yet, they were wealthier than most societies thrown to-day in the globalisation storm.

Between large economic and cultural areas so designed, exchanges will take place on negotiations for the benefit of all. In this framework, private helps will take sense. Presently, the unification process is badly felt because it happens under the control of the United-States of America with the hegemony of an imperialist capitalist class characterised by a mind resulting from the history of this country. The history is that of a state-less society, a wild beast capitalism, predisposing the bourgeois elites to conceive the world in no other way than an extension of the Far-West with Coca-cola to civilise it.

Mankind's march to unification is a very long one. The "rationalising process", a specific characteristic of Western culture, stands out, as a matter of fact, as universalism. From the point of view where it is expressed, it allows the whole modern world to be interested in and in fact obliges it to be interested in. Thus we can speak of nature mastering and an until now historically unknown representation of Man, making him a being conscious of his fate. But as a hegemonic practice, it has resulted in dramatic catastrophes, destroying civilisations. It has dropped into crisis in its area of origin, the reasons of which are: too intense a productivity, extreme individualism, value loss. In its contact with the other societies, perhaps it could find a new enrichment source, namely in taking into account the unity of man and his activities. The world needs governance which must be ruled by ethics, taking into account the unequal level of societies, that is to say by negotiation and not only markets.

With ecologic disorder that the race for efficiency and the catching up of industrialisation induce, capitalism does no longer represent a solution to progress. It becomes a negative and dangerous part. If it is still victorious, it is for lack of a coherent alternative solution as an answer to a double challenge, that of setting up a better social organisation, including the dynamism of productive forces, and that of work, techniques and science.