NOTES FOR AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL FOUNDATION TO GLOBALISATION

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1. The factor most often used to distinguish the progression from barbarism to civilisation is undeniably the appearance of the city. This idea is definitively established within the tradition of philosophical materialism in Gordon Childe's book, *Man makes himself*. In 1989 Gustavo Bueno published an article in *Abaco* entitled 'Teoría general de la ciudad' ['General theory of the city'], which parallels the approach established by Childe in *Man makes himself*. In the article Bueno proposes applying the *theory of essence*, established in his book *El animal divino* [*The divine animal*]*,* to the philosophical idea of the city. According to this theory, the philosophical idea of the city includes a "nucleus", a "body" and a "course" that would allow the theoretical basis of the enormous phenomenological complexity of cities throughout history to be reorganised. The nucleus of the idea of the city consists in the formation of a vortex produced by the convergence of various villages reorganising themselves into an entity greater than any one of them, in which relations are established of a kind that are incompatible and irreducible to those which prevail in villages. This schema could be perfectly accepted by Childe, for example, in his description of the origin of cities in the region of Mesopotamia. According to Bueno, the first type of city would be what he calls an "absolute city", referring to cities that are not connected geographically to any others and that are born precisely from the aforementioned vortex.

However, a significant difficulty in how this idea is structured can be observed in Bueno's work, a difficulty that could be very useful to establish an ontological criterion to define the urban phenomenon. In his book *Etnología y Utopía* [*Ethnology and Utopia*]*,* published in 1971, Bueno was still defending the idea, in contradiction of Gordon Childe, that a city could only be understood as such if it had established typically urban relations with other cities that were located relatively nearby. He insisted that isolated cities like Jericho could not be considered cities, despite the fact that they contained some typical features of a city, such as walls, population growth, division of labour, reorganisation of village life, codes, etc. Therefore, what in one book he would consider a model absolute city, in the other he would not consider a city at all.

2. So, why should an absolute city not be considered a genuine city? Are two or more cities required for an urban way of life to exist? What determines when an accumulation of population, which is above the average for a village, becomes a city? Will there be a criterion capable of determining how urban life emerges within the heart of the vortex that blends villages into a city? In short, will it be possible to find a heuristic definition of the concept of the city, a theory that discriminates and explains its role in history and why the city is the gateway to civilisation? What changes occur in the urban way of life that necessarily leave

barbarism behind, if it can be discussed in this manner, especially considering that change is not uniform but rather takes place in different places and epochs? Is it necessary for a vortex to create a new centre around which inhabitants begin to revolve in order to speak of a city? The objective is to find a theory which clearly discriminates between what has conventionally been referred to as barbarism and civilisation and reinterprets many of the problems traditionally studied by historians related to the conflict between city and country, while at the same time providing a new anthropological perspective on the emerging era of globalisation. The problem is that this theory has to be, in a manner of speaking, involved in the birth of the city, in its phenomenology; it has to be saturated in the theories on the origin of the city mentioned earlier.

The objective of this work is to examine the following theory based on personal liberty: an agglomeration of people who live together become a city, and cease to be a Neolithic, or pre-civilised, or barbaric, or pre-urban, village, when it becomes possible for some of its individuals to pursue individual choices (the gradual increase in in their number will define the city's course in history); when it is possible for an individual within the group to ignore the strict limits imposed by customs and determine how they live their lives in a meaningful way; when an individual who transgresses customs has a place within its community. In other words, a society becomes a city when it is capable of fully integrating into the group individuals that break with custom, thereby reforming or diminishing the importance of the customs or overthrowing them altogether.

In the barbaric or Neolithic way of life cultural determinism based on customs is imposed so harshly on each individual that it is impossible for them to disobey them without being banished or eliminated from the group. This phenomenon has been authoritatively explained in Marvin Harris' theory of cultural materialism and numerous examples can be found in ethnographic descriptions and also in many movies and stories. For instance, in Shohei Imamura's film, *The ballad of Narayama* (1983), individuals cannot escape the customs of the group, just as other species cannot escape their nature. If each animal of a given species must follow the law designated by their particular destiny, then each human in a Neolithic group must also follow the law designated by their customs, a law that is enforced mercilessly by the group.

The degree to which the norms of a barbarian group are susceptible to modification creates a corresponding tension between barbarism and civilisation which dominates their lives; this tension is proportional to the social complexity of the group and the accumulation of population. Obviously, demographic pressure and the complexity of customs and institutions make it more difficult to neutralise this tension and so it almost inevitably opens the door to civilised ways of life. When a family steals food in *The ballad of Narayama* the other families enforce the law in such a way that they end up burying the entire family alive in the middle of the night; the group compels each and every one of the inhabitants of the village to follow the law, regardless of what any particular individual of the group may think or want. The grandmother that is obligated to go to die on Narayama Mountain will fulfil her destiny, regardless of the attempts by her loving son to stop her.

The city is born in the bosom of barbaric societies that have been accumulating so many customs and inhabitants that they reach a critical mass in which it

becomes possible for individuals to lead their personal lives in a way that breaks with traditional norms. This is where the idea of freedom takes root. Although factors such as writing are implicit in the city, they do not play a role in their establishment; therefore, they are not considered an essential starting point for a city. The written word does becomes an inescapable necessity once the norms of the group grow so complex that they can only be followed when written and the existential complexity implied by the appearance of writing reveals the presence of a new human figure: the person. However, a lack of writing does not necessarily mean that a city does not exist.

3. The criterion of personal liberty allows an important idea within Bueno's anthropological theory to be reinterpreted: that is, the distinction between open concatenations and closed concatenations of institutions, which he uses to define the progression of barbaric societies to civilised societies. Bueno's philosophical materialist anthropology is based on the category of the "institution", through which a culture can be explained. Institutions are understood as the universal category of human action and they never occur, so to speak, by themselves, but rather in complex concatenations. Bueno proposes that barbaric societies are composed of closed concatenations of institutions, while civilised societies are made up of open concatenations of institutions and are, therefore, more complex.

A closed concatenation of institutions is identified by the fact that it is impossible to introduce new institutions, such as the institution of the person, for example, which can only exist in an open context because by definition each personal institution is an independent and self-determining individuality. In contrast, an open concatenation of institutions allows the possibility for personal trajectories; it is capable of making space for the person, for individual choices, for individuals capable of living lives that do not follow the established customs. Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca raises these issues as he recounts his travels through Northern Mexico from Florida in his extraordinary book *Naufragios.* He discusses how he and his companions were forced to submit to the norms of the Indians in order to be accepted among them and how precisely due to their own cultural antecedents the Spanish were capable of learning the customs of their hosts and using all kinds of ruses to cause reactions among the Indians that they could anticipate and control, as if the Spanish were evil genies.

This is also the reason why certain political proposals such as that of Evo Morales in the new Bolivian constitution are unfeasible: the norms that rule the majority of indigenous tribes and peoples of Bolivia represent pre-urban ways of life based on the absolute submission of the individual to the social group; however, the Bolivian State is founded on a model of open concatenations of institutions based on the principle of protecting the individual and individual liberties in a legal framework that not only guarantees their life, but also their freedom. It is contradictory then to grant the individual the freedom to submit to the way of life of their ethnic group, while at the same time sanctioning a norm that allows each ethnic group to be ruled by their ancestral laws. Such a situation reveals the most perverse and dangerous side of cultural relativism. In any case, one thing is to try and manage this contradiction, another is to try and return to an ancestral way of life. This contradiction will certainly contribute to

the destabilisation of the country, because the civilising process is irreversible and to encourage the desire to recover barbaric ways of life can only lead to social conflict, a conflict that others can take advantage of, unquestionably

When Agamemnon decides to sacrifice Iphigenia on the advice of the soothsayer Calcas so that the winds will be favourable for the Greek fleet sailing to Troy, Agamemnon and Iphigenia accept the destiny established by custom and belief. The murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra and her subsequent murder by her son Orestes are events that occur in the eye of a hurricane that is smashing the standards of the barbaric way of life, as individuals struggle to break free of the chains of traditional norms. Meanwhile, the young girls sacrificed in the male puberty ceremonies in Australia because they heard the roaring of the bull-roarer accept their destiny or prudently avoid contravening it because they are hopelessly enslaved by custom.

4. According to Bueno, historically, the conflict which marks the passage from a barbaric society to a civilised one can be understood as a crisis of personality; however, from a synchronic, sociological point of view this conflict manifests itself over and over throughout the history of cities in the struggle between the city and the country. The village, the town, the country, will always be seen as the place in which the pressure of custom and the group is much greater, to the point of being unbearable, while the city is perceived as a space for freedom: "the air of liberty is breathed in the cities", was a Medieval saying.

In other words, the conflict which *generates* the city is transformed through the different phenomenal manifestations of the city that emerge throughout history. With this in mind, the same criterion can be used to establish a definition of the current era of globalisation; if the movement from barbarism to civilisation should not be understood as a movement from one absolute and definitive stage to another, but rather as two stages within a landscape of historical possibilities that have not yet come to pass, globalisation could be understood as the same process of gradual disappearance as the traditional conflict between the city and the country. Today the country has been urbanised and totally assimilated into the capitalist production model, while the city has been universalised and is thus no longer a city, insofar as it is defined in opposition to the country. Globalisation has swept away the original conflict between country and city and represents the end of the central figure in this conflict: the person as a free subject capable of configuring their own trajectory in life.

In the era of globalisation each and every one of these trajectories are once again in a space in which all personal distinctions are neutralised, transistorised, monitored, robotised, structured in accordance to mass psychology techniques, and the control imposed by customs now occurs through consumerism and media manipulation of emotions, values and personal preferences. McLuhan's *global village* describes a new space in which personal trajectories become irrelevant and man is as insignificant as a bee in a hive or an ant in an anthill.

5. Another important aspect of this doctrine is that it allows us to precisely define the gnoseological field of ethnology, because it is only possible to study the senseless determinism of customs on the lives of every member of a group, without exception, in pre-civilised and barbaric societies. It is impossible to establish habits and rhythms marked by custom for individuals who live in the city, where custom cannot regulate existence as strictly as in barbaric societies in which ethnologists universally seek to delineate the laws of customs. Reading any ethnographic description, no matter how small, clearly illuminates this idea:

In the region [central Africa] where feminine beauty is all but identified with obesity the girl at puberty is segregated, sometimes for years, fed with sweet and fatty foods, allowed no activity and her body rubbed assiduously with oils. She is taught during this time her future duties, and her seclusion ends with a parade of her corpulence that is followed by her marriage to her proud groom. It is not regarded as necessary for the man to achieve pulchritude before marriage in a similar fashion.[1]

In this passage, Ruth Benedict sees a sign of the freedom of men, but this is absurd, as custom is equally imposed on the man and accepted by him.

Interpreting the difference between barbarism and civilisation based on personal freedom, one can imagine the role of anthropologists doing field research, submerging themselves in societies in order to understand their way of life without affecting, insofar as possible, the daily lives of their subjects. The norms of the society will inevitably be imposed on the anthropologists and as the pressure builds they will begin to manifest their frustration and repression in different ways, as illustrated, for example, by Malinowsky's unfortunate diaries. The general obsession of anthropologists and psychologists with barbaric taboos and prohibitions is no more than fascination with the idea that in a barbaric society an individual's life is utterly normalised, regulated and socially ritualised, as Freud states in his famous work *Totem and taboo*:

A comparison of the "Psychology of Primitive Races" as taught by folklore, with the psychology of the neurotic as it has become known through psychoanalysis, will reveal numerous points of correspondence and throw new light on subjects that are more or less familiar to us.[2]

Later, talking about Australian aborigines, he informs us that:

The totem is first of all the tribal ancestor of the clan, as well as its tutelary spirit and protector; it sends oracles and, though otherwise dangerous, the totem knows and spares its children. The members of a totem are therefore under a sacred obligation not to kill (destroy) their totem, to abstain from eating its meat or from any other enjoyment of it. Any violation of these prohibitions is automatically punished. The character of a totem is inherent not only in a single animal or a single being but in all the members of the species.[3]

An eloquent example cited by Ruth Benedict helps to clarify this situation common in a state of barbarism:

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[1] Benedict, Ruth, p. 32.
[2] Freud, Sigmund, (1996); p. 8.
[3] Freud, Sigmund, (1996); p. 9.

Among the Eskimo, when one man has killed another, the family of the man who has been murdered may take the murderer to replace the loss within its own group. The murderer then becomes the husband of the woman who has been widowed by his act. This is an emphasis upon restitution that ignores all other aspects of the situation – those which seem to us the only important ones.[4]

Although the anthropologist uses cultural relativism to assess this matter, the truth is that this case illustrates how the individual person has been absolutely negated and is defined merely as a function within the group, stripped of the personality that is an essential characteristic of individuals in the urban way of life. In this case there is practically no conflict between the individual and the group.

Lorca's *The house of Bernarda Alba* represents with paradigmatic clarity the conflict between the pressure of the group to sustain the established norms and the tension created by those individuals who struggle to break with custom to follow a personal path and determine their own actions. This represents a structural conflict of humanity, underscoring the passage from barbarism to civilisation, the passage from country to city, and the role that the person plays in the development of the civilised way of life. At the heart of much of the dramatic imagery in Spanish literature is the fascination with the burden of gypsy laws and the individuals who strive to escape the narrow confines imposed by these customs. In general terms, the anthropological line being developed here is reflected in the outlaw, a romantic figure that has never ceased to capture the imagination of movie directors and also inspired many musical styles –in the Soviet Union, for example– that mythologise many of them. To a great degree, the figure of the frontiersman who transcends the norms, who is capable of overcoming the limitations set by his own cultural traditions to reach an understanding with indigenous people, can be seen as a foreshadowing of a new man, of the person, of the path that leads inevitably to civilisation.

According to Benedict:

We might suppose that in the matter of taking life all peoples would agree in condemnation. On the contrary, in a matter of homicide, it may be held that one is blameless if diplomatic relations have been severed between neighbouring countries, or that one kills by custom his first two children, or that a husband has the right of life and death over his wife, or that it is the duty of the child to kill his parents before they are old. It may be that those are killed who steal a fowl, or who cut their upper teeth first, or who are born on a Wednesday. Among some peoples a person suffers torments at having caused an accidental death; among others it is a matter of no consequence.[5]

6. In his book, *El sentido de la vida* [*The meaning of life*], Bueno defines ethics as a set of provisions focused on preserving one's own life and he proposes that the principle ethical virtue is *fortitude*, to which he adds the virtue of *generosity*, which is manifested in the care taken to preserve the lives of others.

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[4] Benedict, Ruth, p. 219.
[5] Benedict, Ruth, p. 47.

In this context, medicine would be the ethical profession par excellence. On the other hand, he defines morals as a set of provisions focused on the preservation of the group, even when this involves the sacrifice of an individual, whether of the group or foreign, if doing so will maintain the integrity of the group. In this sense, it can be said that barbarism is the domain of morals, a context in which the group is infinitely more important than the individual; ethics, on the other hand, are established in the city and it is in the urban space that conflicts between ethics and morals arise. These conflicts shape one of the classic topics of moral philosophy. When Bertrand Russell was debating whether to participate in World War I or to stay home and take care of his mother, not only did this represent the conflict between morals and ethics, but it was also a manifestation of the survival of the same fundamental tension between civilisation and the permanent ebb of the moral standards that constitute our shared barbaric roots.

7. Similarly, a criteria for the definition of globalisation could be established which explains globalisation as an era in which man is no longer immersed in the conflict between rural and urban ways of life, an era in which a new synthesis is leading us to the abyss of the person –understood as the axis around which the conflict between morals and ethics constantly revolves– and revealing a new figure of the person, perhaps unknown, perhaps impossible.

Earlier a theory was proposed on the emergence of different manifestations of the person born within the conflict between personal goals and the general plans and programmes of a given epoch. From a materialist perspective, it is evident that the "personalisation" of an individual does not occur abstractly, but rather within a class system. However, classification within a social structure, while inevitable, is problematic because it is impossible to accept a universal, metaphysical conception of alienation of the individual as conceived by traditional Marxism. Absolute alienation would imply the end of the idea of the person, something that would correspond to the period that Morgan defined as barbarism, as discussed earlier.

Therefore, the person is defined by the more or less partial and flawed consciousness of their own classification within the social structure. Furthermore, in each historical moment individual goals are always articulated within the context of the plans and programmes of society. Similarly, according to Bueno, historical changes involve "personality crises" that transform the social classification of individuals. These crises give rise to new archetypes of the person or, to put it another way, to new ways of integrating personal goals within the plans and programmes of each new epoch.

According to this theory, throughout history at least seven types of person have emerged, the vanishing points of each epoch, morphologies of the person resulting from previous personality crises. The first type of person is understood as a citizen of the *polis*, represented by the Aristotelian notion of man as *zoon politikon*. The second is the figure of man as a citizen of the world, the *zoon koinonikon* of the Stoics, which extended throughout the Roman Empire. The third is San Agustin's citizen of the City of God, the Christian man. The fourth figure corresponds to the Catholic ideal brandished by the Spanish Empire. The fifth is the Protestant, Puritan bourgeoisie or capitalist subject of the British

Empire, as defined by Max Weber. The sixth is Marx's proletariat, Ortega's man of the masses or "the new Prometheus", as imagined by Shelley. Finally, a new figure is emerging, corresponding to the end of the nation state and the beginning of the era of globalisation.

The scientific-technical revolution and the revolution in communication technologies, the integration of the markets, the incredible improvements in connections and transport, the interdependence of all production processes on a global scale and the success of mechanisation, have given rise to a situation in which the connection between the goals of many individuals and the collective plans and programmes that have until now given meaning to their lives has deteriorated, not because collective plans do not exist, but because there are so many of them that they neutralise each other.

The era of globalisation is the era of the free-floating individual. No longer a citizen or the new Prometheus, but rather an individual subjected to all manner of manipulative plans and programmes based on desultory and incomplete arguments loaded with demagoguery and propaganda produced by a broad range of special interest groups, all of which are controlled by the law of supply and demand. This new subject is operationally defined as a consumer and anthropologically as a free-floating individual because the convergence of counterpoised classes or archetypes constitutes a reoccurring personality crisis which leaves the individual no longer free, but rather indeterminate and incapable of following a personal path, shaped by the forces of consumer choice.