Sovereignties, Buddhisms, Post-1989:
An Epistemological Conundrum in Rising Asia

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Sovereignties, Buddhisms, Post-1989:
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I was struck that in two almost simultaneous papers on China and mainly on Confucianism i have heard in two successive days at the National University of Singapore this season 2013, one by Wang Ban on march 18, the other by Roger T. Ames on march 20 (then again on april 15, 2013), "governance" was the term readily used for China to designate *both* ancient forms of administration *as well as* modern and contemporary forms. I was struck by the direct and easy connection between the two (governance in old days and hyper-governance today, whereby now governmentality nested *within* sovereignty and in accordance with it delivers direct governance), regardless of perhaps disparate etymologies for what is translated as "governance" (of which i know nothing). Such jumps in time with one and the same term would look very unusual even from a not obviously orientalist position, even if we waive the unproblematised methodology of translation.

Contrary to what is generally asserted by western theories of (western) modernity regarding other modernities, there is no more interruption between antiquity and modernity in Asia than there is in the case of Europe. Each have a continuity with their own past within their respective systems, which also includes circulatory knowledge and linkages with other parts of the world, though the non western ones remain unrecognized by western hegemonic science. It is western modernity itself that operates the interruption for others. Indeed, in the case of all other modernities, an interruption was imposed and has intervened or, should we say, a violent deviation which materialized *new realities*, intersections, combinations and assemblages partly displaced from their own previous history. Thus a discontinuity from their own past for those *other* (alternative, parallel, intertwined etc.) modernities – operated by hegemonic knowledge – was constructed. This discontinuity is not historically fictitious and has been in many ways very efficient, but it functions alongside multiple continuities as well. We go for an image of continuity-including-transformations from the past till our times for Asia, and shun the idea, derived from western modernity, of any radical discontinuity between Asian antiquities and Asian modernities.

Compared to the western political history of sovereignty that sees the latter as a privileged European invention responding to some undebunkable *theoretical* blueprint, "sovereignty" has different (and historically changing) imaginaries, figures and sources in the two paradigmatic cases of India and China (to speak only of these). What is characteristic of the western modern concept of sovereignty, is that it is inscribed in a particular (should we say, "provincial") *cognitive configuration* which comprises a constructed and essential *hierarchy* between *theory* and *practice.* Such a construction, going along with the subject-object divide and some other binaries, has been at the basis of *appropriative knowledge*, i.e. the type of knowledge that was essential to geographic expansion, inner and outer colonisation etc., and responded to a particular *politics of cognition*. But this divide does not appear in ancient Asian philosophical systems at all, and when it does appear in other modernities, it is adopted and adapted through contacts and through the ongoing globalisation of knowledge, even though in many ways in a seemingly "definitive" way (the definitiveness of which may well be deceiving). Both the Indian and the Chinese pattern concord in not building a corresponding (European-like) theoretical concept of the "subject" corresponding to "sovereignty".

The *subject* is of course a historic corollary of *sovereignty* and of modernity only in the parochial European example[3], on a scale where the latter (sovereignty) is at the top of the hierarchy and plays out a transcendence, and where the former (subject) is at the bottom as its "representative", a kind of "epi-subject" for transcendence, be it God or a secular figure like the State. In the western episteme, sovereignty and subjectivation come historically together as a pair of concepts. It may not necessarily be the case elsewhere, which however doesn't prevent them from often surfacing together in the practical-political register anywhere. Needless to say, this paper does not mean to imply any judgement of value as to how these concepts are constructed in different epistemes, or to imply that one is "better" than the other. As it deals with different concept constructions, this is also a paper on epistemologies.

In the Portuguese language (and possibly in other languages too), *exploração* means "exploitation" and not "exploring" as one might expect from today's English, semantics saying the truth the language does not spell out directly: exploring (big colonial exploring, travelling around and conquests) *is* exploitation, although we have different words for the two in most European languages. The colonial language candidly maintained the *meaningful link* between the two, reminding us that epistemologies and genealogies of concepts are hardly neutral. Portuguese cities (as well as other European *metropoles,* but also sometimes towns in once colonial countries!) proudly display monuments to famous "discoverers" of continents to be colonized. Meanwhile, workers in Lisbon during the recent economic and financial crisis (2013) carried slogans "Contra *exploração* e empobrecimento" ("against exploitation and impoverishment"), oblivious of the word's colonial connotation. Of course, this is not to say that all exploring is (colonial) exploitation, but rather, that there is some irony to that rhetorical logic. The main street in old colonial Macau is still today called *Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro*, and in Chinese San Ma Lo ("the new street"). Almeida Ribeiro had been a Portuguese minister for colonies who never set foot in Macau, but who in 1915 ordered the expropriation of houses in the area in order to build the avenue.

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[3]   Due to an accident of the author's biography, Indian examples are likely to be more frequent than other Asian examples. This paper also deals with Buddhism more than with other philosophies or "religions" because Buddhism is explicitly non-sovereignist, but also because the author knows it better than other schools of thought, especially non-indic ones.

BUDDHISM AS RELIGION OR AS POLITICS?

Buddhism is one of the great agents of important successive globalisations. There was a first very important turning point in Indian philosophies with the appearance of Buddhism itself[4]: it is the decisive and incredibly early **linguistic turn** in Indian philosophy (6-7 century BCE). Its second turning point, now a twist within Buddhism itself, i see as a **theoretical turn**[5] (a theorisation of the previous linguistic turn, from the 2nd century of the CE), which also accompanied *a complex and progressive disappearance of Buddhism from India and its migrations across the Asian continent*. When we speak of a theoretical turn here, we do not imply any distancing from "practice" or "therapy" as ultimate test, in the sense of *dhyāna (jhāna)* which remains hugely important. Such migration and transformations of a worldview, the bases of renewed and varied cosmopolitical imaginaries, have made Buddhism a common and unifying factor for vast Asian cultural and geopolitical regions, from South Asia to East Asia, though not exactly for the whole of Asia and not necessarily implying the construction of an entity "Asia". Buddhism's third turn in this respect comes in the middle of the 20th century as a **political turn** (not that it had not been political before; but this time the political aspect has been acknowledged by a world-wide public sphere).

Several great Asian philosophical systems such as Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and even Shintoism, as well as in a way Brahmanism or Hinduism too (though here the situation is somewhat different than in the previous systems[6]) - do not conceive of absolute sovereignty and do not cultivate ultimate transcendence. Buddhism, in its long history and wide expansion over Asia, may be said to be ambivalent on the latter, especially in Mahāyāna, but conceptual sovereignty linked to state-building has never prevailed as a unique system in Asia. The great Asian philosophical systems all have a family likeness with Buddhism's first teaching of not founding any kind of absolute sovereignty or transcendence, in spite of Buddhism's own partial exception to this in later Mahāyāna. They all insist on the interdependence of all things, making sovereignty and its corollary exception – acceptable only with great difficulty. Though state sovereignties (emperors, kingdoms, territorial conquest, tax collection) may have at all times been "justified" through appealing to those philosophical systems, the conceptual configuration of the latter had no need for state-building or the corresponding concept of sovereignty, although there has been at all times a complicity or reciprocity between princes and "religious" orders, including in Buddhism[7]. Today, on the way from sovereignty to governmentality exercising governance, quite independently from this, the national state does not in any case quite correspond to territory any more, if it ever did. Its spatial imaginary

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[4]   I am leaving aside here the fact that the *Upaniṣads* are themselves a possible major shift from the *Vedas*, depending on how one reads them and which register one follows, and that in a broader sense Buddhism comes in the *Upaniṣads*' footsteps, as a revolution in thinking within another revolution.

[5]   I cannot go into details of Indian philosophy here.

[6]   See the brahmanistic concept of *svayaṃbhū* (which can also be Buddhist), meaning sovereign, independent, self-generated, self-standing. It refers to self-origination and is self-referential. But it is not clear that it was translated into state building in any important way, although there has been quite some state building linked to Buddhist predilections, preferences and priorities. The main great philosophical systems we have in mind here are, besides Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism.

[7]   Anne Margaret BLACKBURN, "Buddhist Connections in the Indian Ocean: Monastic Mobility, 1000-1500", manuscript for the lecture "Monks on the Move: Towards a Connected History of Bay of Bengal/Gulf of Siam Buddhisms, 1100-1500" www.ari.nus.edu.sg/events_categorydetails.asp?categoryid=8&eventid=1433 the author gave at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, on may 21, 2013. Steven COLLINS, "What are Buddhists *doing* when they deny the self?", in *Religion and Practical Reason,* ed. by F. Reynolds and D. Tracy, SUNY Press, New York 1994, pp. 59-86, Chapter 2, p. 64. Also: *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities. Utopias of the Pali imaginaire*, Cambridge UP 1998.

does not match its theory. While the sovereignty paradigm maintains (formally) some kind of ideal democratic horizon for the political individual within the state according to the universalised western paradigm, governmentality replaces it with *direct management or governance* without mediation or without the coordination of public space or a "civil society", or a "political society[8]" for that matter. In philosophy we would say – it all happens without any intervention of *manas* [mind], that is without the *material* intellectual/ideal dimension, and thus also without the political one. *Manas* normally bridges the gap subject-object.

The "untouchables", now called "Dalits ", make use of Buddhism in the 20th century as a means of getting out of their political subjection and in order to snatch Buddhism from appropriation by Hinduism. This has some echo beyond in India as well. The Dalits refute the idea that the Buddha should be an incarnation of Višṇu and construct social and political projects based on Buddhism. These are claimed sovereignties of a kind, but not of the kind understood, from the western context, as the pursuit of sovereignty and autonomy of some higher office (such as the State), which could devolve into the lowliest instance (man, people) once it is turned upside-down at the end of the *Ancient regime* and helped by Protestantism. The reasons why are several, but mainly, there is no claim for an alternative hegemony with the Dalits at least at the beginning of their movement, no universalist claim, and no accompanying economic or military power. Their struggle is not supported by monotheism. The western "model" here mentioned is also called *westphalian sovereignty*, whereby the (Catholic) Church was dispossessed of its overlooking (*surplombant)* top-down universal claim, first to the benefit of the king, later to the benefit of the constitutive "people" and of the nation, embodied in a state. The Dalits, however, do not fight for a state, but for inclusion.

In India, the Dalits demand modern civic equality, justice and their own subjectifying "empowerment", and they get it. Likewise in other Asian countries[9]. Since the thirties of the 20th century, in the projects of independence of a still British India, the question of *universalism or of separate constituencies for separate electorates* and communities was posed. The British legacy offered the latter option, abhorred by Mahatma Gandhi, and problematic in many ways. Another father of the nation, Ambedkar, later author of the *Constitution*, wished it for the masses of "untouchable" *Harijans*, but failed to obtain it. He wanted positive discrimination (again, a problematic instrument but often useful politically for a certain time) in favour of the most vulnerable. In the fifties, shortly before his death, Dr. Ambedkar publicly converted to Buddhism with several hundred Dalits. Buddhism is supposed to be the "religion" which prohibits discrimination. The political careers of Buddhism begun in India were also pursued elsewhere in Asia, whatever the judgment on their success[10]. This stage is parallel to the *fourth turning* point of

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[8]   Partha CHATTERJEE, *Lineages of Political Society. Studies in Postcolonial Democracy*, Columbia UP, New York 2011; *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, Columbia UP, New York 2004.

[9]   Vietnam, Burma (Myanmar), Tibet (including Tibetans in exile in India and elsewhere), Thailand, Cambodia and other countries have regularly been the theatre of a political enacting, display as well as instrumentalising of Buddhism in the 20th century.

[10] Dr   B.R.   AMBEDKAR,   *The   Buddha   and   his   Dhamma,*   (1965),   http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/ambedkar_buddha/index.html   accessed   on August 9, 2013; Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of caste,* Delhi, Critical Quest 2007, also: "Annihilation of caste", http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/02.Annihilation%20of%20Caste.htm; Pankaj MISHRA, *An End to Suffering. The Buddha in the World*, London, Picador 2004. On Ambedkar and the Dalits' politics of the Congress Party, see Perry Anderson's *The Indian Ideology*, The Three Essays Collective, Gurgaon (Haryana) 2012.

Buddhism[11], namely the late spread of Buddhism towards the west, although the latter cannot compare, by its magnitude, with its ancient conquest of vast areas in East Asia.

This fourth movement of Buddhism, also in the twentieth century (and in some form since early Romanticism), is more diffuse: it is the belated **journey of Buddhisms towards the west** and their taking root, mainly as *yoga*, alternative therapies and alternative civilisational choices or political options, linked with anti-war, ecological movements etc. This corresponds on the one hand to a certain idealization of the "east" and, especially, to the important and now verifiable failures of colonization, imperialism, international aid, humanitarian efforts, conversion to "democracy"[12] by the force of arms and exporting western models, as well as by the general disenchantment with contemporary capitalism. Certainly, in the wake, other religions of Asia and elsewhere followed. Along with this transfer of "oriental wisdom", there is, in the opposite direction, the rejection of the same "oriental wisdom", on the basis already described of a supposed western superiority[13]. Within Asia, Buddhism remained to a great extent in principle pervaded by active politics of peace and resistance, but contrary examples are not rare: see Burma or Thailand today, or the misuse of Buddhism in Japanese Asian imperialism in the 20th century.

Early Indian Buddhism is a thought of de-sovereignty, de-subjectivation, anti ritualism. It is a philosophy of non-adherence, of de-bonding, divorce and de-parenting, dismissing sedentary life at home. A thought of de-brahminisation and of the denial of the authority of the *Veda*, rejecting received truths, refuting doctrinaire disciplines and brahmin's knowledge, it is also a thought intent on *defusing*. It is a psychological line of minding detachment, disinterestedness, one of yielding, demobilization and uprooting. A philosophy of renunciation, of linguistic scepticism, of de-standardization of the language[14]. There is no supreme authority, no identity, only their fictions and their narrations, which, by the way, appear quite regularly in Buddhist literature. Early Buddhism knows of no transcendence and exemplifies a general aversion to absolute transcendence in Asia, probably because Asia didn't develop monotheisms[15]. Attachment is considered to be innate and harmful. It comes with life. We must learn to discard it. This waiver, this de-identification is neither demoralization nor a disconnection. Instead, it gives rise to *karuṇā*, empathy to the suffering through equality before death. No arrogance is legitimate. The activity of thinking (philosophy) is not alienated from the personal quest of the human (male or female). It is a way of life.

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[11]   R. IVEKOVIĆ, *L'éloquence tempérée du Bouddha. Souverainetés et dépossession de soi, op. cit.* The four turning points i describe are: 1) the linguistic turn in the appearance of Buddhism itself, 2) the theoretical turn with Nāgārjuna, 3) the political turn (20 century), 4) the contemplative turn, backlash of decolonization (p. 65).

[12]   Tomaž MASTNAK, « Le retour du peuple ; "The Return of the people", *Transeuropéennes*, february 18, 2011, http://www.transeuropeennes.eu/en/articles/244

[13]   In rejecting doctrines coming from the "east" there is convergence between the first depreciation of any speculation inherent in the linguistic turn of early Buddhism *and* the fact that these philosophies postulate that there is no subject, that they do not theorize the split between subject and object or between theory and practice, which serve as a welcome pretext; but there is also the later cleavage operated by western modernity, that inhabited the colonial enterprise and constructed our knowledge.

[14]   "Buddhist" sanskrit rather than standardized and classical sanskrit; resorting to *pāli*.

[15]   Prasenjit Duara, *Transcendence in a Secular World: Sustainable Modernity and the Asian Traditions*. Forthcoming. I thank Prasenjit Duara for letting me read the chapters as he was writing them in 2013.

The way of Buddha is a middle path, that of moderation. His *acosmism* shuns from spatial imaginaries and representation in early teaching, although ultimately Budhhism will develop them. Well into *Mādhyamika*, one shall avoid being assertive. The Buddha, who deeply opposed the brahmins, did not revolt: it is much more a kind of "passive revolution" - a choice of civilization, of sensitivity, a cultural, psychological, cognitive and spiritual transformation. A shift of horizon, an upheaval. His "revolution" is carried out through slow individual endeavour, through teaching, proposed organisation and the doing of the *saṅgha*, through "cultural" reforms rather than direct social action, in the beginning. The *saṅgha* becomes a bubble within society, with no sovereignty project (which may be one of the reasons of Buddhism's later eradication - instituted Buddhism, not Buddhist cultural practices - from the subcontinent.

Buddha's "anti-philosophy" or the radical and anti-rhetorical thinking are incredibly effective[16] in their reversal of the paradox of trust in the language: language is not to be trusted. It shows an obvious linguistic modesty and restraint. No inflation of words. The double negation (that regarding the relativity of language and of one's own status - no *ātman*) as a barred (obstructed) rhetoric has an unexpected and paradoxical power of persuasion. It is not part of the brahmanic mechanisms of power through language and through transmitted truth – i.e. it is not set up and given in advance in a book-world (*Veda*). The power of the Buddha's word and of Buddhism (if any) endeavours to be detached from its source, non-instituted, and located in what one will do in the future; it is pure potentiality. Not a sovereign self-founded power mapping a territory, but power scattered or shared on the side of action also when in demobilization, and this without even the possibility of identifying the doer of the action. There is no subject, no representation.

That "the burden has no bearer", does not make it less cumbersome to carry! As much as there is no path, since treading it makes the path. The Buddha makes no statement about the ontological status of the self or the world and is adverse to ontological assertions or metaphysical conjecture. Rather than denying, he avoids. He shifts the focus from ontology and metaphysics to epistemology and psychology, that is to say towards cognition, mental processes and language, and this because these can inform the way to existential issues. Only the latter attracted his attention while referring to inner experience[17]. However, the concept of *anātman* first applies generally to all *dharmas* that uphold the world (√*dhṛ*) (all things, elements or phenomena, one of which is *ātman*) – which in that way have no special status but appear in the cognitive process. *Everything* is bereft of *ātman*, without "self" since, according to the conditioned becoming (or dependent origination), nothing is independent. This does not imply non-being any more than being: *things are other than being or not being*, or are not in the perception or in the non-perception of the unsuitability of these terms. Thus *śūnya*, beyond its primary meaning of "zero" (neutral, between negative and positive values), will become "non-being" in some schools of Mahāyāna only much later and as Buddhism spreads over East Asia. But *anātman* concerns both the subjective and the objective side or rather, operates in a world that is not split by reflection. A misunderstanding, whose origins lay, for the Buddha, in the incompleteness of language, has shifted, with Mahāyāna, to the "conventional" truth. Language traps await at the level of conventional truth, since two levels of knowledge have been imagined.

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[16] "Indian" Buddhism survived its founder for a thousand years. The Buddhism found in the subcontinent nowadays is the new political Buddhism reintroduced by the "wretched of the earth" in the 20th century.

[17] In this sense Buddhism can be called "non realistic": Sue HAMILTON, *Indian Philosophy. A Very Short Introduction*, OUP, Oxford, 2001, p. 93; the overturning of this pluralistic non realism in various comments on the *Abhidharma-pitaka* represents a turning point in Mahāyāna as well (towards a paradoxically more and more monistic « realism »; already Nāgārjuna will critique the ontological pluralism – unwillingly ontological? – of the Buddha) compared to early Buddhism and to Hīnayāna. But only Mahāyāna will be able to deploy itself in Asia with a universalising claim and will therefore be useful in politics.

Globalization reveals among other things (an) entropy of certain ways of doing or thinking. It consists in that the "west" starting from Europe, has willed itself both as a part of the world *and* as the "whole"[18], both participating in the game *and* setting the rules. But this paradigm - that of the *différend*[19] - is itself paradoxical since it is undone by acting itself out. We have a case of *différend* when what one says (an experience, a feeling etc.) has no sense in the discourse regime of the other, the one who sets the rules of the game. Obviously, this reaches quite beyond "mere" language. It confirms, in a rhetorical way, the inner functioning of power dynamics through language in *saying* (i.e. acting) and not in *what* is said. That is why overcoming the epistemological node, the one of a necessary postcolonial critique, is still to be put together[20]. It can be encouraged by a way of thinking that does not split reason into subject and object. Because *the asymmetry produces sense* (some kind of sense) in spite of the inequality it displays, the construction of a wholesome and independent self-image does not come spontaneously. It is conditioned in many ways. The west, now everywhere, is not to be found in the general fragmentation: it becomes "the west". *The quotes acquire meaning.*

This observation may lead to different and conflicting policies and spatial imaginaries. There is massive evidence of other ways of configuring the power-knowledge-language relationships, such as in India, China, Africa, Latin America, the Pacific and elsewhere. The orientalist approach sees them as lesser manifestations of a "tradition", an "exception", "historical backwardness" or "premodernity" comparing to an unquestionable standard that has been rendered ahistorical and ubiquitous by globalization. While orientalism shows in this way its limitations, the postcolonial approach itself is not sufficient any more to account for the multiple globalizations and alternative disjunctive modernities, and even less for the coexisting, independent, "conjunctive" modernities now evident. The designated exception (as apolitical, as belated, as barbarism to "civilize"), has surreptitiously become *constitutive of the standard* from which it represented the gap and the exception.

The ancient philosophies of Asia are originally to a great extent practical and therapeutic in the best sense, and continue being so when extended today. This has a bearing on politics and social attitudes too. In all "Indian" philosophy, discipline or knowledge, there is always some *yoga*: a practical branch of exercises, considered more important than the "theory". The hierarchy between "practice" and "theory" (a "western" and modern distinction) does not appear and makes no sense in this context. So is traditionally the case elsewhere in Asia, where practice and experience are primary. Although there is elitist hegemonic knowledge in Asia too (brahmins, mandarins etc.), there is no sacralisation of "theory" with the pretence of overlooking knowledge being its own rational and self-referential criteria (except indeed with the brahmanic orientation of the *mīmāṃsa* philosophical and hermeneutical school). In most (though by no means all) schools, both practice and theory together must lead to deliverance, to overcoming and eventually to silence.

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[18]   Jacques DERRIDA, *L'Autre cap*, Minuit, Paris 1991; Etienne BALIBAR, *La proposition de l'égaliberté. Essais politique 1989-2009,* PUF, Paris 2010.

[19]   Jean-François LYOTARD, *Le Différend*, Minuit, Paris 1983.

[20]   Boaventura de SOUSA SANTOS, *Para um novo senso comum (vol. 1) : A crítica da razão indolente. Contra o desperdício da experiência*, Cortez, São Paulo 2000. Gayatri CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK, *The Critique of postcolonial reason. Towards the History of the Vanishing Present,* Harvard UP 1999. *From Orientalism to Postcolonialism: Asia, Europe and the Lineages of Difference*, ed. by Sucheta MAZUMDAR, Vasant KAIWAR, Thierry LABICA, Routledge, London 2010.

The question is to understand how to combine this desired silence with modern ideals of freedom that have made their way. We see both the quest for silence and that for freedom everywhere in Asia from olden times till today, and in this way resistance to modernity too, while at the same time a type of hyper-modernity is readily embraced. All options are available. Do Asian philosophies preach social indifference and political inactivity then? Contrary to what may be expected, they generally managed to equip themselves with reformist and revolutionary ideas, to adapt and produce the political. If one believes that the political has no origin outside western history, then one must assume that it appears "miraculously" in non-western contexts. *But the political is the mentioned ambivalence itself* – that of the political, by which indeed all options coexist, inherent in social life and in language, in all relationships. It has never been imported from the west, except for the name. It has been there all along as a *feature of human societies* as such, in the paradoxes revealed by all Asian "religions" from ancient times until today.

THEORY, PRACTICE AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL DISPLACEMENT

The relationship between "theory" and "practice" evolves through a differently conflictual form than the dialectical "western" mode of this rapport. The latter takes place in conditions of a direct *objectal* relation between subject and object. This subtracts any other access from the theoretical observation. The preoccupation with the subject and subjectivation, specific to "Europe" and the "west" / "north", *related to monotheism*, appears historically as a western particularity, and becomes universally pervasive. But there are originally no comparable monotheisms in Asia (except in Western Asia and Asia Minor and elsewhere, not counting a late coming Islam). Something of the mahayanian Buddhist philosophy can be extrapolated, relatively speaking, to most philosophies of Asia: the subject-object relationship is part of the experiential, conventional truth, limited by language. It is part of our way of perceiving the world that presents itself to us as plurality. *But rather than on the subject, Buddhism is attentive to life, life not even human by definition*. In this context, *karma* means co-responsibility, solidarity with all forms of life, and inner transmission within a community through mechanisms of moderate immunisation. It means bearing the other within oneself, and inclusiveness. It is not to negate the splendid etymology of *karma* from the verb √*kṛ*, to do, to act physically or materially. Yet the "ultimate truth", which is not normally accessible to the language or to direct empirical experience, reveals the uniqueness-void beyond the pluralistic realism, which is *śūnya*, "nil", which is, that is, *ontologically unqualifiable*.

The brahmanists, who resorted to the absolute, as well as the philosophically finer mādhyamika Buddhists, both refused to build separately such concepts as "subject" or "object". This is the *advaita*, non-dualist, element in both. This must be seen as a permanent and pretty widespread Asian heritage, not a thing of the past or of Buddhism alone. It is decisive even today and present in art, literature, aesthetics, forms of life and general culture. Such a distinction (subject-object) would be part of an *appropriating* conceptual and language apparatus that always have the tendency to pop up; and part of a mental activity limited and burdened by the *vital interest*. Buddhism and other Asian thought systems have tried to cultivate and civilise this greedy vital interest, in the sense in which Etienne Balibar[21] proposes that violence should be civilised, tamed, but cannot be eliminated once for good. Certainly, this appropriating leaning is there in the human and perhaps in life, and it nowadays operates especially in the excessive importance of market economic priorities gone loose (late capitalism). But experience and "practice" can outweigh any ontological consideration, which is only an attribution, a random predication to a particular reified object. The implications of *śūnya-*

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[21]   BALIBAR, *Violence and Civility: And Other Essays on Political Philosophy (The Wellek Library Lectures)*, New York, Columbia UP, transl. by James Swenson (French original Galilée, 2010).

vāda (the teaching of naught) are even more radical: this "theory" (*śūnya-vāda,* sometimes called "nihilism", though it is a bad translation) is actually an *anti-theory invalidating in advance* by a ruthless logic any economic reason, material interests, selfish vital interests, any speculation trusting language and reason or daring ontological qualifications and metaphysical judgments.

Generally and beyond Buddhism, "Indian" philosophies of *advaita* ("non dualism") avoid the dichotomous segmentation of the human scene by the subject-object opposition or the postulation of a theoretical off-screen, and so do Chinese philosophies too. They, as well as other Asian "religions" such as Taoism or Confucianism, provide in principle the possibility of eschewing any economic reason or financial capital priorities, and represent potentially an alternative civilisational choice. The fact that there is no concept of the subject not only in ancient Indian or Chinese philosophies but in much of people's general cultures today as well, can indicate and refer to the collective, the plural, to complexity, to the impersonal, as well as to forms of "premodern"[22] citizenship. The latter result from the non self-centeredness, from the priority given to the community rather than individuals even regardless any claim of "tradition", from the priority of life over that of humanity in a great deal of Asia. As for the western concept of citizenship, it requires to be revised and broadened and could be so partly along some of these readily available lines.

In Buddhism, there is no subjectivity, no *ātman* (self), no sovereignty, no absolute, no transcendence, no *Brahman*; there is no autonomy or freedom[23] either, because of the conditionality of these "states": none would exist in itself, each is relational - the subject and object, the absolute and the relative, the *brahman* and the *ātman* etc. In addition, in schools of philosophy willing to consider the subject, the latter does not seem to take a "political" dimension according to the criteria of western modernity, or so we are told, and the sovereignty in question does not necessarily refer to the state. But even Brahmanism as well as Hinduism abhor and avoid a notion of the subject and this is the case also within much of the popular culture. The continuity in these matters is obvious and has been maintained from its basis in the past.

According to an ancient Indian approach inherent in various schools, and later by a Kashmiri school known as that of "recognition", *pratyabhijñā*, one always starts by including the opponent's teaching in the presentation of an argument, then by exceeding it through traversing it, in a way that assimilates it while heading beyond; the opponent's argument is deconstructed through a kind of "absorption". Not so long ago, the philosopher Kalidas Bhattacharya, even more than his philosopher father Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya, defended the maintenance of alternative positions in philosophy and emphasized the need and moral sense to put oneself in the shoes of the other in philosophy. This recalls the seven-pronged Jaina logic and the Buddhist reasoning of the four possibilities, *catur-koṭi*. K-C. Bhattacharya[24], a very fine thinker, spoke of freedom as "subject", where the subject expands or dissolves in the outcome, having obtained sovereignty and by the

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[22] Although called "premodern" or "traditional" from a hegemonic point of view, they are not necessarily so. On the contrary, they are a chance for alternatives.

[23] Or conditioned freedom – a *cognitive condition*, of course.

[24] Krishna Chandra BHATTACHARYA (1875-1969), *Studies in Vedantism*, Whitefish (MT), Kessinger Publ. 2008. Kalidas BHATTACHARYA, "Sachin Ganguly as I knew him", in *Communication, Identity and Self-Expression. Essays in Memory of S.N. Ganguly*, ed. by S.P. BANERJEE & Shefali MOITRA, OUP, Delhi 1984*, p. 2. K. BHATTACHARYA, "Different Notions of Freedom Compared and Evaluated", *ibid.,* pp. 101-116; *Alternative Standpoints in Philosophy*, Das Gupta & Co. Ltd., Calcutta 1953; Shefali MOITRA, "Alternative Standpoints: At the Foundation and Culmination of Kalidas Bhattacharyya's Philosophy", in *Freedom, Transcendence and Identity. Essays in Memory of Professor Kalidas Bhattacharyya*, ed. by P.K. SENGUPTA, ICPhR & M. Banarsidass, New Delhi 1988, pp. 1-14.

same token release from the world. If this does not deny the subject, it is in any case its profound relativisation: its coming about means its disappearance. The non-subject stance is legitimate today in Indian and in Chinese great "religions", and in China it has even been culturally maintained through such tumultuous times of erstwhile official Marxism as well as throughout the Cultural Revolution. One could say that it is still there in Chinese nationalism today in a way, in its impersonal and collective dimension.

The question of the status of the subject is a huge problem in the eyes of "continental" philosophy when it comes to evaluating Asian philosophies. It is (wrongly) believed that a philosophy cannot be without a concept of the subject, and also that without the subject, a philosophy or even its place of origin cannot be seen as having a political dimension. It is also a problem of "translation" between the philosophies "western" and "Asian" because of their different histories. *Inter-con-textuality* is the ambiguous space of translation, which needs to be widened. While it is certain that many of the great philosophies of Asia (Buddhism, Brahmanism, Taoism, Confucianism) avoid building an ontologically self-based concept, it is also true that Indian philosophies conceive philosophical alternatives that show the *history of a purposeful bypassing* through a sort of "reversed image" (*en creux*) of the subject around the *possibility/absence* of such a concept.

The concept itself ("subject") is thinkable yet avoided in "Asian" philosophies, "weakened" in anticipation, and not named. "The Asians" have not fared worse without it in philosophy than "the Westerners" have with it, but translating from one system to the other remains difficult – over the many blind spots. The Buddhist "carrier of the burden", "the thinker of the thought," the *bhoktṛ* ("participant", "recipient", "enjoyer[25]") of Kashmiri aesthetics, the concept of ego (*aham*), and even the *ātman* (the self) rejected by Buddhists, clearly show the "barred" area. That area is not simply absent, is it present *as* absence. Some translate it downright as "subject", because it attributes to itself sovereignty in some tantric schools, because it can be *pati* ("master" and "husband"), and is endowed with power (might; *puissance*; *śakti*). Of course, a subject on condition it is, and in a singular historical context. The Buddhist non-self, and the general malaise in ancient as well as modern Asia in the face of concepts of "me", "I", "self", personal identity, "subject", reappears at all times, including when the modern political subjectivities (as it is the case in India, in South Korea or elsewhere) and the ideas of nation and sovereignty have become operative.

Taoism and Confucianism likewise sketch a "hologram" of the subject, as a "negative" in the old photographic sense. It is expressed among other things in the culture of extreme courtesy in East Asia. In "Forgetting to Remember," Ashley Thompson recounts her puzzlement over the drawing by a young boy in a refugee camp after the Khmer Rouge terror, who had no experience of outdoor life: how had he been able to imagine the excitement of the escape in a horse race, he who had never seen or known that animal or freedom, she wondered? But the boy's ideal was different. The Buddha himself had fled his family to a release that would bring him not a positive freedom in a world to master, but liberation from servitude through the unveiling of a non-self.

"Sovereignty", in philosophical systems that do not rely on a monotheistic cultural background, then, - and in our case "Asian" sovereignties, are in any case neither monotheistic nor regal or imperial in origin, and will not necessarily have their implementation in the state form. Certainly, there has always been an imperial sovereignty in China with complex territorial borders, but the three great "religions" have always tempered and *relativised* it through willingly not constructing the corresponding concept of a "subject". The legacy of the Middle Kingdom is spread through other

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[25] *Bhoktṛ* is the "enjoyer", "the one who profits", "participant", from the sanskrit verb √*bhuj*, to enjoy (something), utilize, profit, possess, participate, share, particularly enjoying a meal, a drink or a bodily relationship; to consume, eat and drink.

channels[26]. In what are South Asia and South East Asia today, there have often been states and statelets, city states, agrarian kingdoms and maritime trade polities, "republics" and even empires of diverse fates and duration with which Buddhist orders often sought alliances. But "western" philosophies have never identified a political dimension in the "Asian" ones, although they could have done so through a different translation grid, and have until recently considered them premodern. *The political is prescriptive in the hegemony it installs*.

The brahmanic philosophy of Abhinavagupta is considered as aesthetics by the "west"[27], never as political. Aesthetics *retrieves itself* more than other genres from seizure by modern sciences that serve rationalization in collusion with the market and the state. Transcendence or the absolute advocated by the school of "recognition" refer to the first person (without substantiation, necessarily always unverifiable as any singularity[28]) and are therefore non-standard or represent transgression. They do not report any heteronomous sovereignty. They are after all Tantrism, schools "of the left hand" and all that is internally against the grain within Brahmanism. Freedom obtained by immersion in the absolute, looping the loop, cancels paradoxically, without having fulfilled or substantiated her, the one it releases. If there is autonomy, it is relative and a process. It is relationality[29]. If there is a subject, it will be "decreasing". So there is "de-foundation" or "destitution" (opposite of constitution) of that of which the "foundation" was already the support - support of the *living* consciousness. As in Buddhism, so in this school of Kashmiri aesthetics, de-foundation requires a process, training, and is not simply switching to another dimension or another world pattern. The comparable "de-link", Walter Mignolo's "de-colonial", without related *yoga,* has a cognitive aspect to it. The latter blames its aspect of political and practical realization, a weak point of Mignolo's theory[30], but it nevertheless opens important questions. As for the older Buddhist ideal of the *cakravartin* (a "wheel-turner" or a universal ruler), the latter is supposed to reign over a boundless world, while the ancient king mentioned in the *Upanišads* who performs the *aśvamedha* (the horse sacrifice) is expected to establish a territorially limited state, but sustained by powerful cosmic forces. Both are ideal and strongly symbolic figures with little correspondence to reality although the *aśvamedha* was really performed – as a performative project indeed. The *cakravartin's* sovereignty is universal and also spiritual.

Buddhism represents in "India" and elsewhere on the continent one of several options, which have toured Asia and eventually the world. It is the one that has held for ten centuries in the subcontinent. Can we learn from its delayed fazing out in India, as well as from its political afterlife in independence?[31] The movement of Buddhist teachers, students and translators from "India" from

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[26]   François JULLIEN, *Les transformations silencieuses (Chantiers I)*, Grasset&Fasquelle, Paris 2009, eand other work by the author.

[27]   ABHINAVAGUPTA (X^e-XIe century of the common era), Kashmiri philosopher of the school of *pratiabhijñā* or "recognition", in the framework of shaivism; R. Iveković, *Orients : Critique de la raison postmoderne*, Eds. Blandin, Paris 1992.

[28]   Gayatri CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK, "Speaking for the Humanities." Occasion: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities 1, no. (October 15, 2009), http://occasion.stanford.edu/node/19.   direct: http://occasion.stanford.edu/journals/occasion/articles/speaking-humanities-by-gayatri-chakravorty-spivak

[29]   BALIBAR, *Proposition de l'égaliberté*, *cit.*

[30]   *Walter MIGNOLO,* Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, Routledge 2009; W. Mignolo, "Géopolitique de la connaissance, colonialité du pouvoir et différence coloniale", in* Multitudes *6, 2011, http://multitudes.samizdat.net/Geopolitique-de-la-connaissance.html , sept. 2001.*

[31]   Čedomil VELJAČIĆ, *Razmeđa azijskih filozofija*, Vol. 1&2, Liber, Zagreb 1978; Kancha ILAIAH, *Why I am not a Hindu. A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy. Culture and Political Economy*, Bhatkal & Sen, Kolkata 2001.

the fourth, seventh centuries on and until the eleventh century of the Common Era across Asia has created a large and complex Asiatic cultural space, relatively integrated. It was commonly imagined as a shared space, fashioning a "Buddhist" imagination across languages and across future national and state configurations. That too remains common Asian heritage, though not *all*-Asian and perhaps not seen as specifically Asian. Something of that subsists beyond Buddhism, although it does not amount to a common vision of Asia, and especially not to one where China and India fuse in any way.

Nevertheless historic Buddhism represented in "India" and before adapting to other conditions, *an alternative option to the "absolute translation" and to the "pure" and "seamless" language of hegemonic Brahmanism*. It is also a radical stance of non-sovereignty and non-subjectivation (more so than other schools of indic philosophies). Brahmanism never doubted a direct relationship between words and things, but the Buddhists did. Language, the vehicle of truth for the brahmanists, is distancing from any pretension of truth for the Buddhists. By expelling Buddhism (around the X-XI century it was institutionally, albeit not culturally, all done), Brahmanism was diluted in the abundant diversity of Hinduism. Evacuated by the brahmins and the casteist Hindus[32], Buddhism was represented as disreputable. It cultivated indecision and self-de-centring; and it underscored especially the lack of words to express the human condition - at the risk of abandoning a large slice of it to power passions which instrumentalise language: to the targeted hegemonic rhetoric, precisely. Buddhist ways were exported to China, South-East Asia, Tibet, Mongolia, Japan, and Korea and readily accepted as familiar and akin by Taoism and Confucianism, but also by other cultural configurations. Buddhism accepted thinking with no ultimate guarantee of truthfulness, without supreme or divine insurance, without the umbrella of sovereignty[33]. Like everyone else, "India" has experienced and made coexist those and a few other options.

Asian philosophies were particularly marked by pragmatism and by "therapeutic" approaches concerning what we call "the political", approaches that "western" philosophies have a hard time recognizing to others. It is perhaps not surprising that the seventies, which were in the west the years of civic movements, of the thawing of morals and of the rejection of the family and of social and political rigidity, were also those of the rediscovery of "India" by a certain "counterculture". Number of hippies took the road of the subcontinent in the post '68 euphoria. Had not the concept of politics of the time been reinvented by the revolution of western youth that rejected liberal individualism and sought a merger in the community and generational political enthusiasm? At the same time, anti-psychiatry, authors such as Deleuze and Guattari and other philosophers of difference, filmmakers and writers celebrated the displacement and deterritorialisation of the individual, the body without organs free from coercion, and transnationality[34]. Buddhism and other "Asian" philosophies were timely[35] and fitted well into this picture. For the European '68 generation, "India" and "Asia" had now become reversed positive images of the self that needed to be reformed[36]. Asian teachings were embraced. But there has been no Asian counter image of this

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[32] Not everyone within Hinduism or even Brahmanism is by definition a "casteist". Moreover, "brahmin" and "brahmanist" are not the same. The first are members of a social group, the second ideological followers of ideas attributed to the first, not necessarily brahmins themselves.

[33] This did not prevent it later from inventing one. Is it necessary to act in the world or is it better to withdraw?

[34] Claude ARNAUD, *Qu'as-tu fait de tes frères ?*, Grasset, Paris 2010.

[35] Frédéric LENOIR, *La Rencontre du Bouddhisme et de l'Occident*, Fayard, Paris 1999.

[36] But, as Ravi Arvind PALAT shows, they are not the same; "Is India part of Asia?", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 2002, vol. 20, pages 669-691.

picture, since there had been no special identification of the self with Asia in the east. Meanwhile, Asian exportable elites looked toward the USA, not toward Europe.

NO SELF, NO SOVEREIGNTY, NO THEORY[37]: A DELIBERATE CHOICE

Today, the planet is globalized. In countries like India and China, the local philosophies and "religions" have always traversed and encompassed each other, or been complementary. Born out of a reaction to Brahmanism, Buddhism was subsequently absorbed as subordinate into Hinduism. It then coexisted with both Confucianism and Taoism in China, not contradicting them particularly (not as much as it had Brahmanism-Hinduism in India). There is a long history of absorption and adapting of differences (thereby creating complex and interrelated hierarchies), rather than outright exclusion, in most of Asia. The real question is not so much to know how Asian philosophical culture deals with the encounter with the west: for one thing, people are not prisoners within one tradition. Rather, they are informed and traversed by different traditions and influences, exposed to multiple heritages and genealogies of ideas. Everyone has by now been exposed to the west in many colonial, postcolonial and other ways, because the "west" is not located in the geographical west any more, but is everywhere, including in Asia.

In that sense, the west has migrated to the "west" ("meaningful quotes"). When relating to the west therefore, Asian thinkers do not relate to an outside, since they too belong to the now temporal "west". Asians share western culture more then westerners have historically shared Asian cultures, although the latter is and will be more and more the case in the future, as Asian hegemonies prevail. *That "outside" (the west) has definitively become a constitutive part of Asia's "inside"*[38], not withstanding many historical conflicts of course, but quite across and beyond them. And there is another important point, studied extensively by Naoki Sakai and others, especially regarding East Asia: in order to deal with an encounter with the other, you need to have already constructed the dichotomy "us"-"them". But, as Sakai convincingly shows[39], (east) Asians ignore that they are supposed to be those others, or do not relate to the idea that they are seen as such. In countries (or rather, within social strata) with a heavier anticolonial history (India), this may be different, but even there, foreign rulers and influences have historically been accepted over reconstructed or consecutive empires (the Mughals, the British) and rulers. This may also be one of the reasons why and how Asia so readily engaged in globalization and adopted many foreign mores as its own. The encounter with the west is also the encounter with oneself in a mirror and with the other in oneself. Asia was a mirror creation but also an induced creation by Asians themselves, through a double bind and ambiguous western mediation.

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[37] Clearly, the third "no" has a different status than the previous two: while no-self is explicitly asserted in early Buddhism, and no-sovereignty can be inferred from it through "western" political lenses, "no-theory" would be a UFO in "Indian" terms, where the split between theory and practice is not acknowledged and has purposely not been constructed. The non-existence of this split in ancient Asian philosophies (exemplified in my work mainly through Buddhism, but existing elsewhere too) is very much one of my own main deductions and contentions.

[38] Fethi BENSLAMA, *Une fiction troublante. De l'origine en partage*, Eds de l'Aube, Paris 1994.

[39] Naoki SAKAI, "Theory and Asian Humanity: on the question of humanitas and anthropos", *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 13, n. 4, pp.441-464, 2010; "Theory and the West: On the Question of Humanitas and Anthropos", *Transeuropéennes*, august 2011, http://www.transeuropeennes.eu/en/articles/316/Theory_and_the_West/Sakai; "Le genre, enjeu politique et langage du nationalisme post-colonial japonais", *Cahiers du genre*, n. 50, 2011/1, pp. 41-64.

But aside from that, it seems likely that the ancient and partly still living "intellectual 'religions'" of Asia such as Buddhism[40], if taken into account[41], could foresee solutions allowing for a less violent integration of Asian countries to their contemporary historical role, though there would be no guarantee for this - just a possibility. The whole of Asia is imbued with the sense of *anachronism of being* expressed so accurately and so exquisitely in Buddhism[42], but shared by other philosophies too. It is at least part of the resistance to be identified by the common denomination of Asia. None of these representations are anthropocentric. Some *alternative modernities* have maintained, even as they excel in globalisation, their attachment to a non anthropocentric universe, one not privileging the (human) subject, one of a non competitive and "demobilizing" universe, one that is not perceived as "political" from the point of view of globalized western modernity.

As shown by Sakai, theory is generally denied to Asia, while Europe is considered an epistemological and theoretical territory. This belief is a feature of western modernity. The issue is historically complicated by the Asian deliberate predilection not to sacralise theory, by the primacy of practice, yoga, as well as by the way of "testing" knowledge pragmatically against experience. There are many consequences to this situation, including political ones and such that nourish imagination and the construction of hegemonic knowledge. According to Sakai, while westerners arrogate the *humanitas*[43] as theirs *and* universal, they study the Asian as *anthropos,* or as particular[44], whereby "others" find themselves in the objectal position. Walter Mignolo uses the same example: "others" are *anthropoi:* "Border thinking is, in other words, the thinking of us, the *anthropoi,* who do not aspire to become *humanitas,* because it was the enunciation of the *humanitas* that made us *anthropoi*. We delink from the *humanitas*, we become epistemically disobedient, and think and do decolonially, dwelling and thinking in the borders of local histories confronting global designs.[45]"

The international as well as the "transnational" order feeds national and nationalist programmes. In Asia, "Indian" history is different, but at least China has a long history of central government - the Middle Kingdom, without a self-referential system. This unity was maintained by a system of patronage, clientelism, by the common script, interdependencies and taxation related to the central "vacuum" represented by the Emperor. It was restructured with the imposition of a generalized international order spreading colonialism as well as national sovereignties. And the Opium Wars

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[40] Buddhism plays a singular role in "cultural" globalizations, and develops special and long-lasting transnational imaginaries. Initially, these were not spatially defined. Despite contacts with the Mediterranean and with Europe since antiquity as well as later with the Muslim world, on the one hand Buddhism doesn't spread westward beyond Bamiyan and Bactria before the twentieth century. And, on the other, an onirical, imagined "west" shall be, without any historical reference, correspondence or experience, the fictional place where the "pure lands'" paradisiacal utopia of Mahāyāna will be located, unaccompanied by attempts to export, and possibly prohibited by the fixed imagination from any further exploration. "Pure lands" are located in an imaginary west, which is not investigated, lest the magic disappear. Such imaginary west is the absolute or transcendent "other" of our world, east and west included. A radical elsewhere though unreal, a Utopia of sorts. Geographic east and west are not an operational opposition, and there is a long tradition, since at least the philosopher Nāgārjuna at the beginning of the CE, of deconstructing binaries.

[41] Of the probability of this on can unfortunately not be sure.

[42] Yasuo KOBAYASHI, *Le Cœur/La Mort : De l'anachronisme de l'Être*, Collection UTCP 4, Université de Tokyo, Tokyo 2007.

[43] Sakai, « Theory and Asian Humanity », *op. cit.*

[44] A. CAILLE, M. HUMBERT, S. LATOUCHE, P. VIVERET, *De la convivialité*, La Découverte, Paris 2011.

[45] Mignolo, "Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing. On (De)Coloniality, Border Thinking, and Epistemic Disobedience", http://eipcp.net/transversal/0112/mignolo/en, october 2011.

(1839 to 1860, and sequels) in the name of "free trade" ushered both India and China into the capitalist world market[46] by making them capitulate economically. This is the era of nations and of the global market. National sovereignty, imposed and adopted, though diversely, and in a variety of forms everywhere, first through colonialism and then by the resistant, would introduce a long sequence of volatile international law unfavourable to the colonized even after independence[47].

It is at this point - of western modernity being expanded through a diversely violent and multiple historic process - that the western *imaginaire* of distinct entities Europe" ("us", "civilized") and "Asia" ("them", "to be governed and civilized") was consolidated, legitimizing the global enterprise of "free trade". The latter reduced the idea of freedom to that, long-lasting with hegemonic countries, of the freedom of capital. One of the many abyssal lines was thus inscribed in the phobic and phantasmatic cartography of the geographically common continent. Asians and Asia were objectified without getting access to the rules of the game set by Europe (rules that were therefrom themselves globalised), which is also why, as Sakai and others have shown, Asia's inhabitants could have no sense of being the "others", of being "Asians". The construction of an abyssal line includes the imposed invisibility of its mechanism – a blind spot covering the too obvious to be seen. A pernicious identification logic was thus introduced through an imposed epistemological system (imposed through the universalisation of the rules of the game), which was then corollary to how the "nation" will be constructed[48].

Indeed, the new nations arising in colonies were both a reaction and defence against the ruling colonial nation and its state, as well as an authentic and lived identity constructed out of an internalized need. The Subaltern Studies scholars elaborated the well-known double-track critique of this double-bind situation in the eighties of the last century. So nation-building, in its reactive aspect, was also part of the larger process of Asia being constructed as one of Europe's important others. While "not being aware" that they are Asians distinct from Europeans, and while not entertaining the idea of a radical split between the two, Asians have constructed their own nations in relation to the state of international affairs and of colonial cartography. The historian Jie-Hun Lim has showed how, in spite of that, they have repeated the same technologies of "othering" that had been at work in the process of western colonial policies: through building antagonistic identities and essentialising them, through producing racial hierarchies that were to justify conquest, through subsumed inclusions, through exclusions and dehumanising methods, through "orientalising" the other nation(s) in order to legitimize the appropriation of their territories, colonization and exploitation.

Lim writes: "Eurocentrism is reinforced by the clichéd, geographically positivistic concept of East and West, and of Asia and Europe. But neither Europe nor Asia is a positivistic concept. Neither is geographically fixed. The 'strategic location' of each is always in flux in historical discourse. Both are relational concepts that have their own significance only when they are co-figured in the discursive context of the 'problem space'. The 'problem space' of mass dictatorship[49] enables us to see the twentieth-century dictatorship not as the end-point of a particular path of the pre-modern, but as one of the normal paths of the modern, and ultimately to displace 'East' and 'West' as usable

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[46]   Amitav GHOSH, *The Sea of Poppies*, Penguin India, New Delhi 2008. The "west" is primarily Europe that, as it is being globalized, produces the western "Leviathan".

[47]   Bartolomé CLAVERO, "Conversación sobre Constitucionalismo y Cádiz", july 2012, http://clavero.derechosindigenas.org/archives/12299

[48]   Benedict ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities*, London, Verso 1991.

[49]   "Mass dictatorship" is a term of Lim's own coinage, designating historic situations in the 20th century, east or west, when entire populations have agreed to and collaborated with dictatorship out of conformism and cost-benefit (mis)calculations.

categories. The strategic location of interwar Germany, Italy and Russia as the 'problem space' of mass dictatorship is equivalent to a semi-periphery or to the 'East in the West'.[50]"

Such a construction of the other and such a configuration of the relationship to the other – whether east or west - require a corresponding structuring of knowledge, out of which they are produced and that they also reproduce: they require an epistemological system of appropriation, or knowledge that allows it, that legitimises it, and that justifies appropriation and predation. Such knowledge posits a split between subject and object. But as we hope to have shown, there is no separating subject and object or theory and practice in most of the great ancient Asian philosophical systems in general[51]. Something of that cognitive condition is still present and available culturally, coming up in various new assemblages, modernity, postmodernity and "western" hegemony not withstanding. What has been the condition of the western understanding of the relationship between sovereignty and subjectivity, namely – the separation between subject and object, body and mind, theory and practice, has been neither the condition of the making of politics or of the making of political subjects in the "rest" (of the world), nor that of sovereignty. Which means that whole genealogies of knowledge have been kept invisible and untranslated, indeed, apparently *untranslatable* to the hegemonic gaze when it deems "Asian" philosophies not up to the expectation of philosophy and non-European polities – as unpolitical. Sanjay Sarukkai rightly remarks that philosophy of science ignores Indian logic because the latter doesn't distinguish between the empirical and the formal, or indeed between theory and practice[52]:

> "There is much that can be discussed in the context of logic and science (Sarukkai[53]), but I will limit myself here to making one comment. Indian logic for long had not been accepted as 'logic' by most western scholars. One of the dominant reasons was that the description of inferences included empirical observations and was always in terms of cognitive states. Both these features meant, for modern logicians, that this analysis of inference had not moved away from psychologism. However this claim has been challenged on various grounds, but of relevance to science, it is not even that important. The fact that Indian logic does not make a 'formal' distinction between the empirical and the formal is important in the context of science since scientific methodology is primarily an attempt to integrate these two. Jain logic, which is a multi-valued logic, is also a useful tool to look at other ways of

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[50] Jie-Hyun LIM, "Mapping Mass Dictatorship : Towards a Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Dictatorship" and "Beyond the history of martyrdom**"**, Collection "À traduire", *Recueil Alexandries*, http://www.reseau-terra.eu/article1232.html; see by the same author "Displacing East and West. Towards a postcolonial reading of 'Ostforschung' and 'Myśl Zachodnia'", *Transeuropéennes* (2012), http://www.transeuropeennes.eu/en/articles/354/Displacing_East_and_West ;"The Antagonistic Complicity of Nationalisms – On "Nationalist Phenomenology" in East Asian History Textbooks" (manuscript).

[51] On this matter, see my parallel paper (2013) "Translation and national sovereignty. The fragility and bias of theory" for the journal *Translation*, issue on "Translation and national sovereignty", edited by Naoki Sakai and Sandro MEZZADRA, fothcomimg in 2013 or 2014, R.I.

[52] Sundar SARUKKAI, "Philosophical Implications of Connective History of Science", paper at the workshop "The Bright Dark Ages: Comparative and Connective Perspectives", organised at and by the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, 27-28 february 2013.

[53] Reference by Sarukkai: Sundar Sarukkai, *Indian Philosophy and Philosophy of Science*, New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 2005. References by the author in this paragraph are: J. Ganeri, B.K. Matilal, J.N. Mohanty. Elsewhere in these quotes, the author's references have been cut by me, R.I., because although important in their original context, they are not decisive for my argument. For my other comments on Sarukkai, see my paper mentioned in note 50 above.

understanding such logical structures. There is an intimate connection between Mill's methods and ideas of falsification in Indian logic. However, philosophy of science has continued to ignore the possibilities of these engagements (…)." (Sarukkai, p. 7)

The author here confirms our observation of the irrelevance of the distinction between "theory" and "practice" for "Indian" philosophies when he says that "Indian logic does not make a 'formal' distinction between the empirical and the formal". He further rightly invokes as one of the reasons for the rejection of Indian mathematics and Indian logic by western thought, the fact that "western" mathematics is, at a difference with Indian mathematics, permeated through and through by platonicism. Sarukkai thus confirms our claim that the (modern) separation between theory and practice is part of the hegemonic appropriative episteme. This hegemonic appropriative knowledge which necessarily feeds on the historically constructed cleavage subject-object, gets confirmation by its opposite in most of ancient Asian philosophies, namely by the constitutive rejection of a concept of the subject. Because of different and inflexible analytic registers, hegemonic appropriative philosophies remain blind to whatever is thought within the other system(s): there is mistranslation, or there are, under certain "regimes of sentences", "untranslatables" that respond to other, and incomprehensible regimes of sentences..

"Platonism is the most enduring story of mathematics. Traced back to Plato's theory of forms, Platonism has become the default theory for understanding mathematical entities. (…) But what is worthy of our attention is the absolute lack of Platonism in Indian mathematical thinking. There are no accounts of a metaphysics of numbers which demands a completely different ontological construction. On the contrary, mathematical entities are deeply grounded in the experiential world. Yet, there is a sense of mathematical truth which is present and accepted. After all, the most important contribution of zero and the decimal system came from these mathematicians. While one might tend to read a mystical metaphysics into the number zero – particularly in relation to śūnyavāda of the Buddhists – there is little evidence of it. Staal (2010) suggests that the idea of zero itself has origins in linguistics and thus arises as a way of making sense of language/sounds. If that is the case, not only do numbers arise only in the context of the world but even the number zero is one such. The example of the metaphysics of square root of 2 is another such example. While for the Pythagoreans, this number was metaphysically problematical, for the Indians the challenge was merely to calculate it since numbers were seen as integral parts of doing and building. Even the concept of proofs and how they were used in mathematical discourse suggests alternate possibilities of understanding mathematics. [F]or a large majority of scientists and mathematicians, Platonism seems to be an obvious fact of mathematics. Even the anti-platonic views in contemporary philosophy of mathematics do not see fit to draw upon the nature

of Indian and Chinese mathematics. (…) Part of the problem in understanding these terms lay in their ontology.[54]" (Sarukkai, p. 10)

Sarukkai once again corroborates the idea that "Indian" philosophies do not elaborate a split between theory and practice, but doesn't seem to see that this is a most important discovery. He further importantly argues that western mathematics are irreparably linked to platonicism, at a difference with Indian mathematics, which makes it impossible for the former to recognise the latter. From seeing the trees, Sarukkai doesn't see the forest! His claim about platonicism is extremely important: it implies the division between body and mind, theory and practice etc. It will become systemic and institutionalised through Christianity among others (actually, through monotheism in the first place) and further through the colonialism tinted episteme, and hence, through the grounding of state sovereignty and all these imply. It will pervade all spheres of life and culture, not only mathematics, so that understanding and deconstructing it will require social sciences, one step further from the history and philosophy of science because these two (as much as political philosophy) need to be questioned.

But "he who *thus* knows" was the formula referring to cognition in classical "Indian" philosophy, and significantly not "he who knows *this*". This means that the way of transmitting knowledge matters as much as, if not more, than its contents, and that *objectal* knowledge – comprising the extreme separation between subject and object – is avoided[55] in such philosophy. Since at least the end of the Cold War (1989), from the Nobel peace prize to Rigoberta Menchú (1992), the uprising in Chiapas (1994), the various versions of political ecology and the rise of emerging countries, since the turning points of 1989 for China and for India, a critique of Eurocentric modernity (and concomitant *coloniality*) re-examines the reductive context of the subject-object correlation, the dichotomies of nature-culture, body-soul, particular-universal, and theory and practice.

The severance between subject and object and eventually of theory and practice allows the general "commoditization" and the consequent at least partial, but often substantial *loss of the common good*. This makes available in its turn the quantification of relationships that supports sovereignty; such a separation proceeds through exclusion and violence[56]. It provides advantage for the

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[54] A curious and unexpected collateral remark by S. Sarukkai on language and translation appears here: "Consider the long debate on infinity and infinitesimals. Part of the problem in understanding these terms lay in their ontology. What did these terms really correspond to? In Kerala mathematics, the first ideas of calculus occur in terms of the descriptions of infinite series and approximations to these. Are these questions on the meaning of infinitesimals relevant to their constructions? I do not think so. They are purely a particular linguistic way of describing some specific actions and thus are expressed in their own ways. Another example is that of negative numbers. Mumford (2010) discusses in detail how the European mathematicians for long tried to reduce -1 into a description of positive entities whereas Indian and Chinese mathematicians had no problem centuries earlier to accept these numbers in their calculations. Such a view of negative numbers was extremely influential in the development of algebra including finding the solutions for indeterminate equations." So far Sarukkai, *ibid*. My comment (R.I.): It is astonishing indeed that Sarukkai should consider questions of language and translation so unimportant after all his work which shows the exact opposite, and after referring to the linguist George Lakoff! He speedily dismisses the language question (in relation to mathematics, that is true) in the last but one paragraph on the last page of his paper.

[55] This is evidently dawning upon the "west" as well as the west nowadays, as new ways of conserving, transmitting and creation of knowledge have appeared through the WWW and the compression of time and space on the planet.

[56] Ugo MATTEI, « The State, the Market, and some Preliminary Questions about the Commons », *op. cit.,* http://dupublicaucommun.blogspot.com/2011/03/contribution-dugo-mattei-pour-le-seance.html#more, 26 mars 2011.

entrenched and normative concept of "subject" and to the sacralisation of "theory", thus introducing a hierarchy of values that is sustained by dominant and hegemonic forms of knowledge especially since modernity. It allows for the alliance of forms of polity with ways of organising knowledge, as well as its shapes. The common denominator for both is predation configured through the coloniality of both power and knowledge. A possible critique of this arrangement does not seek transcendence, and will not be captured by the single point of search for alternative, local and dispersed modernities only. It is not restoration or compensation. As any choice to be made in history, this one is ambivalent, and must be judged on results. There is no guarantee for good choices.

A critique of such forms of knowledge necessarily goes towards some kind of transmodernity shared and plural. The latter would have to take into account the common ground ("the third included[57]"), common goods, as well as the fact of the *coloniality of knowledge and power*. Imaginaries and Utopia too belong to common goods in many ways. We are at a tipping point that is as much an opening as it is a blind spot, much as in any division (*partage*) of reason[58].

One important and philosophically technical points is that i distinguish between hegemonic knowledge, as predatory cognition forms, and knowledges (forms, contents, ways of transmission) that have been neglected or have not been counted in hegemonic knowledge. Regarding the hegemonic form of knowledge since the spread and globalisation of the "western" *episteme* model in modernity, it is important to understand that it relies on a constructed hierarchy of values through binaries, of which *one* has hardly been noticed in its naked form in critical philosophical literature. I would like to underscore it: it is the western modern normative distinction between *theory* and *practice*, which has actually been universalized and has been instrumental in rejecting all alternative forms/contents/ways of knowledge. The rejection includes Asian sciences and philosophies (as well as others, particularly those coming from colonised continents, as Africa or Latin America; but important here are also repressed local and inner knowledges in the "west" itself).

The theory/practice divide is systemic to the conceptual configuration where the other split obtains – that between subject and object. Ancient "Indian" philosophies reject both, or do purposely not construct those dichotomies. I have tried to show how "Asian" ancient philosophies, which still inform ways of being, doing politics and thinking in Asia, and their construction of knowledge, do not favour this normative binary (theory and practice, or subject and object) nor the same hierarchy of knowledges as the "west". That is what accounts for much of their contribution to a general history of science, history of ideas and philosophy being missed out completely by the cognitive universe which comes with "western" modernity. I have further tried to show that there is always some kind of politics of knowledge, of translation, even when it is not declared, and that no phrasing or knowledge is neutral. The critique of hegemonic knowledge therefore has to move away and ahead from appealing to mere cognitive justice within the limits of history and philosophy of sciences, and has to assume its wider and fundamental political dimension, relying on critical political philosophy too.

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[57] Michel SERRES, *Le tiers inclus*, Bourin, Paris 1991.

[58] Radomir KONSTANTINOVIĆ, *Filosofija palanke*, BIGZ, Belgrade 1981 (1st publ. 1969). The expression *partage de la raison*, is mine, R.I. R. Iveković: *Autopsie des Balkans. Essai de psychopolitique* : http://radaivekovicunblogfr.unblog.fr/2009/10/30/autopsie-des-balkans-essai-de-psychopolitique-livre/ (the book exist on paper in Italian and German); also: "Partage de la raison", http://partagedelaraison.wordpress.com/;

I argue further that elements of the "non-self" ancient philosophies in Asia could – but without any guarantee – ensure a less violent incorporation of Asia into her new world-leading role. This might allow her to acquire a less fragmented and independent self-image. On the other hand, these elements of "non-self" philosophies have also facilitated the conversion of western capitalist, socialist as well as Asian modernities from sovereignty to governmentality in Asia (or to governmentality imbedded into sovereignty). Hence the ambiguity of present day forms of governance, or rather governmentality, versus sovereignty. We need to develop new cognitive instruments in order to understand this as a yet non-transparent process.

THE MUTATING CHARACTER OF KNOWLEDGE

The mutating character of knowledge entails mutating polities and politics, and vice versa, blurred by time-lag effects.

We witness today, after "1989" (the turning point of globalisation having become visible to the naked eye; in China, this begins some 10 years earlier with the end of the Cultural Revolution), an unprecedented mutation in the construction and transmission of knowledge, as well as a transformation in its forms, functions and contents, as much as we see corresponding changes in political organisation of state, territory, polity etc. This metamorphosis is as much due to the novel socio-political and historical conditions as it is to new technologies. Among the latter, we particularly underline all that in the social, political and economic world makes evolve not only the construction and contents of knowledge, but the *manner of it transmission*: migrations of labour and people, transnationalities, new forms of and relations to labour, the waning of traditional salaried work, the invention of cognitive labour, "knowledge industries" (cognitive capitalism[59]), including networks of individuals and their personal interconnectivity; the dematerialisation of a part of the production but eventually its biopolitical administration, the disappearance of the wage system as the main form of labour, the commoditization of university, of artistic practices and of forms of life as well as their "spectacularisation", the interrogation of cognitive apparatuses and practices from a postcolonial, de-colonial and post-socialist viewpoint, from that of a post-Cold War position, as well as the appearance of new forms of subjection, of subjectivation, or of novel rhizomatic[60] forms that ignore the classical political subjects.

 All such new conditions of arising, training and transmitting of knowledge, which are responsible for the fact that the support and functionalities of memory, the relationship to data bases and to libraries, to reading, writing and memorisation have changed, disrupt traditional pedagogies and teaching, and sometimes also converge with "non-modern" or "non-western" and generally alternative forms of non-*objectal* knowledges. The re-examination of the subject-object and theory-practice relationship that splits the world and that supported western hegemony and the capitalist-and-colonial options is now on the epistemological agenda. It reached its critical objective in the philosophy of becoming (*devenir*) that can also disturb the ratio of intolerance between an individual subject and a community or between communities.

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[59]   Yann MOULIER BOUTANG, *Le Capitalisme cognitif. La Nouvelle Grande Transformation*, Eds. Amsterdam, Paris 2007

[60]   G. DELEUZE- F. GUATTARI, *Mille plateaux*, Minuit, Paris 1972.

But an affirmative biopolitics shows, on the contrary, the limits of immunization and the necessity of the acceptance of others within oneself, as the condition for life[61]. These now have to evolve in agreement with a social, political and technological mutation where, more and more, traditional representative politics from below (democracy) give in to governance, administration and management from above, to networks and to new and still experimental political practices and framing where civil society, public space, political society as well as the state are overwhelmed by individual and collective practices that will not be captured by the mere stately and institutional logic, or within the limited and not always so opened "public space". Migrations on a very big scale of persons, labour and knowledge prove it. This space in between functions through logistics[62]. University in general is one of the neuralgic points where this is all manifested, and where these questions need to be addressed, including in drawing conclusions from the usage of new technologies, from transnationalities border-crossing, from experiences, from alternative and forbidden or non-standardised knowledges. In the light of these issues, there remains as yet for one to understand the relationship between the individual subject and the group subject with regard to the *construction of the common*, and this depends much on local histories. And how are the subjects and political action articulated to ways of thinking that originally refused to apply the concept of a subject? Asia can teach us a lot about this. Self-centredness of the subject is abhorred in much of Asia, although this neither prevents the feeling of belonging and sharing, nor the consecration of subjects.

In a new twist, we are now at a crossroads of changing paradigms, from sovereignty to governmentality. This partly corresponds to the shift of economic power from the west to Asia. It also corresponds to new ways of constructing and transmitting knowledge. We need to get beyond the false dilemma and opposition of the two, governmentality and sovereignty. Nowadays the former (governmentality) is very much formally embedded in the latter even as sovereignty looses some of its westphalian features but maintains its nominal principled superiority. In Europe and in centres of old hegemonies, state sovereignty is officially maintained, although (unequally) weakened through the devolution or outsourcing of some of its functions and the financial crisis and dependence. The claim to sovereignty still governs the way education is organised in a transnational world, while knowledge structures correspond to and reproduce structures of power. Traditional sovereignty is not disappearing altogether, nor is the nation, its corollary, as some may have thought. It absorbed governance.

Governance will decentralise education and the transmission of knowledge much more than sovereignty before it was invested by governmentality and with it by governance practices. It constructs education rather after the mould of the market: knowledge is convertible into wealth and power, but not all knowledge. We could call "cash-knowledge" (in analogy to cash-crops) the knowledge that can serve individual enrichment in a context that *transforms political citizens into depoliticised consumers*. Knowledge serves dematerialised production, where human bodies are however used to the last. The market frames the state and its sovereignty now. Governance now operates without social, political, cultural, symbolic mediation, without intermediaries, without the unfolding of time, without representation (or outside formal mechanisms of traditional political

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[61] Roberto ESPOSITO, « Communauté, immunité, démocratie », *Transeuropéennes* 17, 1999, p. 35-45 ; *Immunitas. Protezione e negazione della vita,* Einaudi, Turin 2002.

[62] Brett NEILSON, "Five theses on understanding logistics as power", *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory,* Volume 13, Issue 3, 2012, Special Issue: OPERATIONS OF THE GLOBAL; B. Neilson, Sandro Mezzadra, "Extraction, logistics, finance. Global crisis and the politics of operations", *Radical philosophy* http://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/extraction-logistics-finance

representation that in principle still exist in the political apparatus but are bypassed) and in politically opaque ways.

In this sense, governance's effect is potentially very brutal in its verticality: it has no checks and balances from a representative system, rendered inoperative. There is some representational democracy at the bottom level, but it looks more like consumers' survey than like political expression. Public services turn into commercial enterprises as the welfare state wanes out, so citizens are more and more consumers[63]. Authorities do consult consumers, rather than citizens, on matters that concern public order or even on some social policies and benefits calculated to maintain command. But this is not the welfare state of the sovereignties of yesteryear. We can see nowadays the limits of the patterns of sovereignty and representation, and at the same time their rising stakes in emerging Asian countries. In European continental philosophy, sovereignty and representation have been the vital basis of autonomy as warranty for subjectivation and citizenship. They have been so in view of state domination and of sovereignty that had also been exported outside Europe, with the nation, throughout colonialism. Colonial history thus unfolds diverse temporalities and spatialities, which are in complex relationships with one another.

Since 1989 and the visible globalisation[64], there has also been unprecedented change in the *meaning of the political* and in the corresponding manner of transmitting knowledge, as well as a disruption of their forms, features and content. The Enlightenment way of entrusting what was to become mass education to the state has prevailed in much of the world under western hegemony. It created modern meritocracies and eventually subordinated knowledge to the nation, to the political system and to the corresponding and basic capitalist production.

Parallelly, other unrecognised systems of transmission of knowledge and of imaginaries have coexisted. They have been very brutally eradicated by the nation state, including the violent and bloody suppression of vernacular languages (thereafter called dialects, *patois* etc.) in favour of one national language, as was the case during the French Revolution, and elsewhere. While the enlightenment type of education privileged certain contents and a state-like hierarchy in the very passing of knowledge, other lines of transmission survived to different degrees in different spaces[65]: women's and indeed "witches'" knowledge[66], local knowledges, subaltern and alternative knowledges, vernacular knowledge, functional experience and everyday life practices etc. Some of those will be gradually rehabilitated or re-evaluated since the turning point of 1989, at least in principle, while a lot is inevitably lost as the loss, correction, replacement, transformation and

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[63] In the metro in Paris (RATP), people boarding it are still called passengers or users (*passagers, usagers*). This is the result of transportation being understood as a service due to the citizens by the authorities. In the metro in Singapore (MRT), they are called customers: "please move towards the middle so as to make room for new *customers* boarding the train".

[64] Globalisation become visible since 1989, but has actually been a much longer historic process. It could be counted since the dawn of history, or at least since colonial history.

[65] See the section "*Anātman* and the end of sovereignty ".

[66] Much of which had been repressed, some of which resisted. Barbara EHRENREICH, *Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers*, The Feminist Press at CUNY, New York 1972; Silvia FEDERICI, *Caliban and the Witches. Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, Autonomedia 2004

circulation of knowledge is part of its normal dynamics[67]. Non-objectal non-hegemonic knowledge, a mode knowledge not aiming at appropriating the world, has existed, ore or less suppressed, all along and everywhere, generally embedded in forms of work or labour, forms of life and non-discursive experience. In such knowledge the way of acceding knowledge is often more important than its content, as in the *Upanišads*. It is important to stress that modus even in times of governmentality, in order to understand the links between knowledge and politics, but also in order to observe possible reconnections between the two at any stage, beyond appropriative *epistemes*.

1989 AS A THRESHOLD: POLITICAL AND KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS FIT TOGETHER

There are important thresholds in history, some of them bigger, some smaller, at which *political systems and systems of knowledge* are reshaped, usually in correspondence to each other. The two share a common internal logic, and both also inform other areas of human activities and life. Political and knowledge systems are bound in a reciprocal relation albeit not necessary the same temporality, and are isomorphic. A politics of knowledge will therefore also be politics *tout court*. It needs to be discussed and shaped.

Such historic thresholds may overlap, are not the same in each part of the world. Through a "spiral" movement in history, an inclusive motion where nothing (or not everything) is really lost, they may awaken old knowledge "assemblages" in new forms and for new purposes, to meet new challenges, corresponding to such and such politics. Sovereignties are re-defined at such modern thresholds, and so are the corresponding *epistemes*. New knowledge configurations (regarding knowledge selection, the way of institutionalising and transmitting it even more than its contents) may launch whole new eras and of course new political constellations.

For example the "axial age[68]" was constructed as one such ancient threshold where critical thought was supposed to have arisen throughout many cultures and languages at the same time, overcoming sterile ancient dogmatisms, and "kicking history". Nearer to our times, some more recent sea-change thresholds have swept over the world and created new *epistemes*, political systems etc.

One such threshold that still feeds our thoughts and needs to be studied is that of western modernity, which is now critically assessed by alternative "southern" knowledges. It is also the birthplace of the modern nation and nation-state, of state sovereignties, which have recently undergone transformations with a turning point: indeed, another aspect of such a threshold, linked to modernity, is the colonial abyssal line in history.

Still nearer to our days and as a development of modernity, the recent post-1989 (in the case of China, possibly post-1979, although it is not a matter of date) turn is actually felt in how the world is being reshaped, in how Asia has emerged (but other continents are emerging too to different extents, such as Africa and Latin America), and in how our old knowledge patterns and the

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[67] See the concept of loss, scattering or *desperdício* of knowledge and experience, B. de Sousa Santos, *Para um novo senso comum (vol. 1): A crítica da razão indolente. Contra o desperdício da experiência*, *op. cit.*; B. de Sousa Santos (ed.), *Another Knowledge Is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies (Reinventing Social Emancipation: Toward New Manifestos).* While some loss of knowledge and experience is an unavoidable historic process, according to the author it is also possible to actively preserve and share useful and shared knowledges across the spectrum and across languages, provided an adequate *politics of knowledge* is jointly configured.

[68] Robert N. BELLAH, *Religion in Human Evolution. From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*, The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, Cambridge Mass. 2011.

hegemonic episteme has become exhausted to a great extent. The functionalities of sovereignty as well as of subjectivity have been changing through this. This is another important threshold. "1989", a quasi *temporal* but also a *conceptual* unidentified object, rearticulates Asia to Europe.

Every student in social and human sciences knows that we are NOW at an epistemological watershed, that knowledges as well as their construction and way of transmission are being reshaped and that we must support and feed that process if we are not going to be *des-oriented* (a wonderful pun here!) through the coexistence of multiple systems of value, of knowledge, through multiple semantics and etymologies of concepts and merciless globalisation.

It now has to be decided what the politics of knowledge (old and new) will be, and what can be expected to be done with it. What cognitive future, what cognitive justice, do we want to shape, also considering the new technologies and fields of knowledge accessible to a wider population (not only to specialists) and concerning public education, institutions etc.? It is only in developing such a *politics of knowledge* drawing on all alternative knowledges[69], and especially on their *principled possibility* that we can truly contribute to shape a (post) postcolonial episteme accessible to all, everywhere in the world. This phase of epistemological reconstruction or revolution has been happening for some time somewhat in disarray, scattered and fragmented round the world and over languages, responding to very diverse cognitive politics. The correspondence between knowledge regimes and political systems has to be taken into account, as well as disjunctive effects of alternative intersections.

As shown by Parag Khanna among others, or by an informed reading of present-day globalisation, the historic depth of state sovereignties descending and universalised from the "western" line, and linked with the history of modern-time democracy, has been withering away. Regarding the new aims of globalised economy and cognitive capitalism, it is now indifferent whether a state (for example, an *info-state*, one of the forms Khanna has theorised[70]) is a democracy or not. Democracy is not necessary to governance on which now both sovereignty as well as governmentality nested within it, agree. On the contrary: governance will avoid bureaucracy, legal and political systems through *direct management*, through the implementation and generalisation of exceptions and of special economic zones. It will thus avoid the "lag-effect" that democracies produce in the representation system through voting. The implementation of technologies of governance, even though these are to a great extent fostered by the state in its new function, will now take place under the command of financial markets.

In such an approach, governance technologies fully legitimise, in the name of – once again – "progress", the exhaustion and "overcoming" of the representational system which was historically linked to sovereignty. Importantly, direct governance and management, without democracy, can work and "be beneficial" even where there is no history of political and social citizenship linked to the conjunction of sovereignty-and-subjectivation, from the point of view of efficiency and logistics.

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[69] Arun BALA, *The Dialogue of Civilizations in the Birth of Modern Science*, ISEAS Singapore/Palgrave Macmillan New York 2010; A. Bala (ed.), *Asia, Europe, and The Emergence of Modern Science. Knowledge Crossing Boundaries*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2012;

[70] Parag KHANNA, *The Second World: How Emerging Powers Are Redefining Global Competition in the Twenty-first Century*, Random House, New York 2009; Ayesha & P. Khanna et al., *Hybrid Reality: Thriving in the Emerging Human-TechnologyCivilization* Ted Books 2012.

Political history has thus become irrelevant to the perspective of governance; only efficiency is relevant. Within such a view, since the objective of equality as well as democracy itself (being only a project) was in any case never achieved through the system of representation and democracy, and since any appeal to universal values is rejected by the new ideologues of governance, the ideal of equality as a horizon of political hope and as a "right" to invoke in a totally individualistic perspective can now safely be discarded in the name of sheer economic and financial efficiency "for the good of all". Pragmatism of a minimal political expectation and requirement, and general political and ahistoric cynicism, can now descend on depoliticised directly managed populations in the name of "their own good" decided and implemented by pundits who know better. This is efficient biopolitics, to make use of one more Foucaultian concept, with that of governmentality.

Such governance that manages things from afar without consulting constituencies replaces politics, in a strange leveling of the historic dimension, since it affects both former colonizers as well as former colonized, and has spread everywhere through globalization. Some call this contemporary phenomenon, by which "representative institutions lose power in favor of unelected decision centres" - post-democracy. "In India", says Pratap Bhanu Mehta speaking of the considerable power acquired by the judiciary and calling it the abandonment of politics, "unelected judges have effectively replaced the notion of the separation of powers among three governmental branches with a 'unitarian' claim of formal judicial supremacy[71]." And we have seen elsewhere, particularly in Europe (eg., Italy), a growing judicialisation of politics which has become - depoliticized. Somehow, politics itself is depoliticized. Still others, in some countries in the Global South, critically address the issue of political subjectivity, between the extremes of "western individualism" (as seen from the south) and some rehabilitation of the community or in any case of collective subjectivities, but beyond any call for any tradition whatsoever or for pre-modernity.[72]

On the example of the Indian judicial system, but also in a comparison between India and China, P. Bh. Mehta examines the *relationship between democracy and legitimacy*. In his paper "Citizenship and Political Accountability: the case of India"[73], he speaks of political and judicial institutions that acquire "output legitimacy", justifying their undemocratic actions in the eyes of citizens by the benefits they provide, including the defense of certain rights, etc. When he speaks of China, he gives one more example of ex-post and downstream legitimizing through the effects of a "positive policy" from above that has not been voted. But input legitimacy, provided by the vote in a representative system responds to an at least formal democracy. The problem today is that through the effects of governance, and in the context of governmentality that ignores the sovereignty system but squats within it, this principled democracy by means of input legitimacy works less and less adequately. Its results are not necessarily better in practice (apart from the principle, but this is a substantial difference!) in the eyes of those affected, than those of output legitimizing.

This distinction made by Mehta and other authors, which aims especially at contemporary debates about China, are also found in Perry Anderson's book on India. Legitimizing downstream is indeed a true democratic riddle, and shows the limits of the representative system. In his critique of Nehru in

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[71] P. Bh. MEHTA, "The Rise of Judicial Sovereignty", in *The State of India's Democracy*, ed. by S. Ganguly, L. Diamond, M.F. Plattner, Johns Hopkins UP, Baltimore 2007, p. 107-120.

[72] Nivedita MENON, Aditya NIGAM, *Power and Contestation: India Since 1989,* Zed Books, London 2007.

[73] See P. Bh. Mehta, *op. cit*., and his intervention in Arusha (conference "New Frontiers of Social Policy" - december, 2005), http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRANETSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244329-1133801177129/Mehta.rev.1.pdf

Indian Ideology[74]*,* Anderson also cites Mehta: "Comparing India and China from another angle (…) Mehta, has observed that in the People's Republic, where there is no democracy, communist rule is based on output legitimacy: it is accepted by the masses for the material benefits it takes great care to deliver them, however unequally. Whereas in India, democracy allows just the opposite – an input legitimacy from the holding of free elections, that thereby excuses the political class from distributing more than confetti to the masses who have elected them." Such conditions as described here (not necessarily concerning the judiciary alone – but as a matter of general depoliticisation), and which have matching forms and in many countries, also have corresponding kinds of knowledge.

The planetary move from sovereignty to governmentality – tending to bypass the politics of the subject and even democracy — presents problems but also presents opportunities for alternative epistemes of the past, present and future (Asian, African, Latin American, Pacific Ocean, but also, alternative European historic knowledges such as that of women, witches, various subordinate groups spread over time). It is not possible, conceivable or useful to artificially resuscitate lost knowledges, to insist on indigenism or to bring in "premodern" knowledge for its own sake. But very often, missing knowledge and intuitions are not really completely lost and may reappear displaced, reshaped in new garbs and valuable for contemporary or future purposes in unexpected ways and fields, transmitted away from state institutions and not cared for by high theory. It is important to underscore here that older *Asian* ideas of the hologram of subjectivity, of non-transcendence, of non-sovereignty, non-separation between theory and practice or subject and object – are not alone in the world facing hegemonic knowledge transported through and by colonies: Africa and others are there. The particular strength of such alternative paradigms of knowledge is that they are many and located everywhere blurring the division west/rest, facing one and the same antipode of the coloniality of power and knowledge. Regardless of their differences, they often respond to the same urge of service to sustainable life and practical knowledge, which was also the reason for their near-eradication by hegemonic institutions devoted to predatory and appropriative knowledge. Since it is their way of access and transmission that defines these alternative *epistemes* rather than their content, they are in principle never lost and are available at all times. They are of course a potential chance for the future and surely do not act alone, but no crystal ball can guarantee their success or foresee their failures at any time.

SOVEREIGNTY AND FIXING A PLACE AS REFUGE

Humans occupy wide spaces, but they come to inhabit them *as places* socially, through exchange, interaction and interdependence[75]. Residence, home, abode is a place, located within a wider space. Places are shared, spaces often divided. Places also mark a "borderline" between the inner and outer space. That line is never definitive, and it is always subject to some anguish: as many other animals, humans too need to inhabit, to have a house or some familiar and domesticated space, although they may move, and do so more and more. Both space and place are subject to wild imaginaries, and perhaps is space being generally enlarged through globalisation for individuals. Judging from a new and pretty widespread figure of humanity - migration as a generalised human condition - space and even place can be enlarged, and merged to a great extent when necessary. But the imaginaries of home, of belonging to such and such a community or to a society remain, although their contents vary highly. "Nations" are in modern times such "places" (with the process

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[74] As well as in the article "After Nehru," *London Review of Books* Vol. 34 No. 15 · august 2, 2012, p. 21-36, http://www.lrb.co.uk/v34/n15/perry-anderson/after-nehru

[75] Sanjay CHATURVEDI, "The excess of geopolitics: partition of 'British India'", in *Partitions. Reshaping states and minds,* Routledge-Frank Cass, London 2005, pp. 125-161*.*

and time it takes to build them) where "belonging" and "place[76]" coincide, and where territory – a concretisation of space - may be domesticated. They have each their narrative imbedded within a space *imaginaire*, as a mental picture. Those spatial imaginaries are loaded, worked and modified by states, which shape them to a great extent, besides being wrought by them in return. What we call civil society and public space are often influenced by the state and work in unison with it, more or less under cover. Nations tend to seek a state, and modern states claim sovereignty. States also usually provide public space, regardless of the way one is to judge the latter: as relatively free or as completely framed by the state and a possibly rigid society.

A state even works "backwards" in time, projecting on the past - images of its present spatial configurations. What is or was Poland, a country shifted in space several times over the wars and European tumultuous history? What is "Ancient India"? Can we talk of "Indian philosophy" and thus project retroactively a polity that did not exist at the time referred to? Imaginaries are concordant with their historic times and locus of origin and influenced by a hegemonic present. But they may lag behind real time in their ideal forms, and thereby produce anachronisms and even violence. Violence (to self or to others) is produced in such cases when the ideal or inherited image one has about herself or one's own group doesn't correspond to the official figure, to the one reflected by others, by material conditions, by "reality"[77]. Modernity[78] easily produces such violence, as does any bigger threshold in history. The discrepancy between the received image and the possibility for one to act within her world is too big, so that one is no master of one's life.

What is India's image, we may ask, and of her space/territory? One threshold will immediately come to one's mind – partition, as the bloody event from which both India and Pakistan were born, though very different official discourses of the event have been held on the two sides. The visualised territory and spatial imaginary of "India" before partition was that of British India. Its unity was colonial, after which, and with independence, it became national, incurring also a shift of territoriality (partition). That once imagined – sometimes nostalgically – colonial space has "shrunk" to that of independent India, with persistent uncertainties in peripheral areas such as Kashmir or the north-east, and with moving inner borders. "India" is therefore a box with multiple meanings, or at least those two: before and after partition. Some authors still say "India" for South Asia, or at least for India and Pakistan taken together[79]. The past histories of Pakistan and of Bangladesh refer to India too…. But many other spatial imaginaries of the same territories have preceded these.

Has globalisation produced new spatial imaginaries, new territorial identifications within Asia? It probably has, and they must be numerous, shifting and complex, such that will be easier to read *ex post* and in the future, than now. But we can discern some tendencies, as sovereignties and borders no longer completely correspond to territories or to citizenship[80]. Namely, the (self-)image of such big and emerging countries as India or China are strikingly split along class lines: there is an ever more "shining India" facing masses whose life was not substantially improved by the recent boom. In China, likewise, the rift appears as unbridgeable between the rich and the poor, the millionaires and

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[76]　Not always spatial! Indeed nations are not bound by clear territorial borders, but states are and want to be.

[77]　R. Konstantinović, *Filosofija palanke, op. cit.*

[78]　Peter WAGNER, *Modernity. Understanding the present*, Polity, Malden (USA) 2012.

[79]　Ravi Palat, "Is India part of Asia?", *op. cit.*

[80]　Saskia SASSEN, *Territory, Authority, Rights. From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, Princeton Univ. Press 2006. See Aihwa ONG in much of her work.

remote peasantry[81]. Currently, the big *imaginaire* of China (as opposed to that of the local village) is incredibly national(istic). So is partly that of "Shiny India", tainted also with "hindu nationalism". Both are enmeshed with the global market, promoted through the nation and the state claiming sovereignty, in spite of centrifugal tendencies at the geographic peripheries or with minorities.

"Governance" has somewhat transformed the old imaginaries through the influence of the new neoliberal and cognitive capitalism, and has reconfigured the meaning of sovereignty within new conditions. But due to the great dispersal and fragmentation of globalisation, new meanings are added to old ones that do not disappear completely, but act as multi-layered images of the world and of home. This fragmentation of now multiple spatial fantasies corresponds to the partial shift in the meaning of sovereignties[82], and to the at least temporary defeat of transcendence and of utopian projects.

Jambudvīpa, the "the rose-apple continent" belongs to "Indian" imaginaries preceding Islam, with variations from Brahmanism, Hinduism (mainly in the *Purāṇas*), Buddhism and Jainism. The round middle island of Jambudvīpa is shared by gods to the north with humans to the south, and is surrounded by six other circular continents and oceans. "India" is at the "south" of the middle continent. Imaginary geographies do not correspond to territorial and geopolitical ones, can lag behind them in time, or diverge from them as fictions and fancy creations, though they can be and are informed by them. On the other hand, the Middle kingdom had seen itself as sovereign at the centre of the world, from which the self-centred conclusion was drawn of Chinese superiority. Surrounded by seas, high mountains or desert, and eventually by the Great Wall, imperial China was geographically comforted in the belief of her supremacy and uniqueness. The others were barbarians and *tributaries* confronting a more developed country. The idea of barbarians is not in itself original, and everyone has their own. But the Chinese imperial unity was supported by the figure of the emperor, by the common script, the tributary system, the organized mandarinates of administrators and tax collectors. With changing dynasties, that pattern was not substantially altered over centuries until it was challenged by the Taiping uprising in the 19th century, followed by the revolution in the 20th. China lived through two important successive defeats that have affected its self-satisfied self-image, resulting in the unequal and humiliating Nanking Treaty (1842) and Peking Convention (1860) with the British and other western powers, ending the Opium Wars[83]. Thus was imposed "free trade" and opened the world market in Asia. And in the war with Japan, China was utterly overcome (1894-95). But the Taiping anti-imperial uprising itself was a failed modernization[84]. The socialism that was introduced as a result of the Revolution, was a form of modernity. Capitalism provided another form of modernity and it too made its way, with a new turn since 1989. Both modernities were western in origin, but modernity was politically and economically first introduced in China through socialism, and adapted. Western capitalist features have been customized too. The western origin of modernity seems to be no political issue any more. It did not

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[81] This is not to deny immense general progress on all fronts in both countries for the whole population, and serious new attempts in China, which has a longer history of egalitarianism to its credit, at introducing structural changes that would not reproduce such inequalities.

[82] On the one hand, the end of westphalian sovereignties in the West, the partial discontinuity with these in Asia since the beginning, and also the global merger of sovereignties with capital, where states waive their direct grasp of territories, citizenship is fragmented and states with renewed nationalist ideologies serve the capitalist machine, while old forms reappear through "global assemblages" (Saskia Sassen, *cit.*).

[83] Julia LOVELL, *The Opium War*, Picador, London 2011; Amitav GHOSH, *River of Smoke,* John Murray Publisher, London 2011.

[84] Lucien BIANCO, *Les origines de la revolution chinoise 1915-1949*, Gallimard, Paris 1967, 2007. Bianco describes the "failed" and late modernisation.

really destroy the specific culture, as was feared, although it certainly transformed it – and was likewise transformed by it.

For colonized continents, in our example – Asia, western modernity introduced an interruption and separation from their own past, from the histories of their concepts, and from their own epistemologies. Modernity should therefore be understood as an epistemological condition as well. The idea of citizenship belongs to the ensemble of sovereignty-and-of-continuity marked by western modernity and in conjunction with the nation. It does not arise historically from a conceptual framework where sovereignty and subjectivity have purposely been ignored, though it is now obvious that it can very well compose with them. And citizenship is also a modern palliative intermediary for dispossessed subjects dreaming of a direct connection to power, state or god.

But sovereignty, subject and citizenship are not the only possible historic scenario; they are originally a European, then western, then "western" script[85]. They are one of many historic options, even as the form called state has (practically) prevailed. It is under the regime of sovereignty, of individualism and of subjectivity that the political space unfolds, and not under that, more recent, of governmentality and governance. The latter have no use for the subject or for public space, except formal. It is a stand by which any change of paradigm is refuted, but not in favour of plurality: this reduction of a political dimension is done in view of the continuity of the dominant model. Governance and biopolitics have had their very first experiments in the colonies through the rudiments of "welfare" politics. The continuous appeal to sovereignty and, in western examples, to representation, although it has become formal, resemble very much the procedure of the nominal legitimising by the *Veda* of any subsequent ancient "Indian" knowledge (except for the *nāstikas*[86]).

And on the other hand, sovereignty and governmentality come to be inoculated to conceptual environments, such as the "Indian" or the "Chinese" one, that had chosen from antiquity not to privilege the subject, especially the individual subject-agent, not to install a sovereignty theory (or any "theory" as distinct from practice, for that matter) and, in the "Indian" case, not even to develop effective sovereignty etc[87]. Certainly, "India" has known theories and precepts about the king's best way of governing and about the political and state geometry of possible alliances[88]. But there is a

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[85] These concepts are of *European origin*, presented as universal conditions for anyone's access to modernity through a supposedly one only possible scenario. As European influence grows into western hegemony, those terms become *western* (Europe and the west become indistinguishable, and blurring the distinction between the two is the power game). But as western "values" are exported to the whole planet, especially in the latest phase of globalisation and as the *"west"* is not located only in the west any more, the quotation marks acquire significance and those terms become "western", i.e. "universal". This universalisation is itself violence, but there is no denying that it has been real and that it must be overcome.

[86] *Nāstikas*, "nay-sayers", were the dissidents or disclaimers of the Vedas, whose point would of course be to disavow the ancestral codified knowledge. Buddhists and Jainas are among those, but there are actually many schools and orientations.

[87] Apart from the fact that sovereignty is always a misconception, because it hides the fact of its arbitrary axiom, the foundation being – that there is no foundation.

[88] The Aśvamedha ritual (sacrificing of a horse by a king establishing his sovereignty) appears in the *Yajur-veda* and in the *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa, in the Br̥hadāranyakopanišad* and elsewhere in the *Upanišads*. The *Dharma-śāstras* are non-canonical texts representing compendiums of ancient Indian views on social life, religious and secular law and the art of governing by kings. See P. Chatterjee's interesting distinction, in ancient "Indian" thought, between the concepts of *nīti* and of *dharma* in "The Rule of Subjects", in *Lineages of Political Society*, *op. cit.,* pp. 53-74, where his preference goes to *nīti* (leadership); he understands *nīti* as comparable to governance, which he takes as an unquestioned general framework, while *dharma* appears to correspond to some "pre-modern" pattern.

direct and uninterrupted, though in western philosophies ignored, link between the ancient Asian "no-subject" stance and today's cultures including political cultures of Asia, hypermodernity not withstanding. We have examples in point in the way in which, generally speaking, it is not polite to insist on oneself, in the way Japanese or other leaders apologise to the citizenry for their failures, or even in the way, in the labour culture of Korea or Japan, the individual is supposed to be subordinate to the working community.

Those « governances » now imbedded in new or renewed proud and arrogant national sovereignties and implemented through governmentality technologies, such as are flourishing in rising Asia, are also supported by the inter-state *inter*national system. European references have proved to be insufficient to explain Asian sovereignties of late capitalism[89], although it is the spread of capitalism that favours them, possibly in a different order from what historically took place in Europe.

A COMPLEX RELATION BETWEEN ASIA AND EUROPE

In response to the imperial and colonial projects irrupting from the west, not only independentist nationalisms (South Asia and elsewhere) but additionally, also counter-hegemonic, counter-imperial ones will arise in Asia, in particular, as Prasenjit Duara, Ravi Palat and Naoki Sakai were able to show[90], in Japan, in the 1920-30s. The aggressive project of a shared "East Asian Community" dominated by Japan, carries then a pan-Asian idea of Nipponese partly colonial but also developmental conquests, imperial aspirations, nationalist and (counter)racist anti-western ventures that will combine with Nazism[91], respond to contradictory policies (invading *and* developing), and provide some other "models" for the nation in East Asia. There was in this project a great hostility to cosmopolitanism, seen as imported with western conquests. The relation to cosmopolitanism will however remain paradoxical and periodically exposed to contextual alterations. Thus, like elsewhere, nationalisms in Asia will range from liberatory to enslaving ones, but it is important to underscore the historic significance of anti-colonial liberatory nationalism such as in British India. Cosmopolitanism is a test for both developments.

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[89]　R. Iveković, "The watershed of modernity: translation and the epistemological revolution" in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Volume 11 Issue 1, march 2010 pp. 45-63 (Routledge, Taylor & Frances); "La révolution épistémologique nécessaire", *La rose de personne/La rosa di nessuno*, 5/2010, pp. 213-224; "Politiques de la philosophie à partir de la modernité", *Transeuropéennes* 6 nov. 2009, http://www.transeuropeennes.eu/fr/5 (paper available also in Englishon the site); "Subjectivation, traduction, justice cognitive", *Rue Descartes* n. 67/2010, "Quel sujet du politique?" dirigé par G. Basterra, R. Iveković, B. Manchev, pp. 43-50.

[90]　Prasenjit DUARA, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham 2004; *Rescuing History From the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, University of Chicago Press, 1995; see also Duara, "The New Imperialism and the Post-Colonial Developmental State: Manchukuo in comparative perspective": "While the new imperialists maintained ultimate control of their dependencies or clients through military subordination, they often created or maintained legally sovereign nation-states with political and economic structures that resembled their own." (http://www.japanfocus.org/-Prasenjit-Duara/1715). N. SAKAI, « Translation as a filter", *Transeuropéennes,* march 2010, *http://www.transeuropeennes.eu/en/articles/200/Translation_as_a_filter/Sakai* ; "The Body of the Nation : the Pastorate, the Emperor System and the Society of Sympathy of Japan's Intellectual Modernization", *Biopolitics, Ethics and Subjectivation*, ed. by A. Brossat, J. C.H. Liu, Y-H. Chu, R. Iveković, L'Harmattan, Paris 2011, pp. 91-120; Ravi Palat, "Is India part of Asia?", *op. cit.*

[91]　TETSUYA Takahashi, *Can Philosophy Constitute Resistance?*, UTCP, Tokyo 2008.

But there is indeed potentially, and independently, an *early and contradictory cosmopolitanism* involving plurality within the old ideal of Buddhist *a-cosmism*, of which we may be reminded in this context. Buddhist "acosmic cosmopolitanism", apparently paradoxical, actually relies on a non-anthropocentric idea. It may be understood to find at least some continuity in the events from the 19th-21st centuries. There is even a subsequent – quite ambivalent - Mahāyāna Buddhism ideal with delirious cosmologies, exuberant imaginary geographies coinciding with the wishful geographic expansion of Buddhism (except that the imperial project exceeded Buddhism). A geopolitical complicity was easily forged between eurocentrism and pan-Asianism[92], by which our sciences are still governed to some extent. It is and asymmetrical complicity though. According to N. Sakai, it is urgent to reconsider the Euro-centred construction at the origin, which is also reciprocal though asymmetrical, of the concepts of Asia and Europe, to which both the self-orientalisation of Asia as well as its opposite - the internalized occidentalism of anti-western regionalist policies in "Asia" - belong. "Asia", as a concept *relational* in the same (complementary) way to that of "Europe", is constructed by the hegemonic view as a deviation and, as paradoxically *cosmopolitan in subalternity*. It is also established through its role as a mirror. Its subjects-agents, its geo-cultural and *mental spaces*, its temporalities are, too, constructed in the same manner. "Asia as method[93]" seems then quite uncertain.

Humanism, an Enlightenment ideal and cultural disposition, was the cover ideology of the colonial enterprise: or rather, under its guise, often its worst practices have been exploited and applied to colonised peoples. The concept itself has had a long history of association with discrimination in the name of such and such (a) humanity, a trail of massacres and genocides, of wars, of racist selection, of differential treatment, of « civilizing » the others in the name of a *certain* kind of humanity. In a non-anthropocentric world such as Asia, humanism can be seen as a specific *speciesm*. It carries a history of preferring oneself and one's own kind to all others, and declaring its sovereignty. It belongs to a disenchanted and anthropocentric universe. It is obvious today where it has brought us seen from the feats and results in ecology, in international relations, in justice and « human rights » (the latter being, though necessary, also a limiting concept), in matters of equality, in poor scores of democracy, in a (lack of) balance north-south, in a world economy where governments have yielded to the Global Financial Marked (GFM)[94].

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[92] Ravi Arvind PALAT, "Is India Part of Asia?", *op.cit*. See also: "[…] the Transnational Humanities paradigm should undertake the urgent task of problematizing the geographic configuration of East Asia versus Western Europe. To problematize Asia is to disclose self-Orientalization and the reverse Occidentalism internalized in anti-Western international regionalism in 'Asia'. By employing post-disciplinary approaches, […] will explore times, spaces, subjects in 'Asia' as a fluid and hybrid construct, not necessarily constrained by geopolitical or cultural boundaries. The analysis of this historical formation will open the door to the possibility of Transnational Humanities." Project for a panel organized by the historian Jie-Hyun Lim & by Naoki Sakai at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Hawaii, 2011.

[93] Kuan-Hsing CHEN, *Asia as Method. Toward Deimperialization*, Duke, Durham UP 2010.

[94] Etienne BALIBAR, "Un monde sans maître ? Nouvelles réflexions sur le problème du souverain", paper at the conference "De la terreur à l'extrême violence" at Belgrade University, december 2011. Also, lecture by Antonio NEGRI, "Federation, fédéralisme et commun", at the seminar "Du public au commun" in Paris on march 21, 2011: http://dupublicaucommun.blogspot.it/2012/03/les-enregistrements-de-la-seance_22.html , http://dupublicaucommun.blogspot.com/search/label/Antonio%20Negri and Saskia Sassen, "Expulsion: The Fifth Circle of Inequality", lecture at the Columbia Global Center, Reid Hall, Paris, on march 26, 2012, and "CAN WE GO BEYOND A SAVAGE SORTING OF WINNERS AND LOSERS?", keynote speech at the "Globalisation and the return of Geography conference, National Library, Singapore, on february 21, 2013.

Governments have surrendered their sovereignty to this new sovereign power, the market. But nationalisms have still not disarmed, while migrants without citizenship rights, as opposed to citizens, are the new face of humankind. Then again, Humanism, in its European history, has a tightly knit history of relating to sovereignty and to the state and nation complex. Besides meaning the independence of once conquered countries as they access and endeavour to repeat the same historic pattern, sovereignty is also a claim of exceptionality and domination, often in the name of humanism. On the international level it has often been used to legitimise colonial and imperialistic feats when at the hands of big powers. In small states and since the Wilsonian-Leninist theories of sovereignty and non-interference, it is a claim aimed at protecting. The system of mutually recognised sovereignties, while it lasted, was a complex interrelationship of interests in equilibrium.

Yet this story doesn't start with western modernity. The dilemma is much older and known to all ancient civilizations. Modernity only gave it new momentum. Modernity has been a great disjunction which freezes history: from that time on, western modernity[95] has constructed an imaginary unbroken genealogical origin for its own concepts and episteme as "universal", and has proposed/imposed them to the planet. From here on, we have two lines: that of continuity from ancient times till modernity for the "western" pattern and exemplified by it, and discontinuity for the others if they are to be modern. In that way, concepts such as humanism, or democracy can be proposed as universal to the globe. This is not exactly or not only an imposture; it has been an efficient historic process[96], also broadly called globalisation.

The concept of Eurasia appears periodically and supports various visions of international relations regarding Russia, the USSR, China, Central Asia and the involvement of British and other colonialisms, various phases of the Great Game and various nationalisms. Nowadays the term denotes former central Asian Soviet republics, presently predicated economically mainly upon China, but also, including culturally, still to a great extent to Russia. The USA and Europe are also players in this game, which is linked to oil and pipelines, the "new silk road" and Chinese maritime appetites[97].

But Europe is really not a continent and neither is Asia. The two parts together form a geographic continent that has always had spatial continuity. Asia and Europe are and are not one, and Africa needs very much to be brought into the picture historically. From here, one could choose to privilege egalitarian integration instead of domination.

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[95] First western, then "western" and finally "universal"… globalisation being the mechanism.

[96] Maybe we can approximate the paradox of "Europe as a borderland" without closed and defined territories, a Europe as process, through that of *AsiaEurope* instead of EurAsia, forgetting temporarily about Europe's current deep crisis. We don't have to invent that configuration: at a difference with other continents, people have always been circulating between Asia and Europe. We can ask pertinent questions about the world if only we change the frame, temporarily and tentatively broadened to AsiaEurope.

[97] Robert R. BIANCHI, "China and the United States in the Middle East and the Islamic World", lecture on march 26, 2013 at the Middle East Institute, www.mei.nus.edu.sg (manuscript); Pepe ESCOBAR, "Pipelineistan and the New Silk Road(s)", *Asia Times Online*, may 31, 2013, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/CEN-01-310513.html ; Ivan IVEKOVIĆ, "The N[on] A[ligned] M[ovement] and the Ongoing Arab Revolts", at the conference "The Cold War and the Postcolonial Moment – Prehistory, Aims and Achievements of the Non-Aligned Movement 50 Years after Belgrade", held in june 2011 at Zürich University, Abteilung für Osteuropäische Geschichte (manuscript); I. Iveković, his regular political analyses from the Arab and Western Asian World in *H-alter*, http://www.h-alter.org/search/index/Ivan+Iveković/author .

TERTIUM DATUR OR THE GENERAL OPERATORS. GENDER, "1989" AND AFRICA

The "missing link" between the two "continents" could be a conjunction, or an active operator. "Post-1989" may be seen as that missing link or connector for this last historic threshold of our times. In any relationship (here Asia vs. Europe and even Africa) there might be some symptom or invisible operator, a "third" party as it were. In constructing a common future, "post 1989" (a "date" differently but equally decisive for all) can be understood as either the backdrop and *toile-de-fond*, or as an operator, a "clutch", maybe as a sign. Which means that it can go – and does go - unseen, like *śūnya*, "naught" or an "empty place" in ancient "Indian" mathematics or in Buddhism. Such a "third element" in the cognitive operation enhances or triggers the relation, brings a rapport into view. Different historic figures and prospects could be obtained, depending on whether we would take as such a third and pivotal vantage point (for example, Africa), or a "functional common ground-cum efficient principle" (*tiers instruit*[98]), or some other political hand, even a mere symptom. Considering past history, "post-1989" fits well the active suture line between Asia and Europe. From another point of view, thinking of future emerging markets and competing foreign investments, Africa appears as the ideal disjunctive conjunction and vantage point.

Étienne Balibar had developed the idea of a concrete vanishing mediator (a third party in a "trinity"?) to intercede between Europe and the global, postcolonial south (or rather: between diverse tendencies and interests in the latter). The "mediator" was to offer transfer services and instruments which, although still centralising Europe and resulting from the colonial construction of the world, can however - though otherwise historically limited and outgrown - operate some connections by "arbitrage" between contexts that have no other connection. That mediator would fade away after its mission is accomplished[99], being only functional. Apart from the problem that one does not see exactly how or why the "mediator" would be so disinterested as to ultimately retrieve, one can perhaps see, in the examples picked by Balibar in *Saeculum*[100], more radical options.

One of them, as an example, concerns *gender*, which appears now with Balibar not as the benevolent European and neutral mediator in world affairs, but as either the general backdrop and universal operator for the interrelation between religion and secularism, or as a functional symptom and switch between the two. My preference would go to the former (*gender as the universal operator*), but i think that Etienne Balibar means the latter. The element *gender* then, differently from the previous concept of a vanishing mediator in the example of Europe-versus-the-world (also an asymmetrical relation, as much as gender), would be in that – it is not at all vanishing, because it is at the root of the relation (seen or unseen). Or, it is here at the root of the dichotomy, as both its condition *and* its operator, though it goes unnoticed in conditions of gender inequality and injustice. Balibar takes gender as the obvious mediator between secularism and religion that deals with the in-com-possibility of the two.

What i call the in-com-possibility, is revealed in that it is impossible to talk about the two from any neutral position, since such a neutral position does not exist. In our example, it is impossible to talk from any neutral position about Europe an Asia from within any of them, because they are so historically entangled. But Balibar seems to suggest that other such mediators may be found in other

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[98] Michel Serres, *Le Tiers-Instruit*, Bourin, Paris 1991.

[99] É. Balibar, "Europe: Vanishing mediator", *Constellations*, Volume 10, Issue 3, pages 312–338, september 2003, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-8675.00335/full ; "Europe, une médiation évanouissante", http://stl.recherche.univ-lille3.fr/textesenligne/auteursdivers/BalibarEurope.html

[100] Balibar, *Saeculum, Culture, religion, idéologie*, Galilée, Paris 2012; "Cosmopolitanism and Secularism: Controversial Legacies and prospective Interrogations", *Grey Room 44*, Summer 2011, pp. 6-25.

cases of other hierarchies, which are usually reduced to dichotomies. We are in comparable situations of *internality* in cases of other symbolic asymmetries and social, political and historic inequalities too, that are conceptually represented through binaries: the universal and the particular, male and female (Balibar counts these between "anthropological differences", *Saeculum,* which is somewhat confusing to say the least), the west and the rest, the nation and the non nation, religion and its other (which can be secularism, *laïcité* or another religion), nature and culture, subject and object, theory and practice etc. In none of these cases is there an *outside* from which to judge or to compare neutrally: we are always involved, or there is at work some hegemony. From some positions, other positions are unthinkable (*différend*). The universal claim tends to associate itself all too easily (though probably not fatally or *ontically*) to the dominant position. On top of which of course, as Balibar has shown convincingly, different universalistic claims *compete* with one another. There are even hopeless particularistic claims (such as lost nationalistic non-universalising, "religious" or "cultural" causes) that compete for a place and for visibility on the scene of all universalisms (given that universalisms are really multiple), whatever the scale.

When we speak of religion (as well as of secularism), it is clear that *gender is the basic divider and political operator*: there is no religion or culture that does not separate the sexes and that does not subordinate women to various degrees. The same can be said of the nation as well as, with variations, of culture; in both dealing with gender is decisive – establishing a strict gender code "previous" to any "social contract" or political negotiation. Women or the feminine element are codified as particular, in the company of all other particular differences, and as subordinate to the universal:

The equation of this asymmetry goes like this:

$$A (A+B); \text{ or}$$

Man [in the universalistic sense of "human", which is there in most languages] (man + woman); or as

$$♂ (♂ +♀); \text{ or as}$$

universal (universal+ particular).

The universal really claims both universality and particularity.

It must be understood that the universal is of particular origin: it is the particular interest that managed to impose itself as universal acceding to a hegemonic position. The universal therefore appears twice in our scheme (as both universal outside the brackets, and as particular within the brackets) where the particular (in our example, female, or B) appears only once. One of the two – the subordinate element that appears only once - remains unseen in the universal dimension, and is not normally universalisable. For B or ♀ or any subaltern element to accede to the possibility of being universalized, it is required that it subverts the *whole* relation, frame and setting, of which it is part as its inner component, or as its de facto constitutive other.

I suggest that gender is a "primordial" *universal political operator* prior to the dilemma expounded by Étienne Balibar as that between religion and secularism or cosmopolitanism. It appears *within* religion (as well as within secularism), within culture etc., as within all human activities. It generates the first divide and thus legitimizes all the other exclusions and inequalities by analogy, through the ancient, general and endlessly renewed acceptance of the general subalternity of women. It is gender, as performative and normative, that holds the capacity of defining or shifting the *abyssal line* according to historical context. Gender, as a social and political norm, renews under changing

conditions not the exclusion, but the *constitutive and subordinate inclusion of women,* part of the hegemonic game. It also administers through analogy and as a general operator all other inequalities (especially race, class, nation etc). This subordination is essential, because it holds in check all other subordinations by justifying them through the gender blueprint.

Women are thus positioned on the inner-out border as pivotal, fundamental for the functioning of social dynamics and of primordial importance. They are really the stake, giving to gender the essential role of the chief of police in all matters other than gender too. A different kind of politics that would question the system (inequalities and injustices) would then require thinking through and away from the given and unreflected, indeed invisible and "unthinkable" gender order at the root of any hierarchy. This is of course very difficult due to hegemonic knowledge and to the normativity of political patterns within it.

But in this, governing social and political relations through the gender regime puts indeed both gender (as a codified relation) and women in a specific position at the root of all other rapports. It is women (and the relation to them, the position they are given) within a gender inequality regime, that inform and determine the relationship between the universal and the particular. It is not an act of their (women's) will, but the stake of the whole construction.

The pursuit of sovereignty, self-determination and autonomy on the part of the existing, established political, historical subject(s) requires a paradigmatic exception to that sovereignty that can be used *in all cases* (universal) as well as in the one concrete case (particular: women). When Balibar then sees gender as intervening between secularism and religion as the disjunctive but engaging moment, he is right: this is how the system works. But how can we traverse and overcome it? It would be necessary, for that, to think the *relation*. Most western philosophers among even those who are making openings to the other and to other *epistemes*, have thought that relation (to the other) as impossible, or have thought the impossibility of thinking it[101]. This is because many of them have not tackled sovereignty and have not reached further from the division subject-object, remaining within the disjunctive synthesis.

We can use both the idea of gender as a general political operator as well as its analogy for rethinking the political and epistemological relation of Asia and Europe in a wider context. This is not to say that there are no other additional mediators or political operators that intervene in other arbitrages, depending on conditions. They all *build on gender, but have never deactivated it so far*. In the relation of Asia and Europe, the pattern of historical inequality is like elsewhere corroborated by gender. But in view of the construction of a common and shared continent for the future, we have some vanishing and turning points or, according to another visualization, backdrops to use as operators (such as "post-1989" or possibly others still). All these, "gender" or "post-1989" function as disjunctions, *but it is precisely as disjunctions that they are productive*: at each new choice or bifurcation of reason (*partage de la raison*[102]) we have to make a political decision. This is why it is impossible to wonder about the reasons why "western" philosophies and philosophy of science repeatedly exclude Asian and other knowledges, without engaging with political philosophy.

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[101] Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'« il y a » du rapport sexuel*, Galilée, Paris 2001; Lyotard, *L'inhumain: Causeries sur le temps*, Galilée, Paris 1988. These two philosophers, among others, identify the problem.

[102] R. Iveković, "Partage de la raison", http://partagedelaraison.wordpress.com/

In order to recognize its *relationalism*, Europe would have to come to terms with the heritage of historic events within modernity (colonial history) *that have marked her as split and contradictory in herself*[103], with unconscious hemispheres that have not been able to connect (because unconscious and untreated) or have not been ready to integrate and construct a shared society of trans-Euro-Asian unity and solidarity. A history that has no past in Europe but that has not been particularly hindered by Asia's past, can be built in the future on that asymmetry – if the new Asian sovereignties and race to contemporary capitalism allow it. Eurasia or Asia-Europe is then larger than central Asia (it is Asia and Europe taken together), but it also functions as an empty signifier to be filled in with new meaning. That meaning could be, for example, the commons to construct with others, and with Africa in the first place, because of its geographic and historic proximity, for a sustainable planet. There are some fears of possible future hegemonies here (China replacing European colonialism). But if we take Europe the way it geographically is – a smaller excrescence of Asia, then borderlands and margins are much broader, and perhaps we may come to make them work as *inclusive and not exclusive* in view of further openings. If the scale changes, the necessity of a politics of inclusion becomes more obvious.

In her paper on tsarist, then soviet, then Russian Central Asia, "On Post-Soviet Imaginary and Global Coloniality: a Gendered Perspective"[104] as well as in other work, Madina Tlostanova shows that over the past several years scholars both in the west (the 1st world) and in the ex-socialist countries (the 2nd world) have expressed a clear interest in re-conceptualizing the post-socialist heritage from many positions including post-Marxist and post-colonial ones. She tries to introduce a meaningful dialogue – and translation - between the de-colonial theory[105] and post-socialist discourses and experiences. In the case of the Soviet empire as well as in the case of central Asian countries, the western model had prevailed but other – central Asian and Eurasian - options have always remained available and indelible. The evidence is that they have regularly merged and traversed each other and that there are no "pure" forms, European or Asian. That might be a good new beginning, if Asia and Europe where to reconsider their relationship as equals on their common and shared territory of one unique continent or, even better, of an Afro-Eurasia. In a broader perspective, Africa can obviously play the third element where the creative and revealing disjunction appears. The creation of the European Union is probably of not much help here, rather a hindrance for the time being, on account of its closing borders. But it seems that equality will not be economic for some time to come, as Asia emerges and Europe sinks. It should however be possible to see the perspective of as a minimum *possible equality in political culture*, constructed out of a shared project for a common future on a common continent, and on a saved planet, through sustainability. But it is a long way, as long as crass inequality is the reserve and guarantee for growth – as is now the case in Asia.

As long as sovereignties prevail, no matter what autochthonous local genealogies they have, they will be linked to the modern form called "nation" (and to nationalisms in their new post-1989 form), and there is little chance of this sharing without extra efforts, including *cognitive* ones. We don't see that day approaching spontaneously in the shift of hegemony to the east. Yet the contours of the new upcoming hegemony (China) are not yet clear and are open to options. Whether centring such new options in global cities rather than in sovereign national states could bring new solutions as

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[103] Derrida, *L'autre cap*, *op. cit.*

[104] Madina TLOSTANOVA, "On Post-Soviet Imaginary and Global Coloniality: a Gendered Perspective", Collection TERRA "À traduire", Recueil Alexandries, décembre 2011: http://www.reseau-terra.eu/article1224.html

[105] Purposely called *decolonial option* and not *theory* really, for obvious reasons of claims to a new epistemology.

some have hoped[106], is not yet clear either, but is certainly partly a possibility, since many things happen on that level. The spread of "governance" introduces a pragmatic dimension de-linking management and administration from traditional state sovereignty, from representation and from people's politics, thus erasing some of the political historic depth, favouring quicker connections and mergers at the obvious cost of welfare.

CONCLUSION: FROM SOVEREIGNTY TO GOVERNMENTALITY OR FROM GOVERNMENTALITY TO GOVERNANCE

How does radical postcolonial philosophy integrate projects of governmentality/governance, how are the latter concepts introduced, transplanted or shaped by schools of thought that had chosen in their notable development until the moment of interruption, detour and deflection by western modernity – not to construct theories of the subject or of sovereignty? To which multiple spatial imaginaries does this correspond? Indeed, "Asia" is constructed as the limit of Europe, as its other and as its discontinuity.

However, subjectivations did and do occur, but they happen autonomously, not needing the European philosophical pattern, possibly as practices, *yogas* and therapies, non-discursive (or seen as such) experiences. They occur without any glorification of the subject or of political theory, under the auspices of a matter-of-fact and functional "utilitarian" approach good for the "real" world, for "lower or ordinary truth" (to use the Buddhist distinction), which is generally not held in very high esteem in the west, but which comes handy for "governance". So politics (with war, with governing peace and everything it involves) is practically useful though not transcendent, and is not likely to bring deliverance or any kind of ultimate freedom in classical Asian philosophical systems, either on the individual or on the social level. Utopia is not to be realised by politics, but does contribute to it in the way of political ideas and ideals. *Datong,* Utopia, is like a dream and there are sometimes futuristic dreams too. Like elsewhere, politics is caught in party politics away from utopian ideas, where it is driven by a battle and competition of political wills.

"Governance" is partly easily adopted and absorbed into state sovereignty thanks to the old heritage of "non-self", unleashing all sorts of new "subjects" without much mediation by a "public space", by "civil society"[107], with a different history of citizenship than in the west, often with the utmost violence and growing social gaps[108].

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[106] Aihwa ONG, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*, Duke UP, Durham 1999; *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*, Duke UP, Durham 2006; *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global (Studies in Urban and Social Change)*, ed. by Aihwa Ong & Ananya Roy, Wiley-Blackwell 2011, as well as other work by Aihwa Ong; Saskia Sassen, *The global city : New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton, Princeton UP 2001 (1st 1991); *Cities in a world economy*, Pine Forge Press, Thousand Oaks 2006 (1st 1994).

[107] On "civil society" and its transformed meanings in Asia compared to a European pattern, see Partha CHATTERJEE, *The Politics of the Governed: Popular Politics in Most of the World*, Columbia Univ. Press, New York 2004. On a debate concerning, in addition, the differences in this regard between the Indian subcontinent and Chinese societies, see Kuan-Hsing CHEN, "Civil Society and Min-Jian : on Political Society and Popular Democracy", *Cultural Studies* 17(6) 2003, 876–896, p. 883; *Asia as Method. Toward Deimperialization*, Duke UP, Durham 2010. The older idea of Asia as method, follows a long debate and refers Takeuchi Yoshimi: ref. Naoki Sakai, "Critique of Modernity : The Problem of Universalism and Particularism", *South Atlantic Quarterly* 87(3), 1988, pp. 475-504.

[108] This is not to suggest that the process was less violent in the west.

In the present paper i have attempted several things at the same time: i have tried to show the different epistemological foundations for the concepts of sovereignty, subjectivity as well as related concepts in "western" philosophies and in "Asian" ones, in particular in early Buddhism, from which i draw most of my examples. I have also tried to show that, whatever, the basis for sovereignty and its varied histories east and west, sovereignty in any of its new (and partly reduced) shapes, has no problem in adopting forms of governance and direct management beyond and regardless of representational politics, through imbedded and generalised governmentality which is a feature of post-1989 (post-Cold War) conditions on the planet. I have further tried to argue that in this sense, "post-1989" represents an important watershed in world history, political forms and cognitive patterns, especially so in Asia. I have tried to corroborate the latter through the contention that political forms necessarily have matching *epistemes*, with which they are in a reciprocal relationship: one influences and reproduce the other, and they function as a system.