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Abstract:

Is there a relation between wealth and human nature? Can the Delphic maxim "know thyself" ($\gammaνῶθι σεαυτὸν$) help us decide whether or not to be affluent and wealthy? And if so: how rich? Human beings, says Aristotle, can only use and benefit from a limited amount of goods and services. The very rich have more than they need; the poor are in need because they have the minimum required to live, or even less. Only in the 'middle' do we find those who enjoy 'true wealth'. Any society should search to increase the number of persons who possess enough and therefore are 'truly wealthy'. Every human being should have what one needs. To achieve a 'truly rich' 'middle class' (Aristotle) rather than aspiring to increase its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), per capita GDP or income equality in terms of a normal distribution a country must solve the welfare problem of its population. That means it must end with the food, health, education, employment, and other such gaps. This paper argues that the hierarchical stratification of the contemporary Mexican society that favors an outrageously rich minority could renew its social order with the understanding of two Aristotelian categories: attainment of 'real wealth' for large 'middle class'. This would allow Mexico to become a member of the developed world by turning into a mostly middle class country.

Keywords:

GDP, Human Nature, Mexican Society, Middle Class, Wealth.

FOREIGNERS TO HUMAN NATURE

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Introduction¹

This research is not mere an academic exercise; it originates from the lack of debate in question regarding the dignity of the human being and its relationship with the economic, social, political and cultural sphere in Mexico. It is a contribution of a humanist character from a multidisciplinary perspective. It values the case of Mexico as a typical Latin-American country. Its reflections are generalizable, because they aid the understanding of inequality, violence, populisms and other problems presented on a global scale, to varying degrees. There is a need to rethink the concepts of middle class, non-sub ordered work and true wealth as fundamental elements to overcome the civilizing crisis that plagues the contemporary world.

The bibliography on the topics of this essay is extremely broad, but the books quoted in it careful selection of the authors that help to substantiate the main theses of this work. The reader will find some of the most important

¹ This topic has been treated previously Mc Cadden (1992), (2008).

historians and thinkers of Latin America in a discussion with classical thinkers as Plato and Aristotle and modern thinkers like Hegel. Not only the Western canon is alluding, but also thinkers from Spain, New Spain and Mexico and even writers and poets such as José Vasconcelos and Octavio Paz (Nobel Prize in literature). The documentary sources used are both European and Latin American and the dialogue between these two traditions is as enriching as was the phenomenon of miscegenation.

Operata recludit²

A Hegelian proposition will help me find my topic: "What is "familiarly known" is not properly known, just for the reason that it is "familiar" (Hegel, 1967, p. 31).³ Wealth is so familiar to us that we do not question it. Is more wealth truly better than less? Rephrasing Hegel one could say that being wealthy and rich is so "familiar" to us that there is no room to question its benefits. My claim is that precisely because this issue is so "familiar" to us it is not properly known.

The question I want to raise reads as follows: Is there a relation between wealth and human nature? Does the Delphic maxim "know thyself" (*γνῶθι σεαυτὸν*, transliterated: *gnōthi seauton*) have anything to do with being affluent? When one lacks wealth human dignity suffers a debasing effect named misery. But is there a similar danger when one is too wealthy? Who can deny that wealth is important for a human being, the question is why? This seems obvious and that's why it is so hard to give an answer. Now, can our human nature give us a clue about wellbeing and wealth? May Humanists say anything about wealth that might be appreciated by economists, administrators and accountants.

It is my understanding that our contemporary shared global culture on wealth is an ideology that is producing apparently unsolvable social problems. Present-day culture knows little about the Aristotelian concepts of 'real wealth' and its relation with the 'middle class'. In this paper I advance the hypothesis that the

study and implementation of these two correlated ideas would generate an unbeatable binomial solution for societies; composed, as far as possible, of equals and similars, where friendship could flourish. A 'truly well-off' 'middle class' would reduce the present Economic inequality also referred to as income inequality, wealth inequality or wealth gap.

Strangers to Human Nature: outsiders

However let me start elsewhere. On October 12th 1992 Spain, Europe and the American Continent celebrated the 500th anniversary of the encounter of two worlds, or rather the gathering of men who so far ignored all matters relating to their mutual existence.⁴ In three years Mexico will be commemorating 500 years, not necessarily rejoicing, of the arrival of Hernan Cortes and his men to the coast of what is known today as "Estado de Veracruz", freely translatable as the "True Cross State". It faces the Atlantic Ocean and is a one of the 32 states of the United States of Mexico or United Mexican States; which the official name of Mexico.

The "novel experience of new worlds"⁵ could easily be labelled as an encounter of 'foreigners', 'strangers' or even 'aliens', but one has to recognize that these terms do not properly describe what took place at the time, since to say or think in those terms one must somehow assume that one is actually facing a human being.

The Encounter of Spaniards and Mexican Aztecs

If Mexican Aztecs had said that Spaniards were 'Aliens', or Spaniards had said that Aztecs were 'Foreigners', they would have had ultimately to accept that they were citizens from another country, or from a different sovereign-

⁴ See O'Gorman (1973, p. 73 - 93).

⁵ Bernardo García Martínez points out: „Desde los años de Cristóbal Colón y durante las primeras décadas del siglo XVI la presencia española en América se adornó con definiciones grandiosas. Así, las mayores acciones de los castellanos en esta otra parte del mundo fueron aclamadas como 'descubrimientos' y 'conquistas' (...). De ninguna manera proporcionaban una definición precisa (...) se fundaban en generalizaciones bastante simples y reflejaban percepciones discutibles y un punto de vista muy relativo (el de ellos)" (2002, p. 3)

² Concealed opens. Horace Epistulae 1 5.

³ In German: „Das bekannte überhaupt ist darum, weil es bekannt ist, nicht erkannt.“ (Hegel, 1986, p. 35).

ty.⁶ Initially neither Aztecs nor Spaniards considered the other party as citizens from another nation. At first, they perceived each other as nonhumans.

The Spaniards: beyond human nature

I will say a word about the way Spaniards understood themselves in such an adventure. Heirs of the Greco-Roman culture and the Judeo-Christian religion, they had an accurate knowledge and a fairly developed awareness of their human nature and their identity as persons. In addition to this cultural background, the invasion of Spain by the Moors in 711 A. D. made them ardent Christians and convinced them that they had to fight all those who did not profess the Catholic religion.⁷

But how did the Mexican Aztecs view the Spaniards that came into their land? It is difficult for us to have an exact idea almost five hundred years later. However, through the valuable testimony of Moctezuma (1466 – 1520), who was the Aztec emperor at the time, one can begin to grasp the reaction the natives had (León-Portilla, 2000).

Moctezuma was familiar with the mysterious signs that had appeared a dozen years earlier which were associated with fire falling from heaven, as strong as the aurora, when he was informed of the arrival of people mounted on large deer (horses) (León-Portilla, 2000). The most impressive omens originated from the in-

terpretation of a luminous mist which appeared three hours before dawn, and a whirlwind that rose to the sky. All these were seen as manifestations of the gods that supposedly were descending from the heavens, so when the Spaniards landed on the Mexican Coast, Moctezuma was certain they were the gods accounted by the omens.⁸

The first encounters between Indians and Spaniards were delicate. The Aztecs thought they had to do with Quetzalcoatl⁹ the deified mythical King who, after having committed a crime, had exiled himself and had promised to return. Furthermore, the Aztec tradition spoke about a physical appearance very similar to that now attributed to Spaniards. This seemed to confirm the divine origin of these newcomers.

When Moctezuma's messengers informed him about the arrival of "towers or mounts on the sea" (the Spanish ships), he sent his wizards and enchanters to meet them, accompanied by prisoners consecrated for slaughter, along with warriors carrying all kinds of foods intended to impress the newcomers. By doing so Moctezuma was pursuing a dual goal, the bewitchment of the Spaniards and at the same he was trying to worship them.

Moctezuma was in fact convinced that he was facing gods who had to be worshipped.¹⁰

⁶ This seems to have been eventually acknowledged by both parties: „Cortés le dijo, (...) somos vasallos de un tan gran señor que es el Emperador Don Carlos que manda muchos reinos y tierras (...) el cacique gordo [de Cempoala], dando suspiros se queja reciamente del gran Montezuma y de sus gobernadores diciendo que de pocos tiempos acá le había sotijugado (...) y les tiene tan apremiados que no osan hacer sino lo que les manda, porque es señor de grandes ciudades y tierras, y vasallos y ejércitos de guerra” (Díaz del Castillo, 1968, p. 145).

⁷ „Durante la mayor parte de la Edad Media los diversos grupos hispánicos estuvieron en continuas guerras: cristianos contra cristianos, musulmanes contra musulmanes y cristianos contra musulmanes. En el norte comenzó a formarse la idea de una unidad hispánica asentada en el cristianismo y con la finalidad de reconquistar el territorio del antiguo reino visigodo. La Reconquista tomó el carácter de una guerra santa desde el siglo IX (...). El matrimonio de Isabel y Fernando I (1469) logró la unidad monárquica, y la territorial de Granada en 1492” (Sierra Moncayo – Sordo Cedeño, 2007, p. 48 – 49).

⁸ „Por todas partes vienen envueltos sus cuerpos, solamente aparecen sus caras. Son blancas, son como si fueran de cal. Tienen el cabello amarillo, aunque algunos lo tienen negro. Larga su barba es, también amarilla, el bigote también tienen amarillo (...) en cuanto a sus alimentos, son como alimentos humanos (...) Moctezuma tenía la creencia de que ellos eran dioses, por dioses los tenía y como a dioses los adoraba” (León-Portilla, 2000, p. 31 – 33).

⁹ León-Portilla says: “la invención histórica náhuatl de Quetzalcóatl concluye, transformado ya en mito el gran sacerdote, pasando a narrar su huida de Tula, su abandono de la Toltecáyotl y su marcha definitiva a Tilán, Tlapalan [que significa el paraíso]. Quetzalcóatl tuvo que irse forzado por hechiceros venidos de lejos con el empeño de introducir en Tula el rito de los sacrificios humanos. El sacerdote tuvo un momento de debilidad. Rompió su vida de abstinencia y castidad. Pero arrepentido luego, volvió a erguirse para afirmar de nuevo las ideas a las que había consagrado su vida (...) decidió hacer realidad la búsqueda de Tilán, Tlapalan”, (1973, p. 33)

¹⁰ „Y la razón de obrar así Motecuhzoma es que él tenía la creencia de que ellos eran dioses, por dioses los tenía y como a dioses los adoraba. Por esto fueron llamados y fueron designados como ‘Dioses

Instead of trying to discover what kind of being was before them, or to invent a new legend about those new beings that came from the sea, the Indians somehow overlaid them with their beliefs and preconceptions. Moctezuma wanted to know what they were facing.¹¹ Wizards were assigned to cast spells upon them, and he also ordered the sacrifice of prisoners in front of them thinking that the Spaniards would ask to drink their blood.¹² The result was unex-

“venidos del cielo” (León-Portilla, 2000, p. 33). Asimismo, abunda León-Portilla: “luego de prisa se fueron, hasta México llegaron. Y entraron no más de noche; sólo en la noche llegaron. Y cuando esto sucedió, Motecuhzoma ya no supo de sueño, ya no supo de comida. Ya nadie con él hablaba. Y si alguna cosa hacía, la tenía como cosa vana. Casi cada momento suspiraba. Estaba desmoralizado, se tenía como un abatido (...). Y por todo esto decía: ‘-¿Qué sucederá con nosotros? ¿Quién de veras queda en pie?’ (...) Y luego fueron a la Casa de la Serpiente los enviados. También él, Motecuhzoma. Luego a sus ojos fueron los sacrificios. Abrieron el pecho a los cautivos: con su sangre rociaron a los enviados. La razón de hacer tal cosa, es haber ido por camino muy difícil; por haber visto a los dioses; haber fijado sus ojos en su cara y en su cabeza. ¡Bien con los dioses conversaron!” (2000, p. 29 – 30)

¹¹ „En este tiempo precisamente despachó una misión Motecuhzoma. Envío todos cuantos pudo, hombres inhumanos, los presagiadores, los magos. También envió guerreros, valientes, gentes de mando” (León-Portilla, 2000, p. 33).

¹² Hernán Cortés: „Y el dicho Muteczuma y muchos de los principales de la ciudad estuvieron conmigo hasta quitar los ídolos y limpiar las capillas y poner las imágenes, y todo con alegresemblante, y les defendí que no matasen criaturas a los ídolos, como acostumbraran; porque, demás deser muy aborrecible a Dios, vuestra sacra majestad por sus leyes lo prohíbe y manda que el que matare lo maten. (...) Los bultos y los cuerpos de los ídolos en quienes estas gentes creen son de muy mayores estaturas que el cuerpo de un gran hombre. Son hechos de masa de todas las semillas y legumbres que ellos comen, molidas y mezcladas unas conotras, y amásanlas con sangre de corazones de cuerpos humanos, los cuales abren por los pechos vivos y les sacan el corazón, y de aquella sangre que sale del amasan aquella harina (...) les ofrecían más corazones, que asimismo les sacrificaban, y les untan las caras con la sangre” (1995, p. 72 – 73). Fray Toribio Motolinía describe los sacrificios así: „otras veces tomaban el corazón y levantábanle hacia el sol, y a las veces untaban los labios de los ídolos con la sangre. Los corazones, a las veces los comían los ministros viejos; otras los enterraban, y luego tomaban el cuerpo y echábanle por las gradas abajo a rodar; y allegado abajo, si era de los presos en guerra (...) aparejaban

pected. Witchcraft had no effect, and when Spaniards saw the sacrifices and the food stained with human blood they were disgusted; they vomited and covered their eyes.¹³

Only by carrying out experiments did the Indians get an indication that the Spaniards were not gods. Using these “quasi scientific experiments” they discovered that they were - to a certain degree - men just like themselves. It is told that an Indian who helped a Spaniard cross a river kept him with his head underwater for several minutes to see how he tolerated it! And only when the Indian saw that the Spaniard was dead did he realize that the latter was not a god. There are also accounts of what an Indian woman attested to. She said, after having sex with a Spaniard, that he was neither more nor less human than others.

In the bellicose terms of Fray Toribio de Benavente Motolinia (1491 – 1569), one of the first twelve Franciscans who arrived to evangelize Mexico: „(the Indians) admired the horses and what the Spaniards could do on them, some thought that man and horse were altogether one, although this was only in the early stages, because afterwards everyone knew they were men and that horses were beasts, these people look and notice very many things, and seeing them dismount they called horses *castillan mazatl*, which means deer of Castile (...). Spaniards were called were *tetehuv* (*teteu*), which means gods, and the Spaniards corrupting this word said *teules*, this name lasted with them for more than three years, until we found the way to have the Indians understand that there is no more than one God, and that they should call the Spaniards Christians” (Motolinía, 1979, p. 32 – 33).

The belief the Indians had about the Spaniards evolved the more they spent time with them: if at first they regarded the Europeans as gods, soon the natives discovered that they were men;¹⁴ although “some” very ambitious and unsavory men.

aquella carne humana con otras comidas, y otro día hacían fiesta y le comían” (1979, p. 32 – 33).

¹³ „Pero cuando ellos (los españoles) vieron aquello (las víctimas) sintieron mucho asco, escupieron, se restregaban las pestañas; cerraban los ojos, movían la cabeza. Y la comida que estaba manchada de sangre, la desecharon con náusea” (León-Portilla, 2000, p. 33).

¹⁴ “Vista por la República Mexicana tanta novedad, procuró saber por razones evidentes, siestas gentes

Indians: beneath human nature

Readers interested in the philosophy of the Mexica may refer to the work by Miguel León-Portilla's *Nahuatl philosophy* (1979). For now, it suffices to remember that the Aztec people (or Nahuatl) considered themselves the people of the Sun.¹⁵ There rested both their strength and their weakness. They were very religious, they believed in their divine mission of becoming a great nation but their religiosity, as we have noted, was full of myths, magic and legends.

How were the Aztec perceived by the newcomers? They were perceived in the light and thought drawn up by the European culture, particularly that of Spain. Let us remember some historical facts. Christopher Columbus' trip was financed by Isabella I of Castile (1451 – 1504), and for this reason it was in a way a private enterprise. All other expeditions also used private funds, with the added goal of discovering and offering new lands to the Spanish Crown. Thus, without a doubt, *economic inter-*

eran los dioses de lo alto o hombres humanos, y así por mando y acuerdo Motheuhzoma despacharon gentes muy secretamente a Cempoalla para que le trajesen verdadera relación de lo que había, no embargante que por sus hechiceros, encantadores y adivinos, sabían que era gente nueva y no dioses, sino hombres, aunquesus no los podía comprender, por cuya causa no se eternizaba a decir que fuesen hombres, pues las fuerzas de sus encantamientos y perdíancontra estas gentes (...) supieron muy de raíz como eran hombres, porque comían dormían y bebían y apetecían cosas de hombres. (...) Finalmente, sobre este argumento de si eran dioses u hombres no se sabían determinar, porque si fuesen dioses, decían ellos, no derribaran nuestros oráculos." (Camargo, 1972, p. 185 – 186). The first complete edition, illustrated and annotated, was checked against the original preserved in the archives of the National Museum of Anthropology Lauro E. Rosell; It includes a study of the engineer Don Alberto Escalona Ramos, with the itinerary of primitive tlaxcaltecas. The 1892 edition was made by Alfredo Chavero and was made by agreement of General Porfirio Diaz, President of the Republic, as a tribute to Christopher Columbus in Chicago, in the Fourth Centenary of Discovery del New World.

¹⁵ „Los aztecas se orientaron por el camino de lo que hoy llamaríamos misticismo imperialista. Persuadidos de que para evitar el cataclismo final era necesario fortalecer al Sol, tomaron como misión proporcionarle la energía vital encerrada en el líquido precioso que mantiene vivos a los hombres” (León-Portilla, 1979, p. 126).

ests were always present during the conquests. Money was needed to repay loans obtained to finance the trips.

At the same time a *religious component* was vital within 16th century Spanish mentality concerning the conquest of Mexico. They wanted to gain, and this sometimes prevailed, souls for the true religion. Hence economic and religious interests were so interwoven that it is difficult to analyze them independently. From the beginning Spaniards wanted several things: wealth, the Spiritual Conquest of Mexico (Richard, 1974) and the acquisition of new territories for the Spanish Crown. To achieve this, they were willing to risk their lives.¹⁶

Upon their arrival Spaniards were definitely not interested in the enquiry about the "ontological status" of the beings that inhabited the newly discovered lands. For the Spaniards most indigenous peoples represented only a cluster of ignorant, superstitious and barbaric individuals. Nevertheless from the very first moment, some good Spaniards considered that American Indians, far from being mere means of enrichment, were above all persons that merited the proclamation of Jesus Christ.

One can speak of a certain dual Spanish mentality. One underestimated Indians and reduced them to "sub-humans"; consequently providing for grounds to consider them slaves by nature. The other one considered Mexican

¹⁶ Bernardo García Martínez: "El conquistador español arquetípico valoraba sobremanera el oro, pero en los años en que la conquista llegó a Mesoamérica ya eran muchos los españoles que se habían dado cuenta de que la mayor riqueza de las tierras conquistadas estaba en el trabajo de sus pobladores, los indios. No importaba tanto conquistar a la tierra en sí como a su gente. Habían llegado a esa conclusión, si no por inteligentes, al menos por haber experimentado las consecuencias de la explotación desmedida de los antillanos en busca de oro y perlas, consecuencias que, junto con los efectos mortíferos de guerras y enfermedades, habían desembocado en el despoblamiento de esas islas. (...) Estas circunstancias fríamente materiales, surgidas del hecho innegable de que la conquista tuvo fines de lucro, coincidieron con las consideraciones filosóficas y humanísticas tejidas por esos años a propósito del derecho de España sobre América y la justificación de la conquista, y sobre todo a propósito de la misión evangelizadora de España, para fundamentar la política de defensa de los indios que mucho honró a los pensadores, juristas y políticos españoles que la promovieron frente a no pocos detractores" (2002, p. 63).

Indians as children of God, called to receive the good news of salvation.¹⁷ Without going into the discussions about the legitimacy of the conquest and the so-called rights of the Spanish Crown on the American continent,¹⁸ let us consider these two ways of understanding.

For economic reasons some tried to deny Indians their status as human beings, and their right to enjoy their human dignity. Already Columbus had resorted to using them to alleviate the lack of manpower on the Island of Hispaniola. He had used them as slaves, compelling them to forced labor. Ferdinand I himself, after the death of Isabella, ratified the practice of using Indians as slaves by arguing they were prisoners of war. Some thinkers and philosophers would have doubted the existence of their souls if it weren't the case that in the bull

*Sublimis Deus*¹⁹ (1537) Pope Paul III strongly condemned the practice of slavery. He denounced this practice and clearly declared the indigenous peoples of America to be rational beings with souls. To think the contrary, he wrote, was an inspiration of Satan.

If the natives had no souls, the question of salvation became superfluous. They would have had a purely economic function. Somehow a more 'classical' tradition was restored and some explored the theory of natural slavery developed by Aristotle (*Politics*, book IV, chapter IX). This is the case of Ginés de Sepúlveda (1490 – 1573) who despised Indians and understood the rapport between Indians and Spaniards in the same terms as the Greeks toward barbarians.²⁰

Others were supporters of the "full humanity" of the indigenous peoples. Better still, some said that as children of God Indians should be

¹⁷ Motolinía: „En el primero año de la venida de los frailes, el padre fray Martín de Valencia, de santa memoria, vino a México, y tomando un compañero que sabía un poco de la lengua, fuese a visitar los pueblos de la laguna delagua dulce, que apenas se sabía cuántos eran, ni adónde estaban, y comenzando por Xuchimilco y Cuyuacan, veníanlos a buscar de los otros pueblos (...) y luego por escrito y con intérprete los predicaban y bautizaban algunos niños, rogando siempre a Nuestro Señor que su santa palabra hiciese fruto en las ánimas de aquéllos infieles, y los alumbrase y convirtiese a su santa fe (...). En este tiempo en los pueblos que había frailes salían adelante, y de muchos pueblos los veían a buscar y a rogar que los fuesen a ver, y de esta manera por muchas partes se iba extendiendo y ensanchando la fe de Jesucristo” (1979, p. 78 – 79, 82).

¹⁸ „Acaso sea interesante llamar la atención sobre el hecho curioso de que las polémicas reavivadas por el Quinto Centenario están teniendo lugar sobre todo a propósito de lo que hemos llamado el aspecto resolutivo del Descubrimiento. Lo que se discute apasionadamente – y se discutió ya en los tiempos de la conquista, en los tiempos de Vitoria y Sepúlveda- son los múltiples problemas implicados en el aspecto resolutivo: si la resolución de conquistar las tierras descubiertas era justa o injusta, lo que autorizaría incluso a suscitar la cuestión de si los europeos tenían el derecho siquiera de descubrir, aún conspicuamente, un continente ya poblado (...) si el descubrimiento comportó un proceso civilizador bien un proceso triturador de las culturas americanas (...) De hecho, muchas personas, en las vísperas del Quinto Centenario, vienen a sugerir que su conmemoración debiera, en todo caso, consistir en un ‘pedir perdón’ los europeos, pero sobre todo los españoles, a los aztecas, a los mayas” (Bueno, 1989, p. 3).

¹⁹ „The enemy of the human race, who opposes all good deeds in order to bring men to destruction, beholding and envying this, invented a means never before heard of, by which he might hinder the preaching of God's word of Salvation to the people: he inspired his satellites who, to please him, have not hesitated to publish abroad that the Indians of the West and the South, and other people of whom We have recent knowledge should be treated as dumb brutes created for our service, pretending that they are incapable of receiving the Catholic Faith (...) Indians and other peoples should be converted to the faith of Jesus Christ by preaching the word of God and by the example of good and holy living” (Paul III, 1537).

²⁰ Fray Domingo de Soto: „El doctor Sepúlveda sustenta la parte afirmativa afirmando que la tal guerra no solamente es lícita, más expediente. El señor obispo defiende la negativa diciendo que no solamente no es expediente, más no es lícita, sino inicua y contraria a nuestra cristiana religión (...) Fundó, pues, el dicho doctor Sepúlveda su sentencia brevemente, por cuatro razones: la primera, por la gravedad de los delictos de aquella gente, señaladamente por la idolatría y otros pecados que cometen contra natura. La segunda, por la rudeza de sus ingenios, que son de natura gente servil y bárbara, y por ende obligada a servir a los de ingenio más elegante, como son los españoles. La tercera, por el fin de la fe, porque aquella subjecion es más cómoda y expediente para su predicación y persuasión. La cuarta, por la injuria que unos entre sí hacen otros, matando hombres para sacrificarlos y algunos para comerlos”, “Summa de la polémica entre Ginés de Sepúlveda y fray Bartolomé de las Casas acerca de las guerras de conquista”, (Bartolomé de las Casas, 1965, p. 218).

respected in the same way as other Christians, and they should have access to identical rights as Europeans. This option was the equivalent of a condemnation of colonial domination.

With the arrival of the first twelve Franciscan priests²¹ Cortes's Conquest was challenged, or at least assumed from a more spiritual and peaceful angle. Although the exploitation of indigenous people continued, Bartolome de las Casas (1484 – 1566) helped develop laws that aimed at the protection of their freedom. The "Valladolid debate" (1550 – 1551) was the first moral debate on both the rights and treatment of colonized people by colonizers. Bartolome de la Casas argued in favor of the Amerindians despite their practice of human sacrifices and other such mores. Opposing this view were a number of scholars and priests including the above mentioned humanist scholar Juan Gines de Sepulveda, who followed Aristotle's doctrine (Politics, Book I, Chapter II) on slavery backed with additional religious arguments.

The controversy extended the matter on the rights and humanity of the Indians to Spain where it became of interest to the most remarkable intellectuals of the time: Vitoria (1483 – 1546), Soto (1494 – 1596), Vázquez de Manchaca (1512 – 1569), Acosta (1540 – 1600), Bañez (1528 – 1604), and Suárez (1548 – 1617), among others. Thus, if at first Spaniards undertook no enquiry into the status of Indians, eventually they did.

The knowledge the conquerors and the conquered had of each other went in different directions. At first Spaniards in a very pragmati-

cally manner simply admitted some "humanity" to the colonized, particularly the right to be evangelized. Conversely, originally Indians were uncertain of the nature of the newcomers but ultimately discovered the bittersweet "human nature" of their conquerors; some of whom were thirsty to exploit them and others were craving to save them.

The upshot: Mestizos, sons of the gods and of the barbarians

The conquest of Mexico, of Peru, and later of the American continent, altered permanently the "new world". Among the "novelties" surely the most radical one was miscegenation. Never before in human history had the world seen the fruit of the union between people of the two different worlds in question. Nobody had ever seen a Euro-American or an American-European. "New men" were born. In fact, it could be argued that miscegenation is in itself a biological "confirmation" of the humanity of both Indians and Spaniards. Nonetheless one would have to say categorically that among mestizos the "alien" element and their 'foreignness', far from disappearing, turned inward. In a very peculiar way a Mestizo is someone "alien" or "foreign" both to Spaniards and Indians. The individual resulting from the interbreeding of an American and a European remains somehow "novelties" to himself. These "novelties" endured as inscribed in him. That is why the human "novelties" of all Mestizos seems to be the need to overcome these oppositions.

A "Mestizo" usually does not perceive straightaway his dignity as a human person. He is rather both: conquered and conqueror, server and master, poor and rich, Indian and Spanish. Mestizos live in their own person the conflict generated by the conquest and this vein is still alive in the Mexican culture today.

A Mexican philosopher, Samuel Ramos (1897 – 1957), wrote in his book "Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico"²² that Mexicans have

²¹ Francisco Morales and Óscar Mazín say: „El primer grupo religioso que vino a México fue el de doce franciscanos que llegaron en 1524. Les habían precedido un año antes otros tres franciscanos, entre ellos Fray Pedro de Gante (paje flamenco de Carlos I de España, convertido a franciscano y delos primeros que Hernán Cortes recibe en México). Aunque ya existía una diócesis, la Carolingia, fundada en 1519, las actividades misionales de los franciscanos tuvieron como ámbito geográfico no los confusos límites de esa diócesis, sino el ámbito conventual de sus comunidades religiosas. (...) Pero no solamente fue el ámbito geográfico lo que le dio la peculiaridad a estos primeros años de la iglesia novohispana. Fueron sobre todo los privilegios que la Santa Sede concedió a los misioneros, privilegios que, en cierto modo, hacían innecesaria la presencia de los obispos (...) la fundación de una iglesia, (...) la conversión de los indígenas" (García Martínez, 2002, p. 124).

²² Samuel Ramos (1987). Guillermo Hurtado (1939): "El Perfil del Hombre y la Cultura en México, 1939, México, Imprenta Mundial. It became a classic of great importance, and it led to the formation of Hyperion group. (...) The Hyperion was a group of young teachers and students made up of Emilio Uranga (1921 – 1988), Jorge Portilla (1918 – 1963),

not yet had access to their being persons; they have not yet developed their own personality. Mexicans in general, he tells us, suffer from an unjust self-assessment of their value.²³ They are continuously underestimating themselves when compared with other cultures and other models.²⁴ They flee their own personality²⁵ and do not dare to be honest, neither to themselves nor when facing others.

Luis Villoro (n. 1922), Ricardo Guerra (1927 – 2007), Salvador Reyes Nevares (1922 – 1993). Leopoldo Zea (1912 – 2004) joins the group when he chooses as his subject of study of "The Mexican" Guillermo Hurtado (2006). Also see: Ramos (1962).

²³ Samuel Ramos: "La diferencia psíquica que separa a la clase elevada de mexicanos de la clase inferior, radica en que los primeros disimulan de un modo completo sus sentimientos de menor valía, porque el nexo de sus actitudes manifiestas con los móviles inconscientes es tan indirecta y sutil, que su descubrimiento es difícil, en tanto que el 'pelado' está exhibiendo con franqueza cínica el mecanismo de su psicología (...) Son sentimientos que el individuo no tolera en su conciencia por el desagrado y depresión que le causan (...) se manifiestan como sensaciones vagas de malestar, cuyo motivo el individuo mismo no encuentra ni puede definir. Cuando logran asomarse a la conciencia asumen matices variados. Enumeremos algunos de ellos: debilidad, es valoración de sí mismo (menor valía), sentimiento de incapacidad, de deficiencia vital" (Ramos, 1962, p. 58).

²⁴ For the Hyperion group it was important to analyze the Mexican being under various approaches. For Ramos the inferiority complex, which he takes Adler (disciple of Freud), originates from the trauma of the Conquests, the Colonial life, and the failed effort to build a successful society from an invaded one. A society raped by interventions and subject to dominant countries. The complex is rooted in the non-identification with neither Indigenous nor Spanish cultures; looking for a symbolic force in other cultures, encouraging *malinchismo*. Uranga sees Mexicans as accidents that trample; Portilla as beings essentially determined by relaxation, delightfully taking nothing seriously. This would be a defense before the emptiness of their being. The reader can confront with Uranga (1990) and Portilla (1985).

²⁵ „Podemos representarnos al mexicano como un hombre que huye de sí mismo para refugiarse en el mundo ficticio (...) Nadie puede tocarlo sin herirse. Tiene una susceptibilidad extraordinaria a la crítica, y la mantiene a raya anticipándose a esgrimir la maledicencia contra el prójimo. Por la misma razón, la autocritica queda paralizada. Necesita convenirse de que los otros son inferiores a él. No admite, por lo tanto, superioridad alguna" (Ramos, 1987, p. 60).

That Mexicans struggle to consider themselves "human beings" is further aggravated by the context of violence in which both cultures met at first contact. Octavio Paz (1914 – 1998), awarded The Nobel Prize in Literature (1990), in his book *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (Paz, 1961), says: Mexicans are sons of "La Malinche" (1502 – 1539).²⁶ "La Malinche"²⁷ was the female Indian lover of nobody less than Hernan Cortés (1485 – 1547), the great conqueror of Mexico. By translating what the Indians wanted to express, her words reduced distances and gave the Spanish an asset that the Indians did not have. She helped Spaniards understand their "enemies", while remaining

²⁶ Octavio Paz: „si la Chingada es una representación de la Madre violada, no me parece forzado asociarla a la Conquista, que fue también una violación, no solamente en el sentido histórico, sino en la carne misma de las indias. El símbolo de la entrega es doña Malinche, la amante de Cortés. Es verdad que ella se da voluntariamente al Conquistador, pero éste, apenas deja de serle útil, la olvida. Doña Marina se ha convertido en una figura que representa a las indias, fascinadas, violadas o seducidas por los españoles. Y del mismo modo que el niño no perdona a su madre que lo abandone para ir en busca de su padre, el pueblo mexicano no perdona su traición a la Malinche. Ella encarna lo abierto, lo chingado, frente a nuestros indios, estoicos, impáctiles y cerrados. (...) Los malinchistas son los partidarios de que México se abra al exterior: los verdaderos hijos de la Malinche, que es la Chingada en persona. De nuevo aparece lo cerrado por oposición a lo abierto" (Paz, 1967, p. 77 – 78).

²⁷ Bernardo García Martínez: "así fue que en abril de 1519 (coincidiendo en el tiempo con una de las fallidas expediciones a Pánuco) un poco más de 600 soldados castellanos al mando de Hernando Cortés y varios capitanes subalternos desembocaron en una playa inmediata al actual puerto de Veracruz. Habían venido siguiendo los pasos de Grijalva y tenían noción más o menos clara del punto al que se dirigían. Se habían enfrascado en algunas contiendas con los habitantes de los litorales del Golfo, pero su verdadero interés no estaba en las cosas recorridas ni en esas pequeñas conquistas, sino en la percepción de que tenían por delante un reto más grande que afrontar. Tuvieron cuidado en ir cimentando lo que vendría a ser una base de operaciones, lo que incluía tejer ciertas relaciones y hacerse de guías y traductores. En esta calidad fue que habían incorporado a su grupo a una mujer oriunda de Coatzacoalcos, Malintzi, conocida también como La Malinche o doña Marina, quien se haría famosa como intérprete y amante de Cortés", (García Martínez, 2002, p. 5 – 6).

herself indigenous. Through her collaboration²⁸ she undertook the tough and problematic task of serving the conquerors. Octavio Paz concludes, not without reason, that each "Mexican Mestizo" is the creation of a "morganatic" marriage between a male member of a Spanish family and a person of an Indigenous one which was considered of inferior rank. Since then the rank of the lower pair has remained unchanged; it is no secret that Indians are despised and treated differently to this day in Mexico. Mexican Mestizos are half-and-half children of such "marriages", in case they were the fruit of a legal marriage, but never were awarded the titles, fiefs, or property of the parent of higher rank. This was usually the case even if originally the mother belonged to a royal or noble Indian family; which was case of "La Malinche".

These Mestizos have an enormous task. In a way not only do they live in two "worlds" at the same time but they have to cope with two differing cultures, which were occasionally conflicting. That is why "opposites" survive inscribed in every Mestizo and why their human "task" seems to be the need to overcome them. They embody the vanquisher and the vanquished, the betrayer and the betrayed.²⁹ They were forced to create a new realm out of a bicultural sphere, and a bilingual realm. This is how the fresh Mexican nation was born.

This task still is left to accomplished, the Mestizo is not able to remain foreign to his nature and, in a certain way, must discover and conquer its real being and true dignity.³⁰ Many

minds have sought to provide "solutions" for this challenge. Let us mention one of these attempts, the one offered by Vasconcelos (1963), a Mexican philosopher. According to him, Mestizos are the men of the future, the new race which he calls the "Latin-American race", the "bronze race", or even the "cosmic race".³¹ This "cosmic race" would be a fifth race, built with the finest of all other races; the ultimate achievement of all races. Located in the Iberian part of the American continent, this race has the mission to rethink and reinterpret the world after its own sensibilities and perceptions.³²

do aún esa que reconcilie nuestra libertad con el orden, la palabra con el acto y ambos con una evidencia que ya no será sobrenatural, sino humana: la de nuestros semejantes. En esa búsqueda hemos retrocedido una y otra vez, para luego avanzar con más decisión hacia delante. Y ahora, de pronto, hemos llegado al límite: en unos cuantos años hemos agotado todas las formas históricas que poseía Europa. No nos queda sino la desnudez o la mentira. (...) Estamos al fin solos (Paz, 1967, p. 173 - 174).

³¹ Vasconcelos: „El objeto del continente nuevo y antiguo es mucho más importante. Su predestinación obedece al designio de constituir la cuna de una raza quinta en la que se fundirán todos los pueblos, para reemplazar a los cuatro que aisladamente han venido forjando la Historia. En el suelo de América hallará término la dispersión, allí se consumará la unidad por el triunfo del amor fecundo, y la superación de todas las estirpes” (1963, p. 27).

³² Vasconcelos: „Cada raza que se levanta necesita constituir su propia filosofía, el *deus ex machina* de su éxito. Nosotros nos hemos educado bajo la influencia humillante de una filosofía ideada por nuestros enemigos, si se quiere de una manera sincera, pero con el propósito de exaltar sus propios fines y anular los nuestros. De esta suerte nosotros mismos hemos llegado a creer en la inferioridad del mestizo, en la irredención del indio, en la condenación del negro, en la decadencia irreparable del oriental. La rebelión de las armas no fue seguida de la rebelión de las conciencias. Nos rebelamos contra el poder político de España, caímos en la dominación económica y moral de la raza que ha sido señora del mundo desde que terminó la grandeza de España. Sacudimos un yugo para caer bajo otro nuevo. El movimiento de desplazamiento de que fuimos víctimas no se hubiese podido evitar aunque lo hubiésemos comprendido a tiempo. Hay cierta fatalidad en el destino de los pueblos lo mismo que en el destino de los individuos; pero ahora que se inicia una nueva fase de la Historia, se hace necesario reconstituir nuestra ideología y organizar conforme a una nueva doctrina étnica toda nuestra vida continental. Comencemos entonces haciendo vida propia y ciencia propia. Si no se li-

²⁸ Maybe not as discredited as the French women classified as *Nazi collaboratrice* by French resistance during World War II.

²⁹ Octavio Paz: „la desconfianza, el disimulo, la reserva cortés que cierra el paso al extraño, la ironía, todas, en fin las oscilaciones psíquicas con que al eludir la mirada ajena nos eludimos a nosotros mismos, son rasgos de la gente dominada, que teme y que finge frente al señor. Es revelador que nuestra intimidad jamás aflore de manera natural, sin el acicate de la fiesta, el alcohol o la muerte. Esclavos, siervos y razas sometidas se presentan siempre recubiertos por una máscara, sonriente o adusta. Y únicamente a solas, en los grandes momentos, se atreven a manifestarse tal como son” (Paz, 1967, p. 64).

³⁰ “El mexicano se esconde bajo muchas máscaras, que luego arroja un día de fiesta o de duelo, del mismo modo que la nación ha desgarrado todas las formas que la asfixiaban. Pero no hemos encontra-

We can ask about the origin of such a strange way to understand Mexico and Latin-American. Isn't Vasconcelos visualization a veiled way to provide a "new racist solution" to a nasty old problem? So why then mention Vasconcelos? Isn't he simply lost? Can he offer any great intuitions into the Mexican contemporary culture? What does he know that we don't? The truth is he knew something we haven't mentioned. See the following 18th Century Caste painting.³³



And then, this other painted screen about "The four continents" found in México:³⁴



berta primero el espíritu, jamás lograremos redimir la materia. (...) Tenemos el deber de formular las bases de una nueva civilización; y por eso mismo es menester que tengamos presente que las civilizaciones no se repiten ni en la forma ni en el fondo. La teoría de la superioridad étnica ha sido simplemente un recurso de combate común a todos los pueblos batalladores; pero la batalla que nosotros debemos librar es tan importante que no admite ningún ardid falso. Nosotros no sostenemos que somos ni que llegaremos a ser la primera raza del mundo, la más ilustrada, la más fuerte y la más hermosa. *Nuestro propósito es todavía más alto y más difícil que lograr una selección temporal.* Nuestros valores están en potencia a tal punto, que nada somos aún" (1963, p. 43 - 44).

³³ Anónimo, siglo XVIII. Museo Nacional del Virreinato (Tepotzotlán). Caste Painting. The sixteen main combinations: 1. Español con indígena: mestizo. 2. Mestizo con española: castizo. 3. Castizo con española: español. 4. Español con negra: mulato. 5. Mulato con española: morisca. 6. Morisco con española: chino. 7. Chino con india: salta atrás. 8. Salta atrás con mulata: lobo. 9. Lobo con china: gíbaro o jíbaro. 10. Gíbaro o jíbaro con mulata: albarazado. 11. Albarazado con negra: cambujo. 12. Cambujo con india: sambiaga (zambiaga). 13. Sambiago con loba: calpamulato. 14. Calpamulato con cambuja: tente en el aire. 15. Tente en el aire con mulata: no te entiendo. 16. No te entiendo con india: torna atrás. Dostupné na internete: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pintura_de_castas [8/9/2016].

Vasconcelos was merely poorly wording Mexico's History. Vasconcelos was perhaps too attached to the mentality of the early 20th Century and described what he was acquainted with in terms that we would surely be criticize today. But he knew what had happened in the sixteenth century and afterwards. The situation was experienced up to the Mexico's Independence, and its effects are felt even today. This phenomenon in terms coined in American English is what Americans call a "Melting pot". Mexico was the place where different types of people lived together and gradually created one community. Since the 16th Century, Mexico has lived a blending process that should have resulted in the invigoration of local cultures, but somehow it didn't. But actually what took

³⁴ Juan Correa (1645-1716). Los cuatro continentes (hacia 1684). Biombo. Óleo sobre lienzo (2.500 x 6.000 cm). Banco Nacional de México. Ciudad de México (México). Dostupné na internete: <https://www.revistadearte.com/2010/12/12/los-cuatro-continentes/> [8/9/2016]

place was a truly "cosmic novelty" in its own unusual way.

I believe that one of the most positive ways to portray what Vasconcelos tried to describe has been spectacularly worded by Charles C. Mann, who in turn was inspired by Bernardo de Balbuena's poem on Mexico's Grandeur (1604). Let us read what Charles C. Mann wrote in 2011:

Mexico City's multitude of poorly defined ethnic groups from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas made it the world's first truly global city – the Homogenocene for *Homo Sapiens*. (...) it was a place where East met West under an African and Indian gaze. (...) it was an amazingly contemporary place, unlike any other then on the planet. It is the first twenty-first-century city, the first of today's modern, globalized megalopolises." (Mann, 2012, p. 419).

Mann writes on a factual situation lived in Mexico in the early the 17th Century. These facts were seized in beautifully painted canvases like the ones we just depicted; dozens of such „caste paintings” still exist and are well known. Besides these paintings there are other testimonies that confirm the evidence of the phenomenon. This is the case of Bernardo de Balbuena's (1561 – 1627) poem, *La Grandeza Mexicana*, where he portrays the Mexico-City of the early 17th Century as follows:

„In thee,
Spain is joined with China,
Italy with Japan, and finally
an entire world in trade and order.
In thee, we enjoy the best of treasures
Of the West; in thee, the cream
Of all luster created in the East.”
(Mann, 2012, p. 419)

Mexico-City in 1604 was the American crossway of Europe, Africa and Asia. In many different ways the peoples from four continents shared the space-time coordinates of the same city, Mexico City.

Nevertheless, inequality remained in diversity

No matter how beautiful, modern and globalized Mexico-City actually was in the 17th Century, the fact is that contemporary „Europeans were fascinated and repulsed by New Spain's exotic inhabitants. The portraits were

intended to parade their fellows like specimens in zoo. Yet at the same time most show *castizos*, mestizos, and mulattos dressed sumptuously, moving happily about their daily business, tall and robustly healthy each and every one. Looking at the smooth, smiling faces now, one would never know that on the streets of the cities where they were painted these people were scorned for their very diversity." (Mann, 2012, p. 410).

Scorned? Yes scorned! This would be very difficult to understand by anyone that has never lived in a tightly stratified society in which hereditary transmission of lifestyle and customary social interaction determines public exclusion by means of purity of blood. It is perhaps due to Catholicism that Mexico barely escaped from becoming a society with a caste-like social division similar to that of India. Yet Mexico has not totally erased to this day its century long caste system culture. Mexico has lived for centuries with a mentality and a reality that pays much attention to a society divided by differences of wealth, inherited rank, privilege and occupation. Are Mexicans born equal today?

Today's disparity and inequality

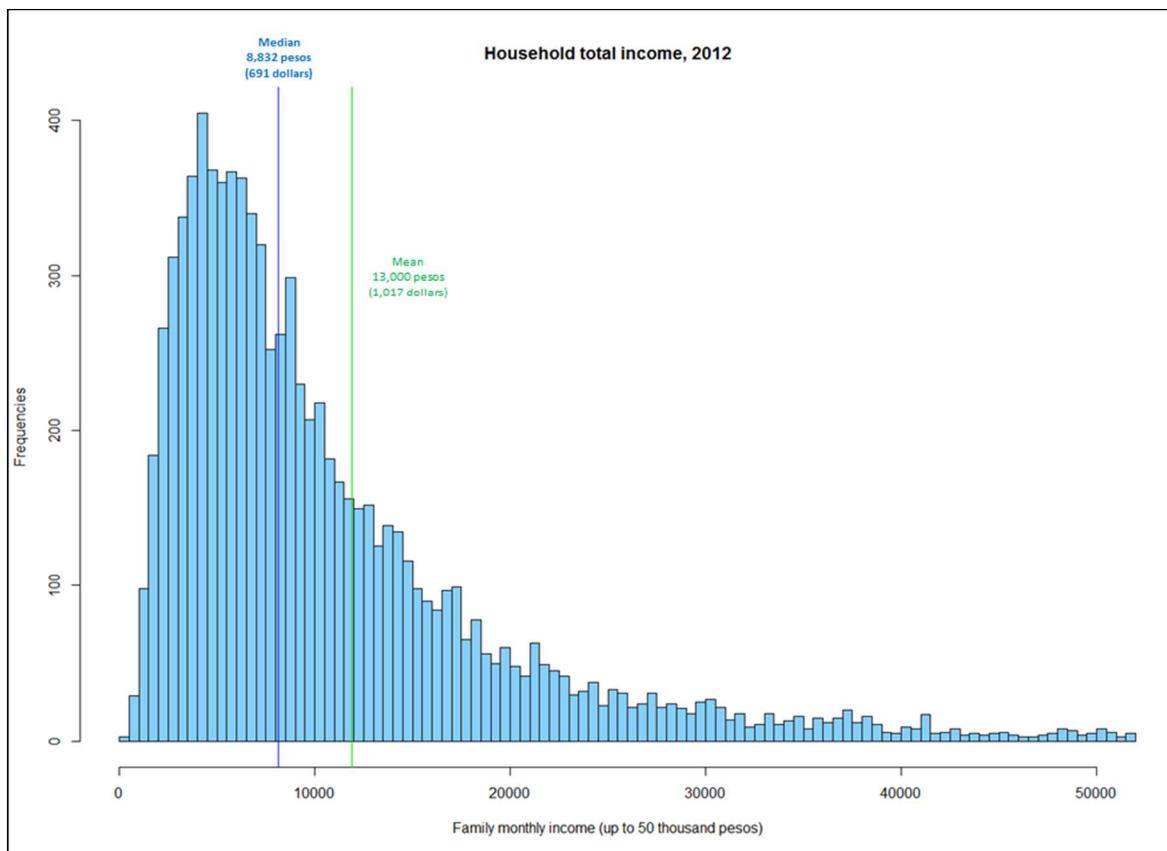
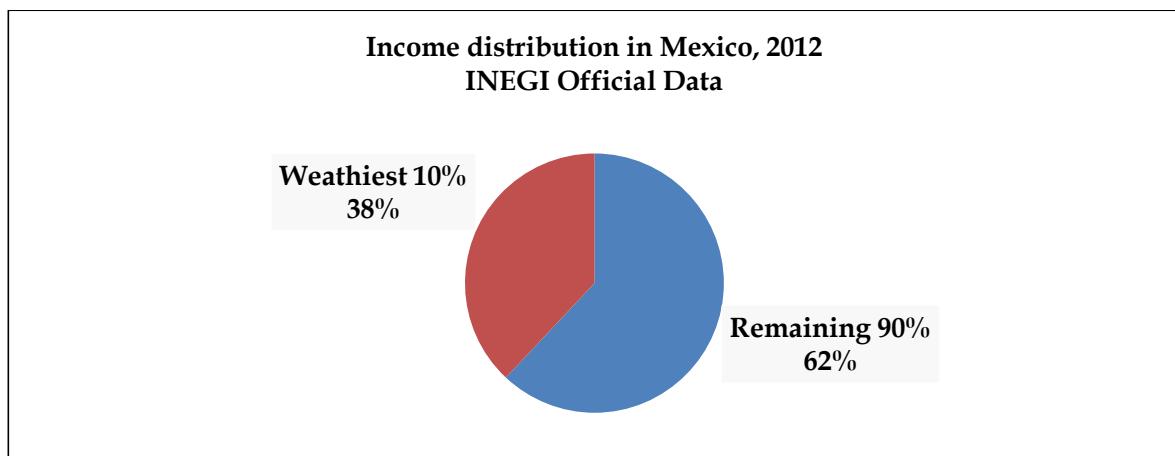
The truth is that inequality, a characteristic of almost all Latin America, has its origins in the way Mexico was colonized. The current distribution of income wealth is not only a product of history but it has to do with it. The abundance of land and natural resources in Mexico favored the intensive use of native labor and even African slaves. The military power of Spaniards led to the creation of closed elites that took over and dominated production, leaving the quasi-slave local labor with few privileges and opportunities (Hernández Licona, 2016).

The evolution of vice regal institutions that later became colonial resulted in greater prerogatives for the elites. These privileges have survived to this day. Although there are dissimilarities between the different countries of Latin America and Africa, it is possible to affirm that the common denominator of both continents is the fact that they were colonized for centuries and the effects of this colonization has created the important inequality that reigns still today. (Hernández Licona, 2016).

The actual Mexican ethnographic diversity encompasses several subsections of dissimilar societies and cultures. But from the standpoint of income distribution 38% of total income is earned by the richest 10% and the remaining 90% receives only 62% of total income (see the images in the following percentage circle). This takes us to another query: How can one expect

Mexicans to coexist peacefully with such a high level of inequality?

As shown in the following graph, income distribution in Mexico reports a positive skewedness. The median 691 USD (8,832 pesos) per month, a value that divides the income distribution into two halves, is lower than the mean 1,017 USD (13,000). See the next graph:



The National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL)³⁵, an independent government entity in charge of measuring poverty in Mexico has adopted a multidimensional poverty methodology, that combines a twofold approach: 1) the economic outlook, by fixing a wellbeing line, equivalent to the combined value of the food basket and the non-food basket; and; 2) the human rights perspective, by measuring the level of deprivation relative to the household's access to food, education and health; job security; and, quality of and basic services in the dwelling (Hernández Licona, 2010).

This second approach is based on the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which has been lately incorporated, together with other human rights international treaties, into Article 1° of the Mexican Constitution, amended in June 2011.

„Article 3

All people have the right to education. The State – Federation, States, Federal District and Municipalities- will provide preschool, elementary, middle and high education. Preschool, elementary and middle education, are part of the basic education; these and the high education will be mandatory."

„Article 4

(...) All individuals have the right to nutritional, sufficient and quality nourishment. The State shall guarantee this.
Every person has the right to access to health services. (...) Every family has the right to live in a dignified and decorous housing.

„Article 123

Every person has the right to have a decent and socially useful job. Therefore, job creation and social organization of work shall be encouraged according to the law. (...) Workers, day laborers, domestic servants, artisans and, in a general way, to all labor contracts:

XXIX. Social Security Act is enacted for social welfare. This act shall include disability benefit, retirement pension, life insurance, unemployment benefit, health services, nursery services, and other services intended to guarantee wellbeing of workers, farm workers and other kind of employees. (...)

The Powers of the Union, the Federal District Government and their employees:

XI. Social security shall be organized according to the following minimum bases:

a) Social security shall cover work accidents, occupational diseases and other diseases, motherhood, retirement, disability, old age, and death.

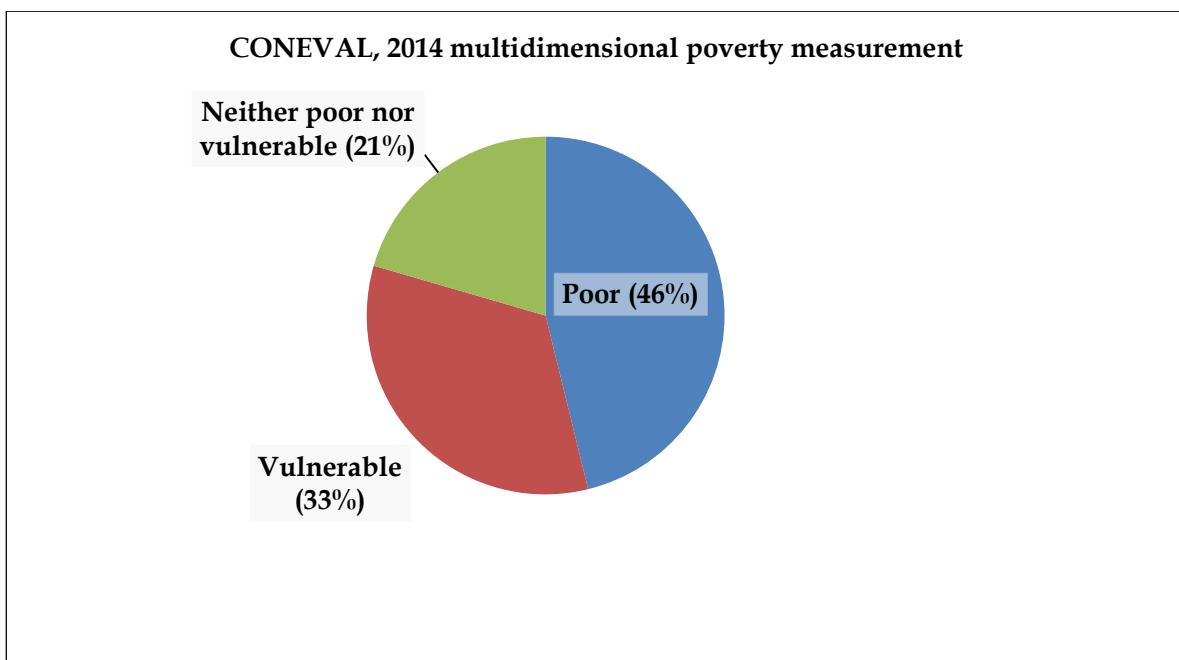
b) In case of accident or illness, the right to work shall be retained for the time specified by law.

d) Worker's family has the right to medical care and medicines, in those cases and in the proportions specified by law.

In this way, instead of than simply seeking a higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a greater *per capita* GDP or income equality in terms of a normal distribution, Mexico is obliged to solve the well-being problem of its population. With this new criterion Mexico turns out to be not only a country with inequality but, unfortunately, despite the latest efforts, it has not been able to eradicate poverty in the terms established in terms of its Constitution. The percentage circle below shows that measured by food, health, education, employment, and other such gaps, in Mexico 46% of the population is poor, 33% is vulnerable³⁶ and only 21% is neither poor nor vulnerable.

³⁵ Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (CONEVAL).

³⁶ Vulnerable is defined by households that due to the deprivations they have or due to the lack of money could be easy fall down in poverty, when confronting a difficult situation: loss of job, sickness etc.



Social Structure in Mexico

Social stratification in Mexico has categorized its inhabitants in different ways. During the colonial era legal links between ethnicity and class generated a society that allocated to individuals different rights and duties, which produced well-defined strata. Social classes were alienated by blood inheritance (*jus sanguinis*). In Mexico there were Spaniards with different degrees of nobility, creoles born in New Spain with parents born in Spain, Mestizos of European and Amerindian descent, varied Asian-born individuals, natives or indigenous of different ethnic groups and even African slaves.

The Mexican War of Independence (1810–1821) from Spain is the conclusion of a political and social development inspired by the *Age of Enlightenment* and its new conception of reason, authority and legitimacy. This intellectual movement shaped the United States' War of Independence (1776) and the French Revolution (1789). Similarly, the *Age of Reason* wrought the Mexican document entitled *Sentimientos de la Nación* (Sentiments of the Nation), written by José María Morelos y Pavón (1765–1815) a Catholic priest who led the *Insurgentes*, who was born to a humble family of indigenous, African and Spanish descent. The *Sentiments of the Nations* (1813) envisions the future nation with the suppression of castes, slavery, and taxes. It says that America is free

and independent of Spain and all other nations, governments, or monarchies. A few years later, in 1829, Vicente Guerrero (1782 – 1831), of Afro-Mestizo descent published the decree abolishing slavery that had been promulgated in 1810 by Miguel Hidalgo, Mexico's founding father.

Legally all inequalities finally vanished because of the legal effort that culminated in the Mexican Constitution of 1857, which was clearly influenced by the *United States Declaration of Independence* (1776), the *United States Constitution* (1787), and the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789). The Constitution of 1857 mandated equality of all citizens by decree. It recognized human rights as the basis and purpose of social institutions; but its use, misuse, and abuse undoubtedly triggered more inequality. A rapid review of the Porfirian dictatorship confirms this (Katz, 1967; Turner, 2013). Aligned with the social minority, the Mexican society since its independence from Spain (1821) has recreated the hierarchical stratification. The actual social Mexican structures favor a minority over the majority throughout the whole social order in such a way that it recalls the 4th Century B.C. Athens that Aristotle described so painfully when he said:

The evil begins at home; for when they are boys, by reason of the luxury in which they are brought up, they never learn, even at school, the habit of obedience. On the other hand, the

very poor, who are in the opposite extreme, are too degraded. So that the one class cannot obey and can only rule despotically; the other knows not how to command and must be ruled like slaves. Thus arises a city, not of freemen, but of masters and slaves, the one despising, the other envying; and nothing can be more fatal to friendship and good fellowship in states than this: for good fellowship springs from friendship; when men are at enmity with one another, they would rather not even share the same path.

The old Mexican ethnographic diversity today has been of mainly reduced to two classes from the viewpoint of income distribution, rich and poor. In Mexico, 38 % of total income is earned by the richest 10 % and the remaining 90 % receives only 62 % of total income.

The majority of the population is poor and works under a subordinate employment relationship, without fringe benefits. In other words, income distribution in Mexico reports a positive skewness. The median 691 USD (8,832 pesos) per month, a value that divides the income distribution into two halves, is lower than the mean 1,017 USD (13,000).

The actual social Mexican structures favor a minority over the majority throughout the whole social order in such a way that it recalls the 4th Century B.C. Athens that Aristotle described so painfully when he said:

Thus arises a city, not of freemen, but of masters and slaves, the one despising, the other envying; and nothing can be more fatal to friendship and good fellowship in states than this: for good fellowship springs from friendship; when men are at enmity with one another, they would rather not even share the same path (Aristotel, 1959, 1295b 21 ff.).

The current disparity and inequality suggest that perhaps there is a way out by seeking the creation of a truly rich Mexican middle class. Says Aristotle:

„But a city ought to be composed, as far as possible, of equals and similars; and these are generally the middle classes. Wherefore the city which is composed of middle-class citizens is necessarily best constituted in respect of the elements of which we say the fabric of the state naturally consists. And this is the class of citizens which is most secure in a state, for they do not, like the poor, covet their neighbors' goods; nor do others covet theirs, as the poor covet the

goods of the rich; and as they neither plot against others, nor are themselves plotted against, they pass through life safely. Wisely then did Phocylides pray - 'Many things are best in the mean; I desire to be of a middle condition in my city" (Aristotel, 1959, 1295b 15 ff.).

From the above CONEVAL 2014 percentage circle chart with the multidimensional poverty measurement one can see that the Mexican Middle class would be the 21% that are neither poor nor vulnerable. Unfortunately this 21 % includes the rich Mexicans. So if there is a Mexican middle class it would be less than 21 %. So if Mexico is not composed of middle-class citizens, then it is not constituted of the elements of which the fabric of the state naturally consists. In Mexico the middle class is not stronger than the other two classes. This is contrary to what Aristotle recommends:

Thus it is manifest that the best political community is formed by citizens of the middle class, and that those states are likely to be well-administered in which the middle class is large, and stronger if possible than both the other classes, or at any rate than either singly; for the addition of the middle class turns the scale, and prevents either of the extremes from being dominant. Great then is the good fortune of a state in which the citizens have a moderate and sufficient property; for where some possess much, and the others nothing, there may arise an extreme democracy, or a pure oligarchy; or a tyranny may grow out of either extreme- either out of the most rampant democracy, or out of an oligarchy; but it is not so likely to arise out of the middle constitutions and those akin to them (Aristotel, 1959, 1295b 35 ff.).

Mexico is not a fortunate state in which its citizens have a moderate and sufficient property. It is rather a country where some possess much, and the others nothing. And when a minority has it in excess and a majority lacks it, it cannot prevent either of the extremes from being dominant. So „there may arise an extreme democracy, or a pure oligarchy or a tyranny may grow out of either extreme- either out of the most rampant democracy, or out of an oligarchy; but it is not so likely to arise out of the middle constitutions and those akin to them. I will explain the reason of this hereafter, when

I speak of the revolutions of states." (Aristotel, 1959, 1296b 1 ff.).

Mexico is prone to extremes of excess of populist democracy or pure oligarchy, or the tyranny that can arise from either of these two extremes. It suffices to see the history of Latin America to confirm what happens in this challenging experimentation process with no sufficient middle class.

A possible solution to Mexican socioeconomic problems

The sociological significance of the lack of middle class and the effect it brings about when it exists was profoundly understood by Euripides (2010, c. 480 – c. 406 BC); who lived during a period of Athenian political hegemony. Economic growth and cultural flourishing in *The Age of Pericles* was also called *The Golden Age of Athens*. According to Euripides: „there are three groups of people. There are the rich who are never satisfied because their wealth is never enough for them –these citizens are totally useless for the city. Then there are the poor who, because their daily bread is never enough, are dangerous because they are deceived by the tongues of crooked politicians and by their own envy and so they aim the arrows of their hatred towards the rich. And then, between these two, there is a third. This one is between them. It's there to keep the order; it's there to keep the city safe” (Euripides, 2010, c. 239 BC).

Oddly enough, in 2000, when Antonio Villaraigosa was only president of the Californian Assembly, while having dinner at the home of Carlos Slim, the wealthiest businessman in Mexico who also ranks high within the wealthiest men in the world, Villaraigosa was asked by Slim to explain in a nutshell, from his perspective as a Mexican-American, the difference between the United States and Mexico (Valero, 2005).

Villaraigosa answered this: „It is very simple, he said, if my family had remained in Mexico (City) I would now be serving you food.” Given the confused looks of the diners, the now former Mayor of Los Angeles, California continued: „Instead they went to the United States and today you offer this dinner in my honor” (Valero, 2005, p. 22). And then Villaraigosa explained why he had succeeded in the

United States: „where the middle class can grow and develop, he said, there is fertile ground for the creation of a prosperous and democratic society” (Valero, 2005, p. 22).

The successful political career of the 41st Mayor of Los Angeles, California (2005–13) son of a *Chilango*³⁷ who came to the United States without finishing high school, brings to mind immediately a disturbing reality in our country: Why do more and more Mexicans develop their talent in the United States and not in Mexico?

Villaraigosa declined to give recipes: „I'm not going to criticize the country of my ancestors”. Instead, he explained what is, or sadly was, the key to success in the United States: „The key to prosperity and the foundations of our (American) democracy is the creation of a strong middle class. Our strength is that America has been a place with a large and strong middle class in a vibrant democracy.” He added: „In a country of extreme wealth and extreme poverty, the middle class does not have the means to grow and develop. The middle class is always the catalytic sector that moves to a country.”³⁸

John Stuart Mill addresses one of main problems

In Book IV, Chapter V, entitle *On The Possible Futurity Of The Laboring-Class* of his *Principles Of Political Economy*, John Stuart Mill puts his finger on the soring problem of the actual Market System better known as Capitalism: „To work at the binding and for the profits of another, without any interest in the work –The price at their labour being adjusted by hostile competition, one side demanding as much and the other paying as little as possible—is not, even when wages are high, a satisfactory state to human beings of educated intelligence, who have ceased to think themselves naturally inferior to those whom they serve” (Mill, 1929, p. 761).

³⁷ A Chilango is a Mexican slang demonym for residents of Mexico City.

³⁸ See: Robert Rich's documentary “Inequality for all (2013)”. Dostupné na internete: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9REdcxfie3M>. Also: “Requiem for the American Dream (2016)”. Noam Chomsky. Dostupné na internete: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjw0s09zvz0>

Mexico can be described as a class society if one categorizes the parties in supra-ordinated and subordinated labor relations, i. e. in independent and dependent workers. A person who works for another has a completely different social stance than the one who works for himself, either because he is professionally independent or a shareholder of a company. Mill again: „The aim of improvement should be not solely to place human beings in a condition in which they will be able to do without one another, but to enable them to work with or for one another in relations not involving dependence” (Mill, 1929, p. 761).

Therefore an invitation must be opened here to social scientists, among which I include, among others, economists, business managers and lawyers, to devise and implement new forms of business organization that enable the dissemination of private property to achieve the so very much desired reduction of the gap between social classes. New and successful companies in line with Cooperatives and other legal entities such as Codeterminations, Co-partnerships and any other kind of productive businesses that redistribute positively and fairly the wealth produced by the corporations should constitute the basic economic entities of any country, and particularly Mexico.

Aristotelian middle class

A majority of Mexicans consider themselves members of the middle class, due to all the symbolism that this concept implies; according to the World Values Survey Association in 2005 eight out of ten persons in Mexico said they belonged to the middle class: 20,9 % middle high, 41,7% middle medium and 18,4 % middle low. And in 2012 61,5 % of the persons surveyed said they belonged to the middle high or middle low middle class.

However, a serious analysis of this topic clearly shows that they are “misled” (Mc Cadan, 2015). The Mexican social structure is made up of a small upper class and a large majority of poor. The middle class is no majority in Mexico. Mexico cannot be considered a country consisting mostly of a middle class.

A similar problem was suffered in the Athens of the IV century BC which –unlike the V century BC which is called the Golden Age– was characterized by severe social crisis result-

ing from the conflict between the Greek cities known as the Peloponnesian War. The war had left the fields in bad condition. The small farmers abandoned their lands due to lack of funding and lived in misery. The impoverished rural population migrated to cities, surviving on meager wages or through welfare. Production and trade also declined. However, the crisis hit differently among the population. Along with increased poverty, there was an increase in wealth of the people who speculated in land and trade.

Aristotle was a keen social observer. He thought the old Athenian balance and equilibrium could be regained if the prevailing social polarization was reduced. Some authors like Claude Mosse (1970) have said that Aristotle addressed the policy of restoring the “middle class” in Athens. However, as M. I. Finley (1983) stated clearly that Aristotle refers repeatedly in his work to the “meson” (the middle), but that the idea of social class, let alone middle class, is definitely not present in his work, at least in the modern sense of this notion: „In the Politics, “to meson” appears only in a few normative generalizations (...) of little practical significance (...) We must therefore restrict ourselves to the ancient connotations of the word-pair, rich and poor, and we must sedulously avoid the modern corollary of a substantial middle class with its own define interest” (Finley, 1983, p. 10 – 11). Aristotle’s “meson” was part of his ethical view of life and his conception of virtue as middle between extremes. According to him, those who have the virtue of courage are neither fearful nor recklessness; righteousness was located between injustice by excess and injustice by absence: „For if it has been rightly said in Ethics that the happy life is the life that lived without impediment in accordance with virtue, and that virtue is a middle course, it necessarily follows that the middle course of life is the best” (Aristotle, 1959, 1295a – 1296b).

According to Aristotle in every society there are three divisions: the very rich, the very poor, and those in the middle. The very rich have more than they need; the poor are in need because they have the minimum required to live, or even less. Only in the middle is there true wealth. Those who possess it are truly wealthy; they have what they need, neither more nor less: „But surely the ideal of the state is to con-

sist as much as possible of persons that are equal and alike, and this similarity is most found in the middle classes." (Aristotel, 1959, 1295a – 1296b).

Human beings, Aristotle said, can only use a limited amount of goods and services. You could use eight beds in one night, one hour each, but it would be foolish. There is thus a natural wealth of those goods necessary for life and useful for domestic or political community. When Ferdinand Marcos ruled Philippines as president and later as dictator in the sixties, seventies and eighties, his wife Imelda accumulated more than 1,200 pairs of shoes. We ought to ask if those 1,200 pairs are real wealth for one person. Keep in mind that if Imelda had used three pair of shoes a day, she would have only used 1,095 pairs in one year.

How many glasses of orange juice can one drink throughout life? Is it a limited or an unlimited quantity? Human wealth is limited because human beings are limited. That is why true wealth, the natural wealth, has limits. For this reason Aristotle offered, as a solution to the social problems of his time, a wide middle sector of Athenian citizens, who would have enough wealth to satisfy their needs; and which would generate a community of free men, with no slaves and no masters, just friends living in real democracy. Aristotle says: „The mean condition of states is clearly best, for no other is free from faction; and where the middle class is large, there are least likely to be factions and dissensions. For a similar reason large states are less liable to faction than small ones, because in them the middle class is large; whereas in small states it is easy to divide all the citizens into two classes who are either rich or poor, and to leave nothing in the middle. And democracies are safer and more permanent than oligarchies, because they have a middle class which is more numerous and has a greater share in the government; for when there is no middle class, and the poor greatly exceed in number, troubles arise, and the state soon comes to an end. A proof of the superiority of the middle class is that the best legislators have been of a middle condition; for example, Solon, as his own verses testify; and Lycurgus, for he was not a king; and Charondas, and almost all legislators (Aristotel, 1959, 1295b 35ff.).

Real Wealth for Aristotle

Regrettably, the social diversity generated by the century long *Mexican Melting Pot* has more or less been reduced to two clusters: a minority of rich and a majority of poor, in which diversity has increased in a very different way. There has been certain social mobility but the groups that were considered lower ethnically speaking are now a majority constituted by the poor and the ancestral ethnic minority is now the wealthy minority. Mexico is not today, as it was not in the past, a society in which the majority of its population belongs to the middle class. The following Aristotelian quotations could help us find what we should look forward to, in not in the Mexican social reality, at least in the projects of Mexican political and social forerunners. Let us freely enumerate some of characteristics of the real wealth that Mexicans should have in mind to produce a 'truly wealthy' 'middle class' should have in mind: „First: real wealth is not unlimited: They are the elements of true riches; for the amount of property which is needed for a good life is not unlimited, although Solon in one of his poems says that. No bound to riches has been fixed for man. But there is a boundary fixed, just as there is in the other arts; for the instruments of any art are never unlimited, either in number or size, and riches may be defined as a number of instruments to be used in a household or in a state. And so we see that there is a natural art of acquisition which is practiced by managers of households and by statesmen, and what is the reason of this" (Aristotel, 1959, 1256b 29ff.). „Second: real wealth is natural, not unnatural: There is another variety of the art of acquisition which is commonly and rightly called an art of wealth-getting, and has in fact suggested the notion that riches and property have no limit. Being nearly connected with the preceding, it is often identified with it. But though they are not very different, neither are they the same. The kind already described is given by nature, the other is gained by experience and art" (Aristotel, 1959, 1256b 40ff.). „Third: real wealth is not coins (money): Indeed, riches is assumed by many to be only a quantity of coin, because the arts of getting wealth and retail trade are concerned with coin. Others maintain that coined

money is a mere sham, a thing not natural, but conventional only, because, if the users substitute another commodity for it, it is worthless, and because it is not useful as a means to any of the necessities of life, and, indeed, he who is rich in coin may often be in want of necessary food. But how can that be wealth of which a man may have a great abundance and yet perish with hunger, like Midas in the fable, whose insatiable prayer turned everything that was set before him into gold? Hence men seek after a better notion of riches and of the art of getting wealth than the mere acquisition of coin, and they are right. For natural riches and the natural art of wealth-getting are a different thing; in their true form they are part of the management of a household; whereas retail trade is the art of producing wealth, not in every way, but by exchange (Aristotel, 1959, 1257b 5ff.).

Fourth: real wealth is not to increase the amount of money without limit: And, therefore, in one point of view, all riches must have a limit; nevertheless, as a matter of fact, we find the opposite to be the case; for all getters of wealth increase their hoard of coin without limit. The source of the confusion is the near connection between the two kinds of wealth-getting; in either, the instrument is the same, although the use is different, and so they pass into one another; for each is a use of the same property, but with a difference: accumulation is the end in the one case, but there is a further end in the other. Hence some persons are led to believe that getting wealth is the object of household management, and the whole idea of their lives is that they ought either to increase their money without limit, or at any rate not to lose it. The origin of this disposition in men is that they are intent upon living only, and not upon living well; and, as their desires are unlimited they also desire that the means of gratifying them should be without limit. Those who do aim at a good life seek the means of obtaining bodily pleasures; and, since the enjoyment of these appears to depend on property, they are absorbed in getting wealth: and so there arises the second species of wealth-getting. For, as their enjoyment is in excess, they seek an art which produces the excess of enjoyment; and, if they are not able to supply their pleasures by the art of getting wealth, they try other arts, using in turn every faculty in a manner contrary

to nature. The quality of courage, for example, is not intended to make wealth, but to inspire confidence; neither is this the aim of the general's or of the physician's art; but the one aims at victory and the other at health. Nevertheless, some men turn every quality or art into a means of getting wealth; this they conceive to be the end, and to the promotion of the end they think all things must contribute. Thus, then, we have considered the art of wealth-getting which is unnecessary, and why men want it; and also the necessary art of wealth-getting, which we have seen to be different from the other, and to be a natural part of the art of managing a household, concerned with the provision of food, not, however, like the former kind, unlimited, but having a limit (Aristotel, 1959, 1257b 32ff.).

By way of conclusion

I think the master of estrangement (*Verfremdung*) is Berthold Brecht (1898 – 1956). He made use of estrangement in his experimental theater (*Über Experimentelles Theater*). According to Brecht, to be surprised means simply to take that something that is known, obvious and self-evident to arouse curiosity and admiration.³⁹

Who would dare to question the idea that we ought either to increase our money without limit, or at any rate not to lose it? Today almost nobody would disagree with the social belief that having an unlimited amount of money is the final purpose of human life. This is a known, obvious and self-evident social belief in with which the world community identifies itself in the realm of the contemporary market economy: money makes the world go round!⁴⁰ But it is precisely this that should produce curiosity and admiration.

³⁹ Brecht says: „Was ist Verfremdung? Einen Vorgang oder einen Charakter verfremden heißt zunächst einfach, dem Vorgang oder dem Charakter das Selbstverständliche, Bekannte, Einleuchtende zu nehmen und über ihn Staunen und Neugierde zu erzeugen“ (Ewen, 1969, p. 218), Bertholt Brecht, *Über Experimentelles Theater*, in *Schriften zum Theater* 3, 1933-1947, Suhrkamp Verlag.

⁴⁰ See: Minnelli, L.: Money makes the world go round". Dostupné na internete: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIAXG_QcQNU [8/9/2018].

True wealth from Aristotle's point of view, does not refer to money. It is true that we have the capacity to possess coins in unlimited amount, but there is no sense to having an unlimited amount of goods and services. Wealth in cash certainly seems to be unlimited, but Aristotle invites us to put aside money and consider wealth in terms of things. Imagine for a minute the very desirable wealth of Mr. Bill Gates, which I understand amounts to about sixty or seventy billion dollars, in things. Imagine owning, for example, seventy thousand one million dollars houses. As soon as we stop thinking in terms money and think on the things that that level of money entails it turns out that seventy billion dollars are not only unattractive, but rather unnecessary. That much wealth would be irrational, and the proof of this is that Bill Gates himself like many other billionaires have given it away. It seems it is because they don't need it.

Aristotle believes that this provision coincides merely with the intention of living, and not of living well, as if one could satisfy desires without limit. There is a global consensus, to which everyone seems to agree: „For, as their enjoyment is in excess, they seek an art which produces the excess of enjoyment; and, if they are not able to supply their pleasures by the art of getting wealth, they try other arts, using in turn every faculty in a manner contrary to nature” (Aristotel, 1959, 1258a 6 ff.).

These social beliefs and the ideology are the valid current and prevailing mentality although they do not withstand minimal analysis. The world economic practices make it indubitable and difficult to eradicate. It remains an unhuman ideology, foreign to human nature: today *inhumanity* is all too human!

Mexicans today are product of a very interesting *Melting Pot* as a consequence of Mexican History and the resulting interbreeding. In their contemporary culture, Mexicans remain somehow “foreign” to themselves, but this time the “opposites” they have to overcome are minority-majority, rich-poor, and suprординated and subordinated labor relations. Mexicans usually do not perceive belonging to one of opposites as damaging to their dignity as human persons. The ‘poor’ want to become ‘ultra-rich’, the employee an employer, a majority member part of the select minority, etc. Says Aristotle: „by reason of the luxury in

which they are brought up, they (the wealthy) never learn, even at school, the habit of obedience. On the other hand, the very poor, who are in the opposite extreme, are too degraded. So that the one class cannot obey and can only rule despotically; the other knows not how to command and must be ruled like slaves. Thus arises a city, not of freemen, but of masters and slaves, the one despising, the other envying; and nothing can be more fatal to friendship and good fellowship in states than this: for good fellowship springs from friendship” (Aristotel, 1959, 1295b 15 ff.).

Contemporary Mexicans have inherited different ways of being estranged from human nature and live without fully understanding how poor the human social order turns out to be when entering negative correlative relations.⁴¹ In Mexico seeing each conational as a person is problematic; it is not part of the everyday culture. By this oblivious democratic life becomes impossible.

Hegel (1770 – 1831), Stuttgart's philosopher, called this enmity the struggle between conflicting self-consciousnesses. And he said this ends when opposing self-consciousness recognize the other for what they are. A slave-master relationship ends when the individuals involved recognize each other as human beings.

If Mexico cannot be considered a middle class nation, it is because in some respect its population is unaware of the real worth of its human nature and of the true sense of political life. Nothing can be so far from friendship and good fellowship than wealth disparity. Good social fellowship springs from a nation composed, as far as it is possible, of equals and similars in terms of opportunities and well-being.

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⁴¹ See Baillie (1967).

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