

**Philosophical and Economic Emancipation through Independent Modernity:
A Peruvian Perspective**

A Research Paper

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"We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms--to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." - Viktor E. Frankl.

Introduction

Our human existence is based on a premise that we are in a living state of conscious reality. Of course, this can be debatable as with anything else. But let one assume, for the purpose of this paper, that we are a true product of our past and present circumstance. As people, one's objective reality is based on a complex interrelationship of social (or socio-economic) and psychological conditions. Thus, a basic construct of subjective rationality can be obtained through objective experience. The Americas, for instance, is a prime example of a series of historical events that vary from location to location and that ultimately end each individual region to the present condition where they are today. The complexity for each geographical region can be rather detailed as to what brought it to its present social condition. Through many past experiences (what I will call 'trials') the various regions started to engage into the inter questioning of its own existence. From the Aztec and Maya in Central America to the Inca Empire of South America, each a product of past colonization and its now newer form: globalization. Globalization being an onset cultural structure and influence that sets a global standard by which everyone indirectly (or directly) becomes assimilated into.

Colonialism left each of the geographical regions in the Americas in utmost poverty, but it was the idealistic visions of modernity that helped achieve a small piece of independence.

Though many sociologists and anthropologists alike would argue that it was because of the false hopes of modernity that led into the depletion of true sustainability and culture. Western ideas of competition and deep stratification of populations pushed each region into its own self-destruction over time. Attempts to justify its own creative power in both philosophical and economic terms were immediately shut down by its European counterpart. Slowly, it was the few historical visionaries that foretold of the times ahead, but nobody heeded the warnings. Overtime, a new form crept into the hearts of populations, one of which was so subtle that nobody realized its power until it was too late. That was when globalization came into being.

There are places in particular that the recent rise in globalization has been taking an unprecedented effect: Peru. Peru's search for its own self identity led it to its own economic downfall. Peru was once a place with Andean ideas of prosperity for all, peace, harmony and mutual aid all of which were being replaced with westernized standards of competition, greed, and unmoral characteristics. A recent example would be that of Peru's global demands on copper. The demands to produce more copper through corporate means left completely depleted the local environment leading to the deaths of several individuals in the surrounding communities.¹

Why would a country go to such lengths to strive as a leading producer of a substance knowing the effects it can have on its own people? The answer is simple, economic viability. At this point it becomes a critical obligation to turn to not the politicians for answers but the philosophers, whom can set forth a new set of standards completely handcrafted for its circumstances and nationality. Furthermore, economic and philosophical emancipation in Peru can only be achieved through a new and independent form of modernity that incorporates both ancient Andean reciprocity and new westernized strategy.

¹ Amicus Brief in Flores v. Southern Peru Copper Corporation
http://www.earthrights.org/legaldocs/flores_v_southern_peru_copper_corporation.html

Brief Historical Account

What if the whole basis for modern day philosophy is based on a foundation of misinterpretations divergent from mysticism rather than wonder? And if so, what problems may this have on present day societies? The ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle traveled to ancient Egypt to become among the initiated in the Mystery Schools. These were initiatic mystical schools of thought, which, as modern day research suggests, was the hidden basis for all Greek philosophy. Furthermore, as Peter Kingsley argues in his book *'In the Dark Places of Wisdom,'* it was the philosophers of that time (e.g. Plato) who distorted and completely misinterpreted the actual teachings on which all of our western academia is built upon. Using archaeological evidence and text, it can be stated that the true esoteric roots which influenced Plato (among others), were based on mystical and shamanistic traditions. (Those very exact same traditions have existed in Latin America as long as people have occupied it such as Mystery Schools, Cults, and Medicine Men/Shamanism) It was Plato, who in a sense stole the ideas and discredited his predecessors. What implications would that have on our understanding of modern philosophy? If one can agree that globalization is a new driving force of domination, such as colonization once was, then what if 'westernization' or even Europeanization was the control mechanism and dominate influence over all of Europe. In most European societies they once practiced shamanic and mystical traditions as well. But it was not until this 'true' European force took over that all these people became conquered, discredited and later assimilated into this 'preordained' scheme of 'how it is suppose to be'. How can people debate whether or not Latin America has a philosophy, if at one point in time all of Europe was conquered by various

invading forces and therefore a product of colonization and ‘modernity’ on its own terms (and time in history). It seems to be a cyclical rational of destroying culture/denouncing their natural wisdoms (philosophical creations by its own rite) and replacing it with the same old ideas in the name of social progression.

The Norse, the Celtic, as well many others groups within Europe, were all conquered by various Empires and groups (e.g. Christians, etc). The dominating means of control were to destroy the old ways and replace it with the new ‘standards’. An example of this would be the Stave churches in Norway, huge wooden Christian churches that date as far back as 1130 A.D. As a mean of domination and control the Christian missionaries tore down the ancient Norse shrines/temples and replaced them with these new churches all throughout Europe. Ironically enough in recent times there has been a radical youth movement in Norway to get rid of all these old churches (by means of arson) in hopes of bringing back the Old Norse traditions.² Many other radical groups have spread throughout many other regions ranging from France to Greece all with the same underlying premise of bringing back the ancient traditions and making that the mainstream. These radical youth movements, however, have not reached the intensity in the Latin America as it has many of the European countries.

Modern Day Peru

In November 18, 1780, over 1,300 Spanish and Indian troops marched to capture the infamous leader of the indigenous rebellion, Túpac Amaru II. They fought to free themselves from the colonial Spanish powers, and after many strategic victories they fell just as quickly as

² Michael Moynihan, Didrik Søderlind: *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground* discusses in depth the underground movement which persisted through the 1990’s until today consisting of arson and militia groups to expel Christianity from Norway. The main driving force for the movement was that of music which perpetuated anti-Christianity, ancient mythology, and the revival of Old Norse traditions. The same type of movement can be seen throughout the world such as in Greece to even North America.

they rose to power. In the center plaza of Cusco, Peru, Túpac Amaru II had his tongue cut out and each of his four limbs tied to four different horses. And try after try his body would not break, until a long period of agonizing pain his body finally ripped. This signaled the end of the royal Inca family and the end to the old ways of life.

In the wake of recent events Peru suffers from a misguided and highly misunderstood state of affairs amidst political unrest. There is a great internal conflict within Peru's own borders among various guerrilla movements. It is stated that over 70,000 people have died since 1980 when the conflict began. Clearly, the post-colonization reality of this country is still very much in the forefront. The election of Japanese president Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000) is an example of how the country is still striving for a unique pace of change. He promised change in modernity, and many things did in fact did improve within the country of Peru. However, after Alberto Fujimori's presidency he was sentenced to 25 years in prison on April 7th 2009, for crimes against humanity (charges include use of death squads and kidnappings involving journalists). The irony in this country's past leadership striving for western standards but yet doing what most countries do and strive to achieve it by corrupt means. It is a very symbolic series of actions that very much reflect our whole basis for progression, "do whatever it takes, just don't get caught".

It is the globalization of not just products anymore; it has become the globalization of ideas and American culture. The argument over whether or not Latin American, or more specifically Peru, has a philosophy should not be of any true validity. As mentioned before, all countries in Europe at one point in time maintained the same so-called 'primitive' cultures of which were later decimated by various influential controlling groups. Europe once had an early form of globalization and it spread new models of civilization, goods, and more importantly the unspoken exchange of culture. If Peru seeks change, then it must completely form something

new from the ancient Andean models of wisdom and sustainability with that of a present day global context. Within the Peruvian country there must be individualistic strides to break away from globalization, in many parts of Peru the native language and culture are still maintained above anything else. Thus, completely reformatting and emancipating itself from western influences can be possible. Philosophers must be at the forefront of all political involvement and not the background if this is to take place.

Norway has one of the biggest oil reserves (third largest oil exporter in the world) in Northern Europe and its progressive environmental issues have become the mainstream. Preparing for the future of the generations of people to come, the government was at a turning point as to who to turn to for guidance. So, the government hired a philosopher to help determine how the spending of its oil money should be undertaken.³ This can serve as a model for Peru and how it should start taking care of its wealthy natural resource industry rather than having outside countries selfishly engage in destroying the environment along with the people it does not hold to value.

Sacred Reciprocity

In 1902 Peter Kropotkin wrote a highly controversial book entitled *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* which gives a number of examples for the idea of 'Mutual Aid', as he calls it. He expresses that Darwin, in his theory of the evolution, misses a very important biological aspect to human nature, instead of competition there many examples where in fact there is no such thing as competition, but rather mutual aid is dominant means of survival. Kropotkin uses a lot of biological examples from the natural environment to even many indigenous communities that exist throughout the world to further prove his point. Imagine if our society was based on one of

³Philosopher Guides Norway's Oil Rich Spending Habits <http://energypreparedness.net/news/norway/20060526>

cooperation, humility, reciprocity without any notion of getting back in return, how amazingly different our world would be. Imagine if all the children were taught these virtues early on, how much of an impact it would have toward the progression of humanity. Kropotkin illustrates a great example of how cooperation in nature can be analyzed and can teach us something. “It is well known that there always are a number of bees which prefer a life of robbery to the laborious life of a worker; and that both periods of scarcity and periods of an unusually rich supply of food lead to an increase of the robbing class... We thus see that anti-social instincts continue to exist amidst the bees as well; but natural selection continually eliminate[s] them”.

Anibal Quijano, in his writings, refers to the notion of reciprocity as the answer for modernity. Due to the increase in assimilation in Peru, it seems that there still seems to be a lacking of ‘value’. With Quijano this ‘value’ that is needed comes from the indigenous ways of life. There is but one law in the Andean indigenous tradition and that is of Ayni (Eye-Knee). The law of Ayni (translated means sacred reciprocity) is rather simple: what you give you will receive, maybe not in material benefit but maybe through an influx of natural living energy from Mother Earth (Pachamama in Quechua). In the Andean tradition everything consists of living energy, and it is through the progressive use of Ayni that this energy can flow in a continuous cycle. In various isolated communities throughout Peru the westernized influence has yet to have an impact. Everything is done as a community, and everybody contributes equal. There are no laws, no mayors, no police, nothing. It’s probably the closest thing one can get to a Socialist Utopia. But in larger towns or cities (such as Cusco), there are more obvious western influences. And with the western influences come the corresponding culture, direct values (such as competition) and indirect consequential vices (such as stealing, etc).

During the reign of the Inca empire every village was suppose to contribute certain material goods ranging from corn to wool. The Inca had an incredibly complex system of distribution throughout the empire. The Inca had sophisticated systems of roads winding throughout Peru and everything worked with great speed. For example, the Emperor every day would eat fresh fish brought to him from Lima, which was over the whole Andes mountains range. And the Inca maintained large storage units in certain locations in Peru. These storage units were used to store large excess amounts of food so that if a village had a bad harvest or some disaster they would have this huge backup of food to bring to the community. In fact when the Spanish ransacked Peru they ate solely from these storage units which lasted them literally over several years. Everything in the Inca Empire was a communal effort, everyone looked after everyone. Even with such a centralized force of power, the benefits were still equally distributed over all areas of the empire. If they communally created great massive structures strong enough to withstand the great earthquakes of the region without the help of the wheel, then imagine what they can achieve economically if they still maintained the same principles and values as they did back during the Inca reign.

Emancipation of Philosophy and Economy

Anibal Quijano explains that the hegemony became globalized through what he terms, ‘instrumental reason’ (form of domination) as opposed to ‘historical reason’ (a form of liberation). Through this interplay of instrumental reason over historical reason has perpetuated even further the western ideas of “capitalist imperialism”. It was instrumental reason that ultimately sealed Latin Americas fate and it was “modernization” that hammered the final nail on the coffin. As idealistic as it may seem, one can hope to bring back the ancient Andean way of Ayni (Sacred Reciprocity) which could collectively help unify a new independent form of self-

sustainability. Quijano thus states that the Peruvian people should in fact not return to this old form of sacred reciprocity due to the complex needs of a contemporary society. However, the immense Inca structures within each of the cities and villages should serve as a model for “collective solidarity” and to remind the citizens of what collectivity and sacred reciprocity can achieve. Through this, one can self reflect on individual choice and through democracy make decisions that will be towards the benefit of all people and will be devoid of any outside western/global influence.

Andean rationality, directed toward reciprocity, will be the ultimate liberation for the people in both philosophical terms and economic terms. A true sense of freedom will be bestowed upon the independently thinking citizen and would reflect a sense of collective good that would be to the benefit of all people. This would go against any western or ‘Americanized’ concept of individualism which would be to the benefit of only oneself. In other words, ideas such as “survival of the fittest” and “natural selection” should be replaced with lesser known ideas such as “Sacred Reciprocity” and “Mutual Aid”. Perhaps this is where the democracy of America has skewed from its original intention of ‘Freedom for all,’ to the modern day interpretation of Freedom. The new American Freedom to choose between three different color pants (which stills fall short within a corporate scheme of proving ones independence through consumerism).

The fight against western globalization is still one that is being undergone today in Peru. A good example of this is the Peru’s own soda, Inca Kola (which kind of tastes like a weird fruity bubblegum flavor). Inca Kola is the only soda to outsell Coca-Cola in its own territory! Every time Coca-Cola tried to sell its product to the country, it just did not work. It was a small victory that unified a distinct culture of people that was completely (and maybe unconsciously) symbolic

of self-nationality against corporate imperialism. “Inca Kola is successful in large part because it bridges the gap between the local and the global and the traditional and the modern by presenting an alternative to Coca-Cola's American-global modernity through the construction of a Peruvian-global modernity.”⁴

Conclusion

In conclusion economic and philosophical emancipation, in Peru, can *only* be achieved through a new and independent form of modernity that incorporates both Andean reciprocity and new westernized strategy which meet global economic demands. To choose one’s own way through an immensely competitive market is to discover fire in a pitch black cavern. Same goes for Peruvian philosophy, the old tools are there, they just have to figure out how the ancients used them in order to illuminate the present. One must learn to explore new ways to seek a new foundation part of which are already rooted in ancient ground. Old European biases and colonialist justifications for the degradation of peoples need to be understood for what it is, superiority complexes. None the less, one must turn to historical accounts, not written by the victorious, but rather the ordinary people and one will find commonalities between all people of the world. One does not choose the circumstance in which they live, rather, they must learn to manipulate the environment to construct a new strategy unique to their own experience. Furthermore, philosophy in Latin America must continue doing what it has been doing regardless of irrationalized criticism against it, *only* when the world is ready will it be able to accept this philosophy under its own terms. It is an independent creation far removed from previous European thought, and elevated through experiential consciousness of timeless wisdom.

4 Journal of Consumer Culture, Vol. 9, No. 1, 31-54 (2009)]

“In this age, when the eagle of the North and the condor of the South fly together, the Earth will awaken. The eagles of the North cannot be free without the condors of the South.”

~Ancient Inca Prophecy