Cultures of Anyone
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the creation of the middle-class illusion, in which the stakes are not only what society is, but also who has the right to construct its representation. Along these lines, I would now like to highlight the importance of another type of cultural elite, beyond that of the Francoist technocracy: the intellectual elites responsible for the construction of a ‘normalizing’ ‘middle-class’ paradigm that became the hegemonic representation of Spanish society after the end of the dictatorship.

1.4. Pedagogy of ‘Normalization’ and Cultural Elites

1.4.1. Francoist roots of neoliberalism

To do this, I must first recall that together with the marginalization of rural cultures and the imposition of productivist, ‘mesocratic,’ consumerist values, the Franco regime also launched, as mentioned above, an economic liberalization that laid the ‘unquestionable economic foundations’ that would later form the backbone of the Transition Culture.

This has been explained very well by Isidro López and his colleague from the Observatorio Metropolitano, Emmanuel Rodríguez, both in the article ‘The Spanish Model’ (2011) and in their essential book *Fin de ciclo: financiación, territorio y sociedad de propietarios en la onda larga del capitalismo hispano (1959—2010)* (2010). In these works, López and Rodríguez tell the story of the continuity between the ‘modernization’ of Francoism in the fifties and sixties and the neoliberal project of democracy from a macroeconomic and sociological perspective. They point out that with the arrival to power of the Francoist technocrats, Spain approached the Fordism of other countries, importing capital assets and equipment (machines, transportation equipment) without ever managing to make their industry self-sufficient, always subsidiary to foreign ones. The alternative that appeared to alleviate this problem was tourism (together with the money sent home by emigrants and foreign investment, but tourism brought in more than twice the income of the other two combined).

Tourism thus produced a rapid tertiarization (a growth in the importance of the service sector) of the economy. It also gave rise to the first real estate boom between 1970 and 1973, during which period 400,000 new homes were built every year. That same pattern would be reproduced later in the real estate bubble that preceded the 2008 crisis. This shouldn’t be surprising, since Spain’s entry into the EEC in 1986 simply served to confirm the guidelines created by Francoism: Europe didn’t want Spain to have a strong industrial base, and so it was decided in Brussels (the headquarters of the EEC) that Spain would continue to specialize in tourism, in services, and as an experimental playground for new forms of financial speculation.
In an article in the essay collection on the Transition Culture, *CT o la cultura de la transición* edited by Guillem Martínez, López (2012) indicates that the project of radical economic and social transformation set in motion by neoliberalism basically consisted of ‘recuperating the economic advantage of capitalist agents’ by dismantling the mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth that had been created by Keynesianism (progressive taxes, welfare state, full employment, etc.) (82). Specifically, following the stipulations of the Moncloa Accords (1977), the Spanish state carried out its project by suppressing regulation of the financial world and worsening conditions in the labor market. At the same time, as successive governments of the PSOE (1982–1996) decreed, industry was dismantled and large public companies were privatized to allow the entrance of international capital. In exchange, still according to López, the European Union assigned Spain a clear role within the ‘international division of labor’ that had been being organized since the beginning of capitalist globalization:

a gigantic real estate and consumer market, through the promotion of financial and stock-market activities and of tourism, that bizarre activity that saved Francoism from the industrial crisis of the seventies, and through extremely heavy investment in transportation infrastructure. Banks, construction companies, privatized monopolies, the big mass media conglomerations, and the real estate developers would be the new leading sectors of Spanish capitalism, and they would be introduced in the new transnational order nourished by very generous doses of public spending. Meanwhile, in the rest of Europe a whole institutional framework was being constructed to prepare for the monetary union, which raised the doctrines of Atlantic neoliberalism to the status of laws. (86)

But López also points out something else, which is especially important for understanding the role played by the cultural elites in these processes. In the Anglo-Saxon countries that had had a welfare state, the redistribution of wealth towards the rich that neoliberalism implies was accompanied by an

28 In this definition of neoliberalism, López follows the foundational work of David Harvey in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Harvey works with notions like ‘accumulation through dispossession’ and ‘production of scarcity,’ which are key to understanding the way wealth is redistributed under neoliberalism. The latter idea had previously appeared in his classic *Social Justice and the City*: ‘If it is accepted that the maintenance of scarcity is essential for the functioning of the market system, then it follows that deprivation, appropriation, and exploitation are also necessary concomitants of the market system’ (114).
ideology of disdain for the poor, stigmatized as supposed ‘freeloaders’ on the welfare system. Differently, the ideology that had enabled Spain’s neoliberal transformation was that of integration into European ‘modernity’ (among other things because the Spanish welfare state was too weak to pretend that someone might ‘take advantage’ of it). As such, a revolutionary economic doctrine that would bring the country to the brink of an economic bubble never before seen and then to the brink of a probably irreversible economic depression, was introduced together with an ideological paradigm strongly founded on Spanish cultural tradition: the progressive, ‘modernizing’ Europeanism of the intellectual elites that has been cultivated since the Enlightenment.

1.4.2. Pro-European ‘standardization’ from the elites

Sánchez León explains that the ‘modernizing’ discourse associated with these intellectual elites has been, of course, the source of meaning from which ‘the dominant accounts of the transition to democracy’ have been constructed. To illustrate this idea, he quotes a genealogy of educated, modernizing cultural elites offered by Manuel Vicent in a 2009 column in the newspaper *El País*, which relates the history of the newspaper itself to the Spanish transition as a moment when

the most noble dreams of the Second Republic, destroyed by the war and all the aspirations of modernity that were floating about in the air during the dictatorship [finally came true]. Giner de los Ríos’s regenerationism, the Free Institution of Education, Ortega y Gasset’s theories, Azaña’s policies, the laity, liberty, democracy, and Europeanism ... a historical heritage [to which] was added the disposition of an enlightened bourgeois minority and the most avant-garde creativity of the younger generations.

Essentially, what was called Spanish ‘democratic normalization’ can be considered the apotheosis of a system for establishing and organizing reality. This system is supported by the authority of experts and intellectuals who are heirs to the long tradition of cultural elites who pedagogically guide the people towards ‘modern progress.’ In a clear continuation of this tradition, such ‘progress’ has often been called ‘Europe,’ since, as noted above, to be ‘progressive’ is to be ‘European.’

Let us take a more or less archetypal example of the discourse of ‘democratic normalization,’ prepared from the satisfied position of someone who thinks it has already been achieved: the article ‘La normalization de España’ by the sociologist Emilio Lamo de Espinosa, published in 2001 in
We find that he uses characteristically totalizing language:

1998 was the year when Spaniards realized that we had completed a great national political project, that of Spain’s modernization and entry into Europe, whose origins we must date back to the humiliating days of our defeat in Cuba and the Philippines. Faced with the romantic, derogatory idea of a different Spain, savage, orientalized, authentic, but amodern, we wanted a Spain that was fully European, and even in its vanguard. We wanted to stop being the ugly duckling of the European countries, stop being different and unique, and make Spain normal and equal [to the rest of Europe].

As we saw, this was not a project for one political party or one social group, nor even a project for the elites. Everyone from all walks of life, from different social classes, different geographical regions, and different political ideologies threw themselves into this national effort. Bourgeois or proletariat; socialist or conservative; people from Cataluña, Madrid, Valencia. It was the national attempt to deal with modernity, the Enlightenment, and the reason from which we had been separated by the Napoleonic invasion and consequent schizophrenia between patriotism and modernity, between being Spanish or being enlightened, between nation and reason, a schizophrenia that was the inheritance the Napoleonic invasions left to half of Europe. (2001, 12–13)

Leaving aside for the moment all the other problems that could be laid on that vague national ‘we’ (and which even seems to include a certain colonialist pride), I would like to highlight the self-representation of a project originated by intellectual elites in those terms of ‘national project,’ of ‘everyone from all walks of life and different social classes.’ To explain the history of that supposedly inclusive project, Lamo de Espinosa himself essentially resorts to an inventory of a series of intellectual and political elites who were dedicated to promoting the ‘modernizing pro-European dream’: the Enlightenment scholars, the regenerationists, the Generation of ’98, the Generation of ’14, and finally, the parties and institutions that wove the transition to democracy. This important methodological decision to focus on an analysis of the elites helps to make clear that a project for everyone is

29  As an interesting side note, Emilio Lamo de Espinosa Enriquez de Navarra, father of this Emilio de Lamo, had been one of those ‘experts’ who, in the journal Revista de Estudios Agrosociales, talked about the necessary transformation of peasants into businessmen (1962, 103).
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not the same as a project for some elites who obtain the acquiescence or the approval of most of the people, always within the boundaries of a society strongly affected by that ‘gardening spirit’ that characterizes the modern power/knowledge complex based, as Bauman says, on ‘the new appreciation of the fact that human conduct could not be left to individual discretion if it was to lead to social order’ (48).

Ever since the Enlightenment when, according to Lamo de Espinosa, the ‘pro-European dream’ began to be conceived, this appreciation for the necessity of not leaving human conduct to its fate made it appropriate, according to the cultural elites, to undertake the immense and essential development of the tool of ‘education.’ At the beginning of the modern period, asserts Bauman, education went much further than the institution of school itself, it permeated everything: ‘in no way was education a separate area in the social division of labor; it was, on the contrary, a function of all social institutions, an aspect of daily life, a total effect of designing society according to the voice of Reason’ (49).

Education had to penetrate every corner of life for most people, who were perceived to have been ‘poisoned in the past by wrong, irrational laws and the superstitions they bred’ (69). Therefore, education was constituted in modernity as that system of ‘objectification of the imperfection of the human individual,’ which Jacques Rancière called, in Le Maître ignorant, ‘pedagogical society,’ in terms very similar to Bauman’s.

1.4.3. Pedagogy as perpetuation of inequality

It is worth pausing a moment on one of Rancière’s seminal books to question the supposed unity of elites and masses in the ‘modernizing’ project laid out by Lamo de Espinosa. Le Maître ignorant is a study of Joseph Jacotot, one of those philosophes designated part of the new, modern ‘power/knowledge’ complex, to replace ‘primitive’ knowledges with those legitimized by scientific modernity, and thus to increase the ranks of teachers whose responsibility it was to alleviate human imperfection through ‘the pedagogization of society.’

A strange philosophie, however, because in his later years, Jacotot renounced all of that, suddenly taking a surprising path. After the return of the Bourbons to post-revolutionary France, Joseph Jacotot (1770–1840) had exiled himself to Louvain to be a reader at the university, and there he expected to spend ‘peaceful days.’ But when a group of Dutch students asked him to teach them French, it occurred to him to initiate a small pedagogical experiment whose result would change the course of his life. Jacotot gave them a bilingual version of Telemachus, to see what they were capable of doing on their own. To his surprise, months later they gave him essays written in perfect French.
This anecdote led Rancière to follow Jacotot in a radical questioning of pedagogical principles, beginning with the very notion of the need for teachers. The teacher, says Rancière, is justified as someone who must ‘explain’ to someone else things the latter doesn’t know, so that he or she can learn them; but in reality, no explanation at all is needed in order to learn. ‘To understand,’ according to the pedagogical myth, would be ‘to give the reasons’ for something, when actually, understanding is always something more like translating. Human intelligence always works by feeling its way, repeating and relating, as can be observed in children learning to speak, and as Jacotot’s students demonstrated by learning French by themselves out of a book. ‘What children learn best is what no teacher can explain to them: their mother tongue. It is spoken to them, and it is spoken all around them. They hear and retain, imitate and repeat, make mistakes and correct them’ (Rancière 22).

However, the pedagogical myth negates the value of this way of learning, and claims that, when we are older, we can only learn if someone ‘explains’ to us what we don’t know. This contradiction, asserts Rancière, caused Jacotot’s great revelation:

The revelation that rocked Joseph Jacotot focuses on this: it is necessary to invert the logic of the explanatory system. Explanation is not necessary to remedy an inability to comprehend. On the contrary, this inability is the fiction that structures the explanatory conception of the World. The explainer needs the unskilled person, not the other way around; it is the former who constitutes the latter as unskilled. To explain something to someone is to first show him that he cannot understand it on his own. Rather than being the act of a true teacher, explanation is the myth of pedagogy, the parable of a world divided into wise souls and ignorant ones, mature souls and immature ones, skilled and unskilled ones, intelligent and stupid ones. (23)

The pedagogical myth, according to Rancière, has important social repercussions that carry far beyond the four walls of a school. In reality, what it does is change society into a school where people are denied the ability to learn for themselves, where constitutive inequality is instituted between ‘those in the know’ and ‘those in the dark.’ Only by yielding to the authority of those in the know can the rest ‘progress.’ And so what Bauman predicted has come to pass: most of the population becomes dependent on the knowledge elites and sees itself as incomplete and unable to provide itself with the intellectual resources it needs to live.

Rancière calls this ‘the circle of impotence’: those who are considered ignorant by society cease to trust in their ability to learn for themselves
(an ability in which we all necessarily believe when we are children: no one ‘explains’ language to us, we learn it for ourselves), and accept that they will always need the guidance of those who do know. The end result is that we essentially cultivate our own inability to a certain degree, and our own ignorance. Large social groups appear that consider themselves incapable or incomplete; they internalize the contempt. ‘Those who are excluded from the world of intelligence endorse the verdict of their own exclusion’ (Rancière 34). And it is precisely this self-exclusion that is so often used as a justification to assert that ‘people are uncouth,’ that ‘the problem of society is the lack of education,’ or even that ‘human nature is barbaric,’ etc. The belief in the intellectual superiority of a few has the corrosive effect of extending what Rancière calls ‘the passion for inequality’: a refusal to fully explore one’s own abilities because one believes that one will never be able to attain the intelligence that is the exclusive patrimony of exceptional beings, and because, at the same time, one guarantees the prerogative of making one’s own intelligence unattainable and exceptional for others too, who may be ‘at a lower level than me.’ In the words of Rancière:

Unequal passion is the vertigo of equality, laziness in the face of the infinite work that this demands, fear in the face of that which a reasonable being owes to himself. It is more comfortable to compare oneself, establish social exchange as that barter between glory and disdain where each one receives superiority in counterpart to the inferiority that he confesses. (106)

The pedagogical myth and the passion for inequality it promotes are especially prone to spread in modern societies; they have replaced classicist and theological paradigms with that of progress. The ideology of progress, asserts Rancière, is a fiction of inequality more potent and more dangerous than the ideology of classicism, because it lends itself more to pedagogy, which is always progressive: ‘you have to learn, you still don’t know enough, you still don’t understand, etc.’ (150). The ideology of progress is, in fact, the ideology of pedagogy turned into a law of society.

The collective of historians known as Contratiempo, to which Sánchez León and Izquierdo both belong, has explained how this pedagogical myth is articulated in relation to Spanish ‘modernization,’ in what they call the ‘meta-story of Spanish modernity.’ They describe

the assumption that the forces of progress in Spain have always been embodied by educated, cultured minorities that promote the projects of political citizenship and economic modernization, before whom are situated on one hand certain traditional powers, and on the other, an
immense, uncouth population that can thus be manipulated and is only turned into a historical agent capable of promoting modernization when its action is duly channeled by illustrious progressive minorities. (Contratiempo, historia y memoria 2014)

1.4.4. The determinist story of ‘democratic modernization’
From here it seems that we can construct a more convincing explanation of how the ‘unity’ of Lamo de Espinosa’s supposed pro-European ‘project of everyone’ was articulated. It refers to a project that may have affected everyone but in which, ultimately, in no way is everyone equal. In short, it is a pedagogical project, strongly impregnated with the ‘passion for inequality’ due to which a minority appears as the vanguard of a progress which the majority would be unable to attain on its own.

The genealogies of the educated minorities whom we must thank for that ‘progress’ are repeated over and over in texts that justify Spanish ‘normalization’ as the price of integration into European modernity. The cultural critic Jordi Gracia, coeditor of the aforementioned Más es más, to which I will return, explained ‘normalization’ in Hijos de la razón: contraluces de la libertad en las letras españolas de la democracia (2001) as ‘an unprecedented and lasting reconciliation between the logic of reason and the tortured logic of our contemporary history’ that had its distant origins in ‘a minority sympathetic to Erasmism.’ He then continued with that minority’s historical line of descent ‘slowly and laboriously enlightened,’ then later with ‘the exile of the Romantic liberals,’ Krausism, positivism (‘capable of liberating Spaniards from their most harmful and sterilizing mental baggage’), and modernism, which leads him to the tumultuous twentieth century in which, after the ‘eclipse of reason’ that was Francoism, ‘Spain intertwines itself definitively, following the same harmonic melody, with the European theme. A dream unfulfilled by successive generations of Spaniards throughout the 1800s and 1900s, and which has finally come to pass at the turn of both the century and the millennium’ (16).

It is interesting to note that Gracia uses language that borders on determinism in introducing this small genealogy of generations of ‘reasonable’ Spaniards:

Reason as an instrument of civilization knew how to silently reestablish its validity as an instrument of coexistence and of human understanding, as well as of transformation, like the intermittent forge of a time that, despite all regrets, had to come and would come according to a very ancient historical hope. (16)
Without wishing to over-interpret what might otherwise be a somewhat disproportionate rhetorical emphasis, it seems to me that there is something significant in this reading of ‘modernization’ brought by educated elites as something that ‘had to come and would come.’ And the tradition that defends this ‘modernizing’ discourse doesn’t seem overly inclined to consider the very possibility that things could have been different, that perhaps ‘modernity’ could have meant other things, that the relationship of the enlightened elites to the vast cultural territory not occupied by them could perhaps have been articulated another way, including, at the extreme, that those elites could have come to consider their culture not by definition superior to any others, or at least that there was no reason for it to be the only authorized one.30

30 It is important to at least mention the centrality of one particular intellectual in the configuration of not only the ideological components of this quasi-determinist and elitist intellectual Europeanism, but also the institutional, material conditions of its reproduction. I am referring, of course, to José Ortega y Gasset. About him, intellectual historian Gregorio Morán stated: ‘There is no intellectual figure in the Spanish twentieth century that can compare to him. There may be different opinions about his stature as philosopher, as essayist, as cultural promoter, as writer, as politician, as journalist, etc., but he is the most influential figure ... He has been recognized as a master to generations.’ In his book about Ortega, *El maestro en el erial* (1998), Morán explained the philosopher’s connivance with Francoism, causing an intense controversy which was perhaps as interesting as the book itself, because it showed the persistence of the figure of Ortega as a model of the intellectual for many in Spain. Eduardo Subirats (1993) had already analyzed his symptomatic centrality as a link between the ‘ancient regime’ and the new cultural elites of the democracy: ‘Ortega was, for many reasons, the ideal voice. First, politically speaking, he was in an ambiguous position. He appeared to be a thinker who was open to ‘Europe,’ to humanism, to modern philosophy. He appeared to be a liberal thinker. At the same time, however, he had adopted a radical distance from the Spanish exile and its more eloquent signs’ (62). Besides the ethical and political responsibilities which Morán and Subirats point out, I think it’s interesting to note Ortega’s position as the perfect example of the subject ‘in the know,’ as the model of what a member of the ruling intellectual class should be in a ‘modern’ capitalist disciplinary and pedagogical society. Born into a family of the high bourgeoisie, the son of the director of an important newspaper, he inherited a vast cultural capital—including the job as director of his father’s newspaper—which he was able to multiply exponentially, through his access to the highest circles of intellectual prestige, notably the German philosophical tradition and university. He became an essential figure whose influence in the intellectual Spanish field is still very much alive, reaching institutions like the university, journalism, scholarly journals, and the publishing world in general. To use Bourdieu’s concept, he was not only a founder and transformer of visible institutions, but also a crucial creator of ‘habitus’: of ‘systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their
Labanyi and Graham asserted that using the concept of ‘modernization’ ‘is made particularly problematic—beyond frequent lack of precision in definition—by the unacceptable normative and determinist baggage loaded onto it’ (10). I think it is very important to point out that the power of the extraordinarily useful concept of ‘Transition Culture’ depends on a not insignificant amount of that ‘normative and deterministic baggage’ carried by the discourses of ‘modernization’ and its close relative ‘standardization.’ In this sense, I think the acritical ‘cultural consensus’ that Martínez says is formed around the post-transitional state is justified not only because of the threat of possible social instability, but also (as hindsight shows us from the comfort of a Spain already distanced from those turbulent years surrounding the end of the dictatorship) by integrating the state within that normative and deterministic power of modernizing discourse.

Again, the prototypical victorious claim of ‘normalization’ proposed by Lamo de Espinosa is a perfect example:

What was gained through the PSOE was that immense, historical national project of modernization and Europeanization that had first inspired Enlightenment intellectuals, then the regenerationists, and then the Generations of ’98 and ’14, only to be driven underground for 50 years. But then, at last, it had its historic opportunity. Spain voted in the socialists as executors of that grand project. Its very slogan, ‘For change,’ was its summary and its synthesis. For the voters and those elected in 1982, the change was to modernize and democratize; and to modernize was to become European. (13)

Of course, one of the keys of this linear and teleological retelling of history is its constant omission of the central role played by the capitalist project, and likewise, of the neoliberal derivation of this project. In Spain’s case, this omission is particularly important, since it avoids the inconvenience of having to acknowledge that it was the Francoist technocrats who completed one of the three great tasks of ‘modernization’: the conversion of subsistence economies into capitalist economies. The elites who had outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them’ (1990, 53). Below that conscious level to which Bourdieu alludes, I think it is Ortega’s influence in the construction of ‘habitus’ for the intellectual Spanish class that explains his omnipresence in Spanish culture, his ability to thrive in different political regimes (both as living human being and as posthumous figure), as well as the fact that, as Morán mentioned, he had disciples on both sides of the Civil War, and, as Subirats points out, he was recovered as a model figure in the post-dictatorship period despite his ambiguous political past.
considered themselves the vanguard of the other two modernizations—the political and cultural (or aesthetic)—would have to accept the company of those Francoist technocrats in their privileged space if they acknowledged the centrality of capitalism in the modernizing project. But in addition to this, there is another problem, perhaps even more profound, as I have tried to explain: the hierarchical, naturalized structure of the elites’ (both technocratic and ‘pedagogical’) very leadership itself.

Obviously, this is not a purely Spanish problem, since it has its roots in the necessarily hierarchical functioning of the modern power/knowledge complex, which is articulated through the development of ‘modernization’ plans preconceived by the elites. This leaves the rest of the population to either assume a passive role and accept these plans, or, at most, try to join the ranks of the elites who design them by submitting to the ‘educational’ processes the elites consider necessary. This means the loss of the experiential, egalitarian, and creative potential present in all human beings: the possibility that anyone can invent valued ways of life to which anyone else can add value.

In Spain’s case, as I will try to show in the next chapter, the late arrival of political and cultural ‘modernization’ that has historically accompanied capitalist ‘modernization’ has perhaps made the latent elitism of the modern power/knowledge complex of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries especially virulent. The political and cultural post-Francoist ‘vanguards’ considered the heirs of that long tradition of ‘modernizing’ elites enjoyed a particularly solid legitimacy, which caused them to carry to extremes their inability to recognize other sources of knowledge and value, thus naturalizing their exercise of power as a necessary and desirable ‘normalization.’

31 There has been a recent and very important contribution to the analysis of this ‘normalization’: Luisa Elena Delgado’s La nación singular. Fantasías de la normalidad democrática española (1996–2011) (2014). It uses tools from Lacanian psychoanalysis and theories of cultural hegemony to shed light on the collective internalizing of the paradigm of a ‘normal,’ ‘consensus-based,’ and ‘united’ democratic nation. Working with an extended and plural archive of cultural objects (ranging from op-ed articles to commercial campaigns, as well as literary and essayist production and cultural policies), this book illuminates some important links between cultural, economic, and political power in Spanish democracy. Unlike my line of work here, Delgado’s investigation tends to focus more on the right-wing version of ‘fantasies’ of normalization (notably, Spanish unity), perhaps because of the period she chose for her analysis, while I veer more towards the study of the ‘progressive’ (Europeanist, allegedly social-democrat) foundations of the same ‘normalized’ society she studies.