



LIFE-ENHANCING
LEARNING
TOGETHER

OIKOTREE MOVEMENT

Life-Enhancing Learning Together

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Oikotree Movement

Oikotree is a movement of movements, a combination of critical church related groups, social movements, and individuals who want to stimulate all churches and social groups to cooperate prophetically with the prime actors who are struggling for justice and sustainability around land conflicts. Oikotree provides a platform for sharpening our vision of justice and renewing our solidarity in the struggle for justice in the economy and the earth. We live in solidarity with the social, economic, cultural and political initiatives of historically disadvantaged as well as socially and traditionally excluded communities. Oikotree accompanies its members and organizations through joint and collective actions for reforming faith communities and societies. Oikotree is nurtured, cared for and watered by the Council for World Mission (CWM), the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). It is open to groups and individuals who carry justice in their hearts and share this dream of fullness of life for all.

Preface

In 2007, thirty-five theologians and practitioners from Asia, Africa and other parts of the world, met in Changseong, Korea, to explore together the contribution of *Ubuntu* and *Sangsaeng* in relation to theology, life giving civilisation and ecumenism in the 21st century, under the theme ‘Transforming Theology and Life-Giving Civilisation’.

The term “life-giving civilization” was a critical attempt to discredit the current “civilization” that brings death to humanity and the whole creation. This was a working term that would have to be fully replaced by a new one which is a more organic, relational, and holistic cosmo-vision.

Several communities in Africa, Asia, Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean have beautiful concepts that describe the good and transformative life we are talking about, because many of these communities are still living from and into an understanding of good and transforming life for all living things, the Earth and beyond.

Ubuntu is an expression of human relations lived in community and in harmony with the whole of creation (‘African anthropology and cosmo-vision lived in community’). *Sangsaeng* is an ancient Asian concept ‘of a sharing community and economy which allows all to flourish together’. In Latin America, *Sumak Kawsay*

is a similar concept to *Ubuntu* in Africa and *Sangsaeng* in Asia. *Sumak Kawsay* is a concept that comes out of the cosmo-vision of the Indigenous Peoples in Latin America about creation. It is an expression and praxis originating from the Kichua language of the Andes. “*Sumak*” means fullness and “*Kawsay*” life, altogether meaning “well being”, “good living” or “integral quality of life for all”. *Sumak Kawsay* is both tradition and realization in an on-going project pointing to a cosmic community.

These expressions are references to the model of common life that implies an organized, sustainable and dynamic economic, political, socio-cultural and environmental system, an alternative which ruptures the postulates of the capitalist development by including all human society and all the life forms that exist on earth. This community is built on the principles of diversity, reciprocity, solidarity and equality. In other regions than Africa, Asia and Latin America, there must be equivalent concepts like these, which need to be explored further.

The current dominant world view in education prepares young people to be objects of an over-consumption system. The paradigm inculcates values of competition among people for resources instead of cooperation. They are taught that poverty will never be eradicated and that inequalities in society are a natural phenomenon and can never be overcome. They are educated to dominate nature instead of nurturing

and living in harmony with it. Values of competition, selfishness, apathy and greed are promoted in colleges and schools. Ecology is taken for granted by corporations, which ‘externalise’ ecological damages to increase profits and employ ‘green-washing’ to enlarge their markets. Influenced by corporate lobbies, mainstream policymakers see the “green economy”, which continues to privilege economic growth, as the hope for the future. Corporate thinking is manifested and continuously reproduced in schools through business, economics and other curricula. The current knowledge that devalues creation has contributed to the intertwined economic, social and ecological crises confronting our planet today and which reflect an unjust and unsustainable mode of life on Earth. One of the most serious problems in modern epistemology is dichotomy, by which all sorts of organic and reciprocal relations have been dismantled and divided.

One of clear awarenesses coming from Oikotree movement is that a new epistemology and methodology for theological thinking and theological education/training is urgently needed for churches and theology in order to respond to the enormous challenges of the contemporary life-annihilating human “civilization” manifested in economic injustice, ecological destruction, the threat of Empire, and the escalation of religious conflicts today.

Today, therefore, is the time when a new Life-enhancing culture needs to be explored, reflected and lived out based on those relational, organic and reciprocal concepts like *Ubuntu*, *Sangsaeng*, *Sumak Kawsay* and etc. A new generation of thinkers, young activists, church leaders, politicians, scientists, teachers, economists, and theologians with alternative education and skills that will bring fullness of life is needed now. This was affirmed by the report from Changseong, which said, “We believe that the challenge in the 21st century is to be life-centered, rooted in people’s struggle for life and justice, here and now. It will be characterized by convergence – convergence of philosophical, cultural and religious/faith visions and praxis for the sake of all life and in the service of life.”

This is a collection of the papers contributed as brainstorming voices from various regions to the Oikotree Workshop on Transformative Education in February, 20015 in Matanzas, Cuba. The Life-Enhancing Learning Together programme is planned for different global regions in the coming years, and more substantial resources will be generated from this process. It is our hope that this book is used as one of the stepping stones by which more resources in various forms, including the arts and actions as well as written, will be generated.

Park, Seong-Won (Prof. Dr)
Oikotree Movement, Moderator

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Life-Enhancing Learning Together (LELT) – Comprehensive report of Matanzas workshop on Transformative Education

The Oikotree Workshop on Transformative Education took place at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas, Cuba from 03 to 09 February 2015. The workshop was organized by the Oikotree Movement which is “movement of movements” striving for justice, peace and fullness of life in the spirit of *Ubuntu*, *Sangsaeng* and *Sumak Kawsay* (for their meaning, see below). The Oikotree Movement is sponsored by the Council for World Mission, World Communion of Reformed Churches and World Council of Churches.

The Oikotree Workshop on Transformative Education is envisaged as an open and inviting space to reflect, explore, share and learn about new epistemologies or paradigms for the construction of knowledge(s) that would support communities in their many struggles to untangle themselves from—and create alternatives to—the prevailing economic and political system that is destroying the social and ecological fabric of life. What kinds of knowledge(s) do we need to rediscover or cultivate in order to challenge—and live out alternatives to—the present-day life-annihilating civilisation, manifested in unprecedented economic injustices, environmental destruction, Empire, wars, and escalating religious

conflicts? How can we promote these new ways of thinking and relating? These are some of the critical questions that the workshop tried address.

In order to respond to these challenges, a Life-Enhancing Learning Together (LELT) programme is be launched in different parts of the world in the years to come.

A Radical Shift from the Conventional Epistemology to Life-Enhancing Epistemology

Major purpose of Life-Enhancing Learning Together programme is to provide a new epistemology, research and publications on eco-theology and eco-economy with a view to educate and train young people on how humanity can live in right relationships with the whole created order and work for justice and fullness of life for all. Our challenge is sharing and enhancing life, rather than "giving life". It must incorporate the processes of struggle and creation of alternatives to overcome all the forms of divisive sacrifice that for centuries have subjected peoples, cultures, and especially women. Caution is made to ensure that this is not a new form of instrumentalisation in the sense that it is the only alternative education which will bring fullness of life but that is part of a vision for such a life. The LELT movement is the beginning of such a critical endeavour.

There is an urgent need to equip young people with competences that allow them to critically analyse prevailing paradigms in theology, economics and ecology that have partly contributed to the current interconnected crises in the world and to develop creative solutions to such crises. It will therefore be necessary to begin with general studies on the origins of the current systems of knowledge that in many cases have been perverted by dominant powers. Exposure of the reductionist understanding of the Oikos and creation could be explored. Social and structural analyses must therefore be the starting point.

The LETT will stress analytical approaches from an eco-justice (sometimes termed environmental justice) perspective which refers to right relationships between human beings, other living organisms and the whole creation. While ecology has been defined as the study of relationships between organisms and their environments, eco-justice underscores the ethical dimension of relationships. It includes social transformation, care for the Earth as house (oikos) for all, and liberation of the most vulnerable communities.

For the new epistemology and methodology we understand: a praxis concerned with awareness, emancipation and liberation, starting from the popular classes and experience in relation to the whole inhabited world, articulating instruments of criticism and creativity, being able to create alternatives to current societal arrangements, modes of organization

of work, relations with nature and education, especially the dominant forms of production and use of knowledge.

Ecumenism is part of this praxis, as a statement of faith and the capacity for dialogue with the entire inhabited world beyond the current confessional and corporate ecumenical forms dealing with the mere survival of Christianity and capitalism.

In the shifting conceptual understanding about the meaning of life by people in the margins, Christians are presented with the privilege and responsibility of formulating a transformative expression of Christian faith constructed around:

- new ways of relating
- openness to theological expressions rooted in the cultures of the South and of marginalized people
- an agenda which reflects the issues and concerns of the peoples of the South and of marginalized people in the world
- a commitment to building bridges of understanding and hope, and deepening relationships between North and South.

Oikotree Commitment to Initiate the LETT movement

This challenge requires new theological thinking and new theological formation, education and training based on a new cosmo-vision and perspectives like *Ubuntu*, *Sangsaeng* and *Sumak Kawsay*. At the Oikotree

Global Forum in Anoldshein, 2010, it was agreed that one of the focuses of the Oikotree Movement was to facilitate a theological education and formation movement through the Oikotree Roving Faculty. This mandate was further developed by the Oikotree Facilitation Group meeting in Frankfurt after the Global Forum, and a decision was made to organize an Oikotree Roving Faculty in different regions every two years and a global institute when some of the regional processes bear fruits.

To implement this vision, a preparatory meeting of LELET (then, in the name of Oikotree Roving Faculty) was held in August 2012 to brainstorm possible curricula for Oikos Theological Education and Training, involving theological teachers and activists from different parts of the world. The brainstorming workshop was held in conjunction with the Oikos summer school 2012 which is annually organized by the Oikos Theology Movement in Korea.

The following ideas were developed:

The Oikos Sophia Praxis Roving Faculty

During our meeting as the LELET programme of the Oikotree Movement, the key question was how we commit ourselves to re-memembering the wisdoms of indigenous faith traditions throughout the world for the work of dismantling the systems of evil that produce various conditions of injustice. As an initial

inspiration of this work, the indigenous cosmovisions such *Ubuntu* in Africa, *Sangsaeng* in Asia, and *Sumak Kawsai* in Latin America were recalled. The preparatory group strove to pull together the spiritual wisdoms of various regions. Social analysis skills, experiential, practical implementation from the eco-justice perspective are essential for students who will pursue studies offered by LELT. Such skills should enable students to analyse problems from the surface to their root causes starting with issues, policies and structures to the system in which all these are interrelated. The social system need to be analysed in terms of both time-historical analysis and space-structural analysis which provides a cross-section of a system's framework at a given moment in time.

In the spirit of this commitment, the following module has been developed as the first attempt.

Oikos Education: Foundational Module

Oikos Sophia-Praxis

Sophia stands for the wisdom and praxis/actions by indigenous peoples in the world that derive from an orientation to life that is shaped by the experiences of their forms of knowledge. The module is intentionally designed as a praxiological rather than a cognitive approach to the construction and formation of knowledge. It is more about the search for lived experiences on the margins of modernity and its calculative forms of knowledge.

1. Indigenous Thought/Spiritualities (description)

The realm of the spirits in the worldviews of indigenous peoples has not been understood by modernity nor has it been central to the modernist forms of knowledge. The material and the spiritual are not dichotomized in Indigenous thought and spirituality. Indigenous Spirituality is not dualistic but unitive as life is perceived and celebrated in its wholeness. The application of this well-known indigenous view of life will emphasize the following forms of knowledge construction:

- a. New forms of Interconnectedness
- b. Affirming “body”

2. Critique of (dominant) Paradigms

The modernist discourse of knowledge is calculative, dualist and abstract. The Module will need to critique the dominant paradigms, especially the neoliberal forms of knowledge which are not only ideologically driven but violently imposed on peoples who have lived for centuries with their own forms of indigenous knowledge. The themes below are suggested as areas the module could focus on to engage the contest of the paradigms at play between dominant one and the indigenous one.

- a. Critiques of hegemonic and patriarchal paradigms (emphasis)
- b. Historical-critical analysis (emphasis)
- c. (New) Paradigms more than perspectives

3. Oikos Praxiology (contextual, bodily learning)

The theme is an attempt to totally move away from learning processes that place cognition above experience, immersion, presence of the body in the construction of knowledge. It is a paradigm of learning which cascades from an integrated value system distinct from and in opposition to abstract forms of knowledge creation

4. Introduction to an eco-analytic approach

One of the fundamentally problematic perceptions which led the dominant human civilization to current ecological destruction was anthropocentric thinking. In indigenous spirituality, human beings and nature are not two but one creation community. In God's household (oikos), all inhabitants are the members of the same family. The theme is an attempt to radically transform the anthropocentric thinking into *Ubuntu*, *Sangsaeng* and Sumak Kawsai thinking, which is an organic, relational, and holistic cosmo-vision

Beyond this Foundational Module, we might subsequently pursue the following modules, but the work of the foundational module – covered in one or more apprenticeships through prior workshops establishing the foundational module and its faculty – will ultimately determine the focus, format, and content of the subsequent modules:

The emphasis on “eco” is derivative of an understanding of life as integrated and whole, thus an application of the Foundational Modules precepts in the analysis of the fields identified below:

- 1) Eco-Spiritualities and Eco-Analysis of Theologies
- 2) Eco-Analysis of Economies
- 3) Eco-Analysis of Technologies
- 4) Eco-Analysis of Politics
- 5) Safeguarding Creation / Liberated Creation

Whether these or other modules are covered, we hope that each module will adequately provide a critical descriptive history of old, hegemonic paradigms, descriptive of new paradigms through an applied approach, connecting the various modules between one another.

We need to work to develop and share these essentials, signposts, guidelines or maps of transformative education through gatherings of students and teachers from various traditions and professions. Specifically, we should bring together respected practitioners of various indigenous faith traditions in all regions – especially practitioners of these faiths and Christianities who are committed to social justice and working in social movements, churches (i.e. local and denominational), the ecumenical movement, and the academy (i.e. religious, other disciplines, and interdisciplinary). The workshop will be apprenticeships whereby we gather knowledge

about indigenous spiritualities and connect practitioners of these spiritualities for the purpose of rebuilding the earth-oikos in ways that are life-enhancing and sustainable for all creatures. Through these gatherings, participants will be invited to share papers and/or annotated “bibliographies” of various resources.

Workshop in Matanzas

A full-scale of LET preparatory workshop that had been brainstormed in 2012 was held in Matanzas, Cuba. Matanzas means “killing” because of so many massacres. A significance of holding the workshop was to see the world from marginality perspective, moving the centre of civilization to a root of marginalization of cultures, values, wisdoms and way of thinking.

For this historic and significant workshop, more than 30 educators and activists in the field of education from all over the world and from various faiths were brought to Matanzas to discuss and exchange ideas on new epistemologies that affirm life and that will help us to envision and construct alternatives to prevailing inequitable and destructive socio-economic systems and structures.

How can we unlearn what is life-destroying and re-learn theologies, economics, politics, sciences and technologies that nourish the wellbeing of communities around the world and that sustain the

entire ecological web? What different pedagogical methodologies could we employ and what educational resources are available? These were the key question with which the participants struggled.

Participants began their own journey of un-learning and re-learning in Cuba with a visit to the Matanzas Slavery Museum—which highlighted the complicity between religion, economics and politics in a colonial project that caused tremendous suffering spanning centuries and continents—and with the sharing of a meal called ‘ajiacó.’ Ajiaco is a traditional Cuban soup or stew made with a variety of indigenous root crops and other ingredients – it symbolizes community, well-being and a deep connection with the land.

The workshop was held with the following objectives:

- To learn a transformative epistemology) that will enable participants to propose alternatives to the prevailing destructive imperial epistemology.
- To come up with a new concept of good living epistemology
- To outline guideposts (or essentials, or guidelines), tools, or methodologies to this end, which may not necessarily be in the form of (or defined as) curricula

The workshop was carried out with the following style:

- To imagine a concept of good living epistemology for the time being, we hold “Oikos Sophia Praxis”

as a working title/working process. We are not importing the roman connotation of this world, but we are using this language a tool.

- Indigenous culture of sharing life which is very much oral tradition. Not compartmentalizing.
- Telling our own story, hearing other stories. It is not going to be “now tell us about.” Providing different story-telling spaces.
- Imagine that there are sharing spaces
- As a familiar way of sharing our thoughts and ideas we have prepared papers, but the papers are not going to be presented by the writer like academic conference, trying to share our story, having our own paper in our mind. We are not debating or discussing, but sharing our own story and hear other stories. After all, we may realize that there could be different way of sharing thoughts beyond written form, maybe in a holistic way which is usually used by indigenous community.
- Memory as part of the work of reconstructing our history: reconstructing and rewriting – we are there as people who are ready
- We are not liberated from conventional concepts and words yet, but trying to move towards Oikos Sophia Praxis methodology.

The programme began with historic and critical analysis on hegemonic and patriarchal paradigms in knowledge system. We critically tried to see and judge

the current knowledge system based on hegemonic, patriarchal and dichotomical epistemology and paradigm that is inherited modern thought and Western way of thinking and worldview.

We then move to search for new paradigms, that is, more than just perspectives. What would be alternative epistemology and paradigm for more organic, relational and holistic cosmo-vision beyond dichotomized way of thinking? We have been interested in *Ubuntu* of Africa, *Sangsaeng* of Asia and *Sumak Kawsay* of Latin America as a possible new paradigm. How further study can be made to make these holistic, relational and organic way of thinking for a new theological thinking and a new theological formation? Could we explore more of this sort of thinking in indigenous and other cultures that have not been exposed clearly?

The workshop was geared to be devoted to group work on the following five areas of work:

- 1) Eco-analysis of Spiritualities and Theology
- 2) Eco-analysis of Economies
- 3) Eco-analysis of Science and Technologies
- 4) Eco-analysis of Politics
- 5) Eco-analysis of Creation and safeguarding
Liberated Creation

For the sake of coherent, the groups of creation and safeguarding liberated creation, and science and technology were put together.

The issue for group work as well as the entire workshop was so vast and fundamental. This meant that the discussion in group as well as plenary might not be easy task. We, therefore, tried to search for the ways to go by trying to answer the following questions:

- What would those five major areas would look life if we critically review those five areas with Eco-paradigm?
- How could we organize those five major areas of life according to *Ubuntu*, *Sangsaeng* and *Sumak Kawsay* paradigm?
- How should the political arrangement be made if we live with those values?
- What sort of economic life would be needed?
- What kind of spiritualities and theologies would be articulated?
- What sort of culture and system would be needed for safeguarding liberated creation and how should science and technology serve for this purpose?

The groups, then, were requested to concretely respond to those practical questions:

- In the light of critique of hegemonic and patriarchal paradigms in current knowledge system and in the light of new way of thinking and transformative educational need, would the outcome of group discussion be sufficient as a beginning process or need more thoughts?
- If so, what sort of more thought is needed?

The groups were also asked to answer the following concrete questions for follow-up:

- For transformative education, what sort of essentials, guidelines, signposts would be needed?
- A familiar concept for this is ‘curriculum’. However, we try to avoid using this term for transformative education to be more open process rather than putting way of thinking in a fixed form.

The Oikotree Movement is committed to opening a Oikos Sophia Praxis Roving Faculty programme, once we get a clear picture from this workshop at least for beginning process. We try to map out the future journey for transformative education, organizing faculty team and planning some regional school.

Critiques of Hegemonic and Patriarchal Paradigms in Knowledge System

- Historical-critical analysis
- New Paradigm more than perspectives

We began the journey of critiquing paradigms by locating ourselves and by choosing starting points. Dominant paradigms marginalize and make invisible various groups of people. We did pose the question, “How do we write women, people of color, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalized groups back into history?”

The critiquing paradigms were started by initially focusing on facing the memory of the role of theology/scripture/religion/faith in legitimizing slavery through religious references and ecclesiastical edicts. For instance, slaves had to be baptized and slaves who resisted were not only accused of being traitors to the state but were also called traitors to the faith. The power of churches dominated theological thinking and theological education. There is a need to deconstruct religion. What is religious? What is secular?

We need to critically review modernity and enlightenment thinking which put a premium on science and rationality. Science affords a veneer of absoluteness and therefore divineness. In economics the use of mathematics provides “scientific proof” of absoluteness (and divineness) of neoclassical economic theories and policies. It has also contributed to promoting a money-oriented, “more is better” mindset and a calculative attitude.

In relation to the former, we have to question the idea of God as absolute, divine and perfect. Nothing is absolute, theologically or in economics. There is a need for experiential/contextual theologies just as there is a need for empirical/contextual theories and methodologies in economics.

The church institutionalized spirituality, made the divine absolute. This institutionalization has destroyed spirituality. How can we reclaim spirituality and

transform absolute images? What alternative images can we use?

Patriarchy and anthropocentrism are at the roots of the intertwined crises we face. Following Bacon and Descarte, knowledge became power, as in the power to dominate. We torture nature to derive the knowledge to dominate. This knowledge system is based on patriarchy, on other dualisms and dichotomies. The idea, “I think therefore I am,” sets humans apart from nature and promotes the idea that man is privileged and special. The alternative must therefore build on the principle, “we are therefore I am.”

We must ask, “knowledge from whom?” From books, oral wisdom of our ancestors, practices of social movements? What is the ecology of knowledge?

We need plurality and intersubjectivity for transformative education. The way forward involves leaving behind Western perspectives and dynamics of power.

Education as we have received it is designed to control. It is designed to instill the empire inside us. We need another term for education that is less loaded, e.g. formation, investigation, exploration, and discovery.

Transformative epistemology ought to be about improving the conditions of life for all. It must be related to life. It must help us question and dismantle our own imperial thinking and mindsets.

We need to teach and learn alternative ways of relating with each other and to nature – alternatives that are life-creating and life-nurturing – instead of getting stuck in concepts. It is important to remember that such alternatives already exist and lie with indigenous and social movements.

Eco-Analysis and Signposts for Transformative Education on Four Areas

For the substantial part of the workshop was conducted through group work. The group work tried to develop a chart from which one could see clearly the content of that particular area's contents, processes that need to be taken and available resources. This is clearly just a beginning which needs further and on-going development.

Eco-Praxiology for Spiritualities and Theologies – Transfigurative learning

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Where to begin 'teaching' theologies and spiritualities: with the stories not told, with marginated narratives, stories the seminary doesn't consider, stories from historically, socially, and culturally excluded communities. Start with the students' experience, and also the professor's experience, so that the learning context is a community of learners rather than a

one-way communication based on the professor's experience. Start out of the classroom. Take our traditions and reinterpret them according to the peoples' struggles, histories which have been excluded.

- With regard to the Body, the focus should be on a theology of life, embodiment, context, connection and communication, Indigenous, and transfiguring.
- With regard to the Land: Theology of justice, reconciliation and restoration; Indigenous; Sea and Water.
- With regard to (Re)Production, focus on hope, the future, healing, restoration and resurrection.

- Processes

Privileging praxis over rhetoric, coming together to cooperate on practical tasks, not to 'dialogue'. Sharing community responsibilities, with attention to spontaneity and openness. Exchanging local experiences among the group. Being present, in relationship and flexible. Giving priority to the knowledges of the subjugated and marginalized. Having interfaith conversations while we walk the walk. Intercultural/inter-religious reading of and meditation on sacred texts from several religions. Decolonizing our minds, redefining categories and re-engaging local people and cultures. Singing, prayer, meditation, worship

- Resources

First and foremost, participants and their experience. Relationships within and outside the group which are grown in reciprocity – the mutual exchange of assistance.

- Arundhati Roy
- Chandr Mazaffar
- Thich Nhat Hanh
- Samdhong Rimpouche
- Korean Monks
- Films and web-based resources, found and shared by participants both before and during the regional Life-Enhancing Learning Together events
- Post-Holocaust Studies
- Indigenous/post-colonial materials.
- I Corinthians 8-9
- Healing Waters in the Bible

- Books

- The Quran
- The Bible in contemporary translations
- Jasmin Zine, Muslim Women, Transnational Feminism and the Ethics of Pedagogy: Contested Imaginaries in Post-9/11 Cultural Practice
- Farid Esak, Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective Of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression
- Phyllis Tribble, Texts of Terror

- R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*
- R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Still at the Margins: Biblical Scholarship Fifteen Years after the Voices from the Margin*
- Miguel A. De La Torre and Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, *Beyond the Pale: Reading Theology from the Margins*
- Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, *Reading from This Place, Vol. 1: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*
- Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, *Reading From This Place, Vol. 2: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective*

Politics

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The first process is to de-colonize the reading of politics from global history to our context by learning post-colonial dynamics, the history of politics in our community and local experiences. That will entail specifying how we define politics, including

- Critique of the western traditional narrative and institutions (nation-state, political parties, etc.), including the nature of politics, policy, democracy, and citizenship, and the deconstruction of political themes/‘values’ therein.

- How we locate our politics: the politics of self, identity, and the politics in and of daily life.

The next steps include critique of the politics of religion and of faith. The politics of religion will address the political dimension of both

- religions in the public sphere and
- religious communities within themselves and in relation to the public sphere. The politics of faith will attend to biblical and theological reflection.

Attention will then turn to Theology, Politics and Religion, including deconstructing and proposing new 'political values' (justice, democracy, equality, community/commons, solidarity, diversity).

- Process

Heterogeneous groups: professors and students using a participant methodology. Start from knowing and analyzing alternatives. Political experiences as the departure point of the work. Work on the concepts that the participants bring from the different topics.

- Resources

De/post-colonial theory and political philosophy

Eco-Economics

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Critique of dominant economic theories, histories and systems, which will include the following areas

- What is wrong/problematic/life-denying with the dominant economic theories?
- What is wrong/problematic/life-denying with the dominant economic policies and systems?
- What are the historical and ideological roots of prevailing economic theories and systems?

Envisioning economies of Life

- How do we define economies of life, especially from the perspectives of the marginalized and using an eco-lens? What would be its key elements?
- What would be the goals of economies of life?

Constructing economies of life to replace capitalism

- In economies of life, how would we organize the way we produce, consume, distribute and invest?
- Is there a role for trade, money and banks? Are there existing alternative examples of trade, other media of exchange, different ways of financing and investing that resist the logic of profit and respect the planet's ecological limits?

What can we learn from these examples? What structures would support these alternatives?

- What would be the roles of states, markets, corporations, private sector and households in such economies? How should these relate to each other?
- Do we need global economic governance? If so, how do we envision it?
- What are the roles and functions of labour, capital, property and technology?

- Processes

Popular education, learning and formation of ‘trainers/fertilizers/animations’ through participatory processes that facilitate mutual learning and sharing of collective wisdom – everyone has something to contribute. Immersion in contexts of socio-economic injustice, and posing critical questions (rather than providing answers) through dialogue. Storytelling from the margins, along with gender/class/race/contextual/empirical analyses. Affirmation of alternatives to money that are already in practice among indigenous communities.

- Resources

Activists, leaders of social movements and communities. Formation materials (written, oral and visual) on alternative economies. Cultural and artistic references. Existing research and financial support

Creation, Science and Technologies

- Contents

We live in a context where theological expressions, articulations, images and symbols are grounded in a range of perspectives and paradigms that have devalued and distorted the importance of history. There have been several and severe attempts in the present and past to distort people's memory/history, either in part or in toto. This is nothing but an attempt to distort/kill people's history along with the people, an attempt to change the past, the present and the future of the people – especially the oppressed of the earth.

Pedagogy of Transformative Relatedness/

Connectedness. Isolating the 'I' is an illusion. There can never be an I without the We. The interconnectedness of the *Ubuntu*, *Sangsaeng*, *Sumak Khawsay* metaphors is born as affirmative concepts of Community adopted as an integrated principle and affirmed as the starting point of every knowledge.

Interconnectedness: Buddhist Perspectives, Inter-religious Dialogues, Praxis.

- Processes

- Intentional grounding in praxiology: We believe that transformative learning can be achieved by Relatedness.

- Connectedness: We believe that transformative learning must be shaped by the interconnectedness of all.
 - Transformative knowledge is compassionate, embodied knowledge, it acknowledges the priority of the epistemological sophia of the subjugated.
 - Current theological education patterns need to be revisited in light of the emerging challenges in contexts for Transformative Learning (learning from initiatives in Cuba).
 - Rereading the Bible through the eyes of the Marginalised/People of the Earth.
 - Link knowledge, ethics and aesthetics: Immersion in context, learning from the people. Share with the local experiences of struggle and participation.
 - Looking at Creation as a gift: Vandana Shiva, Gayatri Spivak, Leonardo Boff, Ivonne Gebara and others.
 - Revisit the history of relationships between religion and science.
- Resources
- Caroline Merchant, The Death of Nature.
 - The Oikotree paper on Land
 - New interpretations/understanding of Creation: biblical and other discussions on Adam-Adamah, not limiting to male-female but go beyond to

Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 2:15, Genesis 9, Ezekiel 37, Isaiah 11, 65, etc.

- Rabbit Footprints
- Radiance
- Women in Black and Occupy Movements around the world.
- Taking up the new/emerging/urgent challenges in our future, such as convergence technologies taking over from information technologies as a projection of our future

Life-Enhancing Learning Together programme in different part of the world

Intensive LELT courses will be held in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, North America and the Pacific region for the next five to seven years. The participants (faculty members and students in current term) will mainly be from the respective region, but some other participants from other regions could also be involved for learning together. Detailed programmes, including contents, style and so forth will be developed by the preparatory groups for different regions in consultation with the Transformative Education working group and the Oikotree Facilitating Group. As an example of how the LELE programme might look, here is a possible LELE brainstormed by African participants at the Matanzas Workshop.

The Africa Oikotree Transformative Education Awakening

- Objectives:
 - 1) To learn a transformative epistemology that will enable Africans to liberate themselves from an imperial destructive epistemology.
 - 2) To equip the facilitators with skills for enhancing a transformative epistemology.

- The learning space (Kitivo):
Bagamoyo (the route of slave trade)

- Participants:
 - 28 from the following countries: To come from the Eastern and Southern Africa.
 - Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ruanda, Burundi, Madagascar, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland, Namibia, Angola.
 - The categories include people leaders in peasantry, workers, juakali/machingas, spiritual leaders, activists, musicians, dancers and fine artists.

- Facilitators:
Various spiritual communities, gender networks, ecologists, social solidarity economics, social solidarity financing and life-giving agriculture.

- Methodology:
Pro-active Participatory approach in learning whereby each and everyone bring knowledge for sharing in various forms: Oral tradition, music, singing and dancing, dialogue, art, stories and analyses.

- Time table
 - First day: Community building: songs, dance and stories from each participant. Immersion activity
 - Second day: Sokoni day: meditation, sharing of praxis from the machingas and others, why they are doing what they are doing, preparing and sharing *Ubuntu* meals.
 - Third day: Spiritualities- *Ubuntu/Ujamaa* praxis
 - Fourth day: Reflecting critically on the destructive economies- listening and dialoging on various narratives on such economies.
 - Fifth day: Revisiting indigenous eco-epistemology
 - Sixth day: Reflecting critically on science, technology and innovation
 - Seventh day: A dialogue on how to work with communities on the new epistemology and outlining an action plan.
 - 8th day: Departure

In Matanzas, we tried to organize regional LELET programme in different part of the world as follows:

- 1) 2016
 - A. Latin America/Caribbean(Spanish speaking) – Colombia
 - B. Asia 1 (North East, South East) – Korea
- 2) 2017
 - A. Africa 1 (Anglophone) – Tanzania
 - B. North America/Caribbean(English speaking) – Canada
- 3) 2018
 - A. Europe – South Spain
 - B. Asia 2 (South, West or Middle East) – Sri Lanka
- 4) 2019
 - A. Africa 2 (Francophone)
 - B. Pacific – Australia
- 5) 2020
 - A. Global

Eco Analysis of Politics. Realities and Representations
of the International Criminal Court in Africa.
Reflections of Kenya's experience with the ICC and
the fractured nature of pursuit for justice.

Wahu Kaara

Abstract

The origins of violence in the political culture of Kenya lies not in the egoistic personal power plays of individual African politicians, but rather in the complex interplay of indigenous and exogenous social forms of democratic political organizing. Likewise, redress for the violence of the past lies less in isolating and punishing a few political actors, and more in challenging the dominant (global) political culture of bourgeois democracy and instantiating indigenous, horizontal, participatory, subsistence-oriented (universalizing) people-centred democratic political relations into advancing democracy from its current state of upholding inequality to a form which universalizes access to life goods and equalizes power relations between rulers and ruled. This remedy is best achieved through a local judicial process which would allow Kenyans to “own” the debates and contribute more directly to self-reflection on the history and future of democracy in the country.

Background

The distinctive shape of political competition in Kenya is in part a product of the combining of two different social forms (a) western bourgeois democracy, with its hierarchy, competition and money-centeredness; and (b) Kenyan indigenous social, political and economic social forms, rooted in the inter-linked but distinctive histories of Kenya’s culturally

and spatially diverse (and highly decentralized) ethnic groups. Ethnic groups, in this view, primarily distinguished themselves from each other by their distinctive economic and political lifeway's. And though language and cultures also differentiated people from one another, it was easy enough for a Kikuyu to "become Maasai," for example, through adoption into the cultural and economic practices and relations of that group.

The colonial administration imposed a hierarchical, highly centralized political structure, employing explicit and lethal force to subdue dissent. The post-colonial period has seen a US-centred refinement of the structures of "good governance" through intensification of bourgeois democratic, individualistic and competitive political culture and practice, tied, as it is, with a friendly openness to foreign corporate investment and financial interests in Kenya.

The successive history of western imposition of individualistic, competitive, and resource-controlling political hierarchies onto on horizontal, small-group, a cooperative/consensual polities have contributed to the emergence of sharply competitive hierarchies within the distinctive indigenous socio-political-cultural groups (ethnic groups, tribes). Furthermore, indigenous forms of kith- and kin-based support networks and self-help traditions; and historical experience of political actors in the colonial and post-colonial eras maintaining privileged access to

resources: both tendencies underscore the cultural and political sources of the common practice of citizens looking “up” to politicians, especially of their own ethnic group, for assistance and for means of bolstering personal and communal development.

The distinctiveness of Kenyan manifestations of the bourgeois democracy is further explained by French Africanist political scientists Chabal and Daloz (1999), who argue that in the ‘west’ politics is “liberated” from society and the economy, whereas in Africa, politics is not at all separated from society and the economy. In fact, despite western-backed “democratization,” politics in Africa is becoming more, not less, wed to the economy and society. We would argue that this is precisely because indigenous social forms were, and remain, based upon holistic conceptions and practices of political economy in which politics serves to organize society and mobilize the economy.

Non-governmental organizations in Kenya fit into this scenario, since, as “civil society,” Kenyan NGOs have played an active part — one might say, a partisan part — in “democratization” initiatives funded by the west. Inherent in this relation is an existent contradiction based on the fact that in a post Berlin wall global division of labour and the ascendancy of American – West led neo liberal globalization, retreating former client states in Africa during the cold war era were now deemed dictatorial and murderous regimes. Kenya was a remarkable western ally in the

cold war era though it propagated its own nationalist plan under its famous 1965 development blueprint, “Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on... The push for democratization, good governance and such liberal agendas was a well couched regime change orientation through which the development and emergence of a new coterie of a leadership, often western backed and intellectually stimulating was much necessitated by the funding of good governance work by mainly Western government development agencies and other private foundations.

In the ever changing context of the Kenyan political landscape, this nexus between the funding from external sources and push for democratic credentials at the national level has lately been manifested by a contestation between the elites both in the political and the civil society leadership. Accusations of sabotage, subversion and treason abound with the political elite insisting that civil society at the behest of its western backers and funders is out to fix one end of the political elite via the ICC while promoting and facilitating a favourable regime change to a more western favourable leadership.

This grandstanding and elite contestation has greatly informed Kenya’s activities at the continental level in pursuing a more deepened and nationalist African agenda. The rhetoric especially from the ruling coalition is that Kenya is at the enviable position of

leading Africa's resurgence in its integration and relations within the global division of labour.

As such, it is in this context that we must place our analysis of the post-election violence of 2008 and how it has impacted on a resounding reorganization of the Kenya body politic. Machete-wielding youth who fight and kill "for their candidate" or "against" another candidate, are not necessarily acting at the behest of said candidates. Rather, theirs is an extreme, and criminal, expression of both their dispossession and deprivation, on the one hand, and their seeking of redress through the channels of hierarchical, competitive political processes. "A hungry man is an angry man;" and when the way he thought was open, is suddenly closed, he may be expected to do anything to open the way again: What is "the way"? Or where does it lead to? The way that is most pressing is the way towards food, towards basic subsistence that has been — and let us add emphatically here — *criminally inaccessible* to tens of millions of Kenyans, at various rates and intensities, for generations. This is the giant elephant in the room, that capital's crime against humanity created and sustains the conditions under which Kenya's — and other African countries' — post-election violence erupted.

Conclusion

A different remedy for the scourge of post-election violence* is required than that offered by the ICC, one that takes into account the history and culturally-specific expressions of democratic organizing in Kenya. Local court proceedings would at the very least become a public self-examination of the ways that indigenous participatory democratic traditions would be better instantiated within democratic governing structures. At best, local proceedings could facilitate citizens' engagement in processes of determining how social (and individual) reparations could be organized to redress the extreme inequality and deprivation suffered by the majority of Kenyan citizens, and allow the strong history of cooperative and consensual indigenous political governance structures to shape and define the practices of democracy in Kenya.

- * Not only PEV 2007-2008, but all previous instances, and indeed, all forms of violence at all times. It is not as if there is any acceptable level of violence. Post-election violence is an extroverted form of socialized violence, under conditions described above. In the west, violence is both introverted (battering of women and children, bullying, rape, prostitution, sex slavery, pornography – all forms of explicit violence that either threatens or occurs every single woman

and child's life. The fact that this violence does not warrant criminal investigations into how such crimes have been organized, illustrates the limitations of bourgeois justice. For surely people profit from violence against women. No doubt. Absolutely. And profit is the motivation on a grand scale, and capital the organizer of the dispossession of the men, women and children whose lives are in submission to the normalization of sexual violence in the west.

The story of Eco-economics
as *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa* Economics

Rogate R. Mshana

The term eco-economics means more than ecological economics. This is a holistic term arising out of *Ubuntu* economics which has to do with people's economics embedded in relations inherent in the ecosystem. This means the *Ubuntu* concept of "you are because we are, and we are because you are" is extended to mean "you are because we are a part of God's creation (*Teseru*)". This type of understanding of *Ubuntu* beyond human relations to that of relations in creation can be appreciated when studying, among other things, blessings and curses in African communities.

In my community (the Pare community), one of the most popular blessing is the following: "*Niwe Mramba chenona, uliwe ntunda kangi uaghuswe nzighi.*" "*You are the sweet Baobab tree, may people eat your fruits and from you come out ropes.*" A Baobab tree grows in very hot and dry areas in Africa. It has three characteristics. First, it is huge and strong, producing sweet fruits from which delicious juice can be made from. Secondly, medicinal oil can be extracted from its seeds. Thirdly, from its back, ropes for construction can be made.

It can be deduced from such a blessing that the Pare community's understanding of good life is one that is wished for all people. A Baobab tree denotes strength, capacity, wealth, and by such a blessing, others will have an opportunity to benefit. It is another way of wishing a person and communities good health. The Baobab tree also implies serving as the depository of

community wisdom. Pride in success is when someone says, “*I am a Baobab tree.*”

There is another type of blessing regarding good relations with all people: “*We uoke Kimbara chegura suke ya mkiva na ya mzuri. Uoke Kimbara wesina nzo na muntu.*” “*May you be Kimbara that sticks to both a poor and rich man’s clothes.*” Kimbara is a simple plant that produces sticking seeds. As one walks through a field with such plants, the seeds stick on clothes. The idea here is that Kimbara does not discriminate between a rich person and a poor one. To bless someone to be a Kimbara is to wish one to be a good leader who will treat all people the same.

The main point raised in both examples is to demonstrate how in the Pare community, human beings are related to plants and where good examples can be drawn for a good life. This is what can be understood as relations in creation. From plants and other living things, a transformative epistemology of economics is emerging. Here an attempt is made to outline *Ubuntu* economics but first one needs to understand the concept of *Ubuntu*, a term used in East and Southern Africa. Some of this information is extracted from the Wikipedia.

What is *Ubuntu*?

There are many different, and not always compatible, definitions of what *Ubuntu* is.¹ *Ubuntu* asserts that society, not a transcendent being, gives

human beings their humanity. An example is a Zulu-speaking person who when telling you to speak in Zulu would say “*khuluma isintu*,” which means “*speak the language of people*.” When someone behaves according to custom, a Sotho-speaking person would say “*ke motho*,” which means “*he/she is a human*.”

According to Michael Onyebuchi Eze, the core of *Ubuntu* can best be summarized as follows:

*“A person is a person through other people’ strikes an affirmation of one’s humanity through recognition of an ‘other’ in his or her uniqueness and difference. It is a demand for a creative intersubjective formation in which the ‘other’ becomes a mirror (but only a mirror) for my subjectivity. This idealism suggests to us that humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other and need to sustain this otherness creation. And if we belong to each other, we participate in our creations: we are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am. The ‘I am’ is not a rigid subject, but a dynamic self-constitution dependent on this otherness creation of relation and distance.”*²

An aspect of “extroverted communities” is the most visible part of the *Ubuntu* ideology. There is sincere warmth with which people treat both strangers and

members of the community. This overt display of warmth is not merely aesthetic but enables formation of spontaneous communities (co-operatives if you will). The resultant collaborative work within these spontaneous communities transcends the aesthetic and gives functional significance to the value of warmth. How else are you to ask for sugar from your neighbour? Warmth is not the *sine qua non* of community formation but guards against instrumentalist relationships.

Ubuntu as political philosophy has aspects of socialism, propagating the redistribution of wealth. This socialisation is a vestige of agrarian peoples as a hedge against the crop failures of individuals. Socialisation presupposes a community population with which individuals empathise and concomitantly, have a vested interest in its collective prosperity. Urbanisation and the aggregation of people into an abstract and bureaucratic state undermines this empathy. African Intellectual historians like Michael Onyebuchi Eze have argued however that this ideal of “collective responsibility” must not be understood as absolute in which the community’s good is always prioritised over the individual’s good. On this view, *Ubuntu* it is argued, is a communitarian philosophy that is widely differentiated from the Western notion of communitarian socialism. In fact, *Ubuntu* induces an ideal of shared human subjectivity that promotes a community’s good through an unconditional

recognition and appreciation of individual uniqueness and difference.³

What is *Ujamaa*?

Ujamaa is another concept related to *Ubuntu*. It means familyhood and mutual involvement of all members of a family unit. In Tanzania, *Ujamaa* was made a policy by the first President Mwl Julius K. Nyerere. Philosophically, he characterized *Ujamaa* as his attempt to “*synthesize the conflicting needs of a human being as an individual and as a member of society.*” In traditional Africans societies a human being was socialized to put the common good above individual good. According to Nyerere, Africans by tradition had been socialists in the sense that their lives in extended family settings were governed by three fundamental principles: living together, working together and sharing equitably the fruits of their work especially basic goods and services as well as the major means of production. Their culture encouraged them to think of themselves primarily as members of a large group, a community, and thus the needs of each as an individual tended to be superseded by one’s needs as a member of society. During colonialism a trend was initiated to move away from extended family production and social unit towards a class system in rural areas. The *Ujamaa* policy, therefore was about reactivating the principles upon which traditional extended family minus patriarchy was based. Based

on this policy, self governing communities in form of extended *Ujamaa* Villages were promoted. Nyerere stated the following:

“We have deliberately decided to grow, as a society, out of our own roots...We are doing this by emphasising certain characteristics of our traditional organization, and extending them so that they can embrace the possibilities of modern technology and enable us to meet the challenge of life in the twentieth century world.”

Ubuntu and Ujamaa Economics

Ubuntu and its version of *Ujamaa* in Tanzania have elements of humanness which should be essential in designing new ways of doing economics that are people- and ecology-centred. Economics that serve the needs of the people and respects ecology can be derived from *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa*. Such economics must include everyone in sharing the fruits of labour on the one hand but also recognising the limits of our planet on the other. *Ubuntu* economics focus on sharing resources equitably. Unemployment does not exist in such economics. Production and consumption are done with a degree of sensitivity to the ecosystem and harmony is maintained. The Pare community demonstrated this in their worship called “*Mpungi*” which has the following elements. Two stones, one white and one black are put in a pot. Water is added into the pot and the pot is placed under a banana tree.

The white stone symbolizes harmony among people and creation. The black stone symbolises purification, self constraint, satisfaction and reconciliation. Water symbolises the source of life and the banana tree becomes a symbol of food production. These elements are at the centre of worship in Pare community to remind the community of their worldview about good living in their society.

New Epistemology in Economics based on *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa*

In order to develop new economics based on *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa*, we need to raise the following questions:

- What other notions similar to *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa* can eco-economics be developed?
- In eco-economics, scarcity as a theory needs to be revisited and critiqued and replaced by the economics of abundance. Are there examples from communities practicing economics of abundance? What about economics of enough? What about Cooperation and competition aspects?
- It is essential to define eco-economics as a field of study that aims at fulfilling the needs of communities and those of the ecosystem. In such a study, how can the term profit be conceptualized? How can money be a common good, a real medium of exchange of goods instead of as a commodity by itself? How can production, consumption and

distribution be organized? What about the concept of labour? How can waste be avoided in economics?

A Hardening Husk of Neoliberal Antics:
Worrying Signs of the Times

Vuyani Vellem

Introduction

This paper was first presented in Germany Hannover in November 2014 in a Conference that was organised by the World Communion of Reformed Churches. It has been reworked a little because its thrust is part of an on-going analysis of the antics of Empire. The thesis of this paper is that Empire is hardening. Empire is not getting any better. The point is illustrated by a story, real story or even thought about how ordinary people view the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela on the Robben Island to commence our conversation. Following this perspective, a brief contrast between the Sharpeville Massacre and the Marikana one is presented to demonstrate the killing of the consciousness of the people by Empire. This is done within the context of a broader view of democracy within the clutches of pseudo-religious neoliberal politics and economics. The paper concludes with a short argument on ethics of feasibility.

Mandela and the Robben Island

‘When Mandela was in Robben Island, not only Mandela was there, but all of us were imprisoned there on the Robben Island,’ says one ordinary South African, in conversation with others. There is a shopping complex in the far North West of Johannesburg fondly called ‘kwa Moses’ meaning at Moses’s place serving neighbouring townships and some informal settlements. This is where many people

flock at weekends to enjoy their drinks and roasted meat! I often spend my time among ordinary South Africans to listen to the heartbeat of those on the underside of history, hard-working labourers with no labour power, as living work has turned out to be 'living' deadly work!

'When they released him,' this fellow, who seemed overtly 'happy,' markedly concludes, shaking his head: 'you know, when they took him out, they left us there!' Many of us have been to the Robben Island a number of times, perhaps as tourists. I have been there a number of times in search of the footprints of these ordinary South Africans, including those of Hintsa the Great, the King of AmaXhosa whose skull, ears, teeth, beads and bracelets are still missing!¹

I have seen Robert Sobukwe's abode of solitary confinement on the Robben Island, the quarry that affected Mandela's eyesight throughout the years he spent with others digging out stones on this island and his cell. But each time I go there I always feel that there is something missing! I do not see the footprints of Hintsa the King of amaXhosa, I do not see the footprints of mothers and fathers who died as cheap labour and whose eyes were affected by the teargases and gunfire during the Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto uprisings. It is even harder for me to trace the footprints of the Marikana widows as if the dead bodies of their husbands were washed away by sand and the rhythm of the Atlantic Ocean, the Atlantic

Ocean which is verily a cemetery of black African bodies disposed from merchant ships of the slave trade in the nineteenth century. As if this fellow were asking: ‘Where are the ‘ears’ of democracy, the ‘teeth’ of democracy, the ‘beads’ and ‘bracelets’ of democracy among those of us who are still on the Robben Island?’

While I see tourists at Robben Island, each time I go there, the voice of this ordinary person, continues to haunt me. When I set foot back to the land of Cape Town, and as I move into the hinterland, the peri-urban settlements that have become *de facto*, dwelling places of millions of South Africans today, that is only when I then begin to see the footprints and disremembered bodies I struggle to find when I am on the ‘Island of Tourists.’ So, I begin to think, well, this fellow is telling the truth! Robben Island is the whole country. Robben Island is now the entire globe in which the narratives of the struggle and suffering are turned into exotic images for the satiation of a tourist. We are still actually there, decades after the release of Nelson Mandela and his passing. What sign is this then for me? Perhaps as the title of my reflection goes, this is but a time of *A Hardening Husk of Neoliberal Antics*.

Pseudo-Democracy in Post 1994 South Africa

Since my participation in the Accra-Agape-CWM-OikoTree discourse— Kitwe, Debrecen, Accra, Porto Alegre, Nairobi and Hannover after the adoption of the Accra Confession, I have been influenced and

inspired by a number of people I have met, today with some of them like James Buys and Russel Botman having departed—may their souls rest in peace. In this journey I deeply began to think about theological innovations,² the meaning of democracy,³ Reformed faith⁴ and its salvationist paradigm and many other socio-political themes that are pertinent in our continent.⁵ I purport not to suggest that my views are beyond reproach on these issues, but rather to assert that my current reflection is not isolated from journey I started outlined above. There is continuum of reflection since Kitwe hitherto that shapes some of my thoughts and reading of a number of theological proposals.

I have been fascinated by new proposals that seem to co-opt the liberation symbols. I have painfully witnessed numerous attempts by exponents of the liberation paradigm to re-assert and re-articulate the tenets of this life-giving heritage, irrupting, as it were from the waves and currents of the Atlantic cemetery that struggles to hide the bodies of men and women buried within its deeps. I have closely looked at and have since argued that an unadulterated paradigm of the liberation heritage, an unapologetic prophetic imagination is probably a way for theological witness in the context of the life killing hegemony of neoliberal ethics. Some of these innovations are simply micro-waved theologies at the service of – and indeed also manufactured by the dominant forms of knowledge

prostituted by Empire. Every theology today can argue that it is a theology of life, but my take on this is that not any theology is a theology of life.

I see democracy today as an opiate of neoliberalism. In one of my reflections on this, I used a term coined by an ordinary person that democracy is *domocracy* – a word taken from an Afrikaans word *dom*, meaning dumb. Some might remember the association of democracy with low intensity forms of democracies – unmistakable marks of the Regan-Thatcher era of Low Intensity Warfare. The Low Intensity Warfare or strategy was a new way of waging Total Warfare. The heart of this strategy was contained in the maxim *winning the hearts and the minds of the people*. What is important here is that the United States of America, while promoting democracy in the 1980s, was also waging war and using force against the revolutionary movements in the global south that were struggling for the liberation of their countries.

In this manner, the promotion of democracy by a powerful state which undermined the values of democracy itself in its foreign policies made democracy itself to be a mockery in the eyes of the weak. One of the best examples is the doctrine of regime change associated mostly with the military occupation of Iraq and the killing of Saddam Hussein. In one of the documents of the United States Army the following is stated:

... successful LIC operations, consistent with US

interests and laws, can advance US international goals as the growth of freedom, democratic institutions, and free market economies... US policy recognizes that indirect, rather than direct, applications of military power are the most appropriate and cost-effective ways to achieve national goals in a LIC environment.⁶

The relationship of democracy with military strategy has in the past few decades undermined the essence of democracy. What is worse is the combination of democracy itself with the ideology of the free market.

In our South African context, it is not only the pact between white capital and the political power of the African National Congress (ANC) that has bedevilled our democratic dispensation. In actual fact it is but the powerlessness of the ANC itself since it is a ruling party of a people that own nothing, itself owning nothing, but political power and patronage. I have since argued that *democracy* is one of the pseudo – religious antics of neoliberal globalization manifest to some extent in the rise of spirituality in the 21st century and the growth of the prosperity gospel, the powerful role played by advertisements in line with Francis Fukuyama’s triumphalist view of capitalism, and thus a veil if not a façade of power that seems to be shared, while only concentrated in few hands. Importantly, this distortion of democracy as potentially one of the best polity forms that contributes to human

participation in governance, has tended to use religion to propel itself. If we revert to the Mandela symbol I used at the beginning of this paper, what Tinyiko Maluleke poignantly poses as a question paints the picture of what the religiosity of neoliberalism has become:

How does it happen—outside of the world of religious worship—that one man or woman amongst a set of equally deserving peers is singled out for the most lavish praise human words can give? Has the world drifted unwittingly into the realm of religion when it comes to Mandela?⁷

To put Maluleke's insights above into context, in this article he debunks what he calls the hagiography of Nelson Mandela in favour of the human face of this icon of the struggle. This is extremely important as one cannot afford to forget that the symbols of the struggle in Black Theology of liberation are not tokens of hagiography nor are they even romanticised for them to be liberative. Indeed the thread in this article is that any other reading of Nelson Mandela in South Africa and in the world that does not proceed from his human face is killing Mandela. This is very important for this conversation as there could be no killing and dying of Nelson Mandela without a particular pseudo-religiosity that swallows Mandela in its fetishist husk. Remembering how Black South Africans in particular are 'notoriously' religious and

ipso facto remain vulnerable to the elusive use of religion in public life, a Mandela swallowed in the husk of Empire is the best example we can give about the false religious hopes promised by the dominant neoliberal ideology and how they inhibit or destroy their agency in the democratic project that must be life-giving and liberative. In essence, democracy in the context of Empire includes forms of knowledge that co-opt liberative symbols thus rendering power itself as a dangerously corrupted commodity in the use of the market.

Within this context an examination of the role of the Church in South Africa in economic justice since the demise of Apartheid through the landscape of economic policy, should begin from an analysis of a discourse that is saturated with pragmatism and a Left immunized against any hope of renewal and neutralized, practically and theoretically, with respect to any subversive struggle, that is originally the basis of the struggle for liberation.⁸ The black church must remember Terry Eagleton's argument that the scum of the earth constituted the primary locus of the gospel of Jesus. Importantly for us in this reflection is that we should take into cognisance the fact that the metaphysics of capitalism in its symbiotic relationship with racism proceeds from an ideology now turned religious and defended militaristically that is anchored on the myth of the supremacy of the white race.

In this section, I have reflected on the democratic dispensation through the prism of the Accra-Agape-CWM-OikoTree discourse. The corruption of democracy by projects such as the LIC, the killing of such liberative symbols as Nelson Mandela and the pact between neoliberal capitalism and black political power explain the statement: when Nelson Mandela was in Robben Island, the suffering were all there. When he was released, they left all the suffering people of the land and indeed the globe I dare say, on the Robben Island.

Reading the Signs of a Hardening Husk of Neoliberal Antics:

The paradigm of liberation theology has operated in three ways – three related, but distinguishable ways. At first level, praxis is an expression of faith by those who are immersed in the struggles for life in conditions that make it impossible for them to live. The intellectual, systematic interpretation of praxis has been understood as the second act of theology, the proverbial “doing of theology” as the exponents of the school have for some decades argued. At the third level, dialogue with other fields of knowledge outside theology itself has been one feature that has made this school to be characteristically interdisciplinary in its quest to validating its assumptions and reflection on praxis. Inevitably, these levels are not separable, but distinct moments of the same process namely,

conversation about God and thus reflection on faith. Flowing from this understanding then, one should see what a challenge it is for one to read the sings of the times, albeit unavoidable.

From my context in South Africa I see a hardening husk of Empire – the hardening husk of the symbiosis between neoliberal capitalism and race in what I designate a Christianized fetish of ANC Rule. In one of the communities I recently had some conversations called Thabo Mbeki Village there is a story that has made an imprint in my mind. Leading up to the ANC Conference in Mangaung,⁹ one pastor, on a Sunday, in his worship service, I mean right in the middle of the service, saw a mob of community members of this squatter camp invading and bringing to a halt his service. Such an invasion of a service on a Sunday, allegedly by people who associate themselves with the ANC cannot be viewed lightly. Such an invasion when one recalls the St James Massacre in Cape Town, quite early in the transition period toward a democratic dispensation in our land, deeply signifies what others have called a “de-territorializing of sacred space.” During that time, the time leading up to the Mangaung Conference, I had already begun a series of a radio show we had dubbed, ‘ the road to Mangaung and faith.’

I participated in one interview with the ANC Chaplain General who argued that Chaplaincy in the ANC is shaped after the model of liberation theology.

In fact, at that time, to say the least, the ANC managed the South African Broadcasting Cooperation (SABC) with an instruction that there be no commentaries on the Mangaung Conference itself. Currently as I speak to you, the URC is embroiled in public dispute with its own minister recently appointed as the ANC Chaplain. Is the ANC de-territorializing the sacred spaces? It is a well-known fact that the ANC has always used faith language given its historical connection with Ethiopian Movement in South Africa and many religious leaders of the ANC. Statements by the current ANC leaders and the election campaigns that have flooded churches or other religious spaces only during this season suggest something deep. Neoliberalism invades sacred spaces and poses one of the hardest challenges to those who reflect on faith and its role in public life.

When one compares the Marikana Massacre¹⁰ and the Sharpeville Massacre one thing becomes shockingly true. The Sharpeville Massacre led to the Cottesloe Consultation, and a number of other radical changes in the theological imaginary of the black South Africans and Christian faith in general, the formation of the Federal Theological Seminary and the South African Council of Churches to mention but a few. In a sense the question about the meaning of the gospel to black experience had since then been sharply raised. Stated otherwise, socio-political praxis became understood as faith. It was the foreignness and other-worldly spirituality of the theological paradigms

associated with the missionary enterprise that had become so glaringly exposed for their hypocrisy. That ultimately, through the work of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the WCC Program to combat racism helped declare Apartheid as a heresy.

The Marikana Massacre is ostensibly not 'foreign'. First this is about the South African government maiming its own people. What remains strange is that the Marikana Massacre has not even awakened the church to a deeper sign of our times. Well except for a few and maybe other activities of solidarity that I may not be aware of, there is something more to this that I need to argue. The strike was about wages. For five months, workers were on strike demanding living wage. They too lost the battle after one of the longest strikes the country has ever seen since the demise of apartheid. Sharpeville was political, Marikana is economic and pseudo-religious. Sharpeville changed the theology of South Africa, Marikana did not as yet change anything about the ANC and the theological imaginary of the church. Forty four people died and in addition, the cries of the women who lost their husbands in this massacre continue to haunt us. The report of the Marikana Commission was released on the 31 March 2015.¹¹ Is Marikana as sign of a de-territorialized space of the consciousness of the people of South Africa and the poor? Is it not a quintessential sign of the commodification of life – an expression of the life of workers as an alienable object that has

freely become exchangeable as commodity? Where is the world that came to South Africa at the advent of the Sharpeville Massacre? Where is the ecumenical Church that began to question faith that had nothing to do with blackness? But what has happened to the consciousness of black people? It seems the consciousness of black people is swallowed in the husk of Empire. Empire is hardening.

Allan Boesak in his tenderness of conscience raised the question of the separation of a theology of refusal from the political dreams of the nation. But the de-territorializing discourse is about the invasion of sacred spaces, the invasion of the “inalienable objects and practices that are held to be sacred and inviolable by a community.” The de-territorialized sacred spaces in South Africa imply that the dominant imaginary of the day is to make to accept that the ANC is now the church, people love Zuma than Jesus, Whites love Mandela than Jesus, the inalienable objectives of the vision for liberation that are sacred and inviolable are freely exchanged as cheap commodities at the Alter of the market. I want to conclude by making a few points about the ethics of feasibility.

Feasibility

One of the things I remember about Hegel is that he argued too that every philosophical proposition is authentic only if it could be tested for its feasibility. In other words, an authentic philosophical proposition

has a corresponding empirical, feasible material expression. For years now the marginalized nations of the world gave expression to their response to the Constantinian models of Christianity by harnessing their own disenfranchised symbols and epistemological categories. Can we argue that these efforts are feasible today? Is African knowledge for example, in developing alternatives to Empire feasible? Who makes philosophical propositions feasible? Who makes disenfranchised forms of knowledge feasible? What makes these questions to be more important is that Empire co-opts the symbols of the oppressed and marginalized. When these symbols are co-opted, such as the one of Nelson Mandela, the agency of the marginalized is stultified and this destroys the hope of the oppressed as the alternative vision their symbols seek to signify simply becomes elusive.

According to Franz Hinkelammert, feasibility is what is true and what is valid. What is true must be practical and also material. Neoliberal metaphysics is about “empirically impossible models of life that perform the role of regulative ideas, including regulative ideas of religion and faith.” Feasibility implies a general empirical principle of impossibility. The feasibility of neoliberal principles is ‘impossible,’ it is against life. This is the argument that Black Theology of liberation should advance with vigour:

Generally speaking, the view that Black Theology is a theology of life derives from a particular

understanding of the word or concept “life.” Life is understood as the starting point of ethics, a precondition of all ethical claims or systems (cf. Petrella 2008: 13ff.). God is thus understood as God of life and this understanding of life is not abstract but material, bodily life. For example, Gustavo Gutiérrez says (2007:11 of 30) “Resurrection is the victory of life over death, while poverty means simply death.” We need to turn this around. There is a sense in which resurrection is rebellion and in the struggles for life, the non-person rebels against the life killing spirit of Empire. Rebellion against death is to live in the context of Empire without the ideals and notions of Empire. Rebellion against death is to deny victory to torture and starvation in the context of the militarization of life by Empire. Rebellion against death is bodily resurrection. The symbiosis between neoliberal capitalism and racism is at core life killing we argue, but both the philosophy of liberation (Dussel 2008) and its theology posit life itself as a ‘sovereign’ starting point and a precondition of any claims and systems in the world.

An ethics of feasibility renders the husk of Empire a killing machine as life is not the starting point of its ethical system. But I am using the concept of feasibility deliberately here. Most arguments against Black Consciousness have entailed that it is not feasible.

Most arguments against *Ujamaa* entailed that Kwame Nkrumah's scheme is not feasible. Most arguments against *Ubuntu* entail that it is an ethical philosophical scheme that is not feasible in modern civilization. Most arguments against the miners at Marikana entail that it is not feasible to pay them a living wage. Yet, in its use of the concept, its application and appropriation, the use of the concept of feasibility by Empire is impossible to life. The illustration given by Franz Hinkelamert and Ulrich Duchrow in their book is powerful. Cutting the tree may be good for life but it depends on which side of the branch one is sitting. One may cut the tree and fall with the branch of the tree he or she is cutting. One thus may tame life and destroy it and destroy himself or herself depending on the approach of one's feasibility. Tested on these grounds, the civilization of Empire is not feasible. It is impossible to life. For the poor and marginalized life cannot be feasible without rebellion. Cone's *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* is a text of the inability and thus a theology of the WEest that is not feasible for the lives of the blacks and non-person that are lynched by Empire.

Un-concluding Thoughts

Some years ago I was literally assaulted by the then police of the Apartheid regime. We were travelling from a Church Conference back from Johannesburg to home in Welkom when we were suddenly stopped

at a road block. In my bag, I had a book whose cover had a picture of Nelson Mandela. The police were searching all our bags. I was punished! I was literally assaulted and in Afrikaans I can put it this way: *hulle het my daar die dag good gebliksem!* They beat a hell out of me. Mandela's book and others were confiscated. Since then, I could not go anywhere else to study and I landed in theology. Thanks to God that taking Nelson Mandela's books helped me search for the meaning of faith in relation to the symbols of the struggle. This paper argued that Robben Island is where we stayed and continue to stay while symbols of the struggle for liberation are in the hands of Empire. Democracy is corrupted and the vision of alternative life is rendered unfeasible by Empire that is swallowing all life into its husk. The feasibility of life is in rebellion against Empire. That is where it begins.

In Modernity's Wastelands: Peripheral Islam and the
Politics of Imagination

Junaid S. Ahmad

Introduction

In the backwaters of modernity where its exiled victims live, there are innumerable pockets of resistance that are sustained through an imagination that is chaotic, uncontained, transcendent, unschooled, playful and slippery. This imagination is rebellious precisely because it rubs against the sacred cow of modernity- the 'progress of reason'. Those whose lives have been shredded on the sharp edges of modernity's juggernaut refuse to be silenced by buying into the dominant narrative- a narrative that commands them to suffer in silence and patiently wait until the God of modernity delivers them from itself.

This essay isn't so much anti-modernist as it is anti-hegemonic. The discourses of modernity despite their benefits constitute the hegemonic narratives of our times. The socio-economic forces it legitimizes arm its hegemonic tendencies. This essay critiques modernity to the extent of its hegemonic tendencies and attempts to uncover the workings of resistance in the peripheries through their use of non-modern imagination.

The essay focuses on how dominant theological narratives in Islam are configured by modernity and it argues for a rethink of the chaotic Islam of the peripheries as spaces of hope. This chaotic Islam is a space where a community of believers interact with the Qur'an and the Sunnah in ways that transgress the boundaries of dominant theology-it is an Islam

of stories passed down through generations, myths, shrines, pirs, ecstatic worship, legends, *qawwalis* and other locally rooted traditions. It refuses to be organized and its chaos is its strength.

The argument here isn't that merely because a practice is non-modern, it is necessarily an act of resistance. On the contrary it makes the point that non-modern spaces are perhaps one of the few spaces where the rejects of modernity can and will articulate their resistance. Since the voices of the beneficiaries of modernity occupy a discursive centrality we will call these spaces of resistance the 'peripheries' and the Muslims who inhabit these spaces as 'peripheral Muslims'.

The essay first outlines an Islam that is configured by modernity- more specifically two dominant strains of Islam: modernist Islam and Islamism. It then maps and makes a case for resistant practices of the Muslims in the peripheries. It attempts to locate progressive Muslim practices not necessarily within self-identified organized movements of progressive Muslims but also amongst un-self conscious practices of the peripheral Muslims whose politics of resistance is genuinely pre and post-modern. It is resistant to categorization and therefore surveillance. It constantly adapts and is sometimes collaborative, sometimes resistant but generally disobedient and disengaged. In essence it is unpredictable since its weapons constitute experience and imagination both of which constantly transgress

the boundaries of simplistic cause-effect equations. Its strength lies in a conception of God as a perpetual overflow beyond the definitions and theologies of the powerful- a God who is inexplicable, experiential and constantly amazes by slipping out of definitional traps and eclipsing them.

Political Islam – The Other Side of Modernity

The dominant strains of contemporary political Islam (Islamism and modernist Islam) aren't anti-modern or engaged responses to modernity but are in effect configured by modernity. The impact of the discourses of modernity have little to do with a standardized uniformity of its minions but rather reconfigure them to the extent that they seemingly retain traces of their previous lives but are yet distinctly modern in their ideology and impact. This is applicable to even those discourses such as Islamism that are apparently neo-traditional and thereby anti-modern, but in reality have a strongly modern deep structure. The discursive power of modernity lies in precisely in its ability to seemingly retain old appearances while having transformed the subject internally.

It is debatable whether modern rationality is intrinsically problematic, but we will not concern ourselves here with that. What is significant is the yoking of these discourses by the dominant socio-political forces of our times to exploit and cause

untold miseries amongst large sections of the non-West. Irrespective of whether the western rationalist discourses spawned by modernity derived their power from the forces of capital or vice-versa the locus of power in this case lies in ideological hegemony of modern reason. The hegemony is absolute to the extent that even challenges mounted against it are articulated in the language of reason that creates a game like situation where both domination and dissent are circumscribed by clear rules. Dissent outside the rules is branded as irrational by all players of the game despite their disagreements amongst themselves- for eg. both the Islamist and the secular modern state despite their disagreements will collaborate to categorize beliefs in the miraculous healing power of saints as the irrational faith of the non-moderns. The real struggle therefore lies in the peripheries where lives that are negatively impacted by modern socio-economic forces understand through bitter experience that modernity isn't all that its trumped up to be. It is these people of the peripheries who occupy sometimes materially but more so ideologically non-modern spaces. They may even straddle modern and non-modern worlds, almost like discursive guerillas making attacks within modernity's fortress, which they enter as its innocuous toiling underclass and then retreating to their faith spaces outside of reason's panopticon.

The contemporary hype about Islamic resurgence must be understood as less to do with a pre-modern

revivalism and more to do with competing discourses within the framework of modernity. Political Islam though articulated in a ‘non-secular’ language is clearly modern in its ambitions. The traditional arguments that are deployed have changed with the impact of modernity. They are merely taken, reified and presented in a political form. Islamic resurgence isn’t a resurrection of something that is dying but rather the result of the global ascendancy of western political and cultural norms that has produced a remake of things traditional that are impossible to comprehend in an unmediated way.

The common fallacy in western political theory is to understand political Islam as epiphenomenal- i.e caused by the disenfranchisement and disenchantment endemic to modernisation. This overplays the rational/irrational dyad of western political theory and misses the point of current politics in the Muslim world. These explanatory models must be understood to express western conceptions of truth, political fears and cultural unease as much as they describe what ‘political Islam’ really is.¹

Most of these explanatory models in contemporary western political theory that attempt to explain political Islam suffer from orientalism. As Edward Said puts it – Orientalism constitutes not only a field of investigation but an exercise of power: Orientalism is part the story of cultural hegemony and the Orient is the ‘other’ against whom European culture is

asserted. Orientalism is premised on ‘exteriority’ for the orientalist makes the orient speak to a western audience. In the context of radical inequalities of power Orientalism is more revealing of the formation and presence of Euro-Atlantic power than as a truthful discourse of the Orient itself. European culture not just managed but produced the orient. Western analytic categories not just reflect but produce facts. A rationalist analysis is not simply the application of non-normative, ahistorical constructs to a political phenomenon but involves the translation of all culture through the filter of Western categories of knowledge.²

The irony is that colonialism and neo-liberalism have ensured that one doesn’t have to be European to be afflicted by orientalism. Orientalism is an affliction that is also rampant in the tropics where the political Islams we speak of could be equally guilty of it. In fact most of the political Islam the West perceives as traditional is in fact a highly modern reorganisation of the faith and its deployment in very rational ways as statist ideologies. Political Islam’s conception of itself has clearly internalised the orientalist binaries of true religion/false religion, true interpretations/local aberrations, organised religion/chaotic traditions, rational religion/irrational beliefs etc. To observe political Islam not as an ‘other’ in western media but in its full play at home tells us a lot more about its inner machinery. Political Islam as a host for modernity’s virus is best perceived observed by paying

close attention to its self-definition- and this self-definition is best conceptualised by examining who it is that political Islam others. To begin to understand political Islam is to understand who is the ‘other’ of political Islam, who are relegated to its margins, who are branded as heretics, non-believers, as mislead Muslims who have sullied pure Islam etc- for our self-definitions are strongly informed by who we are not rather than who we are.

Modernity and Its Discontents

It is relevant to examine the nature of modernity and its concomitant discontents prior to engaging political Islam as a phenomenon. Richard Falk in his work Religion and Politics understands modernity as “associated with the ascendancy of reason and science and statist forms of political organisation as they emerged in Europe during the 13th to 17th centuries, culminating in the triumph of industrial capitalism in the 19th century and finally complemented by the October revolution in Russia that brought state socialism to the world. Implicit in the dynamic of modernism was its globalisation by way of colonialist extension and capitalist expansion. A strong feature of modernism was its basic secularism, finding meaning in the combination of materialist and scientific developments that made knowledge equivalent to what an earlier age regarded as salvation”.³

Expanding on this definition Moroccan scholar Anouar Majid in his work 'Unveiling Traditions: Post Colonial Islam in a Polycentric World'⁴ makes a clear indictment of modern rationality. He locates the modern rationalist discourses not as a benign moment in western political history but as theories that were definitely co-opted by capital to legitimize colonialism and neo-colonialism. He makes an argument for liberating ourselves from the hegemony of western conceptual categories because of their material impact on the third world.

Majid traces the secular rationalist discourse to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century products of Enlightenment thought and classical liberal philosophy that called for the re-calibration of human morality in ways that attempted to exclude traditional religious commitments. Majid argues that the emergence of natural rights that were later articulated as human rights were forged as a part of the liberal discourse where the individual was constructed as a bundle of rights and the new society was seen as an arithmetic sum of individual aims. This in many ways may have been an important development but Majid seems to think that this entire process was deeply entrenched within capitalism whose ideology of infinite progress, profit and private property was buttressed by liberalism.

With colonialism these ideas were exported to Asia and Africa to create conditions that are conducive to

capital. Majid feels that most third world postcolonial theorists despite pointing out that colonialism was a rupture in traditional societies have been unable to come to grips with colonialism transforming itself into neo-colonialism. The export of Enlightenment ideas of liberalism and secularism have been under-interrogated in a number of postcolonial countries and their links to rogue capital have not been taken seriously. Instead what seems to have happened is that we still think in terms of western dichotomies of religion versus reason, tradition versus modernity, regressive versus progressive etc. These crude binaries have engendered a reductivist understanding of religion and its consequent reconstruction through the categories of the empire where the reality of religion as a living culture fraught with debate and dissent undergoes an erasure.

A few examples of this understanding of religion may be helpful to locate Majid's critique. Marx in his work 'The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' understands religious "resurgence" as – "The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene in world history in

this time honoured disguise and borrowed language'.⁵ In 'The Jewish Question' he states that- 'Religions are nothing more than stages in the development of the human mind ... snake skins which have been cast off by history, and man is the snake who clothed himself in them.'⁶

Amongst the liberals, the 'rational actor' theories of Amartya Sen etc. attempt to understand religious appeal as human behaviour that involves participants who maximise utility from a stable set of preferences and accumulate an optimal amount of information and other inputs in a variety of markets. This may be partially true of political Islam but the rational actor theories attempt to explain the intrinsic appeal of Islam not so much because of its moral power amongst people who still hold on to the metaphysical foundations of morality but because of the advantages it seems to bestow on people regardless of their moral outlook. The rationalist assumption here is that all people necessarily function as 'rational actors' who choose Islamism in a supermarket of ideologies because of the failure of Marxism and liberalism to make good on their promises.⁷

Emblematic of the liberal response is Adam Smith's analysis of popular religiosity of the urban poor in his work 'An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations'. Here he states, "As soon as the villager comes into the great city he is sunk into obscurity and darkness. His conduct is observed and

attended to by nobody and he is therefore very likely to neglect it himself. He emerges from this obscurity and has a voice in respectable society by becoming a member of a religious sect. He from that moment acquires a degree of consideration he never had before.”⁸

In all the above examples reason is grafted onto history. The march of history is reinterpreted as the development of reason. Islam in varying degrees serves as the irrational other to the western intelligible self. It is an approach to history as evolution of reasoning, where political Islam is a slide back in history’s ceaseless march to modernity.

Perhaps what this calls for is a re-theorization by the ‘natives’ of the discourse of the ‘empire’ where ideas such as secularism, liberalism, nation-state, individual rights etc are looked at through different eyes- This time through the eyes of the peripheral. The attempt is to make a case for this peripheral vision that begins by understanding these ideas as historically contextual to the West and not universal thus liberating us from being forced to think in these categories. Instead we can then begin the process of re-imagining a polycentric world by liberating suppressed progressive traditions/narratives within our own cultures and religions.

But before we identify the possible futures of ‘retheorisation by the natives’, it would help to assess the impact of the internalization of western analytical

categories by Muslims and the kinds of political Islams it has produced. Only when we are able locate the Muslim modernists and the Islamists in the socio-political contexts they emerge from and analyze their political fears and cultural unease, can we begin to think of alternate futures that can be realized.

The Muslim Modernists

The first step towards understanding the Muslim modernists is to describe the prototype of the ‘western man’ who epitomizes a secular rationality that is viewed as the cause of the West’s success and the non-west’s failure. The ‘western man’ is more a mythical figure, because as a prototype he doesn’t necessarily have to exist in the west either. He is more a critique of the lay Muslim and a projection of the non-western ego ideal of some of the Muslim modernists. The Muslim modernist more often than not has internalized the category of the western man by at once indigenizing him and representing him as an ‘other’ that has to be imitated to beat him at his own game.

The Muslim modernist can be of two types. Lets term them as ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ modernists. They both have an uncritical obsession with modernity. Both of them attempt to engage modernity with a certain euphoria that prevents them from seeing its discontents that are fairly modern thought has added valuable correctives to the modernity narrative.

Debates about modernity amongst Muslims raise certain key questions around which the Muslim response is configured – 1) Is modernity and its concomitant rationality historically a Muslim legacy that should be uncritically reclaimed/embraced? 2) Or is modernity a western project that must be Islamised? 3) Or is modernity a valuable corrective to Islamic tradition and Muslims must embrace it or be left or be left behind? 4) Or should Muslims engender their own version of modernity that does not break from the ethical foundations of their tradition?

The Hard Modernists

The 'hard' modernists argue that modernity is a valuable corrective to Islam and a much-needed critique of the power of the clergy and the charismatic authority of the Sufis. The hard modernist sees history in terms of a linear progression that moves towards an increasingly rational and culturally homogeneous world. Though the hard modernist is someone the West is most comfortable with, the hard modernist lives amidst people for whom a religious discourse is still significant. Thus for the sake of strategy the hard modernist has to sometimes couch his secular ambitions in religious terms.

It would help to elaborate the stance of the hard modernists by examining the secularization policies of Kemal Ataturk in Turkey. Emblematic of the Kemalist policies was the banning of the headscarves from

universities: the scarf being a symbolic violation of a specific kind of secular absolutism. Turkish secularism had its roots in last days of the Ottoman Empire where a sense of inferiority towards the west developed after defeats at the hands of European powers in 1699 and 1718. One can sense this in the dairies of Yirmisekiz Mehmed Celebi, the first Ottoman of the western civilization after visiting Paris and Vienna. From then on the feeling of admiration for western culture and worldview grew radically replacing all confidence in indigenous ideas and ideals. The majority of Turkey's religious scholars lacked the intellectual acumen and ability to generate new indigenous knowledge or creatively synthesize western science and technology. They reacted by becoming more dogmatic and narrow- and thus increased admiration of the West.⁹

Westernisation in Turkey began in the Ottoman palaces with its intellectual justification provided by the Young Ottomans, a group of Turkish intellectuals who came into prominence towards the end of the Ottoman period. They blamed the religious scholars for the decline and decay of the Ottoman Empire. The religious scholars were largely apologists for the Ottoman sultans and in effect Ataturk was a reaction to this.¹⁰

Ataturk presented secularism as a theology of salvation. Coming to terms with the "European miracle" required embracing every component of Europe's ideology: being modern meant being exactly

like the Europeans. Imitation was duplicated in minute detail, up to including how one dressed and behaved. He replaced Ottoman history based on a religious community with a “national history” that he hoped would replicate the history of the West. In a real sense Kemalism internalized how the West conventionally represented Islam: As the darker and degenerate opposite of the Christian and secular West. He represented Islam as “the Orient” of the West suffused with all the ills conventionally ascribed to it, from being ignorant and stupid to inferior.¹¹

The Soft Modernists:

For the soft modernist, modernity is a part of Islamic heritage that must be reclaimed. If parts of it are not a part of the Muslim heritage it is nevertheless an extremely significant intellectual and material current that must be embraced and adequately Islamized.

The soft modernist’s way of identifying the Islamic roots of modernity begin with tracing the origins of rationality to the Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Al-Kindi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd who belonged to a group of thinkers called the Mutazalites (lit: the Separatists) who denounced the strict Shariah based faith and worked to transform Islam into a more humanistic religion. The Mutazalites argued that reason was the only way one knew how to act morally. The Mutazalites were opposed by the

Asharites who argued the limitations of human reason and the inscrutability of the ways of God. For the soft Modernists the history of Islam from the seventh to the fourteenth century was a struggle between these two schools of thought and it was the victory of the Asharities that sealed the fate of secular humanism in Islam and is responsible for the present state of affairs.

The soft modernists believed that there would be no West without Islam, for the foundations of European Enlightenment emerged in the Islamic civilization during the Ottoman Empire. Islam for them taught Europe all it knows about science and civilization when Europe was in its Dark Ages. Whether it was the importance of the experimental model and the empirical method or the mathematical theory that was important for Copernican revolution or medicine and the use of surgical instruments, all of this were bequeathed to Europe by the Muslims. Even the origins of liberal humanism is attributed to the adab movement in Islam that is concerned with the etiquette of being human.

Those aspects of western modernity that couldn't be traced to Islamic heritage were none the less considered important enough to be Islamized and thereby embraced by Muslims. A typical example of this was the life of Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, the Muslim educator from India and the founder of the Aligarh Muslim University. According to Sir Sayyid, the cause of England's civilization is in its arts and sciences

and accordingly Indians desirous of 'bettering India' should have the whole of the arts and sciences of the European civilization translated into their own language. This according to him was 'the truth that must be written in gigantic letters on the Himalayas'. In the Aligarh Institute Gazette he wrote that "Without flattering the English, I can truly say that the natives of India, high and low, merchants and petty shopkeepers, educated and illiterate, when contrasted with the English in education and manners and uprightness, are as like them a dirty animal is to an able and handsome man".¹²

Sir Sayyid straddled both tradition and modernity attempting to bridge them. He believed that the Qur'an had to be studied in the light of reason if Islam was to retain the educated in its fold. He said 'It does not satisfy the mind of the doubter to simply say that Islam has been taught in this way and has to be accepted. The educated Muslim should have philosophy in his right hand and natural science in his left hand and the kalimah crowning his head.'¹³

For the Muslim modernist, both the hard and the soft variety, there was a romance about modernity that made its seduction inescapable. Modernity in many ways represented to them a significant critique of tradition and culture and an indispensable corrective. For the soft modernists especially modernity was the shot in the arm that Muslims needed that would at once cut Islam free from its cultural baggage while

simultaneously returning it to its purist roots and providing it with the material means to reclaim a fallen glory.

The Islamists

I use the word 'Islamism' rather than 'fundamentalism' to capture the rise of a number of political movements that have stressed on the theme of Islamic regeneration. 'Islamism' as a term is broad enough to capture the diversity and similarities of these movements, whether the Iranian Hezbollah, Algerian FIS, Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt or the Hamas. 'Islamism' as a word is also more likely to create its own meaning that captures the complexity of these movements as opposed to 'fundamentalism' that is already embedded in the meaning systems of the western media as a form of regressive neo-traditionalism.

Fundamentalism popularly represents a form of religious inflexibility, political traditionalism, social conservatism and rejection of the modern world. But this description lacks a basic empirical integrity. Unlike Christian fundamentalism these Islamic movements engage with modernity in ways that at least claim to interrogate traditional power structures, state repression and imperialism. They are distinctly anti-traditionalist since they don't seek to conserve a social order that is eroded by capitalism. On the contrary they stress on the theme of religious regeneration

attempting to give voice to their mass base, which is predominantly the petty bourgeoisie and sections of the working classes. This religious regeneration could go to the extent of Khomeini's denouncement of the last 1,300 years of Islamic history, harking back to a mythical past that involves reclamation, doing away with obfuscation by tradition and a renewed search for origins. The enemy is false tradition, since by and large these movements welcome modern industry, technology and science. Practices that are associated with false tradition are seen to have weakened the *Umma*, and the stress on female modesty and an end to promiscuous mixing of sexes is projected as a fight against western cultural imperialism. There is a construction of a mythical past that is projected back through history and attempts are made to reclaim the pious Muslim identity that has been diminished by the cultural compromises of tradition. This is hardly religious inflexibility or traditionalism but on the contrary is a complex mixture anti-imperialism and a critique of traditional power structures with a strong flavour of cultural fascism.¹⁴

There is lack of ideological clarity in Islamism that is its strength. The core ideas are ambiguous to the point where it means everything to everybody. The use of broad religious phraseology whitewashes the material differences and differing interests between the different interest groups. In the heat of the struggle, the compulsory veiling of women is seen as

the fight against Western cultural hegemony, which in turn is seen as a critique against the complicit and repressive state. What would be termed in liberal rights discourses as religious chauvinism and blatant sexism has to contend with counter arguments by Islamism's intelligentsia who also rely on discourses of modernity. These arguments underpin ideas of cultural relativism, anti-imperialism (Khomeini's notion of 'westoxification', Qutub's notion of *Jahilliya*), third world nationalism, state sovereignty, right to collective self determination, post-structuralism and finally scientifically verifiable capability differences between the sexes that justifies differing gender roles.

To deconstruct the deep self of the Islamist is to realise that the Islamist is simultaneously reacting to and internalising the humiliation inflicted on his faith by western modernity. His attitude to his own faith is an interestingly modern one where he understands the practices of the ordinary Muslim as a cultural embarrassment. The Islamist is obsessed with a notion of religious purity believing that it is the only way to combat the west. The common Muslims through their diverse practices is the reason for what he understands as the defeat of Islam. What ails the *umma* for the Islamist is its lack of martial spirit and an understanding of hard politics of strategy and necessary losses.

The Islamist in his attempt at religious regeneration is ultimately only a variation on the secular political

man of post-Enlightenment Europe and his Islam is skin-deep and reactive. He has identified with the aggressor and turned against his cultural roots that are infinitely more complex and multi-vocal than he wishes it to be. He has internalised the modernist rational perception of his faith as irrational and backward to the extent that he desperately desires political self-affirmation. This political self-affirmation, the Islamist pursues at the expense of the diversity of cultural selves amongst the ordinary Muslims. This occurs because for the Islamist the idea of Islam is more appealing than the actuality of it. Herein lies the Islamist's need to go back to the revelation and purge what he calls 'false tradition'.

For the Islamist, the 'defeat' of Islam can only be avenged when the ordinary Muslim has internalised the technology of victory of the western man and decided to fight under its flag. The Islamist hates the Muslim modernist accusing him of selling out to the west. At least at the initial stages the main struggle of the Islamist is against the hard line Muslim modernists who had led post-independence Muslim countries. For eg. the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was reacting not just to Nasser's repression but also because of what they perceived as an increasing secularization that had folklorized Islam. The Islamist response in Tunisia was a similar reaction to President Habib Bourguiba's attempts at westernizing education etc.¹⁵

The Islamist is more frustrated with the cultural spill-overs and rich practices of the 'ordinary Muslim' much of it having to do with a fusion of Islam and different local cultures- here he shares with the Muslim modernist the reference point called the 'western man'. Islamist responses here begin with scepticism of tradition. It denies possible Hellenistic influences of scholars such as al-Kindi, Ibn Rushd etc. as having been corrupted by the Greeks. There is a witch-hunt for what is known as 'false tradition' and once discovered it is exorcised. Sufism, grave worship, intercession, rationalism, music, poetry etc. all of it is branded as *shirk* (idolatry). An interesting example of this is Wahhabism, which has spread largely through its huge backing by the Saudi regime. The first assault by Wahhabism is on locally rooted cultural practices of ordinary Muslims, ranging from *qaseeda* singing to how they dress. There is an advocacy of strict literalism where the text of the Qur'an becomes the sole source of legitimacy. Any form of moral thought that was not entirely dependent on the text is treated as self-idolatry and the humanistic fields of knowledge such as philosophy are considered the 'sciences of the devil'. Any historical or contextual interpretation of the Qur'an is considered moral corruption and therefore a vast majority of Islamic history is corrupt and had deviated from authentic Islam. Long lists were created of practices amongst Muslims that made them *kuffar*

and a number of medieval jurists are branded as infidels.¹⁶

Islamism generally has a variety of hues and Wahabbism as an example is more generic. Islamism in the Arab world is a spectrum with a variety of positions that is more circumstantial than an ideological essence. Islamism in Algeria isn't just the views of Ali Benhadj but also the more nuanced position of Malek Bennabi. Islamism in Egypt also includes the more moderate views of the Muslim Brotherhood before Sayyed Qutub's more hardline position after he was imprisoned, tortured and finally hanged. Adel Hussein and Tareq al-Bishri of Egypt were both leftists and Islamists not seeing a contradiction between both but emphasizing the importance of Islam as an integral part of national identity constructed in opposition to imperialism. Tunisian Rached Ghannouchi was a Nasserite who became Islamist after Bourguiba started dismantling the Zaytouna University, which Ghannouchi felt was tearing apart Tunisian culture in the name of modernisation. For these Islamists, Ibn Taymiyya wasn't the only point of reference but also a succession of other thinkers after him who increasingly felt that the Shari'a has to be re-interpreted.

Islamism, Shari'a and the Islamic state

What is common to the Islamists is an obsession with the Shari'a and the establishment of the Islamic

state. The word 'Shari'a' literally means 'the path or road leading to water' and in religious terms it implies the path leading to God. But what is popularly understood as the Shari'a is essentially a derivative based on specific principles of Islamic jurisprudence called *fiqh*. The four main sources of the Sharia are the Qur'an, *Sunna* or the traditions of the Prophet Mohammed, *ijma* (consensus) and *qiyas* (reasoning by analogy). *Ijtihad* which is independent juristic reasoning was also considered in the early tradition as a source of Shari'a. Though *ijma* and *qiyas* are not specifically mentioned either in the Quran or the *Sunna* (the practices of the Prophet), they have been considered as a source of Shari'a through the process of *ijtihad*.

All the laws within the Shari'a have to be in some way derived from the verses of the Qur'an or at least by virtue of an interpretation of it based on the *Sunna* or *Ijma* or *Qiyas*. Out of the 6, 219 verses of the Qur'an only about 500 (600 according to some scholars) specifically deal with law. A vast majority of these 500 verses deal with rituals of worship leaving only about 80 verses of legal subject matter in the strict sense. But these 80 verses and other non-legal verses have been interpreted such as to extract the utmost legal content from them. Herein lies the Muslim belief that the Shari'a is the direct law of Allah for human kind. Though there was difference of opinions amongst the early jurists about the nature and relevance of certain

verses in the formation of the Shari'a these debates were resolved by *ijma* or consensus.¹⁷

The Islamists more often than not portray the Shari'a as ahistorical and is intrinsically linked to the establishment of the Islamic state. Every attempt at establishment of the Islamic state necessarily involves a call to enforce Shari'a i.e clergy led Shari'a courts, public floggings, cutting off hands, treatment of women as non-entities etc. The attempt essentially is to conflate the legal opinions of the ninth century male jurists with the word of God, which essentially means the views of the Islamist who seeks to capture or hold on to state power.

This reification of the Shari'a has no historical precedent and is distinctly modern. What makes it modern is its intrinsic link to the nation state. Since the nation state is a part of the discourses of modernity, Islamism combines a constructed, romantic and puritan past with the modernist ideal of a nation confined to a territory to generate a wholly new religious and political outlook. This is what distinguishes it from traditional Islam. Islam for the Islamist is not complete without a state ruled by the Shari'a. From a God centered way of life and thought, of knowledge and action, Islam is transformed into a totalistic, totalitarian, theocratic world order that submit every human situation to the arbitration by the state. So society and state become one and politics disappears. Cultural and social spaces are

totally homogenized, everything is bulldozed into monotonous uniformity and the end product mirrors fascism.¹⁸

Towards an Islam of the Peripheries

The Islam of both the Muslim modernists and the Islamists is an Islam as ideology rather than Islam as faith. Islam as faith involves an Islam that is a way of life, a tradition that is non monolithic and plural. This pluralist Islam is a reality since unless Islam was confined to a small geographical space that was culturally homogeneous (which it most definitely was not) it necessarily is a way of life that links diverse cultures, views and contexts by a common faith and some theological space for heterogeneity.

Islam as ideology on the other hand an Islam that is a sub-national, national or a cross-national identity of groups that are competing for political or socio-economic resources. It is an Islam that is constructed as a manageable set of definitions that can be instrumentally deployed. Islam as an ideology derives less from the lived experiences of the believers and is preoccupied with molding a purist notion of the revelation that is rational and hence highly utilitarian. In Islam as ideology, use value always trumps transcendence.

Islam as ideology and Islam as faith are not mutually exclusive; they are like two axes on which the state of Islam can be plotted. One way of explaining

the difference between the two is to understand ideology as something that its believers constantly need to protect and faith as something its believers constantly expect to protect them. This is because faith always includes a theory of transcendence and usually sanctions an experience of transcendence whereas ideology is wary of theories and experiences of transcendence unless they can be used for some utilitarian purpose.¹⁹

Islam as ideology emulates a modernist discourse that seeks to understand the world in manageable categories that can be scientifically observed as cause/effect models. The ordinary Muslim's individual faith experiences that inform her notions of the Divine are considered as irrational and messy, cultural spillovers in a system that needs to be understood as a tidy model. This tidy model for the Islamists is that of an uncomplicated Shari'a, a clear set of right actions that form both political and spiritual capital that ensures one a beneficial place on earth and a place in heaven. Herein lies the Islamist's discomfort with the present and with a past that includes Islamic history since the time of the Prophet. For the Islamist the present is always unsatisfactory since it is always held up against the only past that is relevant: a mythified understanding of the life of the Prophet. The future then holds the promise of an Islamic utopia that would culturally and politically resemble seventh century Arabia but materially display all the technology and

gadgetry of contemporary high capitalism. For the Muslim modernist on the other hand, the model is still tidy and uncomplicated. The modernist also functions in simple equations and translations. All discourses of modernity can be easily Islamized and the future beholds another vision of the Islamic utopia that is culturally Muslim but materially and politically resembling Western Europe. The naiveté of this model lies in the modernist's neat categories wherein culture, economics, technology and politics are mutually exclusive. The Muslim modernist's ideology rests on the belief that modern disciplines such as science, economics, mathematics etc are ahistorical and value free and therefore can easily be harnessed by an Islam itself rationally explained.

The transcendental aspect of Islam as faith allows for a certain democracy in the believer's engagement with God. Since transcendence is necessarily beyond categories and definitions, it provides space for individual experiences of the Divine that makes God accessible to the humblest of believers in a manner that is unmediated by either the rationalist or the puritan. This unmediated experience of God that is configured in languages and symbols that are local and diverse is a genuine challenge to the power of those whose strength lies in its ability to define, categorize, plot and thereby survey. Besides the challenge of its unaccountable profusion, the practices of Islam as faith also constitute the weapons of Muslims at the

peripheries who are victims of ravages of modernity, development, patriarchy etc.

It is Islam as faith that in many ways inform the religiosity of the peripheral Muslims around popular shrines, festivals, cultural practices and beliefs that challenge dominant theology that services those in power. This could range from stories and myths around the lives of the wives of the Prophet that Muslim women rely on to challenge patriarchal interpretations of Islam to discourses of and examples from the lives of Muslim mystics that challenge the theological hegemony of an elite orthodoxy. It is religion as faith that prompted the Muslim mystic Mansur-al Hallaj to say:

*I am He Whom I love, and He Whom I love is I, We
are two spirits dwelling in one body
If you see me, you see Him,
And if you see Him, you see us both*

And the inscription on Rumi's tomb from his Mathanawi that says:

*Come, come, whoever you are
Believer or unbeliever, Magian or pagan, come
Come into the house of hope. And,
Either seem as you are
Or be as you seem.*

And for 200,000 Indians in the 1911 census to identify as Muslim Hindus and for the Virashaiva traditions

in North Karnataka to revere the teachings and the shrines of the local Sufis.

On the other hand it is religion as ideology that has provided a potent tool to the Jamaat e Islami to disown traditional and plural forms of Islam in the subcontinent and, by separating official religion from everyday life, producing a pre-packaged Islam for Muslims uprooted and decultured by processes of engineered social change in the region.²⁰

If anything the Islam as ideology manner of viewing Islam is intrinsically linked to a perception of faith in a manner that closely resembles that of the colonial state—a Eurocentric way of looking at faiths that subsumes a set of clear polarities: center versus the peripheries, true faith versus its distortions, civil versus the primordial, great traditions versus local cultures.²¹ In each of these binaries the second category is set up to lose. It is also a part of the same story that once the colonial concept of the state was internalized by the colonized through nationalist ideology that was in turn heavily influenced by western theories of state and statecraft²² – the nascent nation state undertakes whether through modernist Islam or Islamism the same civilizing mission of the colonial state on what it considers the Islam as faith practices of Muslims in the peripheries.

The Muslim modernists and the Islamists if anything are definitionally ethnophobic and ethnocidal, unless the Islam informed by local cultures and

traditions i.e 'Islam as faith' shows total subservience to their notion of the modern Islamic state. Islam as ideology has little patience with the fluidity of the self that Islam as faith allows- Multiple selves based on specific histories of Muslim women, African Muslims, Dalit Muslims, Muslims from regions where Islam was spread through the Sufis etc. Instead all these gender, class and ethnic narratives are erased through a crude binary of true Islam versus false Islam.

Emancipatory Discourses from the Margins

The methodology of both the modernist and the Islamist entirely marginalizes the community of listeners as if they have absolutely no participatory role in the interpreting process. In both the modernist's fixation to explain the Qur'an as scientific and the Islamist's attempt to force out a set of black and white rules from it, the text is made sovereign and exists in negation of the 'community of the text'. The interactive nature of Allah's word is lost at the expense of equating Allah's word to Allah.

The idea that the Qur'an prefigures a community of active listeners and the word Qur'an means 'recitation' – recited by a human voice for a human ear, is erased. The peripheral Muslim through her experiential engagement with the text emphasizes an active role for the community of listeners and speakers in relation to the revelation. Since for her the community is integral to the revelation, she takes the revelation seriously by

taking the community seriously. For her the revelation is performative and is enacted by her everyday in her attempt to experience transcendence. This for her makes Islam a living faith rather than an ideology that must be used instrumentally. If both the modernist and the Islamist read the Qur'an as a medical or an engineering manual that is essentially a passive text of instructions, for the peripheral Muslim engaging the Qur'an is an interactive process negotiated by her specific socio-economic location, local practices and myths, piety etc.

For the peripheral Muslim an engagement with modernity isn't to engage in hermeneutical acrobatics by holding up a few verses of the Qur'an to read every other uncomfortable verse thereby making a case for the Islamic state or a Islamization of modern disciplines. Instead she discovers through her history, experience and transformed inner sensibility that the text does not provide all the norms but that she will "make" the norms in conversation with the text.

The Practices of the Peripheries

The Islam as faith practices of the peripheries being experientially rooted provide a certain grass-roots understanding of faith that the grand projects of the modernists and the Islamists fail to see. Theoretically speaking it is theology that is firmly rooted in praxis where theory is rooted in lived experience. Their theology occurs in spaces and in a manner that is not

perceived as legitimate by the modernists and Islamists obsessed with grand visions and impeccable form. The theology in the peripheries isn't necessarily produced in offices of the state or in the *madarassas* but in conversations in the everyday spaces the peripheral Muslims inhabit- the fields, factories, kitchens, shrines, mosques etc. The God of the peripheries is a God in history, a God whose word is realized in pragmatic and compassionate responses to hard realities of life.

A rather typical example of the contrast between the theology of the peripheries and that of the center is described by Ziauddin Sardar in a conversation between a sweeper and a member of the missionary *Tablighi Jamaat* who seeks to rectify the former's faith: When the *Jamaat* member waxes eloquent about the importance of right *Iman* (faith), the sweeper mischievously asks him whether he carries an 'imanometer' that measures people's *iman*. The sweeper further tells him the story of a prostitute who the Prophet said would go to paradise since she kindly gave water to a thirsty dog and thereby had all her sins forgiven. When the *Jamaat* member persisted with another saying by the Prophet, about what the Archangel Gabriel told him about faith, the sweeper counters this with another saying where the Prophet said that there are over sixty or seventy branches of *Iman* and the most excellent of this is saying that there is no god but God and the lowest of them is removing harmful obstacles from the way of others. The sweeper

concludes with the a smile that since he swept the streets 5 days a week all the year round, his Iman was solid and in no need of confirmation or check ups by the *Tablighi Jamaat*.

A response from the peripheries to the debate between the modernist and the Islamist about either Islamizing modernist disciplines or rejecting them wholesale as unislamic would be to first ask the question as to how this debate would genuinely alleviate the suffering of the lay Muslim. The peripheral Muslim in her usual pragmatic response would suggest that research if any should be addressed towards local problems such as diarrhoea and dysentery in Pakistan, flood control in Bangladesh, tackling schistosomiasis (bilharzias) in Egypt and Sudan. This would replace the international agenda dominated by predilections of western science and blindly adopted by Muslim nations. Certain problems of Muslim societies would get priority, for eg. if three quarters of the refugees in the world are Muslim, then the refugee concerns such as housing, clean water, health care etc. should be given priority. Traditional medicine, healthcare systems, agriculture and water management would be emphasized since they ensure greater local autonomy, privilege local knowledge systems that are sensitive to local impact etc. The peripheries will perhaps move away from the 'progress as a value' narrative of modern science and imagine a world where the places they inhabit are not seen as

resources to be exploited but a trust given by Allah to be nurtured. The peripheries may further question the dominant development discourse and demand that a human being not be valued only for being a commodity producer or a commodity consumer but as a vicegerent of Allah. The peripheries who are invariably victims of the violence of the state led development programs will perhaps demand for human values, moral and ethical principles in science and politics.

Conclusion

The category of the peripheral Muslim isn't a self-identification that is used by the Muslims in the margins of power, and it is important not to seek their struggles as either self-conscious (though it could be at times), organized movements. An attempt to tune into the peripheral frequency calls for a new set of analytic categories. The new analysis is beyond the modernist framework of both the Islamist and the Muslim modernist and instead feels one's way through the subtle resistance, myth making, notions of sacred, occasional contradictions, intriguing negotiations, local conversations, stories, sacred spaces, little tricks, hybridized lives between the village and cosmopolitania of the flotsam of tradition and the jetsam of modernity etc. with which the peripheral Muslims engage and destabilize power. It is rooted in praxis, and it develops as we speak. It is an "identity

of becoming” never closed but always inclusive and moving towards.

To classify the interior worlds of the peripheral Muslims as false consciousness is to deny these quotidian struggles at the peripheries that with careful observation one sees have a certain order in their chaotic profusion, a certain method in the seeming madness- in their uncanny consistency, in their ability to continue a low intensity conflict against the orthodoxies of both the modernist and the Islamist and their amazing seepage across the world taking on local forms, garbs and language. The struggles of the peripheries embody the Foucauldian truth of power always begetting resistance, almost as though a universal self-evident law.

The peripheral Muslims exist, live and struggle within and outside of the vanguardist tendencies of the modernist and the Islamist who seek to drag the ummah kicking and screaming into their respective conceptions of salvation. What the peripheries teach us is that Islam not only exists in scripture and a doctrinal system of the ulama but also in literature, images, objects and public discourse and ceremonies expressive of certain conceptions of the universe. Islam is not something divorced from, above and beyond events, in the peripheries it is precisely a way of conceiving, of articulating, the ordinary issues of worldly experience-whether in moral, family, economic or political matters.²³ To be Muslim in the

peripheries is not just to resist the dominant discourse but to also learn how to endure suffering and become stronger through it. The language of the peripheries with its stories, interpretations of scripture, saints and shrines sustains the struggle against power by providing a discourse of suffering that doesn't deny loss but teaches how to endure it – how to make of physical pain, personal loss, worldly defeat or the helpless contemplation of other's agony something bearable, supportable, something sufferable.

Through experiences of the Divine, symbols, saints, tombs, myths, conversations etc. the spiritual faith of the peripheries speaks a language that is neither confirmed by a teleology of truth nor testified by a rational life. The peripheries point to the limits of the social world and indeed the world of its possibilities. In doing so the peripheries derive their spirituality not at the state religiosity of the modernist or the religious state of the Islamist but from an area where reality and imagination blurs in a zone of transcendence- a zone where reason rarely resides but which life seldom ignores. The ruling world of modern rationality can rarely render that zone intelligible to the peripheries. Thus abandoned by modernity except as victims of its ravages the peripheries tune themselves to a rhythm alien to its harsh rationality. This opaque zone that resists the reign of reason is not some esoteric residue of life but it is as palpable as the real experiences of poverty, patriarchy, ill-health, government apathy,

harsh religiosity, pedantic theology etc- in a real sense it is the popular religiosity of the peripheries that renders the dark alleyways of life negotiable, its hostility benign, its arrogance compassionate, setbacks triumphs, defeats victories. Illumined by their own notions of transgressive religiosity the peripheral Muslim hears a well orchestrated symphony in a world filled with discordant notes.

The popular beliefs at the peripheries remain situated at the symbolic realm but at the same time, resolve questions relating to social relationships in the material world. Its non-rational forms of expression evade ordinary access but elaborately speak of real-life situations, autobiographies and anticipations. It provides the peripheries an enduring expression in an otherwise contingent situation. When uncertainty strips the self naked and the situation renders it defenseless, the peripheral self wraps itself in the armor of non-rational spiritual certainty. Popular ways of worship, spiritual links to pirs and their tombs, stories, songs etc. repair the soul that is otherwise scrapped in a soulless world of cruel instrumental reason. For example- for the devotees and the murids at the pir Dargahs in the sub-continent the discipline of *adab* and the passion of *ishq*, the self destroys itself inwardly while satisfying outer imperatives by playing a role assigned in the mortal world. Thus the Sufi self remains staunchly stoic. An optimist the self is without hope, a pessimist, the self, is without despair for in *ishq*

it accepts the condition of total unity with the Divine and all this in a universe that constantly crushes it, directly or indirectly. In *ishq* the self wins, even though a loser.²⁴

Peripheral Islam is intrinsically rebellious. It is rebellious primarily because it evades institutionalization and does not seek legitimacy from the establishment of either the state or the clergy. Peripheral Islam is not so much anti-modern or against reason. It takes on that non-rational form primarily to create pockets of resistance against a hegemonic rationality of the moderns that seek to map, categorize, survey and thereby manipulate the subalterns through its crude dyads of rational/irrational.

The mere fact that a festival or a pir's urs is popularly celebrated does not make the celebration peripheral. Its peripheral nature lies in its ability to challenge, negotiate or trick dominant power. The peripheral Muslim does not necessarily exist in non-modern spaces. On the contrary she could just as well occupy the backwaters of capitalism-the urban slum. The rebellious Islam of the peripheral Muslim lies precisely in its ability to conceptualize faith in a manner that escapes the panopticon of the Islamist or the modern state. To remain peripheral is to resist. For the moment a peripheral activity collaborates with power it ceases to remain peripheral and instead moves to the center.

Every attempt to institutionalize Islam and therefore create an interpretative hegemony, however well intentioned, is necessarily an attempt at domination. Institutionalization of Islam, whether by the Islamist or the Muslim modernist takes away the unmediated experience of the Divine who by definition is beyond all mortal institutions. The modernist discourse controls through its institutions of reason i.e the state, its bureaucracy, its clearly separated disciplines of sociology, anthropology, theology etc. The modernist and the Islamist as creatures of modernity detest the chaos of the peripheries since it is intrinsically non-rational and therefore cannot be controlled.

When Muslim women through their own reading of the Qur'an destabilize the patriarchal interpretations, it is peripheral Islam in the making. When the impoverished Muslim goes to the tomb of the pir and asking him to intercede with Allah on his behalf he is in essence subverting the harsh merciless God of the Islamist. The cruelty of an Islam configured by modernity deprives it of its essence – to be the heart of a heartless world, hope amidst despair, love amidst alienation. What is considered as false religion and irrational practices are invariably concerns of the peripheries since religion configured by modernity also creates institutions that legitimize 'true religion' and 'rational practices' – by bureaucrats and ulema in service of power.

The peripheries create new legitimating sites for their concerns. These legitimating sites function outside the realm of dominant theology. The pir, the shrine, experiences of the Divine, myths, stories etc. all constitute these legitimating sites that transform the formerly demonized concerns of the peripheries into genuine grievances. The closeness of the pir to God, Allah's transcendence, the magical power of a shrine all become the highest courts of appeal that favor subversive interpretations and rebellious narratives that provide succor to the marginalized.

The theology of the peripheries is a theology of praxis, it is molded by experiences of suffering that dominant religion does not care to hear about. The truth is that there is more to the peripheries than its suffering. It is a terrain rich with battles for interpretative autonomy and empowerment. They can't lose for they have God on their side- because they strive for transcendence beyond the definitional boundaries set for them by the powerful. And God is transcendent.

Somos La Esperanza:

God's Kingdom, Reign and Power in the Suffering
and Struggling People of Cuba

Chang, Yoon-Jae

I would like to share with you a story — a story of my first visit to Cuba 14 years ago when I was a theological student abroad. This is a story that I have shared with my own students for the past 10 years whenever we are thrilled to talk about a different world and a different vision. I still sense and feel the power of a transformative education from this story. My heart is now beating fast in anticipation of my second trip to Cuba. Indeed, Cuba is the right place for us to explore the possibility of a transformative ecumenism and education.

“You don’t need permission any more.” I doubted my ears. Something must be wrong. Cuba and North Korea—just the two of them—have been classified as hostile countries by the South Korean government. So I called again to the Korean Consulate in New York to verify the truth. “I said you could freely travel to Cuba,” the same voice stated.

Cuba was that far from me. It was like the “forbidden fruit” and “Pandora’s box.” Travel was open, yet, Koreans in my church were shocked to hear about my trip: “Cuuuba? What are you doing there? What do you, seminary students, have to do with that communist country?” Cuba is still that far from me. And yet, the farther the country is removed from me, the more I was excited about the trip, for “forbidden fruit is sweet” and “bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” I felt that I was like Eve and Pandora, although I had no fantasies of a “paradise lost.” Will my eyes be opened,

however, when I eat of the fruit? Or, will I loose diseases and troubles when I open the box?

As soon as I tasted the fruit and opened the box, however, I was greatly puzzled. Cuba was a country that allowed me no easy comparison with any other socialist country that I have ever visited. The first thing that stunned me was the fact that the country was not a military state. I hardly saw soldiers. No check points. No trenches alongside the beaches that face the 'hostile' U.S. at a stone's throw. Contrary to my expectations, the air was 'liberal': No prohibition of movement; bright and expressive faces of people; sensational and sometimes provocative dressings of women; thick makeup; free religious practices, etc.

These things may sound plain to those who know more about Cuba and little about North Korea where things are the exact opposite. In North Korea you can never move to another town without a pass. Clothes and cosmetics that are considered to be capitalist sensuality cannot be worn. Flat faces, uniforms, and check points abound. One million soldiers are stationed along the 155 miles of DMZ—which is, in fact, *Heavily Militarized Zone* (HMZ). Soldiers are everywhere, in fact, everybody is trained to shoot. It is indeed a military state outwardly and inwardly. Religions are under strict state control. In short, the air is conservative, heavy, tight, and choking.

In light of what I know about North Korea and my limited knowledge of Cuba, these enormous

differences greatly puzzled me. But now I ask myself *why* was I puzzled like this? What was it about their differences that greatly puzzled me? I believe I was trying to capture what Edward W. Said calls, “the fluid and extraordinary rich actualities”¹ through reinforcement of a stereotype by which socialism had been presented to me. There could be other way of socialism; socialism has, in fact, many different faces. It is not a fixed reality that can be easily generalized or categorized. As Trinh T. Minh-ha assures, “Despite our desperate, eternal attempt to separate, contain, and mend, categories always leak.”² My category was leaking. Now I regret that did not go deeper into the heterogeneous, dynamic, and complex human realities of Cuba, because I did not let it come.

I visited Cuba when it was said that the country was in a big ‘crisis’ and ‘transition.’ In fact, I felt the ‘crisis’ most directly through young people whom I encountered on the street. Josephany is a 20 years old man whom I met in Matanzas. I naively thought that he was interested in a foreigner when he approached me with his initiative. We talked—shortly, but quite substantially. He said that he did not want to go to the military—which is understandable, for neither did I. But soon I was embarrassed when I realized that what he was really interested in was not me but my material possessions—my New York Yankees hat and light blue plain T-shirt. He asked me for it as gift. I wondered how he had the nerve to make such a demand. Be

proud of yourself, you SOB, I shouted in my mind. So, I refused. And yet, he asked me for cash instead—just one dollar. I said no. As he was treating me more and more as a source for materialistic goods, I became quite unpleasant. Nonetheless, he did not leave me. A while later, he came back and asked me for the same things. Josephany was the first Cuban who made me upset and frustrated. What kind of ‘crisis’ did I see in him?

I met two other young men—aged 26 and 20—in the Matanzas City Hall Plaza. They were selling cigars *illegally*. One was a mechanic and the other a college student in chemical engineering—so they said. The older man boasted about evading his military service by pretending to be mentally diseased. He greased a psychotherapist, he said. They eagerly spoke of their miserable financial situations, hoping to arouse some sympathy from a latent customer. So I decided not to fall for their ploy. Instead, I launched an offensive: “If you have \$20 in cash, what do you want to do?” The older answered, “Oh then, I will buy two chickens, soup, and oil for my family; some candy for Eleggua; and candles for Ochung.” “If \$100?” I inflated the amount, and they were thinking for a while, for the amount was almost a year’s salary of a professional. “Well then, some cash for my mother and father; and then for fun for ourselves, such as going to a bar, because, you know, we are young,” answered the same one. What kind of ‘crisis’ did I hear from them?

10 years ago in the Philippines, I asked the same question when I visited a sugar cane workers' area in Negros Island—one of another world's sugar suppliers. About 30 women and men sat on a small hill at twilight to be interviewed by me. It was a beautiful evening scented with the smell of mosquito-fumigator. But my mind was filled with deep sadness by their life stories—miserable stories of a poverty-stricken life. I could not raise any more questions. I was speechless. So, just to conclude the interview, I asked them, “Tell me what you would do, if you had \$100 in cash right now?” While my guide was translating the question into the vernacular, I was expecting to hear a small list of personal wishes—e.g., buying some extra daily commodities, saving for the future, or a little entertainment, for the amount was big enough to be considered an extra and a small fortune. When they heard the question, however, they immediately shouted simultaneously like a chorus: “Gugas!” “Gugas?” Astonished by their unison, I asked my translator for a definition. They were smiling sheepishly at me, as they saw my surprise at their big singing. Smiling as well, my translator said to me: “Rice; it is rice.” Rice? With that extra money? I was caught off guard. That was a blow to my face—ridiculing my ridiculous and ‘luxurious’ question. Rice, the basic of all basics for life! That was all they needed. Rice, just rice! Not for saving for tomorrow, but for filling up their empty stomachs now. That was the chorus that I

heard from the poorest ghetto of the world and I have never forgotten my life journey since then. Scales of my eyes were fallen—they ‘evangelized’ me. That was an eye-opening experience for me. What kind of crisis *and* hope did I hear from their outcry?

The differences of these two stories are so self-explanatory that it gives me a clue in understanding the essence and nature of the so-called contemporary Cuban ‘crisis.’ It is not a crisis of basic human needs after all. As Cubans boast of themselves, I saw, during this trip, that the basic human needs for food, housing, medical service, and education were met by the qualifications of the *revolucion*. In fact, the statistics that I discovered in the Revolutionary Museum in Old Havana sharply divided the two different Cubas before and after the *revolucion*: Before the revolution, 4,376,529 children, 10 years and older, did not have the slightest chance for education; 200,000 shacks and misery huts occupied Havana in 1953; In the same year, 40,937 people died due to a lack of medical attendance and unsanitary living conditions. In that Museum, which was the former Fulgencio Batista’s Palace whose grandeur shined like a Greek-Roman pantheon, I became convinced that Cuba successfully escaped from the chain of world poverty. As Louis A. Perez, Jr. affirms, it was “immediate justice”—not “legal justice” of liberals or moderates—that swept the country after the revolution. It was indeed a “immediate, deep, seeping change.”³

Now we see the country registering one of the world's highest housing distribution rate that reaches up to 95%. Family physicians are ready for service, in spite of a serious lack of medication due to the U.S. embargo, and every 200 families are within a two-hour-access of a family physician. Although lacking in items such as cooking oil, soup, and detergent, daily necessities, such as rice, sugar, beans, coffee, matches, and toothpaste, are guaranteed, if not sufficiently provided.⁴ Education is free. For example, it takes only 80 pesos (US\$ 4) a month to acquire room and board and to pay for registration and writing exams for a student in the Matanzas Evangelical Seminary. This sum is less than US\$ 50 that a seminary student in Matanzas needs for his/her study and living for a whole year.

With such a startling figure, I could not resist asking myself: How much do I need in New York? (I must have been jealous.) A doctoral student in the Union Theological Seminary needs a minimum of US\$ 29,000 for 10 months for tuition, medical service, housing, food, and books. Including summer housing and living, the total cost of being a seminary student in New York appears 700 *times* more expansive than being a student in Matanzas. It is 700 times! Could I say then that the quality of education I am receiving is 700 times better? Could I say that my living standards are 700 times higher than in Cuba? It obviously is not. It cannot be. They may have insufficient supplies, yet,

one can never say that the quality of living for Cubans is any less than other peoples. If the value of free food, housing, education, and medical service are calculated in terms of dollars, Cubans are some of the richest in the world.

Why then, are *free* food, *free* education, *free* medical service, and *free* housing not valued in the same way they are valued there? Are they not valued, because they are “free”? Do they have value only when we have to pay? What a funny math! Why is it that the labor and investment of the Cuban people, for the past 40 years, are depreciated and negated economically, politically, and spiritually? Who draws the boundaries between value and non-value? In what mechanism and with what standards? What is it that makes the “immediate justice” that has swept the country so cheap? After all, what is behind this *terror of devaluation*?

I have been inquiring of the substance of the so-called contemporary ‘crisis’ of *Cuba*. If it is not the crisis of basic human needs, then what is it? I contend that it is not a *Cuban* crisis, but a *world* crisis that I observed in Cuba. It is not *their* crisis, but *our* crisis. It is the crisis of perception of value, the way we value the value—our whole philosophy and system of value. The crisis that I felt, saw, and heard from young people in Cuba was the crisis of our global economy that standardizes and homogenizes values by eliminating diversity and qualitative differences. It is

this reductionist paradigm of the global economy that divides the so-called ‘basic need’—food, shelter, and clothing—and the so-called ‘higher needs’—freedom, knowledge, and culture. As Vandana Shiva, Indian eco-feminist, assures, it is precisely the value of the everyday work for survival and for life that has been eroded in the name of the so-called ‘higher’ values.⁵ If we do not return to what Shiva calls a “subsistence perspective”—a perspective which starts from the fundamental necessities of life,—we will not be able to grapple with the true nature of the so-called contemporary *Cuban* crisis which is, in fact, a crisis of *the whole humanity* today. Maria Lugones echoes to my view:

Through travelling to other people’s “worlds” we discover that there are “worlds” in which those who are the victims of arrogant perception are really subjects, lively beings, resisters, constructors of vision even though in the mainstream construction they are animated only by the arrogant perceiver and are pliable, foldable, file-awayable, classifiable.⁶

Basilio A. Gutierrez Garcia, the director of North American Department of the *Instituto Cubano Amistad con los Pueblos*, clearly demonstrates his grappling with the true nature of ‘Cuban’ crisis. This young man, who is only 36 years old, is quite an interesting person whose rhetoric is direct, provocative, and persuasive.

When he was asked about Cuban people's exile out of the country, he refused to identify it as a 'Cuba problem.' "They are leaving this country, because they are looking for better opportunities," he accepted. But he asked a question in return: "Why then do you think Mexicans and Filipinos are also migrating to the U.S.?" He did not mention Puerto Rico, but it was clear enough that this country, from where the one who raised the question came, was definitely included. His cross-question already alluded to his answer: "Ours is the same case. The issue is about migration from South to North." Garcia's answer was so self-evident that the self-contradiction of the question was revealed and challenged.

He then pointed out that "liberal economy is all around the world." But, his response to this phenomenon, which is, in other words, "globalization," was less dogmatic and more pragmatic than many oppositional responses. "This is neither good nor bad. This is just a challenge that we have to face." He was fully aware of what was wrong in Cuba *and* elsewhere. "The problem is that Cuban pesos are losing their value. But this is a temporal phenomenon. This is not simply a Cuban problem either." He was correct to position the 'Cuban' problem in the global context. He then made a strong impression upon me whose country was hit by financial crisis and is now "restructuring" the economy upon the diagnosis of IMF at the very cost of middle and grassroots sectors. "Our approach for

solution [of the Cuban financial crisis] is different from what international monetary system has diagnosed. We are not asking some social sectors to sacrifice. Our way of exit is to share the suffering—although, because of it, it will take longer time.” After all, Garcia redefined the true nature of the ‘Cuban problem.’ “The issue is not about socialism versus capitalism. The real issue is how human beings can survive (when liberal economy is all around the world).” He relocated ‘Cuban’ problem and *human* problem and reidentified the ‘Cuban’ crisis as the *world* crisis. However, is there hope for the human survival? His answer was discrete but full of confidence: “No one has the answer. The future depends on many factors. We are confident, but we have to struggle.” He situated his hope in a concrete historical praxis. I wondered whether he studied Latin American liberation theologies.

Repositioning the Cuban crisis in human and global context, nonetheless, does not alleviate the depth and seriousness of the particularity of the crisis in Cuba. In fact, I heard very critical and negative voices about the present and future of Cuba. Juan Garcia is an ESL teacher who previously worked for the Ministry of Education. He was a sharp, honest, and open-minded person who informed me of how professionals felt about their society and what was going on in the daily lives of ordinary people. In fact, it was he who showed me the ration card of his family so that I could get a concrete sense of the people’s daily life. He identified

himself as “neither super-revolutionary nor against the government.” But he was straightforward: “Cuba is unprepared to face the crisis.” Regarding the cause of the crisis, his answer sounded well balanced, but his finger was pointing to the government. “No, no, it is not only because of the embargo, but because of the collapse of (Soviet) socialism and the inefficiency of the (Cuban) system that we have arrived at this crisis. It is a combination of them all.” He then spoke indirectly but very clearly: “Some say, ‘Lift the embargo and see how Fidel would justify the inefficiency of the system.’ Clinton is a fool.”

As an educator, he might have seen how things were falling apart in his country. “We teach students in the classroom to not be selfish, not to be individualistic, but to be hard working, to help others, and to be devoted to the country. However, when students see their parents bartering in the black market, several months of education in the classroom just falls apart in one minute. The real world is much more powerful than the artificial setting of the classroom.” He then focused his frustration and criticism on the very consequence of the introduction of the market economy of Cuba. “All know-how disappeared. Now only the dollar talks.” He, a professional, is the person of “know-how.” But, his “know-how” is no longer valued and heard—only the dollar counts. His deep frustration then leads him to be ‘prophetic’: “Cuba had a social plan which, in my opinion, worked. But

now some people have assimilated to the external system. The worst case is the people who can't make dollars (like me). They are the new poor. There are no social classes in Cuba yet, but now you see the danger of a widening gap. You will sooner or later see social classes in Cuba." His 'prophecy' was quite conclusive.

Garcia was one of many professionals whose 'traditional' prestige was no longer valued, whose commitment was no longer appreciated, and whose sense of being a part of the Cuban leadership was deeply hurt by the rapid transition to the "dollarization" of the economy. As they say, "transition is nothing other than a restructuring the hegemony of interest." He and many other professionals could not successfully "assimilate to the external system." He failed, because he was not quick to take the "fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden" that has been forbidden for a long time. Indeed, this is a different fall story. Whether or not he did or could locate his suffering in the broader context of the "dollarization" of the *global* economy, he suffers from the system to which he was devoted but whose inefficiency does not secure him anymore. I saw the broken heart in his deep and innocent eyes. My heart was also broken. Fidel once said, "Poverty passes; dishonor is forever." And yet, Garcia's honor was being undermined by the new poverty. Will this pass soon, or will it remain forever? Garcia, with millions of his people who have not successfully "assimilated to the external system," has

become one of “the least,” the powerless, and the most vulnerable when “liberal economy is all around the world.”

Interestingly enough, it is this inefficiency of the system that has provided a fertile ground for the mushrooming of NGOs in Cuba. In other words, the rising of NGOs like mushrooms after the rain is the very reflection of the inefficiency of the system. During our trip, we visited many NGOs—mainly religious and some secular. Particular programs and beneficiaries varied, but, all seemed to be struggling to overcome what Louis A. Perez, Jr. calls the “over-centralization and ineffective incentives” of the system.⁷ In other words, people were tired of the “appeals to self-sacrifice and moral incentives.” It is, however, Padre Ramon who sees this problem, which I call “general fatigue syndrome,” much deeper. He points out that people of Cuba have been suffering from a “pressured situation” in which outward and inward lives are incoherent and thus results in a “double morality” or “double life.” Indeed, I was able to grasp the depth and intensity of this “pressured situation” when, to my shock, I saw a Cuban coin inscribed with “*patria o muerte*” (nation or death). Indeed, it is horrifying to be ‘either or’ when there have been no other options. This is the psychological pressure that ordinary people experience when they are ‘appealed’ to “self-sacrifice and moral incentives.” Indeed, this is debilitating, if not disempowering. One cannot simply blame the people,

however, saying that 40 years are not enough to correct 500 years of colonization, or one cannot simply admonish them with Jose Marti's poetic and biblical words: "My wine is bitter; but it is my wine." Did not Jesus make an effort to let his cup of bitter wine pass from him? Something must be done *differently*—thus, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

"The issue is (people's) participation," pointed out a representative from the Group Oscar Romero, assuring that the inefficiency of the system was derived from the "paternalism of the state." "People do not know where to go," therefore, "We are looking for a new spirituality as ethics for the public," he said. Jorge Ramirez Calzadilla, the director of Center Investigation Psychology Sociology, also emphasized on spirituality: "There is a great spiritual need in Cuba, and we are looking for this-worldly spirituality." Actually "spirituality" was one of the most popular words roaming around many NGOs, regardless of their secular or religious orientations. But, is "spirituality" a *different way* of approach? What is "new spirituality as ethics" after all, if it is not the same with what Padre Ramon calls "a false religiosity which is more devotional, but not engaged and committed"? To be frank, I do not see any substantial differences between the "new spirituality as ethics" being promoted by *non* governmental organizations and what Louis A. Perez, Jr. calls "a revolutionary ethic" initiated by the

government. See what the government of Cuba has tried for the past 40 years:

Mobilization strategies after 1965 were based on appeals to selflessness and sacrifice. Cubans were exhorted to subscribe to a new code, nothing less than a new morality. Emphasis was given to *conciencia*, the creation of a new consciousness that would lead to a new revolutionary ethic. The goal was the making of a new man (*hombre nuevo*), motivated not by expectation of personal gain but by the prospects of collective advancement. The *hombre nuevo* was disciplined, highly motivated, and hard-working.⁸

The “new spirituality as ethics” does not sound *new* to the “revolutionary ethics” in the sense that the former still appeals basically to human *conciencia*, not material incentives. They are identical twins. New is the sack of wine, not its contents. This is why I questioned the man from Group Oscar Romero on what he really meant by “*new spirituality*” when the Cuban society was already the embodiment of a very *Christian spirituality*.

I see a strong affinity between what people of Cuba have struggled to qualify the basic human needs and what Jesus of Nazareth preached, ministered and for which he lived. According to John D. Crossan, the heart of the original Jesus movement was a *shared egalitarianism* of spiritual (healing) and material

(eating) resources *at the most grassroots level*.⁹ It is this radical egalitarianism that can summarize what the kingdom of God meant for Jesus as well as for the first-century Palestine peasants.¹⁰ What else could it be, if it is not a radical egalitarianism of resources at the grassroots level that the people of Cuba have struggled to accomplish for more than 40 years? Jesus taught the poor to pray for “our *daily* bread.” What else could it be, if it is not this “daily bread,” or what Ana Maria Isasi-Diaz calls “*lo cotidiano*” (the daily), that the people of Cuba wished for everyday? “Cuban socialism has not promised big things; but enough food, house, and full-life,” assured Basilio A. Gutierrez Garcia. “*Lo cotidiano*” is not a future-oriented spirituality—a delayed justice in vain. It is a here and now spirituality that is identical with the “immediate justice” that swept the country right after the revolution. It is a “new code, nothing less than a new morality” in which “emphasis [i]s given to *conciencia*, the creation of a new consciousness that would lead to a new revolutionary ethic.” The goal of the “*lo cotidiano*” is to make a “new [hu]man (*hombre nuevo*)” who are “disciplined, highly motivated, and hard-working”—the *disciples*. If this is not the *Christian* spirituality that Jesus directly taught and practiced, what kind of other lofty spiritualities are NGOs looking for? Indeed, I see a strong affinity between the heart of the *Christian* spirituality and the “revolutionary ethics” of the Cuban revolution. NGOs

must have more compelling *raison d'être* per se as *Non*GOs.

Raimundo Garcia Franco of the *Centro Cristiano e Reflexion y Dialogo* was straightforward in this regard: “There needs to be a second opinion.” “We are not enemies of the government,” nonetheless, “We have different perspectives.” In a similar vein, Daisy Rojas Gomez of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center identified her and other NGOs as “uncomfortable friends of the revolution.” I took their nuanced words very seriously, for I wondered how could and for how long would these “uncomfortable friends,” who have “different perspective” as well as *who are heavily financed from abroad*, go hand in hand with the government. I was more interested in their *future*, distant or close, than their *present*. Will NGOs with the introduction of market economy eventually turn out to be a domestic pressure or competitor for political reform and pluralism, like in China, against the existing one-party-rule-system? Is this why, despite the monstrous Torricelli bill (“Cuba Democracy Act”), millions of dollars channeled to NGOs could be poured into Cuba? Will NGOs restrain themselves to deal with ‘micro’ levels while the government still controls the ‘macro’? I am not a political analyst who can answer these questions. Yet, I realize that these questions concerning the ambiguity and ambivalence of the potential role of NGOs are the perfect place where the so-called “human rights” issues can be channeled

into and developed. In fact, it is this place that some of my “uncomfortable friends” in our group did raise the question systematically and thoroughly.

Daisy Rojas Gomez of the Martin Luther King Center was ‘interrogated’ by them. As their questions went on, I had become very upset by their CNN-type interviews. Indeed, from the very beginning to the very end of our itinerary, the same persons persistently raised the same line of questions. I was desperate at last. What was the impulse that drove them madly to prove what they believed in or wanted to believe as being right? How do and can we learn from other people, from other cultures? And yet, I was even more furious when my call for interruption was absurdly cut by Prof. Isasi-Diaz, who made a very dishonest excuse about the lack of time. Personally, that was a moment of tension. I would have walked out, if Prof. Chung, Hyun-Kyung had not interrupted the progress. I was given a second chance, but I refused it as a sign of protest. (Did I make myself clear?)

But afterward I could have had a chance to talk with Daisy while our group was given time to buy books and raise more questions to the other staff members. Our dialogue was short and simple. I first apologized to her about the “human rights” questions. Then, from my heart I expressed a word of comfort and a word of solidarity to Daisy who seemed quite uncomfortable with the “human rights” ‘interrogation.’ I shared my feelings of how important her struggle

was to me and to many others in the world. Then suddenly, a word came to my mind—actually, a short sentence that I learned somewhere in the street corner of the city of Havana: “*Somos La Esperanza.*” She was greatly excited to hear those words not because I spoke in Spanish, but rather because something touched her mind. “*Somos La Esperanza.*” Yes, you are the hope; you are not alone; thus, keep up the good job. And that was it—just that. Suddenly, I saw tears swimming in her big eyes. She repeatedly thanked me; we deeply hugged each other; and I felt her heart beating.

That very end of my trip was the moment that I saw the concrete faces of Cuban people for the first time. I was that slow. It really took time for me to be connected with the living people heart to heart. Finally I was enlightened. Just a word of comfort; just a word of hope; and just a word of solidarity. I realized that these words were what Daisy needed. She was desperately thirsty for those words. That was what she, a revolutionary who devoted her life to her *patria* but who had to allow her son to leave of her country because of the *patria*, wanted to hear most. What else could we say to her when her world was falling apart, when the struggle of remnants was suspected, twisted, and depreciated, and thus when her heart was broken and her dignity was impaired? What did we, our group, bring to them besides our prompting curiosity and probing questions? What did we bring down there? From her tears and from her heart, I deeply learned

that what the people of Cuba needed most. It was *hope, assurance, and empowerment* that could sustain their will to survive, regenerate their cause for struggle, and connect them with other people who are suffering and struggling when “liberal economy is all around the world.”

Indeed, we are witnessing today what Catherine Keller calls the “new cryptoapocalypse of transnational capital” devouring relentlessly the “*otro mundo*” in the name of the same-wealth and progress, modernization, and development.¹¹ The peak of this apocalypse is the full-blown globalization of the *laissez faire* economy all over the world, generated by unfettered global capital. Struck with wonder, Francis Fukuyama claims that this is the “end of history.” But, in my imagination, this is nothing other than an announcement of the arrival of the kingdom of *Mammon*, i.e., the money-god. What then happens to the kingdom of *God*? Is it expelled into a dark shadowy corner of the world? Where is the kingdom of *God*? Where is God’s kingdom, reign, or power in this “end of history” that is disillusioned with the ideology of “progress” and “development,” but unable to construct an alternative conception of historical hope, assurance, and empowerment?

As early as this century, biblical scholar C.H. Dodd points out that “The kingdom of God is not a matter of having God for your King in the sense that you obey His [sic] commandment: it is a matter of *being confronted with the power of God at work in the world*

[my italics].”¹² John D. Crossan also points out that “the Kingdom of God is what the world would be if God were directly and immediately in charge.”¹³ C.S. Song concludes that the kernel of Jesus’ kingdom of God is the *issue of power*.¹⁴ C.H. Roberts goes even further and affirms that God’s kingdom is *power directly available*.¹⁵ He draws a useful exegetical insight from Luke 17:21b which states, “the kingdom of God is among you.” He points out that “among you” means “in your hands,” or “within your power”—i.e., the kingdom of God is not something for which one has to watch anxiously (“Lo, here!” or “Lo, there!”), but it is an *available possibility* here and now. His point is not that the kingdom is in human control; rather that God’s power is “within your power” or “in your hand”—i.e., it depends on your existential, political decision and commitment.

The real good news for us is that God’s kingdom or reign as *power directly available* assures *people itself* as the locus and foundation of it. Elizabeth S. Fiorenza confirms that the Jesus movement offers an alternative interpretation of the validity of Temple and Torah as symbols of Israel’s election by focusing on *the people itself as the locus of God’s power and presence*.¹⁶ Crossan also confirms that the kingdom of God is people under divine rule and that, as an ideal, transcends and judges all human rules.¹⁷ However, it is Song who pushes this point to an extreme:

Jesus identifies it [the God’s reign] with the people...

“The reign of God is yours!” (Luke 6:20) The reign of God, Jesus says to them in no uncertain terms, is *yours*. It belongs to you.

It is *you!* The reign of God means to be *yours*.

It is closely related to you, so close, as a matter of fact, that it means *you!* The reign of God is yours because *you* are the reign of God... By saying that the reign of God is theirs, Jesus affirms the direct link between God’s reign and people... This is new and startling thing in Jesus’ proclamation of God’s reign. This is the good news never heard of before.¹⁸

“*You are the reign of God*”—this is the startling news. “A direct link between God’s reign and people”—this is the good news. Therefore, this kingdom or reign, fully identified with grassroots, unequivocally declares that the sovereignty and power resides in the oppressed, because God, the source of life, power, and hope, takes their side. The kingdom, reign, or power belongs to them. *We are the kingdom; We are the reign; We are the power; and thus “Somos La Esperanza” (We Are the Hope).*

Rev. Dora Arce-Valentin once assured that *what Cuba has achieved* was a “proof of the kingdom,” or a “sing of the kingdom.” But God’s reign as people cannot be encapsulated in an institutional achievement. It is the suffering and struggling people itself who is the kingdom, for they are the locus and foundation of it.

Adolfo Ham, professor of religion and philosophy of the Matanzas Evangelical Seminary, once said at the dinner table that “The future and hope of Cuba is an eschatological question. It is eschatological, because only God knows it.” But the future and hope of Cuba is *no longer* an eschatological question to me, for I do not see the hope in the people in an unrealized future. It is not a redeeming and fulfilling future, as Juergen Moltmann insists, that can give consolation and meaning to suffering and acting in history.¹⁹ The hope, which overcomes death, as Gustavo Gutierrez affirms, must be *rooted in the heart of historical praxis*.²⁰ If hope does not take shape in the present to lead it forward, it will only be an evasion, a futuristic illusion.

Above all, I have learned that Cuba is the home of Lim, Moon-Hee (Martha Lim Kim) who wants to live the legacy of her father who left Korea for Mexico when he was only 8 months old in 1905 and eventually went to Cuba in 1921. Cuba is the home of 650 Korean descendants who are struggling to live in/with/out their Koreanness. It is a place for wonderful lovers like Raul R. Ruiz who has been madly in love with Martha’s Korean beauty and spirituality. Cuba is the shelter that both Martha and Raul have deeply appreciated as “the revolution opened great opportunities of study and work to the poor.” When I took of “the forbidden fruit” and ate it, my eyes were opened and I was not ashamed that I was naked. When I opened “Pandora’s

box,” I discovered not diseases or troubles but really precious stones.

Pela Gandong and Sasi Moluccas' Local Wisdom
To Live In Harmony Between Human Beings and
Nature

Carla Natan

Introduction

Mollucas island was famous in 15 or 16 centuries when the European looking for spice islands and they ended up colonized Indonesia for more than 350 years. It located in the eastern of Indonesia. Known as a land of kings and one thousand islands. The island consists of 1412 islands where 90% is water and 10% land. It has around 50 ethnics and sub ethnics and has around 117 languages.

The ancestors came from Malay, Polynesia and Melanesia and left the legacy of pluralism as one of its character and spirit to live in unity and harmony among brothers/sisters. They called each other as a orang basudara (man/people in brotherhood and sisterhood) and the life they live is hidup orang basudara (life of man in brotherhood). This Philosophy means cut in the nail and feel in the flesh; what you feel, I feel. This fraternity is pro existential because everybody belong to each other and has a responsibility to others. They have built this tradition for centuries before foreigners and Indonesia exist. The spirit of this fraternity is to acknowledge and accept each other as a human regardless different religion and village.

It made Mollucas known for its local culture to preserve and maintain peace eventhough the communal conflict happened in 1999-2004, tearing apart the community in the capital city and other part of the province to live by ghetto between Christian and

Moslem. It was a testing for the local culture, how far it is still able to resolve the conflict and how effective it is still relevant with 21 centuries?

Local Wisdoms

There are three forms of fraternity of Mollucas community which are :

1. Pela

Its origin comes from word Pelau means brother. Terminology means tie friendship or brotherhood that bind community from two village or more. It was formed by ancestor in the special occasion and has a duty and responsibility within any party involved.

Pela also related to Kakehan which is head hunter tradition among tribals in Mollucas, that between them has a rivalry to hunt the head of the enemy and in the certain condition, agreed not to attack each other and in the contrary will protect each other. There is also a form of pela because of the assistance of one village to the other and they vow to be a brother.

There are two types of pela. First is blood brotherhood. This is a very strict brotherhood that has a restriction and duties. It vows with drinking the blood of each other leader's finger in the sacred ritual. It prohibited the community to marry among themselves and they should help and protect each other. Second is pela tempat sirih – a place people use to eat special leaves/sirih. This is a soft relationship

including duty and responsibility and the main purpose to help and protect each other.

Most of the village in Central Mollucas and Ambon – the capital city has a *pela* with other village. Most of this relation based on religion where one Christian village will have a brotherhood with Moslem village. This *pela* was established before the “modern religion” came.

2. Gandong

It is a form of brotherhood or fraternity based on genealogy. It originated from the word biology, so brotherhood based on biology. They formed the community based on biology. The spread to find a new place but later on maintain the relationship in reunion or ritual regardless their religion. They agreed to protect and help each other in the motto one blood, all blood; one life – all life. So your blood is everybody's blood and your life is everybody's life. If *pela* implicitly about brotherhood between two villages but *gandong* can cover more villages for example Siri Sori village (Moslem) and Siri Sori Sarani (Christian) in Saparua – Central Seram and Tamilow village (Moslem) in South Seram is a *gandong* of Hutumuri village (Christian) in Baguala Bay in Ambon City.

In *pela* and *gandong* community tradition, it is shame if there is a social work in one village and they did not help. It can be seen as a big mistake because the ancestor can punish them. The strength of

gandong culture can be seen at its universal values of fraternity, togetherness and sacrifice.

3. Family

The relation between community based on family tree regardless their religion. They have established and maintain the relationship from generation to generation for example visit each other during religion celebration e.g. Christmas and Idul Fitri – Ied celebration for moslem. With the increasing of fundamentalism in Indonesia, there is always a public debate before Christmas whether the moslem can greet Merry Christmas to their fellow Christian. Indonesia Ulama Assembly came up with fatwa to prohibit it and it has been criticized by modern moslem organization such as NU (Nadhatul Ulama).

Beside that there is a tradition of Christian village to keep their house chores to use during the visit of their moslem either by pela, gandong or family such as fry pan, basin, glass, plate, etc.

Sasi is a temporary prohibition not to take something from the forest and sea for the certain time. Sasi has a legal aspect that have a way, norm and ethic local culture to preserve nature. Sasi came from word witness. The substantial legal values of custom law are

- To exercise someone's right on time
- To prevent a conflict among member of community
- To maintain and preserve the nature (land/sea) for the common welfare

- To reduce the possibility of crime such as thief.

The role of Sasi is to allow plants grow in land and fish and other sea's dweller grow bigger so human could harvest the best and on the right time. So, there will be harmony between man and nature, to control and limit the exploitation of natural resources and to sustain the environment. Therefore the local leader has an experience of knowlege about weather, plants, fish etc to arrange and control the natural resources. They want to keep harvest based on the needs of human and not the greediness.

Types of Sasi in Mollucas

1. General Sasi is a prohibition applied to all village members. It consists of two.
 - a. Water Sasi consists of
 - (1) Sea Sasi is a sasi covers shore and sea. The priority of prohibition is given to the fish which a special type of fish that living and moving together in the sea for example in Eti Village in Seram is Lompa fish. Other creatures are shell, seaweed, pearl and fish.
 - (2) River Sasi is a prohibition at the river for example if Lompa fish reached the river and the community could not catch or disturb them. The community could not was their dishes and clothes, the women could not take a bath with

men, an engine boat or speed boat should not on their machine, the trees at the river should not be cut except sago tree. This Sasi is applied in Haruku island in Mollucas.

b. Land Sasi

- (1) Forest Sasi is Sasi covers all things in the land. The main focus of sasi is plants/trees both plant by nature or human. The plants are the one community consume every day such as coconut, pala, fruits, rattan, damar and cloves
- (2) Animal Sasi is special animals at the forest which are protected and watched which the catch according to the needs of community for example in Titawai village, community can not catch kusu-kusu that lives in the tree and eat kenari, gondal tree, beringin, etc.

2. Personal sasi is a prohibition applied by someone to personal belongings and report to the village government. This sasi is only applied to something in the forest.

3. Church Sasi is a sasi determined by religious leader. This sasi also called spiritual sasi or beliefs that based on the beliefs. This sasi is related to the traditional belief before the modern religion came which is Moslem dan Christian.

This sasi is related with community belief to their ancestor's spirit or the power of nature. This sasi applied in the sea for 1-2 months. In the past, sea sasi was applied when there someone died of drawn in the the sea. Or if someone fell from tree or died in the forest and therefore people would prohibited to enter that area for 1-2 months. The community believes if there was an incident at the sea or forest, the spirit of the dead was looking for a place to stay and therefore the live people should be not disturb their process. They can get accident.

4. Village sasi is a prohibition to rule the life of community in the village such as to make a noise in the Saturday night like party etc and should get a permission from the village leaders. On Sunday, people couldnot go to the sea or forest except for the urgent matter and should get the permission from the kewang/sasi enforcer. People are not allow to dry the leaves roof or burn grass, coconut's cover etc in the street or hang their clothes in the house's fence. The woman is not allow to climb tree wear unproper dress and when returned from bathing in the river, should wear cloth up to the chest. The man should not wear sarong – traditional cloth on the day and should not walk on the street with underwear or towel.

5. Babaliang Sasi is a form of village sasi which a village people who has money got the rights for one

year to buy harvest from the farm applied by sasi. The person can buy the harvest through village's officer. The village officer would determined which farm would enforce sasi and which one would not. The buyer team has been decided and under the monitoring of police. The police and buyer team has the same authority with sasi enforcer and their children to monitor whether the farm was clean and applied the penalty if sasi was violated.

Opening and Closing of Sasi of Custom and Church

1. Sasi Village/Custom

The prohibition began with the ritual by stating that sasi was applied and marked by wood tight up young coconut leaves and planted around the areas where was prohibited.

Two days before the custom's ritual, the announcement made by Kewang – Sasi's enforcer who will guard and monitoring sasi process in the forest where the plants will prohibited to take to all community. The family was expected to prepare all their needs during this prohibition. On the night the sasi started, Kewang and his children will guard the forest. The forest and sea announced to be closed. This will happen for 3 months. During the period, the quitness will be maintain in this area. People can come to that place but not make a noise and they can take a food but not excessive. For the sasi to fruits, eventhough the fruit fell on the ground, people can

not take it. To catch the fish, people have to use simple cather and not using a net. For the urgent needs such as cononut, people or family needed something from forest or farm, should asked a permission from head of Kewang. The special day was granted on Tuesday and Friday evening. When they took it, it should be guard by the child of Kewang.

The opening of sasi held at custom's house by sang the traditional song to adore the ruler of sky and earth. On the evening to the dawn, Kewang, his children and village officers would have a meeting and on the day that agreed, Kewang and his children will go around the village to announce the opening. They will remind the community not to take the young fruits, clean the trees and leaves from the village. As a gratitude by the people, they will bring some of their harvest to the local leader and priest.

2. Church Sasi

Church sasi is a personal sasi. The family will ask their purpose to the church to announce in the church on Sunday. After the priest pray and the farm of that family will in prohibition. Usually several families will request the prohibition at the same time to the church. The plant or tree will have a mark/sign of wood cross. The opening will happen in church too and the first harvest of the plants will given to the church.

Presently the community prefer to use this sasi because it is more secure. The people who violated sasi

will get the sanction from God especially for Christian because thief is sin. Beside that the ritual of church is more simple and not long.

The punishment of violator of *sasi* are physical – whipping; fine, force labor and excluded from the community/village.

Challenges

These kind of local wisdoms were destroyed by the colonizer and Indonesia government after independent. The Indonesian national law was not able to preserve and maintain this kind of local wealth. It occurred again after the communal conflict in 1999 where religion has been using by political to create a conflict in the community. For so long, Mollucas has been known as a Christian society. After the fell of Soeharto in 1998, the communal violence erupted in January 1999 and separated the life of two communities Christian and Moslem by market, district, public transport, schools, hospitals, bank, shops, etc. The effort to solve the conflict by revitalizing those local wisdoms. The more opportunities was open with the provincial autonomy law in 2000, opened more space to revitalize such of the tradition now.

The religion should be understood as ethic – profetic power which should be a blessing for universal humanity (*rahmatan lilalamin – islam means*). Being religious with this understanding is able to accommodate multicultural life because the

concept of religion is a blessing for the universe by acknowledge that multicultural is design by God and not a man's choice.

If religion is able to transform at the action level by acknowledged and accepted reality of multiculturalism as stated above and local cultures such as Pela, Gandong and Sasi will get the spirit from religion and therefore religion and culture is no longer a power which is a vis-a vis but integrative power for multicultural society transformation. (Dr. Abidin Wakano, M.Ag.)

Democracy where People can Eat, Politics
where the Poor Matter

Lapapan Supamanta

Introduction

This paper aims to discuss about the poor as a potential force of the society to push for a politics that is friendly to both humanity and nature. When considering environmentalism and politics, there are different shades of “green” politics. This paper shares ideas taken from the experiences of a nationwide social movement of the poor in Thailand comprising largely of small scale farmers in rural areas. So it might not be “eco-centric” enough for some people. But as the peasant life and livelihood depends on nature, we believe that their struggles contribute for both social justice and ecological justice.

Politics that is against the poor and the nature

Humans, both the rich and the poor, both rural or city people, are dependent on nature for living and livelihood. Humans never produce anything. We only take something from nature and transform it into something else. That we all depend on nature which is not unlimited leads to the fierce competition to access and use nature. Now in the light of dominating paradigm of modernity, nature (and even human) is regarded only as resources or the means for wealth accumulation. Exploitation of nature is aggravated also by the globalized neoliberal economic model and technology advancement.

Rural areas remain the storage of massive natural resources, both physical such as land, rivers, lakes,

seas, forests and genetic resources. These natural resources are still under care and for the use of rural people, especially the indigenous. It is common to see rural communities being suppressed by political force, and also the armed force, so that the outsiders could access to and utilize their natural resources. We see politicians and corporates manipulate and play politic games to control the state power. Then they use such power to exploit nature, in various forms, e.g. grabbing of land and water, extractive industries, alteration of topography (e.g. from large infrastructure construction) and also genetic modification.

People who are directly and structurally afflicted by power grabbing and natural resources grabbing can be called the poor. The rural poor suffer more than the urban poor do because their lives depend on nature in many ways including in agriculture, in getting food, energy and other necessities from forest and water sources. Large number of them still practices indigenous way of living.

Today we can find the rural poor in many parts of the world who still have close connection with nature. As they still practice small scale agriculture, they are motivated to protect their community natural resources, land, water forest and genetic resources. They accumulate and hand down indigenous knowledge and culture that help protect nature.

On the other hand we observe that the poor become accused for destruction of nature. They are blamed for deforestation, forest encroachment or clear-cutting preserved land to sell to investors who are backed up by the state's policies to develop industries, tourism and agro industries. The poor are victimized by the state policies that adversely or implicitly make them poor and leave them no option but to become a cogwheel in environment-damaging industries as cheap labors.

The rural poor are stigmatized as stupid, greedy and easily used by the capitalists and corrupted politicians. Their nature-based indigenous knowledge and traditions are not recognized. Their role as protector of nature is ignored. Their community rights are not always respected. They are excluded from the public policy making process, particularly on natural resources. So long that the poor are unequal, marginalized and denied of the rights to decide their own destiny, it is needless to talk about the rights and wellbeing of the Mother Earth and eco-friendly politics.

Some Ideas from Buddhism for Construction of Eco-friendly Politics

As we know that modernity and neoliberalism produce politics that is unfriendly to the poor and the nature, we are searching for alternative views to help us construct the new one from sources such as our spiritual roots, traditions, indigenous knowledge, etc.

Buddhism also provides some worthy materials. Many Buddhist scholars contribute to discussions on the right politics. For example we have Dhammic Socialism by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (the late Thai monk).

Another contemporary world renowned Buddhist scholar monk is Ven. Samdhong Rinpoche, the former chief executive of Tibetan exile administration (equivalent to a prime minister). According to him, the Buddhist teaching on paramita (perfection) can shape a good society with elements such as equal distribution of wealth (*dana paramita*), social harmony with practices of non-violence (*sila paramita*), tolerance (*ksanti paramita*), continuous striving for social wellbeing (*virya paramita*), purification of mind (*samadhi paramita*) and attainment of wisdom to judge the right from the wrong (*prajna paramita*).

On the state administration and the ruler, as quoted by Samdhong Rinpoche, Ksitigarbhanama Dasacakra Sutra (ten wheels of Ksitigarbha), using metaphor of the wheels, explains the good administration as follows:

- The first wheel describes the process and method of choosing the head of the state, qualification of voters and qualification of those who run for election.
- The second wheel describes the duties of leaders, vision, policies and scheme to engage people in development and economic affairs, employment and welfare.

- The third wheel is about recruiting people to serve the country in appropriate ways according to their capacity and provision of suitable post and title for them.
- The fourth wheel deals with religious harmony and process to seek the elders' advices similar to modern parliamentary system.
- The fifth wheel mentions the protection of private property of native people and the visitors.
- The sixth wheel is on the protection of the country
- The seventh wheel describes the regular watch on movement of the people, natural calamity and foreign attacks.
- The eight wheel gives warning against forgetting oneself, temptation, corruption, abuse of power and irresponsibility
- The ninth wheel says that the administration must watch the people and have knowledge about its population. Education and people wellbeing are mentioned in this point, too.
- The tenth wheel said that the state that follows the abovementioned advice is respected by all humanity. Its influence will be spread worldwide and without war or violence.

Following the above-mentioned teachings in Buddhism, the emphasis of good politics is on the leader or the head of state. The other side of politics, which is the people or the citizen, is not expounded enough.

The leader or the head of state is responsible for the economic justice, political rights, social welfare, social harmony, protection of people and nature, engagement of people in the state affairs, education and morality of people. This kind of state would surely benefit the poor and the nature. But in today reality, people cannot expect the leader to easily give us a good politics without our pressure.

Our Building Blocks for Actions toward Eco-friendly Politics

Our aim, and our slogan, is “Democracy where People can Eat, Politics where the Poor Matter”. Our movement strives for politics that is ground-based and benefits daily lives of the poor. For us, a political system that grants the poor with equality, full participation at all levels, and self-determination on our lives and the community natural resources on which we depend is also good for the mother earth. The question is how to achieve it. Buddhism provides numerous teachings for the ruler or the government on how to govern and care for people and the nature. But as we are not interested in taking the state power, we should think from our part.

We must have some practical, tangible and universal proposals for analysis and actions that we could use to educate and organize our people. We share some of them as follows.

The poor and their social movement as a driving force

In Buddhist teachings, only when a person is aware that he/she is in suffering there is chance that he/she will take effort to end it. In this light, a hope for the eco-friendly politics also lies on the poor. That's because the poor is the first, the most direct and the most vulnerable people among those who are negatively impacted from current dominating neoliberal influenced politics that threatens the wellbeing of the mother earth.

An academic in Thailand pointed out that the poor in many parts of the world actively participate in democracy, referring to a book *Poverty, Participation, and Democracy: A Global Perspective* (2008) that studied the participation of the poor in democratization process from 24 countries in Asia, Africa and South America. This is a good sign but unfortunately the larger number of the poor is still not awakened. They remain the submissive subjects, not the responsible citizens. They still fear and think that they are lower class and powerless people. If they cannot overcome this mentality, their potentiality will not be realized. Therefore the poor need to organize themselves as the social movement to achieve the world with political, economic, social and ecological justice for all.

Food sovereignty and agroecology

In addition to the strong social movement, the poor needs some kind of discourse and framework for actions. For us, as the small scale farmers, we adopt the political discourse and conceptual frameworks that relate to agriculture and our role as the feeder of the world.

In 1996 “Food Sovereignty” was created by La Via Campesina, an international movement of farmers as the political discourse against neoliberalism. Neoliberalism weakened the sovereignty of governments in most parts of the world in favor of transnational corporates. Corporates also attack agriculture and continue vigorously to cripple small scale farmers’ control over natural resources. With discourse of food sovereignty small scale farmers worldwide could strengthen our movement and the resistance at national and international level. Food sovereignty centers upon the following: food as a basic human right, genuine agrarian reform, conservation of nature, reorganizing food trade, ending globalization of hunger, social peace and democratic control of natural resources and self-determination on agricultural policies at all levels.

To achieve the goal of food sovereignty, Agroecology is the means. Agroecology is the peasant based sustainable agriculture in favor of the poor, small scale farmers and the nature. Agroecology includes many aspects for examples:

- Peasants and small scale farmers are the heart with autonomous peasant organization as the base.
- Production with maximum autonomy, diversity, organic methods and linked to a geographic space or territory.
- Peasants' access and control over the means of production
- Local and domestic markets are the highest priority than exportation
- Appropriate technology and indigenous and peasant family knowledge are the key

People politic, democracy, human rights and community rights

There are two parts of politics, the politician politics and the people politics. Politician politics is about the competition among the politicians to get the state power. People politics is not about the state power but the people power to check and balance of how the state power is used. It is also about participation and rights to make decision in issues that impact people. Our movement deals with the people politics.

After 50 years of economic development, economic and political injustice and environment crisis are increasingly aggravated while the state did not adequately respond to the people's pressure to solve the problems. Many members of the poor's movements lost hope in democracy and began to join the anti-democracy rally since 2006. Besides the

poor lost self-confidence as the responsible citizen due to the repetitive and aggressive propaganda by the conservative camp, saying that democracy is dangerous for social stability and the country should be ruled by the educated ruling elites. Now we are under the martial law and military junta after a long political crisis followed by the coup d'état in May 2014.

Therefore, we need to educate our people the spirit of genuine democracy. Genuine democracy is universal and important to the poor and also our movement as it guarantees us of equality, political participation, human rights and community rights.

Solidarity and globalization of the poor

To counter globalization of neoliberalism, the poor and the marginalized, too, need to synergize our force globally. Along with the economic development people in absolute poverty might decrease but people who suffer economic injustice are increasing globally. Small scale farmers, the indigenous, fisher folks, landless farm workers, the pastoralist, factory workers, migrant workers, and others all have different hope and need. We should educate our people to share solidarity with them and find common agenda and ways to work together at all levels.

Spirituality for enlightening mind

Although Buddhist teaching which is relevant to people politics is not explicit, the spirituality is part

of the foundation for social movement. In addition to the political discourse that frames the actions, another important part is the enlightened mind of the actors. Religions still have strong influence, negative and positive, over large number of people. The liberating side of religions can change people much more deeply than ideology or intellectual education that deals with knowledge and views. Buddhism provides numerous teachings and practices that we can use to awaken and enlighten our movement members.

Conclusion

Creating the just world for human and nature is not the burden only of the poor. It is everyone's responsibility. But we, the poor, take it seriously as we are among the first ones who suffer the injustice. As it is everyone's responsibility, we need liberating education for the mass. In the past education was rarely for the mass. It was confined to small groups of selected people, e.g. by using sacred language, like Sanskrit or Latin, which is inaccessible for the public. We need education that gives equal space to everyone although they are illiterate, speak only indigenous languages or have different views. For us the above points can frame our mission to educate our people. For others the element might be different and it would be inspiring to learn from different perspectives and experiences. Then, cooperation and synergy among awakened people of all sectors could be sought after

and fortified to resist the strong consortium between the corporates and the state bonded by neoliberalism that day by day threatens the survival of all beings.

Reconstructing Hope in a Globalized World

Ofelia Ortega

Justice. not Greed

The words of Musa Panti Filipus in his recent book *Justice not Greed* published by the World Council of Churches (WCC) constitutes a good beginning for our dialogue:

The principles of equity and Justice for all are a crucial aspect to transform the world economic system and build on pacific coexistence. All recent political events around the world prove that there will be neither peace nor justice. ¹

Transformation of economy requires nurturing culture and ethics of “enough for all women and men”. An important theological element is to assert that the God we believe in, the God that serves, is a God of abundance, not of scarcity. God has created in his divine grace for the needs of all people, and not for the greed of humanity.

It is interesting to analyze how this “principle of enough” is permeating biblical and theological reflection in our regions.

In 2009 we celebrated a meeting in Jamaica that had been called by the World Communion of Reformed Churches to discuss the theme *Power to endure and courage to hope*.

In this meeting Yvette Noble-Bloomfield presented the topic *Biblical Vision of an Economy of Enough*.²

She states, “The mandate that it is impossible to serve God and money is sometimes difficult to apply

because it seems that people are only in the service of money, transforming the economy of enough in an economy of survival of the most vulnerable, which benefits only those who transform economic systems for their own benefit.”

The term “Oikonomia” is basic to understand and respond to the economic necessities of today because to a certain extent they include a radical understanding of the laws of “Oikos”, completely opposed to the vision and praxis of economic globalization.

Chremotistics and oikonomy

Jorge Pixley takes the word “Oikonomy” using the book by Herman E. Day and John B. Cobb (Jr) *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment and a Sustainable Future*.

Economy comes from the word *chrematistics*. These writers establish a difference between *chrematistics* and economy (or more precisely, *oikonomy*, that is the term used by Yvette).

Daly and Cobb propose the difference between *Chremotistics* and *oikonomy*. *Chrematistics* is the art of accumulating wealth and *oikonomy* is the art of managing a house or estate.

Thus *chrematistics* comes from the Greek word *χρημα* that means “thing” even though it can be used also as money; it is the art of accumulating things. But *oikonomy* comes from the noun *oikos*, house; and in Greek it means family, building or estate where the

family resides. This term is a derivation of the verbal root *VEMW* that means to distribute. It can be used for the distribution of food.

Jorge Pixley points out that, “Daly and Cobb make a distinction between *Chremotistics* and *oikonomy* due to three characteristics: 1) Oikonomy considers long term over immediacy; 2) oikonomy considers the costs and benefits for the whole community, not only for the participants in business; 3) it focuses on the concrete value of things instead of only considering its change value. This can be summarized by saying that whereas for oikonomy there is such a thing as enough, for chrematistics the more is the best; that is, there are no limits for growth. Any person with a relative degree of education will recognize today that the current economic science is purely chrematistics.”³

The document presented in the meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in Kolympari, Crete, Greece, entitled *Economy of Life, Justice and Peace for All* is important because it is a call to action after six years of the AGAPE process of consultation and regional studies on poverty, wealth and ecology.

In this document the emphasis is laid on the search for *good life*, that quality of life which we all long for and which cannot be based on a competitive search for possessions, the accumulation of riches, the making of weapons for our security, or the use and abuse of power to control others (James 3:13-L8). We affirm

the *good life* as expressed by the Kichuis language “SumakKausay”; and the concept Waniambi a Tobati Engros from West Papua in the Pacific, moderated by the commission of the Trinity in kind relations of mutuality, shared sisterhood, reciprocity, justice and love.

The good life or common welfare is not found in the Bible as individual abundance; but always the blessing for the people, a collective blessing.

When we read the attempt of the people of God in the middle of the desert, the divine order not to take more than enough is present in Exodus 16:16-21. According to this narrative, here we find a call against the desire to accumulate, thus recognizing the limits of the possessions needed for good living.

Corinthians II 8:15 also emphasizes the text in Exodus. *“He gathering much, he had nothing left over; and he gathering little did not have less.”*

We must make emphasis on wanting and doing: *Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have (Corinthians 8:71).*

In James 1:22-23 you will find the same idea, *be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.*

When we read the *Lord’s Prayer* we remember the biblical passage of manna in the desert and the generous gifts of God to his people.

Luther stated in his Small Catechism, “What do we understand by our daily bread? Everything that is part

of what we eat and sustaining our body, like eating, drinking, wearing dress and shoes; the house and house chores; the fields, cattle, money, possessions; a beautiful wife, good children, good friends, faithful neighbors and similar things.” In this way Luther extends the biblical concept of our daily bread.

Nevertheless bread should be shared. Asking for bread is not an individual petition. It is about “our bread”, the necessary bread to live. So asking for bread has a social and community dimension. Asking for bread implies an ethics of sharing. The believer is called not to accumulate, not to be controlled by greed, but by the practice of justice.

Therefore the “economy of God” is a concept deeply rooted in the biblical texts, signifying by this God’s righteous interest in transforming the world into a *house, a family, a community*, where its residents may find *life in abundance* offered by Jesus Christ. In this way, all that has been created becomes an economic project, because there is an *oikos* in process of redemption. It all comes from the root that gives way to three related words: economy, ecology and ecumenism. These are interdependent terms: with the first one God points at the right to life; with the second, God demands the duty of preserving that which has been created; with the third, God claims that the world is a family where His peace and His justice must be established among all its inhabitants. Each economic

statement conveys an ecological and ecumenical relationship.

Unlimited desire of controlling and of using all scientific knowledge, all technological inventions to exert and expand this power creates the vicious circle of nature's destruction.

I recently attended a meeting in Guatemala where I listened to many women's testimonies related to the problem of scarcity of water in their country.

Water supply in Guatemala is in a state of crisis; rivers present 90% of contamination, which provokes chronic diseases.

The Congress of the Republic has known of many initiatives to regulate water; but so far, none of them has become a law due to political manipulation of economically powerful sectors.

In *Economy of Life, Justice and Peace for All*, document approved by the WCC, it is stated that, "we have to incarnate a transforming spirituality to connect one another", "*Ubuntu* and *Sangsaeng*"; to motivate us to serve the common good; to courageously rebel against any form of marginalization; to look for redemption in all the earth; to oppose the values which destroy life; and to look for inspiration to discover innovating alternatives. This spirituality provides for the means to discover the grace to feel satisfied with enough, while sharing with those who live in need (Acts 4:35).

Living simply so that others may simply live. Many people think and live this way. They are a minority, but they are creative. They are a minority, but relevant; let's not forget that the kingdom of God is similar to a grain of mustard.

The Contribution of the First Nations.

The good Life of the First Nations

1. Historical resistance of the autochthonous people

With the arrival of the Spanish to our continent the indigenous people stopped deciding their future and prospects. However, since that very moment the historical resistance of many indigenous people of the continent started. The imposition of a new culture, and of new economic and political structures severed the people's way of life, in which they looked for harmony and balance with nature.

Only one king, one state and one God. All with the aim of amassing riches and submitting the indigenous people to slavery and poverty. The quest for enrichment used the imposition of military force and strength. Religion was used similarly, as an arm of subjugation, and of persuasion of the indigenous people.

In response to this there were riots and uprisings. From Central America to South America the indigenous population reacted by organizing themselves, by running away from the settlements of natives converted to Christianity, by telling and

transmitting the traditions and teachings of their own people.

Such resistance has maintained a world view collectively constructed and protected, based on the community as a core element of the autochthonous people. In this fashion, in spite of all the predation and exploitation of nature, for the indigenous people Mother Earth cannot be sold, or owned, because it feels, thinks, and loves like the people and all living creatures.

The resistance of hundreds of years has taught a lesson to the indigenous people on the kind of development and of life imposed on them. That is why, in response to the increased exploitation of nature the proposals of the peoples gain greater coherence and significance. They have a historical background of collective resistance and construction.

2. Nature and Good Life

The exploitation and accumulation of nature at any cost has multiplied in our current times, mainly in the territories of First Nations in the entire planet. This threatens not only the indigenous communities, but also the life of the planet.

We are going through a crisis of the capitalist way of life. This is visible in the food problems thousands of communities are experiencing, in the need to cultivate to produce fuel instead of food, in the manipulation of the reproduction of crops with transgenic seeds.

The way in which oil is used has provoked an energy crisis in which oil fields are exhausted, and unprecedented pollution has aggravated life. Droughts, floods, and all the climate impact is but an extension of the aggression nature has suffered.

The crisis encompasses the political, due to the absence of legitimacy of governments which foster such unlimited prospecting measures. In the economic aspect boundless greed has brought the most powerful banks and financial enterprises to the brink of bankruptcy. As a case in point, multinational enterprises also have destroyed everything they trod on in their limitless profit greediness, ceasing to produce the necessary resources and promoting an unsustainable consumerism.

Facing this there is the proposal of Good Living/Life a millenary practice. The basis is the relationship with nature the people desire. This proposal comes from the daily way of living of communities, where people coexist with nature without damaging it, giving it the care which they receive from her and believing in aspects such as balance, harmony and reciprocity.

Knowledge, science and technology of the indigenous peoples emerge from this relationship of harmony with the earth. Furthermore, the community organization and thought come out from a balanced coexistence with everything that surrounds people.

Good Life encompasses the community of living beings that live in and inhabit the world. It goes

beyond human beings. It is achieving equilibrium among everything that exists because we are part of the great sum of our reality. It is attaining a balance and respect for the moments and cycles of nature, the cosmos, the life and the history we have forged.

Living fully is impossible if lots of people are starving or living miserably; if we are damaging the land, water sources or valleys and mountains. Hurting other people or nature is negative for all of us. Good Living/Life means understanding that welfare must be for all and everything around us.

The definition of Good Living/Life is recovering its sense and historical practices from the tradition and resistance of the diverse First Nations. For the Aymara People Good Living/Life, *Suma Qomoña*, expresses the meaning that all people are part of Mother Earth and reality. We all depend from each other; flowers, stones, animals, people; all complement each other. We are but one body.

Sumak Kausay, the Quechua Good Living/Life, expresses the sense of territory as the space where people live and coexist and recover past, present and future of the peoples. The space where people live their territorial sovereignty in forms of organization; though and spirituality, and economy and culture.

Kume Moge, the Mapuche Good Living/Life, affirms being in balance and harmony, living in contact with nature and educating their children that way. It is

respect for Mother Nature. It is a good and happy family.

The First Nations that inhabit Guatemala give different names: K'aslemal, Chuiquintal; Mam is the expression of the Mayan people for recovering the joy of living and being in harmony with nature and all around us. These expressions recover the whole sense of the reality we live in. They are the complement we see between day and night, hot and cold, man and woman, youth and maturity.

This complementariness tells us to listen to Mother Earth, fire, thunder and mountains; the buzzing of bees, the flight of the bird, the crackling of leaves the trees. The relationship between men and women must have this sense of complementariness without discrimination or power of one over the other. The macho sense strengthened by the western vision must be corrected to achieve Good Living/Life for all the community.

3. Community Thought and Life

From the point of view of the First Nations, Good Living/Life goes for the whole community. The way of thinking that rules the practices of these peoples reflects this idea. Community is “the unity and structure of life”. Individuals are but a part of the whole.

Community is also made up of plants, air, mountains, water... The ancestors who are still present in their daily life are also part of the community.

The democratic community organization goes beyond having representatives or participating in elections; it means a permanent and decisive consultation within the organization of the community.

The ancestral community leaders are a sample of how community recognition goes beyond public positions; it is acknowledging the service of people committed to the needs and interests of the community.

Community authorities are but servants; they have the responsibility to care for all so that they can live in balance and harmony. They should command by obeying.

First of all, Good Living/Life means stop thinking about oneself and thinking in terms of community; having reciprocity with people, nature, the rest of living beings living around us.

4. Community justice and law

The administration of justice by governments obeys to a variety of rules and punishments that can go as far as death. However, for the indigenous communities this is not so. They put life and respect for the people before anything else.

If someone breaks the harmony of the community by doing wrong, it is up to the members of the community to decide what can be done to undo the

wrongdoing. Shame is used as a tool of punishment for wrongdoing on those who break community rules, by assigning roles and tasks to make up for the fault.

This also has the aim of making the offender recover his/her sensitivity and understand the harm made, by going back and contributing to the community.

5. Education for good living/life

Community education contributes to strengthen our relation and balance with nature and with the rest of the community members. It is the way in which the history and life of the community and of the indigenous people is recovered. It is practical teaching based on the community needs. It also strengthens our relationship with nature and with everything related with our reality and with the community.

Community education is permanent and it provides important elements to good manners and personal relationships, all of which is a government's responsibility. Due to its communitarian nature it breaks the pattern of a know-it all-teacher. Contrary to this all the community members have their contribution in the learning process resulting from life itself. Education is not only the school's responsibility but it also takes place out of the experience of the people, of men and women, of wise men and of the community authorities.

Life is dynamic and changing. As a consequence, education must also be so, on a permanent basis. Education for Good Living/life is the result of the indigenous communities' practices and their consequent experiences and analysis.

The wisdom of the autochthonous people can teach us that ailments and diseases may be a consequence of the lack of balance of nature. We need to enjoy a healthy environment around us. It consists on the harmony of the people with their food, with Mother Earth, with the plants and animals, with the other people; that is, with the world in general.

The knowledge acquired for many centuries about plants and animals, and in the conversations with our ancestors, are some of the various forms of cure. We do not need to depend on western chemical medications. We must first achieve harmony between the body and the soul.

We are before a crisis of "development". The neoliberal efforts and ideas are still strong, but they are creating crises in all spheres of life: in the economic, political, social, cultural, and spiritual spheres. It is now, when we can see the damage of capitalism on the people and on nature that jeopardizes all forms of life in the planet.

This situation generates a discussion at local, national, continental and global levels. People recognize that there isn't only one way of conceiving development, or only one way of life. Opposed to this

there is Good Living or Good life as an alternative of Capitalism, assumed as a historical proposal coming from the indigenous peoples of the Americas.

With the organization and government power in the hands of popular parties and movements, the debate on the proposal of Good Living/Life has contributed to the promotion of legislation, and the framing of national constitutions.

In Ecuador and Bolivia, the indigenous people have played a leading role; in this way the proposals going contrary to Capitalism and Neo-liberalism are inspired and guided by Good Living/Life. For example, the recently approved constitution of Ecuador is the only one recognizing the Rights of Nature.

Also the right to health, education, the non-appropriation of territory, the typical forms of organization, the protection of biodiversity, community participation, the responsibilities of governments, among many others, have their very foundation in *Sumak Kawsay*, The Good Living/Life.

This is so much so, that the discussion on capitalist development is now facing the challenge of real alternatives to surpass it. It is at this point where Good Living gains importance. It is becoming a front of unity and a comprehensive proposal. Many indigenous people, popular movements and organizations take sides with the alternative proposals that Good Living is making.

The defense of Mother Earth, of nature and of everything that is part of it, represents one of the main slogans to be discussed all over the world; It is a question of risk for all forms of life in the Planet.

6. Towards a Solidarity Economy

Economic power still determines many decisions in our society. Even though we may be aware of the deep causes of our problems, it is not easy to fight against the owners of economy.

That is why we discuss alternatives to capitalist development, because it is necessary to review the nature of economic relations we live in. From the Good Life is committed to a community economy where work is not a punishment or a burden, it is the responsibility and joy of working the land, without competition and exploitation.

Beyond accumulating we must seek for accommodating the needs of all. This economy must be respectful of life and nature. It is based on solidarity, complementariness at work and wants for the community to achieve what they need to live in dignity; that everyone has everything; and that no one lacks anything. In the end if a few win and most lose, we all lose.

From the look of Good Living production, mainly of food, must be allocated to the consumption of the family and community, and the surplus market it over

to nearby communities and other places and countries, and not the other way around.

The means of production do not have a single owner or employer, but the community works together, without anyone feeling as a direct owner. On the contrary, it is a collective task of producing the necessary, without damaging nature. There must be equality in terms of meeting needs and interests of the whole group, achieving dignified conditions regarding the work done, not attacking Mother Earth, not competing but complementing the work developed by all, and eliminating the idea of profit which often distracts from community goals.

Given this, and the experience in the South that draws on the proposals of indigenous peoples, a key element is to change the economic model.

This change should include the current injustice and exploitation of a small group of businessmen, landowners and politicians. Leave behind the environmental degradation model, and foster the model of respect for the environment, with sustainable activities for nature and for the economy of communities.

Regarding discussions on development, we must exercise the right to consultation and consent of the aboriginal peoples. Faced with community consultations in good faith, the only answer is the recognition and respect for the decisions of the community, who are deciding on extractive activities

that directly affect them. In addition, also mining and oil activities should be stopped until community consultations are realized.

The people should be aware and monitor economic policies and programs that reach the community; mainly when these policies involve international companies with more power to put pressure on governments. This economic proposal should consider repairing the damage caused by the companies against nature, as to rivers, lakes, land, forests, and other natural environment which may have been contaminated or eroded during the extraction activities.

Conclusion: Dignified life for all men and women

Good Living/life is today a contribution to the alternatives to Capitalism. It permits us to confirm that other forms of relationship are possible, other forms of being community, of consuming only the necessary, of not competing but giving support and complementing one another.

We must reaffirm that another development is possible, a development that does not damage or attempt to destroy nature. It is a must to understand that not only human beings have rights; we are not the owners of anything. Everything existing is part of the community and of the planet where we live.

Building a new economy, of responsible consumption, of recovering traditional non-profit medicine, of food sovereignty, of the culture of solidarity and community can show us how to contribute and enrich proposals like that of Good Living, opposed to the practice of greedy and unrestrained capitalism.

This means strengthening and supporting dignified living conditions, for which thousands of organizations are struggling and striving day by day. It is a question of recovering the historical struggle of the oppressed, which will allow them to overcome the destructing and deadly society. That is the challenge. A challenge, that based on the contribution of the autochthonous people, based on Good Living or Good Life, invites us to move forward and to join in.

La milpa from *Abya-Yala*:

An Epistemological Rupture in the Context of
Oikos, i.e., Ecology, Economy and Ecumenism

Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez

Appetizer:

Finally the United Nations recognized that the industrial agriculture is in bankruptcy by declaring 2014 the International Year of Family Farming. Agribusiness subscribes the linear concept of history where the sky is the limit of agricultural growth. The point of departure is Monsanto's suicidal seed and the port of arrival Wal-Mart's monopoly of food distribution. In a sharp rupture with that dead end paradigm stands *la milpa*, namely, the more than 4500 year-old multicropped family, our main foundation and our mere being.

Der Mensch ist was er ißt, i.e., "We are what we eat" stated Ludwig Feuerbach recycling the original saying of Hippocrates (c. 460–c. 375). Both are right, the only thing is that they considered food as a given, and the truth is that not a single living being is, unless he or she eats. From that follows that to eat is a human being's right and not a commodity like the powers that be preach.

After more than 500 years and particularly during the last century, there hasn't been enough time for North-Atlantic rulers to realize that their "modern" epistemology, ontology and cosmology in general are suicidal. Having said that, please join me in taking a closer look at *Abya-Yala*, the original name of what is currently known as America, which, in the Kuna culture, means: "the land full of life," the fertile land," or "the fruitful land."¹

Let me hasten to state that by America I mean the current 35 countries of the entire continent. After WW II, one of these countries re-baptized itself as America, but this is nothing less than identity theft and the swallowing of the neighbors.

Abya-Yala's womb delivered reverential ways of cultivating and worshipping the land, such as Venezuela's conuco and Mesoamerica's milpa. In this Cuban round table, allow me to chew a little bit on *la milpa* with multi-sensorial, inter-disciplinary, historical and theological ingredients.

La milpa and Koinonia

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. (Revelation 7.9)

Abya-Yala is interchangeable with community labor, whether Colombian minga, Incan fajina, Mexican *tequio* or Revelation 7:9. What matters is gratuitousness, the communal voluntary work. For instance, among the Mayan Tojolabales the "I" and "me" don't exist. Instead the Tojolabales forge the *nosótrico*, our-ness or we-ness. Still more, this Mayan people not even have a word for enemy!²

The Mesoamerican culture is one of the ancient foundational civilizations together with the Andean Incas, Nigerian, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Indian and

Chinese. Mesoamerica or literally “Middle America” includes current Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Beliz, Guatemala and two thirds of Mexico.

La milpa speaks for itself. She is our cultural womb, which consists of the holy culinary trinity: corn is the primus inter pares, the first among equals. Together with beans and the veteran squash. Beans feed the corn by fixing atmospheric nitrogen in the soil, and grow in a spiral around the corn stalk. The squash not only keeps the soil moist with its enormous leaves, it also inhibits grass growth. The *milpa*'s extended family includes the following relatives: Hot peppers, which function as a plague repellent. *Habas* (broad beans) add a touch of beauty with their distinguished presence. Chilacayotes are thorny on the outside but juicy and fleshy on the inside. *Cempasuchitl* flowers keep some big animals away. Fencing this ecumenical family are the prickly pear and a variety of cacti. Within such diverse company emerge lots of volunteer green leaves: *quintoniles*, *quelites*, *chibatitos*, *verdolagas*, lamb's quarters, and the *huazontle* which also bears the legendary amaranth. This green koinonia reaches the plates way before the corn harvest is ready. In togetherness, the sisters and brothers of the milpa communicate among themselves with smells and more strikingly, also send away plagues transpiring odors through their leaves.

The wisdom of *Abya-Yala*'s folks has been threatened by the profit- seeking North Atlantic way

of torturing the land. They not only bled the furrow with the iron plow, but also introduced monoculture of native cacao or foreign coconut, sugar cane, wheat and citrus in detriment of the sustainable poly-culture of *la milpa*. And to add salt to injury, they shifted *Abya-Yala* agricultural-economy to European mine-economy. Little wonder first thing Afro-Mexican Emiliano Zapata did was to fight sugar cane plantations and bring back *la milpa* a century ago.

In the mid 20th century USA “Green Revolution” (sic) consisted of a war against *la milpa*. Needless to say it was launched in Mexico.³ The targets still are the 59 native Mexican diverse corn breeds, the more than 600 dishes prepared with corn and the more than 300 kinds of tamales.. However, Mexico resists. Nikolai Vavilov classified Mexico among the 14 mega-diverse countries and the 5th in biodiversity. It’s not by chance that in 2010, the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) declared Mexican cuisine an Intangible, Cultural Heritage. Little wonder that some folks from *la milpa*, alongside with vanilla, cacao, avocado, tomato, papaya, guava,⁴ represent the 16% of current world food consumption.

La milpa and Epistemology: “Dare to eat”

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire was labeled by several of his teachers as mentally challenged during his elementary school years. When his diet was improved, Freire was able to develop all

his intellectual potentialities. His transformative education literally led him to be a born again mentally and physically. No wonder he became the champion of literacy and eradication of hunger campaigns. Freire's reflection on the "given-given and the given-giving," throws light on the current condition where North Atlantic countries spend 70 times more energy than southern countries.

Abya-Yala epistemology is not an end in itself; it is articulated always in relation: namely, we know for the sake of the entire creation for Christ's sake! Kant raised the motto *Sapere Aude*, i.e. dare to know, or better yet: have the guts to use your own reasoning as the only safe way to perceive reality. His agnosticism in relation to other types of knowledge beyond the rational one prevented him from enriching his epistemology at large. Long time before him, the first modern feminist of America, Sor Juana Inéz de la Cruz had stated: "If Aristotle had cooked, he would have written much more." Kant's toothless mouth and very poor sense of taste based on showering everything with mustard didn't help him either.

David Hume was able to awaken Kant from his dogmatic slumbers, but it left his misogynist epistemology intact. The philosopher from Königsberg firmly believed that cooking knowledge belonged to women, who should opt for pots and not for music, since it's much better to have a delicious dish without music than music with an insipid dish.⁵ Kant not only

subordinated the senses to reason, he even classified the senses of tact, seeing and hearing as objective and superior, to the detriment of the senses of taste and smelling.⁶

Abya-Yala epistemology breaks with this Western thought by going to the root of *sapere*, the Latin word which means both: to know and to taste. The Bible talks about a fleshy knowledge, although in a language clothed with patriarchal overtones when it declares: “Now Adam knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain.” (Genesis 4.1) And furthermore, Ezekiel (3.3) also matches knowing with tasting: “Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.’ So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.”

It’s not gratuitous the fact that rabbis referred to teachers as “sowers,” and that babies and cannibals (II Kings 6:26-30, Lamentations 2:20; 4:10) know the world through their multipurpose mouths. In Spanish we say regarding a wise person who is being eaten by cannibals: “quien sabe, sabe,” namely, “she or he who knows, tastes great!

The maguay is a cactus, which is sown lots around *la milpa* in order to prevent soil erosion. Now, the skin of its leaves was perfectly used to either write books or to wrap and steam food in the form of mixiotes. Knowing and tasting are delicious gifts from *Mayahuel*, the Goddess of 400 breasts symbolizing fertility, sustainability and nourishing.

From *maguey*, the Taino voice for Náhuatl Mayahuel, follows to cultivate a reverent communion with *Abya-Yala* by knowing, tasting and clinking clay mugs with the sacred blood of this plant, namely: *octli* or *pulque*.

Western thought preaches a disembodied reason but Mayahuel is of the opinion that we don't know, unless we eat. Berta Nava, the mother of one of the 43 disappeared peasant students from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, put it this way: "cuando se tiene hambre las letras no entran, hay que comer, hay que trabajar." (when one is hungry one cannot digest the alphabet, one has to eat, one has to work).⁷

For instance, in the USA the production of one ton of food entails losing six tons of fertile soil and it takes one hour and 20 minutes to produce a ton of corn, whereas in Mexico 17 days are needed, but with a lower erosion cost.⁸ *Abya-Yala* takes distance from the dead-centered Western think tanks. Instead of that our ancient wisdom is more in tune than with the Easter thinker Jesus and his epistemological judgment: "Forgive them because they do not know what they're doing." (Luke 23.34)

The *milpa* is blunt: there's no noetics without dietetics, period. And still more: *la milpa* points towards wisdom and life in contradistinction to knowledge and death.

La milpa and ontology

Dancing is sacred in *Abya-Yala* since it consists of nothing less than caressing the mother earth with our feet. The same is true with snakes, they are holy precisely because vipers are attached to the Pachamama: serpentine, caressing, kissing it!

Corn comes from Haitian Arawakan voice mahiz, and the Náhuatl word: *tonacáyotl*, that is, “our flesh.” Being and eating are perfectly intertwined. That explains how Centéotl is simultaneously the Goddess of corn and the warrior against hunger. *Abya-Yala*’s theology, then, honors Centéotl the corn Goddess, Xilonen the tender corn Goddess, Llametecuihtli the dried corn Goddess, and Chicomecoatl, the Goddess of food. With so many Goddesses, it is no surprise that women are the custodians and the ones who select the corn seeds to be planted.

There’s a correlation between gastronomy and ontology. An ancient Chinese greeting was “Have you eaten your rice?” However, in the 19th century the courtesy was shortened to “Have you eaten?”⁹ Japanese still firmly believe that “God is Rice”.¹⁰

From the very outset Europeans realized that by attacking corn they were biting “our flesh.” Corn traveled from Veracruz to Cuba, to Canary Islands, to Spain, to Portugal and to Italy (1530) where it was baptized as “Turkish grain.” Brazilian *milho* was renamed as “ear of Portugal” as well in a very often disoriented Europe.

When Plimouth pilgrims arrived in North America they lived thanks to corn. When the potato saved Europeans from starvation, corn did exactly the same to the animal population. It was until the beginning of the 20th century when Kellogs encouraged Nord-Atlantic people to try eating corn. Of course, in flakes form purified by the almighty white milk. In addition, corn flakes had the mission of lowering body heat, read: counteracting teenagers masturbation.

Corn is so linked with ontology that on September 2001, a San Diego, California laboratory created a spermicidal corn tortilla. Literally a gene gun has shot foreign DNA and penetrated the corn chromosome wall, so that the human male sperm becomes sterile while eating transgenic tortillas. This racist anti-sperm, contraceptive method contradicts Chilean nobel prize Gabriela Mistral's dictum: "And Mexico ends where corn fields die."

300 generations of peasants who uninterruptibly grow it, 10,000 years from the invention of corn made out of a wild grass called teocintle, and 20% of the world population that depend on corn, are resisting globalcolonization (Frei Betto). *La milpa* wants us to remain in the being instead of in nothingness.

La milpa is confronting the powers that be which forges the doctrine of ontological superiority of weath over corn and rice cultures.¹¹ Money thirsty corporations practice the ontological indifference, namely, grant value to cars and price to human beings;

corn, “our flesh” has been turned into ethanol to feed machines and let human beings starve to death. In addition, 43% of corn feeds cattle instead of human beings and 75% of agricultural land feeds animals.¹²

Miguel Ángel Asturias in his “Hombres de maíz” denounced the structures which break our interdependence with mother land by desacralizing food. This Guatemalan prophet backed up his speech working shoulder to shoulder with Jacobo Arbenz, the President who experienced a coup d’ état from the United Fruit Company, a company well established in Cuba since the end of the Spanish colonial regime.¹³

In order to be we have to eat. *La milpa* in general and corn in particular will keep us in the being, as Octavio Paz declared: “the invention of corn by Mexicans, is only comparable with the invention of fire by humankind.”

La milpa and Ecology: Eve and Adam’s fertility

“But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.”
(Matthew 13:25)

Seattle, the chief of the Suquamish people, in 1856 questioned the European tradition of selling the mother earth: “The President in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. But how can you buy or sell the sky? the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the

sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?...We are all sisters and brothers after all.”

It doesn't hurt to remember that Adam comes from Adamah, pointing towards its origin from the ground. Humankind is also linked to humus, or the microorganism which died millions of years ago forming the fertile layer of *Abya-Yala*. From humus also comes humility, as a permanent reminder of our sense of belonging to the earth. That is to say that we're not transcendent beings to groundedness but that there's a continuity between ourselves and soil. “Men are from Earth, women are from Earth. Deal with it.” (George Carlin). We better celebrate our rootedness.

Agriculture, invented in the neolithic (8,000-6,000 BC) was derived from *Ager*, *agri* or field and culture or *colere*, to cultivate. It had to do with establishing a relation of respect and celebration with the land, giving birth to cult, culture and agriculture. But, let us not forget that the first cult was followed by the first crime (Gn 4). And Furthermore, was this a way of favoring meat over vegetables such as in the case of Pr 15:17?

We have witnessed the *dominum terrae*, or the brute mastery over nature. The European Renaissance utopia of reducing nature to a merchandise; as well as Cartesian's rationalism detached from inert nature, caused serious ramifications. From August Comte's motto of taming and torturing nature followed the exploitation of “natural people” such as women, blacks,

and the indigenous people, all done in the name of culture above nature.¹⁴

Europeans established the indenture institution to offer American lands to Europeans in exchange for seven years of labor, non-negotiable whether they made a fortune sooner or later. People who made it to the end of that period of time were given lots on the border with Indian settlements to keep them away on a permanent basis. Indenture meant precisely that: “to sink one’s teeth into the very same Europeans’ slaves.”

Mexican presidents Agustín de Iturbide and Álvaro Obregón did the opposite with Stephen F. Austin, Mormons and Mennonites: placing Euro-Americans near Mexico’s borders. Needless to say, USA stole 51% of Mexico’s geographical being.

For more than a century USA has reclaimed Cuban latifunds. In doing that, it has sown weeds, i.e., through chemical, bacteriological and other wars such as the mangosta operation (1961-62).

Mexico, the birthplace of corn, was forced to dismantle its fields since the 1980s. During the 1990s, Mexico shut down its fertilizer factories, changed Art. 27 of the Constitution that protected communal lands or *ejidos*, and signed NAFTA with USA and Canada by displacing millions of peasants. In 2008 Mexico eliminated all tariffs to import corn, read: transgenic grain, which produces 400-500 grains as opposed to 1000 from an organic corn grain. At the end of the day the 3% of the agribusiness owns Mexican fields.

Civilization, that is, city-fication of humankind, has reached a suicidal peak with our current de-peasantization of agriculture and the urbanization of peasants. More than half of the world population lives in cities, being *Abya-Yala* the most urbanized continent. The fundamentalism of the market is eating us since cities are parasites that steal land, water, air and culture from *la milpa*.

The Mesoamerican *chinampas*, are the most productive agricultural system ever created. It consists of artificial islets made out of logs, soil, and river muck. They produce 4 tons of food per hectare, according to some sources having from 3 to 5 harvests yearly,¹⁵ but other testimonies say they are able to provide 4 to 7 harvests per year.

Within this state of the question, *Abya-Yala* doesn't bend its knees to the powers that be. Engels praised USA for plundering more than half of the territory of the "lazy Mexicans," and both Marx and Engels silenced Haiti independence of 1804.¹⁶ *Ayiti*, a Taino word for Haiti means "the land of the high mountains" because Haiti and not the 13 North American colonies (1776) is really the first independent country of *Abya-Yala*. Then, Mexico's revolution (1910) was the first freedom fight in history lead by peasants.

Mapuches, or people from the land in Mapudungún reminds us that there's no such thing as "natural resources" since everything is penetrated by the

Spirit (Acts 17.24) and still more, without spirituality—Kuntxemañ—people are like a tree without roots.

For *Abya-Yalans* civilization does not entail cityfication. Being civilized, as the November 2 All Souls Day enacted, is to go back to the land that has treasured our dear ones under her womb. Civilization means to honor your dead folks. (Yuriria Iturriga)

On April 22, 2009, the United Nations started calling the Mother Earth as the Magna Mater, Pachamama. Isaac Asimov and the scientific world confirmed what *Abya-Yala* already knew, there's a correspondence between humankind and the earth. The ecosystem is not an object but a subject which has intrinsic rights as Ecuador's constitution stated.

***La milpa* and Soteriology: A sense of somebodiness**

Cuban poet, Onelio Jorge Cardoso's soteriology is liberating: "Human beings have two hungers: hunger of bread, which is satiable and hunger of beauty, which is insatiable."

Mexicans never forgive and forget the 2002 summit held in Monterrey. Due to the imminent arrival of George W. Bush, president Vicente Fox told Comandante Fidel Castro: "Comes y te vas," "You eat, you leave."

Cuba has shown us that beyond the agenda of putting casava on people's tables, equally important is to work with its people's dignity "all the time". King's Day is the most important day for Cubans and

Puertorricans because this was the only day when slaves were allowed to take the day off. Masters were clueless that one day was enough for slaves to keep alive their sense of somebodiness:

“Cuba and Puerto Rico are
of one bird the two wings
they receive flowers and bullets
in the same heart.”¹⁷

People laugh about what happened in 1973 when a journalist asked Fidel Castro about the war with USA. He simply stated: “United States will come to talk to us when they have a black president and the world has a Latin American pope.” Whether it was true or not, what is so scary is the fact that Obama is flirting with Raul Castro precisely now, when USA is abandoning Puerto Rico and its 73 billion dollars “eternal debt”.

Today more than ever we have to realize that cultivating the land is an act of active resistance in front of the capitalist system which has reduced reality to merchandise. *La milpa*, then is the living together of plants, worms, insects, bacteria in an organic way. Vegans whose vegetables come from monocrop fields have to think twice while they are eating, since the anti-milpa way of cultivating is not really organic.

From *la milpa* follows solidarity. When you're in a group it's impossible to “cebar el mate” guaraní or to drink *pozol*, made out of cacao, without sharing

with the companions. On the other hand, agribusiness doesn't care about its criminal acts to feed the car industry with corn. It's unacceptable to suffocate our Pachamama with the greenhouse effect where only USA and China produce 50% of those gases. It's worrisome that corn amounts to 20% of the world's diet, and that 40% of the world's corn production comes from USA.

The good thing is that *Abya-Yala* has spiritual reserves. In 2006 the biggest Aztec sculpture, Tlaltecuhli, the earth Goddess, emerged from the excavations at the heart of Mexico City. Tlaloc, the God of rain matched with Michael Archangel in their vocation of protecting *la milpa*. A day before their feast, on September 28, is the time to remember to continue fighting the toxic industry which originated in the war fields and ended up taking over the agricultural fields.

La milpa as a metaphor for diversity and gastronomic justice, urges us to revisit Christianity hermeneutics. Numerically speaking, being a Third World religion (Johannes B. Metz)¹⁸ means that Sapere Aude is coming up with new flavors and new thoughts.

When Westerners trumpeted the end of history with the falling of The Wall of Berlin's in 1989, their triumphalism didn't last long. The zapatista peasants from *Abya-Yala* arose on January 1, 2004. Their atavistic attachment to the land reminded the world community that the new heaven and new earth are ontologically, epistemologically, theologically different

from suicidal capitalism. That the weapon of mass destruction, namely, hunger, is not a technological problem but a political and ethical issue.

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations declared 2015 the International Year of the Soil. That is something commendable but since time immemorial, the *guatini* or *tocororo*, the Cuban national bird, keeps on stopping the eagle's predatory appetite. The privatization of land doesn't have the last word. *La milpa* already crossed the Atlantic, is alive and well in Montreuil, a Paris suburb!

La milpa endorses oikos with fear and trembling. *La milpa* is the antidote of capitalistic economics which with all their money produces only 15% of the world's food. *La milpa* cares about ecology by stopping soil erosion and enriching it. *La milpa* advances ecumenicity through the diverse rainbow of healthy plants and living creatures.

Welcome to oikos, "*Mi casa es tu casa*".

Listening and Engaging the Voices from the Margins:
Postcolonial Observations from the Caribbean

Luis N. Rivera-Pagán

*“We have for once learnt to see the great events of world history from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled – in short, from the perspective of those who suffer.”*¹ (Dietrich Bonhöffer)

Introduction

I originate from Puerto Rico, a Caribbean island that has been aptly described by one of our foremost juridical scholars as “the oldest colony of the world.”² Christopher Columbus claimed possession of the island for the crown of Castile in 1493 and, after the defeat of a desperate native insurrection during the second decade of the sixteenth century, it remained part of the Spanish empire till 1898, when it was conquered by the United States.

The transfer of sovereignty from Madrid to Washington was accomplished through the two classical ways of solving conflicts among powerful nations: war and diplomacy. War was perpetrated in the tropical Caribbean and the Philippines; diplomacy was negotiated later in elegant and cosmopolitan Paris.³ No need to consult the natives. Washington, Madrid, and Paris were the sites of privileged historical agency. In early 1898 Puerto Rico was a Spanish colony; at the end of that fateful year, it had become a colony of the United States. These were the initial stages of imperial *pax americana*.⁴ It was part and parcel of the Age of Empire, so aptly named by the

British historian Eric Hobsbawm. From the Philippines and Guam, in the Pacific, to Cuba and Puerto Rico, in the Caribbean, the American ideology of manifest destiny, with its strong religious undertones, was transgressing national boundaries.

We have learnt much from Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Walter Dignolo about *colonial discourse* and postcolonial critique.⁵ Even before these four distinguished émigrés, there were the crucial analyses of colonial ideology and mentality drafted by Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi.⁶ Also, the critical examination of the strategies of coloniality—military power, economic domination, racial hierarchy, cultural arrogance—by the Peruvian Aníbal Quijano.⁷ The colonized subjects providing theoretical paradigms to their colonizers? Dislocated, “out of place”⁸ Third World intellectuals giving lessons to the masters of the world? Quite a paradox of these postcolonial times!

Colonial discourse mystifies imperial dominion. It crafts by persuasion what the mechanisms of coercion are unable to achieve: the fine-tuned consent and admiration of the colonized subjects. It diffuses and affirms imperial, ideological hegemony. Its greatest creation is what V. S. Naipaul has called *mimic men*.⁹ In 1493, and more firmly in 1508, the Spaniards came to Puerto Rico with the proclaimed purpose of converting its idolatrous inhabitants to the one and only true religion, Christianity, and to teach them how to live

according to the European ethical norms of a civil and ordered society.

In 1898, the Americans came to impart upon us, poor tropical barbarians, the blessings of liberty, justice, humanity, and enlightened civilization. To crown its generosity, in 1917, without consulting “the Inhabitants of *Porto Rico*,” (again, who cares about the views and feelings of colonized subjects?) Washington bestowed upon us the gift of American citizenship. That citizenship has allowed our people to participate in the military adventures of Washington to extend its “empire of freedom,” from the First World War trenches to the streets of Kabul and Baghdad. As an added bonus, we do not need to mess with any of the crucial decisions regarding our political condition and fate. We can rest assured that those decisions, usually important dimensions of democratic sovereignty, are well taken care by the wisdom and benevolence of the powers that be in Washington. How fortunately colonial we Puerto Ricans have been!

Maybe this is another occasion to reiterate Gayatri Spivak’s famous query, “can the subaltern speak?” A question that Edward Said dared to answer affirmatively: “Indeed, the subaltern *can* speak, as the history of liberation movements in the twentieth century eloquently attests.”¹⁰

Coloniality and diaspora

To the ambivalence of a postcolonial colony, whose residents as citizens of the empire can claim in the courts the civil liberties of their citizenship but not its political rights, we should add the crucial fact that more than half of the Puerto Rican population resides in mainland United States.¹¹ Legally, those Puerto Ricans are not migrants. Psychologically and culturally, they are. They belong to the history of modern diasporas. And diasporas are the source of the bewildering multiculturalism of the postmodern mega cities.

Migration and diaspora are crucial dimensions of Puerto Rico's modern history.¹² They constitute an experience shared by many former and present colonial peoples all over the world. Nowadays they have also become important themes of conversation in postcolonial cultural studies.¹³ But, as Homi Bhabha has stressed, diaspora is an important object of critical analysis because it is the sociohistorical existential context of many displaced Third World peoples: "For the demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora ... the poetics of exile..."¹⁴

Diaspora entails dislocation, displacement, but also a painful and complex process of forging new strategies to articulate cultural differences and identifications. In the Western cosmopolis,

with its heterogeneous and frequently conflicting ethnocultural minorities that belie the mythical *e pluribus unum*, the émigré exists in ambivalent tension. More than half a century ago, Franz Fanon brilliantly described the peculiar gaze of so many white French people at the growing presence of Black Africans and Caribbeans in their national midst.¹⁵ Scorn and fear are entwined in that stare. The diasporic person frequently feels, alas, “like a man without a passport who is turned away from every harbour,” the anguished dread that haunts the persecuted whisky priest of Graham Greene’s magnificent novel, *The Power and the Glory*.¹⁶

Frequently, nostalgia grips his or her soul, in the beautiful words of a biblical lamentation:

*“By the rivers of Babylon –
there we sat down and there we wept
when we remembered Zion.*

...

*How could we sing the Lord’s
song in a foreign land?”* – Psalm 137:1, 4 (NRSV)

Often, however, and sometimes simultaneously, the displacement of migration creates a new a space of liberation from the atavistic constraints and bondages of the native cultural community and opens new vistas, perspectives, and horizons. To repressed persons, exile in a metropolis like London, Paris, or New York could convey an expansion of individual autonomy,

even if its sinister hidden side might turn out to be despair or death.¹⁷ Diasporic existence, as Bhabha has so forcefully reiterated, questions fixed and static notions of cultural and communal identity. In the diaspora, identity is not conceived as a pure essence to be nostalgically preserved, but as an emancipatory project to be fashioned, in an alien territory, in a foreign language, as a polyphonic process of creative imagination. In many instances, yet, “the restoration of a collective sense of identity and historical agency in the home country may well be mediated through the diaspora.”¹⁸

As Walter Dignolo has so provocatively asserted,¹⁹ diaspora, as a site of critical enunciation, compels the rethinking of the geopolitical distinction, so dear to many Third World thinkers, between center and periphery, and elicits a border thinking that changes not only the content, but also the terms of intellectual global dialogue. The émigré’s cultural differences produce subaltern significations that resist the cultural cannibalism of the metropolitan melting pot. Diasporic communities are, to quote once more Bhabha, “wandering peoples who will not be contained within the *Heim* of the national culture and its unisonant discourse, but are themselves the marks of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation.”²⁰

The existential dislocation of diaspora, its cultural hybridity, recreates the complex intertwined ethnic

and racial sources of many migrant communities. Asked to whom does she owe allegiance, Clare, the Jamaican protagonist of Michelle Cliff's novel *No Telephone to Heaven*, replies: "I have African, English, Carib in me."²¹ She is a mestiza moving between Kingston, New York, and London, searching for a place to call home, torn between the quest for solidarity in the forging of a common identity and the lure of solitude in a strange land. To be part of a pilgrim diaspora is a difficult and complex challenge, which, to avoid utopian illusions, must be faced having in mind the superb irony of that master of twentieth century skepticism, himself a displaced wanderer, James Joyce: "We were always loyal to lost causes ... Success is for us the death of the intellect and of the imagination."²²

From the margins of empires and metropolitan centers of powers, the crossroads of borders and frontiers, in the proximity of so many different and frequently conflictive cultural worlds, in the maelstroms of the global mega cities and the virtual imagined communities of the internet, arise constantly new challenges to the international structures of power and control.²³ There colonial discourses meet their nemesis: postcolonial defiance. In the ecumenicity of diaspora, to quote again Bhabha, "we must not change merely the narratives of our histories, but transform our sense of what it means to live, to be, in other times and different places, both human and historical."²⁴

It is usually there, in the counter invasion of the “others,” the colonized barbarians, into the realms of the lords of the world that the silenced peoples find the sonority of their voices and reconfigure their historical sagas into meaningful human stories. The quasi-beastly shadows of *Heart of Darkness* dare to disrupt the imperial monologue. They hybridize the language of the colonizers to reshape and narrate their own histories. As Chinua Achebe, engaged in a critical dialogue with the specter of Joseph Conrad, so eloquently has written in a text significantly titled *Home and Exile*, “My hope for the twenty-first [century] is that it will see the first fruits ... of the process of ‘re-storying’ peoples who had been knocked silent by the trauma of all kinds of dispossession.”²⁵

For the early Christian communities, diaspora was a constant perspective in their way of living and understanding their faith, as expressed in a letter written by an anonymous Christian author in the second or third century: “They [Christians] take part in everything as citizens and put up with everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their home, and every home a foreign land.”²⁶ The Bible itself, as a canonically sacred text, is a literary creature of the diaspora,²⁷ for the Old Testament was born from the sufferings of the dispersed Hebrew nation and the New Testament was written in the koine Greek, the lingua franca of many diasporic peoples of the Hellenistic age. The New Testament faith is, in many ways, a devout

endless wandering, by a community of “aliens and exiles” (I Peter 2: 11), to the unreachable ends of the world and ends of times, in search of God and human solidarity. The concept of diaspora could thus be a significant crossroad of encounter, a dialectical hinge, between postcolonial cultural studies and theological hermeneutics.²⁸

Puerto Ricans constitute an important part of the US Latino/Hispanic population, that sector of the American society whose growth, in the view of many, enriches multicultural diversity, but has also led Samuel P. Huntington to warn that it constitutes a “major potential threat to the cultural and possibly political integrity of the United States.”²⁹ How interesting that the former prophet of the “clash of civilizations,” beyond the frontiers of the American colossus, became the apostle of the “clash of cultures,” within its borders. According to this eminent Harvard professor, the main problem of Latino/Hispanics is not the illegality in which many of them incur to reside in the US, but the threat they represent to the American national identity and its allegedly traditional “Anglo-Protestant” culture.

In that clash of cultures, we Puerto Ricans are distinguished warriors. We excel in the “double consciousness,” the transculturation, and the border thinking that Walter Dignolo has so suggestively rescued from the African American W. E. B. Dubois, the Cuban Fernando Ortiz, and the Chicana Gloria

Anzaldúa. In Puerto Rico, we take delight in our Spanish language, in the mainland we share the linguistic fate of the diaspora, we experience “the pain and perverse pleasure of writing in a second language,” in the words of that exceptional Haitian scholar Michel-Rolph Trouillot.³⁰ The experience of *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin), of thinking, speaking, and writing in a different language, opens unexpected spaces for a heterodox understanding of the hybridizing encounters of peoples and cultures.

The colonial situation, encompassing its ensuing cultural symbiosis, its political and juridical dissolution, and the persisting socioeconomic inequities, constitute the historical matrix of many modern diasporas and, thus, a crucial source of the multicultural collisions in the imperial metropolitan centers. In the words of William Schweiker, University of Chicago professor of theological ethics,

“International cities are a ‘place’ in which people’s identities, sense of self, others, and the wider world, as well as values and desires, are locally situated but altered by global dynamics ... The compression of the world found in massive cities is thus a boon for the formation of new self-understandings, especially for dislocated peoples ... This is especially pointed when those ‘others’ are implicated in histories of suffering. The compression of the world confronts us with the problem of how to live amid others, even enemies.”³¹

In the borderlands a new poetic of political resistance is developed, as the late Gloria Anzaldúa so hauntingly perceived:

“In the Borderlands
you are the battleground
where enemies are kin to each other;
you are at home, a stranger ...
To survive in the Borderlands
you must live sin fronteras
be a crossroads.”³²

The postmodern and postcolonial mega cities compress times and spaces into borderlands of cultures, religiosities, traditions, and values. There it is impossible to evade the gaze of the others and the primordial biblical question—“am I my brother’s keeper?”—acquires new connotations and urgency. A new sensitivity has to be forged to the rendering ambivalences, the sorrows and joys, of diasporic existence of the peoples who live day and night with the uncanny feeling of existing as Gentile aliens within the gates of holy Jerusalem.

Theology and postcolonial studies: a critical observation

It is not surprising that Bible scholars—Fernando Segovia, R. S. Sugistharajah, Stephen D. Moore, Musa Dube, Roland Boer, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Richard Horsley, among others—have been first and

foremost among the theological disciplines to pay close attention to postcolonial theories.³³ After all, it is impossible to evade the pervasive ubiquity of empires, imperial conquests, and anti-colonial resistances in the Jewish-Christian sacred Scriptures. The geopolitical expansions or contractions of the Egyptian, Chaldean, Assyrian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman empires constitute the main historical substratum of the entire biblical corpus.

From the Exodus saga to the anti-Roman apocalyptic visions of *Revelation*³⁴ only a fruitless strategy of hermeneutical evasion would be able to suppress the importance of imperial hegemony in the configuration of human existence and religious faith in the Bible. Even a comprehensive study of gender and sex in the Bible has to take into consideration the different ways in which Esther and Judith use their female sexuality in critical historical instances in which the fate of the children of Abraham is at the stake of a powerful empire. How to forget that Jesus was executed by the Roman authorities as a political subversive? Any theory of atonement that elides the intense political drama of the last days of Jesus transforms it in an abstract unhistorical dogma, or in a display of tasteless masochism à la Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004).

Thus, it was to be expected that biblical scholars would be the first in the academic fields of religious studies to incorporate the emphases on geopolitical

hegemony and resistance provided by postcolonial theories to the array of other contemporary hermeneutical perspectives. The question raised by R. S. Sugirtharajah, however, is poignant indeed:

“One of the weighty contributions of postcolonial criticism has been to put issues relating to colonialism and imperialism at the center of critical and intellectual inquiry ... What is striking about systematic theology is the reluctance of its practitioners to address the relation between European colonialism and the field. There has been a marked hesitancy to critically evaluate the impact of the empire among systematic theologians.”³⁵

To be fair, some theologians are beginning to awake from their disciplinary slumber to take into serious consideration the crucial issues of geopolitical power. Creative theologians, like Catherine Keller, Mark Lewis Taylor, Kwok Pui-lan, Wonhee Anne Joh, Mayra Rivera, Joerg Rieger, and others, have begun to face with intellectual rigor and rhetorical elegance the challenges raised by postcolonial studies and dialogues.³⁶ For those studies and dialogues, the Caribbean, just where I happen to live and work, might be the best place to start.

Let me explain this last statement that many of you might find rather perplexing. Fernando Segovia has written a precise and concise exposition of the convergence between biblical scholarship and

postcolonial studies.³⁷ Never an uncritical reader, Segovia raises several poignant critiques to the latter. Two of them are particularly relevant to the argument I want to develop: First, the lack of attention, by most postcolonial intellectuals, to the Latin American and Caribbean Iberian imperial formations as they developed between the end of the fifteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth.³⁸ Second, the scarcity of analysis of religion as a crucial dimension of the imperial-colonial ideological frameworks. To quote Segovia on this second issue:

“It is almost as if religious texts and expressions did not form part of the cultural production and as if religious institutions and practices did not belong to the social matrix of imperial-colonial frameworks. I would argue ... that religion is to be acknowledged and theorized as a constitutive component of such frameworks, and a most important one...”³⁹

The existential relevance of both issues for Segovia, a Cuban-born person who describes himself as “a student of religion in general and of the Christian faith in particular,” seems obvious. I, as another Caribbean-born student of religion and theological ideas, share both concerns.

It is hard to deny that Segovia is partially right, for he is referring to the postcolonial cultural studies as they emerged from the twilight of the European empires that developed in the wake of the

Enlightenment. What has been named by some British historians the classic age of Empire⁴⁰ is the basic matrix whence the critical texts of Said, Bhabha and Spivak emerge. Even a very useful introductory text in the field, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, edited by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, proceeds as if the sixteenth century Iberian empires never existed or as if religious discourses have never been used as motivation for conquest and colonization.⁴¹ The end result of those analytical occlusions is the homogenization of imperial experiences and, therefore, of colonial defiance.⁴²

In many postcolonial texts we learn a lot about the multifarious resonances of the notorious 1835 Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education, but almost nothing about the intense theological controversies, juridical disputes and philosophical debates (Francisco de Vitoria, Bartolomé de las Casas, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, José de Acosta) during the sixteenth century Spanish conquest of the Americas, despite the fact that they anticipate most of the latter colonial and anti-colonial discourses.⁴³ The discussion by Vitoria about the justice of the wars against the Native Americans foreshadows all posterior arguments on the legitimacy of imperial wars.⁴⁴ The dispute between Las Casas and Sepúlveda about the rationality of the Native Americans and the adequacy of conversion by conquest inaugurates a long series of similar latter debates.⁴⁵ The lengthy treatise of Acosta on

the Christianization and civilization of the American “barbarians” is paragon of subsequent analogous imperial justifications.⁴⁶

Segovia is therefore right in his critique to the mainstream postcolonial studies. Yet, his critique reiterates that same mistake. He also excludes from the rather porous and vague boundaries of postcolonial studies authors that do in fact pay serious attention to both the Iberian sixteenth century imperial formations and, as an unavoidable consequence, to the role of religious discourses in those geopolitical structures of control and dominion. The initial shaping of European global imperial expansion in Latin America and the Caribbean during the sixteenth century, in conjunction with the emergence of early modernity, capitalist accumulation, transatlantic slave trade, the proclamation of the Christian gospel as imperial ideology, and the othering of non European peoples have been topics of rigorous academic research and publications by two Argentinean émigrés, Walter Mignolo and Enrique Dussel.⁴⁷ Lewis Hanke⁴⁸ and Anthony Pagden⁴⁹ have also dealt extensively with that complex configuration of themes, engaging frequently in a comparative critical analysis with more recent empires.⁵⁰ I myself have scholarly engaged the theological debates that accompanied the emergence of the transatlantic Iberian empire in the sixteenth century.⁵¹

Columbus and the rhetorics of possession

The last decades of the fifteenth century and the entire sixteenth were times of adventurous European overseas explorations. Ships from Portugal and Castile were constantly encountering exotics lands and strange peoples. The European elite desired to know; designing strategic plans for political dominion, economic enrichment, and religious mission required information. Epistles frequently provided that knowledge. They were the most expeditious way of conveying to the European ruling sectors the wondrous impressions of travelers, explorers, and conquerors. Cupidity for knowledge, gold, spices, and souls to redeem was the order of the day. The epistle was the door by which many of those recently found lands and communities were registered in European literary historiography. Paradoxically, for many of them, that literary inscription was also the source of their historical annihilation.

Many of those letters became the substratum of subsequent historical works, as was the case with Peter Martyr of Anghiera's *Decades of the New World*, which was built upon his correspondence to several highly placed Renaissance dignitaries. One of Amerigo Vespucci's epistles, the famed "novus mundus" text, was the peculiar source for the general name of the lands that we presently inhabit – America. Hernán Cortés epistolary is still a model of the literary construction of colonial conquest.⁵² Significant

traces of these epistles can be perceived in several key sixteenth century works, such as Thomas More's *Utopia* or Montaigne's *Essays*. The dawn of modernity was accompanied by territorial expansion and a new literary passion.

A letter written by Christopher Columbus, on February 15, 1493,⁵³ was the first window of perception regarding the islands and peoples encountered during the four months he navigated through what is now called, thanks to one of his many linguistic confusions, the Caribbean. This brief epistle forged the first images of those lands and communities in the European Christian mentality. It is a founding text; a primal document that initiates a literature of imperialism. Columbus's letter shrewdly constructs a lasting vision of lands and peoples; it is one of the first instances of colonial discourse and imperial gaze.

Samuel Eliot Morison named it "The letter of Columbus announcing the discovery of America" and that title has become the traditional way of referring to it. A careful reading of the text, however, disturbs the certainty of the traditional title. First, the epistle never refers to "America" – Columbus simply writes that he had "reached the Indies" [219/7]. His "triumph," in his mind, is opening a new, convenient, and profitable route of navigation to the "Indies," not discovering a new continent. But, more importantly, Columbus never uses the term "discovery" or the verb "discover". The concept of the "discovery of America" was a

later invention, as Edmundo O’Gorman exhaustively demonstrated in his lengthy treatments of the subject.⁵⁴ The event has been named “discovery of America” as a way of beautifying its image (who can be against “discovering America”?) and simultaneously silencing its tragic dimensions.⁵⁵ Naming it “discovery” is nothing but a semantic asepsis of the event.

What does, therefore, Columbus want to narrate? “Sir ... I reached the Indies ... And there I found very many islands filled with people without number, and of them all, I have taken possession ... of all I have taken possession for their Highnesses...” [219, 223/7, 12]. The letter does not narrate a discovery, but an event of taking possession. This, for Columbus, is the core of his enterprise: the act of taking possession of all the encountered lands and peoples. Stephen Greenblatt rightly terms Columbus’s performance of taking possession a linguistic act, a discursive, scriptural operation. “For Columbus, taking possession is principally the performance of a set of linguistic acts: declaring, witnessing, recording.”⁵⁶ But, we have to be more precise: It is a linguistic act that is not merely inscribed in a literary text – the epistle. It is also registered in the appropriate legal archive. It is a juridical linguistic act by means of which a formal declaration of legal appropriation is rendered. Columbus carefully registers the data he believes to encounter (much of it are monumental confusions) in a protocol with juridical fateful consequences. As

a juridical inscription, he is scrupulous inscribing that the proper ceremony has been performed—“by proclamation and with the royal standard displayed”—registering that nobody contradicted his act of taking possession – “and nobody objected” [219/7].

The literary act of taking possession is thus also a juridical linguistic act and a liturgical enactment, a ceremony, in which royal banners are displayed and some kind of religious ritual is performed (prayer, invocation of the divine name, erecting a cross) for it is in the name of God, and not only of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand that the event takes place. Thus, at the beginning and the end of his epistle, Columbus expresses gratitude to “the eternal God, Our Lord,” the author of “the great victory which has crowned” his expedition.⁵⁷ The text in which the possession of the encountered lands and peoples is narrated has a juridical dimension and a theological justification.

The Spanish scholar Francisco Morales Padrón has studied meticulously this issue. His main conclusion is valid: “Discovery was always followed by the act of taking possession,” therefore, “discovery and conquest are part of one and the same process.”⁵⁸ Morales Padrón, however, disregards an important dimension: every act of possessing is also an act of dispossessing. Yet, he correctly emphasizes that Columbus’s acts of taking possession, as would be reaffirmed by Pope Alexander VI in his 1493 decrees regarding Iberian expansion overseas,⁵⁹ have a religious background.

The lands have heathen princes, but such authorities do not possess authentic authority of sovereignty, thus the first Christian nation to encounter them has the theologico-juridical right to claim them. This principle will be disputed, in Vitoria's 1539 lecture on the wars against the "Indians" and in the 1551 Valladolid debate between Las Casas and Sepúlveda. But those later disputes were certainly not in the mind of Columbus in his possessing paroxysm.

If heathen lands are taken possession of, they have to be baptized. Christian baptism, let us not forget, traditionally implies the act of renaming. That is exactly what Columbus does. He baptizes and renames the lands he finds, for it would not be proper to register them with their infidel names. Christening the lands, Columbus exercises the power of naming and confers to them new Christian names. Thus they are inscribed in the European chronicles and archives with their Christian names, following both church dogma and royal sycophancy: "El Salvador," "Santa María de la Concepción," "Fernandina," "Isabela," "Juana." Greenblatt affirms that this "act [of naming] ... is a cancellation of an existing name."⁶⁰ What in fact is erased is the faculty of the native inhabitants to name their place, as their authority to name their culture and deities will also soon be denied. The sacrament of baptism traditionally contained a rite of exorcism: the protection of the baptized from the dominion of the demons. Demons will soon be called the native deities.

The letter proceeds to “describe” the lands and the people. Those descriptions would be their first inscriptions in European literature and would forge their initial construct in Western Christian imagination. Columbus’s text becomes euphoric – the islands are a paradise: their beauty, splendor, and magnificence are unsurpassed. The possessed lands, the letter continues, also enjoy incomparable wealth. They contain immense resources of great value – cotton, spices, gum mastic, rhubarb, cinnamon, aloe wood, and “a thousand other things of value.” Above all, the lands have incredible amounts of gold, or thus asserts Columbus, “their Highnesses can see that I shall give them as much gold as they want ...” [225/14]. Gold abounds everywhere in the possessed islands, according, at least, to the alchemist’s eyes of Columbus.

Gold in this epistle is a symbol of material wealth. It would soon acquire, in other Columbus’s texts, spiritual and transcendent value. American gold becomes, in his last writings, the means to wage the final and decisive crusade to repossess the Holy Land, which would be triumphant if he, the divinely elected *Christopherens*, leads it. In his feverish 1503 letter from Jamaica, after reiterating to the Crown that he has discovered King Solomon’s mines, the richest possible source of gold, he even confers redeeming efficacy to gold: “Gold is most excellent ... it is even able to put souls into heaven.”⁶¹

Natural splendor and gold do not exhaust the riches of this earthly paradise found and possessed by Columbus. There is something else of great value: “people without number” [219/7]. His observations about the people are scant but significant. They comprise four basic points: nakedness (“all go naked, men and women, as their mothers bore them”),⁶² military weakness (“they have no iron or steel or weapons”), docility (“show as much love as if they were giving their hearts”), and a favorable disposition towards the Christian faith (“their conversion to our holy faith, towards which they are much inclined”) [221-223/9-11]. There are other inhabitants of the islands that he had not had time to visit but of whose existence he is certain: people born with tails, hairless people, amazons, and cannibals [223-225/11-14]. Thus are born Western ethnography and anthropology, cradled by the most exotic archaic mythology!⁶³ The cannibals and amazons will entertain from then on the European imagination as objects of fascination and fear.

Right in the middle of the paragraph in which Columbus summarizes the riches of the Caribbean islands, comes the first and fateful suggestion to enslave American natives: “their Highnesses can see that I shall give them as much gold as they want ... and slaves, as many as they shall order...” [225/14]. To Columbus belongs the doubtful honor of the first proposal to enslave them, the first military campaign

to enact the enslaving intention, and the first trans-Atlantic shipment of native slaves.⁶⁴ He is not well versed in juridical and theological niceties, but he knows that the proposal to enslave the natives has to be conceptually validated. Who are to be enslaved? The answer is laden with theological density: “idolaters” [225/14].

Idolatry, uttered in this epistle for the first time regarding the American natives, will have a long history. Columbus invoked idolatry as a justification to begin the American slave trade, Hernán Cortés to legitimate the conquest of Mexico,⁶⁵ and the secular and ecclesiastical authorities in the Andes to expunge aggressively indigenous religiosity.⁶⁶ The condemnation of idolatry, spiced with biblical quotations and theological references, becomes the benchmark for the christianization, the enslaving, and the annihilation of many native communities. Idolatry is the theological banner to purify theologically the cruelties of war, slavery, and destruction of native religiosity.

The epistle ends in a paean of Christian exaltation. “All Christendom ought to feel joyful and make celebrations and give solemn thanks to the Holy Trinity with many solemn prayers for the turning of so many peoples to our holy faith.” But the last word belongs to the promising economic gains: “and afterwards for material benefits, since not only Spain

but all Christians will hence have refreshment and profit” [226/15].

Paradise, in Columbus’s epistolary fiction, has been found and possessed, in the name of the European Christian God. But, Paradise will soon be lost. Gold will be hard to found and extract. The docile natives will fight and die for their lands and liberty. Between 1494 and 1506, Columbus’s fate will be a pilgrimage of bitterness and tribulations, almost as tragic and deadly as that of the native communities whose existence he had inscribed in European literary history.

Paradise had been found, possessed, and, finally, lost. As the Argentinian writer Abel Posse concludes his fascinating novel, *Los perros del paraíso* (*The Dogs of Paradise*) with Christopher Columbus, in his native language, sadly whispering: “*Purtroppo c’era il Paradiso...!*” (“Unfortunately, it was Paradise”).⁶⁷ Modern European colonialism had just initiated. It claimed religious roots and sacred legitimations. It began in the name of the Christian Trinity and the crucified Christ. Right here, in the Caribbean, where this event sponsored by Oikotree and Matanzas’s Evangelical Theological Seminary is taking place.

The role of Churches and Transformative Education
against Neo-liberalism and Globalization

Maria Karanatsiou

“Whoever stays impassive before history can never be a good Christian”¹. This stance of father Georges Florovsky is basic in order to realize the responsibility of people both as divine creations and as Christians inside and before the world”².

Over the last two decades, history has taken a different course, since various events led to the appearance of new idols much at the expense of the human person³ which is now seen as a number in the service of profit. This was partially the result of unlimited globalization and neo-liberal capitalist policies, which as stressed by Professor Stylianos Tsompanidis⁴, are the climax of Modernity in West⁵. An important factor towards this disproportional dominance of the capital, was the dissolution of the Soviet Union⁶, since the absence of an opposite pole to the capitalist-consumerist system of the West, which was projected – it still does – as the blissful way of life and prosperity for people, resulted to the globalization of capitals, the enormous power of the market which now had easy access to consumers and resources and naturally, to a chain reaction of immunity of the capital⁷. As Margaret Thatcher used to say, “Society I don’t know, I only know about the market”⁸; a market which plunges more and more people in misery, hunger and death. A market which recognizes Mammon⁹ instead of God, since it is focused on “unlimited consumption, uncontrollable speculation, extreme competition, which is understood in terms

of the so-called ‘zero-sum game’ (Null-Summen-Spiel), according to which the power attained by one player means the annihilation of the other, the weak player”¹⁰.

However, what led to such a pathetic situation, where markets are stronger than states and billions of people have no anticipation of a better life at all, since according to a report of the World Bank¹¹ which is symbolically depicted as a glass of champagne, 20% of global population possesses 83% of global wealth, 20% possesses 11% of global wealth and the rest 60% of the earth’s population possesses a meager 6% of global wealth¹²? The question is implacable, but at the same time, explainable based on different theories and approaches.

One approach, which we embrace, is that the crisis, apart from being economic and financial, is simultaneously an ethical crisis, a crisis of values. In a globalized context, it turned the individual into a productive and consumerist being, a *homo oeconomicus*, alienated by every divine and humanitarian quality. Professor Stylianos Tsompanidis describes the whole situation lively when he highlights that “the crisis, that apart from economic is also ethical and spiritual, a crisis of values, is directly connected to the course of globalization, especially of the economic globalization which takes the form of the contradictory to Christian principles neo-liberal economy of the market”¹³. It is unconceivable that whereas “in 2007,

enough food was produced to feed 12 billion people, 854 million people had no access to it”¹⁴, while at the same time “the personal fortune of the three richest men in the world surpasses the GDP of the world’s 43 poorest countries and their 600 million citizens”.¹⁵

This occurrence, a concrete reality in countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, gradually started to evolve in developed countries of the West. However, the country that experienced the neo-liberal practices in the most atrocious way was Hellas.

Hellas, since May 2010, experiences the consequences of an unprecedented economic model. Imperialistic neo-liberal capitalism led to the disintegration of millions of people, the dismantling of social state (health, education, employment, welfare etc.) and the absolute surrender of the state welfare to the private sector, which only aims at the profit¹⁶. For the first time since World War II and its devastating effects, non-working population in Hellas surpassed by almost a million the working population. It is an indisputable proof of the implementation of disastrous austerity policies on countries with devastated economies and productions¹⁷. Nevertheless, as underlined by Haris Golemis in his 2010 article *Can PIGS Fly?* “the extreme financial abnormalities [of Hellas] are not only due to the social crisis, but also to the past or more recent political choices which reflect the relation between the political and social authorities

of this country, along with the way its capitalist social formation was reproduced”¹⁸.

The negative effects of the neo-liberal policies, mostly since mid-2011, resulted to unfavorable consequences on the political life of the country. Undoubtedly, we cannot talk of parthenogenesis but rather of a continuous contribution to the “hatching of a viper’s eggs”, since the Nazi action of Golden Dawn¹⁹ was already known. Initially, it was aspired that fascist neo-Nazi powers could be used as a crutch for the neo-liberal policies of the conservative governments since 1974, in order to avert the governance of the country by political powers of the Left. As a result, a fascist neo-Nazi morphoma emerged in the political life of the country, thus accentuating the decay of the political authorities. Besides, “Nazism and generally speaking, Fascism appears when capitalism malfunctions as experiencing a crisis”²⁰. Unfortunately, certain Church representatives, among others, proceeded to “an ardent critique of the political system and displays of intolerance, i.e. [they] wept for the decadence of democracy, praising at the same time the leaders of the Dictatorship of 1967-74”²¹.

As pointed out by Professor Ulrich Duchrow, it is evident that the debts created by the political parties which governed Hellas surcharged the public debt and rendered the indebtedness of the country²² a fait accompli, authorizing the actions of “western undemocratic institutions, such as the International

Monetary Fund and the World Bank. They used the debts and simultaneously, they implemented policies of structural reforms in order to achieve the liberalization, the privatizations and ultimately, the deregulation of the economies of these countries. Therefore, the brutal military intervention is replaced by the structural economic measures. The result is the generalized poverty, the expropriation of national resources and the aggravated violence among citizens who fight tooth and nail to survive”²³. With this approach of Professor Duchrow coincides Mihalīs Mentinīs, who stresses that “the austerity measures imposed by the IMF and the EU as a remedy to the crisis have been welcomed with no resistance by the government and the elites in Greece. For the measures do not concern simply the shoring up of the country’s external debt, but rather the restructuring of its entire economic, political and social life, so that the recent resurgence of class struggle can be contained and nipped in the bud before attaining uncontrollable intensity and traction. The increasingly revolting ‘barbarians’ of the lower classes should be subjected to the constant poverty shocks brought on by extreme austerity measures, and left disoriented from the rhetoric that they were responsible for what has happened to the country, and therefore should accept the much needed development that would bring an end to the decimated economy; they should, in other

words, be made to succumb to the plans and projects of the local and foreign elites”²⁴.

The situation seems uncontrollable, especially since “economy has separated itself from the broader science of Ethics and formulated an independent science that, naturally, was not obliged to adhere to the laws of Ethics”.²⁵ However, “the quest for a purpose in a world of no purpose”²⁶ is a fundamental value and intention of religions. Even in the modern world, where anything religious is constantly attacked²⁷, “the possibility of religion, and in particular of the Christian Church, to exercise its philanthropic dynamic upon society ‘in order to secure the freedom, the uniqueness of the human person and the integrity of God’s creation’ consists in a) the way by which its theology, as its critical conscience, interprets the signs of the times and b) the way by which the Church itself chooses to deposit its witness, i.e. the way it organizes its mission, both in the area of ‘canon jurisdiction’ and universally”²⁸.

“In the face of forces that exclude, impoverish and destroy life and hope, we as Churches affirm God’s promise of life and wholeness for the entire creation as the oikos (household) of God”²⁹. In their effort, the Churches are sub-served by education, as well as the orientation towards the ecumenical vision, in order to undertake praxis, by stating openly their views and proposing alternatives.

The Churches, through their basic instrument within ecumenical movement, i.e. the World Council of Churches, are opposed to the antichristian system of the “absolute market”³⁰ by proposing alternative forms of economic growth centered not on the profit but on the individual. As Professors Petros Vassiliadis and Stylianos Tsompanidis stress, “against the model of modern system of economy which oppresses people and life, ruptures the social tissue, focuses on individualism and greed, obtains the redistribution of global wealth in favor of few and leads to the marginalization of more and more people, the Churches that embrace AGAPE recommend a different model of life, a Eucharistic *modus vivendi*, which is the keystone of a ‘communion of love, sharing and solidarity’ ”³¹.

In this context, much is said about the Eucharistic aspect of theology. “The Eucharist has not been more successfully interpreted than through ‘trinitarian theology’, i.e. not only as *the* mystery of church, but also as a projection of the inner dynamics (love, communion, equality, diaconia, sharing etc.) of the Holy Trinity into the world and cosmic realities. Ecumenical theological education and ministerial formation should therefore focus [...] on a *costly Eucharistic vision* [...]. With such a costly Eucharistic vision, our future theological education can [...] develop gender sensitivity, articulate a new paradigm to equip the whole people of God and allow for an

innovative, experimental, people-centered approach”³². When Eucharist is not seen as a simple rite, but it is conceived as a transformative power, it is a paradigm of solidarity and contribution, a hope that can set the resistance and the quest for peace and justice against the hunger and the misery of the world. As underlined by Reverend Professor Franz Segbers, “Eucharist is a path to understanding and a place to celebrate the church’s mission to the world, a mission that involves a liberating struggle against the powers of disintegration. This understanding of the liturgy celebrates the relationship between injustice in the world and the justice proclaimed by the church”³³. Orthodox theology has conceived the notion of “meta-liturgy”³⁴ in order to describe this process: “In Vancouver it was stressed once more what Orthodox had underlined in their contribution to the World Congress in Melbourne. It was then highlighted that the function of Christians and the Churches in the world is a double deed that is the continuity of the Service and of their evocation to preach and prove the power of God’s Kingdom: the exorcism of demons, which is a struggle against idols, racism, money, chauvinism, ideologies, robotization and use of people; the healing of those harmed. The Church accomplishes this work not only through the mysteries of Repentance and Extreme Unction, but also through its effort to defeat the evil and the harm done upon individuals and society. This spiritual struggle, (“geistlicher Kampf”) – as describe by the Conference –

must be related to the struggle of poor, oppressed and refugees forced to abandon their country. 'The Holy Spirit is among those struggling' ”³⁵.

A crucial role is undertaken by theological education which is extremely important in today's world of alienation and economic dominance. As stated by former WCC General Secretary Konrad Reiser³⁶, after the fall of communism, Orthodox Churches faced a new reality. They were still carriers of an old tradition concerning theological education, albeit they had to adapt to the acceptance of a massive number of faithful. Similarly, the ecumenical relations which for long were subjected to the governmental control and limitations brought these Churches up against the challenge of “ecumenical learning”³⁷, i.e. the assimilation of God's truth and peace and the crystallization of this experience in contribution for the sake of the whole world. Professor Petros Vassiliadis endorses this opinion when talking of a theological education which was gradually limited to the formation of the clergy and not to the *de profundis* education of people when he stresses that “Naturally, then, they [the theological institutions] were led to defend old-fashioned institutions, not to build up local communities. They lost, in other words, the *community-centred* and the *eschatologically* oriented dimension of theological education”³⁸. The natural consequence of such a reality was the elaboration of certain projects, i.e. the Graz-process³⁹, which set the goal of posing

all European theological institutions into the same framework for a theological education promoting the unity of the Church and securing, at the same time, the diversity of theological institutions. As pointed by Zoë Bennett, ecumenical theological education is capable of leading us towards a transformation of our viewpoint and perspective, “If ecumenical theological education is to be a practice of peace it will not be so by avoiding pain, but rather by allowing pain to be the agent of transformation of perspectives and hence actions”⁴⁰.

The biblical-theological perception of economy of sufficiency is based on the truth that the world and everything in the disposition of people in order to live belong to God. Therefore, a selfish anthropocentric perception where the individual is dissociated by the total of creation is unacceptable; people need to work for an “Economy in the Service of Life”; the latter is clarified, among others, in two texts: In 1997, during the 23rd General Council in Debrecen, Hungary, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) calls its members in a process of “recognition, education, and confession (processus confessionis)”⁴¹. In other words, the WARC detects the signs of the times, which are the result of the decomposition of the social state due to the embracement of a neo-liberal system of economy, and calls the Churches to engage in “changing, renewing, and restoring the economy and the earth, choosing life, so that we and

our descendants might live”⁴². Similarly, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in its Message from the 10th Assembly⁴³ organized in 2003 in Winnipeg, Canada talks of a world in need of healing, since it is an injured world that mourns. Through the celebration of the Eucharist, the biblical tradition and mostly through the so-called “Transforming Economic Globalization”, LWF is engaged and calls its members to participate actively in the process of inverting the situation, as well as to cooperate with ecumenical organizations and social institutions, promoting at the same time the interreligious dialogue.

The contribution of Orthodox in the whole effort is significant. During the 3rd Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference (1986, Chambésy), the need for justice, peace, solidarity and love among people was accentuated⁴⁴. In fact, it is stressed that Orthodox are obliged to take action since “what is imperative today is particular action and commitment for action and a broader cooperation with others and not only pious words”⁴⁵. Since 1983 (the 6th General Assembly of WCC in Vancouver), Orthodox played a major role and their contribution was decisive “particularly to the formulation of a ‘Eucharistic vision’ and to the consolidation of engagement in justice, peace and integrity of creation”⁴⁶.

Obviously, the embracement of the ecumenical vision is a one-way street for the Churches. Moreover, “Oikoumene (the earth community), seen as an oikos of

life created and preserved by God, expands far beyond the humankind, in the whole of creation. Oikoumene is founded on the substantial but threatened relations between Churches, cultures, people and communities, as well as between the humankind and the creation. Human history is linked to the history of all living things. Therefore it is important to institute laws of a common life, for all the tenants of oikos will be able to live sufficiently”⁴⁷. This vision is described once more in the common message of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches in 2008: “the gap between rich and poor is growing dramatically due to the financial crisis, usually the result of manic profiteering by economic factors and corrupt financial activity, which, by lacking an anthropological dimension and sensitivity, does not ultimately serve the real needs of mankind. A viable economy is that which combines efficacy with justice and social solidarity”⁴⁸.

The ecumenical vision of catholicity and reconciliation was further deployed during the 10th General Assembly of WCC in Harare. Theology can provide an alternative to the mechanisms of globalization; this process is necessary and imperative for two reasons: a) the resistance against the violence and the terror provoked by economic globalization represents the Christian quest for justice, peace and integrity of creation and b) the quest for justice, peace and integrity of creation is inherent in the Church.

However, practically, what does the existence of the Church mean under the current situation and why and how do Churches have to handle the problems created by economic globalization? In Potsdam in 2001, an effort to reply to this question is summarized by an initiative led to the formation of “AGAPE-A Call to Love and Action”: a) the transformation of global economy towards equality and development of values which describe the teaching and the paradigm of Jesus, b) the development of fair trade and c) the promotion of a fair economic system, deprived of the slavery of debts, corruption and speculation⁴⁹. In the texts of AGAPE and DOV (Decade Overcoming Violence), Orthodox are almost absent, although as noted, “the Orthodox reflection has contributed to the theological description and foundation of justice, peace and integrity of creation and to the fortification of human rights”⁵⁰.

Moreover, these issues were further deployed during the 10th General Assembly of WCC held in Bussan, South Korea (2013). Professor Stylianos Tsompanidis highlights that “it seems that a catholic ecumenical agreement has been achieved concerning the fact that the issues of justice, peace and integrity of creation are not secondary social and economic-politic problems of the world, but they are issues that refer to the faith and the life of the Church and they are components of the Gospel and not mere recommendations”⁵¹. He continues by pinpointing

that “the transition from an ‘economy of death’ to an ‘economy of life’” is the core of the quest for justice, peace and integrity of creation.

This whole effort is a revival of the “conciliar process of mutual commitment to justice, peace and integrity of creation” in a broader context and with a broader participation. As stated, we can talk of “a meeting point of Vancouver (1983) and Bussan (2013)”⁵².

In a world submitted to the slavery of the demands of modern neo-liberal economy, as expressed by the well-known TINA (There Is No Alternative) attributed to Margaret Thatcher, Churches are called to become carriers of hope. In the booklet ‘Economy in the Service of Life – Churches in the Ecumenical Process for Globalizing Justice’⁵³ particular and applicable solutions are proposed; we summarize some, especially seen within the Hellenic context.

Churches are called to struggle for a fair distribution of employment and for an engagement in social values. Their contribution can be realistic through the creation of working posts, for instance in the case of Hellas. Funded by metropolitans, social schools can be created in order to help pupils respond to the contemporary educational demands. In cooperation with employment trades and social movements, Churches need to claim the protection of employment and social rights given the fact that they are fully oppressed due to the economic crisis. For

instance, as proposed in the booklet, “With the help of more markedly progressive taxes, the introduction of a system providing basic security for all members of society that, from this basis, might embrace and join together free commercial work, family work and works for the public benefit”⁵⁴. Churches can exercise pressure upon political authorities that proceed to the privatization of public services and public resources. Moreover, they can practically counterbalance this whole process by actively grant infrastructures for the accommodation of public utilities.

It is also proposed that Churches could take upon them environmental initiatives, such as the fixation of solar panels on the temples’ roofs. This measure could be excellent in the case of Hellas which is highly favored by its climate (sunlight). Regarding taxation and finance system, Churches can become an example of changing perceptions concerning tax evasion; they can exercise pressure upon governments for the abolition of speculation and tax relief, the latter been exploited by the less vulnerable citizens. In Hellas, for instance, officers are the basic source of votes for the neo-liberal governments, thus enjoying the unique salary raises and at the same time the most important tax reliefs!

Ultimately, as individuals and as congregations we can oppose to the deification of the banking system, by transporting deposits and transactions in other banks (i.e., the ecumenical bank Oikocredit) which finance

non-profitable programs and moreover, they can be thoroughly controlled by Churches based on social, ethical and environmental criteria. The creation of an “ethical bank” (bank of the poor) such as the Grameen Bank founded in 1983 in Bangladesh could also be an initiative.

As today’s crisis is a crisis of values as well, the role of education for both clericals and seculars is crucial. Besides, regardless of the issues separating them, Churches have in common the quest for solidarity, love, compassion and justice against the enormous inequalities provoked by the distribution of power. Individualism, tightly interlinked to the economic globalization and its demands, will continue to thrive unless we abandon egoism, possession and violence. As stressed by German theologian Dorothee Sölle: “Resistance requires a different spirituality”⁵⁵.

Interreligious perspectives of transformative
education in the context of imperial capitalism

Ulrich Duchrow

“Today we are faced with life-killing civilization, manifested in economic injustice, ecological destruction, the threat of Empire, and the escalation of religious conflicts. This compels us to urgently explore the possibility of life-giving civilization which affirms relationships, co-existence, harmony with creation, and solidarity with those who struggle for justice. This quest finds meaning in *Ubuntu* and *Sangsaeng*.” (*WCC-CWM ChangSeong Consultation 12-17 Aug. 2007 on Transforming Theology and Life-giving civilization*)

These words of 35 theologians from Asia, Africa and other parts of the world capture exactly what we are about to meditate on. We live in a life-killing global system, we are called by our own biblical basis – re-read in the spirit of other than Western traditions – to search for life-giving alternatives and challenged to develop theological education accordingly. Let us look at these three components one by one.

The context of theological education today

Neo-liberal, imperial globalization is the climax of a violent, possessive civilization of domination, social devastation and ecological destruction. The book “Diversified Theological Education Equipping All God’s People”, edited by Ross Kinsler, stresses that *context analysis* is the first of three main and necessary characteristics of theological education. This, however,

is easier said than done. In former times we would have defined “context” in local, national and specific cultural terms. Nowadays these specific features are co-determined by a global system, which in itself has many dimensions: economic, ecological, political, ideological, religious, cultural, anthropological, psychological etc. and all of these again to be seen from a historical and interdisciplinary perspective. So we face a complex problem.

It is not difficult to name the *facts*. Just to name a few:

- Between 30 and 40 million or even more people die from hunger or its consequences every year (Jean Ziegler speaks of 60 million). This is now being worsened through the shortage and skyrocketing prices of food, created by agro-fuel and meat production for the rich as well as through the speculation on food prices by financial capital;
- The empire of global capital and its agents is accompanied by violent imperialism of the USA and Europe, where all headquarters of the 10 biggest TNCs are situated – leading to imperial wars like in Afghanistan and Iraq, to counter-terrorism and to civil wars, fed by the socio-economic disaster.
- Between 1850 and 1950 one animal species vanished every year; around 1989 one animal species vanished per day; around the year 2000 one animal species vanished per hour. The recent figures of 2008 speak of one species dying out

every 10 minutes. According to the report of the International Panel on Climate Change, the percentage of vanished species is going to be 30% within 50 years. And climate change also leads to catastrophes. The ecological crisis has dramatically worsened and, therefore, must move into the center of theology.

In spite of the evidence of the facts, many, including churches in Europe, are not clear on how to interpret them, how to analyze the systemic root causes and how to judge them theologically. The first thing to remember is the wide ecumenical consensus that refuses to speak of a *process* of globalization in which one can discern positive and negative elements. What rather has to be distinguished is, on the one hand, the *process* of growing global interdependencies and growing communication, which has good and bad elements, and, on the other hand, the neo-liberal *project* of global imperial capitalism that subjects life in all of its dimensions to the one abstract logic of capital accumulation. It is this logic that the broad ecumenical consensus views as a death-creating monster, totally negative, doomed to be suicidal in the long run. This project has clearly recognizable actors and strategies.

It has been *ideologically* prepared by a trans-national network of neo-liberal thinkers – above all organized in the Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS) under

the leadership of Friedrich August von Hayek.¹ With the support of think-tanks, reorganized university institutes, the buying out and founding of magazines and the training of journalists, economists, politicians and prominent figures in the church, the MPS has developed and set into motion a successful strategy to win back “hearts and minds” for the ideological hegemony of liberalism which was lost in the catastrophe of the break down of the classical liberal system in 1929. In the meantime this ideological power structure has become frightening and nearly total. The vast majority of private media, public relation firms, foundations and think-tanks are in the hands of the same capital owners who profit from the system. Read the book of William Engdahl on the Rockefeller Foundation and its criminal activities regarding oil, seeds and genetic engineering.² Yet it is not only the general public that is being targeted by these networks (even cooperating with the intelligence agencies) but churches, schools and universities. In the USA e.g. more than 30 theological institutions have been created to produce capitalist theology.³ The fundamentalist perversion of religion represented by George W. Bush and other fundamentalists legitimating social degradation, tax cuts for the rich, sabotage of global ecological policies and imperial wars is only the tip of the iceberg. In Germany most churches hire public relation firms to market their product and do not recognize the Trojan horse they are buying etc.

etc. All of this is of highest importance for theological education. One of its most important tasks must be *ideology critique*.

Politically and militarily, as well as by way of *intelligence services*, the USA, beginning in 1953 in what was then Persia, removed socially responsible governments and, with the support of local elites, installed national security dictators, the likes of which are notoriously well-known in Latin America, Asia and Africa. It was the task of these military dictatorships to open up access to natural resources, production sites and markets for transnational capital and, through the purchase of usually second-class Western industrial products and prestige projects, to propel their governments into debt. This, in turn, gave international creditors and finance institutions the opportunity to steer and exploit the national economies through their heavily indebted public budgets. In the meantime, the West has moved back to open imperialism. Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq etc. are the well-known examples. But every country could be hit as well according to the National Security Strategy of the USA, NATO and in the future also of the EU. Here the new Lisbon Treaty asks for a permanent arms race in order to be equipped for intervening everywhere in the world for the purpose of economic interests.⁴ In content it is identical with the former constitutional treaty voted down by the French and Dutch citizens. But now it was ratified, because the peoples of Europe have no

right to vote against it – a disaster for democracy in Europe. The Lisbon Treaty re-enforces what is being called “Empire with imperialism”⁵ by making Europe a sub-empire within and partly in competition with the US. However, the financial crisis has weakened empire and is moving to a more multipolar system.⁶ So *political analysis and critique* is another central task of *theological education*.

Economically, the neo-liberal strategy has been implemented through privatization, liberalization and the deregulation of international capital markets. After, in the course of the financial crisis of 2008, the losses of the speculators have been socialized by bailing out the banks with tax money, the system is operating without changes and, therefore, up for the next round of the crisis. Private debt has become public debt. The governments pay the debt by dismantling the social systems like in Greece. The growing destruction of social cohesion drives the middle classes in richer countries, fearing a downfall, to the extreme right. The rich avoid taxes on capital gains with the help of tax havens. This is the way in which the growing gap between private wealth and public poverty is widened. The sole objective of the present economy is the increase of capital returns at the cost of working people, public goods and services, as well as nature. Few people know that it was already Karl Marx who saw that the interconnectedness between social and ecological destruction. In his “Capital” he writes:

„In modern agriculture, as in the urban industries, the increased productiveness and quantity of the labour set in motion are bought at the cost of laying waste and consuming by disease labour-power itself. Moreover, all progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility. The more a country starts its development on the foundation of modern industry, like the United States, for example, the more rapid is this process of destruction. Capitalist production, therefore, develops technology, and the combining together of various processes into a social whole, only by sapping the original sources of all wealth – the soil and the labourer.”⁷

In addition to and in connection with the production process capitalism creates desires in order to stimulate buying and consuming for accumulation purposes. This means that urban and rural industrialization, driven by finance capital, itself, not just the misuse of this economy, destroys the social and natural basis of humanity and the earth. So *economic analysis from the perspective of life is key for theological education.*

This leads us to the deep *interrelation between the economy and anthropology* in capitalism. It is based on granting an absolute character to private property and

contracts which, competing in an absolute finance-driven market, are responsible for the transmission of monetary profit and the accumulation of capital. Von Hayek gives classic expression to this:

“A free society needs moral ground rules which can ultimately be summarized by saying that they are for the preservation of life: not the preservation of all life because it might be necessary to sacrifice individual life in order to save a greater number of other lives. For that reason the only real moral rules are those which lead us to the ‘life calculation: private property and the contract.’”⁸

Based on the fallacy that there is not enough to go around for everybody, this means that private property and the ability to negotiate contracts in the marketplace become the judges of life and death or, more precisely, determine who the victims of this “human sacrifice” will be. The essence of neo-liberalism is the abolition of the social functions of the state and the latter’s transformation into a security state for property holders and entrepreneurs. Thomas Hobbes and John Locke first stated this in anthropological terms in the 17th century.⁹ They defined human beings as individual proprietors who always strive for more wealth, power and respect and therefore are involved in the one-against-all struggle in the marketplace. So private property and competitive individualism are the two sides of the same coin in a money-driven

civilization. But also the state gets its purpose on this basis. Hobbes and Locke conceptualized the fact in the political economy of capitalism that the sole function of the state in a capitalist context is the protection of property and contracts. Macpherson uses the term “possessive individualism” for this political-economical anthropology, which expresses particularly well the idea of “being possessed” that is included in this view. Possession leads to being possessed. And it leads to violence as Gandhi pointed out: “Where there is possessiveness, there is violence”.¹⁰

Also civil and political human rights were first granted only to male property owners. It was the women’s and the worker’s movements who waged a successful struggle to generalize them. And the formerly socialist and the “third world” countries even succeeded to have the UN also formulate and promulgate the social, economic and cultural rights. These emancipatory gains of former struggles are now being systematically dismantled by neo-liberal economic and political powers.¹¹ So neo-liberalism is even destroying the improved liberal values.

Everybody needs *property and money for use* in order to live with dignity. But those who have more than they need invest their surplus property as exchange value in the capitalist market in order to increase it further. The consequence is that through the exchange-value of property for accumulation, many people around the world are being robbed of

their property for use which they need for a life in dignity. It is characteristic of neo-liberalism that, on the basis of the private ownership of the means of production, it not only sharpens the classical industrial capitalistic exploitation of workers, but even reverts to early capitalist forms of expropriation, called “original accumulation”. For this reason, it has justifiably been called “predatory capitalism”.¹² So *theological education must reject a capitalist anthropology* that defines the human being as a competitive, possessive individual.

This again has *psychological* implications.¹³ Classical western psychology looks at the human psyche with individualistic, drive-theoretical methods. These do not recognize that, from the beginning, human beings are relational. The subject is formed and develops through all stages by inter-subjectivity, being affected positively or negatively. This is studied intensively by relational psychology. This school looks at the *psychological* effects of neo-liberal, imperial globalization. Neo-liberalism by its very nature divides people into individualized losers and winners destroying solidarity. Between them is the middle class in the form of various milieus (P. Bourdieu). According to new research all of these groups are characterized by different psychological captivities. The losers suffer from traumas. This has been researched particularly in the case of unemployment. The winners are captives to the addiction to win, a form of pathological narcissism.

They must win and win and win in order not to lose in competition. The middle class is split into a majority of losers and a minority of winners. Its members are upwardly oriented and, consequently, filled with fear of decline. Because of early psychological patterns, members of middle-classes idealize the higher authority while internalizing the bad elements of it. This leads to depression and/or of projecting the aggressions at scapegoats beneath themselves (foreign migrants etc.). This in turn is instrumented by the upper classes to stop any coalition-building between lower and middle classes. These *psychological* insights should be integrated into *theological education* not only because of their theoretical and pastoral implications but also because of their tremendous political significance.

Capitalist economy is also intrinsically linked to *western science and technology, the cultural* factor. There is no doubt that this approach has also brought improvements for human life. However, taken as absolute and being isolated from social and ecological considerations, instrumental and objectivist reason destroys human and other life. Its main goal is maximizing power and profit (Francis Bacon, René Descartes). Therefore, the key challenge is to develop a life-enhancing culture governed by reproductive reason. This is only possible by getting involved in the practice of alternatives. So theological education must basically reconsider *epistemology*.

Finally, capitalism itself is a *religion* as Walter Benjamin has pointed out.¹⁴ According to him it is the only religion causing people to be trapped in debt. All others offer forgiveness and reconciliation. Already Karl Marx has done the ground work to understand this by offering a penetrating analysis of the *fetishism of commodities, money, and capital*.¹⁵ It is crucial for theologians in a capitalist context to understand this critique of capitalism as religion, especially as Karl Marx is tabooed in bourgeois societies and churches as well as in openly oppressive societies in order to disguise the interests of the capital owners behind what is happening.¹⁶ The key of the fetishism analysis is to show that people are made to believe that it is not the workers creating value on the basis of the gifts of creation, but capital, consequently claiming to be worshipped as the giver of life. Listen to the climax of Marx's analysis:

“The relations of capital assume their most externalized and most fetish-like form in interest-bearing capital... Capital appears as a mysterious and self-creating source of interest – the source of its own increase. The thing (money, commodity, value) is now capital even as a mere thing, and capital appears as a mere thing. The result of the process of reproduction appears as a property inherent in the thing itself. It depends on the owner of the money, i.e. of the commodity in its continually exchangeable form, whether he wants

to spend it as money or loan it out as capital. In interest-bearing capital, therefore, this automatic fetish, self-expanding value, money generating money, are brought out in their pure state and in this form it no longer bears the birth-marks of its origin... This too becomes distorted. While interest is only a portion of the profit, i.e., of the surplus value, which the functioning capitalist squeezes out of the labourer, it appears now, on the contrary, as though interest were the typical product of capital, the primary matter, and profit, in the shape of profit of enterprise, were a mere accessory and by-product of the process of reproduction. Thus we get the fetish form of capital and the conception of fetish capital.”¹⁷

Look at the present reality of *financial capitalism*, also being called casino-capitalism. Not only workers, but governments, peoples and earth are at the mercy of the so-called “investors”. They appear to be saviors. We are being told that the investors bring development and improvement of life. In reality they bring destruction and death. Nothing counts but the maximum return for the shareholders of the investment agencies. Therefore, *critique of religion is a crucial task of theological education*.¹⁸

Taking all these *dimensions of neo-liberal, imperial globalization together* we can see that they all have a totalizing tendency endangering life, albeit quite

more subtle than fascism, Stalinism or the South African Apartheid system. So it needs prophetic clarity in conjunction with interdisciplinary research to name and unmask this power system. At the same time it is equally important to realize and analyze its contradictions and crises as well as the countervailing power of the people arising against it. We shall do this in the third part of our deliberations. Meanwhile let us look at the biblical-theological foundation of our critique as well as of our alternative vision drawing also from other disciplines and religions.

The People of God called to witness to God's humanness in loving relationships

Ross Kinsler in the book on “Diversified Theological Education”, summarizing two former ones, published and edited together with Gloria Kinsler on “Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life” and “God’s Economy: Biblical Studies from Latin America”,¹⁹ has aptly outlined the central importance of the political economy for the understanding of the Scriptures and theological education. They use the concepts of the Sabbath and of Jubilee to outline the biblical vision of an economic order serving the life of all people and creation.²⁰ Let me add three additional aspects concerning the contextual re-reading of the Bible elaborating on these books – 1. the crucial role of a new economy since the 8th century B.C., built on property, interest and money; 2. the role of empire; and 3. the

understanding of the human being in the context of creation – because these aspects are hermeneutically helpful for unleashing the power of the biblical witness and also other faiths and philosophies for today's context. They will also help us to discover new visions for overcoming the paradigm of modernity and to connect with non-western cultures.

Recent socio-historical and theological research has shown that already the Bible speaks directly to these issues of market mechanisms and empire on the basis of *property and money*.²¹ The historic roots of an economy based on private property money beyond their use value date back to the 8th century BCE. The result of introducing money as commodity and private property as an absolute, combined with imperial conquest was increased division in societies between masters and slaves, men and women, a more and more precarious situation of small farmers and in general a dire impoverishment and suffering for the majority of people. This was not just a structural problem because money also changed people's souls. Besides communicating through speech and cooperation they start calculating, including calculating each other's performance in competition. So the problem, people and societies had to cope with, was not just structural, but took on psychological and spiritual dimensions. So private property and money came into existence at the same time – linked to debt slavery and loss of land. On

the other hand, the creditors could collect more and more land, money and debt slaves.

This resulted in increasingly *splitting societies* of the Ancient Near East up to North India and China. The situation worsened when the private property-money-economy was spreading even more during the time of the Hellenistic Empires. Roman Law legalized the absoluteness of property. In one sentence: the Hellenistic-Roman *empires* are characterized by the linkage between totalitarian military, political and ideological power and the absoluteness of the property-interest-money economy.

The spread of this economy from Greece to China in the late 8th and 7th centuries BCE encountered different contexts and responses to them in the different regions of the Ancient Near East. Let us first look at *Israel*.²² With the new mechanism of property-interest-money the (small)holder producers had to suffer an additional dangerous attack on their livelihoods. Before they had to pay taxes to the king, the temple and for the luxury of the aristocratic upper class from their production. Now competition arose among themselves. The consequence was that many lost their land to the landowners with large estates and, to add insult to injury, had to work as debt slaves for them. How did the faithful believers in Yahweh react to this aggravation of the situation?

Four distinct ways to secure the practical consequences of faith in Yahweh can be observed over

the centuries up to the Jesus movement and the early church:

- Prophetic critique
- Legal provisions
- Acts of resistance
- Alternatives in small groups subverting the existing (dis-)order.²³

Precisely the wrong developments in public and social life, caused by the new property economy, called forth the protest of the great prophets in the last third of the 8th and then of the 7th century starting with Amos. They called for law (*mispāt*) and justice (*sedaqa*), which were lost through the new property-money-mechanisms. But above all, repealing justice and the rights of the poor meant rejecting the God of Israel for them. Knowing God is identical with creating justice for the poor (see e. g. Jer 22:16). The prophet *Isaiah* in the 7th century criticized the expropriation of farming families and the accumulation of land in sharp terms: “Ah! You who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land!” (Is 5:8). He, too, calls the greedy land-owners “thieves” (1:23) and the seizure of the land of indebted farmers taking “the spoil of the poor” (3:14).

The prophetic critique of the 8th and 7th centuries was not totally unsuccessful. That is clear from the different *legal reforms* from that period and afterwards,

promulgating prohibitive and restoring laws. The first took place in the early 7th century BCE, reflected in the so-called *Code of Covenant* (Ex 21-23). Here we find e.g. the prohibition of interest and the regulation of taking pawns with the goal not to endanger the lives of indebted people and with the theological argument that Yahweh is “compassionate” (22: 24-26). In 622 BCE the *Deuteronomic reform* under king Josiah adds corrective measures like social “taxes” every third and debt cancellation as well as the liberation of debt slaves and a pause for the land every seventh year (Deut 14:28ff. and 15:1ff.). Here is the root of the Sabbath economics. After the traumatic experience of the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the Judean upper classes by the Babylonians (in the beginning of the 6th century BCE) there is a broad reflection on the issue: how to reorganize society after return from exile in order to avoid the systemic injustices with its disastrous consequences. One result is the *Code of Holiness* in the priestly writings (Leviticus). Here, besides the prohibition of interest etc. we find the famous jubilee regulation for the redistribution of land (the means of production in an agrarian society) every fiftieth year so that each family regains the basis for subsistence farming. The key theological argument is: “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; and with me you are but aliens and tenants (Lev 25:23).” This means there must be no absolute property for human beings, land

must not be made a commodity for sale; God's gifts are for the lives of all people.

The same is expressed in the magna charta of the biblical "*economy of the enough for all*", the story of manna (Exod 16). The bread given by God from heaven in the desert is enough for every person for each day. "...those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage" (v. 18). This is quoted in Deut 8 in the context of the accumulation of wealth in the 7th century by reminding the Judeans that God linked his rule of sharing to the gift of the manna bread "in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" – exactly the passage which Jesus quotes against Satan who tempts him to accumulate bread by transforming stones (Mt 4). Accordingly Jesus prays: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Mt 6:11). This is the "economy of enough" in opposition to the economy of unlimited property accumulation through money mechanisms, linked to the idol Mammon.

When the accumulation of power and wealth becomes totalitarian as in the *Hellenistic-Roman empires* the only way for faithful Jews and followers of the Messiah Jesus to react is *resistance and defiance*. The classical text is the story of the three Jewish men resisting the worship of the golden statute of the emperor. They risk to be thrown into the furnace (Dan 3). Also Jesus practices resistance. This is most

obvious in his prophetic confrontation with the temple (Mk 11:15-19). It is the economic center of the priestly aristocracy robbing the poor for the sake of the temple treasure by the system of sacrifices and collaborating with the Roman Empire. Matthew, the evangelist (Mt 6:19-34), elucidates the same in the context of his topic “collecting treasures” on earth. “You cannot serve God and Mammon.” So the conflict is not just about material things but the God question. Who rules finally, the God of accumulation for the few owners or the compassionate God caring for the lives of all humans and creation as a whole?

Jesus himself adds another exciting option in view of the presence of the sovereignty of God destroying all domination of humans over humans through property and money mechanisms: the messianic empowerment of people, starting with the weakest of them, to create *small scale alternatives* in communities, rebuilding the relationships destroyed by the property-money mechanisms, thus creating hope in hopeless situations. All what is needed for life will be given to those who first seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness, that is, a life in just relationships. This life of sharing is exemplified in the story of Jesus and his disciples feeding the 5000 (Mk 6:35ff.). The disciples want to go to the market. But Jesus empowers the people to feed each other by sharing what they have. This is enough for every body and more than enough. Sharing leads

to abundant life: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

The *early Christian community*, filled with the Spirit, is living this alternative. The classical text is Acts 4:32-35. The congregation voluntarily shared its property. More exactly that means: those with land and houses sold them and placed the proceeds at the apostles’ feet. This wording can be no accident. After all, precisely the accumulation of land and houses had been attacked since Micah and Isaiah as a structural cause of the impoverishment of the farming population. And Jesus had called this robbery, in the same prophetic tradition, and demanded of the rich young land-owner that he sell his accumulated goods and give the proceeds back to the poor (whose land had been stolen through the mechanisms of property—interest-bearing loans—debt; Mk 10:17-22). And this balancing out of property was expressly described as the fulfillment of the Deuteronomic Torah, as the text in Acts continues: “There was not a needy person among them” (cf. Dt 15:4). At the same time, however, it says that they gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. That means, in this way Jesus came alive among them not by their using their property as their own, to maximize personal profit and accumulate property, but by the community living together in such a way that there was no hardship among them. Jesus’ resurrection means – economically speaking – life in

community without need. That is the fulfillment of the Tora and the prophets in the First Testament.

Parallel to the understanding of economy and politics in the service of life there is the discovery of a new understanding of the human being in the image of God in the Bible, starting with the prophet Ezekiel. Walter Wink has worked this out in a book under the title “The Human Being”.²⁴ During the Babylonian Exile, in the midst of the Babylonian Empire and in critical discussion with it in the sixth century before Christ, the prophet Ezekiel who had received a vision of God who seemed “like a human form” (Ez 1:26) was pressing toward revolutionary insights of man and woman as the image of God. This is reflected in the priestly writings: “So God created humankind in God’s image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1: 26-31). In the context of the ancient oriental world this entire text is revolutionary.

- In the Babylonian Enuma Elish myth human beings were created out of the blood of a murdered God, in order to serve the gods – and especially to work for them, because the gods were tired of working.²⁵ In the biblical text human beings are blessed and honored as man and woman to become God’s co-workers. Apart from this, in ancient oriental societies only the king is the image of God. In this case, to speak of the image of God

meant an ideological legitimization of authority, and therefore of the right to not be obliged to work, but rather to let others work for them. In contrast to this ideology Gen 1:26-31 regards all human beings created in the image of God – to freely and responsibly work together with God in good relationships with one another. In this manner, this text, written by deportees in the Babylonian captivity, is an eminently subversive text, directed against imperial powers and forced labor through slavery. But also the relationship with animals and plants – contrary to the modern understanding of the dominium terrae as imperial conquering – is characterized by care within the framework of God’s blessings. The human being has to deal with nature like a good king as described in Deut 17, caring for the poor and creating justice.²⁶

- From the outset, human beings are created as male and female in the image of God, that is, as relational beings – both with regard to their mutual relationship and in their relationship with God.
- On this basis follows the surprising insight that only God is fully human. To be human as the imago dei, as the image of God, means becoming human in the sense of being oriented to God as the genuine human. Insofar as God becomes incarnate in us, we will become human. “Jesus embodied God in his own person in order to show us how we can embody God. And to incarnate God is what it

means to be fully human”.²⁷ In other words: the classical Eastern Orthodox theological concept of “theopoiesis” can be understood as “becoming truly human”. This, of course, in the tradition of the apophantic theology of e.g. Gregory of Nazianz, means that also the truly human, which is the divine, cannot be defined, controlled and manipulated. It transcends our perception and, to become truly human, needs the inspiration of God’s spirit.

- When the prophet Ezekiel, overwhelmed by this vision falls down on his face copying the proskynesis, the humiliation of the people in front of the Ancient Near East emperors, God puts him on his feet by saying: “O, human child, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you. And when he spoke to me, a spirit entered into me and set me on my feet.” (2:1f.). God does not want God’s children to live with a servile mentality. They have to confront the powers that be, as Ezekiel is being told, and therefore, they need a bold spirit.
- This is again confirmed in the book of Daniel in the famous vision in chapter 7. The world’s empires appear as carnivorous beasts, who are confronted and overcome by the Kingdom of God with a human face: “I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven” (v. 13).²⁸ And God says that the power of the imperial beasts is limited in reach and time, but that the power of the human

one is enduring. This power of the human one is incarnated in the true Israel, the people of God, living the Torah, the just orders of God towards life. This is being taken up again in calling Jesus, the Messiah, the “human one”, which means the ultimate incarnation of the human, i.e. God. Jesus himself often refers to this text (cf. e.g. John 1:51).

- It is well known that the center of Jesus’ life and message is the Kingdom of God. On the basis of the linkage between God and the humane the term “Kingdom of God” should be translated, “God’s dominion-free human order”. It has to be understood in contrast to the repressive structures of this world order:
 - The patriarchal order and the suppression of women and children;
 - Economic exploitation and the impoverishment of entire classes of human beings and the earth;
 - The family as the main instrument, by which children are socialized into submissive roles and values;
 - Hierarchical power structures, which favor the strong and disadvantage the weak;
 - The reversal of justice by those who, in so doing, defend privileges;
 - Racist arrogance and ethnocentrism;
 - The entire sacrifice system with its beliefs in holy violence.²⁹

Accordingly, in *Matthew 25:31-46* in the parable of the epiphany of Jesus in the poor, all men and women and all peoples shall be judged by whether they helped “the least” of these brothers and sisters to satisfy their basic needs: hunger, thirst, clothing, shelter, health and freedom. Jesus’ entire life, words, actions, as well as his risk to lose his life for the sake of God’s kingdom was to this one end: to liberate the relational humanity in human beings and to help him/her to a breakthrough.

Patristic theology has developed this biblical theology into a great *Trinitarian dynamics of relationships* as Sigurd Bergmann has shown in his book on ecological liberation theology on the basis of *Gregory of Nazianz*.³⁰ Gregory lived in the end phase of the Roman Empire under similar conditions like under neo-liberal imperial capitalism today: splitting of society in rich and poor, expansion of trade and money economy, degradation of the soil, dismantling of social coherence, but also growing movements of countervailing power. His response to this context is intriguing. I quote from the summary of Bergmann’s book (p. 364):

“13. Ascribing central significance to the distinction between the three divine hypostases in his overall understanding of God leads Gregory to develop his soteriology in a fashion that includes a more differentiated understanding of the trinitarian economy. For Gregory the unity of the divine

essence necessarily derives from the infinite interconnection between the three different parts of the Trinity in the one perfect community of will and power.

14. In Gregory's understanding of the world, communality comes to expression as good inner-worldly and human relationality understood as a mix, composition, interconnection, and union of all creaturely existence; it comes to expression positively as peace, beauty, and nonviolence, and negatively as any disruption or damage to these relations. In construing the integration of human beings into creation from both a corporeal and a spiritual perspective, Gregory is actually defining his position topologically-dynamically rather than anthropocentrically. On his view human beings function as God's image in and for the world; the unity of creation is conceived as continuity, totality, and good order within the world, and the creation community itself is understood as a community of communication.

15. Gregory understands the correspondence between God and the world from the perspective of sociality in three stages: (a) God's own creative social communication or mediation; (b) the trinitarian movement of the cosmos whose creatures move either toward or away from God; and (c) the liberation of creation from evil as a movement of the triune God and the world."

Hermeneutically, i.e. for unleashing the significance of this biblical and patristic message in relation to the global situation today, it is of high importance to see how originally *other cultures and religions* in the same socio-historic contexts responded to the new economy and its ecosocial consequences. The *Buddha* in India concentrated on prevailing over greed, aggression, and illusionary consciousness in order to overcome the suffering of the people.³¹ It is not by accident that Buddhist economists are now among the most lucid critics of capitalism and are designers of a new personal and collective alternative.

In China *Laotse* demonstrated that in line with the Dao (the Way) the soft and female like water prevails over the hard male approach. *Confucius*, under the concept of “rectification of names” asks for the submission of individual interests to the common good.

In *Islam* we see a second wave of renewal of the spirituality of the Axial Age. The context is Muhammad’s struggle with rich merchants in Mecca. Here the particular emphasis is on overcoming the taking of interest as the institutionalizing of greed and on promoting justice by sharing wealth. The oneness of God prohibits making money an idol, and God’s graciousness requires sharing with the poor (*zakat* and *sedakah*). Islamic banks have developed on this basis and constitute an interesting approach when it comes to devising financial alternatives today.

If we look at the classical *Greek philosophy* of that period, we find a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, it brought fundamental insights into the nature and consequences of the money economy, from Socrates to Aristotle. Particularly the latter presented pivotal reflections on the dangerous illusions created by money (when used for accumulation) and on ethical and political ways to protect society from their destructive effects.³² On the other hand, this philosophy, especially in its Platonic version, also laid the foundation for reducing reality to what fits into mathematical models and also for authoritarian political structures (with a male bias) — prefiguring western modernity.

So we do have *inter-cultural and inter-religious resources for developing a relational paradigm for theological education* even from the times of the first type of property and money driven economies. In all these religions and philosophies we see liberation theologies and engaged movements confronting the death-bound capitalist civilization on the basis of their original scriptures.³³

Critical and transformative theological education in the service of life in relationships in a globalized mechanistic world

These biblical and ancient visions are supported by new developments in various sciences, particularly in recent brain research and in relational psychology³⁴ in

opposition to modernity. Both from their perspective demonstrate that the original founder of western capitalism's basic scientific assumptions, René Descartes, was empirically wrong. Brain research shows this by pointing to the necessary interaction between thinking, body, feeling and environment (Damasio).³⁵ More specifically the discovery of “mirror neurons” in our brain suggests that we have been created to feel spontaneously with others (empathy).³⁶ When you cut your finger shedding blood others who see it will automatically feel pain with you. The same applies for our empathy with animals. So it is not true that we are created as isolated individuals competing in a war of all against all.

Relational psychology (in contrast to individualistic, drive-oriented theoretical methods) shows that the human subject emerges from inter-subjectivity, i.e. from the relation between the self and its relating partners.³⁷ Here we can draw upon the object-relation theory³⁸ and especially the trauma psychology,³⁹ but also on Eric Fromm.⁴⁰ The object-relation theory in essence stresses that, from infancy onwards, a person is not to be understood as an isolated individual, but rather as a relational being – beginning with the baby-mother relationship. However, instead of the Cartesian language “object-relation” I prefer to use the language of Levinas by saying that the “self” emerges in relation to “others” – the first usually being the child's mother, his/her first “reference person”. In

the course of a child's further development, the adult partner, however, does not consist of only one person. On the contrary, society at large, groups within society and political and economic institutions also become partners and mobilize early childhood experiences and the psychological patterns of the infant, albeit via his/her experiences of specific persons.

The above perspective can be called that of *primary inter-subjectivity*, inter-subjectivity referring to the ultimate relatedness of the emerging psychological subject, and with it I am in agreement with Winnicott's ingenious statement: "There is no such thing as a baby". In other words, relational psychologists are convinced that one cannot examine a baby without starting from the relational unity of baby-mother. We can speak of the birth of subjectivity only with reference to its emergence from inter-subjectivity; the structural building of the developing personality points to the basic, real experiences in the inter-subjective sphere and the internalization of these experiences. On this basis H.E. Richter develops a way from the "I-society" toward a "we-society".⁴¹ This does not mean that the "I" is being extinguished. On the contrary: a "self" gets strongest through mutuality, as person in community. Essential to this is the acceptance of one's own given limits and one's own death, so that one must not be continuously driven to strive for invulnerability and superior strength.

What I said about relational brain research and relational psychology could be complemented by other sciences. Physics transcended the Newtonian mechanistic approach and the Cartesian subject-object division already a hundred years ago with Einstein's theory of relativity. Biology has embarked on studying the wonderful dynamics of networking living organisms – even being used as basis for a new economic paradigm (D. Korten).⁴² So even in the West we find the beginnings of a new epistemology and a new cultural paradigm, transcending the male, conquering, violent and destructive approach of capitalist modernity. In the USA a new school is trying to capture this transdisciplinary new paradigm under the concept of “ecospirituality”.⁴³

If we link this with other cultural resources outside the West we may hope for a diversified universal search for a new cultural and epistemological paradigm. E.g. in 1999 representatives of organizations of *indigenous people*, NGOs and networks from Asia, Africa and Latin America issued the “Indigenous Peoples’ statement on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) of the WTO Agreement” under the title “No to patenting of Life!”⁴⁴ Here we read among others:

“We, indigenous peoples from around the world, believe that nobody can own what exists in nature except nature herself. A human being cannot own its own mother. Humankind is part of Mother

Nature, we have created nothing and so we can in no way claim to be owners of what does not belong to us. But time and again, western legal property regimes have been imposed on us, contradicting our own cosmologies and values”. Consequently they demand:

“Allow for the right of indigenous peoples and farmers to continue their traditional practices of saving, sharing, and exchanging seeds; and harvesting, cultivating, and using medicinal plants...”

This shows that relationality is not only fundamental to human relations but to the whole oikos of creation. It is exactly this view that was worked out in the WCC-CWM ChangSeong Consultation, quoted in the beginning. Referring to *Ubuntu* and *Sangsaeng* the report states:

“*Ubuntu* is an expression of human relations lived in community and in harmony with the whole of creation (‘African anthropology and cosmo-vision lived in community’). *Sangsaeng* is an ancient Asian concept ‘of a sharing community and economy which allows all to flourish together’.

In the shifting demography of Christianity, with Christians from the South now forming the majority, Christians are presented with the privilege and responsibility to formulate an alternative expression of Christian faith constructed around:

- new ways of relating
- openness to theological expressions rooted in the cultures of the South, and
- an agenda which reflects the issues and concerns of the peoples of the South
- a commitment to building bridges of understanding and hope, and deepening relationships between North and South...

In presentations and discussion we learnt of *Ubuntu* and *Sangsaeng* as exemplifying African and Asian paradigms of life-giving forces that call us into harmony with one another and with God's creation. Resonating with the biblical concept of *koinonia*, we received *Ubuntu* and *Sangsaeng* as necessary resources for the struggle with the critical issues of theology, civilization and ecumenism in the 21st century...

The convergence of *Ubuntu* and *Sangsaeng* highlights the conviviality and relationality of all God's creation, while offering a possibility of reflecting, analyzing and protecting life based on the *Ubuntu* principle 'I am because you are, you are because I am'. Both these principles are about the eradication of hate, anger, private wealth without sharing, oppression, exploitation as well as harmony and peace with the cosmos."

With these words the participants of that consultation challenge us to transform our theology towards a life-giving civilization.

So analogous to the ancient times, called “axial time”, we have a growing *inter-cultural and inter-religious convergence today* against a disembedded, individualistic economy splitting society into rich and poor and destroying nature by stimulating individual competition towards accumulation of wealth and power. Besides these convergences between Jewish, Christian, Buddhist as well as African, Asian and indigenous traditions we could also mention Islam and some traditions in Hinduism (as e.g. revived by Gandhi). This could also be seen in the Colloquium 2000 organized by Kairos Europa in cooperation with an ecumenical alliance in Germany and WARC and the WCC at the international level.⁴⁵ We were particularly intrigued by the fact that there are networks in Buddhism and Islam specifically engaging in social and ecological justice work.⁴⁶

Of course, all spiritual and psychological healing, liberation and mobilization does not help the larger society and the earth if there were not *real possibilities of economic and political, life enhancing alternatives*. In this context a few hints must suffice. In Kairos Europa we speak of a multiple strategy necessary for really transforming the political economy:

- In order to withdraw energy from the system we need to first de-legitimize it by confronting

the ideology with reality and secondly defy and resist concretely certain structures and policies. This is possible because the capitalist imperial globalization is full of contradictions and leads to ever more dangerous crises.

- In order to nurture life we can develop ecosocial economies in solidarity locally and regionally as well as build broad alliances in civil society for macro-economic and macro-political changes including a new property order from below.⁴⁷ Key starting points for this approach are the overcoming of agro-business by life-giving agriculture⁴⁸ and the defense of public goods and services for the satisfaction of basic needs of all – against the hurricane of privatization. The recent changes in Latin American governments suggest that, after serious and persistent work of social and ecumenical movements⁴⁹ also political institutions can be changed to serve the people.

Conclusions for theological education

What are the concrete conclusions for theological education from the preceding context analysis, the trans-disciplinary, inter-cultural and inter-religious resources for judging and the concrete alternatives for transforming the dominating system and civilization in the service of the life of all creation? Let me put my findings in the form of theses.

Thesis 1

In a situation of notorious asymmetry within the global power system the place of church, theology and theological education is *at the side of the losers – people and nature*. This means that theological education has to start with the praxis of theological students in concrete struggles for life – e.g. in ecological agriculture, as Park, Seong-Won is trying in Korea,⁵⁰ in initiatives for eco-social economies of solidarity, as Marcos Arruda is working for in Brazil and elsewhere have embarked on, and in social and democratic movements in all continents.⁵¹ It is there where theological education can help to meet the triune God of the Bible – the God of Israel, the liberating messiah, and the inspiration of relational faithfulness – who asks us to co-operate in God’s healing and liberating work towards justice, peace and creation in order to develop a new culture of life.

Thesis 2

As the system of neo-liberal globalization is absolutizing the capitalist market and the political, scientific-technological power in the form of “empire with imperialism”, it has not only to be constantly and concretely analyzed but also to be rejected and resisted as a matter of faith. Here, the status confessionis has to be claimed regarding lethal economic systems, weapons of mass destruction and the dramatic ecological crisis. Theological education,

therefore, has not only to be engaged in developing a *new epistemology and praxis for eco-social analysis with trans-disciplinary methods but also in ideology critique*.

Thesis 3

As the system is instrumentalizing religion and spiritualities in order to legitimize the asymmetry of power (empire) and wealth (fetishism of capital) theological education has to be a protagonist of the *critique of religion, starting with self-critique*.

Thesis 4

In order to realize the power of our *biblical traditions* for responding to the life-endangering imperial capitalist globalization it is imperative to re-read them with contextual, interdisciplinary methods. Helping the people of God and particularly the theological students to understand how the Bible responds to the first form of property and money based market economies and empires is an essential task of theological education. In view of the inter-cultural and inter-religious situation in most countries today it is also of high importance to understand how *other religions, philosophies and wisdoms* then and now responded and respond to their specific contexts. Here we need to strengthen the cooperation between theology, history of religion and cultural studies.

Thesis 5

As the dominating system is built on the competition of individuals and groups for maximum wealth and power, theological education should make the concept and praxis of “*relationality*” or “persons in community” in all dimensions including the cosmos on the basis of Trinitarian theology its *focal point*. This has implications at all levels and in all dimensions starting with gender justice: creating alternatives to patriarchy, class and caste divisions, race discrimination, destructive exploitation of nature etc. In terms of praxis this is already being done in the diversified forms of theological education by extension because people are not taken out of their communities while studying theology. But in order to unfold the theoretical and theological implications of relationality we also need a trans-disciplinary, inter-cultural and inter-religious approach.

Thesis 6

In order to experience and later to teach the biblical message that “Another World is Possible” those involved in theological education should simultaneously be actively involved in social, peace and/or ecological movements. In this way visions – at least in fragmentary form – can be implemented sustaining hope. This may take place at the local and regional and/or at the national and international alliance-building level. Here, the ongoing ecumenical

processes of the last decade are extremely helpful: the processus confessionis regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction, *leading to the Accra Confession*,⁵² the WCC AGAPE (Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth) process, leading to the Bogor statement Economy of Life⁵³ and the other important documents, accepted at the 10th Assembly of the WCC in Nov. 2013 (esp. those on mission and the financial system). At the same time Pope Francis issued the Apostolic letter “*Evangeliu Gaudium*”, stating that “this economy kills”. So we have a broad ecumenical consensus, that we have to work for another culture of life.

Given the fact that many of our mainline churches still suffer from assimilation to the individualism and imperialism of modern, bourgeois capitalist societies, a relational theological education along these lines would not only strengthen the healing and liberating forces in our endangered world, groaning in birth pain for a new life. It would also help in bringing back the churches to their biblical roots and, on that basis, cooperating in God’s work in all faith communities and eco-social movements. It would contribute greatly towards building a new domination free, life-giving order with a human face.

Transformative Energy Through Relationality:
Feminist Ethics Explorations From Latin America

Maryuri Mora Grisales

Knowing is not simply a passive capacity to grasp things in their own isolated locations. Knowing is a particular skill of intervening in reality through imagining relations among the elements issued from the collective and individual experience.

(Otto Maduro, 1999)

This quote from Otto Maduro contains some key elements for rethinking the paradigms of knowledge, especially when the perspective is transformation and the search for a new life with dignity in our shared sphere. Initially, Maduro introduces his text criticizing the model of knowing and its claim of objectivity as if knowing was an isolated act. He also points to its inherent political dimension, that is, its necessary registration in an agenda engaged with specific changes in reality. Imagination is considered as a decisive part of this process. And finally experience, personal as well as collective, constitutes the *locus* of this transformation that only happens within a relation. So many ideas for our journey!

Situating myself from the perspective of encounter and its engagement with a transformative education, I begin with some questions that can help us to reflect on the subject. Would it be enough to put the word “transformative” as a modifier of the word “education” so that we can inspire a real epistemic change that may support a new comprehension of both knowing and the pedagogical process? Is it really education

that we need to rethink? What happens to education when we imagine other models of subjectivity and collective experience in the world? These questions are framed by some suspicions and some assumptions. The first assumption is that we must abandon the idea of education as being an objective structure of exchanging knowledge and information – no one believes in this any more, at least I hope not – and begin to think of education as a continuous process of reconstructing our ways of being in the world.

Keeping these introductory ideas in mind, I will try to sketch some critical reflections and analysis of reality from a feminist and ethical perspective, starting from my own experience and perception of the contexts that constitute and define my life. I want to focus on some challenges that we need to face, and try to imagine some transformations and possible alternatives to this capitalist, colonialist, racist, and patriarchal world that continues to attempt to break us down, but against which we will never stop resisting.

My location... The crossing of my boundaries.

Feminism is so much more than just a struggle of women for women. Feminism needs to go, and today more than ever, far beyond a movement that struggles against a one and exclusive form of oppression, “patriarchy.” It is precisely feminism that allows me to criticize and deconstruct this “woman” subject, built *a priori* and exalted as an essence, even in trying

to explain women's oppression. This oppression is never something exclusively based on gender; it is a contextually located oppression, potentialized and multiplied by other ideological systems of subalternization such as racism, colonialism, heterosexism and capitalism.

In my daily life, feminism just happens when I protest with some girlfriend against abusive use of force and racism committed by the police in the streets of Brazil when two black teenagers are peacefully walking while eating ice cream. Weapons are pointed at them, along with the power given by the state, threatening in an unjust and violent way those black youth. They are pushed against the wall, in any given night, apparently because they may be suspected of something. Black people are always suspect in Brazil, in the U.S., and in Colombia. For example, two out of three murders committed in Brazil are of black youth between 15 and 24, as is shown by the Map of Violence (2013). Indignation and anger, along with a physical and verbal positioning against a concrete type of oppression become radical feminist actions. These actions don't involve the feminine subject as a victim, but the feminine subject struggling against all the mechanisms and structures producing victims.

This is a feminism that resists racism and the militarization of the police in Brazil. It raises its voice, firm and strong, against all kinds of violence against women (femicide, economic, symbolic, and

sexual violence) in the majority of our Latin American countries. This is a feminism that understands the crucial importance of being allied with other struggles: against genocide of black population, against violence suffered by the ancestral and native peoples in their territories, against religious fundamentalism, as well as against the cooptation of the many forms of life and subjectivity by capitalism in its universal character.

Growing up between Colombia and the Christian God

I am 28 and I grew up in a large family, between home, school and the street of the periphery neighborhoods in Cali – the third most important city of Colombia, and sadly the fourth most violent city in the world. I grew up in a fervent evangelical family and in a context of the troubled political and economical life in my country, where bombs and the most “creative” murders happen every day. Guerrillas, the army, paramilitary groups, drug dealers and violence constitute our “daily bread.” Although this restless context is a real dangerous environment for anyone, I don’t remember having fear of it. In fact, as sad as it may sound, I grew up believing that all these situations were “normal.”

In the middle of all that, praying, singing and going to church were fundamental parts of the routine. Eventually, however, I began to question God. I felt I could do so because I had been taught the theology of

a personal God; he was for me a friend, a protecting father, an accessible strong person, a man!

As I walked through life, my faith and my doubts always accompanied me. No answer came. An all-powerful, beneficent god didn't make any sense in the Colombian context, nor within my family and our daily difficulties to survive. In fact, an exclusively masculine, all-powerful god does not make sense under any circumstances of subalternity. No theodicy is enough in the poor neighborhoods of Cali or São Paulo. That said, we need only to look at the growth and strength of some of the Pentecostal churches for confirmation that some theodicies apparently do satisfy many marginalized people. To understand this phenomenon, I decided to study theology, and it was finally my encounter with liberation theology and feminist theology which allowed me to keep my faith.

Challenging contexts... When water is a privilege of the few

The city of São Paulo is facing today an unprecedented social, economical and environmental catastrophe. According to some analysts, no later than June of this year, the water system supplying the city of São Paulo may completely run out of water. In the middle of the chaos and worry, there is no plan B to solve or minimize the impacts. It means that 6 million people will run out of water or will have very little water in the next months. Rationing has happened in different

places, especially in the peripheries and in downtown. We don't need to be experts on water or geographic and political issues to understand the chaos that would result from this or the troubles it would cause to the city, to say nothing of the impact it would have on the country.

According to information issued from the sewage system department of the city (December 2014), about 37% of the clean water in Brazil is wasted. In the same year, a UN report showed the limitations of the Brazilian government on the subject. The low investment in sewage treatment has resulted in higher costs for public health. The report also shows the relation between the income of some citizens in some regions and the deficit of water. Considering the logic underpinning this situation, a logic that deals with water as commodity, only those who can buy it will have it.

The reasons of this crisis around the water system are not simply a result of climatic changes or global warming or any other “natural” factors. In the case of São Paulo, the bad management of the governor,¹ the politics of consumerism and urbanism, the amount of water invested in the agro business, and waste or smuggling are all contributing factors to the situation.

Sao Paulo's citizens are in anguish, mostly those who live at the periphery and are the poorest—men and women of all ages whose survival is dependent upon the functioning of the water supply in their

public or commercial establishments (like restaurants, stores, etc.), many of which are already closing down because of the lack of water. This water crisis appears disconnected from the big picture, but in fact it is part of the larger, overwhelming forces of economic domination on a global scale. It is part of the political and culturally cursed legacy of five hundred years of colonialism, as well as a part of the neocolonialism realized nowadays under different and creative forms of camouflage in the biggest cities of Latin America.

A feminist systemic perspective: another ethics, another spirituality.

The water crisis in São Paulo is the reflection of a global crisis related to natural resources and the limits of the system of production and consumerism of our time. It demonstrates the need to stop with the structures of domination that are threatening the very possibility of life on our planet. The fact that this crisis is affecting some sectors of the population more than others reminds us that in this system there are some lives that are worth more than others. This is what some theologians have called “idolatry of the market” (MO SUNG, 2008:174), wasted lives, a “natural” byproduct of capitalism, revealing its most dehumanized fashion. Jung Mo Sung explains how the economical logic of society asks for sacrifices as necessary for progress. This is what he calls “the sacrificial circuit of the bourgeois myth” (2008:74-178).

The sacrifices of some result in benefits for others. So, *for whom* is the actual economical model “sustainable”, viable, or profitable?

This question prevents us from easily accepting any project or agenda that claims totality in the face of the multiple cultures we have today. On the other hand it recognizes the inequality inherent in the system. This inequality prevents us from naively thinking of a better world for all without producing radical changes.

The first critical question we must ask is about the concrete effects and the plausibility of any political and ideological project. For instance the notion of sustainability could only make sense when we locate ourselves in the western paradigm that thinks in hierarchical terms of control and domination of the resources. The peoples and traditions linked to earth think otherwise (Starhawk, [1989]1994: 203). If we think of other forms of comprehension of the world and our relation to nature not through domination and superiority, it wouldn't be necessary to make the planet “sustainable.” There would be some other and more useful and dynamic expressions such as *participating with, relating to, taking care of*. But how could we step “outside” the interpretive dynamics of the system we criticize? According to Ximena Bedregal, we think with the same categories that prevent us from assuming that what is not working is the founding paradigm (1994: VIII-IX).

The wrong diagnosis of the problem will inevitably lead to the wrong solution. It is wise to take a turn in the analysis. Which way? We need to comprehend the world in a complex and interrelated way. There is no way to think about a common and inhabitable earth as long as we resist thinking about radical transformations of the economical system and the forms of production and consumerism (Michael Löwy, 2011). We also need to understand that the effects of the hierarchies of the colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal, world system marked by class, sex, gender, spirituality, language, geography and race are real, and that they work harmoniously.

At this point, the feminist contribution to the discussion around the complex and articulated global system is important and helpful. Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), along with other feminist scholars,² pointed to the notion of intersectionality. It is about effectively recognizing the various and concrete forms in which racism, patriarchy, sexism and class division act upon women bodies producing different levels of subalternity. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza proposed the neologism *kyriarchy* as an analytical and diagnostic instrument for the study of the multiplicative and inter-related structures of gender, race and class, as well as its discursive inscriptions and ideological reproductions (Schüssler-Fiorenza: 2009:137). With this category we go from a dualistic hierarchical western paradigm to a systemic paradigm. It implies

not only the solution, but also the comprehension of the problem.

We need to seek a solution to those problems while considering their ethical, political and theological dimensions. However, we need to consider that traditional ethics is supported by a hierarchical culture; it is thought of in terms of male rights of ownership of the land resources. It is based on duties, rights, power, authority and freedom. It is about an ethics sustained by absolute principles and naturalist arguments that protect the interests of domination. How could such an ethics oppose the hierarchical, monolithic, and indolent system that produces victims all over the world?

If our objective is to dismantle ideas of domination so that we can search for transforming relationships that protect and enhance life, and not only of the few, we must purge and then reconstruct the ethical criteria. In this sense, we must recognize the importance of the contribution of feminist ethics as it brings another comprehension of the world, nature, and human relationships. “Composed by heterogeneous concepts, it stands out its criticism towards universalist norms such as neutrality, rationality, justice, etc.” (Hofmann, 2008:66). This is a contextual, located and politicized ethics. It criticizes abstract rules and it assumes a moral perspective that goes beyond philosophical orientation of value, considering the context,

responsibility and relations involved at the moment of any ethical decision-making.

Theological and political challenges

A feminist ethic is related to traditional Christian ethics as a critique and an alternative (Haney [1980] 1994: 10). As criticism, it must acknowledge that the ecological crisis of the planet, and human life in general, is not only related to the economic system, but also to mythic and symbolic structures. It is also related to the power relations that sustain hierarchical systems of thought and the violence at the base of our culture. According to Dorothe Sölle, both patriarchal and authoritarian religions, as well as science, are “mechanisms of society that form our thoughts and destroy our ability to feel (sensitivity)” (Sölle, [1992]1994:318). That said, feminist ethics takes on the challenge to develop new metaphors, imagining, creating and taking on new concepts and new practices. It is not possible to continue using irrelevant and idolatrous metaphors of God, ignoring that there are concrete effects in the real life and in relations of power that are established in the world.

The dialogue needs to be open to other religious traditions. When talking about the challenge of ecological justice, Spivak argues that such a dream can hardly be achieved by invoking any of the so-called great world religions for the story of their greatness is deeply embedded in the narrative of the ebb and flow

of power. "I have no doubt that we must learn to learn with the original philosophical practices of the world..." (1999: 383)

This statement becomes a challenge for feminist Christian tradition. What does it mean, in theological terms, to recognize the limitations of our own religious tradition and take on a critical dialogue with other experiences, worldviews and spiritualities? Women within the different religions highlight elements of an eco-feminist spirituality connected to the Earth and the life in a large and interconnected way. Starhawk, for instance, lists three components of spirituality based on the Earth: immanence, interconnection and compassion ([1989] 1994: 204-206). These elements remain relevant today more than ever. In the historical experience of women, and from a critical perspective, those elements not only contradict the traditional ethics in its transcendental and individualistic form, they also indicate concrete ways for transformation in this struggle.

When the struggle for life is taken as the main criteria, this life in its plurality and complexity will inevitably disturb the hegemonic and monolithic Theological discourse. Today we are in a liminal zone for the paradigm of Latin American liberation theology, and I think this is good. Perhaps it would not be wise to try too quickly to move to a new paradigm, nor to neglect the contributions of the former. We should try to locate ourselves in the middle of the conflict, in the

convergence, in a continuous criticism and with the adequacy of the focus of our thinking and acting. This liminal zone implies thinking “in the midst of” and not “starting from.” In the midst of generational dialogue (and not from a specific generation). In the midst of confessional dialogue (and not only from one or two religions). Among the plural knowledge and practices (and not from theology as a discipline “separated from other disciplines”).

This *in-between* exercise to stay in the liminal zone of the paradigm assumes that the words and divine intuitions happen in the middle of multiple voices, as in Pentecost. After all, this is a critical theology that chooses the margins, and margin is understood here as the space of a “complex negotiation of identities (human and divine)” (Althaus-Reid, 2001: 32). I dream of this open place of real dialogue, exchange, touch, relationship. A place where there is no fear of conflict and disorder, but takes all this in its own creative potential.

The transformation of the current unjust and oppressive conditions should remain our ethical and political horizon. And in the process, as stated by Kwok Pui-lan, imagination is essential, “for what we cannot imagine we cannot live into and struggle for” (2005: 30). It is possible to imagine another God, and to imagine that other realities for Cali and Sao Paulo are possible and that other relationships among humans, nature and technology are possible. Dreaming and

imagining are two powerful verbs. On the practical level, it is fundamental to point out the need for a serious critical engagement with the various victims of the system and their struggle for liberation.

Transformative relations erotically inspired

The life enhancing pedagogical process is rooted in resistance to the powers that crush life and our common home. Thus, it is only in relationship where I can envision with hope this transforming power. This relational way requires the formulation of new questions and continuous researches. In Ecology of knowledge, Felix Guatari declares the urgency of re-orienting the concepts and forging new paradigms that are preferably of ethical and aesthetic inspiration to answer ecological concerns (Guatari, 1990: 18). Edouard Glissant will say that such paradigms must be also poetic (Glissant, 2002), and I suspect that they also need to be erotic.

Erotic inspiration for new paradigms is about the recognition of Eros as a vital force that guides our dreams. It is also the affirmation of the subject and the consideration of the body as the *locus* of transformational power throughout any educational process, whether individual or communitarian. This potential is necessarily related to a distinctive definition and experience of power (Brock, 1988: 367). It is about moving from a unilateral power based on domination to a personal power that emerges from the

erotic relationship. I believe that a strengthened self, and an assumed and celebrated erotic energy is able to transform lives and generate strong and meaningful relationships on a daily basis

Who could ever deny the erotic force underpinning the revolt against police abuse, or the disagreement on the context of violence in which it grows? The erotic force is essential for the questioning of idolatrous images of the divine and the struggle against *kyriarchal* capitalism manifested in high costs of transportation, the misery of minimum wages, the commodification of bodies (mostly female bodies), the privatization of water and health, and land expropriation of our native people? These are actions that are born out of our intimacy and from the depths of our perception of being connected. In all of this, eroticism is present.

For bell hooks Eros intensifies our efforts for self-realization and can provide an epistemological basis to understand and explain how we know what we know (Hooks, 2010: 118). Here the question for an education that transforms is answered. We learn, we produce knowledge and exist in an endless dance of threads that are woven in the act of feeling and living with ourselves, with others, and with nature in a responsible and conscious way.

The experience of resisting and sharing with others inspires theological adventures that are able to integrate particular ways of inhabiting the world. It's

the body in relationship, our body with the body of the world and the body of god.

So theologically I share and celebrate Nancy Cardoso's "*prophetic vision of the past*", her reading of Genesis chapter 3. By stating that "the body invents the world erotically" she opposes the *Creator Logos* (controller) to a *creator Eros* (desirous and creative). It is Eve's eroticism that creates the desired, which moves and invents alternatives (2001: 135).

Conclusion

The world is not a closed system but a great web in continuous construction. We weave and are woven from different points of contact and friction. This metaphor of a web points to the processes and relates to the connections and relationships, which is my nodal point of reflection. The poetics of relationship start from this fluid dimension of changes and exchanges. At the same time, it celebrates the complexity and multiplicity of world dimensions in which we live. Thus the imagery of god, my reality and experience of struggle, as well as the suffering and global crisis contexts affecting us, are all intimately interconnected. They are linked to a number of other relationships that happen in our daily life. It's the infinite interdependence of all existing things.

As I mentioned earlier, all learning emerges in the very processes of relationality, including those in which we profit and those in which we lose. The

subject of this process is a subject in relation. The practice of being “in” and “with” as well as being “against” any negation of life is what constitutes it as a subject.

The challenge ahead is reinventing the relationships, uprooting and “indecenting”³ concepts, metaphors and images that constitute our universe’s limited sense, empty and hypocritical. Forging other interactions with ourselves, with our bodies, with the earth, with transcendence. Therefore, the ethical, erotic poetry is a valuable proposal for an epistemological and theological reconstruction. There are multiple roots and knots nourishing our ground, illuminating and pointing out paths full of self-love, strength and justice.

Finding the links between individual and collective practices and our ethical and symbolic imagery is thus an absolute path for the transformation we dream about. Therefore, we are tired of a powerful god that can do nothing, tired of an idolatrous system empty of Eros and relationality, a divinity-system that they keep selling us again and again as a cheap commodity in our Latin American Christianity. So I will imagine god as a feminist companion, a friend of struggle, a partner walking and suffering together in the search for alternatives against the powers that negate life. I will also see god happening in transformative relationalities.

The indignation and anger against the thousand tentacles of domination become powerful feelings

that need to be channeled in interventions producing transformation. In the end they will just be no more than little answers to a huge problem. It is there, within this seeming disparity where its strength lies. Small answers, small acts of resistance are interruptions in the continuum of history, destabilizing it from within, breaking its totalizing and absolute claims. It is about challenging the logic of the system with another (non) logic, forging small changes that become utopian moments. It is through the work of ants that we increase our power for transformation (Kyung 2006: 249) in the middle of this great and beautiful web of life.

Post-development, Difference and Socio-cultural
Identities: The Divine *in-between* as a contribution
to the Epistemology of Ecotheology

Nicolás Panotto

Introduction

This brief presentation has as its objective to provide a forum for dialogue between contemporary Latin American contributions encompassing sustainability and the environment, the underlying concepts of nature and theology. As we know, the themes of ecology have mutated over the course of time (especially in recent decades), from more pragmatic and sectorized approaches to those more epistemologically, methodologically and philosophically focused, where “ecology” is no longer seen as an ad hoc theme but as a framework where diverse disciplines and fields intersect. From which point the key elements in relation to diverse problems analyzed in this field, where relationships of power, political dynamics, the history of colonization and western ontology among other elements can be questioned and deconstructed.

In this case, we focus specifically on the theme of development, particularly what has been referred to as post-development, where economic, political and socio-cultural issues converge as indivisible elements in the analysis of the relationship between social dynamics and its effects on the environment. More precisely, we concentrate on the work of Arturo Escobar, a Colombian anthropologist who is one of the representatives of the Decolonial Turn (Latin America’s version of Post-colonial theory), especially regarding themes that refer to the economy, as well

as other contributions of a similar nature. From there, we propose some thoughts on what the contribution of these approaches signifies to Ecotheology, specifically in as an epistemological issue.

Post-development: globalization, politics of place and socio-cultural identities

The idea of development emerges in the post World War II context as a discursive, political and ideological element that attempts to set coordinates to organize the reconstruction process in Europe. It stems from the need to create management opportunities that respond to current social ills brought on by global circumstances, as well as the need to dominate the effects of the Cold War (especially the progress of communism) and the need to increment goods market.

Development and under-development are two poles of a differentiation that was issued for the first time by President Truman in 1948. The reconstruction of the world system came along with the affirmation and denial of a discrepancy: development implied reproducing the conditions of the central nations within Third World. In this sense, the idea of development is transformed into a socio-cultural concept that defines the status of certain poles of geopolitics, where a difference is recognized but at the same time creates a dynamic of dominance and submission. Moreover, such categories impose the appropriation of an inevitable process that the

“under-developed” nations must go through to reach the status of development. In other words, these economical and political dynamics are founded and marked in much grander frameworks of socio-cultural meaning. As Arturo Escobar says, “The relationship between the meanings and the practices- and the social relationships in which they are rooted- is being transformed today by the assault on development that involves the loss of consciousness and territory, as well as transforming nature into a commodity.”¹

A concept tied to development is that of planning. In this sense, the State becomes the guarantor of the “social ills” that emerge as a result of the reconfiguration of cities during the process of industrialization. Said changes did not arrive naturally but were imposed thanks to this context. These transformations in the administrative dynamic of the State also create “subjects of government,” which are managed through social, economic and educational systems, becoming dependent upon professionals appointed by the same State.

This not only contributed to the planning of the state apparatus but to the planning of the economy through the development of the market, especially around the end of the 19th century.

The idea of development and underdevelopment as discursive constructs is directly related to the establishing of identities. According to Escobar, analyzing these categorizations from the discursive

perspective allows emphasis to be placed on two central axes: the point of domination and power games, and the understanding of development as “enveloping cultural space.” Through them, the discourse on development has not only created models of economic production but models of production of knowledge, including the understanding of what is known as the Third World, of which then an image is constructed with the sole intention of dominating it.

From here stems the idea that development brings with it a *socio-political imagination*. As Escobar exemplifies, “The social production of space implicit in these terms [Developing World, North and South, Center and Periphery] is tied to the production of differences, subjectivities, and social orders.”² In other words, the idea of development creates “regimes of representation”: meeting places where identities are constructed and where violence is originated and symbolized.³

In this sense, development has played a central role, acting primarily from two types of mechanisms.⁴ On the one hand, *the professionalization of development*, which refers to the set of disciplinary techniques and practices through which the creation, dissemination, and validation of knowledge is organized, managed and controlled. On the other hand, *the institutionalization of development*, which implies the establishment of an institutional field in and

from which, discourses and techniques are produced, remembered, established, modified and put into place.

The discursive implications of the concept of development lead to the consideration of its place within the creation of subjectivities and identities. In this sense, development has been spoken of without questioning its ontological status. Here enters the idea of post-development. Said term encompasses a vast number of theoretical perspectives and frameworks, even though we'll only focus on two: *the politics of place and the resignifying of globalization*. The first recovers the notion of location, which became widespread in the midst of the conglomeration of globalization. Here, the understanding of local culture and place are opposed to the homogenized space limited by modernity, the West and capital. "The focus, therefore, shifts towards the multiple connections between identity, place and power- within the creation of place and the creation of people- without naturalizing or constructing places as sources of authentic and essentialized identities."⁵ To quell these forces by the abstraction of social sciences that deal with the concepts of Capital, Globalization and the State, causes the central place which houses the emergence of otherness and subordinate movements to be lost.

This emphasis on the multiplicity of locations leads to the deconstruction of dichotomous differential mechanisms advocated by the West,

just as is exemplified in the case of the bipolarity of development/underdevelopment. This stems from the questioning of the division between nature and culture, which in turn is the source of other dichotomies, such as theory and practice, reason and emotions, body and mind, place and space, among others. In this sense, cultures that conceive biophysical, human and supranatural elements through intersections and relationships do exist. These elements have been deepened by some Latin American anthropological trends, such as Viveiros de Castro's *amerindian perspectivism or multinaturalism*⁶, where the division between the human and non-human is questioned. For these trends, the sense of plurality not only comes from socio-cultural or symbolical-discursive constructions but from the very multiplicity that falls within nature herself. This leads to the recognition that what is strictly human finds its particular place within a more ample cosmos, where other beings which give the sense of existence can be found.

But we shouldn't simply speak of the deconstruction of ontological and identity-based principles but also highlight the political dimension inherent in the construction of otherness, that questions hegemonic frameworks. Here we find the importance of social movements as a body of multiple political identities that confront the homogeneity of the traditional models. In the words of Escobar, "Politics [...] is also found in the place, not only in the supra levels of

capital or space. The place, it can also be said, is the location of a multiplicity of cultural politics forms, in other words, of the cultural becoming political, as is evidenced in social movements...”⁷

In this vein, Boaventura de Sousa Santos⁸ reclaims these elements from an epistemological perspective, proposing to analyze these instances from a sociology of absences (that accounts for the diversity of forms of absent knowledges) and a sociology of emergences (as a space where the plurality of options is articulated), based on the following characteristics, that represent what this author denominate as the emergent paradigm: all natural scientific knowledge is social science, all knowledge is whole and local, all knowledge is self-knowledge, all scientific knowledge seeks to become common sense.

The second element we want to highlight is the *resignifying of globalization*. The politics of place shows the socio-political importance that the multiplicity characteristic of globalization, which reflects a distinct approach- or at least an uncommon one- has in studies of this field. The majority of the analysis within the social sciences are “capital-centric,” which lead to an understanding centered on certain reductionist categories- primarily within the field of economics- which, on the one hand, do not allow for consideration of other types of elements pertinent in the analysis of globalization, and on the other hand, present capitalism as an ontologically sutured definition,

which offers a certain lineal perspective on its socio-political and cultural effects, leaving to one side the complexities and fissures that this element presents, and from which alternative and subversive practices, that internally contaminate the logic of Capital, emerge. “Capitalism has been vested by such predominance and hegemony, that it has become impossible to think of social reality any other way, much less imagine the abolition of capitalism; all other realities (sustainable economies, bio-diverse economies, developing world resistance, small local cooperatives and initiatives) are seen as opposites, subordinates or at best complementary to capitalism, but never as sources of a significant economic difference.”⁹

In other words, the *place* is the “other” that subverts capitalism. “The notion of externality does not imply an ontological exterior, but refers to an exterior that is precisely made up as different by a hegemonic discourse. With the appeal that one is found within the exterior, the Other becomes the original source of ethical discourse *vis a vis* a hegemonic totality.”¹⁰ The models of culture and knowledge always have local characteristics, typical and specific, in spite of being immersed in more ample structural frameworks. The submission of the multiplicity of locations to the neoliberal and capitalist logics—beyond the multicultural political issues, those which neutralize the plurality as a functional strategy for capitalism and neoliberalism¹¹—needs, precisely, to invert logic and

highlight the issue of place and the plurality intrinsic to the global social field as a locus where all types of structures that intend to be alternative to hegemony (or that present themselves as such) are constructed such as a strategy of subversion and performance against the dominance of space.

Here it becomes important to redefine globalization as a space of pluriversity. The euro-centric concept of globalization—in its socio-cultural and symbolic importance—is an issue that not many studies denounce while giving prevalence to the socioeconomic analysis. It is precisely said euro-centrism, in reality, that acts as an ideological mechanism and puts into play the falsity of how globalization is presented, since within said statement reality is erased from the multiplicity inherent in its make up. As Ernesto Laclau says in regards to the ideological, “what is hidden is the dislocation inherent to that which is presented to itself as a closed identity; the act of concealment consists in projecting in that identity the dimension of closure that it lacks.”¹²

Escobar mentions two elements of the relationship between globalization and development¹³. Firstly, globalization subsumes development; that is to say, developmentalism universalizes and naturalizes. Secondly, globalization and development continue being resisted and negotiated in localities. “Every act of development and counter-development is potentially the seed of an alternative modernity.”¹⁴

In other words, there exists a continual process of re-appropriation (*counterwork*) of the phenomenologies and practices of modernity stemming from the diverse localities that characterize globalization. This implies a transformation within the very notion of modernity that produces three central effects: an alternative development, the construction of alternative modernities and alternatives to the modernity itself.

Here is evidenced what Escobar names as *cultural distributive conflicts*. They derive from three types of “debt” that emerge from the *distributive conflicts* triggered by capitalism. Firstly, the problems of economic distribution embodied in the *foreign debt* that plague the majority of Latin American countries. Secondly, the logocentrism that generates inequality in the acquiring of knowledge as well as grave ecological damages. This is named as *ecological debt*. And lastly, the attempt to impose a unipolar view of reality, that negates cultural differences. In other words, a *cultural debt*.

The idea of *cultural distributive conflicts*, as Escobar names it, emerges: “It is a question of those conflicts that arise from the effective differences of power associated with values and specific cultural practices. They do not arise from the cultural difference in and of itself, but from the difference in relation to the definition of social norms and structures. This concept is a way of signifying, of introducing more directly the relationship between culture and power.”¹⁵ This

implies the advancement of redistributive politics in the fields of economy, ecology, and culture that drive the place of social movements to a local and global level.¹⁶

In conclusion, it can be said that the concept of development has implied an attempt to homogenize a way of defining the geopolitical as well as the ontological condition of its players and its “places” (over and under) of each and every component. In this context, as mentioned, neoliberalism pursues the same origin, naturalizing diverse elements that are considered as the way to obtain development: the structural disarmament of the State, the deregulation of the market, the homogenization of the social field through the absorption of differences (multicultural politics), etc. In other words, neoliberalism reflects the tension and paradox of the current world system that, on the one hand, leans on a strong global regime— with a completely virtual and multi-central economy— and on the other hand, projects different forces aimed at the dissolution of differential identities.

What has been posed thus far allows for some temporary conclusions to be made:

- The skein of socio-political and economic processes that intervene in environmental dynamics stem from fundamental frameworks tied to historic processes and cultural identification, that are inscribed in discursive practices and epistemological world views.

- To deal in depth with ecological problems, it becomes necessary to deconstruct the concepts of nature inherent in economical practices (in a daily and global, personal and community level) and in socio-cultural dynamics, in this case those present in the understanding of development.
- Capitalism and its neoliberal model are sustained within a world view sutured in its ontological status—and in turn its practices—displacing, neutralizing, negating or absorbing every kind of alternative form or plurality inherent in the social field and in turn its dynamics. This worldview gives way to a unidimensionality and (false) absolutization of certain political and economic practices and dynamics of power.
- To undo the worldviews that sustain said practices implies deconstructing their own ontological status, showing the plurality inherent in the field in which they are found. Such display not only questions the closure that makes it absolute but also drives the place of alternative movements and perspectives.
- Within the ecological field, the main element of this process which deconstructs meaning entails the redefining of the understanding of nature, overcoming the human/non-human, society/ecology and human/nature dichotomies among others, demonstrating the ontological fusion of cosmos (Abya Yala Gaia).

The divine *in-between*: ontological deconstruction and constitutive difference as epistemological centers of an Ecotheology

From a theological perspective, there are two elements that contribute to this debate. Firstly, *the need to deconstruct the ontological status of the divine*. Nestor Miguez, Jung Mo Sung and Joerg Rieger¹⁷ have done an exhaustive work showing the connection between the transformations of the modern Western world and the images of God. In this sense, the theological centrality of the Middle Age is not overlooked rather mutated into a belief that humans are divine and hold the position of Supreme Being with respect to the rest of the world. For this reason, theological critique holds much relevance at the hour of carrying out a deconstructing exercise within said field.

In this sense, a theological work that questions the closed images of the divine and the alterity of God just as the divisive border with the world, within history and nature (where the theological anthropomorphisms often contribute), will serve as a critical framework of the functional dichotomies as socio-political dynamics and hegemonic economies. In this case, we find that the division human/non-human, subject/object—rooted in the traditional conceptions of nature and ecology—poses a strong theological backdrop that needs to be re-labeled.

Peter Scott¹⁸ attempts to move in this direction posing that ecotheology require moving from environmental to an *ecology of nature* understanding. Within this approach we take into account the definition of nature as the *in-between* of the relationship of human being and environment. While in the environmentalist perspective nature is found apart from the human being, within an ecological nature the two overlap. In this instance the purpose of theology is to overcome abstract notions of human being and nature, in order to reflect on the “dialectical relationship” between the two.

Beyond Scott’s advanced proposal, the question is whether human/non-human, subject/object, etc. can be seen as relational or not. Are they separate instances and completely identifiable, despite the profound connection that can be made between the two? How is difference identified? Does not the dialectical notion continue segmenting in narrow-minded fashion the objects at stake in this dynamic? In this vein, the *in-between* should not only be posed as a porous frontier and an upstart that *provokes* a crossroads between diverse instances (subject/object, human/non-human) but as a *constitutive* ontological element. In this manner, the difference not only identifies, relates and blends but intersects the make up of any entity. In this instance, which is the subject, which is the object? Can they be firmly distinguished? Can one be

lead to question the particularly human elements that distinguish them from that which is non-human?¹⁹

The *in-between* that characterizes all ontological composition represents the vague space of any certain entity and the space where it is found. The *in-between* characterizes the possibility of transformation, change and process of all segmentation. It is the necessary and inevitable “emptiness” that renders impossible the absolutization and narrow-mindedness of a resolve, naming or practice. In other words, the *in-between* implies the unity of every entity in its becoming and journey, in its composition and constant transformation, in its relationship from difference.

Theologically speaking, the *in-between is the mystery that characterizes the cosmos and from which the divine is defined*. In this sense, we must revisit the dimensions of mystagogy, alterity and transcendence of the divine, where the discursive and historical nominations name the revelation of God but don’t confine God’s being. This allows us to think of a theological epistemology where “the other” in faith and the divine are instances that recognize the very transcendence of nature and with it socio-political, cultural and economic dynamics.²⁰ As Paul Tillich affirms, God precedes all division between subject and object, and cannot be bound by these instances.²¹ This proposal of theological deconstruction is far from abstract being that, on the one hand, it poses a critical dimension—the questioning of all hegemonic practice

that intends to absolutize and stunt the inherent plurality and dynamic of nature—and a purposeful dimension- which evidences and promotes the pluralization of worldviews, discourses and alternative practices.

Further deepening into this last element, the second aspect to keep in mind from a theological perspective is *the construction of an epistemology that allows the building of alternative discourses and worldviews from the ecological field and new notions of nature*. Within Latin American Liberation Theology, we find Leonardo Boff's classic work, *Ecology: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*²², which is one of the most relevant systematic works in the field of ecology, that connects the principle scaffoldings of Latin American Theology—especially the place of the poor—with indigenous worldviews and Trinitarian Theology. Beyond the relevance this work holds, as William Kaizer de Oliveira mentions,²³ Liberation Theology requires a deepening of dialogue with other approaches, especially in what is known as the discursive dimensions of the notion of nature and the place of social and grassroots movements as alternative socio-political and economic practices.

In reconsidering the epistemological, Boaventura Santos de Sousa²⁴ speaks of moving from an abismal thinking characteristic of modernity (where Western knowledge carries out methods of distinguishing between the visible and the invisible, the latter being excluded as a possible foundation of knowledge due

to an impossibility of a co-presence between the two elements), towards a post-abismal thinking such as ecological thought (or ecology of knowledges), where the epistemological processes are as varied as the plurality of historical-cultural experiences. The ecology of knowledges appeals to knowledge as inter-knowledge. From this perspective, theology represents a specific type of construction of knowing, that attempts to enquire around the same mysteries and questions (visibles and invisibles) with which science is faced.

In this vein, Liberation Theology has represented a plurality of epistemic approaches and perspectives by placing the poor in the axiomatic center as a subject of knowledge. Moreover, the fact that said subject was described from a set of ideologically determined characteristics, allowed for the pluralization of the theological discourses from diverse fields and identities. Despite this, Latin American theologies still have the challenge of deepening the epistemological implications of constitutive plurality, with the objective of constructing a theological exercise that promotes the deconstructive dimension of theology, and from there build diverse practices without falling into divided or segmented approaches. In the words of Sallie McFague²⁵, this would help highlight the imaginative instances of theology, which facilitates the delving into “games” of language as a way of understand human and non-human reality.

In conclusion, the plurality inherent in Liberation Theology—which comes from the same elements and subjects from which it is composed—places as the epistemological center the notion of alterity, subject, identities, among others, which give way to a better understanding of the cosmos in a holistic reality: in other words, nature as the place where theology is constructed. As we have mentioned, said epistemological deconstruction implies the advancement of an ecology of knowledges as critical instance, inclusive and committed to knowledge, including social practices (or practices of resistance and the struggle against the foreign, cultural and ecological debt mentioned above).

Conclusions

The analysis of the concept of development helps us see how the questions referring to the ecological and its diverse problems—incribed in the field of the political and economical—stem from a complex discursive and symbolic dynamic, where historical instances, social worldviews and geopolitical dynamics and cultural constructions possess a fundamental, even primary, place. Through this, we can see that the questioning and analysis of these elements comes from instances of the deconstruction of such meanings and practices.

In this vein, the Ecotheology is challenged by the work in its inherent socio-political dimension, as it

enables a framework of deconstruction of meanings and a construction of alternative knowledges and practices. The ecology or environment should not be *ad hoc* thematics but, on the contrary, transversal axis of an understanding of the divine. This epistemological resignification of the theological exercise and of the deconstruction of the divine *onthos* allows us to create a critical hermeneutic as a contribution to Ecotheology, that places the heterogeneity of nature as an instance of the questioning of dichotomies, of practices of oppression and frameworks of hegemonic meaning.

In other words, the imagination that awakens the divine mystery and its alterity, allows us to enter into the *in-between* of nature so that we can question that which intends to evade differences, and from this point drive the imagination of subversive and alternative practices.

On Education and Emancipation

Lilia Solano

As I write this article, there comes news from the distant Canadian Arctic concerning a remarkable aboriginal woman. She is Tanya Tagaq, a singer who is one of many local artists that are rediscovering the roots of a strange oral tradition among native peoples of the Arctic. In her case, is the Inuit's "throat singing," a technique that tries to mimic life in all its complexity. Ms. Tagaq, the first non-white artist to win the prestigious Polaris Award, recently spoke of what lies behind her work.¹ The element of violence is central as it has become even more dramatically naturalized nowadays that operates as driving force behind any single human activity, from domestic life to economic endeavours.

Her words sets, in an eloquent tone, the tone for the reflection I present in the following paragraphs. Thus, I take the liberty to make her into the launching pad of the ideas expressed herein. At the award gala ceremony, her work was introduced as "the sound of a people defying genocide to rise, wounded but alive, strong and ready to fight."² Ms. Tagaq's work is an engagement against colonization and its enduring bent on raping its victims: individuals—mostly children and women—, communities and the earth. One of the tracks in her CD *Animism* bears the title "Fracking." Through moaning and gasping, Tanya Tagaq's worldless song conveys her conviction of what such a ravaging practice entails: "the raping of Mother Earth."

It is my intention to discuss in the following pages the roles that education plays in the emancipatory processes of individuals, communities and peoples by moving forward in two stages. Initially, I will revisit the persisting problem that still has education moored to an age honored object-subject dualism. Ever since Paulo Freire (1972) dismantled it in order to open the new horizons of his liberating pedagogy based on his concept of an education that is constructed on the basis of a subject-subject encounter wherein the educator/apprentice divide is overcome, the until then reigning subject-object pair has reinvented itself thus proving to be imbedded in society as a whole. In this particular aspect I will follow Franz Hinkelammert's (2006)³ critique of what he calls the means-to-end logic which aims at reducing human relationships to its monetary outworkings. Following Horkheimer and Adorno,⁴ Hinkelammert casts doubt on whether what is called real in a context dominated by a means-to-end logic corresponds to the historically verifiable real. How real is reality? The instrumentalization of social interaction and of education stands at the root of a situation that, by perpetuating inequality, leaves violence and oppression unchecked.

Secondly, the question is raised as to what the path forward could be if what is at stake is, let us say it plainly, the future of humanity itself. Special attention will be paid to Noah De Lissovoy as he, together with two feminist theologians (Coakley, 2013; Forcades i Vila,

2011), unpack the concept of the self along lines that could be traced back to the concepts of the I and the You as exposed by Martin Buber (1970).⁵

Before moving on, I would like to include a word on my option to speak of emancipation rather than liberation when it comes to think of alternative pedagogical dynamics. The old cherished concept of liberation was conceived in the context of a debate around the impact of dependency upon the Latin American destiny. The situation was seen as one of a people being oppressed and in the process of breaking free from their chains. Later reflection and action led to recognize that the situation of oppression and liberation was more multilayered than initially thought and thus called for a more nuanced understanding of the situation in the continent. Emancipation as the goal speaks of the new challenges that the social movements in the continent face that could be understood in terms more closely related to the reflection around the pervasive presence of colonialism in the continent. I am not invalidating the liberation imagery and discourses. It is my conviction that, without resolving our issues of oppression, the atmosphere grew heavier in Latin America as we discover that the unfavorable conditions of our peoples keep on worsening.

The problem:

Violence as an organizing principle of society

Violence as an organizing principle of society. The expression belongs to De Livosoy (2010:207). Violence calls into question the problem of power, or at least, makes it a problematic element when it comes to think of and act upon emancipation. As soon as we engage in a dialogue, and mostly so if such an intercourse has emancipation looming on the horizon, it becomes evident that our discourses are pre-determined (Rufin-Pardo, 2014:16). There is a reigning dominant worldview that defines symbols, codes, mores, and thus prearranges the identity traits around which the subject constructs itself.

In spite of the contributions made by the French post-modernist tradition (I beg for such overstatement to be allowed here), the problem of such symbolic violence still goes unaccounted for.⁶ It does not suffice to speak of a self that does not go beyond itself and thus does not interrogate itself as of the nature of its own make up.

Therefore, concepts such as education, educator, apprentice, and so forth, get blurred if our discourses and educational engagements do not question whether such concepts are the results of an economic interaction that is thought out in terms of a means-to-end mentality (Hinkelammert, 2006:ch.II). The very concept of the subject, of the self, of the person thus falls under the iron fist of a for-profit project

that takes captive the will of concrete human beings as they engage with each other in a way that mirrors the overarching economic relationships that determines any and all human interactions (Hinkelammert, 2013:278). We could even say that the symbolic violence as it is exercised by such logic of instrumentation equals to what Buber sees whenever the You of the other (being that other a fellow human being or the earth) is either overlooked or denied altogether. The result is that such You is deprived of its own I and thus rendered an It, which leads to the realization that with an It there is an experience but not a relationship (1970:53 ff).

Relationship is what is called for whenever we speak of education and emancipation. The current state of affairs rests upon an already established network of relationships that reflect the interests of the dominant worldview. Although hierarchical, top-down relationships in pedagogical processes have, for the most part, fallen in disrepute, the relationships of domination still are prevalent. It is not a surprise to admit that even within the very same processes, their agents, liberation movements, and so forth, issues of domination and oppression are ubiquitous.

Therefore, the problem must be restated and reframed. Since the critical point is relationships and the prevalence of a set of unequal relationships that are either unchallenged or replicated by the very same pedagogical dynamics that aim at dethroned them, the

critique must focus on its underlying moorings. As far as Latin America is concerned, our world perspectives, ideal social arrangements, mores, ethics, and so forth, can be traced back to the time of the establishment of what constitutes our nations and peoples nowadays. Although felt and lived at different scales, Latin America shares with the global South the imprint of colonialism. Our language, points of view, worldviews, and ideals are shaped and determined by a longue tradition that is consonant with a colonial heritage that determines what should be aimed at in terms of gender, social power, education, political acumen, economic prowess, the environment, etc.

Therefore, it is my contention that concepts of critical importance such as education, emancipation, person, educator, pupil, community, land, resources, and so forth still are thought of and spoken of along the lines of what the dominant colonialist mentality desires to perpetuate. This, in turn, leads us to a renewed agenda for action that now is one that places decolonialism in the center.⁷

Towards an appropriation of an emancipated and emancipating self

Ours still is a Europe-centered world, to which it must be added the shadow that the US casts its shadow on the Latin American continent. In spite of the plurality of voices, nations, languages and ethnic backgrounds in the North, the US presents

itself in Latin America as a unified world around a single worldview: white, protestant, male-centered, consumerist. The emphasis upon counter-terrorist efforts provided the most recently manufactured common enemy, this time with Europe converging on the same and one monster: dark-skinned Islam. In other words, Latin America had not cleared as yet its own perspectives on gender, the environment, the rule of law, economic rights, freedom of speech, education, development, and so forth and all of sudden must incorporate to its worldview the most recent public enemy No. 1.

Although historically a post-colonial continent, Latin America still struggles with its heavy colonialist baggage. Epistemologically it still sees itself in European-centered garments and speaks of itself in US-centered lingo and longings. The pervasiveness of colonialism is better described by De Lissovoy when he states that it "opportunistically invades bodies across a range of modalities—as gendered, raced, and culturally constructed; as economic and socially productive; even as imaginative, communicative, and emotional potentialities" (2010:206). Its gift of ubiquity reaches a critical point in the body, be it that of a person as an individual, or a community, or even a whole peoples group.

Education, with its disciplinary component, has had over the centuries a problematic relationship with the body. As the agency of the self, the body encapsulates

what a given dominant mentality implements in terms of social order and economic interactions. It is through the body that domination is exercised. As a result, education is reduced to a crusade, a conquest. Education, “the site where the core truth of society and social relationships is articulated” (De Lissovoy, 2010:207) takes on a concrete face, assumes a historical countenance in the bodies of educators, pupils, communities and the environment of which they are part. Education inculcates, indoctrinates concrete and historical subjects in what their selves, relationships, identities, communities, etc., are expected to be, or to become. Thus the dynamics of domination are maintained even by those who critique and contest them.

It is of supreme importance to include at this height of the debate the key aspects that must be highlighted by and in any liberating pedagogical process. Anne Stickel, commenting on Hinkelammert (2006), points out at the human being as a subject, an embodied self breaking free from an oppressive world, as such key element (2010:127). Since such a self is being oppressed, its liberation calls for a conversion to become human, a conversion to humanity (Hinkelammert, 2013:292-296).

There is a debate coming from emerging voices within the theological feminist camp that connects that call to conversion to the current debate on the complexities of the self. Teresa Forcades i Vila (2011)

and Sarah Coakley (2013), each on her own way and terms tackle the need that the self faces to find its own definition in a language and within a framework that the de-constructionist contemporary discourse still fails to satisfy. If ethics and education takes place in the intersubjective realm that persons and communities create in their constant interactions, just as Lèvinas, Irigaray and others claim (Góngora, 2014), then in what terms such as *in-between* space should be understood? Forcades i Vila and Coakley fear that the de-constructionist project has not yet reached the point to resignify the self beyond the constraints of the reigning worldview. As a result, the ensuing new self is but a new skin containing the same old wine.

Forcades fixes her attention on the problem of freedom (2011:11-15). Following Augustine, for her it is necessary to recognize a distinction freedom and free will. The former refers to the external conditions a person or community cannot control but that shapes free will. The latter is what the self has on its hand in order for the subject to flourish in dignity and full enjoyment of its potentiality. As a model for the interaction between those two spheres, Forcades reaches back to the work of Basil of Caesarea (5th century of the Christian era) in order to reclaim his concept of the Spirit (capitalized as it refers to a theological category), which is understood as a relational being. Thus, Forcades moves on to assert the construction of the self in relational terms.

In other words, the free will of the inner world interacts or stands in tension with the freedom that is in the external sphere thus creating a relationship mesh that facilitates the construction of the subject. Coakley, in turn, follows L. Irigaray in posing desire as the driving force behind the identity construction initiatives of the subject. Coakley also refers to the Spirit which is for the desire of the divine longing for entering into relationship with desire at a historical and concrete level, that is, human desire. Rather than transformation in a patronizing, proselytizing way, such encounter of desires aims at self-discovering process that eventually lead to the construction of the subject or, as Hinkelammert would put it, the conversion of man/woman as defined by the means-to-end logic into human beings, that is, the construction of humanity.

The possibility of liberation revolves around a confrontational task. It does not suffice with transforming the pedagogical space into one of productive dialogue in which both, the educator and the pupil, are subjects, not objects of such transforming process. Emancipatory education confronts the reigning epistemology that lures in the transforming subject-subject dynamics of a pedagogy as advanced by, for instance, Freire. Emancipatory education confronts the educator/pupil and questions the label that distinguish him or her as such, and also the new one attached to his or her forehead. Emancipatory

education demands that the symbolic be unpacked so that the self can start its own emancipatory process.

Concluding remarks

Even the pedagogical processes that move along liberating lines and adopt a liberating rhetoric might end up reinforcing the mentalities of domination that be. Without unmasking the labels that arbitrarily assign each person or community a place, education contributes to reinforce the dominant mentality that reduces persons, life, and the environment just as means with an end of capital accumulation in mind.

Allow me, then, to close with De Lissoy's words when he states that "The possibility of liberation depends on confronting these basic understandings that incessantly repeat the wound—at the levels of identity, knowledge, and even being—which colonialism and capitalism have inflicted historically as political projects" (p. 207)

In seminary, I once asked, “Since our religious doctrine is based on Paul’s interpretation of the life of Jesus, not Jesus’ teachings, wouldn’t it be more accurate to call ourselves Paulinists instead of Christians?” I listened in amazement as the class exploded with strong statements defending the faith. After twenty minutes of heated discussion, in which I was not participating, a friend looked over at me. “You were just asking a semantic question, weren’t you?” I nodded in response. He said, “Well, the answer is yes, but can you see how upset you got them...?” I could indeed. Once again, as a Fish Out of Water, I realized that I was not playing by the rules of the pond I was in.

Have you ever thought you knew what you were supposed to be doing – thought you were in the right place – but ended up feeling invisible or hyper visible? People acted as though they didn’t see you – or they wondered who let you in? In that situation you were a Fish Out of Water. When you try to fit in—where you don’t fit—you feel uncomfortable and inauthentic because you know you are not swimming in the right pond. You may feel like a Fish Out of Water once or twice in your life, but most people have a pond – or two – where they are welcomed and the ecosystem suits them. You know you belong, because it feels right, because you are affirmed by the other people around you, and your own internal radar tells you its right.

The key to fitting into an environment is knowing and using the rules appropriately. The rules are the cultural expectations, the codes, of the dominant group. Every group has codes. Every environment has codes. When a person assumes that the rules are the same everywhere she goes, or when members of a group, in the name of diversity & inclusion, invite new people to join them, without sharing the hidden codes--the unwritten rules-- with the new group members, problems occur. People are chastised and excluded for not using the right codes, which no one has taught them. The marginalized people become the Fish Out of Water.

Fish Out of Water are those people who sit on the edge of their cultural ponds, or are pushed out of the ponds, because they don't fit in. They may not fit in because of who they are; usually they don't fit in because of how they are. Fish Out of Water can be in the wrong size pond, or be the wrong species for the pond they are in, or just be one of a few of their kind. Visionaries, without social skills, are Fish Out of Water, Paradigm shifters, without patience, are Fish Out of Water, Truth Tellers, who can't keep quiet, are all, Fish Out of Water.

Some people are Fish Out of Water everywhere they go because they are too different from the dominant group. They are marginalized because of their ethnicity, or race, or gender orientation, or age – aspects of themselves that they cannot change.

They are unable to code switch or adapt their gender, physical attributes or the core of who they are, to meet the norms set by others.

Others are Fish Out of Water because they have not figured out what the house rules are, or they have chosen not to use them. I know how to do school. I already had several degrees when I went to seminary. But seminary is a particular kind of school, and it took a while to learn what the rules were for being successful in there. I didn't like all the rules, and they certainly didn't serve me well, but figuring out what the rules were, was essential to my success. I had to code switch to swim in the pond called seminary.

Code Switching

Code switching is a sociolinguistic term that refers to the process of changing one's style of communication to suit the socio/politico/cultural context of the exchange. While often used when describing the use of language by people who speak two different languages, the term also describes the adjustments a speaker makes when moving from one social context to another. When code switching, the non-verbal aspects of the communication event—body language, attire and attitude—also may change. Code switching involves learning to engage according to the unwritten rules of the environment's culture. It is a necessary skill in a culturally proficient environment.

When people learn how to play games, whether the games are cards, basketball or chess, there are standard rules that are followed—and there are house rules. House rules are set by the dominant culture—the host of the game, the home team, or the players who use the neighborhood court regularly. To play the game well, the others must learn the additional rules, and discern how the standard rules are being used. Code switching means playing the game according to the rules that have been set by the home team – or the dominant group – while temporarily suspending or adjusting the rules one may have learned natively. If life is a game, and cultural codes are the rules that govern the game, then code switching is the use of the rules in a way that insures a person can play to win. Playing to win means that a person has learned the rules of the environments in which she functions and switches from one set of codes to another with ease, accuracy, and appropriateness.

Code Switching is not dualism, i.e. assimilating so well into one group, that the group members have no idea the person may belong to another cultural group. Code switching is not learning to engage inauthentically with people in power. Code switching is a display of intercultural competence. It is a tactic and skill that allows one to function in two (or more) cultures. This does not imply that one subjugates his native codes to a dominant one, rather, that one understands the rules of both and

can use those rules/codes appropriately. The native codes are supplemented with the codes of second and subsequent cultures.

Unwritten Seminary Rules

These are some of the unwritten rules that I discovered in seminary. Learning them and using them helped me to survive there. I was too different to be a star, that would have required too many internal compromises, but I adapted enough to stay out of trouble and get what I wanted – knowledge, a degree, and support for ordination.

- Don't express your goals and plans as certainties. Your language should imply you are leaving room for the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Rather than stating a preference for doing a certain thing, say that you are being called to do it. This shows you are submitting your will to the will of God.
- It is not OK to say No to a request for assistance or service, but it is acceptable to decline the invitation by saying, *That is not my gift*, which means, *Please ask someone else who can do this and look happy about it.*
- If you are confused by doctrine, never say that it is not logical or that it does not make sense, simply admit that it is one of the Mysteries of faith, and express gratitude for not having to know everything in order to be saved by the Grace of God.

- Historically, seminaries were designed to shape and form young white men. I have never been a young white man, and consequently I chafed by what I experienced as the patronizing and sexist attitudes of my shepherding committee and many of my professors. There was an assumption that I would be a youth minister in a small church and work my way up in size and responsibilities until I became a senior pastor.

It was also assumed that because I am Black, I would pastor a Black church. I didn't want to be a pastor, and I had never attended a segregated church or school and didn't expect to after ordination. There was, however, no real understanding of my experience or worldview. There were assumptions that they knew my experience (poor, needy, inexperienced) and that because I diversified the classrooms with my presence, I would be grateful for all they offered me. If I wanted to be successful, I had to act as if, their intentions were mine as well. It also meant that I was always qualifying myself – explaining that I had two graduate degrees, and was not from disadvantaged background that placed me at-risk for failure.

- Seminary is not Sunday School. “People lose their faith in seminaries,” I was told. I watched it happen as students sought to reconcile the academics of theological studies with their faith stories. “You

mean, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, didn't know Jesus?" one classmate asked. "Then why did my pastor teach me that?" To be successful in seminary, you must create space within you to hold these contradictions without feeling conflicted.

- Ask questions, but none that would cause others to question your faith or belief in the doctrine.

Decoding the Culture

It took a while for me to decode the pond called seminary. I did it through observation, listening to how others used language, and noting how people responded to my questions and comments. Most Fish Out of Water use some combination of the following steps to decode the expectations of a new or changing culture.

If you are a Fish Out of Water, learning new cultural codes:

- ***Name the game.*** The first step in decoding a culture is to determine what the game is. Ask for help with this step, because left alone, most Fish Out of Water get it wrong. They may think the game in the classroom is to learn as much as possible, when the true game is to make the teacher happy. In an office, the game may be to make the boss look good—which may not have anything to do with the tasks listed in the job description. After figuring out the game, then one must figure out what the codes are for that game.

- **Observe what others are doing.** Listen to the language that is being used and how it is being used. Notice what people laugh at, take seriously, and ignore. Compare the rules you know to the rules that are being revealed. Notice nuanced differences. Practice aligning your behavior to the new codes. Ask questions of those who seem to be accepted and admired.
- **Try it out.** People learn new codes best by trial and error. They watch and try things out. If it works they keep on doing it; if it doesn't they try something else.
- **Get a role model.** Sometimes they get role a model -- a peer in the culture whom they can emulate. Jim, in his first year of law school was asked to explain how he so easily adapted to the new culture. "When I am in someplace new, I stand back until I can identify the alpha in the group. Then I go make friends." This is a great strategy for a confident extrovert.
- **Find a guide.** A less assertive person may be adopted by a native guide. This is someone who has learned the codes of the culture, and who can articulate those codes to someone new to the group. They share and interpret what is going on without judgment.
- **Increase awareness.** Every environment has rules, a set of codes, and if those in charge raise the awareness of all about the cultural codes – that they

- exist and what they are -- it will help anyone who might be marginalized for not knowing the rules.
- ***Develop options.*** There is almost always flexibility within an environment for individual expression and idiosyncratic differences. Fish Out of Water sometimes fail to notice the point at which their individual expression has passed the boundary of the cultural expectation of their environment.
 - ***Reassess and realign.*** Cultures are dynamic; the codes evolve and change. Fish Out of Water who thrive in their environments reassess the codes and realign their behavior to assure continued success.

You might be in the position to help someone adapt to seminary, or another environment. If you teach or befriend a Fish Out of Water, teach them the cultural codes, don't punish them for not knowing the codes, or expect them to figure it out because it is *common sense*.

- ***Explicate the Obvious.*** It is important to remind the Fish Out of Water that some rules are formal and others are non-formal. Only the formal rules are shared publically, and sometimes they conflict with the non-formal rules.
- ***Reveal the Hidden Curriculum.*** The non-formal rules are the unwritten rules, or the hidden curriculum. Those things that must be learned in order to be successful, but which few teach directly.

- ***Explain House Rules.*** One of the privileges of hosting a game, whether it is at a seminar table or in a driveway under a basketball hoop, the host can decide what the house rules are. The host determines the codes for success. In order to have a successful game, you need to share those codes with all the players.
- ***Use the rules consistently.*** Once a culture has been decoded, it is important to use the codes of the new culture consistently. Inappropriate code switching results in undesirable attention because it confuses those in the dominant culture.

Be An Ally to Fish Out of Water

As an ally to a Fish Out of Water whether that person is a seminarian in your care, an adult under your supervision, or a friend that you care about, there are a number of things you can do.

You can spend some time on the margins of your environment with the Crazies, Exotics, Truth Tellers, Outliers, Paradigm Shifters, Visionaries and Change Agents and learn some of their codes. You can figure out the codes of the environment you are in that will help Fish Out of Water adapt here. And you can teach them.

You can help your peers in the dominant culture understand that Diversity is easy; it is Inclusion that is difficult. Being inclusive means teaching the codes of your environment and learning the codes of those

who join you, so that eventually you have a body of shared, universal codes. It is the difference between welcoming someone into your home as a guest and welcoming them as a new family member.

As an ally to Fish Out of Water you can point out rules that are marginalizing people. Even if they have been good rules and useful rules – or codes that have served you well in the past – if they are no longer serving all who are present, it is time to change them. For example, in most churches there are rules about standing up and kneeling down, and rules about shaking hands and hugging people you may not know. These are rules that marginalize the disabled, introverts, and people who prefer to talk to strangers before touching them.

You can speak to those in power about unnecessary rules, marginalizing rules, and unwritten rules. You can speak against the insensitive perpetrators, redirect the unintentional perpetrators and remove those who seek to do intentional harm. You can speak for the voiceless and the invisible.

Fish Out of Water are all around you. They may have learned to adapt well, so you may not recognize them easily. It doesn't mean that they are comfortable in your midst – not many people are comfortable feeling unseen and unheard. All Fish Out of Water need allies. For some, you may need to change the environment you are in, for others you may need to

help them to find a pond that fits. Others are just fine, and want to be accepted as they are or left alone.

The Bottom Line

There is a pond for everyone, but every pond is not for every fish. In an ideal world, the dominant group will adapt to the differences of minority groups among them. Both the dominant and non-dominant groups will learn from one another the codes appropriate for successful communication. Ultimately, through this code sharing, a third set of codes, that all members in the diverse group use and understand, will be developed. Unfortunately, there are few places where this Utopian communication exists. Consequently, in order to be heard, seen and included, Fish Out of Water must learn the codes of the ponds in which they swim. Once they learn the codes for effective communication in their particular environment, they are better able to advocate for equity and justice. Those who work with, manage, teach and mentor Fish Out of Water, can do better in those roles if they code share with the Fish Out of Water rather than relying solely on the ability of Fish Out of Water to code switch.

What ponds do you swim in? Are you aware of the fish that are there? Are they the right ones for your environment? Is the environment you have created the right ones for your fish?

Is there a Fish Out of Water who can use some of your attention as an ally? Do you need help – changing, adjusting to, or leaving your pond?

Look carefully – or look differently – the help you need to receive, or give, may be close by.

Reciprocate: Learning [in] Islandic-Oceanic Style

Jione Havea

In this short reflection i¹ suggest several shifts in the conversation on education, whether it is transformative education or otherwise, informed by my Tongan upbringing and my experience of living in and visiting different islands in Oceania (Pacific Islands). These shifts are suggested in order to make room for a simple invitation—Reciprocate. This invitation is not for control, multiply or submission, but for sharing and caring, for exchange and solidarity, for welcome and appreciation.

The shifts i propose herein aim to take the focus out of the capitalist philosophies of civilization, evangelization, commerce and colonization, in order to account for and to embrace the customs and struggles of everyday local peoples (see also Havea, 2014). These shifts require redefining categories usually associated with local peoples, as well as relocating certain frameworks. I begin with shifting the frameworks before seeking to redefine the local categories. Shifting, relocating and redefining (which will result in a new item) are necessary for this islandic-Oceanic weaving to take shape.² And even though this reflection is located in Oceania, i imagine that it could be taken into consideration in other island and oceanic settings, whether in Asia, Africa, America, Caribbean or yonder.

Shifts

First, i call for the relocation of the platform from “education” to “learning.” In Oceania, *education*

(Tongan: *ako*) is associated with Western (modern) methods and principles whereas learning (Tongan: *molomolomuiva'e* or *muimui*, which also means “to follow,” the general gist of “discipleship”) binds generations of local peoples.

Education, in the ways of the West, requires hierarchy of power according to which certified authorities instruct uneducated or unenlightened people about tested and verifiable truths and the proper ways of civilization. Education came to Oceania as a component of the missionary and colonial projects that came to “bring light,” as if the natives did not already have light. Samoan novelist Sia Figiel challenged this racist attitude through the voice of the character Siniva:

“We are not living in Lightness,” she [Siniva] would say. “We are not. Lightness is dead. Lightness died that first day in 1830 when the breakers of the sky [referring to white missionaries and colonialists] entered these shores, forcing us all to forget...to forget...to bury our gods...to kill our gods...to re-define everything, recording history in reverse. (Figiel, 1996: 236)

Together with the building of churches, hospital and healthcare facilities, missionaries and colonialists build schools for the purpose of civilizing the so-called savages. From the beginning, in Oceania, Western

education was controlled, structured and regulated, as well as controlling, structuring and regulating.

Learning, in the ways of local peoples, focuses on the experience of younger generations qua learners and their place in the local cultures. The elders (male and female) who give instruction do so out of responsibility for their customs and traditions. Hierarchy (components of which are patriarchy and gender-biases, both of which are unhealthy) is still present, but more so in the name of community. The danger of this is the opportunity to be insular, which can be avoided if relationality and reciprocity (addressed below) are encouraged in learning events.

Second, i invite relocation of the mode of learning from written instructions (world of words) to active and creative practices (praxis, world of actions). Many local peoples in Oceania fail the Western forms of education because they are unable to transform what they are taught into practical use. I am not referring here to the need to translate and contextualize the things that they are taught into local languages, but about seeing those things in their daily living. In this regard, the relocation to learning requires privileging of praxis over rhetoric.

This is not an attempt to reject the world of words and of rhetoric. Rather, this is an acknowledgement that the world of words/rhetoric is not enough. There needs to be more than words/rhetoric. There needs to be praxis as well.

To use a practical illustration for what i imagine in this second relocation, i refer to the way in which inter-faith or inter-religious relations are typically labelled and fostered—as “dialogue.” When people of different faiths come together, they are expected to dialogue about their differences and similarities, and the things that they are [not] willing to negotiate. Those dialogues circle around doctrines, teachings, principles and so forth. What might happen if people of different faiths come together to cooperate on practical tasks (see Havea, 2012)? In other words, what if they come together not because of their rhetoric but because of functions, commitments and responsibilities? What if they come together to do something and not just to dialogue?

This second relocation invites attention to physicality and not just to rationality. It thus challenges the privileging of the mind and soul over the body, which has contributed to the unhealthy dichotomy of the sacred and the secular. In Oceania, the realms of the sacred and secular overlap. This second relocation thus invites us to account for our ecological and contextual situatedness.

Third, and in light of the foregoing, there is need for relocation of attitude toward local ways, local wisdoms, local religions and local things (see e.g., Havea, 2008 & 2009). The default tendency among the locals of Oceania is to privilege the ways of the white men but look down upon the indigenous and the

locals. Civilization is associated with whatever is white and/or whitened, while local things are demonized as backward, pagan and defiling. On this issue, it is very painful to me when local peoples advocate views that downgrade their native heritage and the modes of being of their ancestors.

To embrace and affirm the indigenous and the local, we need a change of attitude. We need, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith puts it, to decolonize our minds (Smith, 2004). We need to decolonize our minds in order to free ourselves from “mental slavery” (as Bob Marley put it in *Redemption Song*).

Decolonizing the mind involves redefining categories and reengaging with the locals. I will briefly touch on three of those categories in the following sections: orality, totemism and reciprocity. One of the reasons for my seeking to redefine categories is in order to turn the table, so to speak, so that the locals of Oceania are not seen as natives that only need to be taught but as learned people who also have wisdom to share.

Orality

It is commonplace to perceive the people of Oceania, together with native peoples of the so-called Global South, as people of oral cultures. What “oral cultures” means however has not been defined in light of the living situations of those peoples themselves. Furthermore, there has not been any critical reflection

on the *affects* of labelling southern cultures as oral. What are they saying about us and our cultures? that our cultures are not real because they have not been written (textualized)?³ that our cultures are not solid enough? that our cultures do not qualify as civilized human cultures?

For many, oral cultures are ones that are not literary or text-based. Put another way, oral cultures are oriented toward speech and oratory. This is true. But orality is more than just speech. Orality is also about presence, relationships and fluidity. One cannot be oral without being present, without being in relationships, and without being fluid (flexible).

Orality requires presence (one accompanies one's words) and at once pushes you to cross over boundaries. You are present when you deliver your words, and the words that you utter present you to those whom you address. You are of course more than your words, but orality situates you (makes you present) in a specific space in the event of which you cross into the space of others. When the presence-and-border-crossing aspects of orality are taken into account, the hierarchal axis in learning and praxis events (resituated above) are lowered.

In island settings, you are present(ed) even when someone else recalls or presents your words. This is in part because of the relational framework of oral cultures (which I address next) and our *talanoa* modes of interaction (see Havea, 2013). The word “*talanoa*”

has three meanings—story, telling (of stories), and conversation (around stories). *Talanoa* is a triad in which story does not exist without telling and conversation; in which telling is not possible without story and conversation; and in which conversation is empty without story and telling. *Talanoa* makes someone (who is absent) present through story, telling (by someone else) and the conversation of others.

Talanoa is a more suitable mode for learning in island settings. I am thinking here of the difference between *talanoa* and lecturing, in which story and *telling* are strong but *conversation* is missing.

Orality requires and at once fosters relationships, given that it places you in the space of others. When you cross over into the space of others, you are obliged to relate to them. Without relating, your words may drift with no ears to receive and settle them. (Your words become the proverbial tree that falls in the forest with no one hearing it fall.) Your uttered words can create and foster relationships; at the same time, your words can rupture and break relationships. Relationality is important in the oral cultures in Oceania, where relationships between aiga (Samoan; Tongan: *kāinga*; see Tofaeono, 2000: 3034) and *whānau* (Māori) are about responsibilities between the extended family.

It is important to stress here that in island oral cultures, ties/relationships are not just emotional attachments. The ties/relationships between *kāinga*

and *whānau* oblige people to one another, giving them responsibilities. There are no empty ties; relationships are not obligation-free. In light of the primary subject for this reflection, learning in oral cultures needs to be delivered as events in which relationships and responsibilities happen. Objectivism is therefore not to be encouraged in learning situations.

Orality also requires fluidity, given that it places you in what may feel like a whirlpool of relations. Rigidity does not nurture presence nor does it complement the relationships in which you are involved. Fluidity is preferred on both fronts in the oral settings of islanders in Oceania, and fluidity is the kind of texture in which living and growth are encouraged. In other words, you can't transform and develop if your texture is rigid and prohibitive.

Because the world of islanders is wet and watery, being surrounded by the sea, fluidity is a characteristic of islandedness and of island reading (see Havea *et al.*, 2015). For islanders, effective learning and praxis situations need to be fluid and flexible.

My hope here is that these aspects of orality be taken into account when one enters the frameworks of learning, praxis and attitudinal change with respect to locals. How might events of learning be if they are constructed as oral events? Who would not benefit from learning within the textures of orality? Who does not live in (some form of) oral cultures?

Totemism

We live in worlds filled with symbols (see Ricoeur, 1967). We need symbols, as much as we need stories (so Albert Wendt and Elie Wiesel), in order to live. We can't operate without symbols and *talanoa*; we need symbols, metaphors and *talanoa* in order to be able to think and to communicate (Tongan: *fetu'utaki*, which is about the star [*fetu'u*] toward which navigators sail their vessels). Awareness of our dependence on symbols and of our infusion with metaphors invites us to rethink our attitude toward local things and the ways we do things, including events of learning. In this instance, i return to the world of totems that islanders used to live in before Western missionaries and colonialists brought their foreign forms of education.

The world of symbols in which our ancestors lived was discredited by the white men that came to civilize and to "save" them from themselves and from their customs. The totems that helped them made sense of their roots and journeys, and which gave them their systems of meanings, were judged to be evil and pagan and so those were banned and destroyed. Their totems were consequently taken to be taboos (Sigmund Freud).

The cleansing, or more appropriately the white-washing, of the islands, was very effective in my home island of Tonga where ancient totems have been wiped out. The whitewashing process continues even today in the name of Christianity, as in the recent decree by the PNG Prime Minister to destroy native sculptures

in front of parliament and government buildings. This is another example of the *missionary position* which favors “Christ against culture” (Richard Niebuhr).

There is nothing wrong with seeing the religious significance of totems, for that is primarily what they are. The totems are religious symbols. What’s wrong, in my opinion, is judging them to be pagan, because they are from native religions, and symbols of black religions. That judgment fails to recognize how the totems link the local peoples (1) to their ancestors and (2) to their surroundings. Put another way, the totems are thresholds to their ancestral past and to their ecological presence. And because the totems demand awe and respect, the local peoples sought to live peacefully with their ancestors and with their surroundings.

Recently, i came to respect the gecko as the inspiration for the totems in my mother’s family and the butterfly as the one for my father’s side (the meeting of the two gives rise to the turtle). While i do not regard the gecko, the butterfly and the turtle as gods, they conscientize me to and root me in Oceania’s ecological circle of life. I imagine that the same was true for my ancestors: their totems reminded them that they lived in the shadows of their navigating ancestors and in a fragile ecological circle.

Two questions arise for me, in light of the initiating subject for this reflection: How might events of learning incorporate local networks of totems? How

might local learners engage with Western claims and methods as White totems?

Reciprocity

This reflection shows that, upon the waves of orality and the currents of symbols and totems, the local peoples of Oceania are relational people through and through. To that i add, toward bringing this reflection to close, that relationships arise and grow because of reciprocity (*tauhi-vā, fetauhi'aki*)—the mutual interchange of assistance, gifts and wisdom. In the oral cultures of Oceania and beyond, relationality is the sail upon which the wind of reciprocity blows. The invitation of this reflection is therefore very simple: Reciprocate!

Reciprocity affirms the agency of subjects in relationships. No subject is too poor or too powerless that it/s/he has nothing to share with others. The most desperate of the poor have wisdom to share about endurance and survival. And the most dormant of subjects, like Earth, knows something about the ways of the gods and the secrets of life. The challenge here is whether the educated and powerful are willing to learn from those lowly subjects.

Reciprocity binds the relocated frameworks named above at the beginning of this reflection: learning, praxis and attitude toward locals and local ways. Imagine what those might look like if they were in response to the invitation to reciprocate.

What if learning fosters reciprocity, praxis manifests reciprocity, and the embracing of locals and of their ways ripples to the rhythms of reciprocity?

The form of learning that i hope for, which constitutes learning in *islandic-Oceanic style*, is where everyone in the encounter are learners and the encounter is exchanging and mutual. It is not required to be equals in order for mutuality and reciprocity to take place. Equality is the illusion of Western democracy. It is notwithstanding necessary to be respectful for one another. In the words of Aretha Franklin and her soul sisters, “All I’m askin’ is for a little respect...”⁴

When R-E-S-P-E-C-T is enabled and encouraged, reciprocity is kindled and learners are open to learning *islandic-Oceanic style!*

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Vuyani Vellem

1. For the killing of King Hintsa, see Xolela Mangcu, 2012. *Biko: A Biography*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 270-271. Mangcu places Steve Biko within the mould of this royal martyr of AmaXhosa, indeed violence by Britons and Afrikaners alike. See also Vellem, V. “Rediscovering reconciliation: A response to the call for reconciliation as governing symbol in post-1994 South Africa” In: Conradie, EM (ed): *Reconciliation as a Guiding Vision for South Africa?* Stellenbosch:SUN Press, 103-118., in which he problematizes shallow reconciliation in South Africa or better, cheap grace as an underlying motif for reconciliation. Now the skull, ears, teeth, beads and bracelets that are missing, should be also read, I propose to signify the missing items in our democracy today. The Great Hintsa is a monarch and thus, a representative of a polity undermined or dismantled violently and tragically so as shown by his killing.
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4. See Vellem, V 2013. “The Reformed tradition as Public Theology,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69(1), Art. #1371,5 pages.<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i.1371>, 2014 “‘Spirituality of liberation: A conversation with African religiosity’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70(1), Art. #2752, xx pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2752>.
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8. Vuyani Vellem, op cit, 'The Critical Analysis of the Church's role
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10. The Marikana Massacre is tragic event that took place on the 11 August 2012 in South Africa at the Lonmin Mine in the North West Province. Approximately 250 people were killed and about 70 getting injured at the confrontation that took place between the South African police and the miners.
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13. Elazar Barkan and Marie-Denise Shelton, eds., *Borders, Exiles, Diasporas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
14. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 5.
15. Franz Fanon, *Peau Noir, Masques Blancs* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952).
16. Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory* (London: Penguin Books, 1990, orig. 1940), 102.
17. This was the case for two creative Caribbean writers, marginalized and despised in their homelands, the Cuban Reinaldo Arenas and the Puerto Rican Manuel Ramos-Otero, who found in New York a wider horizon for their literary talents, a greater realm of personal freedom, and AIDS related death. See Rubén Ríos-Avila, "Caribbean Dislocations: Arenas and Ramos Otero in New York," in Sylvia Molloy and Robert M. Irwin, eds., *Hispanisms and Homosexualities* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 101-122.
18. Elazar Barkan and Marie-Denise Shelton, "Introduction," *Borders, Exiles, Diasporas*, 5.
19. Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
20. *The Location of Culture*, 164.
21. Michelle Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven* (New York: Plume Books, 1996, orig. 1987), 189.
22. James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1946, orig. 1914), 131-132.
23. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004).
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25. Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 79.
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28. René Krüger, *La diáspora: De experiencia traumática a paradigma eclesiológico* (Buenos Aires: ISEDET, 2008).
29. Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National*

- Identity (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 243.
30. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), xv.
 31. William Schweiker, *Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics In the Time of Many Worlds* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 6-7.
 32. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1999), 216-217.
 33. Stephen D. Moore and Fernando Segovia, *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2005); R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *The Postcolonial Bible* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: the Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2004).
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 36. Catherine Keller, *God and Power: Counter-Apocalyptic Journeys* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005); Mark Lewis Taylor, *Religion, Politics, and the Christian Right: Post-9/11 Powers and American Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005); Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: a Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006); Joerg Rieger, *Christ & Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); Keller, Nausner, and Rivera, *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (2004).
 37. Fernando Segovia, "Mapping the Postcolonial Optic in Biblical Criticism: Meaning and Scope," in Moore and Segovia, *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*, 23-78.
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 39. *Ibid.*, 74-75.
 40. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987).
 41. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The*

Key Concepts (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). Sometimes their disregard for the sixteenth century imperial formations leads them into egregious mistakes, like asserting that “in 1503, Bishop Las Casas ... proposed ... systematic importation of blacks” as “an alternative to indigenous labor” (ibid. 212). In 1503 Bartolomé de Las Casas was not yet a bishop and he did not propose to bring Black slaves to the new Spanish territories till the middle of the second decade of that century. Cf. Luis N. Rivera-Pagán, *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster – John Knox Press, 1992), 180-195. See also Luis N. Rivera-Pagán, “Freedom and Servitude: indigenous Slavery in the Spanish Conquest of the Caribbean,” *General History of the Caribbean. Volume I: Autochthonous Societies*, edited by Jalil Sued-Badillo (London: UNESCO Publishing and Macmillan Publishers, 2003), 316-362. Several of their statements regarding Latin America are not to be trusted [“the slave system ... persisted in the Caribbean and some South American areas until the 1830s” [ibid. 214] – whereas slavery was not abolished in Puerto Rico until 1873, in Cuba until 1886 and in Brazil until 1888), which only shows the lack of attention of some postcolonial scholars to the colonial history of Latin America and the Spanish Caribbean.

42. Curiously, Chinua Achebe is mentioned once in Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin’s textbook, but his 1958 classic novel, *Things Fall Apart*, one of the foremost literary assessments of the convergence between European colonization of African and Christian missions, is not even alluded to.
43. Enrique Dussel, *Política de la liberación. Historia mundial y crítica* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2007), 186-210.
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45. Bartolomé de las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, trans. Stafford Poole (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992).
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- 1982); Anthony Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c.1500 - c.1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995).
50. Among theologians, Joerg Rieger is a distinguished exception. He devotes a chapter of one of his books to the critical analysis of Bartolomé de las Casas's Christology in the context of the sixteenth century imperial expansion. *Christ & Empire*, 159-196.
 51. Luis N. Rivera-Pagán, *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas* (Louisville, KY: Westminster – John Knox Press, 1992); *Entre el oro y la fe: El dilema de América* (San Juan: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1995).
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 53. "Carta a Luis de Santángel," in *Cristóbal Colón, Textos y documentos completos*, ed. Consuelo Varela, *Nuevas cartas*, ed. Juan Gil (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1995), 219-226; Christopher Columbus, *A New and Fresh English Translation of the Letter of Columbus Announcing the Discovery of America*, translated and edited by Samuel Eliot Morison (Madrid: Gráficas Yagües, 1959), 7-16. I will cite Columbus's letter giving first the page number of the Varela/Gil edition and secondly the page number of the Morison translation. As John Boyd Thacher wrote in his biography of Columbus: "We know of no other work which in the short space of ten or twelve months at the close of the fifteenth century passed through thirteenth editions ..." John Boyd Thacher, *Christopher Columbus: His Life, His Work, His Remains* (New York: Kraus Reprint Corp., 1967, orig. 1903-1904), 72.
 54. Edmundo O'Gorman, *La idea del descubrimiento de América: Historia de esa interpretación y crítica de sus fundamentos* (México, D. F.: Centro de Estudios Filosóficos, 1951). See also Edmundo O'Gorman, *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of its History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press 1961).
 55. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 114: "The naming of the 'fact' is itself a narrative of power disguised as innocence ... To call 'discovery' the first invasions of inhabited lands by Europeans is an exercise in Eurocentric power that already frames future narratives of the event so described."
 56. Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 57.
 57. Alejo Carpentier, who always wants to make fun of the Admiral, calls it ironically a "sacra rappresentazione." Alejo Carpentier, *El arpa y la sombra* (México, D. F.: Siglo XXI, 1979), 160.
 58. Francisco Morales Padrón, "Descubrimiento y toma de posesión," *Anuario de*

- estudios americanos, Vol. 12, Sevilla, 1955, 321-380, quotations from page 379 and 328.
59. Latin transcripts and English translations in Frances Gardiner Davenport, ed., *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and Its Dependencies to 1648* (Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1917), 56-83.
 60. *Marvelous Possessions*, 82.
 61. *Textos y documentos completos*, 497.
 62. Columbus's observation about the nakedness of the Caribbean natives raised an interesting initial theological question: is their nakedness representation of innocence or of savagery? The enigma is slightly suggested in Pope Alexander's 1493 *Inter caetera* bull that mentions both the nakedness and the vegetarian diet of the natives. This is an implicit allusion to Adam and Eve before original sin. When the Spaniards discovered that the natives were willing and able to fight and kill for their lands and freedom, the theological controversy ceased: nakedness became a sign of savagery. Queen Isabella ordered that they be clothed and prohibited their daily baths in the rivers.
 63. W. Arens, *The Man-eating Myth: Anthropology & Anthropophagy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
 64. Jalil Sued Badillo, "Christopher Columbus and the Enslavement of Amerindians in the Caribbean," *Monthly Review*, vol. 44, no. 3, July-August, 1992, 71-102.
 65. Cortés's Tlaxcala military ordinances invoke idolatry as the main cause for the war against the Aztec kingdom: "In as much ... the natives of these regions have a culture and veneration of idols, which is a great dissidence to God Our Lord, and the devil blinds and deceives them ... Let us go to uproot the natives of these regions from those idolatries ... so that they will come to the knowledge of God and of His Holy Catholic faith ... I affirm that my principal motive in undertaking this war ... is to bring the natives to the knowledge of our Holy Catholic faith." Hernán Cortés, *Documentos cortesianos, 1518-1528* (ed. José Luis Martínez) (México, D. F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México – Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1990), 165.
 66. Pierre Duviols, *La lutte contre les religions autochtones dans le Pérou colonial: l'extirpation de l'idolâtrie entre 1532 et 1660* (Paris-Lima: Institut Français d'Études Andines, 1971).
 67. Abel Posse, *Los perros del paraíso* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janes Editores, 1987), 223.

Maria Karanatsiou

1. Georges Florovsky, «The course of Russian Theology» in *Theologia, Truth and Life, Spiritual Symposium*, Athens 1962, ed. Adelfotis Theologon "Zoi", p. 29, [in Greek].
2. Vasilios Dimitriadis, *The Orthodox Church and the quest for unity in the work of father Georges Florovsky*, postgraduate paper, at <http://digital.lib.auth.gr/record/128677>, p. 12, [in Greek].
3. "The sacredness of the human person is constrained to partial claims for the

- “individual”, whereas his relationship toward the rest of sacred creation is subjected to his arbitrary use or abuse of it”. See the Message of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches (12/10/2008) in Stylianos Tsompanidis, *For the whole world: Studies on the Ecumenical Movement and the purpose of the Church in today’s World*, Thessaloniki 2014, ed. OSTRACON PUBLISHING, p. 685, [in Greek]. See also in English in official website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate <http://www.ec-patr.org/docdisplay.php?lang=gr&id=995&tl=a=en>.
4. Stylianos Tsompanidis is Professor of Ecumenical Theology in the Theological School of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
 5. Stylianos Tsompanidis, «The Ecumenical Process of AGAPE (=Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth): An Orthodox Perspective», in *A Testimony to the Nations. A vigintennial volume offered to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, Thessaloniki 2011, ed. AUTH-Theological School, p. 906, [in Greek]. See the enhanced version of the text in German entitled «Unterwegs zu einer «Alternativen Globalisierung im Dienst von Menschen und Erde» aus orthodoxer Sicht», *Una Sancta* 67 (2012), pp. 30-43.
 6. There is no willing to stand for or stand against these political systems. We would only like to demonstrate the stability of the bipolar or unipolar systems.
 7. Ulrich Duchrow, “The Spirituality of social collaboration: For the liberation of modernity from the disastrous instrumental individualism”, in *Biblical Theology of Liberation, Theology of the Fathers and Ambiguities of Modernity in Orthodox and Ecumenical Perspective*, Athens 2012, ed. Indiktos, p. 228, [in Greek].
 8. *Ibid.*, Stylianos Tsompanidis, «The Ecumenical Process of AGAPE», p. 906.
 9. Professor Tsompanidis underlines that “the greed and the absolutism of private property is characterized an idolatry in theological terms; in this context, we talk of money-theism (an alteration of monotheism), linked to Mammon and the idolatry of money and market”. See Stylianos Tsompanidis, «Economia Mondiale – cambiamenti climatic – dibattito interreligioso: La testimonianza Christiana nell’ era della globalizzazione», *La Testimonianza della Chiesa nel mondo contemporaneo, Atti del XII Simposio intercristiano Tessalonica, 30 agosto – 2 settembre 2011, Padova – Roma 2013*, pp. 63-86 [in Italian]
 10. Stylianos Tsompanidis, *For the whole world: Studies on the Ecumenical Movement and the purpose of the Church in today’s World*, Thessaloniki 2014, ed. OSTRACON PUBLISHING, p. 427, [in Greek].
 11. Nikitas Alimprantis, “The sociology of money and the modern development of capitalism”, *Theologia*, vol. 83, issue 4, p. 142, [in Greek].
 12. Robert Hunter Wade, “The Rising Inequality of World Income Distribution”, *Finance & Development*, December 2001, vol. 38, no. 4. Also *ibid.* Stylianos Tsompanidis, “For the whole world, p. 428.
 13. *Ibid.* Stylianos Tsompanidis, *For the whole world*, p. 428.
 14. “World Food Day 2008: Vegetarianism Against Global Hunger,” *Vegetarian and Animal News*, 16 Oct. 2008, at www.evana.org/index.php?id=38147&lang=en, acc. 8 Dec. 2009.

15. Konstantinos Kotsiopoulos, "Economy, Civilization and Capitalistic Crisis", *Theologia*, vol. 83, issue 4, p. 154, [in Greek].
16. This viewpoint is also supported by Professor Konstantinos Kotsiopoulos, *ibid* "Economy, Civilization and Capitalist Crisis", p. 147: "We talk about the domination – already since the 1980s – of the Neoliberal spirit of Globalization, which resulted to the deterioration of social inequalities, the dismantling of the Welfare State and the laxity of social control on employment market".
17. According to the pro-government newspaper *Kathimerini* (16/12/2012), "the unemployed in Hellas already outnumber by 992.000 people the employed citizens", [in Greek].
18. Haris Golemis, "Can PIGS Fly?" at <http://www.espaces-marx.net/spip.php?article568> [in French].
19. For the historical evolution of Golden Dawn see Dimitrios Psarras, *The black bible of Golden Dawn. Documents from the history and the action of a Nazi group*, Athens 2012, ed. Polis, [in Greek].
20. Ulrich Duchrow, *Global Economy: A Confessional Issue for the Churches?*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987, p. 117
21. Thanasis Papatthanasiou, "Signs of ethno-socialism in Greek Church?" in *Synaxi*, issue 125, January-March 2013, p. 23, [in Greek].
22. André-Jacques Holbecq / Philippe Derruder, *La dette publique, une affaire rentable. A qui profite le système?*, Paris 2009, éd. Yves Michel.
23. *Ibid.* Ulrich Duchrow, "The Spirituality of social collaboration", p. 228.
24. *Ibid.* Ulrich Duchrow, "The Spirituality of social collaboration", p. 228
25. Petros Vassiliadis, "The biblical view of economy", *Theologia*, vol. 83, issue2, p. 25, [in Greek].
26. Lefteris Zouros, *The quest for a purpose in a world of no purpose*, Heraklion 2014, ed. University of Crete.
27. "Efforts to distance religion from societal life constitute the common tendency of many modern states. The principle of a secular state can be preserved; however, it is unacceptable to interpret this principle as a radical marginalization of religion from all spheres of public life". See the *Message of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches (12/10/2008)* in Stylianos Tsompanidis, *For the whole world*, p. 685, [in Greek]. Also in English at the official website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate <http://www.ec-patr.org/docdisplay.php?lang=gr&id=995&tla=en>.
28. Petros Vassiliadis, *Post-Modernity and Church. The challenge of Orthodoxy*, Athens 2002, ed. Akritas, p. 29.
29. Stylianos Tsompanidis, *Ecclesiology and Globalization, The Churches in the ecumenical process for an alternative globalization in the service of people and the earth*, Thessaloniki 2008, ed. Pournaras, p. 166.
30. *Ibid.* Nikitas Alimprantis, "The sociology of money and the modern development of capitalism", p. 137, mainly footnote 47.
31. *Ibid.* Petros Vassiliadis – Stylianos Tsompanidis, «Economia Mondiale – cambiamenti climatic – dibattito interreligioso: la testimonianza Christiana nell' era della globalizzazione», pp. 63-86.

32. Petros Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness. Orthodox Perspectives on the Unity and Mission of the Church*, Geneva 1998, ed. WCC Publications, p. 114.
33. Revised version: Franz Segbers, "A Transformative Eucharistic Vision for the Entire Oikoumene", in *International Journal For the Study of the Christian Church*, vol. 90, no. 2 / May 2009, 138-150, here p.13 at http://www.franz-segbers.de/resources/Segbers_Eucharist+and+Hunger-Manila_2008.pdf.
34. *Ibid.* Franz Segbers, "A Transformative Eucharistic Vision for the Entire Oikoumene", here p. 22, footnote 30 at http://www.franz-segbers.de/resources/Segbers_Eucharist+and+Hunger-Manila_2008.pdf.
35. Stylianos Tsompanidis, *Meta-liturgy. The Orthodox participation in common Christian Witness for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*, Thessaloniki 2009, ed. Pournaras, p. 82-83.
36. *The Future of Ecumenical Theological Education in Eastern and Central Europe*, Full report of the International Seminar for young lecturers and professors of theology, ed. Viorel Ionita – Dietrich Werner, p. 31.
37. *Ibid.* *The Future of Ecumenical Theological Education in Eastern and Central Europe*, p. 33.
38. Challenges and promises of quality assurance in theological education: Multicontextual and ecumenical inquiries at <http://wocati.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2013-Challenges-and-Promises-of-Quality-Assurance-in-Theological-Education-WOCATI.pdf>, p.75.
39. See more at <http://www.uni-graz.at/en/>.
40. Zoë Bennett, "Ecumenical Theological Education as a Practice of Peace", in *Religious Education*, vol. 101, issue 3, pp. 331-346, here p. 344.
41. See the full text entitled «Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth» here <http://www.kairoseuropa.de/fix/english.html>.
42. *Ibid.* «Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth».
43. See the full text entitled «Message from the 10th Assembly – Transforming Economic Globalization» here <http://www.kairoseuropa.de/fix/english.html>.
44. *Ibid.* Stylianos Tsompanidis, *For the whole world*, p. 662 (4.3).
45. *Ibid.* Stylianos Tsompanidis, *For the whole world*, p. 117.
46. Stylianos Tsompanidis, *For the union of the whole world. The contribution of the Orthodox Church and Theology to the World Council of Churches*, Thessaloniki 2008, ed. Pournaras, p. 174, [in Greek].
47. *Ibid.* Stylianos Tsompanidis, *Ecclesiology and Globalization*, p. 45
48. See the Message of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches (12/10/2008) in Stylianos Tsompanidis, *For the whole world*, p. 685, [in Greek]. See also in English in official website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate <http://www.ec-patr.org/docdisplay.php?lang=gr&id=995&title=en>.
49. *Ibid.* Stylianos Tsompanidis, *Ecclesiology and Globalization*, p. 58.
50. *Ibid.* Stylianos Tsompanidis, *For the unity of the whole world*, p. 201.
51. *Ibid.* Stylianos Tsompanidis, *For the whole world*, p. 111.
52. *Ibid.* Stylianos Tsompanidis, *For the whole world*, p. 113.
53. Short and to the point. Churches in the Ecumenical Process for Globalizing Justice Economy in the Service of Life, at <http://www.kairoseuropa.de/english/DinA5-Heft1-engl.pdf>.

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Ulrich Duchrow

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3. Cf. Duchrow, U./Eisenbürger, G./Hippler, J. (ed.), 1990, Total War Against the Poor: Confidential Documents of the 17th Conference of American Armies, Mar del Plata, Argentina, 1987, New York CIRCUS Publications, New York.
4. Cf. Pflüger, Tobias/Wagner, Jürgen, 2006, Welt-Macht EUropa: Auf dem Weg in weltweite Kriege, VSA, Hamburg.
5. Cf. Petras, James /Veltmeyer, Henry/Vasapollo, Luciano/Casad, Mauro, 2006, Empire with Imperialism: The Globalizing Dynamics of Neoliberal Capitalism, Zed, London.
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7. Karl Marx, Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production, edited by Frederick Engels, Translated from the third German edition by Samuel Moore and Edward Averling (New York: International Publishers, 1947) Page 514-515. (Original: MEW, vol. 23, 529f.)
8. In an interview supporting Pinochet and his economic advisor, Milton Friedman, the latter also member of the MPS, published in the Chilean newspaper Mercurio, 19 April 1981.
9. Cf. Duchrow, U. and Hinkelammert, F.J. 2004. Property for People, Not for Profit: Alternatives to the Global Tyranny of Capital. London and Geneva: Zed Books in association with the Catholic Institute for International Relations and the World Council of Churches, chapters 2 and 3, and DUCHROW, Ulrich/Hinkelammert, Franz: Transcending Greedy Money: Interreligious Solidarity for Just Relations. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.
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11. Cf. Duchrow, Ulrich, 2005, Capitalism and Human Rights, in: Smith, Rhona K.M./van den Acker, C., The Essentials of Human Rights, Hodder Arnold, London, p. 33-36.
12. Cf. Zeller, C. (ed.). 2004. Die globale Enteignungsökonomie. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot.
13. Cf. DUCHROW, Ulrich/Hinkelammert, Franz: op.cit 2012, chapter 2.
14. Benjamin, Walter, 1972, Kapitalismus als Religion, in: Gesammelte Schriften,

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15. Marx, Karl/Engels, Friedrich (ed.), 1974, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol III: *The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole*, Lawrence & Wishart, London. Cf. Hinkelammert, Franz J., 1986, *The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y., and Duchrow, Ulrich, (1995) 1998 2nd ed., *Alternatives to Global Capitalism – Drawn from Biblical History, Designed for Political Action*, International Books with Kairos Europa, Utrecht, 39ff.
 16. In some countries it might be dangerous to quote Marx but, where it is not, it should be done in order to break the taboo and use his insights, wherever they are relevant – like we do with any other thinker or scholar. In formerly communist countries we might not wish to use the traditional Marxist language. But especially here, where the neo-liberal “shock therapy” has split the societies even more than in the West, the social reality has developed in such way, that Marx’ analysis is particularly pertinent. In any case it should be made clear that we need alternatives transcending both capitalism and the traditional socialism. Historic socialism has shown the same calculating rationality of modernity as capitalism, leading to the same ecological disaster as capitalism.
 17. Marx, *op. cit.* 391f.
 18. In German we do have an excellent example of how this can be done: Pax Christi, *Kommission Weltwirtschaft* (Hg.), 2006, *Der Gott Kapital – Anstöße zu einer Religions- und Kulturkritik*, LIT, Münster.
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 20. See also: Myers, Ched, 2001, *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*, Church of the Saviour, Washington DC.; Colwell, Matthew, 2007, *Sabbath Economics: Household Practices*, Church of the Saviour, Washington DC.
 21. See Duchrow/Hinkelammert, both *op.cit.* (2005 and 2012) Chapters 1.
 22. Cf. Duchrow, U., 1995 (1998²), *Alternatives to Global Capitalism – Drawn from Biblical History, Designed for Political Action*, International Books, Utrecht, 142ff.
 23. Cf. Duchrow, U., 1995 (1998²), Part II.
 24. Wink, Walter, 2002, *The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of the Man*, Minneapolis.
 25. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
 26. Cf. Duchrow, Ulrich/Liedke, Gerhard, 1989, *Shalom: Biblical Perspectives on Creation, Justice and Peace*, World Council of Churches, Geneva.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
 28. Cf. also Veerkamp, Ton, 2006, *Der Abschied des Messias. Eine Auslegung des Johannesevangeliums, I. Teil: Johannes 1,1-10,11*; in: *Texte & Kontexte*, 29. Jg. Nr. 109-111, 1-3; Lehrhaus e.V., Berlin., p. 43f.
 29. Cf. Wink, *op.cit.* 14.
 30. Bergmann, Sigurd, 2005, *Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature*, Series *Sacra Doctrina: Christian Theology for a Postmodern Age*, Eerdmans,

Grand Rapids, Mich.

31. Cf. Chakravarti, Uma, 1987, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism in India, Delhi*, and an unpublished lecture »Can Dalit/Buddhist Culture be an Anti-Capitalist Resource?«, 2005.
32. Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1, Chap. 8-13.
33. Cf. Duchrow/Hinkelammert, op. cit. 2012, chapter 13.
34. Besides the reflections above cf. Richter, Horst Eberhard, 2003.
35. Damasio, Antonio, 2006, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*, Vintage, New York.
36. Cf. Bauer, Joachim, 2005, *Warum ich fühle, was du fühlst – Intuitive Kommunikation und das Geheimnis der Spiegelneuronen*, Hamburg.
37. Cf. Duchrow/Hinkelammert op. cit. 2012, chapter 2.
38. This theory was developed by Fairbairn, Winnicott and others and is presented in an historical overview by Greenberg, J.R. & S. Mitchell 1998 (11th ed.). *Object Relations in Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge, MA./ London: Harvard University Press.
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40. Cf. e.g. Fromm, Erich, 1976, *To Have or to Be?*, Harper & Row, New York.
41. Richter, Horst Eberhard, 2003, *Das Ende der Egomane – Die Krise des westlichen Bewusstseins*, Knaur, München.
42. Cf. Korten, David, 2000, *The Post-Corporate World: Life after Capitalism*, Kumarian Press/Berret-Koehler, West Hartford, CT/San Francisco, CA.
43. Kearnes, Laurel/Keller, Catherine (Hg.), 2007, *Ecospirit. Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*, Fordham University Press, New York.
44. Cf. U. Duchrow/F. Hinkelammert, aaO. 225.
45. Cf. Duchrow, Ulrich (ed.), 2002c, *Colloquium 2000. Faith Communities and Social Movements Facing Globalization*, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Studies, 45, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Geneva.
46. Cf. The International Network of Engaged Buddhists; the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN)/Thailand; the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism/India etc. See also: Thich Nhat Hanh, *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism: Precepts for Everyday Living*, Parallax, 1998.
47. Cf. Duchrow/Hinkelammert, op. cit., and Duchrow, Ulrich/Bianchi, Reinhold/Krüger, René/Petracca, Vincenzo, 2006, *Solidarisch Mensch werden. Psychische und soziale Destruktion im Neoliberalismus – Wege zu ihrer Überwindung*, VSA in Kooperation mit Publik-Forum, Hamburg/Oberursel. chap. 9.
48. Cf. Report of Life-Giving Agriculture Global Forum, 9-13 April 2005, Wonju, Korea.
49. Cf. Krüger, René (Hg.), 2007, *Life in all Fullness. Latin American Protestant Churches Facing Neoliberal Globalization*, Lutheran World Federation/ ISEDET/AIPRAL, Buenos Aires.
50. Cf. <http://www.kairoseuropa.de/fix/0610-DokuMA.pdf>, p.3ff.
51. Cf. https://infotek.awele.net/d/f/1790/1790_ENG.pdf?public=ENG&t=.pdf, cf.

- “Solidarity Economy: Building Alternatives for People and Planet – Papers and Reports from the 2007 US Social Forum”, 2008, edited by Jenna Allard, Carl Davidson and Julie Matthaui, ChangeMaker Publications, Chicago, IL USA, www.lulu.com/changemaker.
52. <http://wrcr.ch/accra-confession/>
53. http://www.kairoseuropa.de/english/WCC_Bogor_A%20Call%20to%20Action.pdf.

Maryuri Mora Grisales

1. São Paulo is been ruled for more than 20 years for the same party, PSDB (Social Democracy Brazilian Party) in spite of its name, considered one of the most conservatives parties, and the first opposition to the Workers Party (PT). Its politics are clearly neoliberal, not so different from Dilma’s government, this party have ruled the city in the interest of the middle and higher classes.
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Nicolás Panotto

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4. *Ibid.*, p.431
5. Arturo Escobar, "El lugar de la naturaleza y la naturaleza del lugar", p.115
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8. De Sousa Santos, Boaventura (2009) Una epistemología del sur. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, pp.31-57
9. *Ibid.*, p.126

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12. Ernesto Laclau, *Misticismo, retórica y política*. Buenos Aires: FCE, 2000, p.19
13. Arturo Escobar, *Más allá del Tercer Mundo*, pp.97-98
14. Arturo Escobar, "El lugar de la naturaleza y la naturaleza del lugar", p.97
15. Arturo Escobar, *Más allá del Tercer Mundo*, p.101
16. Ver Bruno Latour, *Políticas de la naturaleza*. Barcelona: RBA Libros, 2013
17. Míguez, Rieger, Sung, *Beyond the Spirit of Empire. Theology and Politics in a New Key*. UK/USA: SCM Press, 2009; Joerg Rieger, *Globalization and Theology*. Nashville: Abignon Press, 2010
18. Peter Manley Scott, "Trinitarian Theology and the Politics of Nature". In: *Ecotheology*, 9.1 (2004) 29-48
19. Desde una perspectiva antropológica, la concepción de entre-medio ha sido trabajada por Homi Bahbah en *El lugar de la cultura*. Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2002. Un concepto muy similar es la "epistemología fronteriza" presentada por Walter Mignolo en *Desobediencia epistémica*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Signo, 2010
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Lilia Solano

1. On occasion of the release of her latest work, Animism, Tanya Tagaq was interviewed by Drew Nelles for The Walrus Magazine. See <http://thewalrus.ca/howl/>
2. Idem. The presentation was made by Geoff Benner, a Canadian musician.
3. Regarding the problem of the self in a subject-object context, his *El sujeto y la ley: el retorno del sujeto reprimido*, Caracas: Ed. El Perro y la Rana, 2006 is his most comprehensive analysis where he argues for a return of a repressed self as it reclaims its subjecthood (my term) by means of breaking through the confines that were imposed by a means-to-end logic.
4. *Mostly their Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford University Press, 2002.
5. I do not mean to say that De Lissovoy's paper is devoted to Buber's thought.

Although he does quote I And Thou, De Lissovoy's concern takes him to zero in on the concept of being in the context of formal education.

6. De Livossoy, Rufin-Pardo, and Góngora (2014) each offers partial yet useful overviews that taken as a whole provide a fairly accurate picture of the state of the discussion. What becomes apparent is that the legacy of, mostly, the French contemporary philosophy stresses upon the space-in-between the subjects create between themselves as they engage in mutual interactions on equal footings. The in-between is not only the locus of ethics but also, I would add, that of education.
7. I am aware of the need to nuance my call to focus on colonialism and an ensuing decolonialist agenda. What motivated pioneers on colonial studies such as Edward Said (who is the best known in Latin America, specially through his book *Orientalism*), G. Spivak, and H. Bhabha, set colonial studies apart from what we see in Latin America since Mariátegui. Around here we have moved along a path that has taken us from theories of dependence to the most recent efforts around a philosophy of liberation (i.e. Enrique Dussel, Franz Hinkelammert) and a philosophy of interculturalism (i.e. Fornet-Betancourt)

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Jione Havea

1. I use the lowercase “i” because we use the lowercase for the first person in the Tongan language, and also because i use the lowercase with “you,” “she,” “they,” “it,” and “others.” Why capitalize the first person when it is in relation to, and because of, everyone/everything else?
2. Imagine this essay as a mat (weaving). The conditions of essay-writing require that i begin from one specific place, but it would be more appropriate to read the sections of this essay together, as sections of the one mat, taking note of how each section is the weaving of different strands. Reading the sections together is part of the islandic-Oceanic style, the upshot of which is the fragmentary structure of this essay. What i see and present as strands could be read as fragments.
3. Privileging the written as if it is fixed and rigid has been problematized by deconstructionists for several years now.
4. Franklin in fact rewrote, in other words, in the spirit of the opening to this essay, “shifted” the framework of Otis Redding’s 1965 original song, in which “respect” was a euphemism. Franklin demanded a different kind of respect from what Redding wanted.

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List of Contributors

Wahu Kaara is a renowned educationist and a global social justice campaigner. Currently she serves as the Executive Director, Kenya Debt Relief Network – KENDREN. Over time I have been involved in numerous processes around Globalization, Debt, Trade, Aid, Human Rights and Sustainable Development and been a central figure within the World Social forum (WSF) process. Some notable publications include; The Mwomboko Research Project The Practice of Male Circumcision in Central Kenya and its Implications for the Transmission and Prevention of STD/HIV, African Sociological Review, 1,1,1997 pp. 66–81. Co-authored with Alberg BM, Kimani VN, Kirumbi LW and Krantz I; Gender Relations and Sustainable Agriculture- Rural Women Resistance to Structural Adjustment in Kenya. Canadian Women Studies/ Les Cahiers de la Femme, Spring 1997, pp. 40-44. Co-authored with Brownhill, Leigh S, Terisa E. Turner; Social Reconstruction in Rural Africa – A Gendered Class Analysis of Women’s Resistance to Cash Crop Production in Kenya Canadian Journal of Development Studies, Fall 1997, Co-authored with Turner, Terisa E and Leigh S. Turner.

Rogate Mshana is an economist (rogatemshana@hotmail.com) and the director of ECOLIFE Centre. He used to be on the staff of the World Council of Churches for many years with the responsibility of coordinating Economic Justice programme of WCC. He has edited and published several books among them, *Insisting on Peoples Knowledge against Developmentalism*(1992), *Passion for Another World*(2004), *In Search for a new Economy*(2003), *Justice and Poverty Eradication*(2002), *Justice Not Greed*(2011), *Economy of Life*(2014), *Poverty, Wealth and Ecology In Africa*(2006), *Debt in Developing Countries: Where are we?*(2001) and *Poverty Wealth and Ecology in Latin America*.

Vuyani Vellem is the Director of the Centre for Public Theology at the University of Pretoria and an Associate Professor in Systematic Theology and Ethics. He is an author of numerous articles, co-editor of *Prophet from the South: Essays in Honor of Allan Boesak* and a social commentator on ethical issues in public life.

Junaid S. Ahmad has a Juris Doctor (law) degree from the College of William and Mary, USA, and is the Director for the Center for Global Dialogue in Lahore, Pakistan. He has been teaching law, religion, and politics at the Lahore University of Management Sciences and the University of

Management and Technology since 2009. He has been a long-time human rights activist. In the US, he has worked with the National Interfaith Committee on Social Justice and Amnesty International. In Pakistan, he has worked with groups such as Educate Pakistan and AMAL Human Development Network. He is a member of the following professional organizations: National Muslim Lawyers Association (NMLA), American Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), American Academy of Religion (AAR), the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), and the South Asian Muslim Studies Association (SAMSA).

Chang, Yoon-Jae is the Professor of Systematic Theology at the Christian Studies Department of Ewha Womans University in Seoul. He earned his M.Div. and Ph.D. from the Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York. He served the Christian Conference of Asia as President and was one of the plenary speakers at the 10th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan in 2013. He wrote many books in Korean and some articles in English, such as "Francis of Assisi: An Invitation to 'Brotherhood/Sisterhood' as an Alternative to the Profit Economy of Medieval Europe," "Creation in light of Liberation: Ensuring Connection between Life and Justice," "Toward the Pax Christi in North East Asia," 'Adam (Human),

Where Are You?' (Genesis 3:9) – Ecology, Economy, and the Place of the Human," and "Anchored on Our Rock, Building a Sustainable Future," etc.

Carla Natan is a human rights lawyer by training and an independent consultant for migrant workers; conflict and peace in Indonesia. She is a member of Social Rehabilitation for Victim of Human Trafficking Crime and Violence against Women and Children Working Group of Ministry of Social Affairs of Republic of Indonesia.

Lapapan Supamanta is a Buddhist and social activist in Thailand. She was Executive Secretary for International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) until 2009. Currently she is Deputy Director of Thai Poor Act, an NGO based in Thailand, and a member of Technical Support Team for Assembly of the Poor, a nationwide grassroots social movement. Her interests include the integration of Buddhist teachings in social activism. She wrote a number of papers on socially engaged Buddhism and translated several books including "Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective" by David R. Kinsley.

Maria Karanatsiou is Greek, translator, French teacher and postgraduate student of Ecumenical Theology. She is an active member of the non-

profit organization “Initiative for the Child” and a volunteer of the “Solidarity and Action Group” of her hometown.

Ofelia Ortega is Pastor of the Presbyterian Reformed in Cuba and Professor of Theological Ethics and Theology and Gender at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas, Cuba (SET). She is also Director of the Christian Institute of Gender Studies of the Study Center of the Council of Churches in Cuba (ICEG) and Vice President of the International Association of Women in Ministry (IAWM). She is a member of Cuban Parliament (2008-2018). She used to be President of the World Council of Churches (2006-2013). She wrote numerous books and articles. The recent ones are: *The Cuban Church in Socialism*, in *Hope for the World*, edit by Walter Brueggemann, Louisville Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, *Encuentros y Visiones – In Panorama de la Teología Latinoamericana*, ed. Juan José Tamayo y Juan Bosch, Estella, Navarra, España, *Gracia y Ética*, Ofelia Ortega, edit. CLAI. Quito, Ecuador, 2006, *Diaconía Ecuánica*, Chris Ferguson and Ofelia Ortega, CLAI, Quito, Ecuador, 2006 and *El Derecho a Ser*, Ofelia Ortega, in *Vida Plena para toda la Creación*, René Kruger and others, editors, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2006.

Ulrich Duchrow is Professor of systematic theology at the University of Heidelberg in Germany, specialised in ecumenical and inter-religious theology and theology-economy issues. He is co-founder and moderator of Kairos Europa, an ecumenical grassroots network striving for economic justice. Recent books: with F.J. Hinkelammert, Property for People, Not for Profit: Alternatives to the Global Tyranny of Capital". London & Geneva: Zed Books & World Council of Churches, 2004.; with F.J. Hinkelammert, Transcending Greedy Money: Interreligious Solidarity for Just Relations. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012; with others 5 volumes of the series "Radicalizing Reformation". Muenster: Lit, 2015 (details in: www.radicalizing-reformation.com)

Maryuri Mora Grisales is a Colombian theologian, 29, feminist and ecumenical activist for youth rights in Brazil. She is a member of ecumenical youth network (REJU) and PhD student in Sciences of Religion at Methodist University of São Paulo.

Luis N. Rivera-Pagán is Emeritus Professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, is the author of several books, among them: A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas (1992), Mito, exilio y demonios: literatura y teología

en América Latina (1996), Diálogos y polifonías: perspectivas y reseñas (1999), Essays from the Diaspora (2002), Ensayos teológicos desde el Caribe (2013), and Essays from the Margins (2014).

Nicolas Panotto is Argentinean and theologian.

Master in Social and Political Anthropology and PhD candidate on Social Sciences. Director of Multidisciplinary Study Group on Religion and Public Advocacy (GEMRIP) and coordinator of the consultant Pedagogical and Theological Services (SPT). He is Author of Hacia una teología del sujeto político (Towards a Theology of the Political Subject, 2012) and Teología y espacio público (Theology and Public Sphere, 2014)

Lilia Solano is a human rights defender, political activist and expert in Latin American social movements from Bogota, Colombia. She has campaigned for over twenty years for peace in her country and is a member of the Union Patriótica political party. She is a professor emeritus at the Nacional and Javieriana Universities in Bogota, specializing in Latin American social movements, Latin American liberation theology and social theory.

Kikanza Nuri-Robins is an Organization Development Consultant who works with mission-driven organizations that are in transition, helping them to close the gap between what they are and what they want to be. She also works with faith-based organizations, helping congregations move to a state of greater health and stability, and assisting denominational national offices in addressing issues of diversity and inclusion. She attended San Francisco Theological Seminary (M.Div. and Diploma in the Arts of Spiritual Direction) and is ordained in the Presbyterian Church, USA. Her EdD in the Anthropology of Education is from the University of Southern California. She serves on the BioEthics Committee of the UCLA Medical Center, and is a coach for Social Venture Partners Fast Pitch competition. Dr. Nuri-Robins is the author of five books including, Cultural Proficiency, A Manual for Leaders (3rd ed 2009), Culturally Proficient Instruction (2011), and Fish Out of Water (April 2016).

Jione Havea is a native Methodist pastor from Tonga who is Primary Researcher at the Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre, Charles Sturt University, Australia, and Visiting Scholar at Trinity Methodist Theological College in Auckland, New Zealand. He is the author of Elusions of Control: Biblical Law on the Words of Women (Society of

Biblical Literature) and co-editor of, among others, *Out of Place: Doing Theology on the Crosscultural Brink* (Equinox) and *Reading Ruth in Asia* (Society of Biblical Literature).