STRUCTURES AND STRUCTURAL SIN

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Introduction

Sociology and social philosophy's intense analysis of the socio-cultural basis and manifestations of social ills appeared soon after the rise of capitalism during the European industrial revolution. The figure of Marx (1818-1883) and the Frankfurt School (1923-1950) whose well-known members include Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin and Marcuse occupied prominence. Emerging in their analyses was the burning concern to lead philosophy and social science towards transformative/normative practice. Their theories informed many socialist political practices eventually identified with various historical forms of socialism.

Capitalism expanded beyond the European and North American frontiers and, in due time, issues raised by Marx and critical theory hounded it. It was in the 1950's and 1960's that the world heard and witnessed the growing influence of the decolonization struggles identified with militant socialism and the Latin American revolutionaries like Fidel Castro and Ché Guevarra. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, anti-capitalist sentiments reached feverish point among the militant activists of Latin America[1] and some parts of Africa and Asia. Some theoreticians from this dependent side of capitalism developed their localized views about the socio-economic roots of social inequity. Dependency analysis from African and Latin American pens targeted the affluent capitalist centers as the perpetrator of a system that produced manifold negativities in satellite

1. See Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People: The Struggle of Human Rights in Latin America: The Catholic Church in Conflict with U.S. Policy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).

societies. Even as they stood on the shoulders of Europe's philosophical giants, these local theorists complemented the center's critical school with a version of their critique from the periphery.

It was, thus, in the context of struggles of militant groups in Latin America against the presence of dominant capitalism that members of the Christian Churches participated in the twin-involvement of political and theoretical practices. The language of *de dependencia a liberación* (from dependence to liberation) which became the secular banner of activists eventually seeped into some portions of the Christian Churches until Christian involvement in the struggle for social amelioration became the starting point of critical reflections which was later known as *teología de la liberación* (or theology of liberation).

The theology of liberation became the promoter of Latin American theological reflections on social sin. Although it wanted to clarify the social dimension of sin, it has also created confusion in the minds of many readers. Recent thinkers who wanted to clarify issues did not fail to introduce newer sets of more confusing interpretations. The conundrum relates to some misinterpretations or gaps in the understanding of structural sin. Most of the readers' confusion revolves around the mistaken application of a traditional category of personal sin to explain structural sin. Many readers do not possess the conceptual tools to think of structural sin in a structural perspective.

In this article, I will examine some of the ways in which structural sin is treated in liberation theology, official pronouncements of the Catholic church, and non-liberation theologies. Then, I will read the structural dimension of sin from a structuralist perspective and to restructure it within the Christian understanding of original sin.

Social Dimension of Sin

Liberation Theology

It was from the liberation theologians that the concept of structural sin (and kindred terms like *sinful structures*, *sinful situation, social sin, institutionalized sin, structural violence, structural evil,* etc.) became

a tool of interpretation, a category used to judge a situation already perceived by dependency theory as causing so much oppression. The same concept will occupy important place in the Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979) documents.

Ronaldo Muñoz, a Chilean theologian, who analyzed Latin American post-conciliar documents of the church, points to three ways social sin is understood or communicated: (1) the sin crystallized in social structures and established order which configures this situation of sin; (2) the sin we see in human beings and more concretely in the favored minorities – those using the situation to exploit the poor and above all to voluntarily maintain it even by violence; (3) the sin on the level of values, conception of life and the social conscience pervading the dominant sector.[2] Hence, social sin may be crystallized in surface, visible and operational structures as well as those anchored in the deep, invisible and ideological structures which can be consciously utilized for personal interest. Subsequent views within liberation theology would fit into this three-fold classification.

Social sin as a conscious use of structures to carry out evil plans does not raise problems in the understanding of structural sin because of the connection between individual intention and its means. Stealing money from the government through patronage politics is a clear example. Moreover, social evil flowing from warped structures as when racism is reinforced by a collective representation of a 'white God' and the idea of paradise/heaven exclusively for whites, does not disturb the standard understanding of sin as flowing from a corrupted source itself. Problems in interpretation occur when social evil present in society cannot be referred back to evil plots and/or evil structures or when *unintended* negative consequences are linked to the very idea of structural sin.

One of the more developed presentations about social/structural sin is that of Juan Luis Segundo.[3] What is special in Segundo's contribution is the application of the sociology of knowledge which made clearer the following: (1) the objective character of sin in both

2. Ronaldo Muñoz, *Nueva conciencia de la iglesia en America Latina* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1974), 102-103.

3. Juan Luís Segundo, *A Theology of the New Humanity. Vol. II: Grace and the Human Condition,* trans. J. Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973), 37ff.

the visible and invisible modes; (2) the objective structures and their representations being internalized by subjects to form beliefs and values; (3) the reproduction of society through individuals whose identities and activities are continuous with socio-cultural life-processes. The sociology of knowledge clarified the link between the two-levels: ideological structures (e.g., unjust norms and values) internalized by people and unjust (operational) structures reproduced and legitimized by ideologies. The correspondence between the 'negative invisibles' and the 'negative visibles' shaped this way of interpretating structural sin. However, this scheme does not extend the notion of structural sin to cover the negative products of 'positive visible' and 'positive invisible' structures. If this latter interpretation is pursued, the meaning of structural sin should go beyond liberation theologians' intended meaning which usually locates sin in the established practices of dominant and exploitative people. Structural sin, however, could also be ratified by the dominated and exploited and even via structures perceived as good. The double-effect principle operates in the following example: the structures of farm work include, among others, the established relations between the farmer, the land, product and consumers. Since the development of agriculture, the progressive supply of protein became available to gestating mothers. This made it possible for a more promising child care, contributing to the development of a more positive and optimistic view of conception and childbirth. However, its unintended consequence was to bind women to a role which became very oppressive: the child breeder role. If we do not consider the latter as oppressive to women (and, thus, as not sinful), it is because the structures serve to normalize the negative effects. On the other hand, if we consider such role as oppressive and sinful, we could demonize many of us males.

Other formulations, like those of Enrique Dussel, show how domination and exploitation could come about because of established structures. The domination of the poor, for example, by the moneyed class through the established structures of capitalism perpetuates the invisible character of sin in an unequal form of relationship.[4] Sinning through structures, therefore, cannot be an object

4. Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and Community,* trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 126-127.

of planning. The invisibility of sin is reproduced because of the *typical,* thus, quasi-obligatory character of, say, employer-worker relations in capitalism. This specific example is appropriate and Dussel believes that domination could be avoided by agents because of the possibility that they may be "converted,"[5] where conversion is understood as "metanoia (a changing of one's ways, one's life, motivated by repentance – Matt.3:3-8)… a breach with Babylon, a breach with the prevailing *social* relationship in whose toils we had been snared."[6] However, this intra-religious form of exhortation is difficult to fathom since it appears that the invisible sin in domination through existing structures could be overcome by personal conversion towards other ways of life, other structures. If the way to avoid sin is to avoid typical relationships which embody sin, how is avoidance possible when such typical relations are themselves society's all-pervading structures? Moreover, how does one realize the sinfulness of structural sins (and thus repent) when they are in effect invisible? Although Dussel suggested socialism as alternative to capitalism,[7] the category of conversion could be misunderstood since, for some people, it suggests sin-avoidance apart from pursuit of alternative relations or structures. While Dussel's formulation may not be erroneous, we are still in a quandary in grappling with the idea of conversion from structural sin towards 'structural grace'. The process of moving towards another socio-political realm may need more than the hortatory formulas from Dussel's work (although recent works of Dussel not yet available to us could supply some answers).

Gustavo Gutiérrez in his *Teología de la liberación* cited the view of the Spanish exegete Jose Gonzáles Ruiz who coined the term *hamartiósfera* as the sphere of sin, indicating the objectivity of conditions that go beyond the moral act of conscious persons: "a kind of parameter or structure which objectively conditions the march of human history itself".[8] Gutiérrez provides a follow-up reflection:

5. Ibid., 131.
6. Ibid., 39.
7. Ibid., 193.
8. Jose M. Gonzáles Ruiz, *Pobreza evangélica y promoción humana* (Barcelona, 1966), 29; as quoted in Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación: Perspectivas* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1972), 237.

> Sin is evident in oppressive structures, in the exploitation of humans by humans, in the domination and slavery of peoples, races, and social classes. Sin appears, therefore, as the fundamental alienation, the root of a situation of injustice and exploitation.[9]

Gutiérrez's explanation see-saws between the objective character of sin and a subjective but collective mode of sin's commission. Such a collective characterization of structural sin imputes guilt on some subjects. There is, however, a dearth of explanation on how this subject-pole of structural sin could be widely practiced aside from the fact that we fail to see multitude of perpetrators with malicious intentions.

Succeeding references to structural sin offered variations on the same three-fold theme. Other elements are introduced to further qualify the term: "A negative fundamental option which flows from the heart of a person and expressed in structural reality; sin constituted by structural relations."[10] Here, two things are raised by the author: (b) that structural sins can be viewed as subjective expressions of one's negative fundamental option, and (b) that they can be engendered and constituted by sinful structural relations themselves. It leaves us guessing, however, whether all negative fundamental options have to be *intentionally* expressed through structures or whether these same options are already *constitutionally* linked to structural relations.

Liberations theologians lacked the more sustained structuralist reading of structural sin which could further examine the philosophical/theological implications of naming as sin those negative effects of ideational and operational structures. The following statement of Jon Sobrino may partly explain this failure of delivering a more sustained analysis:

> In Latin American theology, the object is first to see that sin is there and then to ask how to get rid of it. The theological concern is not to explain as accurately as possible

9. Gutiérrez, Teología de la liberación, p. 237.

10. J. Aldunate, "El pecado social, teoria y alcances," Teología y vida 24 (1983): 106-108.

> what the essence of sin is, or what meaning a sinful world has, or what meaning human existence has in such a world. The concern is to change the sinful situation.[11]

This is reminiscent of Marx's exasperation over idealist philosophies when he wrote in the 11th Thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it."[12]

Official Pronouncements

As early as May 15, 1961, before liberation theologians could make their point about structural dimension of sin, Pope John XXIII in *Mater et magistra* has already referred to the role of the "organization and structure of economic life"[13] in furthering justice *or injustice*. *Gaudium et spes* (1965) already pointed to an "urgent need to revamp economic and social structures"[14] as a norm useful for international cooperation in economic matters.

It was Pope Paul VI in *Populorum progressio* (March 26, 1967) who called as "less than human conditions" the "oppressive political structures resulting from the abuse of ownership or the improper exercise of power, from the exploitation of the worker or unjust transaction."[15] The same pope who stressed in *Octogesima adveniens* (May 14, 1971) the values of freedom and participation in society has paired the term (social) structures with the term "conditioning

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11. Jon Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor,* trans. Matthew J. O'Connell and Fernando Segovia (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984),16.

12. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *On Religion,* with an introduction by Reinhold Niebuhr (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1982), 72.

13. John XIII, *Mater et magistra,* No. 83, in *The Papal Encyclicals: 1958- 1981,* ed. Claudia Carlin (Raleigh: Consortium Books – McGrath Publishing Co., 1981), 59-90.

14. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 86 in *Official Catholic Teachings: Social Justice,* ed. Vincent P. Mainelli (Wellington: McGrath Publishing Company, 1978), 189.

15. Paul VI, *Populorum progressio,* No. 21, in *The Papal Encyclicals: 1958-1981,* 183-201; henceforth, PP.

circumstances" both posing as threat to freedom and self-determination.[16]

There are no indications that John XXIII, *Gaudium et spes,* and Pope Paul VI could have been coached by the liberation theologians nor the latter borrowed from the official documents. Significant to the liberation theology's version was its distinctly Latin American context as it carried the urgency of *liberar el pueblo* (to liberate the people) or *liberación.* The influence of liberation theology, however, has been visible in the Synod of Bishops of 1971 which introduced into the broader social teachings of the church the whole idea of sinful social structures.[17]

The 1974 Synod of Bishops cited the problems of unjust social and political struc-tures.[18] These unjust social and political structures are referred to as "the social consequences of sin."[19] The interventions of Latin American bishops during the Synod on Sin and Reconciliation in 1983 desired to expand the notion of sin beyond the personal, individual and intentional by pointing out the notion of social sin manifested in the autonomous social structures.[20] As a rejoinder to the bishops' interventions, John Paul II's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (1984) hoped to clarify the notion of social sin by offering different meanings: (1) social

16. Paul VI, *Octogesima adveniens,* No. 50, in *Official Catholic Teachings: Social Justice,* ed. Vincent P. Mainelli, 282. See the pope's explicit reference to the ability of multinational corporations to become tools of domination (No. 44) and his assessment of present-day economic activity as "a field of confrontation and domination" (No. 46) both of which relate negatively to his hope of "setting up structures in which the rhythm of progress would be regulated, with a view to greater justice." (No. 45)

17. Synod of Bishops 1971, *Justice in the World* (November 30, 1971) in *Official Catholic Teachings,* 285, 291, 296.

18. Synod of Bishops 1974, "Declaration on Evangelization," *Origins* 4 (7 November 1974): 308.

19. Ibid.

20. See the interventions of the following bishops in *Origins* 13 (3 November 1983): Henry D'Souza, "Structural Sin and Injustice," 365-366; James Spaita, "Liberation and Development of the Whole Person," 362-363; Angelo Fernandez, "A Perspective for the Synod," 363-365; Aloysius Lorscheider, "Beyond Domination: Service," 357-359; and Peter Hebblethwaite, "The Synod on Social Sin," *The Tablet* (22 October 1983): 1043.

effect/influence of sin; i.e., every personal sin is social; (2) sin against other people; i.e., against one's neighbor; (3) social structures opposing God's plan; in this sense, sin does not refer to free human option or decision but to the universal condition and power beyond human beings. Social sin is rooted in the structures of social life. The following is his attempt to explain it:

> Now it has to be admitted that realities and situations such as those described, when they become generalized and reach vast proportions as social phenomena, almost always become anonymous, just as their causes are complex and not always identifiable. Hence if one speaks of social sin here, the expression obviously has an analogical meaning. However, to speak even analogically of social sins must not cause us to underestimate the responsibility of the individuals involved. It is meant to be an appeal to the consciences of all, so that each may shoulder his or her responsibility seriously and courageously in order to change those disastrous conditions and intolerable situations. (*RP,* 16)

This third meaning reminds us about the anonymous and impersonal character of social realities, as well as the intentional and collective elements, which correspond to some notions of social sin proposed by liberation theology. The following lines from *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (December 30, 1987) reinforce the points in *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*:

> one must denounce the existence of economic, financial and social *mechanisms* which, although they are manipulated by people, often function almost automati-cally, thus accenting the situation of wealth for some and poverty for the rest . . . they suffocate or condition the economies of the less developed countries. (*SRS,* 16)

Again, structures' relative automaticity and autonomy from personal intention is peppered with cautionary reminder about the possibility of people intentionally taking advantage of social mechanisms. John Paul's view in this excerpt is, however, very close to liberation theology's version even as his warning would sound louder than his concurrences.

Although written earlier than *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, the most representative of the official account's intentionalist perspective and its fear against some erroneous presuppositions in liberation theology are *Libertatis nuntius* (Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation" [August 6, 1984]) and *Libertatis conscientia* (Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation [March 22, 1986]). Both documents agree on the need for structural change but *Libertatis conscientia* openly attacked the strategy of giving priority to structural change over personal/interior transformation. Liberation theology, however, stresses the need for personal change within a communitarian context. This does not imply the degradation of personal/interior change.

Theology Outside Liberation Theology

The theological awareness of the structural dimension of sin antedates Latin American liberation theology and even the 1960's questions against racism, poverty, war and peace.[24] As early as 1912, the Social Gospel movement in America had a voice in Walter Rauschenbusch whose awareness about social sin reflected the movement's reaction against Christianity's too individualistic thinking and indifference to social ills.[25] In 1917, Rauschenbusch referred to the concept of superpersonal sin: "The structures and institutions (e.g., trade unions, political parties, legal profession, etc.) which can be converted into sources of evil and exploitation and oppression."[26] Although what is stressed here is the link between intention and structures, the mode of sinning is already identified to be via structures.[27]

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24. Burke believes that "[t]he concept of social sin actually began to appear in the 1960s in relation to questions of racism, poverty, war and peace." Margaret Ellen Burke, "Social Sin and Social Grace," *The Way Supplement* 85 (January 1996): 40.

25. Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1912).

26. Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan Co.,1922 [1917]).

27. See T.H. Sanks, "Liberation Theology and Social Gospel: Variations on a Theme," *Theological Studies* 41 (1980): 668-683.

A more structuralist view, one that is rooted in structures and without the precondition of personal intentions, is evident in the formulation of Piet Schoonenberg: "Sin is more than the accumulation of personal acts of sinfulness, it also embraces manifestations of sin within institutional and societal structures, cultural patterns, and political and economic systems."[28] Likewise, Gregory Baum and Dermot Lane[29] gave reflections on structural sin apart from the qualifications offered by liberation theology. In addition, the political theologies of Jürgen Moltmann and J.-B. Metz offered views on the socio-political significance of the Christian faith and the reality of sin in its socio-structural dimensions in the context of post-World War II Germany. All of them have pointed to the visible and invisible aspects of structures.

As liberation theology's formulation on structural sin became well-known, more and more, non-liberation theorists responded to its claims and subsequent discussions reveal constructive reactions/ criticisms. Curran, McCormick, Fuchs, Häring and Schüller[30] – all well-known moral theologians – contributed to the enlightening debates about structural sin raised strongly by theologians committed to social change in Latin America. Explanations of other writers like Matthew Lamb, Dorothy Sölle, Marciano Vidal and Thomas

28. Piet Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin: A Theological View,* trans. J. Donceel (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 98-123.

29. Gregory Baum, *Man Becoming: God in Secular Experience*(New York: Seabury Press, 1970); Gregory Baum, *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Society* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975); Dermot Lane, *Foundations for a Social Theology: Praxis, Process and Salvation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 110ff.

30. Charles E. Curran, "Catholics Social Ethics: A New Approach?" *The Clergy Review* 70 (1985): 41-47, 83-89; Richard A. McCormick, "Moral Theology 1940-1989: An Overview," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 113-119; Josef Fuchs, *Moral Demands and Personal Obligations* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1993), 69ff; Bernard Häring, "Sin in Post-Vatican II Theology," in J.A. Selling, *Personalist Morals: Essays in Honor of Professor Louis Janssens* (Leuven: University Press/ Peeters, 1988), 87-107; Bruno Schüller, "The Debate on the Specific Character of a Christian Ethics: Some Remarks," in Charles E. Curran and Richard McCormick, *Moral Theology No. 2: The Distinctiveness of Christian Ethics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 207-233.

Schubeck[31] have further expanded our understanding of structural sin which has already entered the consciousness of non-liberation theologians. Many of their views reinforced the ideas of liberation theology.

Summary

On the part of liberation theology, in general, there is a lack of autonomous explanations of structural sin, i.e., explanations which should have gone beyond the theonomous backdrop and religious exhortations aimed at promoting liberating praxis. Ideally, the concept of structures from autonomous secular disciplines should further mediate reflections on structural sin. Religious exhortation should have opened itself earlier to a more expansive and inclusive theory and praxis. The autonomy and inclusiveness of theorizing may free theological reflection from some tentativeness, 'ad hoc-ness' or, worse, amateurism in theorizing as engendered by theology's preoccupation with political praxis.

On the part of the official's concern to guard tradition, the classical understanding of sin serves as a standard approach of interpretation. The traditional view of sin as intentional "sin of the person" has given little justice to the broader understanding of the "sin of the world" found in the Christian scriptures. The tendency to search for intentions in sinful effects serves to block one's view about the possibility of structural mechanisms producing evil effects as pointed out by the Synod of 1971 and John Paul II. Intention/ responsibility as a limiting forestructure of understanding has redefined structural sin in many official pronouncements.

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31. Matthew L. Lamb Solidarity with Victims: Toward a Theology of Social Transformation (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1982); Dorothy Sölle, "Thou Shalt Have No Other Jeans Before Me (Levi's Advertisement, Early Seventies): The Need for Liberation in a Consumerist Society," in *The Challenge of Liberation Theology: A First World Response,* eds. B. Mahan and L.D. Richesin (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1981), 4-16; Marciano Vidal, "Teología de la liberación y ética social cristiana," *Studia Moralia* 15 (1977): 207-218; "La preferencia por el pobre, criterio de moral," *Studia Moralia* 20 (1982): 277-304; "Is Morality Based on Autonomy Compatible with the Ethics of Liberation?" *Concilium* 172 (April 1984): 80-86; Thomas L. Schubeck, *Liberation Ethics: Sources, Models and Norms* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

Non-liberationists widely accept the use of structural sin to refer to the objective dimension of sin. But not unlike the liberation theologians and sometimes thinking alike the official pronouncements, many failed to come up with more autonomous scientific explanations *and* resolution as to its place in the sin tradition of Christianity itself.

There seems to be some confusion among readers arising from the virtual lack of clear explanations around the two ideas of objectivity and subjectivity. Still confusing is the concept of sin commonly understood as subjective capacity being applied to objective realities which are clearly not possessing intentions. How structural sin could indeed be sin to include, for example, the element of temptation to commit sin is not elaborated. Furthermore, the opportunity to explore a well-argued correlation between negative effects of structural sin and the positive/transforming effects of structural grace[32] is missed, leaving behind the usual confusion in the minds of readers about sin.

Original Sin and Structural Sin

Nikolaus Wandinger,[33] a theologian from Innsbruck University, speaks of structural sin as a concrete instance of original sin, "as the ensuing consequences from that first act of sinning for the rest of humankind, that is, our nature's being marred by original sin, the *peccatum originale originatum."* This refers to the second aspect of original sin, the first aspect of which is the sin committed by the first humans referred to by the technical term, *peccatum originale originans*. This state of primordial sinfulness is more consistent with the meaning of structures viewed from a structuralist form of analysis.

32. Cf. Leonardo Boff, *Liberating Grace* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979).

33. Nikolaus Wandinger, "Where should one Search for 'Original Sin'? Dialogue between Theology, Philosophy, and Science," (Feb. 2003), in http://theol.uibk.ac.at/leseraum/artikel/342.html (access 06.12.2005).

The term 'original sin' does not function as a concept of moral appeal or judgment but an instrument of interpretation. It explains "why human persons in certain circumstances are not able to act in accordance with their moral ideals and tend to fail in spite of the efforts they make." Being marred by the original sin of the first humans, people today suffer from limited freedom which does carry with it ample amount of brokenness and alienating dispositions. Wandinger continues:

> we are aware today that oftentimes we are not our own masters, that we might want to be better but are unable to, we might have meant well but caused damage instead, we might act in an evil way, yet claim that we are not to blame but someone else who made us the way we are. And these are not just excuses or pretexts. There are objective causal relations between us and our ancestry that limit – and sometimes remove – our ability to choose, or to act according to our choices. This is basically, what the consequences of original sin are in our lives.[f]

Wandinger cautions us, however, into reducing the meaning of original sin into structural sin, i.e., viewed from the perspective of sociology. Structural sin, among other concepts like neurosis, hereditary disease or mimetic desire, is only one way of making concrete the meaning of original sin. It cannot replace this more integrative concept. Structural sin and the other ways of concretizing original sin "contribute to the understanding of original sin in [their] own particular way, in as much as they contribute something to the question, how human nature's inclination toward sin can manifest itself . . . they situate what is meant by *original sin* in the lives of people and relate the concept to their experiences."[f]

It is in view of this treatment of structural sin as an instantiation of original sin that I will theorize through the mediation of structuralist explanations. I will supply what Wandinger has left out, that is, a more detailed structuralist examination of what constitutes as structural sin within capitalism. I limit the meaning of structural sin to refer to the deep/ideational and surface/operational structures which bring about unintended negative effects to society. (Thus, I

f. Ibid.

f. Ibid.

will not treat of structural sin viewed either as malicious use of structures or evil structures producing evil effects).

Theorizing Structures and Systems

The concept of structure is explored in different academic fields. The visible/invisible, deep/surface or ideological/operational qualifications are constantly discussed and always within the broader discussion of a system (i.e., economic, political, cultural, linguistic, physiological and intra-psychic systems). Discussions abound in sociology/philosophy (Durkheim, Marx, Bourdieu), philosophical linguistics (de Saussure, Peirce, Chomsky), anthropology (Levi-Strauss, Radcliffe-Brown), psychology (Freud, Jung, Bronfenbrenner), and many of their studies would interpenetrate as in the philosophical-linguistic model of Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology, or the philosophical treatment of the sociology of knowledge by Schutz and Luckmann. The following theoretical framework distills the very important ideas propounded by various authors from Marx and Durkheim to Bronfrenbrenner.[34]

Structure is to be understood as the mutual relations of elements within a whole, and such relations determine (fundamentally) the character of the whole. This concept, which focuses on relations as paths or founts, compliments and builds up the eco-systems theory of human development.[35] This also puts emphasis on interdependencies within the whole, serving as the environment or background/foreground/underground of human behavior. While the concept of structure points to relations of elements and how these relations determine operations and procedures, the concept of system refers to the group of elements actually working together,

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34. U. Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

35. For the following, see J. Garbarino, "The Human Ecology of Child Maltreatment. A Conceptual Model for Research, *"Journal of Marriage and the Family* 39 (1977): 721-735; J. Garbarino, *Selected Readings on Adolescent Maltreatment,* DHHS# 81-30301 (Washington DC: National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1981); U. Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

following the paths determined by structures, to do a certain job or produce a certain purpose. It is important to note that diverse intertwining structures find their convergence within the solidifying definition of a system; the system defines the overall operations which drive structures to follow their course in making the former operational. This, of course, takes for granted an unproblematic system-structures entity.

A structure's meaning is centered on relations of units which produce distinctive effects on the system's operations; the latter also demarcating the functions of such relations. A change in basic structural relations will thus produce a corresponding effect on the system's operations, while the system's rigid and stabilizing status already limit these basic relations. A system, thus, depends on the stable patterning of relations to maintain its normal operations. Notwithstanding the fact that structures seek their most stable positions within the system, some elements, whether exogenous or endogenous, will definitely appear to produce destabilizing and restructuring qualities.

As a functional concept applied in analysis, system is valuable in looking at capitalism's determination/constitution of flows, processes and substance as it finds its best way to reproduce itself. Capitalism, as a system, is thus viewed as whole with varied and complex elements mutually interlinked to produce efficiency and, thus, greater ordering.

Structures maintained and reproduced in everyday life circumscribed and saturated by capitalism are set channels of relations that determine human development. In various ways, persons will act or move through and, sometimes, against those channels of behavior, come out formed and forming themselves in the process. In other words, persons belonging to a capitalism-pervaded milieu will necessarily be formed consistent to the system's character or limits. While some people are benefited, many others also feel capitalism's adversarial or negative effects, making this an essential factor in their formation.

Capitalism, with is attendant spirit, is one among the broader systems (e.g., traditional culture and religious traditions) which constitute the macrosystem. As the present-day dominant system, it colonizes ecological systems and thus circumscribes action and human relations. The following discussion assumes the role of the capitalist system in life's processes, human behavior and social interaction.

Structural Sin and the Structures of Capitalism

A concrete and historical genesis of our state of primordial sinfulness within capitalism points to a time that is no longer available to us but may be viewed as a beginning of beginnings. Its genealogical reference may not even be referred back to certain responsibilities of individuals or specific groups but to some generalized original human-ascendants and their originating activities.

In the context of capitalist system, some basic elements acquired value because of the simple but determined relations which, in the beginning, were meant to produce some desirable results for some agents and their interests. Because of the sustained everyday patterned process of interactions to maintain and reproduce the system these relations became taken-for-granted relations and subsequently became models of interaction. No matter how these standard relations evolved into variants, they occupied a place in human consciousness, both individual and collective, through language and other forms of representations, as well as in society, visible in the concrete habits, practices, roles, rituals, signs, symbols, institutions and organizations.

The entrepreneur's, merchant's, financier's, industrialist's and manufacturer's simple intention to gain profit from the investment of private property with the help of available human and natural resources has given shape to a society built on the simplest core structure of private property/self-interest tandem. The division of labor, raw materials, technology and information meant for operationalization of the capitalists' intention to produce products and services for profit were determined by this core structure. It became the primordial structure – the hub around which other activities of capitalist societies revolve.

The core and associated/derived structures of capitalism gave rise to conditions, opportunities, channels or networks which in turn shape and reshape patterns of action or behaviors of individuals, groups and institutions which make up to produce and reproduce a whole system of consistent operations, rules, network of codes, beliefs and the corresponding symbolic universe.[36]

36. This takes into account the idea of structuration which refers to the mutual interaction and correction of individuals and structures. See Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985).

Alienations, Disconnections and Fragmentations: Effects of Capitalism's Primordial Structure

The emergence of capitalism highlighted both its break from rural/feudal communities and its push towards a progressively urbanized setting. This break is the original and far-reaching separation upon which other forms of separation/alienation would develop. In urban centers, capitalists were dominant and their principles and everyday activities led to the formation of their typical productive forces, setting up their appropriate organization, establishing venues for the circulation of goods and defining their distinctive legitimating ideas. Their set-ups and activities also determined the ways with which capitalists and other groups responded to the effects of alienations on the lives of workers and consumers.

Previous to the creation of factories, manufacturing was usually rural- and home-based. Work, including the agricultural and non-household-based, was largely centered on the *oikos*. When work was household-based or adjoining it, family chores and intimacies interconnect with the manufacturing processes by virtue of a shared space. This household-based industry shared a feudal cultural setting with agricultural labor. Cottage industries presupposed the *oikos* nearby.

The household-industry set-up was problematic for merchants since it was not under their direct and immediate control. The families had much independence from the supervision of their merchants-financiers who had to contend with unpredictable production output caused by household dependencies or needs that affected manufacturing operations.

More and more merchants had to seek for investment alternatives that slowly led them to towns/cities and away from cottage manufacturing and, thus, away from the rural household outlook and concerns. In due course, merchants turned to power-driven machines which eventually replaced handwork. The factory, not the households, was the best place for machines and workers. Work, following this development, became a regularity, already taken-for-granted as part of normal existence for many societies. But many groups of people were in effect excluded from this work which already required special skills and appropriate manners or mentality.

For being penniless, many people were also excluded from the market circulation of produced goods. Other people, however, were privileged (as workers and consumers) by virtue of their preferred skills and possession of cash.

As the demand for goods expanded, the rural population filled the need for additional labor. Rural and household labor, as a result, migrated for urban work. *Oikos*-rooted workers had to move away from their private spheres but remained orientated to their private concerns and dependencies. Eventually, "activities and dependencies hitherto relegated to the framework of the household economy emerged from this confinement into the public sphere."[37] The publication of private/household concerns evolved as rural people became part of a space now defined by social labor and commodity circulation.

More and more people had to find some cash. This was possible for those who were engaged less in direct labor on the land and more in waged labor. They are gradually integrated into the public where commodities are circulated for general consumption. Those same commodities are potential goods for the alleviation of sufferings and insecurities or the removal of risks confronting the more vulnerable: children, women, disabled, elderly, unskilled, unemployed, and others[38] who rarely have cash to acquire commodities from the market.

Many people were not only forced to work away from the previous sources of security but also forced to sell their labor for wages (commodified) which guaranteed connection to life's necessities. The capitalist's privatized production and publicized private goods have become the structures of both satisfaction of some and alienations and deprivations of others. It would be clear that these alienations and deprivations are *mainly unintended* effects of structural determinations around the processes of production/labor and selling/consumption.

37. J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into the Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 19.

38. Cf. E.S. Riemer and J.C. Fout, *European Women: A Documentary History 1789-1945* (New York: Schocken Books,1980), 115ff.

Privatization and Publication Processes in Capitalism's Primordial Structure

The concerns of former household workers eventually depended on and bowed down to the directions of private capitalist production. The latter refers to the privatization of the process of economic reproduction which is just one side of the whole process of capitalistic economic activity. The other side is its orientation towards the public market for commodity circulation.

> The economic activity that had become private had to be oriented toward a commodity market that had expanded under public direction and supervision; the economic conditions under which this activity now took place lay outside the confines of the single household; for the first time they were of general interest.[39]

Activities connected with the survival of rural households were then allowed to appear in public.[40] Consequently, the welfare of the former household-based, thus private, workers became visible before a newly constituted public. Such a move, however, was a tension-filled process. Even workers needed to get used to the private-public spheres distinction as they began to gain spaces which they recognized as their own private sphere distinct from the public sphere of labor and circulation of private goods and already separate from their folks in the countryside. Consumers too did not escape the privatizing culture of work and market.

These are the fundamental sources of tension felt by many people today: (a) the privatized state and process of economic reproduction not without public significance, and (b) the publicized process of private commodity exchange in the market (including labor market). Within their privatized sphere (factory, office, etc.) capitalists are constantly challenged by public issues; within the publicized market set-up, their private interests are exposed before the public eye.

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39. J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* 19.

40. Cf. H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), 46.

Laborers, especially the low-skilled, are doubly disadvantaged: within production units where they are exploited and dominated by private interests; and within the labor market where they are, by necessity, commodified. As consumers, they may become captive utilizers of imposed necessities and inaccessible luxuries.[41]

Consumers, as they too are the producers, cannot necessarily consider work as intrinsically rewarding. What also used to be a way of expressing one's self (through crafts) has become a *means* to acquire what the market has offered as needs which would become, through and in the process of marketing and consumption, ways of expressing ones' self. Through their experience in the workplace as assets of employers, workers will also learn how to become enterprising, rational and calculating in their regard for themselves either as producers or as consumers.[42] Being either objects of exploitation for gain or organizable assets towards excellence, workers will exhibit in their behaviors some forms of identity which production units and consumer markets have established as qualifications or quality marks. As consumers, workers very often behave consistently according to their learned behavior in production or service units, in the world of capitalist or late-capitalist enterprises.[43] Without realizing it, consumers become and reinforce further what they imbibe in their workplaces and what they, discriminately or indiscriminately, consume and symbolically represent for themselves in the market, thereby effectively alienating themselves from their intrinsic worth.

Workers, especially the affluent ones, consume commodities and thus identify themselves with products (or vice-versa) that did not bear the personal marks of their producers. Being deprived of the original opportunity to express themselves in work, consumers search for their identities in what has been strewn into the open market by

41. Cf. Edward S. Hernan and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

42. Cf. J.H. Goldthorpe, D. Lockwood, F. Bechhofer, and J. Platt, *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behavior* (Cambridge.: Cambridge University Press, 1968); J.H. Goldthorpe, D. Lockwood, F. Bechhofer, and J. Platt, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

43. See R. Keat and N. Abercrombie, *Enterprise Culture* (London: Routledge, 1990); Z. Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

the appropriators and markers of products and identities.[44] Consumers, thus, perceive themselves as autonomous, enterprising and calculating searchers, discriminating subjects, in their consumer behavior. They are self-regulated but also open to new forms of control in corporate management, public relations and advertising campaigns in the market.[45] These also indicate the nature of their confinement in a market where their worth in work has been preempted by compromise through wages and identity-forming organization principles. Thus humans, whether as workers or consumers, become seduced and possessed by a gnawing desire to find oneself in any product/consummable with which they could again, or over and over again, express and identify themselves, albeit only in episodic and, thus, fleeting moments. In fact, the consumers' drive to find themselves in goods constitutes desperate and hopeless desires because they are aimed at intrinsically empty products, that is, in themselves empty of substantive values.[46] Ironically, consumption practices have become ways of affirming one's being as self-regulating, self-actualizing, self-directing creative individual. Liberalism in political theory and practice would thus dovetail with the non-political, but choice-filled and participative, consumer. Liberal theorists and practitioners could also identify their cherished ideas of liberty, rights and freedom with the freedom that their brothers and sisters rightfully exhibit in the open field of commodities. To such consumers, shopping is also liberating.

In both production and consumption areas, workers are in constant search for their place within the wider scheme of things. Within production units, they will slowly gain a different form of identity, individually and collectively, as laborers and as organized labor.

The traditions of the past, which were still alive in the ways of the workers, tangled with new ways of private individuals-led free

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44. Cf. Nikolas S. Rose, *Governing the Soul: the Shaping of the Private Self* (London: Routledge, 1990).

45. See Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October* 59 (Winter 1992): 3-7. See also Z. Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

46. See J. Baudrillard, *Selected Writings,* ed. M. Poster (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

enterprise set-ups. These traditional culture bearers had to adapt to the new ways while the entrepreneurs installed what was for them necessary to preserve the basis of their new ways. It was in their climb towards dominance that capitalists were challenged by different forces: state, trade unions, socialists, critical social theorists, literary bohemians, Catholic church (cf. Papal social encyclicals), other religious groups and later on, *dependistas* and liberation theologians. The privatized economic production as well as the public market sphere of privately-owned goods became contested areas where capitalist self-interest was subjected to supervision, control, regulation and challenges by forces external to private-property and self-interest.

Dusts settled and new structures, roles, institutions, rituals, beliefs, and laws, were put into place. The reciprocity familiar to previous generations has been sidelined from the subsequent socio-economic adjustments. Reciprocity was expected to inform and affect people within the limited and traditional spaces of simple societies. The present-day formalized concerns and expectations of capitalism developed in the West have driven it out from the business/capitalist arena.

Social Labor and Commodity Exchange

Within the workplace and the marketplace, structural determinations produce other negative or negatively-inclined results: exploitation, dependence, and further alienation of labor and consumers.

1. Exploitation and Dependence

Industrial and, later post-industrial, labor which produced goods that acquired market value required more skills far greater than the amount invested on raw materials and labor-power. In due course, capitalists made sure that their investments will have to result into profits even as they took advantage of nature and workers. In this sense, profit is the translation of rationalized exploitation. In manufacturing, the owner decides to exploit the labor of the worker in order to optimize.[47] The worker does not have a choice since he is

47. Cf. Karl Marx, *Capital I* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 216-17.

compelled by the nature of owner-worker relations. This situation which always allows the possibility of surplus for the owner is a root of all alienations and struggles between capitalists and workers. The possession of labor by the owner-capitalist makes compulsion necessary for the extraction of, say, surplus labor and surplus value.[48] This is true anywhere the worker lands a job. His dependence on capital is necessary. The dependence of capital on labor, however, is not translated into automatic benefit for labor.

2. Industrial to Post-Industrial Separations

There was enormous increase in the production of many kinds of goods from industry which are not necessarily meant for household subsistence. This is a basic labor-product separation multiplied a million times as workers churn out millions of goods through their labor. Basic processes of waged labor will also alienate workers from their fellow workers and from their own ideals. Marx anticipated the coming of a new breed of workers who no longer fit into the early stage capitalism that puts emphasis on manufacturing and division of labor. Today's multitude of young and versatile workers will identify with Marx's late stage capitalist workers who

> replace the detail-worker, crippled by life-long repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to the mere fragment of man, by the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labors, ready to face any change of productions, and to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers.[49]

With the advent of the versatile worker, Marx was hoping for the demise of capitalism and the growth of communism. Of course, he could not have fully anticipated the way advanced economies today have redefined the roles of capitalists and workers whose

48. Cf. L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, vol. 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 329.

49. K. Marx, *Capital I,* 487-8.

work patterns, organization, rituals, and beliefs could eventually give shape to a post-capitalist order or post-industrial capitalism.

Some authors believe that the growth of managerial institutions in more advanced economies is a transition leading to a post-capitalist order dominated by a new managerial ruling class.[50] The 'capitalist' in the term 'post-capitalism' refers to the former active capitalist who was owner and manager at the same time. This shift in the character of service-laborers from commodity-subordinates to initiators and executives tells us a lesson in the way capitalism could develop as it moves away from the more traditional personalist arrangement into a more stewardship form of advanced capitalism. Although a radical surrender of authority may not be expected, the meaning of ownership and work in capitalism will now have to be relativized by such a development. Nevertheless, a capitalism without capitalist-owners is unthinkable; and to expect that the purpose of management is no longer for the purpose of gain is to destroy the system's imperative. The manager is a steward not of any public interest but of the private firm's interest. The post-capitalist scenario may highlight some structural transformations in ownership, management, and class patterns but the capitalist private property/self-interest core is still in place as more and more ownership will be concentrated within disembedded and transnational financial institutions.

The position of the non-active capitalist is far removed from the ground of production and product circulation. Service capitalism has more and more replaced some manufacturing industries in the United States but this has been reassigned by owners to set-ups in developing economies like China and India. This is hundreds or thousands of positions away from the rank-and-file laborers and consumers. Such absence on the ground will be tough as the disadvantaged workers will neither be able to go near the person of

50. Gerald Duménil and Dominique Lévy, "Periodizing Capitalism: Technology, Institutions and Relations of Production," *Phases of Capitalist Development: Booms, Crises and Globalizations,* eds. R. Albritton, M. Itoh, R. Westra and A. Zuege, (New York: Palgrave Publishers, 2001), 152.

the owner nor the owner has the opportunity for direct contact with the rank-and-file.

3. Publication of Private Commodities

Common understanding identifies capitalism with the processes and practices of the market economy typified by the commercial exchange of goods and services. The commercial exchange found in modern settings is so extensive that it involves practically all sectors and functions of society. Services which were associated with care for the sick and the weak, the education and guidance of young people, or the construction of a community artesian well, may already take the form of commercial transactions. In many traditional simple societies, such services are normally part of kinfolk or mutualist obligations and, thus, not capitalized. Where goods and services are needed, people are bound by the typical monetary or financial exchange format. Persons may become captive/receptive consumers and possessed by the commercial processes by virtue of their need to buy goods which they no longer produce.[51] Those who cannot pay are *per se* estranged from the cash/goods structures.

3. 1 Stock Market and Finance Capitalism. Some theories of capitalism focus not only on market economy but also on capital investments. They presuppose a money economy and the predominance of capital being invested in production as no longer tied to subsistence level. The growth of banks and the stock market as centers for raising financial capital has expanded, to some extent, the meaning of capitalization from exclusively private ownership or institutional financing to include people's capitalistic contributions. The development of banks was a correlate of the growth of industrial and commercial capitalism which needed larger capital than what a single individual investor could provide. New York Stock Exchange's history is a veritable school about capitalism minus direct engagement in industrial or commercial enterprise. The stock market, however, no matter how it opens its floors to the public is still controlled by banks owned by the great financiers. Ranking among these were

51. See F. Dagmang, "Instant Gratification," *Concilium* 4 (1999), 49-58.

those owned by the Rothschilds and Barings of England and Morgan of New York. Free from government regulation, these became integral to the operations of industries of that age and the succeeding years.[52] These huge financiers did not directly involve themselves in the ins and outs of capitalist production and product circulation in markets. They were the super- or hyper-capitalists who operated above the heads of other capitalists. In the stock exchange, the private property-profit structure is illustrated in its sacramental-representational form. In late-stage capitalism the hegemony of finance has been highlighted.[53] In a Durkheimian sense, hegemony of finance reflects a 'totemic capitalism'.

3.2 Transnational Public. Today's transnational corporations have slowly replaced the big banks of the industrial era in terms of capital and financial expertise. They have not only attained greater financial autonomy from their regular businesses, but also obtained financial resources from other currencies and countries where they extend their business ventures. As transnational transactions redefine relations – business firm to another business firm, business to government, government to government – within familiar institutional spaces as well as undefined transnational spaces, they also take the nature of the inevitable: as disembedded supranational activities which are more difficult to regulate and be subjected to institutionalized rules of commerce.[54] As expected, supra-formalized business relations and interactions will be catapulted into higher levels of business and thus super-alienated from those in disadvantaged position.[55] The relations of capital with labor and consumer will be greatly affected

52. R. Chernow, *The House of Morgan* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990), 23.

53. See G. Duménil and D. Lévy, "Periodizing Capitalism: Technology, Institutions and Relations of Production," *Phases of Capitalist Development: Booms, Crises and Globalizations,* eds. R. Albritton, M. Itoh, R. Westra and A. Zuege (New York: Palgrave Publishers, 2001), 141-62.

54. See M.-L. Djelic and S. Quack, eds. *Globalization and Institutions: Redefining the Rules of the Economic Game* (Cheltenham, UK and Northhampton, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2003).

55. See M. Chossudovsky, *The Globalization of Poverty: Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms* (Penang, Malaysia: Third World Network, 1997), 20.

by the lack of traditional standards of behavior informing disembedded owners and managers. This lack of contact due to separation multipliers, by virtue of their ability to widen structural dependencies (global financing, trans-national commerce, corporate ownership), is frustrating and often times deadly for the workers on the ground.

Background and Foreground Structures

Without the conditions for the possibility of private individuals/capitalists to enter into business, capitalism will neither flourish nor grow into a dominant system that we know today. The enthronement of the deep/invisible structures of rights, autonomy, liberty and freedom made the social order hospitable to capitalistic activities of private citizens. Yet, it is also because of some sovereign private citizens' activities that made these fundamental beliefs flourish. The drive towards sovereignty/autonomy will also dovetail with a group of people's sense of nationalism which will propel dominant nations to greater expansion beyond their own territories.[56]

The inalienable and imprescriptible human rights have come to us as natural. The fact is that such rights, as they are understood in the liberal tradition, have only found their developed and well-articulated form toward the end of the 17th and 18th centuries. In other words, these were generated from the bosom of the industrial era. This developed notion of human rights has gone through evolutionary processes that involved considerable conflicts between certain citizen's individual interests and repressive practices of authorities.[57] Specifically, the notion of human rights developed in polemics with the continuing arbitrary intrusions by the feudal masters as well as with the popular pressures and demands brought upon the people-constituted state

56. See L. Greenfeld, *The Spirit of Capitalism: Nationalism and Economic Growth* (Cambridge, Ma./London: Harvard University Press, 2001); R. Poole, *Nation and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999).

57. Cf. Alois Muller and Norbert Greinacher, eds., *The Church and the Rights of Man, Concilium* 124, No. 4 (1979).

in order to complete what the latter is supposed to deliver for the welfare of its constituents.

The more abstract principle of rights has its concrete instantiation in every capitalist's desire for autonomy or sovereign status (Adam Smith) and in the way that capitalist's rights and other people's rights are protected by the state. In the expanded field of transnational capitalism, nationalism has served as a more visible coalescing principle of rights of a nation or race akin to the well-defined human rights.[58]

Capitalism, from the point of view of investments, had rested on two essential elements: self-interest and private property. If private property is the fuel, self-interest (realized through profit-seeking or maximization of gains) is the fire. We add that liberal tradition provided the light and ever since has been challenged or balanced by other lights of socialism, democratic socialism and traditions of Catholicism, East Asian Confucianism and other lesser lights from local cultures.

Conclusions

A structuralist analysis of capitalism pointed to a core structure of private property and self-interest being hooked on the canopy of ideational structures of rights, autonomy, liberty and freedom which have their source in the originating success stories of citizens of liberal-capitalist societies. These mutually intertwining structures serve to ground, maintain and reproduce capitalist system(s) apart from the conscious effort of actors. However, this successful system also consists of structures that produce, legitimize, preserve and even multiply alienations, disconnections, separations, fragmentations, marginalizations, deprivations, and oppression of a multitude of workers and consumers largely coming from the unskilled, impecunious, and property-less peoples from dependent poor societies-satellites of affluent capitalism. Such negatively-inclined products of capitalism may not, however, be imputed with malice,

58. See R. Poole, *Nation and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999).

i.e., by effectively demonizing people whose ways follow the path or affirmed the principles of a necessary system. Moreover, these may not be used to prove that capitalism with the culture it helped to give shape is thoroughly evil. It means more precisely that within capitalism viewed with its ambivalent, double-effect-producing core-structures, we see more clearly the human condition as being deprived of the original grace of total openness to the divine transcendent and the enjoyment of freedom which flows from personal integrity. It also means that within capitalism, because of typical privatization/self-interest inclinations, compassion may be frequently sidelined by the concerns for gain amidst competition and the never-ending pursuit of success and progress. That is why when the hungry, alienated, abandoned, oppressed and dying people stare at many of us – who probably are in anguish too because of our own helplessness – they usually get our mastered art of civil inattention,[59] itself a structure of survival and decency in many cities.

The notion of structural sin, therefore, makes us aware of our lack of capacity to respond to appeals of compassion and solidarity as well as of our limited freedom which has taken shape mainly as a freedom from compassion's appeals and freedom for security, personal happiness and beautiful experience. Office work and shopping time have in fact determined and limited social work, civic participation or compassionate service.

The discourse of structural sin could also suggest to us a possible approach – a structuralist approach towards a system which relativizes the power of the core private property/self-interest. In fact, the successes in favor of the disadvantaged in some societies today are possible because of the hybridization of their economic systems brought about by contestations from various sources (unionized labor, state policies, legislations, civil society).

A problem concerning culpability may be raised since most people behind the dominant center are seen to be acting within the

59. See E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959).

structural constraints offered by capitalism.[60] Constraints raise the question of freedom and, thus, of culpability. A passage from Boff is helpful:

> The western world is comprised largely of societies organized around the capitalist system which is characterized by the private ownership of production in the hands of a few, by the unequal distribution of opportunities for work, and by the unequal distribution of products of that labor. This unbalanced system gives rise to class societies, wherein there are relationships of domination and power between the classes as well as conflicts of interest…. Such a class structure limits and deter-mines all activity within the society, independent of an individual's intentions…[61]

Such a view claims that the capitalist system determines people's socio-economic and political transactions no matter what intentions people have. Thus, peoples from both the centers and peripheries of capitalism, one might argue, have to be considered 'innocent' under those pre-determined circumstances. This argument actually advances the *intentional model* of action, which says that only agents who *knowingly* exploit peoples and maintain an oppressive system could be rendered responsible. Moreover, as the argument may continue, many First World peoples could not possibly be guilty

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60. "Montesquieu contends that the forces at work in society together produced an *esprit general* which both expresses and conditions the nature of social development. His *esprit general* is really the sociological intuition. It is the apprehension that society is more than the sum of its parts, that the individual elements, classes, legal systems, institutions of all kinds take their meaning from their interrelationships with each other. On this view, social arrangements are no longer the result of political decision deliberately taken, the residual in history of royal houses. Rather, politics is organically related to the structure of society in general; men's activities in society are interdependent and, in part, determined by factors inherent in the social structures and physical environment, and hence beyond human control." Angus Walker, *Marx: His Theory and Its Context* (New York: Longman Inc., 1978),25-26. See also John Harris, *Violence and Responsibility* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 11.

61. Leonardo Boff, *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church,* trans. John W. Diercksmeier (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985), 111.

when they are virtually 'programmed' by social determinants. Such an argument will claim that people without freedom cannot commit any moral evil, if they can act freely at all. The ethicist, in this case, is faced with a problem: what is the proper course of action for the First World peoples to follow if they want to get out of this seemingly dead-end road of social determinism? It seems that the call for compassion and solidarity remains for them a grace-filled option.

In a setting of solidarity, the privileged are expected to uplift their underprivileged partners, but the poor are no less enjoined to adopt the same attitude. It is the task of both the poor and the non-poor to maintain a setting where everyone can be free and sensitive to calls of mutuality. Anything less would mean the disintegration of a form of life meant to expand the conditions for greater solidarity. For the poor, the setting up of a better form of life oriented to reciprocity and respect can only mean allowing them first to get a share of the material goods of the earth. Since power relations oriented to different perspectives are involved in the preservation of a condition that perpetuates poverty, there is a need for the dominant ones to share their power resources even if this would mean its diminution or even relinquishment. If this does not happen, which is usually the case, the poor will have to affirm their legitimate perspectival concerns, develop them and put them forward as a challenge to the established powers who, being embedded in their own domains, are no longer able to maintain communication with the poor. The poor cannot remain passive for this would mean giving in to error.

In the whole structured relations are determined roles and transactions, the victims of which are the poor of the periphery. Thus, we can call these poverty- and powerlessness-generating structured relations as violent. As autonomous processes, they inflict violence to many people who suffer the consequences of asymmetrical relationships. In other words, structures of the hypostatized asymmetrical types already produce evil apart from individual or group intentions. The mere presence of *haciendas,* for example, could already inflict untold sufferings on landless peasants. Hypostatized structures have mechanisms independent from human intentionality. Such mechanisms do not need the intervention of free individuals to produce evil. It is enough that such structures

exist. Thus, *in this case*, the idea of structural sin as one committed by individuals through the mediation of structures does not show the autonomy of structures themselves.[62] In claiming this, however, we are not denying the enabling character of structures. On the contrary, we affirm it, and in the particular case of the core capitalist structure of private property/self-interest, it is partially enabling in favor of the dominant-role players. Moreover, we do not deny the fact that structures can be subject to human intervention.

We do not underestimate the role of people in the overhauling of structures or in creating and re-creating alternative ones, but then their contributions may also add up to an unintended structural road

62. See, for example, Hormis Mynatty, "The Concept of Social Sin," *Louvain Studies* 16 (Spring 1991): 3-26. Mynatty, of course, distinguishes between the objective and the subjective [point of view of] social or structural sin. From the objective viewpoint, he calls structural sin as *sinful social structures* (p. 13). He prefers this latter term because the terms "structural sin," "social sin," "structures of sin," etc. "give the impression that the reality of sin acquires the form of a structure." He claims that this is not theologically correct for "sin is not a thing and it cannot become a structure (p. 13)." Mynatty, in this case, fails to present the fact that not all structures are reifications. A more fluid structure can still be grasped in the smaller type of free associations like the fraternity-enhancing *Basic Christian Communities*. Sin, therefore, can become a structure, i.e., sin can have an objective existence, which may not be subjectively intended but still produced because of embraced double-effect-producing necessities perceived as value. Moreover, Mynatty seems to be moving away from a structuralist position to the intentionalist one since toward the latter part of his article, he emphasizes the subjective notion of social or structural sin (p. 14) and adds the concept of "'fundamental option of the society' oriented to the social project (p. 15)." He writes, "To consider unjust social structures only from an objective point of view is equal to the 'thingification' of the social reality, which is very dangerous for it will ultimately lead to fatalism and irresponsibility (p. 14)." This 'thingification' [reification/hypostatization] is precisely what is meant by his *sinful social structures*, a formulation he favors but which he later balanced by the idea of a societal option. Mynatty's approach, however, does not present the role of "thingified" structures run by an "invisible hand" in a society's option and the impact of society's option on rationalized "thingified" structures. Nonetheless, the objective and structural dimensions of relations give a better view of how sin is congealed in structural processes.

To speak of "thingified" sin would be *appropriate* for analytical and "tactical" purposes. Otherwise, how should we call and communicate the evils perpetrated by hypostatized structures? It is also in calling hypostatized structures as sinful that intentions, as they are enlivened to work for an alternative setup that favors the marginalized, may be brought into the realm of the divine calling.

that is not necessarily opted for. It is also through the unintended multiplication of diverse countervailing pressures against some horrible effects of privatizations and monopolies that some unexpected forms of structures have developed – e.g., the NGO phenomena and the alternative principles they engender – many of which become resources (cf. Gidden's idea of structure) for human struggle against structural sin.

Patterns of practices by groups resisting against dehumanizing structures (e.g., indigenous people's [IP's] struggle against incursions by capitalists into their ancestral domains) or even local governmental initiatives to overhaul infrastructural dificiencies could clarify further this point. It was not the intention of the various and fragmented struggles of the many indigenous groups in the Philippines to form a collective voice for better bargaining power against private interests and the groups which supported the latter in the name of progress. With the interested capitalists' concerted practices of disenfranchising and undermining the place of the IP's vis-à-vis their ancestral domains, various forms of resistance coming from the IP's themselves and from almost all sides of the political spectrum have similarly surged towards the IP's defense and the promotion of a common cause, that is, to protect the IP's from privatistic appropriation schemes. Such seemingly fragmented struggles have formed an unexpected avalanche of actions and ideas which eventually crystallized into more potent, desirable and structured ways of dealing with IPs (institutions were created and laws were enacted to protect their ancestral domains). With the introduction of such new resources, the fields of contestations between capitalists and the IP's have never been the same and such fields formed a new backdrop for further agential and structural adjustments.

Some relatively ingrained (structured) behavior could take a different turn with the introduction of alternative courses of action. In pre-Bayani Fernando Marikina, one of the cities within Metro Manila, Philippines, streets and sidewalks were practically user-unfriendly. When Mayor Bayani Fernando assumed office in 1991, a city-wide overhaul of facilities kicked-off. Infrastructures upgrading intensified and government services rose to an unprecedented Philippine standard. Subsequently, behavior in public areas got affected and slowly took a more disciplined mode. Although bad habits rarely

died out, many good habits spawned from the introduction of new ways of moving around. The ubiquitous tree-lined sidewalks, for example, have provided people space to walk in safety and comfort away from the streets where previously 'human ants' would swarm because of the absence of sidewalks. Bike paths were introduced and, slowly, groups of government-sponsored bike-riding children become visible signs of a future bike-riding public. These patterns of behavior have generated new ideas in people, becoming a new evaluative standard for the activities of other cities in Metro Manila. This happened: from idea translated into visible infrastructures which modified structures that generated fresh flows and patterns of actions and ideas. However, it is not easy to solely refer back these desirable effects to an original fundamental option since most of these were not necessarily opted for but only eventually brought into a congealed reality by people's common sense. Together, collective social forces have 'unknowingly' contributed towards the formation of a totality of interrelated elements which now work for their advantage.[63]

My main task in this article is to emphasize the limiting, conditioning and institutionalizing role of patterned practices which reflect the objective historical conditions of our sinfulness. This is not to say that the intentional factor cannot be affirmed. *In the domain of patterned interactions,* however, the intention takes a secondary role in relation to the effects that patterns do to, or violently impose on, people's behavior and practices. Let us take, for example, *strategic actions*.[64] They are the unquestioned institutional practices which no

63. Georges De Schrijver wrote about Ellacuria's idea on the 'dialectics' between intended innovations (by action groups) and their crystallization in 'anonymous' structures – a crystallization which makes these innovations effective, in his book, *Recent Theological Debates in Europe:Their Impact on Interreligious Dialogue* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004). See Ignacio Ellacuria, *Filosofía de la realidad histórica* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1990), especially in pages 398-416.

64. "*Strategic action* is distinguished from *communicative actions* under common traditions by the characteristic that deciding between possible alternative choices can in principle be made monologically – that means, *ad hoc* without reaching agreement, and indeed must be made so, because the rules of preference and the maxims binding on each individual partner have been brought into prior harmony." Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Oxford: Polity Press, 1988), 151.

longer pass through dialogue or negotiations for their implementation. Members are expected to merely advance or implement them. People, however, may face this seemingly unassailable force of the 'violent' strategic practices with their protests. Yet these initial challenges to the hypostatizing strategic actions are almost always met by repression. It is these challenges, however, which carry with them the seeds of counter-strategic practices that could evolve into full-blown communitarian alternative practices, ideas or structures which, in turn, are also limiting, conditioning and institutionalizing. When counter-practices are authored by the poor themselves, such alternative courses of action will carry the poor's stamp for their direction and function.

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