Questioning the Development Paradigm: Latin American Liberation Theology

Georges De Schrijver

In Populorum Progressio *(1967) Pope Paul VI endorses a notion of development that includes the empowerment of the local people, in contrast to the development programs of the United Nations with their focus on imposed modernization. The article examines the reception of this encyclical in Latin America. The Medellin Conference (1968) and Gustavo Gutiérrez hallow the Pope's message because they feel encouraged by it in their commitment to a liberating praxis aimed at making the people authors of their own destiny. Others, like Juan Carlos Scannone and Enrique Dussel assimilate the Pope's message by placing a heavy accent on the revival of the typically Latin American culture with its popular religiosity. For them, this typical culture is at stake because the western logical thought and planning are making inroads everywhere. Ignacio Ellacuría, finally criticizes the unequal access to opportunities because the political elites foster their capacities only for themselves. He is convinced that the western life style and pattern of consumerism cannot possibly serve as model for the whole world, because the planet is not equipped for such an exorbitant amount of consumption and pollution.*

Introduction

In his Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967) Pope Paul VI made it clear that, from his perspective, development is a much broader concept than purely economic growth. He writes: "The development we are speaking of here cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each person and of the whole person." (PP, no. 14). In other words, economic development must be linked to a search for a new humanism. Only the latter guarantees the human being's "authentic development – their transition from less than human

conditions to truly human ones" (PP; no. 20). Pope Paul's use of the term 'new humanism' is reminiscent of Jacques Maritain's 'Integral Humanism', a concept which invites Catholics to creatively play the role of animation at the heart of secular institutions. It also surfaces in the name of the movement founded by the French Dominican Louis-Joseph Lebret in 1941: '*Economie et humanisme'* (Economy and humanism).

As is well known, Lebret's approach to development forms the source from which Paul VI drew his inspiration for *Populorum Progressio*. In this encyclical the pope refers to Lebret as an eminent specialist, and quotes a passage from his 1961 work *'Dynamique concrète du développement'* (The practical dynamic of development): "We cannot allow economics to be separated from human realities, nor development from the civilization in which it takes place. What counts for us is the human person, each individual human person, each human group, and humanity as a whole".[1] Lebret is renowned for his local thinking 'from below'. He wagers on territorial organization and solidaristic planning. For him "Territorial organisation is the optimal use of space in view of its development and of the development of larger territorial units." "When considered as the planning of space, planning becomes indistinguishable from development".[2]

Lebret's notion of space differs from that of the abstract, geometrical space managers of multinationals use to develop their calculations about where to open a new profitable overseas subsidiary in a part of the globe. These managers regard space "as 'independent' from any particular place or region–"[3] modernity's abstract notion of space. Once in their possession, they incorporate this space into

1. Louis-Joseph Lebret, *Dynamique concrète du développement* (Paris: Economie et humanisme. Les éditions ouvrières, 1961), 28 ; quoted in Populorum Progressio (PP), no. 14.

2. Two passages from Louis-Joseph Lebret, *Dynamique concrète du développement,* quoted in Hugues Puel, "Catholicism and Politics in France in the 20th Century" taken from http://www.oikonomia.it/pages/febb2000/puel.htm (accessed: 25.06.07).

3. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 19.

their business network, disrespectful of the traditional habits and economic dealings of the local inhabitants. Not so for Lebret: for him, "the territory to be organised [….] is not an empty space, but a particular place, characterised by its own physical milieu, its population, its economic activities and its technical resources."[4] Lebret always seeks "the optimal conditions for making the most of the territory and of the ways of life best adapted to the human development of its inhabitants."[5]

This succinct characterization of Lebret's approach reveals that what Paul VI intended with *Populorum Progressio*, the development of the peoples, deliberately deviates from the development strategies devised by national or international centers of planning. No wonder then, that the theologians and bishops in the 'South' felt encouraged by this encyclical to raise a voice of protest against a forced modernization. In this article I will map the criticisms of a couple of prominent Latin American Liberation theologians. Before doing this, however, I will first give an account of the development paradigm that had become dominant in the 1960s.

The Development Paradigm of the United Nations

After the Second World War, the US launched in 1946 the Marshal plan in Europe and Japan to ward off the communist threat. At the same time the US government was concerned about development in the so-called 'Third World' countries, for without further technical progress some of these countries would remain poverty-stricken and be inclined to opt for the communist block. It is from this background that one must understand that starting from 1947 the United Nations (UN), through its Economic and Social Council, started to work out devices and strategies: "The concept of development at that time covered all aspects of society. It implied

4. Hugues Puel, "Catholicism and Politics in France in the 20th Century" taken from http://www.oikonomia.it/pages/febb2000/puel.htm (accessed: 25.06.07).

5. Ibid.

agrarian reform, planning, reduction in social inequalities. It required the creation of a modern state, an effective administration".[6] To make possible this achievement – the transition from a semi-feudal state to a modern state – the UN decided to send experts to the countries concerned – many of them being former colonies of European countries. The experts deployed a missionary zeal, for their mission was to usher the 'backward countries' into the steady economic and societal progress the developed countries had already attained. At the same time, the US president, Harry Truman, backed the UN development program because he saw in it an opportunity to "propagate the American social and cultural system through the dissemination of the knowledge and techniques that enabled it to function."[7]

Finally, on the initiative of President Kennedy in 1961, the UN General Assembly launched the 'First Development Decade'. This decade would be characterized by the furtherance of rapid industrialization, diversification of economies, and market-orientation of agricultural produce. From now on, the developing countries were to be gauged in terms of annual increase in GNP. It was expected that, by the end of the decade, an average annual increase in GNP of five per cent would be reached, provided the local governments would be able to offer a climate that attracted foreign investment. Meanwhile, the social and cultural branch of the United Nations, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), worked out devices for social and cultural transformation, to be implemented through schooling, health services and the beginning of a social security system. The difficulty, however, was how to ensure that this social and cultural assistance would take on the same pace as economic development, which was apparently the primary aim of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Moreover, burning questions such as the erosion of traditional customs and community bonds brought about by rapid modernization were systematically relegated to the fringes.

6. Pierre de Senarclens, "How the United Nations promotes development through technical assistance", in Majid Rahnema-Victoria Bawtree (eds.), *The Post-Development Reader* (London & New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997), 193.

7. Ibid., 194.

Against the background of these internal tensions, the UN General Assembly in 1969, two years after *the* promulgation *of Populorum Progressio*, issued a *Declaration on Social Progress and Development*. This declaration contains brilliant ideas. It comes up with "a catalogue of projects, from the supply of free health services for the whole population to the setting up of crèches for small children to help working parents, including a whole range of measures for education and professional training."[8] However, it leaves these projects as recommendations for local governments, without any provision for how these projects are to be financed. The 'First Development Decade' was rich in well-intentioned declarations, but after a while the United Nations had to leave the whole development program in the hands of robust financial institutions: the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). These organizations were focused primarily on economic, rather than social, development.

Yet, the 1969 declaration undoubtedly had one advantage: it brought into sharp focus the clash between purely economic development (which at most would benefit the higher strata of the population) and a more comprehensive approach that would include social development at the grassroots level (which includes health care, schooling, and the satisfaction of basic needs). This clash would become even more striking from the moment the IMF and World Bank began to impose conditions with which the lending countries had to comply in order to obtain funds for development. One only has to think of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) that the IMF attaches as strings to its loans, and which reflect the ideology of the free market. To restore the balance of payment disorder two sorts of conditions are imposed. First, the state must refrain from unnecessary spending on social services, unemployment benefits, pensions, health care, and schooling. This spending should be kept within limits (for to the extent that the state acts as the great benefactor, laziness is allegedly propagated, which erodes the spirit of free

8. Ibid., 200.

initiative, free commerce and competition among the citizens). And, second, to boost the economy, fresh flows of capital and foreign direct investment should be allowed in. Enhanced circulation of money is believed to flow from unlimited free trade, drastic privatization of state-own services, and deregulation of hitherto closed economies.

A considerable number of groups have protested against this state of affairs. One of them is '*Global Exchange'* which in 2001 published a letter entitled "*How the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Undermine Democracy and Erode Human Rights'*. In this letter one reads the following: "In dozens of countries around the world, the IMF and the World Bank have violated the 'right to social security.' The institutions have forced debtor countries to cut social spending on health, education, and other public services. They have pressured poor nations to charge their own citizens for the use of public schools and public hospitals. And they have demanded that countries keep their wage levels low, a policy which harms ordinary citizens but benefits multinational corporations."[9]

Through this protest, the ambiguity inherent in the word "development" is being denounced, for development can be understood, on the one hand, as a process of financial transactions that incorporates a local industry into the neo-liberal world market, and from which not only the local elite and middle class could benefit, but also the international financial investors (who after all profit from the business). On the other hand – and this is what the poorest of the poor understand by it – development consists in financial aid given to the poor – in the mode of health care, schooling and other social services- to lift them above the level of abject poverty. It was the latter type of development that *Populorum Progressio* primarily had in view.

9. Global Exchange, "How the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Undermine Democracy and Erode Human Rights" (September 2001), taken from http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/wbimf/imfwbReport2001.html (accessed: 26.06.07).

Liberation from Dependence Instead of Development

The Medellin Conference

In Latin America *Populorum Progressio* was hailed as the encyclical that finally brought the needs and aspirations of the Third World into the limelight. According to Segundo Galilea it "served to complement and to make up for a deficiency of Vatican II, which was still very European in regard to Third World concerns."[10] Gustavo Gutiérrez subscribes to this view. He acknowledges that Paul VI went a decisive step further than *Gaudium et Spes* which only touched on some uneven spots in the advance of civilization without really facing up to the conflicts. In one passage of *Populorum Progressio* he clearly spoke of "building a world where every human being, no matter what their race, religion, or nationality, can live a fully human life freed from servitude imposed on them by other human beings or by natural forces over which they have no sufficient control."[11] On the other hand, Gutiérrez regrets that the pope did not find it necessary to expand this basic idea – freedom from servitude - in the whole of his encyclical. True, Paul VI courageously denounced 'the international imperialism of money', the growing gap between the rich and the poor countries, and the numerous 'situations whose injustice cries to heaven'. Yet, these denunciations were, in the first place, addressed to the world leaders, so that these may assume responsibility for ensuring that this injustice stops. He hardly addressed the poor masses themselves, those living in servitude, thus skirting the issue of liberation as a movement from below. Gutiérrez finds in this a missed opportunity. He says: "The outright use of the language of liberation, instead of its mere suggestion, would have

10. Segundo Galilea, "Latin America in the Medellin and Puebla Conferences: An Example of Selective and Creative Reception of Vatican II," in Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua (ed.), *The Reception of Vatican II* (Washington D.C. :1987), 59-73, 62.

11. PP n. 47, quoted in Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 15th Anniversary edition (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1988), 23.

given a more decided and direct thrust in favor of the oppressed, encouraging them to break with their present situation and take control of their own destiny."[12]

The language of Liberation to which Gutiérrez alludes, was used, for the first time in an official ecclesiastical document, in the Medellin Conference (1968). Medellin emphasizes that Jesus Christ "came to liberate all human beings from all forms of servitude in which they are kept by sin: ignorance, hunger, misery and oppression" (Med. 1 no. 3. p. 26). It also states that the Church "is committed to the liberation of the whole human being and all human beings" (Med. 5 no. 15 p. 57), a formulation in which 'development' has essentially been replaced with 'liberation'. Two major topics spell out what this liberation is about: liberative education of the poor masses, and economic activities freed from the planning of international capital.

Paul VI, too, had insisted on the importance of education. He said: "basic education is the first objective for any nation seeking to develop itself",[13] a message he had already addressed to an earlier UNESCO meeting in Teheran. In the Medellin Conference this basic education is specified as 'liberative education,' a term which is reminiscent of the work of Paulo Freire. *Educación liberadora* is "an education which converts the student into the subject of their own development" (Med. 4, no. 8). This type of "education is actually the key instrument for liberating the masses from all servitude, and for causing them to ascend 'from less human to more human conditions'[14]" (Med 4, no. 8). Furthermore, justice is defined as a state that enables human beings to realize their deepest aspirations: a state in which "human beings are no longer just 'objects', but artisans of their own history" (Med. 2, no. 14, p. 38). Medellin even uses a term that in the meantime has come in vogue: empowerment, capability. The bishops commit themselves to the promotion of a basic education "that not only consists in alphabetization, but in capacitating human beings to convert themselves in as conscious

12. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 15th Anniversary edition (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1988), 23.

13. PP, no. 35.

14. The citation is taken from PP, no. 20.

artisans of their own development" (Med. 4, no. 16). Such an education is, for them, 'integral development' (Med. 4, no. 8), or 'development of the whole person' in the wording of Paul VI and Lebret.

As to the economic predicament, the bishops in Medellin speak up for Latin America's liberation from a situation of dependence. They call upon the Latin American countries to stop their mutual antagonisms, because these prevent them from "becoming agents of national and continental development." "Without this unity", they go on, "Latin America will not succeed in liberating itself from the neo-colonialism to which it is bound, nor will Latin America be able to realize itself in freedom with its own cultural, socio-political and economic characteristics" (Med. 1, no. 13). What is called here neo-colonialism is in another passage described as the Latin American countries' "dependence on a center of economic power around which they gravitate" (Med. 2, no. 8). In this context Medellin reiterates Paul VI's criticism of the international economic order, blaming it for extracting cheap resources from the 'Third World', while keeping its population in the fetters of poverty. Specific to Medellin, however, is its criticism of the wealthy classes in Latin America for their complicity with the global capitalistic order which they represent in their own countries. This complicity leads to an increase in national debt: the elites make arrangements with the World Bank and the IMF for development loans, but the subsequent burden of servicing the interest results in greater national indebtedness. This cycle of more loans followed by an increasing burden of debt leads to institutionalized violence, for in order to protect their assets, the elites rely on paramilitary militias to keep the populace at bay. If those elites, the bishops warn, "jealously retain their privileges and defend them through violence, then they are responsible to history for provoking 'explosive revolutions of despair'[15]" (Med. 2, no. 17).

15. The citation is taken from Paul VI, "Alocusión en la Misa del Día del Desarollo", Bogotá, August 23, 1968.

Gustavo Gutiérrez

As early as March 1964, before the end of the Second Vatican Council, Ivan Illich took the initiative of inviting to Petropolis (Brazil) a group of sociologists, among whom was Paulo Freire, and a group of theologians, among whom were Gustavo Gutiérrez, Juan Luis Segundo s.j., and Segundo Galilea, in order to reflect on the pastoral implications of the Council. Juan Luis Segundo spoke up for a pastoral option that would not shun social tensions, whereas Gutiérrez, a professor of theology at the Catholic University in Lima, defended the view that theological reflection must start from an immersion in social reality. This meeting is regarded as the birth-place of the theology of liberation, although that term had not yet been coined. Gutiérrez spoke for the first time of a 'theology of liberation' in July 1968, a month before the opening of the Medellin Conference, in a talk given to priests and laity in Chimbote, Peru, using the title: '*hacia una teología de la liberación* ('Towards a Theology of Liberation').[16] Gutierrez also attended the Medelin Conference as theological adviser to Cardinal Landázuri Rickerts, Archbishop of Lima. Together with José Comblin and Eduardo Pironio, the secretary to the conference, he prepared the key texts to be disseminated for discussion at the Conference. He was also responsible for the section on poverty and composed with Pierre Bigot the texts on peace.[17] In 1971 he published his *Teología de la liberación.*

In this work he spends some pages on the theory of dependence, with reference to authors such as Fernando Enrique Cardoso, Enzio Faletto, and André Gunder Frank. While not delving into the technical details of these studies, he nonetheless sketches the general direction of their research. The theory of dependence questions the existing development paradigm. It sees underneath the develop-ment programs supported by the international organizations, "an ideology of modernization" at work which seeks to bring about "the transition

16. "Hacia una teología de la liberación" published in *Miek*, 1969, 62-76.

17. David Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology* (Boston/Leiden : Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 106 note 59.

of Latin-American societies from traditionalism to modernism, from underdevelopment to development."[18]

Development takes as its ideal 'the modern society' or 'industrial socie-ty', and supposes that, provided that sufficient funds are invested by the World Bank and the IMF and that national governments make serious efforts, the countries of Latin America will gradually attain the high stand-ard of living in the West.

The theory of dependence questions the success of this enterprise, which fails to probe into the geopolitical situation of the Latin-American countries. Linear pro-grams of development are fallacious because they insufficiently acknowledge the 'unequal international division of labor' within capitalism. Gutiérrez's analysis reads as follows: "It has become ever clearer that underdevel-op-ment is the end result of a process. Therefo-re it must be studied from a historical perspective, that is, in relationship to the development and expansion of the great capitalist countries. The un-derdevelopment of the poor countries, as an overall social fact, appears in its true light: as the historical by-product of the development of other coun-tries. The dynamics of the capitalist economy lead to the establish-ment of a center and a periphery, simultaneously generating progress and growing wealth for the few, and social imbalances, political ten-sions, and poverty for the many."[19] Indeed, ever since the colonization by Spain and Portugal the Latin-American countries find themselves in a situation of economic dependence on Europe and later on the US, even after they attained political independence in the 19th century. From this historical reading Gutierrez draws the conclusion that "[t]he notion of dependence emerges as a key element in the interpretation of the Latin American reality."[20] It allows one to see this dependence reflected within Latin-American countries in the form of an internal domination: "External dependence and internal domination characterize the social structure of Latin America."[21] With this

18. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 15th Anniversary edition (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1988), 50.

19. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 15th Anniversary edition (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1988), 51.

20. Ibid., 52.

21. Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith" in Rosino Gibellini (ed.), *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America* (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1979), 17.

statement Gutiérrez joins Cardoso, who had asked the question as to why in Latin America capitalist development only seems to prosper under repressive regimes (such as Brazil). At the same time Gutierrez holds out, with Frank, the prospect that the periphery will succeed in freeing itself from the grip of the capitalist world system. He opts for a socialism with a Latin-American face.

In the first edition of *Teología de la liberación,* Gutiérrez proposed to opt out of the capitalist system. He wrote: "Autonomous Latin-American development is not viable within the framework of the international capitalist sys-tem."[22] Opting out of the capitalist system (Cuba is cited as the example) does, however, not have to imply the mimicking of some Western type of socialism (read: communism). Gu-tiérrez' model is José Carlos Mariátegui who in the 1920s defended the creation of an Indo-American socialism with its own pace of development and organization and its own indigenous sensitivities, including the remembrance of the people's age-long suffering under foreign domination.[23] In the introduction to the English 15th Anniversary Edition of *The Theology of Liberation*, Gutierrez seems to abandon the idea of 'opting out.' There he points to some inadequacies in the theory of dependence: first of all, it "does not take sufficient account of the internal dynamic of each country", and second, it ignores "the vast dimensions of the world of the poor."[24] In my view, this is not a dismissal of the theory of dependence, but rather a shift from Frank's position – a radical break –to that of Cardoso. Indeed, as Joseph Love has shown, Cardoso still believed in the possibility of economic growth in parts of the periphery of the international economic system, depending on the emergent dynamic of the social classes in these parts.[25] After he became president of Brazil, Cardoso boosted these local dynamics in his country (for some in a too neoliberal fashion)[26], while at the same

22. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 15th Anniversary edition (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1988), 51.

23. José Carlos Mariátegui, *Siete ensayos de la realidad Peruana* (Lima: Biblioteca Amauta, 1928).

24. Ibid., New Introduction, XXIV.

25. Joseph Love, *Crafting the Third World. Theorizing Underdevelopment in Romania and Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 192.

26. Ibid., 225.

time seeking alliances with other dynamic 'pockets' in the periphery, such as South-Africa and India.

In *Teología de la liberación* Gutiérrez in various places insists on the urgency of consciousness-raising. The downtrodden must be helped to come to the aware-ness that they have the right to be the authors of their own history. Gutierrez has come to embrace, in other words, Paulo Freire's 'pedagogy of the oppressed' the aim of which is to free people from attitudes of submission to fate. Freire's objective, Gutiérrez explains, is to train the poor in acquiring a critical consciousness.[27] Naive consciousness "does not deal with pro-blems, and gives too much value to the past", whereas critical consciousness "delves into problems, is open to new ideas, replaces magical explanations with real causes, and tends to dialogue." [28] The passage from naive to critical consciousness is technically called 'con-scientization': "In this process the oppressed reject the oppressive consci-ousness which dwells in them, become aware of their situation, and find their own lan-guage. They become, by themselves, through their own initiatives, less dependent and freer."[29]

In his later writings, Gutiérrez broadens this 'pedagogy', taking into account the complexity of what it means to be poor. In a lecture delivered at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in 2002 he says: "There are many faces to poverty, economic, racial, gender (women are poorer than men), cultural. Poverty means all of these and is more than a mere economic issue."[30] Given this complexity, he prefers to call the poor the 'insignificant persons,' for one can be insignificant for other than purely economic reasons; just as there are various kinds of 'death' that befall a person. It can be a 'physical' death, due to malnutrition or sickness in abject circumstances, but it can also be a 'cultural death" on the grounds of gender, race, and culture. In Peru, for example, the large Indian population who speak Ketchua,

27. Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1973), 46.

28. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 15th Anniversary edition (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1988), 57.

29. Ibid.

30. Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Poverty as a Theological Challenge", in Jacques Haers et alii (ed.), *Mediations in Theology. Georges De Schrijver's Wager and Liberation Theologies* (Leuven: Peeters, University Press, 2003), 176.

the indigenous language, are regarded as 'second-class' citizens. Women are culturally killed, because they are not treated as full human persons: "All these are aspects of death –be it physical or cultural – where people don't have the opportunity or means to lead a full human life."[31] These various faces of death cry out for liberation. They compel theologians to immerse themselves in these various predicaments and to reflect on them, from the perspective of native Indians, blacks and women, in order to find out, with them, the reason or reasons as to why they are looked upon with contempt.

Liberation from the Cultural Dominance of the West

Juan Carlos Scannone

Juan Carlos Scannone is an Argentinean Jesuit, a specialist in the philosophies of Blondel and Heidegger, and is engaged in the recovery of the typically Latin American manner of philosophizing. In 1976 he published *Teología de la liberación y praxis popular*. Scannone does not hide his Argentinean background with its Peronist tradition of populism. This populism thrives on the cooperation of the various social classes under the leadership of the popular hero. So, there is no place left for class struggle, a phenomenon that seems to be implied in Gutiérrez' theology of liberation. One thing, however, Scannone has learned from the theory of dependence: that Latin America finds itself in a situation of being a periphery in relation to the center, Western world, which with its highly developed technology is making inroads everywhere. To the extent that this 'technologization' infiltrates the periphery, it leads to an impoverishment of what it means to be human, and more particularly, it erodes the Latin-American culture with its amalgamation of Amerindian and Iberian ethnic characteristics. This *mestizaje* is the source of popular wisdom and of popular religiosity, two formative elements of the 'soul' that animates the fabric of the Latin American society.

31. Ibid., 177.

Liberation from dependence, thus, means: staunch resistance in the name of the cultural heritage of this old *mestizaje*, against the Western logic of domination. Scannone writes: "[The] culture and faith [of Latin America] was spurned as 'barbarism' by the enlightened 'civilization' of Bourbon Spain, France and England, which was imported into Latin America by the local elite. In reality it is the original fruit of Ibero-American cultural intermingling and the baptism that was conferred on it. The *logos* or sapiential rationality of this popular culture is not the logos of the modern Enlightenment; nor does it correspond with the canons of modern technological and instrumental reasoning. But that does not make it any less human, rational, and logical nor any less usable for *theology*."[32]

Just as forcefully as Gutiérrez, Scannone emphasizes that the people must become the artisans of their own history, but he looks at this artisanship from a different perspective , that of the people's cultural revival: The common people are deprived of their "right to be the active subjects of their own message and their own historico-cultural project."[33] As forcefully, too, as Guiérrez, he accuses the elites of contempt for the people. For him, the elites must be blamed for adopting the values and cultural perspectives of the Western technocrats. In doing so, they alienate themselves from their own cultural heritage. This reality, however, is for Scannone no justification for recommending class struggle as the remedy. Those wagering on class struggle are not any different from the Western planners; they reduce themselves to the level of the enlightened thinkers and behave as inhumanly as the ones against whom they struggle. In various places, Scannone reproaches the leftist intellectuals for being more concerned about the correctness of their revolutionary strategy than about the needs of the people. What is absolutely imperative is that both kinds of elites – those from the left and those from the right – resolutely join the people. The common people have their own aspirations; but today they "are oppressed in their *being* (i.e. their life style and cultural ethos) precisely because they are oppressed in their

32. Juan Carlos Scannone, "Theology, Popular Culture, and Discernment" in Rosino Gibellini (ed.), *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America* (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1979), 218-219.

33 Ibid., 223.

capacity to be (i.e. their power to make decisions concerning their own history and their mission therein)." [34]

Scannone's approach resonates with that of the Bishops' Conference of Puebla (1979). Here, through the maneuvering of Lopez Trujillo, the president of the Conference, the revolutionary language of Medellin was recast in the key of a recovery of Latin American culture. In his post-1979 publications, Scannone can thus effortlessly refer to the documents of this Conference, for example when they state that, in a situation in which the oppressive elites have severed themselves from the people, the poor must be honored as the 'evangelizing potential' of Latin America (Puebla, n° 1147).[35]

Besides being a liberation theologian, Scannone is also a philosopher of liberation. The philosophy of liberation originated in 1971 around a group of professors who gathered in San Miguel (Buenos Aires) to reflect on the nature and objectives of a typically Latin American philosophy. Scannone finds his inspiration in Blondel and Heidegger, but also draws from the anthropological studies of Rodolfo Kusch. From the latter he appropriates the central notion '*nosotros estamos',* as the distinguishing feature of the self-understanding of the Latin-American people. He also uses Kusch to clarify the specific sense in which transcendence functions in Latino culture.

The Spanish language differentiates between *ser* (to be) and *estar* (to find oneself in a certain place or position). '*Nosotros estamos'* thus means: 'Here we are, look at the place where we live'. This is not only a definitely historical, but above all, a geocultural approach. From here it is only a small step to arrive at the specific sense in which transcendence functions in Latino culture. One only ought to add: '*en la tierra*' (on the earth): '*nosotros estamos en la tierra.*' [36] In the notion of 'earth' resonates the idea of a fertile womb that provides food to all that lives. To know oneself supported and surrounded by the life-giving care of 'Mother Earth' (*Pachamama*) reveals a

34. Ibid., 224.

35. Juan Carlos Scannone, "Die Rolle des Volkskatholizismus in Lateinamerika" in Johann Baptist Metz & Peter Rotländer (ed.), *Lateinamerika und Europa. Dialog der Theologen* (München/Mainz: Kaiser/Grünewald, 1988), 64; 70.

36. See Rafael Capurro, "Ethik und Weisheit des Volkes", in Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, (ed.), *Ethik und Befreiung* (Aachen: Augustinus Buchhandlung, Concordia Monographien, 4, 1993), 99-100.

dimension of transcendence which Scannone describes as 'transcendence from below'. This chthonic transcendence evokes, in its turn, the sky defined as 'transcendence from above'. The Latinos live in the 'in-between' of both transcendences. This awareness makes them celebrate the sacred character of existence, which they cheerfully express in their community life.

Enrique Dussel

For the Church historian and ethicist Enrique Dussel the cultural approach is also central, although his intense study of Marx from the late 1980s led him to the appropriation of some basic Marxist insights. In his ethics of liberation, Dussel is in search of a free space of human togetherness at the other side of the totalitarian system. Just as Scannone, in his Argentinean period Dussel fills in, this free space with popular elements such as spontaneous festivity and mutual solidarity. At that moment he is convinced that these popular elements will fuel the will to resistance. In his later works, however, Dussel introduces certain nuances. In a polemic with Scannone, he argues that Scannone's positive outlook on the Latin American character is, to be sure, an advantage over the gloomy prospect of Marxist class struggle, but that it nevertheless remains insufficient to grasp the Latin American situation. What, for Dussel, is missing is the element of consciousness-raising in relation to cultural *and* socio-economic oppression.

Dussel appreciates Scannone's view of the Latinos as "creative persons in a world full of meaning –creative persons who remember the acts of heroism of the people and pride themselves of their culture and the '*nosotros estamos'* of the community." At the same time, however, Dussel wants to emphasize that these creative persons must realize the extent to which they are oppressed by, and excluded from the advantages of, today's economic globalization. Only then can one speak of "a '*nosotros estamos'* in a situation of vigorous resistance." [37] Without this awareness no ethics of liberation, which presupposes both a positive and a negative experience, can see the

37. Enrique Dussel, *Etica de liberación en la edad de la globalización y de la exclusión* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1998), 418-419.

light of the day. He says: "Because the victims find themselves betrayed, rejected and despised, they begin to realize their positive qualities (hence the importance of Scannone's analysis), but this realization is complementarily brought forth by the theoretical and ethical knowledge of their negative *relation* to the system. One really discovers oneself and the '*nosotros estamos'*, but in their quality of oppressed, betrayed and excluded people."[38] For Dussel, this latter aspect is crucial. It allows Latinos to realize that they find themselves, with their culture, in the 'exteriority' of the system, an experience one can only have when living *(estar)* in this 'exteriority'. The theory of economic dependence surfaces again as a threat and a challenge to reaffirm one's cultural identity.

Ignacio Ellacuría

Scannone's and Dussel's program of cultural revival breathes the air of post-development studies. One of the key-figures in this direction is the Persian diplomat Rajid Rahnema who for several years served as an executive in UNESCO and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). In his book *Quand la misère chasse la pauvreté* (When Indigence Expels Poverty) he makes it clear that, in many parts of the world, people with low incomes are able to survive with dignity prior to the onslaught in their regions of planners of 'development' who upset the existing equilibrium.[39] For him, the development programs devised by Western technocrats after the Second World War and avidly welcomed by the post-independent governments all over the world are much more disastrous than what befell these countries under colonialism. In order to modernize the country the Western planners deemed it necessary "to destroy the basic institutions of local populations, which they considered to be detrimental to economic growth."[40] It is against this mentality that Scannone and Dussel raise their voice of protest.

38. Ibid.1 422.

39. Majid Rahnema, *Quand la misère chasse la pauvreté* (Paris: Fayard, Actes Sud, 2003).

40. Majid Rahnema, "Development and the People's Immune System: The Story of Another Variety of Aids", in Majid Rahnema-Victoria Bawtree (eds.), *The Post-Development Reader* (London & New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997), 118.

Ellacuría's approach is somewhat different because he espouses an evolutionary world view. Ignacio Ellacuría is a Basque Jesuit who spent his adult life in El Salvador where he taught social and political philosophy at the Jesuit University UCA in San Salvador, until he was murdered in 1989 with five fellow Jesuits and two house staff members by a Salvadoran commando team. For some time he had been the assistant to the Basque philosopher Xavier Zubiri, from whom he borrowed two basic insights: (a) The human intellect cannot be separated from the senses: it is a sentient intelligence in the service of the biological survival of the species; (b) reality is not static; it contains a dynamic thrust towards fuller deployment through the opportunities it offers to the humans to enhance their capabilities. In a sense, Ellacuría is a precursor of human capability theory. In the end, he also refers to the cultural riches of Latin America. Yet, he sees this culture evolve at its own pace. Latin American culture is not static; it can, therefore, not be an object of nostalgic longing.

In his book *Philosophy of Historical Reality*[41] Ellacuría applies Zubiri's cosmological considerations to the construction of social reality. The whole of reality is filled with a dynamism that pushes the entities (and their interactions) towards 'becoming more than they are'. At the social level this means: the human societies advance to the extent they succeed in exploring new possibilities. The creative forces in history are carrying human beings to higher forms of 'standing in reality' (*estar en la realidad*). This happens through the constant acquisition of new capabilities in the various social bodies and in humanity as a whole. On the basis of new capabilities humanity produces more qualitatively distinct items than it was able to do decades or centuries ago. The newness lies not so much in the new items people have at their disposal, but in the new capabilities they have acquired in making them.[42] For Ellacuría, '*capacitación'* is a universal category; to be human means: to creatively promote the 'becoming more' of reality. This daring creativity has always been at the essence of science and technology. A comparable breakthrough is also to be expected "in

41. Ignacio Ellacuría., *Filosofía de la realidad histórica* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1990).

42. See Ibid., 437

the area of social and political institutions,"[43] but exactly in that area much still remains to be done.

In his reflections on the Salvadorian reality, Ellacuría emphasizes the importance of the material and social components of the world in which one lives. These material and social elements are waiting to be brought to further deployment through the social and political structures of the nation. With Zubiri, Ellacuría takes seriously the sensible roots of human knowledge. Only a sentient intelligence can bring one into contact with the creativity of reality – and make one perceive the intolerable obstacles that block this creativity. The social reality is a field of ever new possibilities of which one can take advantage but which one can also ignore. Ellacuria writes: "Each human being and each social group belongs to a precise moment of historical development. They have at their disposal a whole range of possibilities; but the growth or weakening thereof lay in their hands. Just as human life, history bears the heavy burden of having to decide what one wants to make of oneself".[44]For Ellacuría, history knows successful developments, but also set-backs, depending on the choices that were made, and are being made, in setting up institutional structures. To trace these set-backs is the objective of Ellacuría's political philosophy.

The most serious set-back is the widening gap between the rich and the poor countries. This gap results from an unequal division of power which, although justifiable in itself, goes astray from the moment that a mentality, individually or collectively, of 'capacities (*capacitación*) only for me' ('only for us') comes to prevail. In spite of the fact that technical knowledge has reached a summit, the enormous gap between the developed countries and the poor countries of the 'Third World' has not disappeared. The wealth created by technical knowledge is unevenly distributed. Obviously, economic and political forces are at work in which prosperity in one region feeds on the often concealed social exploitation and environmental degradation of another region. This demonstrates the ambivalence of *capacitación*. Ellacuria writes: "The acquired strength can be used to build but

43. Ibid., 442.

44. Ignacio Ellacuría, "Introducción critica a la antropología de Zubiri", in *Realitas III* (Madrid: Sociedad de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1976), 133.

also to destroy – that is the inherent risk of history. The dangers pointed to by ecologists and the lamentations rising from overdeveloped countries about many evils are so many signals of warning. But most alarming are the terribly high social costs caused by the concentration of power in the hands of people who regard themselves as the vanguards of history, spearheading history's progress."[45]

For Ellacuría, the life style and patterns of consumption of the rich countries cannot possibly serve as a model for the whole world. First of all, our planet is not equipped for such an exorbitant amount of consumption and pollution; and second, it is more than obvious that the rich countries use their capabilities only for themselves and not in the service of all of humanity. He therefore opts for a civilization that would be primarily concerned about satisfying the basic necessities of each and every body in all the nations of the globe, instead of being obsessed by the accumulation of capital and a shameless display of luxury.[46] This 'new economic order' must go hand in hand with a social order "that renders the peoples capable of becoming more and more the masters of their own history, by giving them the opportunities to develop themselves in creative freedom and through political participation."[47]

Ellacuria's program can only be successful in a political order that is no longer satisfied merely to mimic the Western democracies, but that draws on the human potential of its own culture: thus, reacting against the standardized 'way of life' Western technology and consumerism tend to impose on the nations. The felt need to go back to the riches of one's own culture makes it clear that no homogeneous or uniform model of development exists. Time and again, each of the peoples on earth will have to discern what is attainable for them in the given circumstances: to discern the real possibilities by which they might hope to eradicate dehumanizing life conditions.

45. Ignacio Ellacuría, *Filosofía de la realidad histórica*, 446.

46. See Ignacio Ellacuría, "Utopia y profetismo: un ensayo concreto de soteriologia histórica", in *Revista Latinoamericana de teología* n. 17, 1989, 170-173.

47. Hëctor Samour, "Zubiri y la filosofía de la liberación', 8. http://www.uca.edu.sv/facultad/chn/c1170/samour2.html (accessed: 02.07.07).

Conclusion

Latin Americans are still traumatized by the legacy of their colonial past, in which internal domination by the elites and external dependency go hand in hand. Their fears are that the new development programs devised by the world organizations will only aggravate this situation. That is the reason why the Latin American theologians and philosophers, each in their own way, emphasize the necessity of 'empowerment from below'. Such an empowerment is alluded to in *Populorum Progressio* when it quotes the famous dictum of Lebret: "We cannot allow economics to be separated from human realities, nor development from the civilization in which it takes place. What counts for us is the human person, each individual human person, each human group, and humanity as a whole".[48]

Georges De Schrijver, SJ
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Leuven, Belgium
Email: georges.deschrijver@theo.kuleuven.be

48. Louis-Joseph Lebret, *Dynamique concrète du développement* (Paris: Economie et humanisme. Les éditions ouvrières, 1961), 28; quoted in PP, no. 14.