

PART 2

*TEN DISPUTED
QUESTIONS*

Chapter 11

THE ETHICS OF WORK

11.1 STATE OF THE QUESTION

Throughout this chapter my approach will continue to be abstract and general. It will be applicable not to the case of capitalism alone, but to the whole of human reality, at least from as long ago as the neolithic age or the invention of money. It will be a reflection on the "community" condition of labor before its transposition to a "social" condition (3.2).

We read, in the daily newspapers, of work, of workers, of production, wages, strikes, money, and so on. What does all of this mean?

We read in holy scripture:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ...
The heavens and the earth and all their array were completed.
Since on the seventh day God was finished with the work he had been doing, he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation [Gen. 1:1,2:1-3].

A theology of work is the fleshly or material starting point for a communal ethic. Without it a communal ethic would be not only abstract, but unrealistic. Only a theology of work can guide our concrete reflection in the proper direction. Between 1959 and 1961, before the Second Vatican Council, I spent two years with Paul Gauthier working as a carpenter in Nazareth and fishing on the Lake of Gennesaret. It was a spiritual experience, and the aftermath saw

the publication of *Jesus, the Church, and the Poor*. The book's title simply lists the three major themes of the *theology of liberation*. The reaction of certain superficial critics notwithstanding, these themes are not fad, fashion, or idle chatter.

11.2 NEED AND LIFE

The point of departure for any reflection on work must be in a stage "antecedent" to the emergence of the phenomenon of work on the human scene (a merely utopian point, to be sure, hypothetical and perhaps a-historical).

Life is action. A living being consumes energy, and that energy must be replaced. Human beings must replace their lost energy, their expended life. They must satisfy their needs (1.7, 4.8-4.9, 6.3-6.7). "Need" is to be defined as any lack of the necessities of life. Need includes hunger, cold, homelessness, illness, and so on. To be "in need" is to open oneself to the world in search of the elements that will satisfy that need. I shall call this openness-of -need *pragmasis* (the Greek word for the "need to make use of something"), and the objects needed *pragmata* (Gk., "things needed, useful").

I shall term the reciprocity between need (*pragmasis*) and the things needed (the useful, the *pragmata*) the "pragmatic circle." If things, the object of use, happen to be at hand, they will supply the wherewithal for the reproduction of life without further mediation. They will be acquired without work, without production. But when the useful object is not within reach of one's need-when it stands outside the pragmatic circle-one must obtain it, extract it, "produce" it. At this point, openness to the world, *pragmasis*, will become a "productive" openness. And *poiesis*, "production," enters the picture. Now the useful thing, the thing needed, is no longer the object of the openness of *pragmasis* alone, the object of need, but becomes the object of *poiesis*, "production," as well. Correlatively, the object of this compound openness of need and production is no longer only the useful (*pragmata*), but the product (*poiemata*) of toil. Only in this latter case will there be such a thing as work -the activity calculated to produce, to extract, or otherwise obtain, the non-existent object in order that it be at hand. Work is thus to be defined as human activity set in motion in order to bring into existence some

useful object that was previously non-existent or otherwise not at hand. The "productive circle" is not sheerly pragmatic, then. Now women and men must themselves secure the existence of the useful object. That object becomes the product of their work.

11.3 THE PRODUCT: OBJECTIFIED LIFE

The mere object of need, the means of satisfaction that would be available without the mediation of production, is useful, but without "value." *Value* attaches only to the product of human toil. Aristotle (*Politics*, I, 3, 1257) termed this value the "use value" of any object: the quality of a product of work that makes it useful, as a shoe is produced to be worn and walked in.

In order to produce an object, then, we work. This makes our work itself an object. In "working" matter, molding it, "transforming" it-changing its "form" or shape-we render nature the object of *culture*. The object has become a human object. As an object precisely *produced*, it has become *human toil objectified*. Let us call the fact that the object is a product of work, the product *as product*, as objectified work, the "productuality" (not "productivity") of that object.

But if the *work* of the worker has become real in the object, if it has been objectified, then the *life* of the worker has been objectified in it as well-and life has a sacred dignity, because it is a human life, the life of a person-1.3. The "use value" of the object produced is then human life objectified-and nothing less. The use value of an object is "blood" (2.8,3.10): it is life. It is the circulation of human life from the subject of the work to the object worked, by way of the activity of working. The value of the object produced is ultimately the worker's lifeblood, coagulated.

Thus the "use value" of an object, as objectified human life, is a *sacred* "wealth" or good. Wealth and capital are sometimes identified (see, for instance, *Rerum Novarum*, 15; *Laborem Exercens*, 13). Surely the capitalist's wealth is capital; but there is wealth that is not capitalistic. All use value is wealth: valuable, useful, necessary, positive. Its accumulation against other persons, as in domination, is sin. But wealth in itself is good.

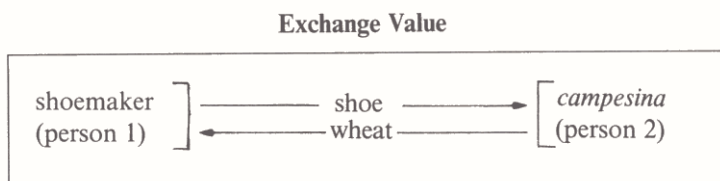
11.4 EXCHANGE AMONG PRODUCERS

For Aristotle, the use of a shoe not as a shoe but as an object by which one can obtain other objects (comestibles, and so on), constitutes that produced object (to which use value attaches in the form of wealth) the subject of another value: an "exchange value."

Thus the objectified life of the subject of work, the objectified life of the worker, can be exchanged for another object, in which some other worker has objectified his or her own life. The shoemaker who has objectified five hours of his life in making a pair of shoes, now exchanges his shoes for the wheat that, in five hours of her own life, the *campesina* has produced. This trade, this exchange, is just: each of its principals has traded off as much as she or he has received. The shoes and the wheat have use value (the shoes to walk in and the wheat to eat), but not for their respective producers (who do not use them, but exchange them). Rather, their use value is value only in the possession of the opposite term of the relationship: the shoemaker will be able to use the wheat to eat, and the *campesina* can wear the shoes to protect her feet while working in the fields. (The relationship in question is a "practical" one-I.2).

To any object, then, an added value can attach, called the exchange value, in virtue of the insertion of that object into the relationship of exchange. The actual terms of the relationship are the subjects of the work that has produced the objects: the shoemaker and the *campesina*. The objects exchanged, the shoes and the wheat, are merely relational mediations.

Diagram 6



The concerns of *justice* are precisely with this particular species of practical relationship—that obtaining between persons by way of the product of their labors. Justice, then, is concerned with practico-productive, or economic relationships. Ultimately, these relation-

ships constitute an exchange of human life. Circulation of value is circulation of the lifeblood of human beings (Mark 14:24).

11.5 PRODUCT VALUE

Still in general terms (and not yet in the capitalistic sense), the value attaching to a product of human toil resides in its utility and its productuality: the object in question is useful, and it is a product. Before becoming merchandise (the intent of its production when it is produced *in order to be exchanged*), the product is useful. It is wealth. It is the instrument of the satisfaction of a need.

The "value" of the product, then (and we must keep in mind that this value is independent of its function in capitalism), is simply the quantity of objectified human life attaching to that product. It is in complete accord with the Hebreo-Christian concept of "creation" to say that the subject of work, the human person, is the sole "*creative source of value*": human beings produce, *ex nihilo subjecti*-in the absence of any material substrate (and hence, in due course, in the absence of capital as a material substrate)-what we call "value" (for the moment, in general, or *in abstracto*).

Nature, as mere nature, has no value. It is only matter, potency-the potential material of work. As such it "amounts to nothing." Land "amounts to nothing"-has no more actual "value" than the surface of Saturn-until human work renders it its object, its matter. Land has no intrinsic value. Land as land is without value. It is the agriculture, the work, the human life objectified in that work, that bestows value on land. It is *subjective work* (as John Paul II indicates, *Laborem Exercens*, 6) that furnishes the value of the object. Thus the value of land, like that of any object, is as sacred as human life itself. To rob persons of the value of their product, then, is to kill them (Ecclus. 34:22).

The "product value" is identical with the value of the human labor it represents. By definition, their equivalence is one of total equality. The *price* of the product, for its part, essentially and in the abstract, is merely the value of that product in terms of *money*. The amount of money representing the price of the product ought to be equivalent to the value of the objects needed by workers to replace the life that they have objectified in this particular product.

11.6 PRODUCT OWNERSHIP

The social teaching of the church admits that the natural owner of a product is its producer, the worker. The latter is invested with right of possession and of use. It can scarcely be otherwise if what I have been saying is rational and coherent.

Work bestows on the worker the possession of a thing as one's own right (*Rerum Novarum*, 3). Work produces fruits, and alone adjudicates those fruits to the one who has produced them by working (*Quadragesimo Anno*, 52). Any object possessed is the fruit of labor, and the only legitimate title to its possession, whether as private property, or as public or collective property, is its service to labor (*Laborem Exercens*, 14).

As persons, and persons invested with freedom, human beings are the subject of a relationship of *dominion* over their own life. This is the basis of the right to devote one's life to a cause, even "delivering up" that life (as does the hero or the martyr).

The actual exercise of dominion over one's life implies a number of possible relationships, between the subject of the life and the life itself. It implies the real option to reproduce that life or to suppress it, to objectify it or to recover that objectification. The life objectified by the subject in the product of work is the very life of that subject. This is the foundation of the absolute right of workers to the product of work. It is only through an imperceptible "sleight of hand," as we shall see below (12.6), that workers' ownership of their *own* product is transformed into ownership by *another*, a subject who has performed no work upon that product, a subject who claims the same right to the work of *others* as actually belongs to workers because of their *own work*.

God created the universe for all human beings, bestowing on them the right to the common use of the world. And yet private ownership is exercised over these goods, even when they constitute the necessities of life, despite the Bible, despite the Fathers of the Church, despite Thomas Aquinas (for whom such ownership was legitimate only in the "law of nations," not in "natural law").

11.7 DOES WORK HAVE VALUE?

If the *products* of work have value (and I am still speaking generally, not in a context of capitalism), can *work itself* have any value?

One sometimes hears, when payment for work in the form of wages (11.9) is being discussed, that work has value. But let us keep in mind an essential aspect of the biblical conception of work. If the human person is the most sacred thing in creation, if human work is the image or likeness of the creative act of God, and if "as a person, the human being is the subject of work" (*Laborem Exercens*, 6), then work can have no *value*. As the subject of the highest dignity in creation, and thus essentially and basically the measure and creative font of all value ("all things are measured by the measure of the dignity of the subject"-*ibid.*), the human being transcends value. One cannot "have" what one transcends. Thus strictly speaking the human being is beyond all value.

Value is a quality or aspect of the product of work, not of the personal subject of that work. Value attaches to a product, to what is useful. A product has value, and in virtue of that value it can be exchanged. It has productuality, utility, and exchangeability. But none of this attaches to human persons as subjects of the work that has produced the product. Neither have they been produced (rather, they have been procreated), nor are they useful (rather, "worthy," invested with intrinsic dignity), nor can they be exchanged (as if they were slaves). One of the satanic practices of slaveholders of the New World, whether in Bahia or Georgia, was the reproduction of slaves. Male and female African blacks were paired for breeding, and slave children were "produced" and sold. In this case the subject of work, and not only the work itself, would have value (as does a cow or a bull). But here a person is treated as a thing, a piece of merchandise, and alienated even before its conception.

Work, then, has no "value" attaching to it, any more than does the subject of the work. Once more, the human being is the "creative source of all value"-a concept essentially in accord with the Christian theology of all ages.

11.8 MONEY AS OBJECTIFIED LIFE

Like the prophets who preceded him, Jesus was altogether conscious of the ambiguity of money. "How hard it will be for the rich to enter the reign of God!" (Matt. 19:23); "One cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24); "...the mammon of iniquity" (Luke 16:9). Why this mistrust of money? Why this negative view of "mammon"?

Shoes can be exchanged for wheat in virtue of the exchange value (11.4) attaching to each of those products respectively. To the one—the shoes, for example—a *relative* value attaches (a value relative to the wheat). Thus it can be exchanged for the other term of the exchange, in this case, the wheat (whose value is *equivalent* to that of the shoes). But then, say, a table could be exchanged for x amount of wheat, a chair could be exchanged for y amount of wheat, whereas a house would bring z amount of wheat. Wheat could be measured out in quantities equivalent, respectively, to the values of all the other products of work, and thereby itself constitute the measure of all those values. Were it actually to function as such a universal equivalent in real life, wheat would by that very fact be constituted as *money*.

Money, in its basic definition, is the value of some product of labor (or indeed some abstract value as such) determined by convention to function as the measure of all other values. But just as the value of all products of human work is human life objectified, money also represents human life. If with x amount of money I can eat, survive, for a month, then x amount of money represents as much life as I live over the course of a month. To accumulate money is to accumulate human life. For a desert ethics of shepherds and bedouins, or of the prophets of Israel, accumulation was hoarding, and perverse: "Let no one attempt to keep anything over for tomorrow." But they paid no attention, and sought to keep something over for the morrow, so that putrefying maggots emerged in it to spoil it" (Exod. 16:19-20).

Money affords the possessor the opportunity to accumulate, to amass, the wealth that is the life of others. If there were no money, one could still steal, but thefts could not be cumulative. They would be "discontinuous," perpetrated as single points in time and space. They could not be institutional. Money is the bloodthirsty god Moloch or mammon, and the blood for which it thirsts is the blood of human life.

11.9 WORK CAPACITY AND WAGES

The institution of wages has flourished even beyond the pale of capitalism—for example, among the ancient Greeks or Hebrews. "Pay not a just wage, and shed blood" (Ecclus. 34:22). What is a wage? How are a worker's wages determined?

A wage is simply the price of the usual value of a worker's capacity for work. Price is the expression in terms of money of the value of a thing. Money (11.8) is a product (or series of products) whose value (or series of values) is designated by convention as the measure of other values. When price was expressed in gold coins, the number of coins representing the value of a thing (the price of the thing) was the expression of its value in gold. The amount of human life objectified in the production of shoes or wheat was regarded as "tantamount," precisely, to the "amount" of human life objectified in the obtaining, the extraction and refining, of that much gold. The gold was the *measure* of the wheat or the shoes.

Thus money fixes the value of the "work capacity of workers" (*Laborem Exercens*, 12)-not of their work, which has no value, being the "creative source of all value." What is "work capacity"? Work capacity is potential for work in the sense of Thomas Aquinas's *potentia* or Aristotle's *dynamis*. Whether or not workers *can* work depends on whether they have eaten and rested, have good health and a strong body, clothing, housing, and education. It further depends on whether they have a spouse and children (the latter being the workers of the next generation), and whether they eat, are educated, and so on. All such elements constitute the *conditio sine qua non* of workers' *potential* (capacity, *potentia*, strength) for actual work.

In other words, in reality a wage does not purchase the subject or agent of the work (the human person, created by God and procreated by human parents, by the human race). A worker has dignity, but no value. Thus the person of the worker can only be "gratis." The wage purchases only the work capacity or potential of the worker. The value of this capacity does shift to the product as part of the "product value." But the "value of the integral product" also includes the *new* value created by the subject of the work. When men and women work, they not only reproduce the goods necessary for their subsistence; they create, *ex nihilo* (out of nothing, as far as any pre-existing, underlying matter is concerned), new value, out of their creative subjectivity alone. It is owing to this act of creation that there is "progress" in the history and development of humanity. The "product value" of an object produced is equal to whatever amount of the life of workers it objectifies. As the creation of workers, as the fruit of the toil of these particular human beings, the product is the

property of the workers who have produced it.

11.10 AN ETHICO-PRODUCTIVE COMMUNITY

The "life cycle" (4.8), in terms of both human nature and justice, is the locus of the consumption of energy by the human person as a living being. This living being suffers need; and thereupon performs work; and thereupon is satisfied with the product of that work-by consuming, and thereby recovering his or her objectified life with interest (for in working the worker has created *new* value).

Were it not for sin, were it not for domination and theft, it would be easy for individuals to constitute "living communities" (*Laborem Exercens*, 14), like the ecclesial community of Jerusalem (1.1), or like the later communities of cenobites who held all things *in common* (in the East, as well as among the Latin Benedictines with their motto, "to work is to pray," or like the Jesuit, Franciscan, and other "reductions" (independent communities) of colonial Spanish and Portuguese America. All of these communities were "communities" indeed-entities in which life, production, and consumption were practiced in common. In these historical utopias, these "associations of free persons," the product was originally communal.

Here the "face-to-face" of the community of persons (1.5), the practical or ethical relationship, functioned as the "whence" of any decision-making as to the production of products for life and living. The "*subjectivity* of society" was guaranteed:

By the subjectivity of a society we mean the ideal or factual attitude of a society guaranteeing each and every member of the community, in virtue of their own work, full title to co-ownership in the great workshop in which they commit themselves in union with all their peers [*Laborem Exercens*, 14].

In such a community, all workers are "conscious of working on something of their own" (*ibid.* , 15). Full individuality is actualized in full community.

In this type of community of production, the worker ought to enjoy full, conscious awareness of, and bear full responsibility for, the productive process, from its original planning to the last decision taken regarding the product. In this type of community, one could

genuinely "speak of socialization" (ibid., 14).

CONCLUSIONS

The hardest questions are simple when stripped to their bare essentials. A *theology of work*-and thus of course the ethics that forms part and parcel of this theology-must accept fundamental biblical principles, not excluding those expressed in the "social teaching of the church." It has not been my intention to contribute anything new to the content of the theological ethics of work. I have sought only to establish the starting point for an ethical critique of the prevailing, dominating morality of Latin America, the peripheral world, and the developed capitalist nations themselves.

Chapter 12

ETHICAL CRITIQUE OF CAPITAL

12.1 STATE OF THE QUESTION

I have come now to the central topic of the ethical theology that is the subject of this book. I continue, however, to deal on an abstract, general level. I am still speaking of *structural sin in general-institutional sin* stripped to its essentials. Only later shall I apply my findings to the more concrete levels of this sin. I am reflecting on the "social mechanism of sin," then, to use the words of Pope John Paul II in Mexico in 1979, but in its most general sense-in its basic *reality*.

We read in the daily newspapers that such and such corporations or institutions have made investments, that such and such a wealthy person is "worth" so much capital, that there is a crisis in the "capitalistic system," or that the value of merchandise has dropped on the market. What theological meaning attaches to all of this?

We read in holy scripture:

As for you, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries. Your wealth has rotted, your fine wardrobe has grown moth-eaten, your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion shall be a testimony against you; it will devour your flesh like a fire. See what you have stored up for yourselves against the last days. Here, crying aloud, are the wages you withheld from the farmhands who harvested your fields. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You lived in wanton luxury on the earth; you fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. You condemned, even killed, the just man; he does not resist you [James 5:1-61.

The words of Saint James will provide us with the theoretical

(theological) horizon of an unmistakable situation of injustice whose cries to heaven are even more deafening today than when these words were written.

12.2 THE "POOR" TODAY

The "poor" constitute the majority of the population of the nations of the world, especially in the "peripheral" world. Let it be noted, however, that I am still speaking in general, or "essentially." I am speaking of the "poor" in their basic confrontation with the "rich" - with the vested interests of the system (any system, not just a capitalistic economic system).

The "poor," in their anteriority or exteriority, are those who emerge into the society of the prevailing system from a community that has been dissolved—for example, the Zapotecs of Oaxaca in Mexico, who must come to Mexico City in order to find work. The dominating system has destroyed their previous way of life. It has expelled them from the place where they had lived in security, with legitimate wealth, with their family, relatives, nation, history, culture, and religion. They are the *pauper ante festum* -the poor who find themselves standing wistfully at the door of the feast that is about to make them its main dish.

The "poor"-still in the negative sense-are those who, in the face-to-face of the person-to-person relationship (1.3) must confront the person possessed of money. And yet they have not sold themselves. They are poor because they have their own corporality to sell (6.4), their bodiliness, their skin, their "hide," in their absolute nakedness, their radical poverty-without food, clothing, housing, health, protection. They are but miserable beggars. The word "economy" comes from the Greek *oikos* and *nomos*, and means, etymologically, "law of the house." The homeless, then, are nothing, non-being, worthless, to the economists of domination. The "poor"-this time in the positive sense of the word-are the miserable unemployed, precisely in their carnality, their fleshliness. They ask the person with money, the capitalist (or abstractly, capital) for work. And yet they are subject, the creative subject, of all possible value. These starving poor, who beg for work, for a wage, are the very Christ of the *ecce homo*. And yet it is they who constitute the foundation and groundwork of the whole current system of

domination. They abide only on the outside, "thrown into the ditch and robbed." But there is no Samaritan to help them.

12.3 SIN AS THE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP OF DOMINATION

I have shown that praxis is a relationship (1.2), and that the praxis of domination or sin is a *social* relationship (2.5), being the breach of *community* relationship (1.5, 4.6, 12.2). When that relationship is institutionalized (2.5-2.6), it becomes real and historical. In this section I propose to speak (in abstract, very general terms-considering sin in its ultimate essence, then) of the fundamental institutional sin of our time.

Standing in the "face to face" of the person-to-person relationship (chap.1) are, on the one hand, the "poor" and, on the other, those who have the money to pay for the work the poor perform (the "rich," then, in the sense of the biblical category). But the persons in this relationship do not face each other as did Moses and God, or the Samaritan and the poor victim of the robbery on the road to Jericho-that is, in infinite respect for one another's otherness (5.2). Instead, in the interpersonal relationship under consideration, one term is constituted by a wretched individual who must go begging in order to eat, dress, have a house or health, and so on; and the other is the person who has money (and we ask: from what source? by what means?) and who wishes to increase the amount of that money thanks to the other person. The money (\$-see Diagram 9 p. 161) must increase (\$) and adopts the other as the mediation of that increase. It instrumentalizes, reifies, alienates that other (2.2). The prince of "this world" has commenced his praxis (2.10).

The person having money proposes to the poor person (the individual who has already been *violently* coerced, with the violence of the injustice that has destroyed his or her community of origin-16.7) a contract, an exchange (11.4). Thus a *relationship* is struck between the two: I give you money (\$-Diagram 9) and you give me your work, which, purchased as commodity, now becomes my property, for I am the one who had the money. Correlatively, the one who had work to offer exchanges it for money-receives wages (W) (see 11.9).

But there is a subtle *inequality* in this exchange, invisible both to the one who has the money and the one who offers the work. This is

a *social* relationship (8.2) because it is a relationship of domination, of injustice. Invisibly, imperceptibly, it is sin. Why? Because the person having the money uses the *person* of the worker while paying only for that person's *work capacity* (11.9). The employer makes use of the whole worker, makes use of the "creative source of value" (11.9, 12.2), though paying only for his or her "upkeep." It is as if someone wished to purchase an automobile by paying only for fuel and servicing. I receive the "creative subject" gratis, and pay only for what is needed to keep that subject from dying, to keep it working. As creators in the image of God, inventors by nature, obviously human beings will produce a value equivalent to the value of their needs (which is the value of the money they are to be paid in wages! 11.8) in a certain time, and then will go on to produce beyond this limit. Thus the value of the product (11.5) produced by the worker will acquire a "more-value," *more life* and more reality than the value of the wages received. In other words, the worker will give more life than he or she receives. This is an injustice, a *social* relationship of domination (3.2), a sin.

12.4 WHAT IS CAPITAL?

The word "capital" has a great many meanings. It derives from *caput*, Latin for "head." To have a great many sources or "heads" of profit was to have a great deal of "capital." Many understand "capital" as money, others as goods, and so on. Let us examine this question.

In the social teaching of the church, capital is a "fact": "neither can capital subsist without work, nor can work subsist without capital" (*Rerum Novarum*, 14). These documents generally identify capital with "wealth." More precisely: "Capital, inasmuch as it constitutes a set of means of production, is only an instrument, or instrumental cause" (*Laborem Exercens*, 12). It has been a long road from *Rerum Novarum* (1891) to *Laborem Exercens* (1981). The teaching now is that all capital is the fruit of work: "All of the means of production, from the most primitive to the ultramodern, have been developed gradually by the human being. ...[They are] the fruit of work" (*Laborem Exercens*, 12).

Pursuing the line of thought I have undertaken, the concept of "capital" could be understood as extending beyond money or

commodity to the means of production as well. But-and this is sometimes forgotten-work, purchased and used (over the course of an eight-hour day, for example), as it is taken up or subsumed by the capital that has employed it, itself becomes capital-specifically, the value-creating aspect of that capital. Finally, the product, too, which is value before being commodity, is capital.

In terms of Aristotle's concept of movement (*kinesis*), then, we may understand capital as the *subject of value in its movement of growth*. Value passes through successive determinations. It moves from money to work (wages), then to the means of production, then (in virtue of the interplay of the latter two moments) to objectification in the product, then (as the product enters the market) to commodity, and finally (as the merchandise is sold) to money once more (\$-Diagram 9). But this time the amount of money has grown, has become more money, surplus money (\$'), as profit has accrued to the original amount. This entire, circular (or rather, spiraling) process, like some great, organic maelstrom, is capital: the growth of value, "valorization."

12.5 THE POOR AS WAGE-EARNERS

In a biblical sense of the word, the "poor" are the dominated, persons murdered by sin (2.7-8). The "poor" in the economic sense are the wretched, those left lying by the side of the road, those living outside the system. Biblically speaking, the "poor" are the exploited: they are Job suffering the results of the praxis of domination, writhing under the satanic praxis of the sinner .

Torn from their original *community* (8.3), their former source of security, the poor have been thrown on the "labor market" (12.2). In the "world of commodities" (*Laborem Exercens*, 7: "work was understood and treated as a kind of merchandise"), the poor, in their absolute nakedness and radical poverty, sell their "skin" as a thing. "The primacy of the human being vis-à-vis things" (*Laborem Exercens*, 12) has gone by the board. Now they are isolated, solitary individuals, without a community, in a dominating *society* (3.2), where they attain to their "sociality" only to the extent that they toil in the workshop or are bought and sold *on the market*. Whether in the workshop or on the market, they continue their individual isolation.

Once workers have sold their work, they are no longer their "own," but the property of another. Now they are "made other" ("otherfied") alienated, the object of sin and exploitation, and this in an institutional manner (2.5) thanks to the social division of labor. Now their work must be sold daily. The only alternative is starvation. Like some great god (2.3, 12.10), capital fills every corner. There is no possibility for the reproduction of the worker's life without the participation of capital. There is no "work ...without capital" (*Rerum Novarum*, 14). Now we have "work for hire," the obligatory alienated social relationship that demands of workers that they sell themselves for a wage that pays them less life than the life they objectify in the product destined to be possessed by the owner of money. "Work for hire" is the name of the institutional sin of our time. It has held sway for the past several centuries of human life on earth. Thus work for hire is the "original" sin committed against the worker (2.5)-committed by the "rich" (in the biblical sense) upon the poor.

12.6 ACCUMULATION OF "SURPLUS LIFE"

The theological syllogism is a traditional one. Workers objectify their life in their product (11.3; Eccles. 34:21). Their wages, being in the form of money, are vehicles of value, which is life (11.9,11.8). But the value or life objectified in the product (11.3) is greater than that received in wages. (Otherwise where does the profit come from-the difference between \$ and \$'-Diagram 9?) See 12.3.

Some identify profit as a difference in value between the value of merchandise sold and the payment received, which payment would somehow be greater than the value of the commodity sold. In that case, the seller steals from the purchaser (commercial injustice). But then in becoming buyers in their own turn-in buying the products needed in order to produce their own- -sellers (and workers themselves can sell their work for more than the value of their work capacity) are robbed in turn, and everything "comes out even."

The objection might be raised that employers earn their profit by the work they perform. No, work is recompensed precisely through a wage, which employers can and should receive (in some decent proportion to the wages the workers are paid). Anything left over-called "profit"-is the fruit of the *work of the non-owners* of the

capital invested-for which they have not been paid-not that of the capital itself, and therefore does not belong to the owners or stockholders.

But does capital not "earn" a profit from the risks it takes? No, risk is not a principle of the creation of value or earnings. (This is not the place for the rehearsal of and response to every possible objection. Suffice it to have sketched these two.)

The secret of the great idol of capital lies in the fact that the profit gained in exchange, in the circulation I have sketched, is based on the "surplus life" acquired by capital in the productive process by paying *less* by way of wages (x life) than the value produced in the product by the worker (y life-11.3). And James protests in advance: "Here, crying aloud, are the *wages* you withheld from the farmhands who harvested your fields. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts" (James 5:6) The social relationship is unjust and sinful, and this is why "your wealth has rotted" (James 5:2).

"Capital springs from labor, and bears the marks of human toil" (*Laborem Exercens*, 12). It is made up entirely of the accumulated life of the worker. Workers have been dispossessed of the fruit of their toil in advance (11.6), and day after day, by reason of the structural sin of our time, continue to be stripped of the "surplus life" they produce-the difference between their wages and the value of the product. This surplus life is absorbed by capital. "Capital cannot subsist without work" (*Rerum Novarum*, 14).

12.7 THE INSTITUTION OF INVISIBLE SIN

Thus in its more comprehensive, broader sense, at least, if not indeed in its strict sense as well, capital is a social relationship of domination, a certain relationship of unequal exchange among persons, a *practical* (1.3) or *moral* (3.6) relationship, with respect to work or its products-a *productive* relationship, then (1.2, 8.4), an economic exchange in both the anthropological and the theological senses of the word (11.4, 1.6, 6.10). But this relationship is stable and historical. Therefore we are dealing with an altogether particular "*social* institution."

The prince of "this world" (2.10) employs his mechanisms in all invisibility. Neither his existence nor his machinations are any longer

the object of anyone's belief. Thus he can act with impunity. The "good" bourgeois person (3.7, 3.8, 3.9)-indeed the "good" worker (the virtuous, punctual, "responsible" worker), because the dominated at times introject the dominant morality (8.6)-are actually *good* and moral in the eyes of the prevailing morality (3.7). The *social* relationship of domination, which is the unjust essence of capital, is accepted by the owner of the capital and of the work as "natural" (3.9). In all tranquility of "moral conscience" (3.8), the owner kills the neighbor.

Thus this *institutional sin* is very subtle. It is invisible. It is "absent in its very presence." It conditions the existence of us all (2.5): it determines one of the terms of the *practical* (1.2), *social* (8.2) *relationship*. (To be sure, the determinism in question is relative. I reject the oversimplification of a determinism that would preclude the possibility of a "conversion" -4.3.) It is in this sense, as well as by reason of its nature as wealth or means of production (as for the social teaching of the church), that capital is a social, historical *institution* of injustice, and hence a praxis of domination. Capital consists of the accumulation of the surplus life unjustly extracted from the worker.

The structural sin of any age has always been invisible to the prevailing morality of that age (3.6), and bourgeois morality is no exception. But the task of ethics, of prophecy, is to render that sin visible, after the example of Bartolomé de Las Casas: "All have sinned. It is gravest injustice."

12.8 THE PERSON OF THE WORKER AS "NOTHINGNESS"

Capital has no misgivings about its own divinity. It pretends to produce profit *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. Its idolatrous (12.10), fetishistic nature blinds it to the origin of any of the value that it contains, that it has accumulated. It actually believes that it has produced that value. The person of the worker is regarded as nothingness in the process.

Only God creates from nothing. Out of infinite, unconditioned freedom, God has created the entire universe. But capital pretends that it too has created something out of its sheer spontaneity. It has created profit, it cries. Of course, for this to hold true, the worker must be reduced to nothing. And surely enough, for capital, the

worker who does no work—who is not the subject of "productive work," of work that yields surplus life (12.6)—does not "count," does not constitute a "social class" (8.4), is not made use of (exploited), and hence cannot have been subsumed by capital (12.4). Such a worker is outside, is no-thing.

For capital, furthermore, the wage-earner is "virtually poor" (*virtualiter pauper*). *Before* being purchased, the wage-earner is nothing. *While* being used, the worker is an alienated aspect of capital (in a social relationship of sin). *After* being used, when no longer needed (for example, when technology has stepped up production and decreased the number of wage-earners), the worker is a miserable beggar (even with welfare payments or unemployment benefits in developed countries; in peripheral countries the worker simply starves to death in some urban slum or outlying shantytown).

Constituting a social relationship of domination—being sin-capital shows no mercy. It cannot commiserate, it cannot accord any consideration to the dignity of the person. It can have no recourse to any ethical yardstick. It does not hear the voice of the other (4.2). It has "hardened its heart."

12.9 BLOOD CIRCULATION

Capital, then, is ultimately value (11.5)—but only in the strictly capitalist sense of value. Value attaches to something useful (use value is its material base) produced by human work (productuality) in order to be sold as merchandise (exchangeability is essential to value).

Ultimately, then, capital is "value" *moving* or circulating through its successive determinations—money, wage-earning work, means of production, and so on (12.4)—and growing, thanks to the "surplus life" it extracts from the worker (12.6). The Bible styles this value "blood": "Who does not pay the just wage spills blood" (Ecclus. 34:22).

Blood is the seat of life (2.8). Without blood an organism dies. But workers objectify their life in the product of their work, in the value of their product (11.3). And so their death occurs: objectified life has not returned to the producer. Instead of a "circle of life" (11.2), the movement of value is transformed into a "circle of death" (2.8). It continues to be life—but it has become the *life of capital*. For, as we have seen, the life of capital, like the circulation of blood, is a

continuous circulation of value, which is transformed from money into wages or means of production, then into product, then into merchandise, and so on, and finally into *more* money, "surplus money." O blessed profit, "made" on the altar of the murder of "the innocent" (James 5:6)! "To divest the poor to offer sacrifice"-to the idol, capital-"is to murder the child in the presence of its father" (Ecclus. 34:20).

Thus value follows its life course through the successive determinations of *industrial* capital to become *profit*; then through the veins of *commercial* capital to reach the status of *commercial profit*; thereupon to arrive at the condition of *financial* capital, which gains *interest* through the investment of money alone. Interest is the sin of usury transfigured to the virtue of saving. Behold the bourgeois virtue of economy (saving, hoarding), condemned by the Fathers, the church, and justice itself (15.2-3). All of this value is simply and solely the *life* of workers dispossessed of their property.

12.10 IDOLATRY CONSUMMATED

Our reflection is theological. Accordingly, evil is seen and interpreted sub *peccati lumine* ("in the light of sin"). In its origin and essence, capital is a social relationship of domination. Therefore the consummation of its "morality" (3.8), and its total justification, rests upon its ready capacity to consign the other term of the relationship to oblivion. Capital's self-absolutization, its claim to utter singularity, isolation, and existence *ex se*, its denial that it is beholden to anyone or anything, constitutes its character as a false god and an idol (2.3).

The sin of Adam, we learn in the Book of Genesis, consisted in seeking to be "as God." Capital, too, denies its origin (the toil of the worker), pretending that its increase, its growth, its profit, emerges from its own entrails (rather than being extracted from the worker in the form of "surplus life"). It owes no one anything, then. All value produced, regardless of its actual source, belongs to capital. Capital has negated the worker as the "creative source of value," absolutizing itself instead. "Work has been separated from capital, and counterpoised to capital. . .almost as if they were two autonomous forces" (*Laborem Exercens*, 13). And this "separation" has fetishized capital, and alienated it from work.

Indeed, to "separate" capital from work as a self-subsisting profit-making entity, and work from capital as a self-subsisting wage-earning entity, is to forget that "*all capital is objectified work*" and therefore *only work*. We do not actually have two terms here. We have one only: *work*, now as objectified (as capital), now "living work" (as the life of the personal subject working here and now).

Once capital is absolutized -idolized, fetishized- it is the workers themselves who are immolated on its altar, as their life is extracted from them (their wages do not pay the whole of the life they objectify in the value of the product) and immolated to the god. As of old, so today as well, living human beings are sacrificed to mammon and Moloch. Only, today the oblation-and it alone-permits the dominant class to enjoy the surplus life of its victims. "Woe to you rich. You have received your reward" (Luke 6:24).

CONCLUSIONS

The theology or ethics of liberation interprets reality *sub pauperum lumine*-from the point of view of the poor. My conclusions may seem exceedingly hard, unilateral, and apocalyptic. In my view, they are simply ethical, evangelical, and realistic. Jewish theologian that he was (however some may be at pains to deny it), Jesus draws the conclusions generated by his premises. He did not cringe or fall back before them, cost his life though they might. Not without reason "must this man suffer much, be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the doctors of the law, be executed" (Mark 8:31). Our ethic cannot be a reformist morality (3.6, 3.2). This does not mean that it will be practicable on the present level of abstraction. ("Abstract" or "essential" does not mean "unreal." However, abstract conclusions cannot be practiced without concrete mediations.) All tactics are possible within the framework of ethical demands. But they may not violate ethical principles (5.3,5.6-7 ,5.9) through the utilization of the moralizing, received tactics of the day. Such tactics may not be adapted to the prevailing system. One must distinguish between the tactics demanded by the practice of prophecy or ethical criticism, and a reformist betrayal on the part of those who accept the tenets of the system of domination in the name of the reign of God.

Chapter 13

ETHICAL CRITIQUE OF DEPENDENCE

13.1 STATE OF THE QUESTION

Still very abstractly-if more concretely than with the considerations of the preceding chapter-I now turn attention to yet another essential aspect of sin. Having examined the "international *social* relationship"-the vertical relationship between capital and labor-let us consider the horizontal relationship of competition obtaining among the particular supplies of capital of the various nations.

We read about North-South relationships in the daily newspapers: we hear that UNCTAD meetings have been broken off, that the rich nations are forcing the poor nations to pay for their crisis, or that the rift is widening between the nations of the North and those of the South.

We read in holy scripture:

Woe to the rebellious children,
says the Lord,
Who carry out plans that are not mine;
who weave webs that are not inspired by me,
adding sin upon sin.
They go down to Egypt,
but my counsel they do not seek.
They find their strength in the pharaoh's protection
and take refuge in Egypt's shadow;
Pharaoh's protection shall be your shame,
and refuge in Egypt's shadow your disgrace.
When their princes are at Zoan
and their messengers reach Hanes,
All shall be ashamed

of a people that gain them nothing,
 Neither help nor benefit,
 but only shame and reproach [Isa. 30:1-5].

Here we have an apt characterization of the situation I am about to describe. To the sin of chapter twelve is added a new sin, so that we have "sin upon sin," superdetermination, superdomination, superexploitation. The expression "sin (*jatha't*) upon sin (*hal-jatha't*)" indicates that our considerations are about to shift to a more concrete, more real, more complex level.

13.2 SOME NECESSARY DISTINCTIONS

Capital (2.4, 12.9) is not of a piece. It is cloven, divided, differentiated. There is capital and capital: this branch of capital and that, this sector and that, this nation's capital and that one's. Only in the abstract, only as a single concept, is capital one. In the concrete it is multiple.

Here we must invoke the species of *analogy* that Thomas Aquinas called "proper proportionality." First, what I have said of capital in general, I now apply to the various kinds of capital under consideration as they stand in opposition to one another. We find individual supplies of capital operating in mutual confrontation. They are in "competition" with one another. If capital is a "*social relationship*" (12.3), two or more supplies of capital in confrontation will constitute the terms of a *relationship of relationships*. The relationship obtaining between capital and labor is vertical—a relationship of exploitation as sin (12.7). The relationship obtaining between two supplies of capital is a *horizontal* one— that of competition.

The horizontal relationship among supplies of capital is manifold. First there is the relationship among the branches of capital (between the metallurgical industry and the chemical industry, for example). The branches of capital can *compete*. One may be more profitable than another; or one may be more profitable during one period of time, and another during another. In analogous fashion, capital may be divided into "sector one" (the produced means of production, such as machinery and technology—this will be constant, fixed capital) and "sector two" (as, for example, consumer or agricultural

products, terms of a relationship with wages-circulating capital). An individual supply of capital as a whole will have branches, sectors, parts, dividing it further through a division of labor.

Then, once more in analogous fashion, capital is divided along international lines, with the total capital of one nation pitted against that of another in a relationship of competition, or those of nations having their respective total aggregates of capital more highly developed (in the *technological* component of value, then) standing in opposition to the supplies of capital of less developed nations, the stronger against the weaker (in terms of *accumulation*), the central against the peripheral (in terms of the *spatial* hegemony of a capital first to develop in *time*), and so forth.

13.3 THE NATION AS POOR

Still in terms of our analogy: just as a particular supply of capital has a subject of appropriation -a person, the capitalist- so also a total national capital has a subject of appropriation: a bourgeois class. Beginning with the Renaissance this class rose to the status of the hegemonic one in the West, and set up the nation states, first in Europe and later in the Third World, so that "men of all countries ...are now citizens of an independent state" (*Pacem in Terris*, 42).

Despite the danger of its fetishization-as in Nazism and Fascism-the "nation" is the "great society to which one belongs on the basis of particular cultural and historical bonds. ...The culture of a determinate nation ...[is] a great historical and social incarnation of the work of all generations" (*Laborem Exercens*, 10). Despite the criticisms we may level against it, the nation continues to be the spatial, politico-historical, cultural, linguistic, and even religious horizon within which peoples live and dwell.

Consequently, corresponding to the vertical relationship of class (that between capital and labor), we have a horizontal relationship as well, and one of worldwide dimensions. One can "set in relief the problem of *class*, especially," as Pope John Paul II says; but one can also bring "the problem of the *world* into the foreground ...the worldwide sway of inequality and injustice" (*Laborem Exercens*, 2). Here sin acquires a world dimension, and the suffering Job of the Bible becomes the *poor nation*.

By "poor" nation I understand the victim of (politico-military)

domination, the ideological (cultural) hegemony of another nation, and economic exploitation (by way of the transfer of surplus value). Poor and impoverished, "the hungry peoples call out to the opulent peoples" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 9).

13.4 THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

As I have said (12.1), because capital is a social relationship, competition among national supplies of capital will constitute a relationship of relationships. Both relationships are relationships of domination: the first by the very nature of capital, the second-the one now under consideration-in its quality as a relationship of dependence. That is, both relationships are relationships of sin. In the latter we have "sin upon sin," in the form of the *exploitation of the exploiter*. Let us examine this question.

We cannot escape the fact that "the poor peoples always remain poor, and the rich become gradually richer" (*Populorum Progressio*, 59), a fact that Medellín attributes to the following causality:

We wish to stress that the main culprits in our situation of economic dependence are those forces that seek unrestrained profit, and thus pave the way for economic dictatorship and the "international imperialism of money" (condemned by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* and by Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*) [*Medellín Document on Peace*, 9e].

Praxis is a relationship among persons (1.2) or among nations (or their supplies of capital). The praxis of domination is sin (2.2). The "*international social relationship*" of domination among nations (or among their supplies of capital, even where the relationship is one of competition among dominators) is an "*international sin*," then, a world structure of evil, the structure of the domain of the Prince of "this world" (2.10), and it causes the death of entire nations (2.8), the *poor* nations (2.7). This complex structure determines its agents, and is inherited historically (2.6). It is the most fundamental social sin of our age (2.5), despite the fact that it is the least visible (3.9).

If there is sin in the social relationship of capital, by which one person appropriates the life of others (12.6), now we have the sin whereby entire nations transfer *their life* to other nations, through

the intermediary of complex mechanisms by which the total capital of poor countries is lost, annihilated, delivered over to other countries.

13.5 WHAT IS DEPENDENCE?

Medellín speaks of "dependence." This concept appeared in the social sciences in Latin America only in the mid-1960s, and has not yet attained the status of a clearly constituted category. But we may say that it denominates the abstract or essential law determining the type of international social relationship obtaining between the total national capital of a central (developed) nation (or nations) and the total national capital of a peripheral, underdeveloped nation (or nations)-a law whose ultimate content consists in the *transfer of the surplus value* (the surplus life) of weak capital to strong capital.

This is sin, this horizontal domination of one total national capital over another, weaker, and undeveloped national capital, in the international relationship of competition; this is *sin upon sin*, dependence. At its most general, basic, and abstract level, dependence will be the universal law as applied to the particular case of mercantile or free-trade colonial or imperialistic domination. Thus it will be operative in the phenomenon known as transnationalization (14.3). "Dependence" will thus denominate the theft, the unequal exchange, the sin, of the appropriation of the human life of another nation through the transfer and appropriation of its surplus value.

How is this transfer effectuated? In the first place, the "highly industrialized nations" (see *Populorum Progressio*, 57), in virtue of the greater technological resources at their disposition, can produce products at lower cost, put them on the market in less developed countries for a price above their value, and reap extraordinary profits. The less developed nations, on the contrary, must market higher-cost products (less technology having been employed in their production), lower their price to below their value when they are placed on central markets, and reap so little profit that these nations simply transfer their surplus value, their surplus life, to the developed nations, annihilating their own work and impoverishing themselves. Various factors convert this abstract "law" into a concrete tendency, and in certain cases actually transform it into a two-way street.

In its essence, then, "dependence" in ethical theology denotes a

structural international sin by which the poor peoples lose *life*.

13.6 THE POOR NATION: A PEOPLE AND ITS DOUBLE EXPLOITATION

The poor capitalistic country (I shall speak of the socialist countries only in chap.17)-poor even though capitalistic-is exploited through its bourgeois class (socially) and its total national private capital (economically). Without the transmission of which I have been speaking-without the transfer of surplus value from poor capitalistic nations to rich ones-the surplus life of a people cannot flow abroad. That is, if a poor nation is either a pre-capitalistic one, and therefore unexploitable, or a post-capitalistic one, which would therefore no longer allow itself to be exploited, so that there were no transfer of surplus value, then neither would there be a transfer of surplus life.

A peripheral total national capital is weak (because it transfers its surplus life and thus fails to build itself up), underdeveloped (because it is a latecomer technologically), and politically dominated (by security forces). A peripheral total national capital will therefore have to increase its exploitation of its workers (in the capital-labor, or vertical, relationship) in order to *compensate* for the loss of competition with other, central capitals (in the horizontal relationship). Thus the separation between the rich and the masses of the oppressed generates an ever more violent, bloody, repressive scenario.

The dominant bourgeois classes (the "rich," 2.7) must compensate for the transfer of their own surplus life by extracting even more of the life of the masses than before. Their productivity is low, for they have little technology (constant or fixed capital, depending on the level) at their disposition. Thus they must super-exploit the wage-earner, the "poor," by demanding more speed and effort in the workplace, as well as by imposing a minimal alimentary regime-tortillas and beans, rice and manioc, "bread and water." And so the *poor of the poor countries* become the genuinely miserable mass of the planet.

Thus the "peoples" are the *social* and *communal* blocs of those in the poor nations who are oppressed by super-exploitation. But these masses today are the subjects or loci of a universal conscientization

with regard to the international, basic structural evil of which they are the victims. Their consciousness (4.2) is the clearest consciousness in present world history. As the subject, the host organism, of total suffering, they are the subject (agent) of our planetary future as well.

13.7 "SURPLUS LIFE" TRANSFERRED TO THE CENTER

The fetishistic essence of world capitalism is most clearly seen in the transfer of the life of the worker of a peripheral country to a central country via the supplies of capital between competition:

Perhaps the greatest problem of our days is the one that concerns the relationships that ought to obtain between the economically developed nations and the countries still in the process of developing economically. The former enjoy a comfortable life, whereas the latter suffer the most grievous scarcity [Mater et Magistra, 157].

This transfer of "surplus life" is a concrete, horizontal channel (that of competition, 13.2) through which value passes from one total national capital to another. It is procured, in its essence, vertically (through the accumulation of capital in the form of work, 12.6), by way of the super-exploitation of peripheral workers. It is domination over a dominator who exploits still another victim of domination.

Theologically, "dependence" is the name of the international sin by which peripheral peoples are sacrificed to the fetish of world capitalism. Not only the laboring or agricultural class, but ethnic groups, tribes, and other marginal groups have their lives (their life, their work) immolated on the altar of a fetish (2.3, 12.9, 12.10) that today wears a global face. But the channels of this domination occasion no explicit consciousness of their nature or overt responsibility for their injustice (2.9). They operate through rigid structures, seemingly objective and objectively justified, whose origin no one remembers and whose rectification no one can imagine. And indeed, within the framework of the capitalistic rationale, no solution is possible (3.6).

To export the product of a poor country and sell it for a price below its value is to immolate human life to the international fetish in

the form of profit. For a poor country to import a product and sell it for more than its value is likewise murder: it is the theft of the life of the poor, who use their money (their life-ll.8) to purchase less life (in the form of products) than the life they have objectified in their wages.

13.8 THEOLOGY, POPULIST AND POPULAR

It was in the mid-1960s of our century, in Brazil, Peru, Chile, and elsewhere in Latin America, that the "poor" were first discovered as a class. Here, in Latin America today, were the "poor" in a truly biblical sense of the word (2.7, 12.2, 12.5, etc.). At the same moment, the "poor" were being identified in Argentina, Uruguay, and elsewhere, as the people. Despite the ever-present threat of "populism," this latter outlook (8.4-8.5) was adopted, from about 1973 onward, by all currents of thought in the theology of liberation.

I define "populist theology" as the theology that speaks of liberation, but does so in a context of national liberation-which would be unobjectionable (13.2, 13.3), were it not for the fact that it identifies the "nation" with the "people" (13.6): that is, it includes in the concept of "people" the dominant classes, especially the bourgeoisie. This is precisely the tenor of the Latin American "populisms"-those of Vargas, Cárdenas, Perón, Apri, and the like. These represent the capitalistic project of an anti-imperialist national liberation to be effectuated under the aegis and inspiration, and in the interests, of the industrial bourgeoisie. Certain theologies sustain this position, and these currents take an anti-socialistic line on "liberation."

At the other extreme there have been-and there still are today-theologies for which "liberation" is a process to be spearheaded by a "working class." What meaning could such a conceptualization possibly have in Guatemala, El Salvador, or Nicaragua? A certain dogmatic, abstract, classist theology rejects as "populist" any position that is not totally abstract. Here the "poor" are the wage-earners alone. This sort of "Marxism" is bookish and amateur.

A popular (neither populist, then, nor simply classist) theology of liberation defines its protagonist-the "people" (8.5-8.10, 13.6), the historical subject of the nation-as a bloc of the oppressed that excludes dominant classes, a bloc restricted to the "poor" in the

political and economic sense of the word: working classes, ethnic groups, tribal groups, other marginalized groups, and even a petite bourgeoisie that has been "converted" (4.3)-the biblical "children of the pharaoh" (Exod. 2:10).

13.9 LmERAnoN FROM SIN TODAY: ESSENTIAL LEVEL

Here as well, two extreme positions are to be avoided. Some think of sin as an exclusively religious phenomenon, played out only in direct relationship with God (2.2). The abstractive, monophysitic mentality betrayed by such an approach mars the August 1984 "Instruction" on the theology of liberation. It implies that there can be no such thing as sin on a profane, secular, economic, or political level. At the opposite pole there are those who think that sin is only to be found on these concrete levels.

Both positions are in error. Sin, as the domination of one person by another (2.2), is effectuated in praxis: in the action of domination and in the social relationship of the alienation of the other. In the concrete (and this distinction is neglected by the "Instruction") sin is an economic, political, sexual, ideological, or similar, domination. In the abstract (basically, or metaphysically)-inasmuch as everything finite and concrete is a creature of God and hence to be found within the order of the reign of God (1.8), as its affirmation (1.9) or negation (2.3)-all concrete domination, albeit profane, will always and at the same time be sin against God: against God's creatures, God's sons and daughters, or God's divine Son (and hence a matter for christology)-James 2:14-26; 1 John 4:19-21.

One of the concrete, historical, and social (3.2) dimensions of "sin today" is that it is a social relationship of inequality and domination-the relationship that I have denominated strictly (and if it were only "wealth," or "means of production," or any other partial element, my judgment errs-12.4) capital-wealth amassed by means of the blood extracted from the life of the poor.

On this abstract, fundamental, or essential level, liberation in a dependent Third World means the defeat of this alienating, sinful "social relationship." Historically, concretely, and essentially, liberation today is a dissolution of, emergence from-a gigantic exodus from-this "social relationship," where the poor are the victims of murder (2.7-8).

13.10 LIBERATION FROM SIN TODAY: WORLD LEVEL

Liberation (from sin) on a concrete level can be sexual, ideological, political, or economic liberation. It can be liberation, for example, from the social relationship that constitutes the essence of capital. But this concrete liberation, simultaneously and intrinsically, in virtue of its transcendental relationship (its creatureliness with respect to the Creator and its redeemability with respect to potential redemption in Christ), is religious, eschatological liberation as well (inasmuch as it constitutes community, 1.5; struggles with sin, 2.5, and with Babylon, 3.5; serves, 4.5; satisfies the poor, 4.9-10; sanctifies, 5.9, and liberates the "people of God," 8.10).

Poverty today, on its essential level, is the fruit of sin as the specific social relationship of capital and labor (12.3). But on a more concrete level-on the world level-sin has the name of dependence: sin is the transfer of surplus life from one nation to another (13.7). Liberation in this second sense is "national" liberation, yes, but not in the "populist" sense-rather in the popular (13.8). Liberation is deliverance from the sin of the horizontal international social relationship in which life is extracted by way of competition among supplies of capital-thanks to, and simultaneous with, deliverance from the sin of the vertical essential social relationship in which life is extracted by way of the relationship victimizing the wage-earner (12.5, 13.10). A "national" liberation consisting only of a breach with the social relationship, to the benefit of the national bourgeoisie, is only populist, superficial, and fictitious. The reality of the oppression of a poor people, by way of the relationship between capital and labor, abides.

A peripheral nation enjoys authentic national liberation only when it is effectuated in tandem with a liberation from the social relationship of capital and labor-in other words, only when national liberation is characterized by the "promotion of a more humane world for all" (*Populorum Progressio*, 44), and a genuine concern for "full human perfection" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 86).

CONCLUSIONS

I have dwelt on only one concrete level of sin-the structure and mechanism of sin on the world level, the relationship of domination

imposed by the Prince of "this world" in the form of competition among the supplies of capital of the various nations occupying their several stations in the international division of labor (that is, executing their precise assignments in the process by which sin designates some as dominators and others as dominated). A theological community ethics must call things by their name. Precious little has been forthcoming in the way of prophetic denunciation of these levels. No ethical judgement has been pronounced upon the prevailing structures of our idolatrous world, which, with impunity-indeed, with a tranquil Christian conscience-plays with the very life of so many millions of human beings.

The extraction of wealth from underdeveloped, peripheral countries whose capitalism is weak and dependent is the immolation of human life to the cannibalistic, demoniacal, invisible god Capital. No one sees him, hears him, knows him, or blames him. Many Christians are the very agents of this monster, the Beast, in its appropriation of the lives of its victims. These Christians think they offer worship to the God of the poor of Israel, to the poor Jesus of Nazareth, in their Sunday liturgy. But they continue to offer weekly worship to the Monday-through-Friday god of their factories, their fields, and their private properties, which continue to swell with the surplus life of the poor, the life of a Christ crucified anew.