

CREATIVITY AND STRUGGLE: PROCESS PHILOSOPHY AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

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I am a Biblical scholar who has had the privilege during my active ministry of *living during the emergence of a movement of Christians, mostly poor, who* live their faith as a motivation to struggle for the liberation of Latin America. The study of the Bible has been a major instrument in that struggle and the best part of our discipline has been cultivated in a dual relation with popular Bible study and academic Biblical research. I was a founder of RIBLA, the Journal of Latin American Biblical Interpretation that appears three times a year in both Spanish and Portuguese and has enough sales to pay its own way in spite of its modest cost. The strength of our journal is its use by pastoral agents who work at the base level with groups of poor Christians. These are not just any poor Christians, but those who have made an option for the poor as agents which means they are engaged in the struggle to transform society so that there will no longer be great numbers of disposable humans and also a disposable environment for life. These are the subscribers who pay six dollars per issue or half price if ten get together to receive their issues at a single address. Of course, the journal also depends for its success on academic writers who themselves make an option for the poor. They usually carry out some kind of ministry that allows them to speak to them as together all seek to open the Bible as God's Word for the poor who affirm their dignity and struggle for a different world.

These introductory remarks are designed to show that liberation theology is a movement in Latin America. The books and journals, which are the theological tip of

the movement, depend for their life on the pastoral practice of thousands of Christians devoted to practicing their faith by following Jesus in the struggle for health for their nations and for the continent. I have accepted the challenge this afternoon of dealing with the encounter of this movement with process philosophy in Latin America. This is a strange task, like comparing apples and oranges. Perhaps I as a Biblical scholar am not fitted best for the task, but I am available. Process philosophy is present in Latin America but it is by no stretch of the imagination a movement. The same can be said of process theology. Still, I do believe that something can be gained by exploring our topic. It will surprise many that process philosophy, more than process theology, has had an impact on liberation theology which is hidden from view but it seems to me, not insignificant. Liberation theology has not occupied itself with philosophy explicitly but philosophy has been present, of course, in its academic elaboration. So, let us see where this will take us.

I propose to approach my topic in three parts: First, I want to make an inventory of process philosophy in Latin America. Second, some autobiographical remarks will illustrate how this Baptist Biblical scholar came to be and to be recognized as a liberation theologian. This, hopefully, will help you see for yourselves how liberation theology emerged as a significant academic expression of the struggle for liberation. Third and last, I want to explore the presence and contribution of process philosophy in various topics of liberation theology.

AN INVENTORY OF PROCESS PHILOSOPHY

As process philosophy has developed in the U.S., or at least in Claremont, it is the study, development and application to different spheres of life of the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. We will see that this is too narrow a definition for Latin America but it will do as a starting point for our inventory.

Much of the Whiteheadian corpus of writings was translated into Spanish in Argentina between 1941 and 1961: Nature and Life in 1941, An Introduction to Mathematics in 1944, Modes of Thought also in 1944, Adventures of Ideas in 1947, Science and the Modern World in 1949, Process and Reality in 1956, The Aims of Education in 1957, and Religion in the Making in 1961. It is obvious that there was an academic interest in Whitehead during those years. Nature and Life was translated by Risieri Frondizi, a philosopher who was recognized in the 1940s as a significant thinker in Latin America. Science and the Modern World and Process and Reality, two major works of Whitehead, were translated by J. Rovira Armengol. Religion in the Making was done by Armando Asti Vera, who became later the chairman of Humanities at the University of Buenos Aires, the largest university in the country. I met him in 1969 and was disappointed to discover that his interest in Whitehead was as a basis for esoteric Oriental religious thought. The lasting result of this major translating effort appears to have been very slight.

The Spanish Civil War in 1936-1939 brought to Latin America a number of scholars who were escaping Franco's Fascist repression. For our purposes the most important was Juan David García Bacca, a very competent philosopher who had been a Professor of Mathematical Logic and the Philosophy of Science at the University of Barcelona. After brief stays at the National University of Ecuador and the National Autonomous University of Mexico, he settled in Venezuela in 1947 and there he remained until his return to Spain in 1977. García Bacca studied Thomist philosophy at the Claretian seminary in Cervera, Navarra, was ordained and went to Louvain, where neo-Thomism failed to move him. He studied sciences in München, Zürich and Paris, and then spent some time in Vienna on Mathematical Logic. During his American stay he wrote widely on most subjects in philosophy, but showed a special

interest in Karl Marx, William James and Whitehead. The last years of his life, spent in retirement in Spain, were devoted to extensive work on Esthetics, especially music. His is no doubt the most important influence in Latin America toward the study of Whitehead. His was also an early interest in Marxian social analysis.

The University of Puerto Rico was led during the Spanish Civil War and in the three following decades by don Jaime Benítez who put the university on the map of Latin American universities and made it a force in Puerto Rican national life. He was able to attract competent Spanish scholars trying to get out of the repressive university atmosphere in Spain during the Franco years. One such philosophy professor was Jorge Enjuto Bernal, who wrote a general interpretation of Whitehead that is a very competent work, La filosofía de Alfred North Whitehead, published in Madrid in 1967. This was apparently his doctoral dissertation, although I do not know who was his advisor. I wrote in 1971 a follow-up in Diálogo, the journal of the philosophy department of the UPR, in which I drew the many parallels between Marx's Capital and Whitehead's Process and Reality. Enjuto was doing no more than interpreting Whitehead's difficult system for Spanish speakers. My point was not to claim any dependence of Whitehead on Marx but to show the structural similarities of their systems of thought and the ways in which those systems were related to appearances in the everyday world, which process thinkers connect with the famous airplane metaphor in Process and Reality. Neither Enjuto's book nor my article seemed to have significant repercussions in the Puerto Rican intellectual scene.

Philosophical study has two quite distinct settings in Latin America: the universities, which have in Latin America a strong lay orientation with no religious studies, and the seminaries designed to prepare young men for the priesthood. Catholic theological education has traditionally begun with four years of the study of philosophy.

Indeed, this was García Bacca's first exposure to philosophy, though later he received secularization and abandoned his early religious interests. For the purposes of process philosophy the most important figure in Latin America is the seminary teacher Ignacio Ellacuría, a Basque Jesuit who taught philosophy and was the rector of the Central American University in San Salvador, where he was martyred the 16th of November of 1989 along with five other Jesuit professors and two of their servants. Ellacuría did his doctoral dissertation in Madrid on the philosophy of Xabier Zubiri, and he became a close friend and associate of this greatest of Twentieth-century-Spanish philosophers. Zubiri had many of the same interests and points of view that Whitehead developed at Harvard. Though trained in philosophy in seminary, he recognized the importance of science. He studied physics with Schrödinger, Planck and Einstein in Berlin, after three years of philosophy with Heidegger in Freiburg. Like García Bacca, he was a victim of the Civil War, though he opted for an internal exile, living in Spain for years with a prohibition of teaching at the universities. He lived by giving lectures of philosophy in rented halls in Madrid and he wrote profusely. His doctrine of "sentient intelligence" bears some resemblance to Whitehead's doctrine of causal efficacy, the preconceptual feelings which go into the make-up of all perception.

In Zubiri's understanding of metaphysics Whitehead students will recognize themselves. Physics deals with the factually real, metaphysics has to do with the structure of the real insofar as real, not with some other world. Though no longer a priest, God was a problem for Zubiri, and he hardly spoke about God without speaking of the issue as a problem. If there is no "other" world for metaphysics beyond the here and now, God must be discovered in the structure of physical reality as we know it. My limited knowledge of Zubiri, doesn't allow me to speak about his views on the relatedness of all things, a critical issue for process philosophy. I suspect a reading of

Zubiri would discover that his view is not far from what process philosophy knows from Whitehead, largely because of his close knowledge of twentieth-century relativity theory. His acquaintance with Albert Einstein during his years in Berlin was more than passing. Einstein was a friendly person so it would probably be too cheap him a friend, but they did have more than the usual professor-student relation. Because he believed that philosophy must be based on reality as known scientifically in his time he surely recognized relatedness as essential to the contingent things that make up reality.

Ellacuría, though he had finished his formal studies, was in Spain cooperating with Zubiri at the time of the martyrdom of Father Rutilio Grande that “converted” Bishop Romero to the insurgent cause in El Salvador. He was a close friend of the archbishop and the murder of Father Grande had a similar impact on him. By his research in Marxist thought along with a rigorous work in metaphysics in a Zubirian line he laid the grounds for the first well-developed liberation-process philosophy. This is what the students at the Jesuit seminary received in their training in San Salvador, and this guided his extensive reshaping of the university, to such an extent that it drew the attention of the authorities who murdered him along with his colleagues on that 16th of November. This makes his process-liberation witness all the more credible. I confess that this label as a process-liberation philosopher is just an intuition by a Biblical scholar on the character of the philosophical work of this important Jesuit philosopher. With him we end our inventory of Latin American process philosophy.

But perhaps a word on Christian marxism is in order. The official Marxism promoted by the Communist parties of Latin America has no intellectual importance. It followed a party line dictated from Moscow, Stalin’s view of the necessary five stages of historical development. These parties were not revolutionary, with the one exception of the Salvadoran Communist party that gained its credibility when it led the