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The current crisis of humans from a spiritual and scientific perspective

La crisis actual del ser humano desde una perspectiva espiritual y científica

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Howard Richards¹

Abstract

Christian Social Thought (CST) continues to be relevant. The evolutionary survival and success of humans was made possible by cultures of solidarity. They provided the cohesion and the creativity needed to cope with the challenges of the physical environment. Among the many such cultures there have been and are, CST, in several versions, shaped the European World System that then expanded to become today's Modern World System, sometimes as its critic, sometimes as its ally. Today CST, together with other cultures of solidarity, has much to contribute to the social transformations needed to survive humanity's current crisis.

Keywords: Christianity, Christian Social Doctrine, Crisis, Spiritual, Science

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Resumen

El Pensamiento Social Cristiano (PSC) sigue siendo relevante. A través de su evolución como especie, el éxito de los humanos se ha hecho posible por culturas de solidaridad. Suministraron la cohesión y la creatividad necesarias para enfrentar los desafíos del medio ambiente físico. Entre las muchas culturas solidarias que ha habido y que hay, el PSC, en diversas versiones, contribuyó a la estructuración histórica del Sistema Mundial Europeo, siendo el PSC a la vez fuente de críticas y fuente de aliados. Este sistema se amplió para llegar a ser el Sistema Mundial Moderno de hoy. El PSC, junto con otras culturas solidarias, ofrece mucho a la reconstrucción social imprescindible para superar la actual crisis de los humanos.

Palabras clave: cristianismo, doctrina social cristiana, crisis, espiritual, ciencia.

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Introduction

This essay begins with the question, by what right does Christian Social Thought (CST) claim a voice in the discourse of universities? It is understood that today CST, taken seriously, requires and guides a civilizational change.

One response, typified by the democratic criteria of the Charter of Principles of the World Social Forum (WSF) would be that a Christian has the same right to speak that we all have, no more and no less. Within Catholicism one can often give another: type of response, similar to: "You who are baptized, confirmed, confessed and married in the church; you have assumed an obligation to know your own church's social teachings". In addition to arguing that it is self-contradictory to pretend to be a Catholic and not to study Christian social doctrine, one can argue that spiritual development that does not lead to social responsibility is a failure. In the words of St. Ignatius Loyola, the objective of his spiritual exercises is to purify the will and unify the will with the will of God. God is Father. God loves all his children, not just me. (Note: In the Spanish version of his Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius treats "spirit" (espíritu) and "will" (voluntad) as synonyms.

This paper adds other reasons for integrating the CST into the curriculum. It assumes the following postulates. The multiple facets of the current crisis that fill the agendas of social fora with more topics than there are meeting rooms have a basic cause. They derive from social relations defined by an individualistic ethics and jurisprudence forged in Europe in early modernity. (hereafter identified as the basic cultural structure of the modern world, or in one word as modernity). They were then imposed on the rest of the world, mostly by armed violence. In Wallerstein's terms, the European World System became the Modern World System. They are leading today (2020) to the physical and moral collapse of that modern world system.

The construction of the other possible and necessary worlds, meeting human needs in harmony with nature, requires solidarity ethics because it requires cohesion, i.e, bonding, i.e. social capital. There are many solidarity ethics: pre-Columbian Buen Vivir, many contemporary feminisms, many socialisms and Eco socialisms, social entrepreneurship and other transformations of capitalism, African Ubuntu, the millenary spiritualities of Asia, and so on. But only the Christian ethics of solidarity, with roots in Judaism and Greek philosophy, as the ethics of the principal religion of Europe in early modern times (in the 17th and 18th centuries, allowing some flexibility to consider events shaping individualistic ethics before and after), shaped the birth of modernity (Monares, 2005). It was early modernity's interlocutor, and often its opponent. For example, the philosopher David Hume –a great architect of the modern basic cultural structure, and an intellectual ally and close friend of Adam Smith– in a 1741 essay attempted to demonstrate that avarice is a virtue, not a vice. The context, form, and goal of Hume's argument cannot be understood without knowing that in 18th century Europe both Hume and Smith struggled against a Christian social thought that classified avarice –often defined as consuming more than one needed– among the seven deadly sins. For another example, Denis Diderot, who famously

articulated modernity's ethic of liberty as freedom to do whatever the law does not forbid, also famously declared that he lived to see the last king hung by the entrails of the last priest.

This document is divided into three parts, each composed of heroic simplifications intended to be useful today as the precepts of the reigning, or until recently reigning, neoliberalism is synthesized with other precepts taken from other traditions or newly minted, to build a future that is sustainable and just. The three parts are: the rise of humans, the crisis of humans, and the current (2020) alternatives.

Part One: To understand the rise of humans

Once upon a time, in a certain corner of the universe, there was a small planet whose name was earth. It revolved around a medium-sized star whose name was sun. There lived on it a race whose name was humans. It was (and is) an intelligent and resourceful breed. In the course of their history they organized a series of 'basic' institutions to meet the needs of each one in harmony with nature. The possible alternatives for the other institutions are limited by the requirements of the basic ones. For example, if we adopt the language of the regulationist school and identify the basic institutions of contemporary capitalism with the necessity of maintaining one or another regime of accumulation, then apparently non-economic institutions –such as schools, sports, science, religion, government and entertainment– are limited by the necessity of strengthening, and not weakening, the confidence of investors. If the basic institutions fail, then the basic needs of the people are not met. That is why they are called basic.

The identification of certain institutions as 'basic' begins with Plato. In the second book of *The Republic*, he lays down a premise that Charles Darwin can be read as agreeing with twenty-one centuries later; The true architect of our city (polis) is our needs, and the first and most basic of our needs is food. Abraham Maslow starting in 1943 proposed considering basic physiological needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization. It is notable that his classic essay begins as a theory of motivation. It quickly becomes a theory of needs. What motivates people is what meets their needs, it ends as an ethic; the good society is one that meets people's basic needs, freeing them to pursue self-actualization. Maslow consciously follows in the functionalist tradition of James and Dewey, who in turn draw on Darwin, Maslow's work remains invaluable even if one does not believe his hierarchy of needs (or if one believes that the hierarchy of needs attributed to him by the terrible simplifiers does not survive a careful reading of what he wrote). Shortly after Maslow wrote his classic essay, Frankl established that human beings who live with meaning and purpose are more resilient than those whose lives lack coherent aims, even in the extreme pain and humiliation of a Nazi concentration camp. In our times-Lindner and Hartling have demonstrated that for human beings it is basic not just to live, but to live with dignity.

To begin to sketch a philosophy designed to help humans cope with the alternatives of 2020, we recall that during a relatively late century in the history of our race, namely, the nineteenth after Christ, when for many centuries the main religions and cultures had already created moral systems of norms, beliefs, practices and ceremonies that had served to sustain life; the previously mentioned Charles Darwin appeared. Traveling the world –especially our part of the world, where for many millennia flora and fauna had lived isolated from their relatives elsewhere– he gathered evidence for a theory of evolution by adaptation. That is what humans need in 2020: adaptation. In the terminology of Joseph Schumpeter: Innovation. Would you agree?

Darwin observed that life forms vary from one place to another according to the challenges of the moment and of the environment. He passed through our Limache in the Valparaíso region of Chile twice in 1836. He climbed Cerro La Campana, which many of us limachinos can see from the windows of our houses. He saw many things that today anyone can verify for herself or himself: For example, there are different ecosystems, with different plants and different animals, depending on whether one is on the south side of the mountain where there is more shade or on the north side of the mountain where there is more sun. He saw animals and plants unique in the world.

Regarding humans, Darwin drew the impeccable conclusion that, since with irresponsible, quarrelsome, dishonest and selfish people it is not possible to achieve any goal; therefore, the normal tendency of human evolution is towards more cohesive societies organized by more functional moral systems. It should be noted that in the case of humans it is not the individual's genetic code that is mainly adaptive, but the rules of the game, the moral systems, that organize a way of life. Mahatma Gandhi's thought was similar: Love is the law of our species. If our ancestors had not formed cohesive communities, their moral systems would not have survived, and we would not have been born.

Contemporary scientists, including the Chilean biologists Maturana and Varela, have confirmed in detailed ways that the human being is emotional, ethical, and spiritual by nature. Physiologists have been able to show that certain regions of the brain have evolved to trigger empathy that motivates them to help the injured, the poor and those who are lonely and depressed. Physical damage to those regions by car accident, in sports like boxing, by the bullet of a rifle, or by drug overdose can erase empathy and with-it normal sociability, morals, and spirituality.

The distinguished Chilean psychologist Jorge Baguy, a native of Villa Alemana holds that responsible development of children is favored in conditions similar to the typical tribal organization of humans during more than 90% of their residence on earth: extended family, caring community, respect for authority and norms, maternal intelligence hardwired into the female body, moral education by ceremony (as in mass, first communion and birthday parties), care of animals and plants and in general a life in harmony with nature. Baguy finds that such conditions have through the ages triggered and cultivated the better angels of human nature.

Among the philosophers who have devoted themselves to studying the relationship between the physical and biological background of human beings and their religious and ethical life is the author of *Darwin's Influence on Philosophy* (1910), the American philosopher John Dewey. He was previously mentioned as an influence on Maslow. The Chilean saint, Father Alberto Hurtado, dedicated his doctoral thesis at the University of Louvain to demonstrate the concordance of the Catholic religion and Dewey's philosophy of education. In Dewey's time, Darwin's findings sparked heated debates questioning faith. Dewey argued that at a deeper level Darwin's finding questioned science. They questioned the moral authority of cold reason. Claims to live by unchanging ethical certainties, like those of Kant's imaginary pure reason or the property rights established once and for all by an imaginary social contract, could not possibly be true. There are no unchanging certainties. In fact, the history and the prehistory of human beings is the history of a species that has survived and thrived because culture has empowered it to adapt and innovate. Science itself confirms that what counts most for human flourishing is not what is true but what is adaptive. (See Exodus 3:14; Matthew 6:27) A further point of agreement between the philosopher (Dewey) and the saint (Hurtado) was their common emphasis on prosocial values (good citizenship for Dewey, *actitud social* for Hurtado) as the primary goal of education.

In the words of Dewey himself:

" (...) I wonder if the spiritual life does not have its most secure and ample guarantees when it is learned that the laws and conditions of justice are involved in the processes of the universe; when it is found that man in his conscious struggle, in his doubts, temptations and defeats, in his aspirations and successes, is moved and sustained by the forces that have developed nature; and that in the moral struggle one does not act as a simple individual, but as an organ to maintain and carry out the universal process." (Dewey, 1898)

A note on the most common uses of the words 'moral' and 'ethics.' They are often synonymous. The first comes from a Latin root. The second comes from a Greek root. Both mean customs. They are not usually just any habit, but rather those with authority, typically a transcendental authority. Failure to fulfil moral / ethical duties gives others license to criticize, gossip about and sometimes to punish. A normal person assumes morality as a guide to regulate his own conduct. But often they are not synonymous. In this case "moral" remains the same. "Ethics" changes. Now ethics is the philosophy or theology that grounds the bases of morality. It investigates what morality should be. Here also cynicisms fit. Arguments that hold that neither morality nor ethics have any basis are also called philosophy.

Summary of Part One: To understand the rise of humans:

They have been able to survive and flourish due to the functional virtues instilled by their moral systems.

Part Two: To understand the crisis of humans

To vary a theme taken from Keynes, a certain type of human relationship (in other words a certain social structure; certain cultural rules constituting certain material relations) is the *causa causans* that triggers and conditions the innumerable causes that intervene to produce the crisis of humans. Namely: the relationship of buyer to seller. To vary a theme taken from Auden, when we are lived by a power that we pretend to understand, that power is (now in modernity), the market. (1936, pág. 221)

For Keynes himself, before our variation, the *causa causans* of economic activity and hence of employment was investment. There is similar language in Marx: Production - and therefore the satisfaction of those needs without which life cannot continue - begins when the capitalist enters the market as an investor, buying labour-power and other commodities required to produce something he can make a profit selling (Marx, 1964). Adam Smith's analysis is basically the same. At first, Smith says that the basic cause of the wealth that supplies the necessities of life is the division of labour. But only at first. In the last analysis, everything begins with capital formation (that is, saving) because: 1. Without a fund already saved available to pay their wages, workers will starve to death during the period that passes before the eventual sale of the product. 2. Once it is given that there already are savers with savings, there will always be investment. Because any sane owner, on Smith's view, will use his capital to hire workers and to employ them efficiently, to increase his fortune. (2007, pág. 14)

But the analysis must be extended. By extending the analysis we will be able to show that at the level of the church's social thought –that is to say, at the level of ethics that constitutes social structures and the bases of jurisprudence– we can solve vital problems that we cannot solve at the level of the economic sciences. We must ask: Why has the outcome of history been that a person's physical existence depends on getting money? Why does employment for money depend on the decisions of investors?

It happens that recently through an activity of the Chileufu House of Dialogue² we met another way of life. In collaboration with the Aymara Association of the fifth region of Chile, for educational purposes we replicated a pre-Columbian practice

² It is a House of Dialogue, located in Limache, and part of the global network of Houses of Dialogue "Humiliation Studies" (www.humiliationstudies.org) whose objective is to promote human development in the community and in harmony with the environment. They seek to support the construction of a supportive and sustainable society with new ideas and recovering good old ideas, through workshops, seminars, programs, experiences with the surrounding community and in alliances with related institutions. <http://chileufu.cl/quienes-somos/>

called Chhalaka in Aymara and Trafinku in Mapudungun. We all arrived with food that we had harvested or collected. We placed the food on a table in front of an altar. Between prayers and songs to the Pacha Mama, each one removed something from the table to take home. We experienced one of many traditional tried and true ways of life, one of innumerable other worlds that are not only believed to be possible, but which have been proven to be possible.

Without claiming to represent the only ancient tradition from which modernity has much to learn, Christians do aspire to be the salt of the earth, seasoning modernity with wisdom harvested from its ancient traditions. (Matthew 5: 13-16) At the same time, many Christians, such as Martin Luther King Jr, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, and thousands of Chilean Christians during the dictatorship, have been faithful defenders of Human Rights, the iconic authentic values of modernity. They have been hiding Jews from Nazis, running underground railroads smuggling slaves out of captivity, making a Methodist church in downtown Johannesburg a refuge for victims of Apartheid, defending rightists from leftist extremists and leftists from rightist extremists. They are inspired by a faith that was born two millennia ago in cohesive communities practicing love in an environment dominated by the power of the Roman military.

The current crisis of humans is a crisis of a civilization, of its basic values and structures, namely those that define domination by markets. The crisis does not happen because people are bad. Nor is it the case there is a great mystery as to what to do. Jesus already gave us a basic list: Feeding those who are hungry, visiting the prisoners, sharing clothes with those who need them, housing those who are sleeping on the sidewalks, caring for the sick. Some necessary tasks that had been left out of the teachings of the great masters of the past have recently been added to the list by the Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg.

No. The basic cause, the *causa causans* of the human crisis is a crisis of neo liberal logic that regards an act-in-the-law, namely a sale, as by definition the creation of value. It is a crisis of the agency theory of corporate powers. It is a crisis of a common sense that backs the self-interested ego, siding against instead of for the best angels of our nature in our private decisions. It is the crisis of the rigidity of eighteenth-century neo-Roman European legal principles. It is the crisis of the physical dependence of humans on capital accumulation. This terrible dependence alone if left unchecked dooms the humans and their mother the earth. It implies, Investor confidence at all costs! It makes it an imperative, not a choice, to subordinate any other goal, be it saving life on earth, be it justice, be it peace, be it health, be it whatever it is, to the existential imperative to motivate investors to invest.

It remains to show in greater detail why the basic individualism of the dominant culture renders it unable to adapt to physical reality. To show why the fires in the Amazon, Africa and the North American West are not accidents that occur by chance but consequences of the rules of the game that organize human activities; and why the same is true of the extinction of 680 species of vertebrates; the threat of extinction of a million species of plants and animals in the next decades; the rise of carbon

dioxide in the atmosphere to 412 ppm; the annual loss of 24 billion tons of fertile land; the endless violence in the Middle East; political polarization; the defeats of the humans by their enemies the viruses; the melting of ice caps; of mass unemployment and its aftermath of desperate migrants, organized crime, drug gangs, popular rebellions and authoritarian reactions.

To demonstrate the link between ethical causes and physical consequences, I count on the distinguished (former director of the French National Institute for Scientific Research) economist André Orléan, and the even more distinguished economist Alfred Marshall.

Orléan identifies the foundation of modernity with greater rigor and brevity than I have been able to contribute. My word 'individualism' is vague. Orléan proposes a French phrase 'séparation marchande.' I prefer to treat it as an untranslatable idiom. Instead of a translation of the phrase, I offer a translation of the explanation of its meaning that Orléan himself provides:

"Our starting point - we insert: that is, our way of speaking of the dominant cultural and social structure today - is the **séparation marchande**, that is, a world in which each individual is isolated from their means of existence. Only the power of value, invested in the monetary object, allows the existence of a social life under such auspices. It brings together separate individuals by building for them a common horizon, the desire for money, and a common language, that of accounts.

Indeed, the mercantile society ignores these bonds of solidarity that exist between parents, neighbours, or relatives, thanks to which, in traditional societies, each one can directly mobilize the help of the others to carry out their projects. To obtain something from another person, in the commercial order, there is no other means than to awaken his or her desire." (Orléan, 2011, p, 227)

Modernity brought the crushing victory of the basic cultural structure of the *séparation marchande*. Families, churches, governments and other institutions did not cease to exist, they did not go away.; They were, however, compelled to acknowledge that in real life, in the socially created and yet existentially dominant real world, they need money. To get it they need to conform to a social order whose foundation is commerce. In this way, our destiny in the twenty-first century has already been programmed centuries ago by the authors of our basic laws and customs. They were summed up by an illustrious pamphleteer of the American revolution Thomas Paine with the four words 'our plan is commerce'. But, surely, not even our illustrious ancestors (if we are Europeans) nor our illustrious conquerors (if we are not Europeans) who imposed the legal frameworks and ethical ideals of the *séparation marchande* in every corner of the planet, knew the eventual consequences of the nails. that they hammered We must say about them what Jesus said about those who nailed His

hands of flesh and blood to the wood of the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23-24)

Alfred Marshall (1842-1924) is among the scientists who have analyzed the causes that have produced the consequences we suffer today. Marshall observed that where commercial human relations (separation marchande) prevail, rational producers constantly sought more efficient techniques. Thus, they achieved the goal of the game: profitability. Thus, in Orlean's words, they manage to awaken the desires of buyers. Buyers prefer superior products and / or more affordable prices. By practicing constant innovation with new technologies and new products, businesses avoid failure.: There is failure when buyers prefer the products of their competitors whose techniques are more up to date.

This is how Marshall formulated the law of substitution. When more efficient techniques appear, they dominate. They replace the less efficient ones. The less efficient technologies, and the breadwinners who counted on them to earn their daily bread, disappear from the market because they are obsolete. Over time, the most efficient multiply both their financial resources and the intellectual property of the most profitable technologies. The law of compound interest operates in positive feedback loops. Success tends on the whole to breed success, where, as Piketty has shown, the greatest fortunes tend to grow at 7% per year, while other great fortunes are likely to grow at 6 or 5, a few like Steve Zuckerberg come out of nowhere and are suddenly rich, while millions, like those who marched on the streets of Chile in October³, in the words of one of their banners. "struggle until it becomes worthwhile to go on living." Major corporations have expensive, sophisticated, and effective marketing.

My point is that because of the basic cultural structure of the modern world (what Friedrich von Hayek, when he lectured in Chile, called "the morality of a free society" and summarized as property and contract), the dominant trend of history tends to be that when *séparation marchande* is established, over time the injustice and unsustainability we observe today will follow. Hence there is another weighty reason for including Christian social thought in the curriculum. In Latin America, Christianity and the pre-Columbian cultures are the best-known alternatives to *séparation marchande*.

By this path we return to the finding of Keynes and almost all economists that investment and investor confidence are keys to achieving economic growth, employment, and the creation of taxable surpluses to pay for public sector expenditures.

³ The author refers to the "Estallido social" that occurred during October 2019 in Chile. Said protests begin due to the increase in subway fares, which triggers consecutive evasions of payment in protest mode, usually 'organized' by secondary students. The strong police repression by the state made the conflict worse, not only in the capital, but also in multiple regions of the country. At the same time, different causes of social annoyance were added, including but not limited to the malfunction of the health system, pension payments, social security, living conditions, education system (school and university), the conflict in Araucania, constant cases of collusion to fix the price of consumer goods (pharmacies, hygienic paper, meats) and cases of political corruption.<https://www.dw.com/es/chile-por-qué-explotó-el-país-tranquilo-de-sudamérica/a-50908967>; <https://time.com/5710268/chile-protests/>

We have returned to typical conclusions in economics from Smith on, but not by just any route. We arrive by a route typical of the intellectual traditions related to Christian social thought. Now we can see that we are seeing in our days a historical outcome that has been inevitable from the moment that the *séparation marchande* became the basic norm. Now we can see that overcoming the present series of crises requires a culture shift. The crises cannot be overcome with an economic model. All economic models presuppose economics. Economics presupposes the social structures that make life depend on the decisions of investors. It presupposes the ethics/jurisprudence/culture constituting those social structures. Without "cultural action" to borrow a phrase from Paulo Freire, put into practice as "organization", to borrow a key term from Freire's colleague Clodomiro Santos de Morais, we cannot build human cultures adapted to today's physical reality.

I know of no one who has felt today's dysfunction more deeply than Tshepiso Moahloli. She is an executive in the South African public sector. She was a student last year in the course I taught with Gavin Andersson in the University of Cape Town EMBA. She writes:

"I work for the government, and not a single day goes by when you do not hear the same cries of alarm. You are going to scare away investors! Every day we are warned that anything we do for the good of the 99% is going to scare off investors. Many workers receive miserable wages, and some receive nothing in money but only alcohol (this is called the Dop system) They warn that any introduction of legislation to raise wages, will cause the leakage of investment to other countries. This on top of executives and shareholders making supernormal profits. Any transformative effort that shares the earth's resources (mining, industry, land) will result in the flight of investors. Taxing large corporations drives away investment; that is why individuals have to bear the burden of taxation. Obviously, something is wrong. And now what is going to happen? The capitalist system is so all-powerful that it threatens the sovereignty of nations." (Moahloli, 2018, págs. 6-7)

Summary of Part Two: To understand the crisis of humans

Our institutions are out of control. They take us to destinations that are not desired by anyone, not even the most privileged. It is as if all the billions of people who form the human family were seated in the billions of seats of an immense airplane without a human pilot. None of us determine the destination of our flight. Its destination has already been programmed by history. A basic cultural structure, constructed by past generations, without the participation of any man or woman now living, has determined the flight plan.

The automatic pilot is programmed to carry homo sapiens to social chaos and to a degraded uninhabitable biosphere. In two words: to death.

(A note on what a social structure is: a social structure consists of related material positions (for example, one cannot occupy the material position of employer without being related to another who occupies the material position of his worker). Culture defines the duties and rights of each position. With this definition it is easy to see that ethics, i.e. rights and duties, is fundamental for the reconstruction of society.)

Part Three: To understand current alternatives

At the end of the second part we were left in a pilotless plane flying to destination death. Nobody wanted to go there, but each one faced a more immediate and urgent problem, how to get or retain a job or a business to get money to live? How to avoid being a failure in the game of life? We all understand, therefore, that the environment, social justice, peace, and health are held back. Sometimes more braked, sometimes less braked, but always braked. They are held back by the priority of achieving economic growth and avoiding the collapse of the system that sustains us. The engine of the system is capital accumulation. Its agents, who calculate whether it would be convenient for them to start it or not, are the investors. The victories of the economy are often the defeats of the environment, social justice, peace, and health,

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Unpacking the pilotless plane metaphor, the suggested analysis is that the physical dependence of human life on capital accumulation –not completely but sufficiently, as Michael Kalecki put it, to give “the capitalists a powerful indirect control over government policy: everything which may shake the state of confidence must be carefully avoided because it would cause an economic crisis” (Kalecki, 1943, pág. 9). The programming of the plane without a pilot is what some authors call a systemic imperative of a regime of accumulation. A pervasive causal power shaping history is that what must be done, or what is believed must be done, to encourage investors to invest, will be done. Here I would amend Kalecki’s language, for it is not “the capitalists” considered as a group of people, who mainly control the direction of history – there is not one of them who desires the ecological disaster that is happening. It is, as Roy Bhaskar suggested, the causal power of the social structure, which is discursively constituted by the cultural structure.

Joanna Swanger and I did an empirical study testing this suggested analysis in our book *The Dilemmas of Social Democracies*, using a version of John Stuart Mill’s method of differences. We studied the failure of social democracy that paved the way for the subsequent triumph of neoliberal regimes of accumulation. First we considered Spain (twice, once in the 1930s and again under Felipe Gonzalez) , then Sweden, Austria, South Africa, Indonesia, Venezuela and the evolution of the policies of the World Bank. We found that although all other factors varied –personalities, international relations, political rhetoric, key incidents, religions, ideologies....

and so on –a constant factor in all cases –itself a consequence of the basic cultural and legal structure– was that when investor confidence collapsed social democracy collapsed. (Sometimes the collapse took the form of keeping the word `socialism` while adopting neoliberalism in practice.)

Some language of Keynes (and one could also cite almost any other economist) supports this analysis. In his *General Theory* he remarks that the weakness of the inducement to invest has always been *the* economic problem. It would follow that encouraging investment has always been the aim of economic policy. (Keynes 1936, pp.347-48)

It would follow –to resume the airplane with no human pilot metaphor– that some good names for what must be done to make it possible to govern where history is going and to change history's course would be `resilience` and `a plural economy`. A third might be `community.` and a fourth, ethics. In Latin America and much of Europe one speaks of social solidarity economy. In South Africa, building on the unity across sectors achieved in the struggle against apartheid, one speaks of unbounded organizing. Regarding all these matters Christian social thought has much to contribute. It also follows that it is not to the interest of the capitalist class to win a class war that would cement in place the physical dependence of humans on wages or property income, and which would in turn require that social structures serve to generate profits, even at the cost of social and ecological objectives. Regarding all these matters Christian social thought has much to contribute

I would like to suggest, following the tradition of Franciscan theology, that especially now the conversion of the will matters more than the conversion of the mind. We do not know the answers to the questions, or the solutions to the problems, that are posed by the crises of today. Most likely there is no single answer or single solution, but an indefinite number of positive steps whose summation would take humans off the endangered species list.

The conversion of the will entails social commitment: In Gandhi's terms, it entails unity of hearts. All the converted share a common goal: namely, the good of each and every one. (Luke 19: 25.37) The constants are the attitude social and the open mind to consider all the options and all the evidence seeking for any given problem a beneficial solution for all concerned. The variables are the institutions, within the institutions the practices, and within the practice's the actions. (Romans 3:23).

I would also suggest that authentic modernity, the modernity that promised us *liberté, égalité, fraternité* and then did not keep its promise, is still struggling to be born. To extend the metaphor, to be born the true modernity must first be conceived, and to be conceived it must fall in love with beautiful cultures the bogus modernity's colonialism and imperialism have violated, as well as with beautiful ideals from its own European and North American past whose practical utility modernity has underestimated.

The Christian religion is a faith that is in principle penitent (Romans 3:23). It is also a religion that is in principle devoted to doing good works, not just talking about them. In the theology of Martin Luther, "a Christian is perfectly free, and yet a perfectly dutiful servant of all". (Luther, 2018)

Being the religion of Europe, the home of the modern moral system and often its critic, Christianity has often also been the religion of conquest, of imperialism, of capitalism, of colonialism, and sometimes of slavery. Its constructive contributions to the future can only be made in a spirit of cooperation with the other great religions and the secular ethical philosophies of the world; and in a spirit of realism that accommodates both penitence for its sins and gratitude for the millions of faithful who in the past really have done good works for no other reward than the greater glory of God.

Today –would you agree with me? do you see what I see?– there is a growing chorus, on all continents, of voices expressing from diverse positions in the social structure and in diverse cultures, the love hardwired in our DNA; blended with fear and indignation –two other emotions with hard-wired roots. Rekindling prosocial emotions appears to be an integral part of building future economic institutions under human and humane control. Many who have studied other cultures, among whom the most famous is probably Karl Polanyi, find that that without the redistribution of the surplus of those members of the community who at any given moment had a surplus to share, many of the moral systems of our ancestors would not have been viable. Here, at the point where moving the heart is essential to the kind of social reconstruction that the mind tells us is the only kind that can possibly work, Christianity has an emblematic example to offer. One of the principal founders of our religion, the apostle Paul, was in the business of making tents. He tells us that he craved no luxuries for himself. And when he with his own hands sets to work making tents to earn his livelihood, he deliberately made more tents than he needed to sell to meet his own modest needs. He went on making more tents to create a surplus to give, to share with "the weak." (Acts 20: 30-33)

Today apostle Paul's exemplary practice is back in style. It goes by many new names, including creating shared value and stakeholder capitalism. Alfonso Swett⁴, a major entrepreneur who was recently elected unanimously to a term as president of the Chilean version of a national chamber of commerce, is calling for teaching ethics more in the public schools, asserting that a business with no social mission has no reason to exist, and insisting that 'The private sector must have a collaborative role alongside the public sector, focused on the common good.'

The thought of the founder and director of the World Economic Forum (WEF), Professor Klaus Schwab, requires attention. The organization he founded, the WEF,

4 Alfonso Swett, president of the Confederacion de la Produccion y del Comercio in Chile, in an interview for the CNN Chile channel, where he points out that "Poverty is not the lack of material goods, it is the lack of dignity" referring to the Chilean context: https://www.cnnchile.com/programas-completos/alfonso-swett-presidente-de-la-cpc-la-pobreza-no-es-la-falta-de-bienes-materiales-es-la-falta-de-dignidad_20190526/

is now officially working with the United Nations for a better world. However much we may disagree with Schwab and the powerful organizations he has orchestrated, if we ignore him and them, we are ignoring the agenda set by the discourse of people more influential and powerful than ourselves.

Unlike the World Social Forum, (WSF) which defines itself as a forum for the expression of diverse ideas, the WEF seeks consensus, not diversity, among the business and government (and religious) elites of the world. It convenes thousands of experts as unpaid volunteers to study and to plan the future. They come from all fields, but especially from those fields said to be destined to change everything by creating an inevitable fourth industrial revolution. These conversations happen and produce thousands of pages of intelligent reports with what appear to be the best of intentions.

Schwab himself writes:

“The current economic crisis {He means the crash starting in 2008} should warn us to fundamentally rethink the development of the moral framework and regulatory mechanisms that underpin our global economy, politics, and interconnectedness. That would be a wasted opportunity for all of us if we pretended that the crisis was simply a momentary obstacle. If we want to hold society together, then a sense of community and solidarity are more important now than ever. The most fundamental question today is whether we can adopt a more communal spirit or whether we will fall back into old habits and excesses, further undermining social peace.” (Klaus Schwab; John J.DeGioia, 2010)

The most recent manifesto of the WEF, dated March 20, 2020, is entitled *The Universal Purpose of Companies in the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. The allusion to Christian Social Thought is clear. The universal destiny of property is a Christian doctrine holding that the wealth of the earth is meant to serve everybody, not just a few. It is a doctrine directly contradicting the civil law that frames standard capitalist economic theory and practice, it has deep roots in many traditions, not only in Christianity. The language of the WEF (and of the current Secretary General of the UN now allied with it) tends to be Christian while making a point of inviting contributions from leaders of all faiths, and while, inconsistently, assuming the validity of the core concepts of orthodox economics and their juridical foundations. Pope Francis, who regularly sends an emissary to the annual meetings of the WEF at Davos, almost daily echoes the doctrine of the universal destiny of property. Moreover, in the World Social Forum (WSF), the participation of eloquent Christians is long-standing, while Karl Marx’s adherence to the slogan “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs” (Acts 4 32-35) dates from 1875.

The word ‘capitalism’ was coined by Marx. The phrase “stakeholder capitalism” (in German, capitalism for the benefit of *die Interesse*, i.e. for the benefit of all interested parties, as in Rotary International’s fourth test of all we think say or do, “Will

it be beneficial to all concerned?") None of Marx's definitions of the same word correspond to the uses of the same word in the publications of Klaus Schwab and the WEF. Here we find a common phenomenon in history: the proposed new (the responsible "capitalism." serving all die Interesse, guided by an ethic of solidarity, by sharing surplus and by other communitarian and spiritual practices) appears with the same name as the old (capitalism defined by a wage relation that appropriates for the capitalist the surplus value the worker produces.).

If the above analysis is correct, Schwab, Michael Porter, Alexander Osterwalder, and many of the others who redefine capitalism do so with too short a time horizon. Schwab, writing in 1971, consciously defined stakeholder capitalism in opposition to the agency capitalism of Ronald Coase. Among Schwab's illustrious predecessors who had denounced Coase's theory previously was Peter Drucker, while Coase himself was only a recent (1930s) defender of the view that all employees of a corporation are agents of its owners, the shareholders, and duty-bound to do, and only to do, what is in the shareholders' interest. Over the years in discourse like that prevailing in the WEF the concept of stakeholder has gradually widened until now Mother Nature herself is one of die Interesse. But if those of us who see the basic social and cultural structures of the modern world as set in stone in early modern Europe are telling it like it is, then the question whether the efforts of the WEF could possibly pilot humanity to a safe destination cannot be answered by proving they are sincere. One must ask whether they understand the need to change legal conceptions of property set in stone in the 18th century. Basic property law, imagined as set in stone by an imaginary social contract, and now combined with expensive and sophisticated technology, make humanity physically dependent on decisions of investors. The investors themselves are driven by a social structure that compels them not to stray far from standard profit-maximizing rationality.

The good intentions of the volunteers and paid staff of the WEF and the UN can be taken as what Paulo Freire called a hinge theme, a hinge connecting what people understand with a broader conversation that is necessary, and that is already underway in the writings of authors like Piketty, Foucault, Douzinas and innumerable Marxists.

In 2009-10 the WEF collaborated with Georgetown, a Jesuit university, and Facebook to conduct a survey on public values. More than 130,000 people from ten countries answered on Facebook. Answering the eighth question, more than two-thirds of those surveyed said 'yes' the current economic crisis is a crisis of ethics and values. I deduce that today ethics, values and spirituality, as well as the feasibility of carrying out the announced good intentions of an international elite, are sources of hinge themes, Millions see and feel a need to raise the level of ethics to survive as a species.

Without saying more about what others are proposing, I will spend the rest of my space following my own advice. I will write a short sample of a selective unwalking of the path of history that brought humanity to where it is today, I will not mention

–but I will not forget– that the European downtrodden working classes (my ancestors) have been spared the even greater suffering of colonialism and slavery imposed on the rest of the world. Then I will devote my last page to the future.

Unwalk the historical path: From contract to status.

Selectively dismantle the path from status to contract which, according to Sir Henry Maine's famous history of law, first published in 1861, made us modern. Every victory for human social rights is a victory for status. Current human rights, official on paper but broken promises in practice, grant the right to decent and dignified work to each person, *because they have the status of a person*, not because they succeed in finding a buyer for their labour power who calculates that he or she could make a profit by offering them a contract. But because they belong to the human family. As the Chilean bishops have written: "It is the son –and not the emancipated individual– who is the true antithesis of the slave."

Unwalk the historical path. From property as domination to property as gift.

Property and talents are gifts received, to be passed on as vocations to serve, as gifts to others and as trusts to be faithfully administered (Luke 12:48; 1 Corinthians 4: 7), Similarly Saint Thomas Aquinas: wrote "whatever you own is not only yours; it also belongs to the needy who you can help with your surplus". (Aquinas, pág. art. 5. answer 2) Second part of the second part, question 32, article 5, reply to objection two.

To unwalk the historical path: The poor woman's net worth is the same and sometimes more than net worth of the rich man.

In the language of current evolutionary biology and anthropology, to transform a moral system you must transform norms. The offering of a poor widow, even if it is only two pesetas, is worth the same or more than the billion dollars that the Bank of America just committed to the fight for economic opportunity. (Mark 12: 41-44) Why?

The widow more than met the norm because she gave everything she had. She contributes to the construction of the moral system of Jesus and of the Christian communities.

The likelihood is that Bank of America money, on the other hand, like most public and private anti-poverty programs today, will do little or nothing to construct the new but old ethical standards needed to overcome the human crisis. Most likely,

rather than thinking of transforming to a solidarity ethics, the officers of the bank will think “economic opportunity” within the logic of the *séparation marchande*. They will think of preparing people to sell themselves in the labour market, often for jobs that are not there, often for jobs that are temporary, often for jobs that are won only by taking away somebody else’s job, and often for mini enterprises that duplicate services others are already providing.

Unfortunately, the chances are that the Bank of America is going to spend the money earmarked to promote economic opportunity guided by numerous illusions. They should instead retrace the historical path; back to *Buen Vivir* and beatitude, building the future with more knowledge of unintended consequences gained from more study of the past. What the Bank of America should do –and what should be done with the astronomical sums that find no profitable investment in the real economy, and circulate in the speculative transactions of the global casino– is to transfer their surpluses to where there is need. They should support pioneering institutions, for example Caritas Spain, which every day build the economic institutions of the future. They finance permanent (not stopgap) useful activities, employing the millions, soon to be billions, rejected by the labour market. They do not simply give money but also dignity (Caritas, 2019). (See their site Caritas con la Economía Solidaria⁵)

Retracing the historical path, humans should take advantage of mass unemployment and the fourth industrial revolution to make the transition to a future when humans will devote themselves to intrinsically valuable activities (sports, music, science, philosophy, dance, religion, studies, gardening, yoga, etc.) while advanced technology produces more and better goods and services, and creates more surplus to share. Thus, the availability of dignified and paid activities will become abundant enough to leave nobody unemployed like, thrown out and rejected! Fundamental features of our currently basic cultural structure, like the wage relation, and the principle that you need money to live and to get money legitimately you have to sell or rent something to a willing buyer will be relaxed. They will not go away entirely: people will still buy, sell, and rent. But neither will they determine who has dignity and satisfaction of needs and who does not. As Kalecki put the matter, capital will no longer have a veto power over public policy, because a fall in investor confidence will no longer mean an economic crisis. A fall in investor confidence will no longer stop an economy that runs partly on sales and partly on solidarity. The solidarity part brings history into play, and with it all the infinitely varied forms of mobilizing resources to meet needs practiced before –for the first time in history– the whole earth was integrated into one global economy run on neoliberal principles. Before societies became susceptible to falling into a crisis whenever large-scale investors declined to invest.

Besides paying more attention to history, we need culture shifts toward putting a commitment to solve everybody’s problems first, leaving it to dogged persistence

⁵Caritas Spain is the official confederation of the social and charitable action organisations of the Catholic Church in Spain. Established in 1947, it has its own legal personality, both ecclesiastic and civil. <https://www.caritas.es/que-hacemos/economia-solidaria/>

and mental flexibility to discover one way or another to achieve that aim. This brings into play the new economic forms recently invented in the Social Solidarity Economy movement, and the ones that have not been invented yet but will be.

Unbounded organizing for cohesion and solidarity is not about trashing what works now. Much of it is about reviving what worked in the past. The same as now, many will just keep doing what they are already doing. One thing that is new is that as robots take over the heavy lifting, many humans will be paid to do something worthwhile that does not depend on sales. Funding will come from where funds are, starting with mobilizing resources a local community already has, and continuing with income from endowments, donations, public funds, sharing what you do not need by Internet, and so on and on. That is one reason why this approach is called unbounded, it starts with conversion of the will and continues with unbounded innovation.

What is new is remembering that human life does not have to be physically dependent on the confidence of investors. A pluralist solution revives the old alternatives, augments the existing alternatives, and invents new alternatives. The existence of alternatives to pleasing major investors at all costs empowers a society to choose environment, social justice, peace, and health.

Humans as a species can decide to survive, starting by remembering tried and true spiritual and moral principles. Although they vary from culture to culture, without some or other sources of spiritual cohesion we homo sapiens would have gone extinct long ago. For 99% of our residence on earth there have been no banks, no stock exchanges, and no multinational corporations. But there have been ceremonies, rites, hymns, sacred relationships, and norms with moral authority. Usually they have called for sharing resources, not for accumulating them for oneself with no social purpose.

Unwalking the path that led humanity to today's bogus modernity can deconstruct the structures that paralyze us. It can give us cohesion to face together existential challenges like global warming, wildfires, loss of topsoil, mass unemployment, and pandemics. It can empower us to do the social innovation we are biologically programmed to do. It can create the true modernity, the authentic modernity, the one that promised us peace, justice, and social human rights, and now by allying itself with old wisdom and new creativity can learn how to keep its promises.

Summary of Part Three: To understand current alternatives.

To achieve the true modernity, the one that promised *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, it is necessary to invent new institutions, suitable for today's realities, and to rekindle appreciation for traditional tried and true institutions, too hastily discarded, whose functional utility has been underestimated.

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