

Christian Ethics & Global Economics

Denis Goulet

For Aristotle and his contemporaries economics was merely a branch of moral philosophy or ethics. This is not the place to retrace the historical process which led to the fragmentation of Western thought and the emergence of economics as a separate discipline largely unconcerned with normative questions. What needs to be noted, however, is one decisive contemporary fact: Development planning and development politics continually pose anew basic ethical questions about the good life, the basis for just relations in society, and the stance human communities ought to take toward the forces of nature. In short, the state of the world's economy is, most assuredly, an *ethical* question.

But, is it also a specifically *Christian* concern? The answer is an unequivocal "yes" on two counts. First, it is no historical accident unrelated to the expansive missionary enterprise of the Christian religion that the present global economic distribution of goods is what it is. Second, the fundamental issue in development is that of social justice in access to the world's resources. Do Christian ethicists care about the specific conditions under which men and women must work out their destinies? If so, then they have a large stake in the normative underpinnings of world economics.

This is why a growing number of Christians are fully justified in examining the ethical dimensions of what has now come to be called the development debate. Likewise, this is why a growing number of development economists are undertaking a critical and creative examination of the value questions their profession faces. The stakes are enormous: Unsound global economic policies can perpetuate inhuman lives for vast numbers of people. On the other hand, sound policies can remove major obstacles to the achievement of greater social justice throughout the world.

It is useful to examine three separate points in the development debate: first, the context in which development issues are presently raised; second, the view of the role of ethics that is most able to handle questions of economic justice adequately; finally, the preferred values that underlie recent trends in development thinking and practice.

The Development Problem in Context. Arguments over the root causes of underdevelopment have now

raged for 30 years. Prevalent in all this discussion is the recurrence of intellectual cycles, at the crest of which some new theory or focus captures the attention of students and practitioners of development and becomes, in effect, a new "fad." For a while it was institution-building, then liberation; at other times integrated rural development or upgrading human resources. With time, however, each of these usually recedes and becomes integrated into the existing wisdom about development's multiple dimensions.

Structural Injustice

Given the complexity of development issues, it is useful to begin to address them in the form of three propositions.

(1) "*Continued underdevelopment is structurally unjust.*" What does this mean? It means that "underdevelopment" is not principally mass poverty or technological backwardness, but rather an abiding condition of dependency, of inferiority, of marginalization from the dynamisms of modernity. It is possible to perpetuate inhuman conditions of life for large numbers of people only if certain social structures and political relationships are enshrined in society. These structures bear on the incentives—that is, the reward systems—at work in a given society as well as on the ground rules governing access to resources.

Speaking more concretely, social structures are unjust when they confer legitimacy to patterns of resource use or access to power to the advantage of the privileged few in ways which deny the masses real possibilities of satisfying their urgent material needs. In many Latin American nations, for instance, a tiny percentage of landowners possess title to 80 percent of lands under cultivation. Consequently, a majority of peasants must work laboriously on lands which not only belong to others but also produce wealth for others. And often the owners are absentee landlords living in luxury in capital cities or in foreign lands. In terms of basic equity and justice, it is wrong for societies to permit vast quantities of resources to be appropriated by a few where the many do not have the barest sufficiency of essential goods.

In the last century Marx quite correctly insisted that capitalism is cruel and inhuman not because capitalists, industrialists or financiers are morally insensitive or avaricious, but because the competitive market system favors automatically and impersonally a small number of "haves" to the detriment of the larger number of "have-nots." One century later, a similar criticism can properly be addressed to the Soviet

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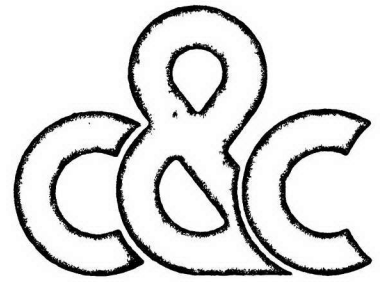
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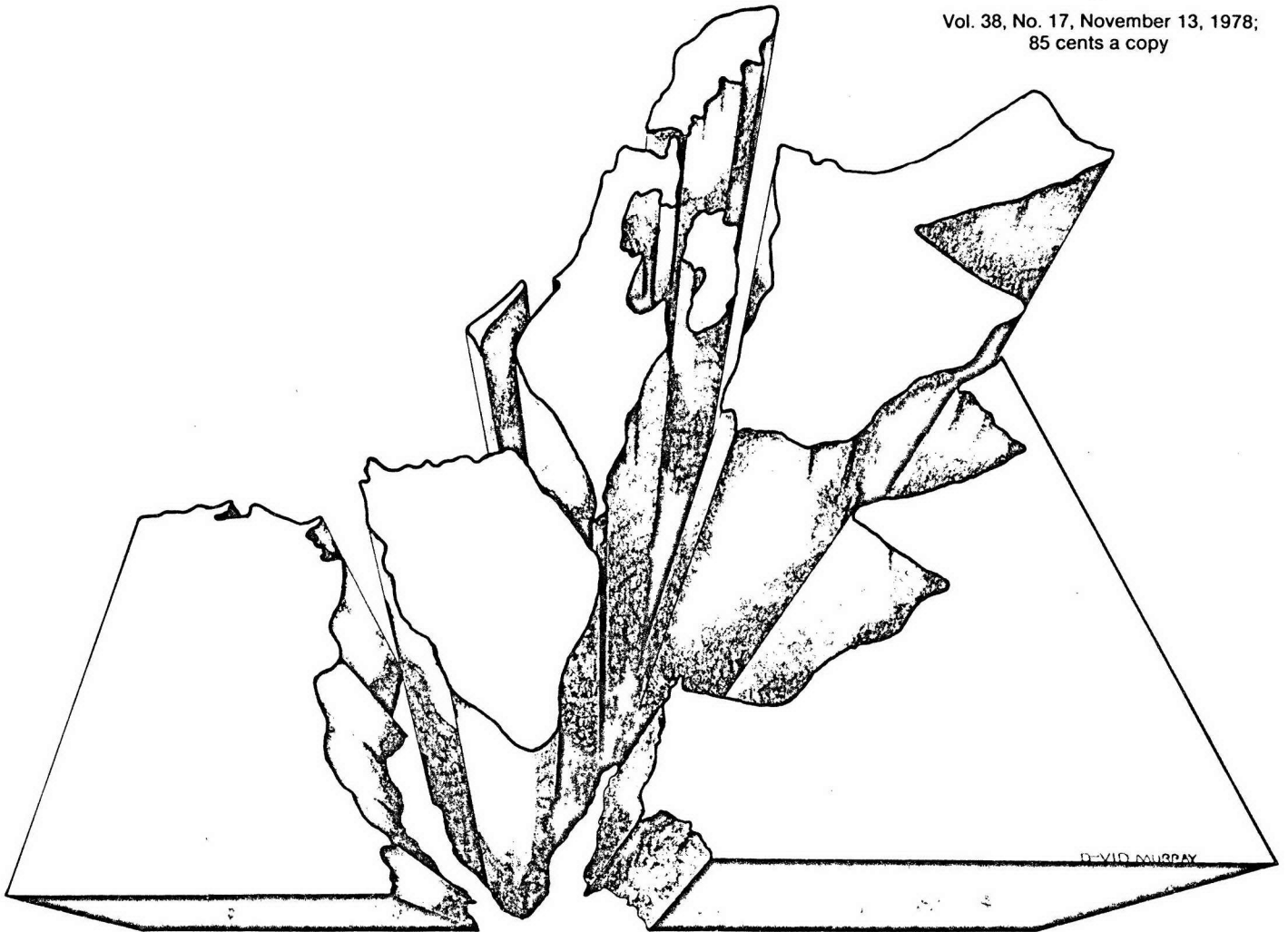
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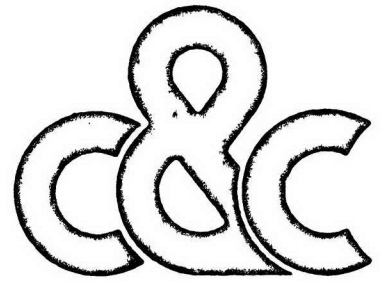
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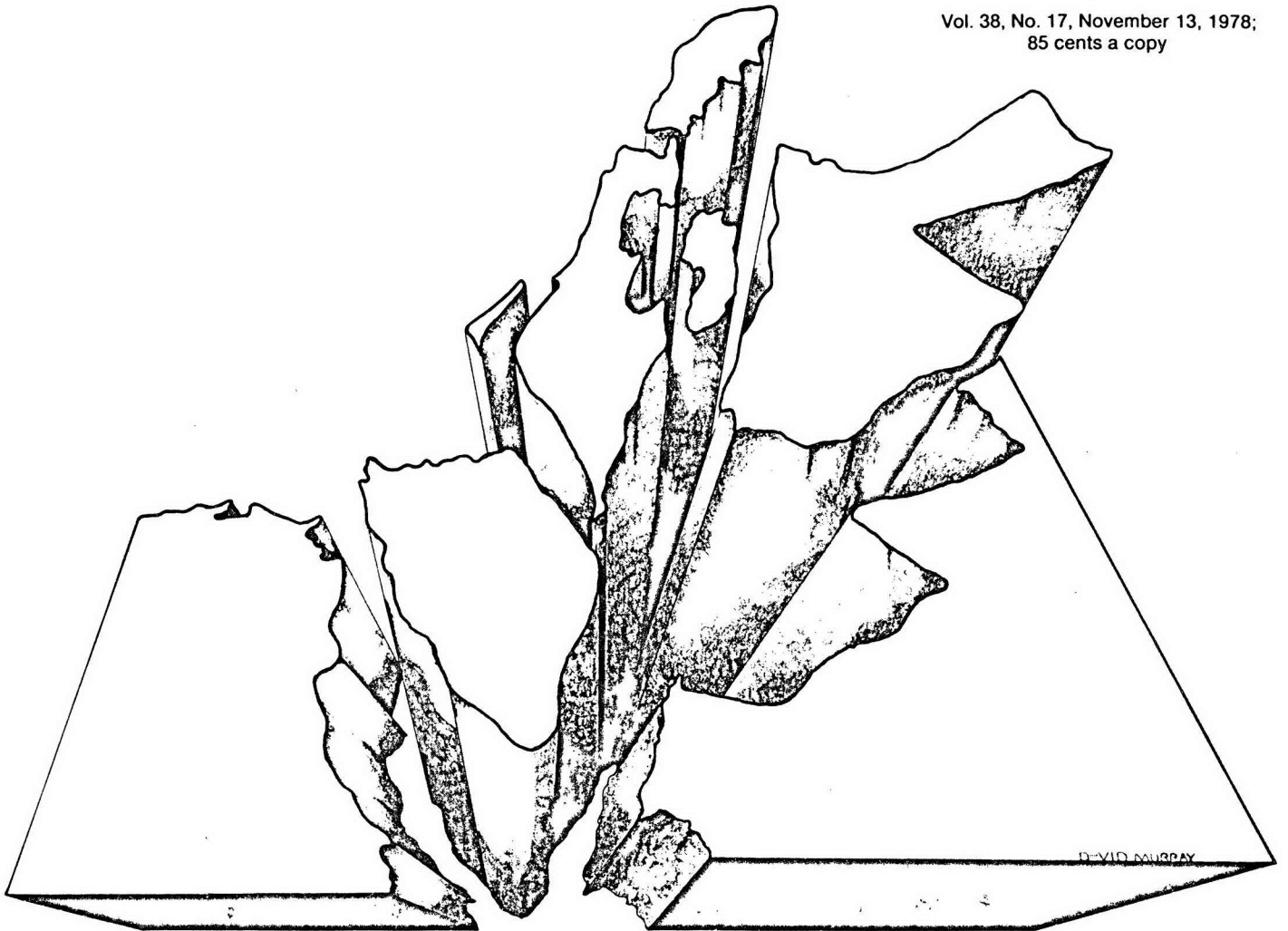
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Union and many other self-designated "socialist" countries. Notwithstanding their humane rhetoric about eliminating the exploitation of workers by capitalists, it is obvious that these societies have created their own new privileged classes. As Michael Harrington, the American socialist writer, has noted, it is not enough for socialists to demand that the "people" own the means of production. They must also ask: Who owns the apparatus of the state? And how can the people own, or even control, that apparatus unless they enjoy the full panoply of political rights and unless they are allowed to choose their leaders and their policies?

The point is that certain societal institutions and structures violate the aspirations of citizens to have both their rights and their needs properly met.

As Gandhi was fond of pointing out, there are enough resources in the world to meet the needs of all, but not enough to satisfy the greed of each one. Each person in every society ought to be able to have enough essential goods in order to be human. Underdevelopment is precisely a codified societal arrangement which allows a few to have a superfluity while allowing most people to lack essentials. This condition, in structural terms, is unjust.

(2) *To the extent that underdevelopment is perpetuated by existing global economic arrangements, the latter are structurally unjust.* Critics in the rich countries usually denounce the present International Economic Order (IEO) because it does not work efficiently. One reason for this is that the basic legal, political, financial and institutional arrangements governing the circulation of goods in the world were based on the assumption that the most real—and the most "natural"—unit of international life is the sovereign nation-state. Yet transnational corporations do not respect national boundaries in their investment decisions. Moreover, pollution, the depletion of nonrenewable resources, radioactivity and economic depressions in one land all impinge on other nations regardless of their own policies.

Representatives of poor countries, in turn, are more inclined to denounce the present IEO because it "stacks the cards" in favor of the already rich, the already industrialized, the already competitive. Over 20 years ago the Argentine economist Raul Prebisch advanced the thesis of "the deteriorating terms of trade." This position, which came to be known as the "ECLA" approach (Prebisch headed ECLA, the United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America) argued that industrial countries—the exporters of finished products and manufactured equipment—received disproportionate gains from the world trade system. They imported raw materials and commodities—minerals, fibers and unprocessed foodstuffs—at a low price and, in return, exported their finished goods to nonindustrial nations at a high price. Because industrial nations effectively controlled world market institutions, it came about over the years that an "underdeveloped" country would have to export more rice or tin or jute than before in order to import the same quantity of machinery, the same number of tractors or electrical appliances. Hence, from the point of view of the poorer countries, their terms of trade "deteriorated."

Economists and political ideologues still disagree as

to whether this disparity is traceable to stronger bargaining positions in world markets held by rich countries, or to some deliberate manipulative design on their part to exploit the poor exporters thanks to an "international division of labor" which works to their advantage. Indeed, some economists still deny that the "deteriorating terms of trade" thesis is fully supported by the statistical evidence; as we all know, statistics can be read in quite different ways. What is evident, however, is that the world trade system is almost universally perceived as favoring those already "developed." In short, at least in some of its essential arrangements, the present global order is unfair; it is structurally unjust.

A Dual Vocation

(3) *"Christians must fully 'assume' their dual task of creating history and of witnessing to transcendence."*

To "assume" is to "take upon one's shoulders, to enter into fully." The term is borrowed from the late French personalist philosopher, Emmanuel Mounier, who advocated a middle ground between collectivist and individualist approaches to social philosophy. For Mounier, the highest reaches of personal development—what the American psychologist Abraham Maslow called "peak experiences"—could only be achieved in community. But a community, in turn, has to place the highest value on all levels of personal realization (unlike a collectivity, which simply subordinates persons to aggregate goals). Mounier repeatedly stressed the need for each person to "assume" or fully endorse his or her historical conditions by a free, internal acceptance. If I am a white, American, Christian male living in the late 20th century, I must work out my deepest personal vocation and destiny within this context, these constraints, these limits. It makes no sense to pretend that I am a highly spiritual Hindu guru from Bihar or Uttar Pradesh, or some Argentine revolutionary leading a peasant war of liberation.

This is true of individuals; it is also true of institutions, including, of course, the church. The church has a past—in fact, a rather embarrassing one which often seems to be a weighty albatross around its neck. Recently I visited the Palace of the Inquisition in Cartagena, Colombia. As I surveyed the instruments of torture in the judgment chambers where "men of God" presided over the torture of alleged heretics—all the while observing such niceties as keeping Moors and Jews in chambers separate from those assigned to Christians—I felt "ashamed" of being Christian. But this very shame must be "assumed."

Those of us who have lived in mission lands formerly colonized by Britain, France, Belgium or Holland or economically dominated by the United States know how difficult it is to "assume" one's identity as a North American or a European citizen in a land where one's ancestors were slave-traders or exploiters, and where earlier generations of missionaries came with their cross hidden in the sheath of a soldier's sword. But Christians must not flinch from analyzing realistically the role of religion in the expansion of the colonial system. In doing so, they will discover many disturbing historical truths. What is

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I cannot here repeat the analysis I have made elsewhere (*A New Moral Order*) of the dual vocation of Christians: to bear their full load of responsibility in creating history, and to bear witness to transcendence. In order to do so, Christians must consent to live in a state of tension between the demands of life in historical time and those of redemption beyond history. To use the dichotomy advocated by John Stott in his recent book, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, both evangelism and ecumenism are required. This tension is usually destructive; it is the Christian's task to make it creative. Expressed in other terms, the central task of Christians in the context of global underdevelopment is to devise ethical strategies for overcoming it. No strategy can be forged, however, unless it takes us way beyond mere moralism. This very challenge now takes me to my second major point:

Living in the Lion's Den

Development Ethics: A Critique of the Ends of Development and a "Means to the Means." Ethical values are only one particular kind of values, namely, those which guide right action or offer rules of conduct. Hence they differ from signifying values, which assign basic meanings to existence. (Ultimately, of course, sound norms for action need to be derived from a defensible philosophy of meaning.)

Here, it is useful to recall briefly what I have written elsewhere (*The Cruel Choice*) regarding the four roles played by ethics in concrete situations of social conflict. A problem arises because norms, taken alone, cannot coerce those who hold power into acting rightly. Yet, the greatest power of ethics is its capacity to elicit internal allegiance to its values. Only when individuals and, more importantly, societal institutions apply their influence and power to implementing norms, therefore, can ethics fully play its normative role.

Nevertheless, even when the champions of ethics do not themselves hold the reins of power or have influence on those who do, ethical values have other functions. They serve, alternatively or cumulatively, an evaluative role, a critical one and a pedagogical one. Lenin once declared that the slave who knows he is a slave is already half free. Indeed, those who are caught in webs of determinism must be able to make the value judgment that they are determined and that it is bad for them to be so determined. They can only do so, however, against some standard of what it means to be free, of what it is to be developed or to be human. Development ethics must raise that standard so that people can evaluate or judge the degree to which their own circumstances meet or fall short of it.

At times ethics is also summoned to criticize, that is, to undermine the legitimacy of a reality which is immoral or unjust. Prevailing modes of power or institutional systems cannot be presumed to be optimally just or inevitable. What is more, the freedom to contest power, both verbally and by effective actions, is a necessary counterweight to the irresponsible use made of power by its wielders. Thus, ethical critique exercises a power of its own, thanks to a profoundly dialectical paradox. For if those holding power reject ethical critique, those without power will find in the directives provided by the rejected ethic the basis for the new legitimacy they need to validate their opposition to that very power.

Finally, ethics plays a pedagogical role, whether it educates leaders as to what they should be doing instead of merely giving them good conscience for what they are doing, or it helps the victims of injustice become more self-aware of how evil are the burdens imposed upon them.

In exercising each of these four roles, development ethics judges the ends of social decisions. In addition, it enters into the dynamism of the means used by power-wielders to orient them in the direction of desired value-creation. This is what I call ethics as a "means of the means." By agreeing to enter into the constraints of policy-makers and problem-solvers forced to live in universes of relativity, ethicists are enabled to articulate norms which are "means of the means," that is to say, transfiguring dynamisms which avoid mere moralism or sterile denunciation, on the one hand, and idealistic Utopianism, on the other. There is no way of constructing *what ought to be* without first experiencing *what is* and feeling the full weight of why "what ought to be" cannot simply be wished into existence.

The proper task of Christian ethics in the arena of development can thus emerge with some measure of clarity. Christian individuals and institutions must respect the autonomy of ethics and of history, without, however, abdicating their responsibility to infuse both with new values. St. Paul summoned us to "redeem the time." It is clearly impossible to do so unless we first respect the limits of time. The mission of redeeming time needs to be accomplished at two levels: that of healing the wounds inherent in finitude and time, and that of transvaluating them, as it were, into higher domain of worth.

Christian ethics forbids us to idolatry any social system, any development model. Precisely because it is *Christian* ethics, it necessarily has the prophetic function of *announcing* what is good as it *denounces* what is evil. Christian intellectuals face a peculiar danger, namely, the temptation to rationalize some preferred ideology or political system. By invoking Gospel categories Christian ethicists have frequently muted their prophetic voices by explaining that they

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were in the business of "speaking truth to power." In the process, however, they drew close to power—not just to its conscience, but to its trappings and privileges and to that special "vertigo of possibility," as Kierkegaard called it, which exhilarates those who have the physical means to impose their will. Great power does strongly dispose to great corruption. And even moral proximity to power is often sufficient to rub off some of that corruption—which now takes the form of prudent reticence. But development ethics cannot run away from the danger; it must consent, as it were, to live in the political lion's den. We do well to recall Péguy's warning that those who boast of having clean hands may simply have no hands.

The Paradoxes of Social Change

Even ethicists, theologians and mystics must earn their livelihood. Societies have always preferred to subsidize the material needs of intellectuals who subsume their prophetic voices to the demands of *Realpolitik* or the procedural consensus. Too many Christian ethicists seem to overlook this danger, this occupational hazard. Consequently, they readily fall into complicity with structurally unjust *status quos*, or into the opposite error of uncritically advocating—as though it were an absolute good—some quite relativistic counter-system. This is no justification, of course, for inertia or abstention from the risks of history. But it is a plea to deploy our energies on behalf of relative goods while never giving our full allegiance to them—even the intellectual allegiance of our critical spirit!

Christians need not, for all this, feel timid about their commitment to build a more humane history for themselves and for their fellow humans. Teilhard de Chardin was correct in arguing that Christians adhere to the world more than their pagan counterparts because they have pre-adhered to God and that is how they will triumph over the world. Teilhard contrasts the pantheist, the pagan and the secular humanist with the true Christian humanist. The former love the earth, he says, "in order to enjoy it." The latter, loving it no less, does so to make it purer and draw from it the strength to escape from it."

To conclude: Different philosophies, different religions, and even different interpretations of the same religion possess within themselves varying "coefficients of insertion into temporal history." Christians cannot avert the challenge to insert themselves fully into earthly history. But they must do so without abdicating their specifically Christian values. The secret is to live in creative tension between what Yoder calls the "politics of Jesus" and the Jesus who is indifferent to politics. That these demands should appear paradoxical, or dialectical, should surprise no one. Even secular revolutionaries like Mao or Guevara have always recognized the dialectical or *yin-yang* nature of social ethics.

Where does this analysis leave us? The only possible answer is: in the ambiguity-strewn terrain of social change theory. One cannot formulate a sound development ethic without a sound theory of social change. My own view, briefly put, is that change agents must carry two arrows in their quiver: the

arrow of creative incrementalism, which unlike palliative incrementalism attacks causes of evils and not symptoms; and the arrow of discontinuous social mutation, which breaks sharply with previous continuities when it is possible and wise to do so. No one-dimensional strategy can succeed. If a single lesson stands out from all the painful experience of the last 30 years, it is that no society, even a relatively successful one, constitutes a model for any other: It is one's specific conditions that are most decisive.

Moreover, since the root causes of underdevelopment are so deep, and are so totally intertwined with patterns of exploitation, privilege, domination, slavery and conquest, development is something far more radical than the mere choice of optimum problem-solving techniques or optimum resource allocation. This is why development strategy frequently requires discontinuities from prior solutions or systems. One's theory of social change must, therefore, make room for such a requirement.

The How and What of Development

Yet development strategies themselves are in constant flux. Hence we need to reflect briefly on *new trends in development and practice*.

Nowadays there are countless discussions of what development professionals call "alternative development strategies." Experts generally, if somewhat belatedly, recognize that most conventional approaches have failed because they place greater emphasis on aggregate economic growth than on the equitable distribution of growth's benefits to the neediest people in any given country. The new theories also preach the merits of local and national self-reliance so as to correct the tendency of earlier "aid" philosophies or "technical assistance" programs to perpetuate the dependency of recipients on outside help. A third ingredient of alternative development strategy is the quest for ways to avoid imposing from above in elitist fashion, or from outside in ethnocentric ways, appropriate solutions to problems or models of desired change. Hence the importance now attached to building development from within indigenous values.

In most instances little effort is made to translate in concrete terms what are the precise limits and constraints each of these goals must face. Moreover, many champions of alternative development strategies implicitly assume that their three "components" are easily harmonized. In truth, however, no pre-existing harmony exists among them. A poor nation's search for self-reliance can lead it to keep the outside financial "aid" it receives at low levels, but in doing so, it may risk having too few resources to meet the basic needs of its poor masses in a short time. Similarly, the commitment to a basic needs priority may require rapid and drastic alteration of existing traditions or value systems so as to introduce dynamic ways of generating new resources to satisfy heightened aspirations.

Two conclusions are evident: One, the three objectives underlying alternative development strategies are found in tension one with the other, and some trade-off of benefits may be needed; second, political

were in the business of "speaking truth to power." In the process, however, they drew close to power—not just to its conscience, but to its trappings and privileges and to that special "vertigo of possibility," as Kierkegaard called it, which exhilarates those who have the physical means to impose their will. Great power does strongly dispose to great corruption. And even moral proximity to power is often sufficient to rub off some of that corruption—which now takes the form of prudent reticence. But development ethics cannot run away from the danger; it must consent, as it were, to live in the political lion's den. We do well to recall Péguy's warning that those who boast of having clean hands may simply have no hands.

The Paradoxes of Social Change

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leadership and popular support are needed to provide the unifying cement of any successful strategy.

It is also important to recall that "alternative development strategies" are being advocated in the context of increasingly vocal demands for a new international economic order. Among the central values posited as desirable in a new global system, particular weight attaches to the following: justice in resource distribution, ecological responsibility, the minimum use of violence by society's institutions and optimum participation of non-elites in decisions affecting their lives. These are precisely the same values which hold pride of place in numerous experiments aimed at devising alternative styles of living in developed countries. Therefore, the growing momentum in favor of different approaches to development bears on the goals of development, as well as on the means for reaching it. Disaffection is rampant not only with *how* development has been pursued—the array of means—but also with *what* is to be pursued—the objectives of the whole process.

In this respect E.F. Schumacher's writings on the beauties of small scale in economic and technological enterprises are of interest. The values Schumacher most strenuously advocated lie at the center of today's development debate: social equity over mere growth, control of change processes by the grass-roots populace over elite problem-solving, an approach to tasks which places people in harmony with nature over modes which destroy it, etc. One notes also a resurgence of interest in Gandhi's basic ideas. Long ago Gandhi preached the superiority of production by the masses over mere mass production, the importance of helping villagers become self-reliant, the need to keep desires for superfluous goods in check so that essential needs could be properly met, and the value of organizing human labor in ways which could bring esthetic as well as material satisfactions to workers.

In Gandhi's thought, as in the present worldwide search for new approaches to development, the primacy goes to ethical values as normative for sound development. It is asserted that certain human goods ought to be enhanced by the workings of the economic system, by the means chosen to improve material conditions, by the patterns preferred to face the challenges of modern life, by the response given to the impingement of technology on daily existence. This is a salutary improvement over the reductionist economicism which has presided over development discourse for too long. In 1954 Adolf Berle asked rhetorically whether corporations have a soul. He made his point timidly and apologetically. Today, development economists feel no shame when they ask: What is development for? What human values should development promote?

Tough Minds/Tender Hearts

Consequently, the intellectual climate of discourse on development is more receptive than heretofore to a serious input from ethicists who do their homework. Christians who propose ethical strategies tested in the real social praxis of human communities of need and

of struggle will be heeded, even by economists and planners.

As concerned human beings, then, we need to cultivate two qualities as we come to grips with the perplexing contradictions of development: tough minds and tender hearts, or, as Lebrecht used to say, "intelligent love." It is not enough to have one without the other because intelligence or a tough mind without love breeds technocracy, elitism and disdain for suffering masses whom we then treat merely as statistics. On the other hand, a tender heart without intelligence or a tough mind is likely to produce nothing but well-meant failures.

My point ought to be obvious. There are no Utopias in history; there is no such thing as a perfect society. Nor can there be. I recall a visit I made to a Chinese embassy outside the United States in the company of Paulo Freire several years before Richard Nixon opened up communications between the US and the People's Republic of China. On that occasion a colleague of mine, a fellow American, spoke in such laudatory terms of China's development efforts that Freire became deeply embarrassed in the presence of our Chinese hosts. He finally reprimanded the speaker by reminding him that "China is history, not paradise." We must not for one instant imagine that authentic development could be achieved if only politicians and planners paid serious attention to Christian ethics.

Yet we have no excuse for supporting unjust structures on the grounds that evil and sin are permanent

Liberation theology

— its meaning and
its challenge

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Jews for Jesus: One Jew's Response

Esther Cohen

SOMETHING MAY BE WRONG with our understanding of civil liberties. We liberal-leftists who believe that everyone has the right to speak feel torn when what the speaker says goes against our own belief systems. A lawyer friend said it best: "I support the Nazis' right to march in Skokie, but I don't want to be the one to defend them." And so it goes.

Something similar happened in Philadelphia, when MOVE, a black ecological organization with an ideology never quite articulated, covered their lawn with feces and sundry other debris in an attempt to live out their non-articulated beliefs. Because they were bordering on a planned, liberal and peace-oriented neighborhood, where the expressed credo was Live and Let Live, they were able to continue their bizarre existence for two neighborhood-threatening years—until a member of the community blew the whistle because he feared the rats in the yard might bite his children.

The ambivalence evidenced in these episodes aligns with my own confused thinking about Jews for Jesus.

Walking past one of their centers several years ago, on 72nd Street and Broadway in New York, I saw an elderly Jewish woman listen to a proselytizer of this organization. She expressed incredulity.

"What does your grandmother have to say about

this?" she asked the young man.

"She thinks I should live my own life," he answered.

"And how about your mother and father?"

"They agree that it's my decision."

The old lady smashed him in the head with her pocketbook, and walked away.

I agreed with her. I also agreed with the mother and father. Of course, what he decides to do with his life is up to him. Est, Scientology, Buddhism, TM and Jews for Jesus are, in these times of free choice and multi-option, as viable options for directing one's life energies as becoming a doctor or learning a trade. And who am I, with my own semi-rational belief system, to object to this particular kind of proselytizing? I who throw salt over my shoulder when the shaker spills, I who won't walk under ladders, I who live in deathly fear that a black cat will cross my path. Who am I to object to Jews for Jesus?

And I don't really. That is, on principle. But I see them, handing out their leaflets on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, using Yiddish terms and Jewish sensibilities to express something different from Judaism, and an anger builds within me. Although my intellect tells me that one can be a Jew for anything at all, I feel differently. My reaction is the same as that of a jealous lover: It should be one or the other. How can a man really love two women? And how can a believer share two such contradictory beliefs? If the pamphleteer is really a Jew, why is Jesus involved?

Connection and Loss

A woman from my Hebrew School became a Jew for Jesus. Although she lives in California, she still comes East for the Jewish holidays. I saw her a year ago Passover. Although her family does not encourage a discussion of belief systems (as far as they are concerned she is a Jew, period), I was nonetheless very eager to understand her, and I asked her to explain why she had become a Jew for Jesus. She replied that she'd made an intellectual decision based on the persuasive logic of Jesus as Son of God.

Well, no one can deny that this argument and others converted large numbers of people throughout the world to Christianity long before my Hebrew School friend. And that it should become the central focus of her life is no more odd than the life choice of (say) a traditional Orthodox Jewish woman—or better yet, a Chassid—who devotes her every moment to praise of God.

And still. It is here that every logical instinct I have falls apart.

Several months back *The New York Times* ran an obituary for a Jewish scholar from Eastern Europe who had spent most of his life learning and teaching theology at Harvard. The obituary quoted him on his Judaism: "I am a nonbelieving Orthodox Jew." Something about his manner of phrasing this very important aspect of himself struck me: I too consider myself a nonbelieving Orthodox Jew.

We live in a time when we have learned—through psychiatry, through technology, through the strong Western emphasis on intellect and learning—that much of life is determinable through potentially

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knowable information, and this information, by its very existence, changes our relationship to other information, other belief systems. (We all know that religion is dead, that psychiatry is the new religion.)

Yet all of us have a less rational history, as well as instinctual and immediate emotional responses to things. My own responses have a great deal to do with my involvement and my family's historical involvement with Judaism. This involvement has affected my understanding of my own life, and my relationship to others. It's impossible for all of this not to have happened.

I had an aunt whose first reaction, when she heard that some catastrophe had taken place—be it fire, plane crash or flood—was, "Were any Jews killed?" As a child, I didn't understand this. When I asked her why she was only concerned about the Jews, she would answer, "The others have plenty of people to worry about them. We Jews have to worry about each other."

And though today I still don't agree with her reasoning, though I have managed to extend my Jewish penchant for worrying into a general and pervasive overall worry for just about everything and everybody, still I feel the same connection that she did. I am, almost apart from my will, connected to the Jews in Israel, though they may be living according to an ideal I don't believe. I am connected to persecuted Jews in the Soviet Union, used by East and West for big power propaganda. I am connected to the poor

Jews of New York, with lives as full of sorrow and hardship as any people anywhere. It is this feeling of union, this overwhelming sense of almost irrational connection, that contributes to my anxiety, my sense of loss, my anger at seeing the Jews for Jesus.

◀ If they were People for Jesus, I wouldn't object. But Jews. For me that is another story, a story based on a feeling, a sensibility that is at once concerned and protective.

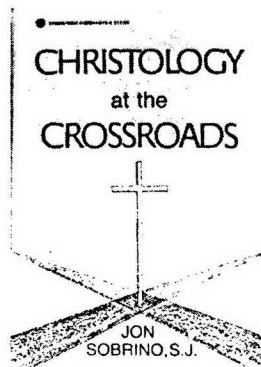
I don't like any idea-selling on the streets. Although it is the American way, to find a product, create a market, sell that product any way possible, still I am offended by accosting Moonies, Buddhists, scientologists, Lubavitch Hassidim. Being barraged by soaps and cars, from every conceivable media direction, is something I've sort of gotten used to. But it's another thing again to be confronted with half-conceived belief systems.

Jews for Jesus—even their name sounds to me as if they were organized around a political candidate rather than a great religious leader. (Can you imagine Jews for Muhammed, or Jews for Buddha? I think instead of Jews for Joe Namath, were he running for office.)

I will defend their right to exist: I can imagine going to a fund-raising dinner, were these rights questioned. And yet, there is something about the way they exist, something I feel when I hear and see them, that makes me wonder about the premise of my own philosophical and intellectual decisions. □

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knowable information, and this information, by its very existence, changes our relationship to other information, other belief systems. (We all know that religion is dead, that psychiatry is the new religion.)

Yet all of us have a less rational history, as well as instinctual and immediate emotional responses to things. My own responses have a great deal to do with my involvement and my family's historical involvement with Judaism. This involvement has affected my understanding of my own life, and my relationship to others. It's impossible for all of this not to have happened.

I had an aunt whose first reaction, when she heard that some catastrophe had taken place—be it fire, plane crash or flood—was, "Were any Jews killed?" As a child, I didn't understand this. When I asked her why she was only concerned about the Jews, she would answer, "The others have plenty of people to worry about them. We Jews have to worry about each other."

And though today I still don't agree with her reasoning, though I have managed to extend my Jewish penchant for worrying into a general and pervasive overall worry for just about everything and everybody, still I feel the same connection that she did. I am, almost apart from my will, connected to the Jews in Israel, though they may be living according to an ideal I don't believe. I am connected to persecuted Jews in the Soviet Union, used by East and West for big power propaganda. I am connected to the poor

Jews of New York, with lives as full of sorrow and hardship as any people anywhere. It is this feeling of union, this overwhelming sense of almost irrational connection, that contributes to my anxiety, my sense of loss, my anger at seeing the Jews for Jesus.

◀ If they were People for Jesus, I wouldn't object. But Jews. For me that is another story, a story based on a feeling, a sensibility that is at once concerned and protective.

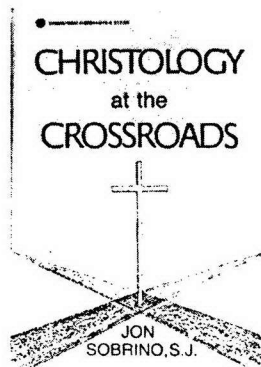
I don't like any idea-selling on the streets. Although it is the American way, to find a product, create a market, sell that product any way possible, still I am offended by accosting Moonies, Buddhists, scientologists, Lubavitch Hassidim. Being barraged by soaps and cars, from every conceivable media direction, is something I've sort of gotten used to. But it's another thing again to be confronted with half-conceived belief systems.

Jews for Jesus—even their name sounds to me as if they were organized around a political candidate rather than a great religious leader. (Can you imagine Jews for Muhammed, or Jews for Buddha? I think instead of Jews for Joe Namath, were he running for office.)

I will defend their right to exist: I can imagine going to a fund-raising dinner, were these rights questioned. And yet, there is something about the way they exist, something I feel when I hear and see them, that makes me wonder about the premise of my own philosophical and intellectual decisions. □

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