

Theological Ethics Out of Latin America, Africa, and Asia

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In the development of theological ethics during the second half of the twentieth century, the Euro-centric dimension of the field diminished considerably. Theology began to develop on each continent, reflecting considerably a much more contextual type of investigation.¹

In many ways the three “southern” continents – Latin America, Africa, and Asia – had to deal with the ever challenging local questions of suffering and inequities. But the local questions on these continents and the development of their theologies were very specific and though parallels emerge, the distinctive gifts from each continent merit consideration.

¹ James F. Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences*, New York, 2010.

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Latin America

In *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, Salvation* (1971), Gustavo Gutiérrez announced the bursting in of the poor into theology as a new historical event and summoned readers to make an option for them, by politically and religiously standing in solidarity with those marginalized by power and economic forces.² The option for the poor became a hermeneutical principle for interpreting the legitimacy and purpose of theology.³ Through it, he made us realize that the end of ethics is action: to respond to the world of suffering, inhabited by the poor.

The interlocking patterns of oppression and domination in the world of suffering were established by unexamined yet causal discriminating structures of economic and social power. These structures became the subject of analysis and in time were called "structures of sin" and people in positions of authority were seen as morally responsible for them. Later, social sin was attributed not only those in designated power, but to the societies themselves whereby ordinary members' implicit tolerance and complacent ignorance of these structures allowed them to be beneficiaries of the very structures that continued to alienate and oppress the poor.

There had been no theological agenda like this. Relying on the developments of theology particularly as an outgrowth of *Gaudium et Spes*, Gutiérrez brought poverty and politics into theological context and discourse. Gutiérrez was joined by others: the Brazilians, Leonardo and Clovis Boff, the Argentine born, Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel,⁴ and from El Salvador Jon Sobrino. Sobrino's theology depends on the historicity of Jesus. Any Christology that fails to capture the historical death of Jesus on the cross fails to hear the call of the kingdom and the need to respond to the option of the poor. For Sobrino, from the moment the Word became flesh, the world became ineluctably linked to the kingdom.⁵

² Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, Salvation*, Maryknoll: 1971.

³ Gutiérrez, "Option for the Poor," Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino, ed. *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, Maryknoll, 1993, 235-250.

⁴ See also Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Maryknoll, 1987; Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Times*, Maryknoll, 1978; *Liberating Grace*, Maryknoll, 1979; Clodovis Boff, "Epistemology and Method of the Theology of Liberation," *Mysterium Liberationis*, 57-84; Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and the Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, 1978; *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y la exclusión*, Madrid, 1998.

⁵ Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, Maryknoll, 1976; *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, Maryknoll, 1993.

Latin American theological ethics has a deep resonance with the proposals of liberation theology. Peru's Francisco Moreno Rejon brings together the perspective of the poor, with recourse to the social sciences and a Scripture-based kingdom of God ethics.⁶ The Brazilians Antonio Moser and Bernardino Leers propose to form the conscience through an awareness of the forces impeding the Kingdom through the idolatries of power, money, technology, pleasure and superiority.⁷ From Chile Tony Mifsud has developed a comprehensive handbook for ordinary discernment on contemporary issues.⁸ In the area of bioethics the Mexican Eduard Bonnín develops an ethics of life out of a liberation theology,⁹ while Brazil's Marci Fabri dos Anjos reflects on how the issues of power and vulnerability so dominate the field of bioethics.¹⁰

A recent development in liberation theology is the irruption of women into liberation theology. From Brazil, Ivone Gebara defines the option for the poor as an option for poor women, analyzes women's experience of salvation and evil, develops a distinctive spirituality for women, and writes on the environment from an ecofeminist perspective.¹¹ With another Brazilian, Maria Clara Bingemer, she proposes a theology of Mary as the Mother of God and mother of the poor.¹²

⁶ Francisco Moreno Rejon, *Moral Theology from the Poor: Moral Challenges of the Theology of Liberation*, Quezon City, 1988, "Fundamental Moral Theology in the Theology of Liberation," *Mysterium Liberationis*, 210-221.

⁷ Antonio Moser and Bernardino Leers, *Moral Theology: Dead Ends and Alternatives*, Maryknoll, 1990.

⁸ Tony Mifsud, *Ethos Cotidiano: Un Proceso de discernimento*, Santiago de Chile, 2006.

⁹ E. Bonnín, *Moral De La Vida: Manual De Bioética Teológica*, Dabar, 2005.

¹⁰ Marci Fabri dos Anjos, "Teología de la Liberación," Juan Carlos Tealdi, ed., *Diccionario Latinoamericano de Bioética*, Bogota, 2008, 12-14; "Challenges of Pluralism to Moral Theology," James F. Keenan, ed., *Catholic Theological Ethics in The World Church* (hereinafter CTEWC), New York, 2007, 228-236.; "Power and Vulnerability: A Contribution of Developing Countries to the Ethical Debate on Genetics," Lisa Sowle Cahill, ed., *Genetics, Theology and Ethics: An Interdisciplinary Conversation*, New York, 2005, 137-157; "Bioética em perspectiva de libertação," Volnei Garrafa and Leo Pessini, ed., *Bioética: poder e justice*, São Paulo, 2003, 455-465; "Medical Ethics in the Developing World: A Liberation Theology Perspective," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 21 (1996) 629-637.

¹¹ Ivone Gebara, "Option for the Poor as an Option for Poor Women," Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed., *Women, Work, and Poverty*, Maryknoll, 1987, 110-117; *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation*, Minneapolis, 1999; *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*, Minneapolis, 2002; *Águas do meu poço. Reflexões sobre experiências de liberdade*, São Paulo, 2005.

From the United States, the Mexican born Maria Pilar Aquino argues that women have a different epistemological horizon than men and re-interprets the saving historical value of reality in light of new theological criteria: to unmask and dismantle theological formulations that perpetuate the interpretation of humanity in patriarchal terms; to recognize and describe women's history; and to reflect on women's use of the bible in their quest to understand and speak about God. Throughout she calls for a hermeneutics of suspicion and daring.¹³

The Cuban Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz sees salvation and liberation as two aspects of one process and rejects any concept of salvation that does not affect the present and future reality.¹⁴ She advances liberty, both psychologically and socially, without buying into the myth of individual achievement.

Still, as everyone remembers, the Vatican maintained a critical stance toward liberation theology. In 1984, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger issued the *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation,"* though in 1986, he issued a less critical analysis of it.¹⁵ Still, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a critical notification on Leonardo Boff's book on the Church;¹⁶ sent complaints to the Peruvian bishops

¹² Ivone Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemer, *A mulher faz Teologia*, Petrópolis, 1986; "Mary," *Mysterium Liberationis*, 482-496; *Mary: Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, London, 2004, see also Ana María Trepedino and Margarida L. Ribeiro Brandao, "Women and the Theology of Liberation," *Mysterium Liberationis*, 221-231.

¹³ María Pilar Aquino, *Our Cry For Life: Feminist Theology from Latin America*, Maryknoll, 1993; "Women's Contribution to Theology in Latin America," Charles Curran, Margaret Farley Richard McCormick, ed., *Feminist Ethic and the Catholic Moral Tradition*, Mahwah, 1996, 90-119 (hereafter *Feminist Ethics*); with Daisy L. Machado and Jeanette Rodríguez, ed., *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology. Religion and Justice*, Austin, 2002.

¹⁴ Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Defining our *Proyecto Historico: Mujerista* Strategies for Liberation," *Feminist Ethics*, 120-135; *En la Lucha - In the Struggle: A Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology*, Minneapolis, 1993, 2003; *La Lucha Continues*, Maryknoll, 2004.

¹⁵ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation*, August 6, 1984; http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html; *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, March 22, 1986; http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19860322_freedom-liberation_en.html

¹⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Notification on the Book «Church: Charism and Power. Essay on militant Ecclesiology» by Father Leonardo Boff, O.F.M., March 11, 1985, AAS 77 (1985) 756-762.*

regarding Gustavo Gutiérrez; silenced Ivone Gebara for two years; and, published a *Notification* on the books of Jon Sobrino.¹⁷

Moreover, a variety of assassinations dehumanized the advocates of liberation theology. The killings in El Salvador alone were extraordinary. On March 12, 1977, Fr. Rutilio Grande was murdered. Three years later, after five other priests were assassinated in El Salvador, Grande's friend Oscar Romero the archbishop of San Salvador was gunned down on March 24, 1980. Seven months later, on December 2, three American religious women and a lay woman were murdered by a military death squad. On November 16, 1989, the El Salvadoran army attacked the Jesuit compound at the University of Central America and assassinated six Jesuits and their housekeeper and her daughter. The only Jesuit to escape, Jon Sobrino, was lecturing in Asia at the time but since then he has been the compelling witness to their martyrdom.¹⁸

Still, today, concepts like option for the poor, structures of sin, critical reflection on praxis, liberation, and the overall call of theology to respond to the irruption of suffering into theology are now constitutively foundational to theology in general and theological ethics in particular.

Africa

The irruption of the suffering poor did not enter African theology as a delayed after thought. If there is one part of the world that most people think of when they consider human suffering as a social reality, it is Africa. The world has become more familiar with Africa, through globalized communications that narrate frequently the advance of HIV/AIDS, the enduring tragedy of malaria and tuberculosis, and the internecine struggles that pit poor aggressor against poor aggressor.

African theology has been attentive not only to the challenges facing Africa, but also the gifts animating it. If liberation theology is the offering from Latin America, then an inculturation that is critically approached through liberation theology is Africa's contribution to

¹⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Notification on the works of Father Jon Sobrino* SJ Nov 26, 2006; http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20061126_notification-sobrino_en.html

¹⁸ Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*, Maryknoll, 1994; *Witnesses to the Kingdom: The Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples*, Maryknoll, 2003.

the church and the world. Africa yearns for its identity and finds that by understanding its past it can establish the future.

From the Ivory Coast Mawuto Roger Afan describes the fundamental challenges facing Africa today: an identity crisis, the post-colonial moves to democracy, and the reconstruction of Africa itself. He calls fellow ethicists to retrieve from the African traditions a rootedness that could stabilize social upheaval.¹⁹

The African personal identity is probably even more critical than the issue of social stability. The Cameroonian Engelbert Mveng considered the suffering nature of this identity so extreme as to describe it as the "structural sin" of "anthropological poverty."²⁰ From Tanzania, Laurenti Magesa incorporates this phenomenon into his own reflections: "African self-doubt is perhaps the most embracing factor in African 'anthropological poverty,' the kind of poverty which is not merely material but affects the personality itself. It has enormous ethical consequences, one of which is the psychological situation which instinctively obstructs initiative in many areas of personal and social development."²¹

In search of greater identity, Bujo and Muya edited a tribute to nine French-speaking African theologians who paved the way for contemporary African theology.²² They highlighted Bishop Tharcisse Tshibangu, who developed in 1960 a specifically African theology by proposing that certain African epistemological insights and local practices were different from European ones.²³ He had the foresight to realize that while many wanted to reduce African theology to social and economic problems, he wanted an inculturation that integrated liberation and development.²⁴

¹⁹ Mawuto R. Afan, "The Main "Building Sites" of Ethics in West Africa," *CTEWC*, 39-48.

²⁰ Engelbert Mveng, "Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World," Rosino Gibellini, ed., *Paths of African Theology*, Maryknoll, 1994, 154-163; *Theologie, Liberation Et Cultures Africaines: Dialogue Sur L'anthropologie Negro-Africaine*, Yaoundé, 1996.

²¹ Laurenti Magesa, "Locating the Church among the Wretched of the Earth," *CTEWC*, 49-56, at 50.

²² Bénézet Bujo and Juvénal Ilunga Muya, eds., *African Theology in the 21st Century: The Contribution of the Pioneers*, vol. I (hereinafter *African Theology 1*), Nairobi, 2003.

²³ Emmanuel Ntakirutimana, "Msgr. Tharcisse Tshibangu: Champion of an 'African-coloured' Theology," *African Theology 1*, 47-63.

²⁴ Bujo, "Introduction to the Tshibangu and Vanneste Debate," *African Theology 1*, 179-182.

Later Bujo and Muya published a tribute to the English-speaking moralists, specifying Charles Nyamiti's contributions to Christology and Ecclesiology and particularly his interest in ancestor worship.²⁵ After Tschibangu and Nyamiti, inculturation theology became the focus of African theological inquiry,²⁶ and today Bujo has become its most eloquent promoter.²⁷

One critical area in which inculturation plays a major role is HIV/AIDS. In Africa there is overriding insistence that the HIV infection cannot be understood, inhibited or treated by a simple clinical study of the disease. Only by understanding the African context in which this infection has festered can we respond to those at risk, infected, or suffering from full blown AIDS. Toward this end, Laurenti Magesa looks at practices of the African religion upholding a pan-African life ethic; he uses that life ethic as the standard for more effective teaching on HIV/AIDS.²⁸ The Ugandan Emanuel Katongole becomes suspicious of "miracle Western medicines" and asked what are appropriate medical approaches for Africa.²⁹ Also from Uganda, Peter Kanyandago reflects on the nature of God in a time of AIDS.³⁰ Still, inculturation does not guarantee unanimity in addressing the challenges of AIDS: the debate over whether condoms are an appropriate part of HIV prevention strategies is a case in point.³¹

²⁵ Patrick Watchege, "Charles Nyamiti: The Vibrant Pioneer of African Inculturated Theology," *African Theology: The Contribution of the Pioneers*, vol II (hereinafter *African Theology 2*), Nairobi, 2006, 149-162; Charles Nyamiti, *Some Contemporary Models of African Ecclesiology: A Critical Assessment in the Light of Biblical and Church Teaching*, Nairobi, 2007; *Jesus Christ, the Ancestor of Humankind: An Essay on African Christology*, Nairobi, 2006.

²⁶ Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, New York, 1990; Alward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, Maryknoll, 1995.

²⁷ Benezet Bujo, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation*, Nairobi, 1990; *African Theology in its Social Context*, Maryknoll, 1992.

²⁸ Laurenti Magesa, "Recognizing the Reality of African Religion in Tanzania," James F. Keenan, ed., *Catholic Ethicists on HIV/AIDS Prevention* (hereinafter, *CEHP*), New York, 2000, 76-84.

²⁹ Emmanuel Katongole, "AIDS, Africa, and the 'Age of Miraculous Medicine'," Linda Hogan, ed., *Applied Ethics in a World Church: The Padua Conference* (hereinafter *Applied Ethics*), Maryknoll, 2008, 137-146; *A Future for Africa: Critical Essays in Christian Social Imagination*, Scranton, 2005.

³⁰ Peter Kanyandago, "Is God African? Theological Reflections on the AIDS Scourge," N.W. Ndung'u and P.N. Mwaura, ed., *Challenges and Prospects of the Church in Africa*, Nairobi, 2005, 145-59; Peter Kanyandago, ed., *The Cries of the Poor: Questions and Responses for African Christianity*, Kisubi, 2002.

³¹ Paul Chummar, "HIV/AIDS in Africa: A Task for an Inculturated Theological Ethics," *Applied Ethics*, 155-162; Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator, "Ethics of HIV/AIDS Prevention: Paradigms of a New Discourse from an African Perspective," *Ibid.*, 147-154.

Other ethicists write on HIV/AIDS in more local contexts. James Good looks at HIV/AIDS among desert nomads in Kenya,³² while James Olaitan Ajayi studied challenges regarding women's empowerment in Nigeria.³³ His co-citizen Paulinus Odozor offers local cases to examine the standards of moral reasoning for facing HIV/AIDS.³⁴

Many see the local Church as key for successful support of peoples with or at risk to HIV/AIDS.³⁵ Nigeria's **Agbonkhianmeghe** Orobator asks what happens when AIDS comes to church.³⁶ Elsewhere he demonstrates how the sociological category of crisis correlates with the theological conception of *kairos* and contends that the identity of the African church is measured by its response to the HIV crisis.³⁷ Finally, he presses for new paradigms for discourse on sexual ethics in an African context, describing the experience of women as instructive, not only because they are the predominant victims, but because they are on the frontline for the care of people living with HIV/AIDS.³⁸

Finally, through the African Jesuit AIDS network and its director Michael Czerny,³⁹ we find another set of distinctive contributions. Writing from Togo, Paterne Mombe looks for signs of hope in the management of HIV,⁴⁰ Ghislain Tshikendwa Matadi, from the

³² James Good, "HIV/AIDS among Desert Nomads in Kenya," *CEHP* 91-95.

³³ James Olaitan Ajayi, *The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Nigeria: Some Ethical Considerations*, Rome, 2003.

³⁴ Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor, "Casuistry and AIDS," *CEHP*, 294-302

³⁵ Catholic Bishops of Africa and Madagascar, *Speak Out on HIV & AIDS: Our Prayer is Always Full of Hope*, Nairobi, 2004; Aylward Shorter and Edwin Onyanacha, *The Church and AIDS in Africa: A Case Study: Nairobi City* Nairobi, 1998; Therese Tinkasiimire, "Responses to HIV/AIDS in Hoima Diocese, Uganda," Mary Jo Iozzio, ed., *Calling for Justice throughout the World: Catholic Women Theologians on the HIV/AIDS Pandemic* (Hereinafter, *Calling for Justice*), New York, 2008, 183-191.

³⁶ Agbonkhianmeghe E Orobator, "When AIDS Comes to Church," Bénézet Bujo and Michael Czerny, *AIDS in Africa: Theological Reflections*, Nairobi, 2007, 120-128.

³⁷ Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refugees and Poverty*, Nairobi, 2005.

³⁸ Orobator, "Ethics of HIV/AIDS Prevention." For the work of such women, see Margaret Farley, "Partnership in Hope: Gender, Faith, and Responses to HIV/AIDS in Africa," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 20.1 (2004) 133-148.

³⁹ Michael Czerny, ed., *AIDS and the Church in Africa*, Nairobi, 2005

⁴⁰ Paterne-Auxence Mombé, *Rays of Hope: Managing HIV and AIDS in Africa*, Nairobi, 2003, 2008.

Democratic Republic of Congo applies the wisdom of Job to the experience of those afflicted with AIDS,⁴¹ and South African Peter Knox looks at local beliefs, particularly regarding ancestors, as a resource to minister to the sick and suffering in Africa today.⁴²

As important as inculturation is in Africa, the Cameroonian Jean Marc Ela was actually somewhat suspicious of it. If the African Church becomes more truly African, will it become better? If African society heeds its ancient cultures, will it actually move forward? In short, is the retrieval of African culture coupled with any critical reflection?

Ela preferred a liberation theology approach: the African church, its leaders and members need to heed the liberating Gospel which confronts local cultures with the Kingdom of God as expressed in Jesus Christ and in the love, justice, equity, and option for the poor that characterizes the Gospel message. Ela offered a ringing corrective to African contextual theology. As a noted sociologist and theologian, he demanded a concrete and not a conceptual liberation: we must know the Africa that we are talking about, not to accept it, but to liberate it.⁴³

The influence of liberation theology is palpable. While Tanzanian Aquiline Tarimo develops a constructive human rights agenda,⁴⁴ feminists like Teresa Hinga⁴⁵ and Anne Nasimyu⁴⁶ bring a definitively

⁴¹ Ghislain Tshikendwa Matadi, *Suffering, Belief, Hope: The Wisdom of Job for an AIDS-Stricken Africa*, Nairobi, 2008.

⁴² Peter Knox, *AIDS, Ancestors and Salvation: Local Beliefs in Christian Ministry to the Sick*, Nairobi, 2008.

⁴³ Jean-Marc Ela, *Ma foi d'africain*, Paris, 1985; *Afrique, l'irruption des Pauvres*, Paris, 2000; *African Cry*, London, 2005.

⁴⁴ Aquiline Tarimo, *Human Rights, Cultural Differences, and the Church in Africa*, Morogoro, 2004; *Applied Ethics and Africa's Social Reconstruction*, Nairobi, 2005; "Globalization and African Economic Reforms," *Applied Ethics* 32-38.

⁴⁵ Teresa Hinga, "Between Colonialism and Inculturation, Feminist Theologies in Africa" *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology*, Maryknoll, 1996, 36-45; "Jesus Christ and the Liberation of Women in Africa," Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro, ed., *The Will to Arise Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*, Maryknoll, 2001, 183-195; "Becoming Better Samaritans: Gender, Catholic Social Teaching and the Quest for Alternative Models of Doing Social Justice in Africa," *Applied Ethics* 85-97.

⁴⁶ Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, "Christianity and the African Rituals of Birth and Naming" and "Polygamy: A Feminist Critique," *The Will to Arise* 40-53; 101-118; "Christology and an African Woman's Experience," Robert Schretiter, ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, Maryknoll, 1991, 70-84.

feminist liberation approach to their theology by reflecting on women's experience, patriarchal dominance, the practices of local culture, and the fundamental call of Scripture to hear the cry of the poor. Like them, John Mary Waliggo was concerned about the effectiveness of theology in responding to suffering and empowering the poor. Like them, he linked liberation to the very specific context of economics and power.⁴⁷

If Ela brought liberation theology into African theological discourse, Laurenti Magesa considers it as a necessary companion and not a replacement for inculturation. While he identifies with liberation theology,⁴⁸ Magesa equally promotes a theology of inculturation, especially in his landmark work on the pan-African culture of life that imbued African religion.⁴⁹

In a similar vein, Orobator has written on the church as a practical institution with a historical tradition rooted in hope while facing ethical challenges. He reflects on the church as family, a very African line of thought, the specific image of the church used at the recent African synod.⁵⁰ Later, Orobator explores central issues of contemporary faith: from the (non) naming of God to the Trinity, from Christology to mercy and grace; and from the kingdom to the communion of saints. This master-storyteller draws his material from the traditional stories of his fellow Nigerian Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.⁵¹

He also co-authored with Elias Opongo a manual on the social justice tradition for local communities. Using simple, sample cases, for example, the right to land and housing, standing up against corruption, and encountering ethnic discrimination, the authors help communities to understand how they can analyze contemporary

⁴⁷ Waliggo, ed., *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, Kampala, 1986; Waliggo, "African Christology in a Situation of Suffering," *Faces of Jesus* 164-180; Peter Kanyadago, "John Mary Waliggo: The Theology of John Mary Waliggo," *African Theology* 2, 215-230.

⁴⁸ Laurenti Magesa, "Christ the Liberator and Africa Today," *Faces of Jesus* 151-63; Richard Rwiza, "Laurenti Magesa: An African Liberation Theologian," *African Theology* 2, 231-258.

⁴⁹ Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1997.

⁵⁰ Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in Its Social Context*, Nairobi, 2000.

⁵¹ Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, Maryknoll, 2008.

challenges and act to resolve them. The manual promotes the social, moral formation of parishes.⁵²

Finally, the Nigerian Anozie Onyema studies conscience in the context of African traditional religion, while Tanzania's Richard W. Rwiza connects formation of the conscience with virtue ethics and argues that the acting person is called to self-development as both critic and member of her/ his culture.⁵³ In all this, we can see a liberating inculturation theology entering in Africa its second generation.

Still, writing about African suffering and identity is not without risk. On April 22, 1995 Mveng was assassinated. He had been the leader of a variety of movements, all related to forming intellectual, theological and artistic communities for the building up of a more just Africa. He encouraged, founded and led greater associations among these constituencies to help retrieve and shape African identity. A vocal critic of political and ecclesial life, Mveng's colleague, Jean Marc Ela, went into voluntary exile immediately after Mveng's assassination. Aside from a year as a visiting professor at Boston College, he spent his exile in Canada. Ela died on December 26, 2008 in exile. With Uganda's John Mary Waliggo's death eight months earlier on April 19, 2008, Africa lost some of their premiere theologians.

Asia

Until recently, theological ethics in India was taught using a moral manual written by the German Karl Peschke.⁵⁴ Later, Soosai Arokiasamy emerged as a pioneer for an indigenous, contemporary Indian theological ethics. His interests embraced ordinary people, liberation theology, cultural context, the need for dialogue, and the critical reconstruction of the tradition.⁵⁵

In addressing the great caste distinctions in India, Arokiasamy and others have argued that until the option for the poor embraces the

⁵² Elias Opongo and Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator, *Faith Doing Justice: A Manual for Social Analysis, Catholic Social Teachings and Social Justice*, Nairobi, 2007.

⁵³ Richard N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian Conscience in Modern Africa*, Nairobi, 2001; Anozie Onyema, *The Moral Significance of African Traditional Religion for Christian Conscience*, Port Harcourt, 2004.

⁵⁴ Karl H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, vol. 1: *General Moral Theology*, Bangalore, 1991; *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, vol. 2: *Special Moral Theology*, Bangalore, 1992.

⁵⁵ Soosai Arokiasamy, *Social Sin: Its Challenges to Christian Life*, Bangalore, 1991.

most marginalized, the *dalits*, its theological ethics will not realize its call to be liberating.⁵⁶ Like them, John Chathanatt, who wrote on Gandhi and Gutiérrez as two liberation paradigms, argues that an Indian liberative inculturation must turn to concrete economic questions and structural issues of marginalization.⁵⁷ For this more inclusive agenda, Indian ethicists often turn to the language of human rights.⁵⁸

Clement Campos portrays India as rife with cultural complexity and social inequality and examines a host of the major issues his nation faces: globalization, environment, access to health care (in a land with great health care resources), discrimination based on gender, caste, and religion, violence, and the failure to recognize human rights. In each instance, he highlights the work of contemporary Indian theological ethicists responding to these needs, but he concludes with outstanding challenges facing today's ethicists: to move both beyond the confines of a seminary setting so as to become more involved in political debate on issues of urgent social concern; to go beyond the search for pastoral solutions so as to offer ethical solutions to the dilemmas that confront individuals; to dialogue with other religions and cultures and the poor so as to participate in humanity's search for the truth by which we all live; and finally to develop a moral theology that is contextualized, truly Indian, authentically human and socially liberative.⁵⁹

To illustrate his point, Campos describes a major ecological crisis brewing in India. From the ancient religions and their scriptures, which reveal a mystical perception of the earth as the home in which

⁵⁶ Arokiasamy, "Sarvodaya through Antodaya: The Liberation of the Poor in the Contextualization of Morals," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, 51, no. 11, 1987, 545-64; Xavier Ilango, "Morality from a Dalit Perspective," *Jeevadhara* 28, no. 168 (1998), 426-40.

⁵⁷ John Chathanatt, *Gandhi and Gutierrez: Two Paradigms of Liberative Transformation*, New Delhi, 2004; "Reclaiming our Vintage Values: This Hour of the Economic History of India," *Jeevadhara* 26, no. 156 (1996), 435-56; "An Ethical Analysis of Globalization from an Indian Perspective," *Applied Ethics*, 21-31.

⁵⁸ Arokiasamy, "Human Rights: Collective, Societal and Liberational Perspectives," *Jeevadhara* 21 (1991) 53-62; Chathanatt, "Human Rights: A Historical Overview," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 31 (2001) 11-122; George V. Lobo, *Human Rights in the Indian Context*, New Delhi, 1991; Aloysius Pieris, "Human Rights Language and Liberation Theology," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 51, no. 11 (1988) 522-36.

⁵⁹ Clement Campos, "Doing Christian Ethics in India's World of Cultural Complexity and Social Inequality," *CTEWC*, 82-90.

one experiences the life-giving power of the Divine, Indian theologians develop their arguments. In these sources they find complements for biblically-based insights of creation and care for the earth. But Campos adds that Indian eco-ethics needs to repair the rape of nature by rendering justice to the victims of such exploitation. The poor, the first victims always, have a claim to the earth's resources for the fulfillment of basic needs of decent human living.

A new theologian Pushpa Joseph goes further and notes that poor women are especially affected by the ecological crisis, and yet their own approach to the land provides a needed resource for a new ethics.⁶⁰ Elsewhere she examines the work of women in central India on areas of agriculture and food production noting again how overlooked practices might well be key resources for restoring imbalances.⁶¹ This insight, that the resources of women might help alter the very structures that oppress women, is articulated not only by Indian women like Pushpa Joseph, as well as women in Latin America and Africa but also, as we shall later, by women throughout Asia.

Still, the Indian emphasis on ecology⁶² is but one manifestation of the overall Asian interest in the promotion of justice. For instance, the Sri Lankan ethicist Vimal Tirimanna writes on suffering and economic disparities in a globalized world, an argument that he developed earlier.⁶³ More recently he has faced issues of religion, violence and civil strife in a collection of essays.⁶⁴

In facing the challenges of justice and globalization from the Philippines, Agnes Brazal highlights the multitudinous resources

⁶⁰ Pushpa Joseph, "Women's Perspectives in Bioethics: A Case Study from Tribal India," *Applied Ethics*, 98-108.

⁶¹ Pushpa Joseph, "Women's Perspectives in Bioethics: A Case Study from Tribal India," *Applied Ethics*, 98-108.

⁶² See two issues of *Jeevadhara* dedicated to ecological issues, 18.103(1988) and 21.126 (1991) and the statement of the Indian Theological Association, "Ecological Crisis: An Indian Christian Response," Jacob Parapally, ed., *Theologizing in Context: Statements of the Indian Theological Association*, Bangalore, 2002, 252-64. Also, Arokiasamy, "Liberation Ethics of Ecology," *Jeevadhara* 18.103, 32-39.

⁶³ Vimal Tirimanna, "Moral Theological Implications of Globalization from a Third World Perspective," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 65.4 (2001) 296-98.

⁶⁴ Tirimanna, *Catholic Teaching on Violence, War and Peace in Our Contemporary World*, Bangalore, 2006.

which creative Filipino ethicists engage.⁶⁵ They use both more traditional resources as well as more local ones. For instance, Fausto Gomez sees the Catholic social tradition and the Scriptures as central sources of ethical norms and images necessary for what he calls “good globalization/localization.”⁶⁶ Elsewhere, he invokes a theology of the Eucharist and then the writings of Thomas Aquinas to develop an ethic of global justice.⁶⁷

Monica Jalandoni also turns to Aquinas here to understand the fortitude of Filipino women.⁶⁸ Aloysius Cartagenas proposes the common good tradition to understand citizenship as an expression of discipleship and a path to holiness.

But like the Latin Americans, Africans, and South Asians, Cartegenas turns to basic ecclesial communities as forums where the voices of the marginalized can be heard.⁶⁹ Ronaldo Tuazon invokes the narratives from the margins to further the Filipino grasp of justice and the common good.⁷⁰ Christina Astorga looks to Filipino history, particularly the experience of the people power revolution, as providing a resource to strengthen national resolve to respond to globalization.⁷¹

Since poverty in Asia interweaves with cultural and religious identities, any attempt to respond must take seriously Asia’s diverse religiosity. For this reason Carlos Ronquillo proposes an “option for the poor other.” The “other” includes the oppressed, the ‘non-person,’ the ‘non-christian,’ the ‘uncultured,’ the women and children. This

⁶⁵ Agnes Brazal, “Globalization and Catholic Theological Ethics: A South-east Asian Perspective,” *CTEWC* 74-82.

⁶⁶ Fausto Gomez, “Globalization: Ethical and Christian Perspective,” *Religious Life Asia* 3.2 (2001) 45-63; see Dominador Bombongan, Jr., “From Dependency to Globalization: A Changed Context for Liberation Theology,” *Hapag* 1, no. 2 (2004) 33-63.

⁶⁷ Fausto Gomez, “The Holy Eucharist and Commitment to Justice and Solidarity,” *Philippiniana Sacra* 22, no. 66 (1997) 403-20; “St. Thomas Aquinas: Justice, Property and the Poor,” *Philippiniana Sacra* 30.89 (1995) 251-76.

⁶⁸ Monica Jalandoni, “The Fortitude of Filipino Women,” Agnes Brazal, Aloysius Cartagenas, Eric Genilo, and James Keenan, ed., *Transformative Theological Ethics: East Asian Contexts*, Quezon City, 2010.

⁶⁹ Aloysius Cartagenas, “The State of the Nation and its Implications to the Church’s Social Praxis,” *Talad* (2001): 123.

⁷⁰ Ronaldo Tuazon, “Narrating Christian Ethics from the Margins,” *Hapag* 4 (2007) 27-60.

⁷¹ Astorga, “Culture, Religion, and Moral Vision: A Theological Discourse on the Filipino People Power Revolution of 1986,” *TS* 67 (2006) 567-601.

prompts the recognition of a need for a triple dialogue with the poor, the living cultures and, the religions of Asia.⁷² We should recognize that as in Africa and in India, issues of cultural identity and resources drive the East-Asian theological dialogue with older religious claims.

Having taught in Korea and the Philippines, James Bretzke found in the language of virtue a helpful hermeneutics for inter-religious dialogue about ethical issues.⁷³ Elsewhere he notes that the matrix of the Confucian Five Relationships provides the basis of the moral action and community.⁷⁴ More recently, he focuses on the discussion of human rights.⁷⁵

From Hong Kong, Lúcas Chan Yiu Sing highlights the key of virtue in cross-cultural dialogue as well to better understand Scriptural-based Christian and Confucian ethics. He looks at issues of hospitality and immigration, ritual and worship, and the formation of conscience as very diverse contexts for such dialogue.⁷⁶ From Japan Osamu Takeuchi brings the writings of Josef Fuchs on conscience into a Japanese context, acknowledging that the Japanese notion of conscience derives from two other sources: Christianity and Chinese Confucianism.⁷⁷

Beyond these traditional, local, and other religious resources, Brazal and others insist on the need for interdisciplinarity; she highlights one instance in her discussion about sex education and HIV/AIDS

⁷² Carlos Ronquillo, "Moral Responsibility in Asia: A Proposed Approach," *Maryhill School of Theology Review* 3.2 (2000): 217-35.

⁷³ James Bretzke, "The *Tao* of Confucian Virtue Ethics," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 35 (1995) 25-41.

⁷⁴ James Bretzke, "Moral Theology Out of East Asia," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000) 106-121.

⁷⁵ Bretzke, "Human Rights or Human Rites?: A Confucian Cross-Cultural Perspective," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 41/1 (2003): 44-67.

⁷⁶ Lúcas Chan Yiu Sing. "As West Meets East: Reading Xunzi's A Discussion of Rites Through the Lens of Contemporary Western Ritual Theories," Martin Stuflesser and Stephan Winter, ed., *"Ahme nach, was du vollziehst" Positionsbestimmungen zum Verhältnis von Liturgie und Ethik* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet 2009) 101-120; "Boaz as a Model of Hospitality for Community Rebuilding in the Postexilic Period and the Modern World." *Budhi* (2006/7); Lúcas Chan and James Keenan, "Bridging Christian Ethics and Confucianism through Virtue Ethics." *Chinese Cross Currents* 5 no. 3 (2007): 74-85.

⁷⁷ Osamu Takeuchi, *Conscience and Personality: A New Understanding of Conscience and Its Inculturation in Japanese Moral Theology*, Chiba, 2003.

in the Philippines.⁷⁸ Similarly, Cartagenas criticizes local Catholic social teaching for not depending more on these sources.⁷⁹ The results are sometimes exciting. In Japan, Haruko K. Okano invokes a feminist understanding of moral responsibility to critique her own culture.⁸⁰ She names “the potentially dangerous side of homogeneity or nationalistic togetherness, that is, the crass distinction between ‘us and others’” and the “principle of harmony that not just ignores those who are different or strange” but actively excludes them.⁸¹ As in Africa, the hermeneutics of suspicion that feminists bring to inculturated claims are indeed liberating, especially for the other, and in particular, women.

Throughout Asia, women theologians raise questions about the structures that oppress women. Like Pushpa Joseph, Christina Astorga, reflects on the feminization of poverty especially among migrant workers in and from the Philippines.⁸² Gemma Cruz reflects on Filipina domestic workers, “workhorses,” and the way that they suffer from alienation, abuse, and a relentless entrapment in their place of work.⁸³ From Taiwan, Theresa Yih-Lan Tsou discusses sex workers and the need to listen to women in sex work.⁸⁴ She finds in the Scriptures and the Catholic social tradition the resources to address the human rights and public health needs of sex workers. And, again, from the Philippines, Evelyn Monteiro’s reflects on the shame of the bent bodies of Indian women through the lens of Luke 13 to highlight the healing solidarity of Jesus which he brings to a new self-understanding for women.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Brazal and Daniel Pilario, “Disciplines, Interdisciplinarity, and Theology,” *Hapág 4* (2007) 5-25; Brazal, “Information, Sex Education, and Church Intervention in Public Policy in the Philippines,” *Calling for Justice*, 61-67.

⁷⁹ Cartagenas, “The Challenge of Interdisciplinarity to Catholic Social Teaching,” *Hapág 4* (2007) 103-131.

⁸⁰ Haruko K. Okano, *Die Stellung Der Frau Im Shinto*, Wiesbaden, 1976.

⁸¹ Okano, “Moral Responsibility in the Japanese Context,” Jan Jans, ed., *Für die Freiheit verantwortliche*, Freiburg, 2004, 162-169, at 167, 168 respectively.

⁸² Ma. Christina Astorga, “The Feminization of AIDS in the Philippines,” *Calling for Justice* 157-166.

⁸³ Gemma Cruz, “Embodying Theology: Theological Reflections on the Experience of Filipina Domestic Workers in Hong Kong,” Agnes Brazal and Andrea Lizares Si, ed., *Body and Sexuality: Theological Pastoral Perspectives of Women in Asia* (hereinafter *Body and Sexuality*), Manila, 2007, 60-74.

⁸⁴ Theresa Yih-Lan Tsou, “Theological Reflection on Sex Work,” *Ibid.*, 75-89.

⁸⁵ Evelyn Monteiro, “Re-imaging Woman and Reshaping her Destiny: An Indian Feminist Reading of the Bent Body (Lk 13:10-17),” *Ibid.*, 139-152

Women particularly address HIV/AIDS. Pushpa Joseph and Metti Amirtham each turn to the resources of tribal Indian women to articulate a response to the Indian AIDS crisis.⁸⁶ From Vietnam, Y-lan Tran, a physician and theological ethicist calls for dignity, justice and care in response to HIV/AIDS in her homeland.⁸⁷ Throughout these writers highlight how the vulnerability of women, whether in their bodies, in their lack of access to social and economic goods, and/or their own social location puts them at higher risk. By the same token they underline the resources that women develop from their own contexts.

If there is something that distinguishes the Asians from the Africans and Latin Americans, it is their focus on sexuality. In *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*,⁸⁸ India's Shaji George Kochuthara argues that the trajectory of theological development of teachings on sexual pleasure eventually arrives at a validation of pleasure as integral to ethical sexual relationships. More recently, he looked at Indian texts, in particular the Hindu text of Vatsayana's *Kāmasutra*, to assert that in this tradition sexual pleasure is enjoyed in the context of relationality.⁸⁹ Another colleague Kurian Perumpallikunnel uses Indian religious texts to argue that sexual pleasure ought not to be reduced to the body and the physical but embraces the whole person.⁹⁰ Pushpa Joseph wants to find an alternative to the excessive intellectualism of patriarchal theologies and looks to tantric philosophy to find an empowering theology that celebrates eros, fertility, and life. This is a decidedly pro-women approach, that raises up women's experience and struggles.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Puspha Joseph, "Retrieving Spirituality as a Resource for Coping with HIV/AIDS: Perspectives from South India," *Calling for Justice* 192-202; Metti Amirtham, "Women Confronting Stigma in Tamil Nadu," *Ibid.*, 174-182. On a related topic, see Joseph Fonseca, *Marriage in India*, Bangalore, 1989.

⁸⁷ Y-Lan Tran, "HIV/AIDS in Vietnam: Calling for Dignity, Justice and Care," *Calling for Justice* 31-37.

⁸⁸ Shaji George Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, Rome, 2007.

⁸⁹ Shaji George Kochuthara, "Kama without Dharma: Understanding the Ethics of Pleasure," *Journal of Dharma* 34.1 (2009) 69-95. Kochuthara argues that all human relationships should have three components: *Kama* for pleasure, *Dharma* for spiritual needs, and *Artha*, for social and economic issues. In the same volume, see Paulachan Kochapilly, "Sexuality as an Invitation to Intimacy and Integration," 19-35.

⁹⁰ Kurian Perumpallikunnel, "The Spirituality of Sex," *Ibid.*, 37-68

⁹¹ Pushpa Joseph, "Re-visioning Eros for Asian Feminist Theologizing: Some Pointers from Tantric Philosophy," *Body and Sexuality*, 34-57

Another Indian woman religious, Amirtham Metti, critically studies four Hindu goddesses to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of these iconic representations. She raises in turn questions relevant to Christian theology: about whether images of God challenge Christian believers, celebrate the body, highlight inner powers, and promote gender equity.⁹² The Filipina Jeane Peracullo looks at God as the mother of the universe and the universe as the womb of God.⁹³

Finally, while the Filipina Leonila Bermisa considers the effects of the clergy sexual abuse scandal, Malaysia's Sharon Bong asks whether queer theology can shape for us a more fluid understanding of gender.⁹⁴ In many ways they highlight ways that Asia helps us all look to the future.

To appreciate the distinctiveness of Asian theological ethics, we must realize that efforts to respond to suffering, to develop identity through resonating with local cultural and religious resources, to liberate the people of God from oppressively unjust structures and to hear the voices of women is not idiosyncratic to Asia. It is found consistently throughout the entire south, in Latin America, Africa, and Latin America. But it is found assuredly in the north as well. Still, at once, we should see that the theology of Asia is, then, the theology of the church universal. The only difference is that instead of going from the universal to the local, we went from the local to the universal. Such is the work of the last four decades.

⁹² Amirtham Metti, "Bodily Representations of Hindu Goddess: A Feminist Perspective," *Ibid.*, 252-272.

⁹³ Jeane Peracullo, "The Universe as Body or Womb of God: Theologizing on Difference and Interdependency," *Ibid.*, 273-290

⁹⁴ Leonila Bermisa, "Facing the Reality of Clergy Sexual Misconduct in the Church," *Ibid.*, 216-233; Sharon A. Bong, "Queer Revisions of Christianity," *Ibid.*, 234-250.