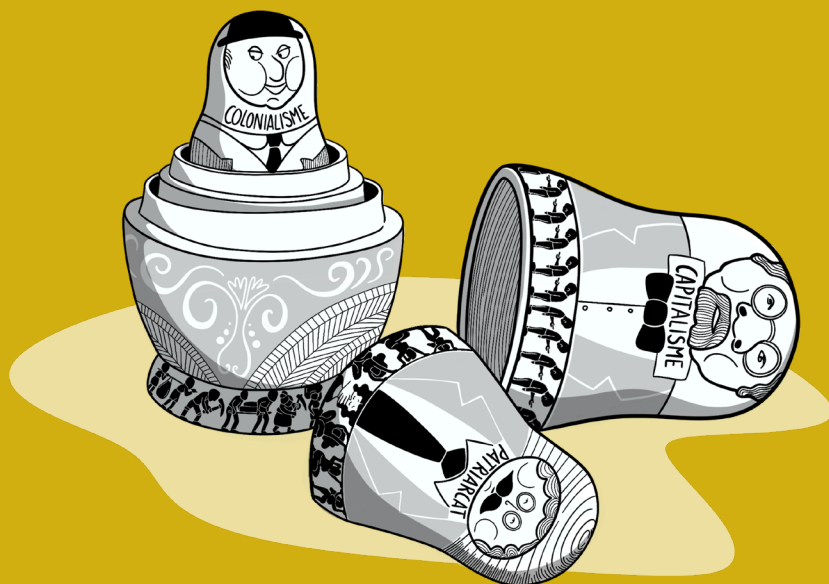


# Against the Necronomy

The Need and Possibilities for an Economy at the Service of Life

Imanol Zubero



**Imanol Zubero.** Doctor in Sociology and Diplomate in Theology from the University of Deusto. Professor at the University of the País Vasco. Specialist in the Sociology of Work. He has participated in and chaired various initiatives and social organizations in the area of anti-militarism, peace and citizens' movements.

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Roger de Llúria, 13, 08010 Barcelona (Spain)  
[www.cristianismeijusticia.net](http://www.cristianismeijusticia.net)  
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[info@fespinal.com](mailto:info@fespinal.com)  
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**AGAINST THE NECRONOMY**  
**THE NEED AND POSSIBILITIES FOR AN ECONOMY**  
**AT THE SERVICE OF LIFE**

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The text of this Booklet corresponds in large part to the lecture that Inamol Zubero gave at the inauguration of the academic year 2023-2024. It is possible to watch the lecture on our YouTube channel. The lecture was followed by three comments or responses given by members of the team of Cristianisme i Justícia: Miriam Feu, David Murillo and Inma Naranjo, which we also include in an Appendix. We wish to thank all four for their availability and their inspiring talks, which we hope will be the same for the readers of this Booklet.

# LIFE IS WORTH NOTHING... UNLESS WE PUT A PRICE ON IT

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At the beginning of our reflection, I propose that you think about those daily activities that are the most attached to life, those that require touching bodies, sustaining them, feeding them, cleaning them, taking care of them, those that require nearness and time, dedication, listening, emotional support, activities that are repeated over and over again, at any moment of the day, activities without which our lives would be unhappy, unbearable and directly impossible.

Let us now reflect on the weight that these activities have on our economic system, on the value that this system gives to them. We will confirm that the huge majority of these essential activities for life remain outside of the space of the economy. We will discover that, in case some of them might be defined as economic activities, they are placed on the periphery of the economic system, in addition to receiving the worst valuation on the part of the dominant economic logic in terms of working conditions and pay. Let's put a face on those who carry out these activities more habitually, we will prove that those who employ them are, in a very generalized way, a very specific type of person: women, above all, who often are also poor and ever more racialized.

## **Let's Think about This for a Moment...**

Now let's do the exercise in reverse, that of thinking about the highest valued economic activities, those that receive the highest salaries, those that count on the best working conditions, those that get the greatest recognition, greatest visi-

bility. Which ones are they? For the most part, we are dealing with activities that are much closer to money than to people. Let's think about those who incarnate them, in their social and personal characteristics, let's visualize mostly white men, adults with a higher education and of the high middle class, Let's think again about the activities which they develop and for which they receive that recognition and those salaries and let's ask the following: could we live without them? Let's begin a game of imagination, making them disappear one by one.

In his book *Utopia for Realists*, Rutger Bregman presents an interesting and provocative section entitled "When the bankers went on strike", in which he recalls the strike by bank employees – therefore, not the bankers – which during six months paralyzed the activities of those entities in Ireland in 1970.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence of the strike, 85% of the reserves of the country remained blocked and the great companies found themselves in difficulties to access credit. Nevertheless, despite the alarms that were warning that, without banking activity, life in Ireland would be paralyzed and that commerce would sink, the daily life of the common people went on practically as if nothing were happening. How was that possible? It was possible because those who continued needing money in order to live, created their own currency, their own money, which they exchanged for services and goods, and as their fiduciary entities they went not to banks, but rather... to the pubs! Bregman tells it this way:

In the blink of an eye, the people forged a radically decentralized monetary system with the 11,000 pubs in the country as the key nodes and confidence as the underlying mechanism. When they reopened the banks in November, the Irish had printed the incredible sum of 5 billion pounds in homemade bills. Some checks had been given out by companies, some were scrawled on cigar boxes and even on toilet paper. According to the historians, the reason that many Irish could manage so well without banks was because of the social cohesion.

This story contrasts with another one that Bregman also recounts in his book: the strike of garbage collectors that in 1968 totally blocked the life of the city of New York, in spite of its short duration of only ten days.

Let us now go back to the questions with which we began this conversation and look at them from the perspective of these two cases, Six months without banks to ten days without garbage collection.

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1 BREGMAN, Rutger, *Utopia para realistas* [Utopia for Realists], Salamandra (Barcelona, 2017), pp. 174-179.

## Capitalism: a Social System

Capitalism is not only an economy; it is a social system. It is a social system that transformed our form of production, but, above everything else, transformed our way of being. *Homo economicus*, women and men formatted by capitalism, are not only people who produce and consume in some other way, the way of the market, they are men and women who feel and desire in the way of the market: not only do they produce according to the logic of capitalism, they exist according to the logic of capitalism. And what is that logic? It was formulated by Adam Smith in one of the most influential texts, lamentably, of modern thought:

Man (in contrast to the rest of animal species) is almost permanently in need of the help of his fellow men, and it would be useless to expect it exclusively out of benevolence. It is more probable that he would get the help if he directs the interests of the others themselves to his favor, and shows them that to act according to what he is asking will redound to their benefit. This is what anyone who proposes a deal to another is looking for. Every deal is: give me this thing that I desire and you will obtain this that you want. In this way we obtain mutually the greater part of the goods we need. It is not the benevolence of the butcher, the beer maker or the baker that gets our dinner for us, but rather the care that the others take for their own benefit. We don't address ourselves to their humanity but to their interest, and we never speak to them about our needs, but of the advantages to them. Only a beggar chooses to depend basically on the benevolence of his fellow citizens.<sup>2</sup>

It is terrible that we continue to applaud these ideas, this vision of persons and their social relationships.

Katrine Marcal has masterfully dismantled this point of view coming from Smith in her book *Who Made Dinner for Adam Smith?* It seems that Smith spent his whole life being cared for by his widowed mother, Margaret Douglas, and his spinster cousin, Janet Douglas, two women devotedly dedicated to Smith, so that he could dedicate himself, in body and soul, to developing his very influential work. It is beginning with this fact, known and cited in all the biographies of Smith, but reduced to an anecdote without greater significance, that Katrine Marcal focuses her work and achieves her mark. Marcal writes, "When Adam Smith sat down to eat dinner, he thought that if he had the meal on the table, it was not because the butcher and the baker liked them, but because they pursued their own interests by means of commerce. Therefore, it was their own interests that served him his dinner. Nevertheless, was it really that way? At the hour of

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2 SMITH, Adam, *La riqueza de las naciones* [The Wealth of Nations], Alianza (Madrid, 2011), 3rd ed., pp. 45-46.

truth, who prepared that steak for Adam Smith?” The point of view to which Marcal is inviting us acts as a frame that denaturalizes the dominant economic paradigm, and reveals bases as impossible in the last instance for reductionists unless it is through hiding that “second economy”. In the same way as happens to the “second sex”,<sup>3</sup> it acts always in the shadow of that “first” economy – really the only economy – which is productive, mercantile and patriarchal. Marcal concludes, “Looking wherever you wish, the market is always based on another type of economy. It is an economy that we rarely take into account”. The half of the economy that becomes the dominant model is a gaslighting that only functions if we forget about the mother of Adam Smith.<sup>4</sup>

## The (Im)Moral Logic of the Market

When in 2021 the then (Spanish) Minister of Transportation, Mobility and Urban Planning, José Luis Ábalos, refused to introduce mechanisms for controlling the prices of rent under the Housing Law that had been negotiated by the Socialist Party *Unidos Podemos*, he used the argument that housing “is a right but *also* goods in the marketplace which generate economic activity.” A right – a fundamental one, let us not forget – cannot be also goods in the marketplace. A right can be *additionally* market goods with the condition that the universal satisfaction of the right is guaranteed.

Cohen is correct when he states that “moral man abandons the room when *Homo economicus* enters”,<sup>5</sup> just as Macfarlane when he holds that money “which is an abbreviated form of expressing capitalist relationships, market values, commerce and trade, introduces moral confusion into the world.”<sup>6</sup> Capitalism revolutionized the world when it placed the exchange value on a good, a resource or service (market value) absolutely above and on the margins of use value, of its practical usefulness. The result is a perverse and paradoxical inversion of values. The most necessary activities, which are those that are more attached to life, are the least recognized, the worst considered and the worst paid, the opposite of what happens with the activities that are the furthest from life and most attached

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3 “This is what fundamentally characterizes a woman: she is the Other, in the heart of a totality whose two terminals are necessary for each other”. DE BEAUVOIR, Simone, *El Segundo zero* [The Second Zero], Siglo Veinte (Buenos Aires, 1969), p. 22.

4 MARCAL, Katrine, *¿Quién le hacía la cena a Adam Smith?* [Who Made Dinner for Adam Smith?], Debate (Barcelona, 2016).

5 COHEN, Daniel, *Homo economicus, el profeta (extraviado) de los nuevos tiempos* [Homo Economicus: The (lost) prophet of the new times], Ariel (Barcelona, 2013), p. 13.

6 MACFARLANE, Alan, *La cultura del capitalismo* [The Culture of Capitalism], Fondo de Cultura Económica (Mexico City, 2013), p. 129.



to money. Economic interest is put over the satisfaction of basic human necessities.

As Sandel warns, mercantile logic displaces the moral of our civic conversation. The valuation and mercantile exchange concerning certain goods and practices has a degrading effect and they cause these goods and practices, converted into objects that are bought and sold, to suffer corruption. “The corruption of these goods cannot impede simply the establishment of conditions for just negotiation. Even in a society without unjust differences in power and wealth there would continue to be things that money cannot buy. And that is owing to the fact that markets are not mere mechanisms. They incarnate certain values. And sometimes the values of the market displace non-mercantile norms that merit preservation.”<sup>7</sup> Goods and practices like sexual integrity, health, the vote, organ transplantation ... or housing.

## Paying More to the Ones Who Generate the Least Social Value

The New Economics Foundation (NEF) in 2006 sponsored a study in which they analyzed the value of various jobs and professions from the perspective of social return. It compared what was paid to the people who worked at the jobs with what they brought to society in terms of social, environmental and economic value that these jobs and professions produce or, in some cases, undermine.<sup>8</sup> For this, the authors of the study chose six professions and work activities, three with very high or high levels of remuneration (investment banker, publicity executive and tax consultant) and another three with a low level of remuneration (hospital housekeeper, worker in a recycling plant, and a child-care worker). The result? The better paid activities had a negative social return. For example, the social and environmental damage caused by the consumerism that feeds the ad executives, such as the dissatisfaction and anxiety that this provokes, led the NEF to calculate that these professionals destroy 11 pounds (Sterling) of social value for every pound of monetary value that they generate.

Just the opposite occurs with employees with low salaries like that of persons, overwhelmingly women, who work in tasks related to child-care. Besides freeing up time so that the family members of the babies, especially the mothers, can develop other work activities, they increase the opportunities of learning for the older children. The balance for the NEF is that for each pound sterling

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7 SANDEL, Michael J., *Lo que el dinero no puede comprar* [What Money Can't Buy], Debate (Barcelona, 2013), p. 116.

8 LAWLOR, Eilis, KERSLEY, Helen, STEED, Susan, *A Bit Rich: Calculating the Real Value to Society of Different Professions*. <https://neweconomics.org/2009/12/a-bit-rich>.

that they are paid, the workers in the care of infants generate between 7 and 9.5 pounds in benefits for the society.

“Can you imagine a day without airports?”, AENA asked us in their last ad campaign.<sup>9</sup> Well, we should ask it of ourselves as *Ecologists in Action* did in their response campaign.<sup>10</sup> So then, would you imagine a day without trash collection, without child-care, without time in order to be a companion or to be accompanied when we are sad or sick?

## From the Stairway to the Pyramid (of Sacrifice)

Capitalism is not simply a system of production; it is fundamentally a system of *predation*. Nancy Fraser talks about a *cannibal capitalism*, of an institutionalized social order that devours the social and natural bases of those who depend on economic benefit in order to transform them.<sup>11</sup>

Capitalist development historically has been represented by the image of an ascending stairway from a situation of underdevelopment to one of development. Within the framework of this image, the ascent of the stairway, step by step, would be the desired and possible objective for all the countries of the world. We find the greatest exponent of this image in the work of the American economist W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, originally published in 1960 and the basis for the so-called “Theory of Modernization.” It was also the basis for Jeffrey Sachs in his book *The End of Poverty*: “All of the regions of the world have the possibility of being included in an era of unprecedented prosperity based on science, sociology and world markets. Nevertheless ... certain regions are trapped in a descending spiral of impoverishment, hunger and sickness. ... Our task consists in helping them to climb up the stairway of development, or at least to put their feet on the lowest step from which they can continue creeping up on their own.”<sup>12</sup>

But capitalism is not a stairway; it is a pyramid. A sacrificial pyramid.<sup>13</sup> While many of us enjoy ourselves in this life, many more have to inhabit and succumb in the dead zone of life. Ours is an imperial way of life.<sup>14</sup> We are privileged, not because we possess more than others, but rather because we possess *instead* of

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9 <https://www.aena.es/es/prensa/aena-lanza-la-campana-un-dia-sin-aeropuertos-para-mostrar-la-importancia-del-papel-de-sus-infraestructuras-en-la-sociedad.html>.

10 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=Iia79lmOkYY>.

11 FRASER, Nancy, *Capitalismo Canibal* [Cannibal Capitalism], Siglo XXI (Madrid, 2023), pp. 18-19.

12 SACHS, Jeffrey, *El fin de la pobreza* [The End of Poverty], Debate (Barcelona, 2005), p. 27.

13 BERGER, Peter L., *Pirámides de sacrificio* [Sacrificial Pyramids], Sal Terrae (Santander, 1979).

14 BRAND, Ulrich, WISSEN, Maarkus, *The Imperial Mode of Living*, Verso (London, New York, 2021).

those who are dispossessed<sup>15</sup> We gluttonously consume resources that do not belong to us, resources so that other people, to put it simply, can live. We live devouring the vital opportunities of others. We are, literally, cannibals.

Capitalism is an intrinsically colonial system, which has and continues to depend on something “external” (nature, human work, creativity, care-taking) “from which to usurp value, without any cost and without offering any equivalent service.”<sup>16</sup> The rejection (of persons, of cultures, of territories) is the compensation for externalization, a diabolical operation in which capitalist accounting will show itself as it is, as a system in which some people, which always has to be a minority, live at the cost of others, which have to be the majority, and which too often are abundant. What the official economy calls externalities means, in practice, that we have organized our lives at the expense of others on whom we have laid the costs of our lifestyle.<sup>17</sup>

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15 MELUCCI, Alberto, *Vivencia y convivencia* [Living and Living Together], Trotta (Madrid, 2001), p. 54.

16 HICKEL, Jason, *Menos es más* [Less Is More], Capitan Swing (Madrid, 2023), pp. 175-176.

17 LESSENICH, Stephen, *La Sociedad de la externalización* [The Society of Externalizaion]. Herder (Barcelona, 2019), p. 67.

# THIS ECONOMY KILLS

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Because of the crisis of 2008 and the response of austerity on the part of the principal international institutions, the economists Lourdes Benería and Carmen Sarasúa claimed that, in the same way that after the Second World War institutions and procedures were created to pursue the political crimes against humanity, it was the moment to do the same thing for economic crimes.<sup>18</sup>

Crimes, yes; not phases, crises, circumstances or cycles. They are conscious decisions, informed and selfish, by persons and institutions which cause suffering and death through policies of structural adjustment, cutting back on social investments, lowering of public services. It was decisively denounced by the public health experts David Stuckler and Sanjay Basu:

If the experiments in austerity had been regulated by the same rigorous methods as clinical trials, a committee of medical ethicists would have suspended them a long time ago. [...] In the last instance, austerity has failed because it is not supported by logic or by solid data. It was a part of the belief that a reduced government and some free markets are always better than intervention by the state. [...] The greatest tragedy of austerity is not that it has damaged our economies. The greatest tragedy is the unnecessary human suffering that it has caused.<sup>19</sup>

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- 18 BENERÍA, Lourdes, SARASÚA, Blanca, “Crímenes económicos contra la humanidad [Economic Crimes Against Humanity]”. *El País*, March 29, 2011. Amplified in 2021 with the title “Delitos y crímenes económicos contra la humanidad”, *Revista de Economía Crítica*, 7 (12), pp. 156-159.
- 19 STUCKLER, David, BASU, Sanjay, *Por que la austeridad mata [Why Austerity Kills]*, Taurus (Madrid, 2013), pp. 228-229.

## Death and Suffering

In a joint article published in 2014, Stuckler and his colleagues classified as “denialism” the policies imposed by the Greek and Spanish governments, among others, and by various international agencies when they rejected and discredited all of the scientific evidence that warned about the effects of austerity on the health of their populations<sup>20</sup> Because capitalism kills in a regular way during its normal functioning, not only in moments of economic crisis nor as a consequence of unforeseen failures or errors in calculation.

Anne Case and Angus Deaton in 2020 signed off on an essential investigation concerning deaths of desperation (suicides, alcoholism, addictions) that reduce the life expectancy of workers in the United States (above all male and white) with less education, struck since the 1970’s by the increasing precariousness of their lives and jobs, and by the dismantling of all the public and communitarian institutions that could sustain them. These deaths of desperation increased from a figure of 30 per 100,000 in 1960 to one of 92 per 100,000 in 2017, until it reached in that year a figure of 158,000 deaths, which contrasts with the 40,100 victims of traffic accidents and the less than 20,000 homicides.<sup>21</sup>

Deaths of desperation. Now we are moved just by the use of the term. It is an expression of unbearable moral suffering, of an absolute loss of a connection with life, motivated not by chronic physical pain, but by other causes. It deals with, for certain, self-inflicted deaths, of deaths “by one’s own hand”, as Ann Case said in an interview.<sup>22</sup> But we are also dealing with examples of mental or moral suffering in the final moment of its denouement. If we look at them from their origins, we encounter deaths unleashed by *social suffering*. They are not only tragic deaths, but also unjust deaths which have to do with the “normal” functioning of a social system, capitalism, that, as has been denounced publicly by Pope Francis, rejects and kills.

The European Union and Spain present a situation that is absolutely comparable to that described by Case and Deaton for the United States. The difference is marked here by the existence of several systems of universal public health care, by social networks that are communitarian and denser and more normal, and by the much lesser impact of what has been called the opioid “epidemic”, which is destroying the health and life of millions of Americans. Nevertheless, there are

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20 KENTIKELENDIS, Alexander, KARANIKOLOS, Marina, REEVES, Aaron, MCKEE, Martin, STUCKLER, David. “Greece’s Health Crisis: From Austerity to Denialism”, *Lancet*, February 22, 2014, 383 (9918), pp. 748-753.

21 CASE, Anne, DEATON, Angus, *Muertes por desesperación y el futuro del capitalismo* [Deaths of Desperation and the Future of Capitalism], Planeta (Barcelona, 2020), pp. 65 and 143-144.

22 CASE, Ann, “People Feel That Their Ability To Contribute To Society Has Been Terribly Thwarted”. *Issues in Science and Technology*, XXXIX/1, p. 26.

certain risks that the phenomenon of deaths of desperation can be transferred to Europe.<sup>23</sup>

## Accumulation and Reification

Under the paraphernalia of bits and algorithms that characterizes its digital epidermis, the global capitalist economy is a return to the worst of the original or primitive accumulation which obtained in the beginnings of capitalism. It was “the brutal process of separation of the people from the means of supplying themselves”,<sup>24</sup> by means of the fencing in of common land and the reorganization of the times of daily life in order to subject them to the exigencies of production, like through colonialism or slavery, all of it executed with direct and extreme violence. At the current time, we are talking about policies of extraction and of accumulation for dispossession,<sup>25</sup> of the reemergence of predatory social formations based on a plan of expulsion,<sup>26</sup> of the privatization of the common property of humanity (like water and the forests)<sup>27</sup> and of the criminal dream of the global elites that they – they alone and only them – can “put themselves safely apart from the world”<sup>28</sup> avoiding the consequences of the ecological catastrophe that threatens our future. “For the first time, a movement of great magnitude is trying not to confront seriously the geopolitical reality, but rather to situate itself outside of all restrictions – literally offshore – like the fiscal paradises. The most important thing is not to have to share with others a world that will never again be common.”<sup>29</sup>

Reification, the reduction of everything (nature, persons) to the category of an object, a thing, a purely instrumental relationship with the world, is the other side of the Enlightenment, perhaps its condition of possibility, at least in its concrete historical manifestation. It is this reification that allows us to practice rejection so happily: nature as a thing, the person as a thing, natural and human resources, instrumentalism carried to the extreme.

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23 VICENTE, Alejandro, JIMENO, Alejandro, *Muertes por desesperación en Europa: el impacto de la Gran Recesión* [Deaths of Desperation in Europe: The Impact of the Great Recession], Universidad de Alcalá, Instituto Universitario de Analisis Económico y Social. Working Document 07 (2022).

24 PERELMAN, Michael, “La historia secreta de la acumulación primitiva y la economía política clásica [The Secret History of Primitive Accumulation and the Classical Political Economy]”, *Theomai: Estudios sobre sociedad, naturaleza y desarrollo*, 26 (2012), pp. 60-80.

25 HARVEY, David, *El nuevo imperialismo* [The New Imperialism], Akal (Madrid, 2004), pp. 111-140.

26 SASSEN, Saskia, *Expulsiones* [Expulsions], Katz (Buenos Aires, 2015).

27 GORDILLO, José Luis, ed., *Las protecciones de los bienes comunes de la humanidad* [The Protections of the Common Property of Humankind], Trotta (Madrid, 2006).

28 LATOUR, Bruno, *Dónde aterrizar* [Where to Land], Taurus (Madrid, 2019), p. 12.

29 ATOUR, *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

It is certainly true that reification did not begin with capitalism, and not even with the Enlightenment. As is pointed out by Gerda Lerner, “the sexuality of women, that is, their sexual and reproductive capacities and services, were converted into merchandise even before the creation of Western civilization.”<sup>30</sup> It was this same logic that was behind colonialism, the reduction of the other who was colonized “to the status of an object”.<sup>31</sup> But capitalism, with its conversion of everything into merchandise, is the apotheosis of reification, subsuming the reifying logic of patriarchy and colonialism and bringing along its own (economism and classism).

The *pyramids of sacrifice* on which are built capitalist modernization (development) have not disappeared with the passage of time. They continue being here, underneath our ways of life, sustaining our wellbeing. They are relative when we contrast them with the ways of living of the privileged of the global north to which we belong. They are absolute if we compare ourselves with the impoverished majority of the global south. Yes, it is true. This economy kills, literally. It kills by being capitalist, but also by being colonial<sup>32</sup> and patriarchal.<sup>33</sup>

The work of the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe placed into circulation a term, that of necropolitics, which, inspired by the work of biopolitical thinkers like Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben or Agnes Heller, and in their vision of politics as project and technology by the government from and on bodies, emphasizes the dimension of taking life above that of protecting it or guaranteeing it.<sup>34</sup> This capacity for protecting life has been the legitimating foundation of the modern State ever since Hobbes theorized it as that sovereign power that pulls us out of the state of nature in which any human being is a wolf for other human beings. It has escaped no one ever, let alone Hobbes himself, that it is a fact that in order to protect the lives of many, the condition was that the State could take it away from others, that a guarantee of life is unsustainable without the threat of death. But we have preferred to think about our political world by leaving this question in the shade. What Mbembe does is to invert the vision concerning political power and, starting from the colonial experience suffered by so many countries of Africa, including his own, to uncover the true nature of the politics, its essence as a *politics of death*.

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30 LERNER, Gerda, *La creación del patriarcado* [The Creation of the Patriarchate], Crítica (Barcelona, 1990), p. 57.

31 TODOROV, Tzvetan, *La Conquista de América: El problema del otro* [The Conquest of America: The Problem of the Other], Siglo XXI (Madrid, 1987), p. 142.

32 KOSHY, Susan, CACHO, Lisa Marie, BYRD, Jodi A., JEFFERSON, Brian (eds), *Colonial Racial Capitalism*, Duke University Press (Durham, 2022).

33 MIES, María, *Patriarcado y acumulación a escala mundial* [Patriarchy and Accumulation on a Global Scale], Traficantes de Sueños (Madrid, 2019); MIES, María, *Women: The Last Colony*. Zed Books (London, 1988).

34 MBEMBE, Achille, *Necropolítica* [Necropolitics]. Melusina (Madrid, 2011).

In the same way, it is appropriate to reflect on capitalism as an economy of death or necronomy. Has capitalism done many of us well in material terms? There is no room for discussion because all we have to do is look around us. We are in the *bio* part of the capitalist economy, on the cusp of the capitalist food chain.

## Can We Imagine an Interruption (Conversion)?

The capitalist economy is a necronomy, an economy that acts against life, but this message is meshed into certain communities only with difficulty, even in Christian communities and those in which men and women of a bourgeois lifestyle and mentality predominate, for whom, in general, capitalism works well. We have employment, decent salaries, properties, opportunities for consumption, etc. We are, as pointed out by Metz, people “who already have a future”, and therefore we have objective difficulties in listening and personalizing the Messianic words of the Kingdom of God and of a future in it which has already begun. The only future of which we can conceive and which we desire is the “sublimation and solemn glorification of a preconceived bourgeois future.” But the Messianic future of the Christian faith “does not confirm and corroborate our preconceived bourgeois future, it does not prolong it, adds nothing to it, does not sublimate it or glorify it, but rather interrupts it.”<sup>35</sup> We do not like interruptions; we want more of the same. More than anything, we want growth.

We are facing, then, a problem of conversion, of a profound change in our hearts, of *metanoia*,<sup>36</sup> which, in sociological terms, would require a de-classification (abandoning the ideal of a bourgeois future); in economic terms, downsizing and global justice. The proof of that conversion is in what follows, a radical transformation of our economic practices.

The situation is more than clear. Do we really believe that this economy kills? If it does, besides saying it, what are we doing now in order to reduce, to limit, to minimize our participation in it? This is what is proposed by conversion: against the capitalist necronomy, an economy of and for life, and here eco-feminism has much to teach us.<sup>37</sup> Also, Christian eco-feminism or that which is re-

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35 METZ, Johann Baptist, *Mas allá de la religión burguesa* [Beyond Bourgeois Religion], Sígueme (Salamanca, 1982), pp. 11-12.

36 METZ, Johann Baptist, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

37 CAIRO, Gemma, MAYORDOMO, Maribel (eds), *Por una economía sobre la vida* [For an Economy About Life], Icaria (Barcelona, 2005). PÉREZ OROZCO, Amaia, *Subversión feminista de la economía* [Feminist Subversión of the Economy], Traficantes de Sueños (Madrid, 2014). ASENIO, Astrid, *Economía política feminista. Sostenibilidad de la vida y economía mundial* [Feminist Political Economy. Sustainability of Life and the World Economy], Los Libros de la Catarata (Madrid, 2021). CIRMI OBÓN, Lucía, *Economía para sostener la Vida* [Economy to Sustain Life], Akal (Madrid, 2023).



ligiously inspired.<sup>38</sup> The problem is that our capability as Church to establish a sincere dialog with those eco-feminists is gravely limited by the patriarchal slant of our structures. “We are believing women. We are committed and we raise our voices. We will not stop until we put an end to the machismo of the Church,” called out last March our sisters of the group *Revuelta de Mujeres en la Iglesia* (Revolt of Women in the Church). Let us shout it out with them.

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38 RADFORD RUETHER, Rosemary, *Gaya y Dios. Una teología eco-feminista para la recuperación de la tierra* [Gaia and God. An Eco-Feminist Theology to Recover the Earth], Demac (Mexico City, 1991). PRIMAVESI, Anne, *Del Apocalipsis al Génesis* [From the Apocalypse to Genesis], Herder (Barcelona, 1995). RADFORD RUETHER, Rosemary, *Integrating Eco-feminism, Globalization and World Religions*, Rowman & Littlefield (Lanham, 2004). GROSS, Rita M., RADFORD RUETHER, Rosemary, *Religious Feminism and the Future of the Planet: A Christian-Buddhist Conversation*, Bloomsbury (London, 2016). DEANE-DRUMMOND, Celia, ARTINIAN-KAISER, Rebecca (eds.), *Theology and Ecology Across the Disciplines: The Care for our Common Home*, Bloomsbury (London, 2018). EISLER, Riane, *El cáliz y la espada* [The Chalice and the Sword], Capitán Swing (Madrid, 2021). ARMSTRONG, Karen, *Naturaleza Sagrada* [Sacred Nature], Crítica (Barcelona, 2022).

## ALTERNATIVES TO AN ECONOMY THAT KILLS

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Having arrived at this moment, I have to share my uneasiness, my angst, when I try to harmonize in my own life what Pope Francis told us in #53 of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, published some 10 years ago: "Just like the commandment of 'Do not kill' places a clear limit in order to assure the value of human life, today we have to say 'no to an economy of exclusion and inequality.'" That economy kills.<sup>39</sup>

How do we justify the fact of continuing to participate every day in so many ways in an economy that kills? Because it is a fact that we continue doing it, we continue contributing to the functioning of this economy of exclusion and inequality, of this economy guided by a throw-away culture. Or have we changed anything (something substantial) in our economic practices since the intervention of Francis? I am afraid not. I fear that ever since Francis said what he said, and for as many times as he has repeated it afterwards, Catholics, both individual persons and institutions, have continued functioning as the perfect *Homo economicus*, producing and consuming under the rules of this economy... that kills.

Certainly, everything indicates that the same thing occurred with our reception of *Laudato Si'*, at least if we read #2 of the recent Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*. "Eight years have passed since I published the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, when I wanted to share with all of you, brothers and sisters of our suffering planet, my deeply felt concerns concerning the care of our common home. But with the passage of time, I am aware that we do not have sufficient

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39 I have just reflected on this in an article published in *Iglesia Viva*. ZUBERO, Imarol, "Esta economía mata. ¿Y qué? [This Economy Kills. So what?]", *Iglesia Viva*, 295 (2023), pp. 27-46.

responses while the world that welcomes us continues to fall to pieces and perhaps is approaching a breaking point.”

And the thing is that there are alternatives that are within our reach.

In a marvelous book, the essayist Rebecca Solnit recalls and makes her own a discovered reflection by the American sociologist and anarchist activist Paul Goodman: “Let us suppose that we have had the revolution about which we have spoken and about which we dream. Let us suppose that our side won and that we have the class of society that we wanted. How would you live, personally, in this society? Begin to live in that way now!”<sup>40</sup>

Let’s leave behind once and for all the paralyzing roundabout of the discussion about personal change and systemic change, about whether the transformation has to be individual or structural. The problem is not where the task of transformation will terminate: it happens in the structures and institutions. The problem is where the task begins. Can some one of us begin now with the structure? So go ahead and do it. I can’t. Therefore, I will have to begin with what is within my reach: my capability for agency. That’s it. Let us do now what we believe we should do to combat the capitalist necronomy and to contribute to strengthening “the rebellion of the instinct for life against the instinct for socially organized death.”<sup>41</sup>

## Reviewing Our Privileges; Questioning Our Dumb Good Luck

We were born and grew up in a good part of the world, and which for decades we have called “developed” in contrast to the “underdeveloped” part, as if our situation was a question of merit. We have now seen that was not the case. We have not developed ourselves more than other people, but rather on top of others.

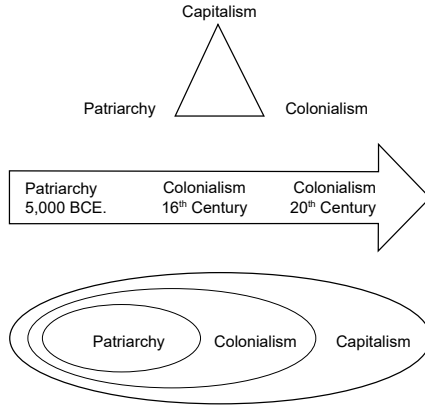
This was not only with regard to ecology, not only in what is referred to as the structure of domination and privilege that is capitalism. That is only one of the great structures, but it is the last after colonialism and patriarchy. Capitalism is one of the structures of domination that configure the system of oppression in whose bosom we live. It is a complex system of domination and privilege formed together at the intersection of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy that are added in and which impose themselves (they don’t overcome or leave behind!) over time and in each historical moment. In order to visualize correctly, we should combine the topographic image, a longitudinal vision of nesting dolls.<sup>42</sup>

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40 SOLNIT, Rebecca, *Esperanza en la oscuridad* [Hope in the Darkness], Capitán Swing (Madrid, 2017), p. 22.

41 MARCUSE, Herbert, “La angustia de Prometeo [The Angst of Prometheus]”, *El Viejo Topo*, 37.

42 ZUBERO, Imanol; “Desigualdad(es) y diversidad(es): elementos para la reflexión [Inequality and diversity: Elements for Reflection]”. SHERSHNEVA, Julia (ed.) *Dimensiones desde la desigualdad*, Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco (Bilbao, 2023), pp. 9-29.



Reni Eddo-Lodge writes in *Por que no hablo con blancos sobre racismo* (Why I don't Talk to White People about Racism):

I have stopped talking to white people about racism. Not with all of them, but with the vast majority who reject accepting the legitimacy of structural racism and its symptoms I cannot continue confronting the abyss of emotional detachment that white people exhibit when a person of color articulates his or her experience. Their visage is turned off and they harden. It is as if someone put sugar syrup in their ears and blocked all of their auditory canals. It is as if they now can't hear us.<sup>43</sup>

As the author points out, if racism were to be contained within words and actions of white extremism, the antiracist struggle would be very simple. It would be enough to ban speeches that are inflammatorily racist, by punishing politically the xenophobic parties, or by fighting them in the streets. But racism is structural, “it overlaps into the fabric of our world”, it exists and persists for and in order to maintain white privilege, which the author defines correctly as “the absence of negative consequences for racism.”<sup>44</sup> This structural racism “not only deprives its victims of power, it also empowers those who are not”, in such a way that “it offers better opportunities in life to white people.”

43 EDDO-LODGE, Reni, *Por que no hablo con blancos sobre racismo* [Why I Don't Talk To White People About Racism], Peninsula (Barcelona, 2021), p. 19.

44 EDDO-LODGE, Reni, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

Exactly the same thing happens with masculine privilege, so for that reason machismo is equally structural. In 1989, the political scientist Peggy McIntosh wrote the following:

The topic of the advantages that men obtain from the disadvantages of women is surrounded by denials that are practically taboos. These denials avoid the full recognition of masculine privilege, or its diminishment or its coming to an end. ... I believe that white people are taught carefully not to recognize white privilege, just as men are taught not to recognize male privilege. It is for that reason that, without anyone teaching me, I have begun to ask myself what it feels like to enjoy white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible packet of undeserved advantages that I hope to make use of every day, but about which "it is supposed" that I will not think. ... To describe white privilege makes one responsible. Just like those of us who collaborate in Women's Studies work to reveal male privilege and ask men to renounce a part of their power, someone who writes about what it means to have white privilege ought to ask themselves "Now that I have described it, what am I going to do to diminish it or do away with it?"<sup>45</sup>

Let's apply the reflections of Reni Eddo-Lodge and Peggy McIntosh to capitalist privilege. Now that we have described it, what are we going to do to diminish it or do away with it?

It is fundamental to begin by recognizing and naming the structures of domination and privilege in those of us who are developing our lives: patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism. We are sons and daughters of such structures. The spectrum of our desires, fears and expectations is formatted by this reality. It is for that reason that we should deconstruct ourselves before constructing anything different: de-patriarch ourselves, de-colonialize ourselves, de-capitalist ourselves. If we don't, everything that we might do would be to reproduce those structures.

If we are not acting with conscious agency, we will be unconscious structure.

## Teaching the Desire to Desire

José Luis Sampedro expressed it beautifully in *El río que nos lleva* (The River that Carries Us). "How does one project out from the existing point of view if it is the first obstacle to the future?" How can one want something different when coming out of inside of this efficient factory of bastardized and domesticated

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45 MCINTOSH, Peggy, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsacks", *Peace and Freedom* (1989). <https://redfeminismo.wordpress.com/2016/09/15/el-privilegio-blanco-deshaciendo-la-maleta-invisible>

desires that is capitalism? And even before him, the question was asked in 1967 by Marcuse. “We find ourselves today facing the problem that transformation is objectively necessary, but precisely the things that were classically defined as the agents of transformation do not feel the necessity for it. You have to begin by suppressing the mechanisms that drown out that subjective necessity, but this presupposes in turn the subjective necessity of eliminating those mechanisms. This is a dialectic in which I do not see an exit.”<sup>46</sup>

In his biography about William Morris, E. P. Thompson reflects about the consequences that the failure of utopian socialism had in relation to the later development of Marxism. The utopia that was held to by these socialists, understood as the education of desire, supposed the opening of a faucet to the imagination “teaching desire to desire, to desire better, to desire more, and above all, to desire in a different way”. Because,

An uneducated “desire”, except in the exasperating practice of the class struggle, could tend – as Morris pointed out frequently – to spread on its own, sometimes for good and sometimes for bad, but again and again falling back on “common sense” or the habitual virtues of the host society. So that what can be overlapping in the “Morris case” is the whole problem of subordination of the utopian imaginative faculties in the later Marxist tradition. Its lack of a moral self-consciousness and even of a vocabulary relative to desire, its inability to project images of the future, including its tendency to fall back, instead of that, on to the terrestrial paradise of utilitarianism, that is, the maximization of economic growth.<sup>47</sup>

An uneducated desire ends up reproducing the desires appropriate to capitalism (that of colonialism and patriarchy). “We don’t have cheap dreams”, as applauded by the organization of Lotteries and Gambling of the State in one of the most immoral publicity campaigns that I can recall.<sup>48</sup>

## Reviewing Our Ways of Life

As noted by Peter Singer, most of the options that we take in our daily life are *restricted* choices, given that they are made within the framework of a given schema or group of values. They are choices in which we do not put into play fundamental values. The choices are a question of which are the best means to

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46 MARCUSE, Herbert, *El final de la utopía* [The End of Utopia], Planeta de Agostini (Barcelona, 1986), pp. 72-73.

47 THOMPSON, Edward P., *William Morris*. Edicions Alfons El Magnanim (Valencia, 1988), p. 728.

48 <https://www.marketingdirecto.com/creacion/spots/no-tenemos-suenos-baratos-el-nuevo-spot-de-la-primitiva>

achieve what is valued. Nevertheless, in the *ultimate choices*, one begins with the fundamental values themselves, and we then choose between different ways of life, more or less in agreement with our ideals of morality. So then in the option that we take, we are dealing with our ethical coherence, our moral identity itself.<sup>49</sup>

Well then, it is possible to hold that, at the present time, all of the options that we take in our daily life have acquired the character of ultimate choices. How do we warm or cool our homes? What jewelry do we wear? Do we take advantage or not of the incredible offers that the low-cost airlines offer us to fly to any of the warm island paradises? What do we eat? Etc. A damnable *ripple effect* today makes even the smallest acts that we do in the course of any day in our lives be full of consequences on the existence of millions of people. We inhabit a world of “overlapping communities of purpose”,<sup>50</sup> in which not only the trajectories of countries intertwine one with another, but also the trajectories of individuals themselves interconnect in ways that constantly become more evident, but not for that reason less real.

We are not talking about sitting an individual in the dock while absolving the “system”; nor about not recognizing the structural dimensions of the problems which we face. But it is fundamental to assume that nothing is possible without a real and effective involvement of the maximum number of individuals in the process of changing the standards of consumption which are characteristic of our model of growth. As Monbiot points out, “We cannot continue blaming only the government or the parsimonious institutions with which the world is responding to climate change. They cannot do anything until we want them to. At this time, we want everything: beaches with palm trees, monstrous cars, televisions with plasma screens and a peaceful conscience, etc. The governments are not interested in questioning our fantasies. If their aspirations and ours differ too sharply, they lose elections. They are not going to act with force until we demonstrate to them that we have changed.”<sup>51</sup>

## Introducing Changes in Our Way of Life

“Can a socialist and a communist of the 21<sup>st</sup> century not be vegetarian?”, Jorge Riechmann asks himself.<sup>52</sup> Can a Christian also not be one? What elements of our life style are incompatible with our ideals of life? It is very easy to elaborate a check list of necronomy in our daily life and of its alternatives. Let each person

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49 SINGER, Peter, *Una vida ética. Escritos* [An Ethical Life. Writings], Taurus (Madrid, 2002), p. 280.

50 HELD, David, *Un pacto global* [A Global Treaty], Taurus (Madrid, 2005), p. 15.

51 MONBIOT, George, *Calor* [Heat], RBA (Barcelona, 2006), p. 20-21.

52 RIECHMANN, Jorge, “¿Pueden un socialista y una comunista del siglo XXI no ser vegetarianos? [Can a socialista and a communist of the 21st century not be vegetarians?]”, *Viento sur*, 125 (2012), pp. 40-49.

write his or her own list. But they should do it! They should try to do it in an exercise of non-collaboration with injustice. And not only in relation to habits of consumption: how much do we act carefully and how much don't we? How central is reproduction in our lives? How much of our time is dedicated to caring for life and how much to its lack of care? Let us care for all that we can and let us change our priorities.

## Acting Collectively

As we have already developed in the 7<sup>th</sup> Report of FOESSA<sup>53</sup>, there have existed and there exist at present very numerous group initiatives under names such as *social and unified economy, economy of the common good, economy for life, economy pro community, and alternative economy*. These are practical initiatives, local, close by, among which it is worth distinguishing fine points and differences, but which in general share various basic principles:

1. That the objective of the economy should be to achieve the satisfaction of the basic needs of the whole population, without the wellbeing of some people depending on the exclusion of others;
2. That the economic activities and processes should be ecologically and socially sustainable;
3. That these activities should be governed by the principles of democracy, equality and non-discrimination, always responding to the aspirations and the policy decisions of the community in which they are inserted.

Real and nearby social practices, oriented by strong normative principles, but which do not remain as mere ideological statements. Practices of collaboration, of cooperation, of communion, of solidarity, of simplicity, of self-containment, that put the lie to what is today the hegemonic discourse of the amoral and asocial *Homo economicus*. This is the challenge and the value of alternative economies: to constitute themselves of *unheard-of viabilities, in unperceived practicable solutions* that might allow us to visualize, here and now, that other world that is not yet.<sup>54</sup>

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53 ZUBERO, Imanol, (ed), “¿Qué sociedad saldrá de la actual crisis? ¿Qué salida de la crisis impulsará esta sociedad? [What society Will come out of the current crisis? Que exit from the crisis will foster that society?]”, VII Informe sobre exclusión y Desarrollo social en España, Fundación FOESSA (Madrid, 2014). <https://www.foessa.es/capitulos/que-sociedad-saldrade-la-actual-tesis-que-salida-de-la-tesis-impulsara-la-sociedad>.

54 ZUBERO, Imanol, “Economías alternativas [Alternative Economies]”, *Documentacion social*. #1 <https://documentacionsocial.es/1/ciencia-social/economias-alternativas>.



## Opting for public Property As Opposed to Private Property

Strengthen those things that are public and communal. Housing, vehicles, spaces, education, insurance. Social life – and even more alternative social life – is in need of some adequate material conditions (infrastructure). Put money into good social infrastructures, that are public and with universal access (schools, parks, plazas, libraries, etc.) that invite people to stop and meet each other, that are not simply spaces but are converted into places, into meaningful habitats, is indispensable if we wish to halt and reverse the tendency to merchandize urban life. “It will not be easy to restore the spirit of a common purpose or a shared humanity necessary for daily life, but, as long as we do not build social infrastructures of a better quality, the arduous task that awaits us will be impossible. The future of our democracy is at stake.”<sup>55</sup>

## Collectively Influencing from the Perspective of Structural Change

We are speaking of the importance of organized sociopolitical action and the vote. But yes, I already know that we are living at a time of disaffection, won over by an institutional policy that becomes more and more sick and sickening. I know what I am talking about.<sup>56</sup> But those of us who can (because the majority of humankind can't, because of the political regime under which they live or their economic situation; poor people vote much less than those who are better situated) should use all the tools of democracy in order to change reality. We can choose where and how to do politics, but we cannot choose not to do politics. We don't participate politically in function of our interests and needs, but rather in function of the interests and needs of the most vulnerable persons. Our political participation should arise from an option for them. It is their wellbeing and not ours that guides our action.

Eagleton has expressed it perfectly: “There is no other place to begin. If we want a different future, it will have to be the future of this our particular present. And the greater part of the present is made up of the past. We are not able to rely on anything more with which to confect a future than are not the few and inadequate tools that we have inherited from the past. And they are tools stained with the legacy of calamity and exploitation through which they have passed down to us. Rejecting these tools (social reforms, unions, political parties, parliamentary

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55 KLINENBERG, Eric, *Palacios del pueblo* [Palaces of the People], Capitán Swing (Madrid, 2021), p. 217.

56 ZUBERO, Imanol, “Política de ida y vuelta [Politics Coming and Going]”, *Razón y Fe*, 264 (2018), pp. 71-77.

democracy, social organizations) only serves to construct for us a self-identity as immaculate as it is impotent.”<sup>57</sup>

## Being Openly Anti-Capitalist, Anti-Colonial and Anti-Patriarchal

“Acceptable capitalism” is a fraud<sup>58</sup> (let us recover, reread and converse again about the indispensable book by José Ignacio González Faus) and idolatry, as was explained on so many occasions by the late Txema Mardones: “An idolatrous cult that blocks us from seeing the otherness of people, especially the poor majority of this world, and of experiencing the Gospel of Jesus Christ as joyful news that the Kingdom has been revealed to the poor and humble and to those who opt for them.”<sup>59</sup>

## And not Dying of Sadness in the Attempt

Raffaele Simone has characterized the attitude in life of a person of the Left (in order that no one should be painted with the brush of partisanship when they are less uncomfortable with the world of today and aware of the victims of unjust structures) as that of one who has to permanently maintain tension in a spring that tends to return to its original position as soon as we release the pressure. Dealing with the “amiable monster” that is capitalism, which rewards us for just letting go, confronting it has an intrinsically penitential dimension. It requires permanent attention, effort and renunciation.<sup>60</sup>

In order to be on the Left, it is necessary to have tucked into your waistband the motivations in the postulates of the Right, with a varying degree of effort on oneself, that is to say, renunciation, including at the cost of denying or limiting one’s own resources. This is the aspect of the Left that is at the same time both admirable and demented (and it is what approximates in certain aspects some form of religious devotion): renunciation when one can have something? Deprive oneself when you can accumulate? Make yourself equal when you can prevail?<sup>61</sup>

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57 EAGLETON, Terry, *Por que Marx tenia razón* [Why Marx Was Right], Peninsula (Barcelona, 2011), p. 72.

58 GONZÁLEZ FAUS, José Ignacio, *El engaño de un capitalismo aceptable* [The Fraud of an Acceptable Capitalism], Sal Terrae (Santander, 1983).

59 MARDONES, José M., *Capitalismo y religión* [Capitalism and Religion], Sal Terrae (Santander, 1991), p. 287.

60 SIMONE, Raffaele, *El Monstruo Amable* [The Friendly Monster], Taurus (Madrid, 2011), p. 187.

61 SIMONE, Raffaele, *Op. cit.*, pp. 181-182.

Effort, renunciation, self-limitation. A daunting prospect, no? How do you maintain yourself and extend such a proposition to others?

There is a book that has accompanied me for many years and to which I turn frequently. It is *The Feast of Fools*, originally published in 1969 by the theologian Harvey Cox. In its first pages, Cox points to the existence at that time of a breach, which he considered inevitable, “between those who want to change the world, and those who dedicate themselves to singing the joy of living.” Cox was referring to the open division between countercultural movements which practiced alternative communal lifestyles, who experimented with drugs and delved deeply into new spiritualities (like the hippies), and those who radicalized their criticism of the system and opted for strategies of direct confrontation, sometimes violent, to tear it down. In Cox’s opinion, there was not any reason that this breach had to exist. “There exist no reasons why those who know how to enjoy the joys of life cannot, at the same time, commit themselves to a deep social change. And those who propose to change the world have no reason why they have to be sad and ascetic.” Even more, “the radicals,” Cox held, “would be more effective if, from time to time, they allowed themselves to live – even if only occasionally – as if all the objectives for which they are fighting had been completely fulfilled.”<sup>62</sup>

Isn’t this from whence comes our eschatological tension, knowing how to live serenely with the profound knowledge of the “now, but not yet” of the Kingdom of God? Of celebrating what has been achieved without leaving off the search for what needs to be done?

There is a profound happiness in the disconnection of capitalism, a system that, despite what it claims, is not a productive cornucopia of unending abundance, but rather a machine designed to produce constant scarcity, without which the gears of accumulation and growth would collapse.<sup>63</sup> Having surpassed the shadows of the satisfaction of essential needs, shadows that the majority of those of us who live in the global north have left behind a long time ago,<sup>64</sup> a life of sufficiency is joyously liberating. Recognizing everything that we have to spare instead of living in anxiety for what we lack is the key to a happy sobriety.<sup>65</sup>

And the same thing occurs whenever we de-colonialize and de-patriarchize ourselves, when we despoil ourselves of the unbearable weight of the invisible and unlivable baggage of white and masculine privilege.

It is then when we are able to experience the blessedness of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. It is a promise. “Seek first the Kingdom of God and its justice and everything else will be given to you as well” (Mt 6:24-34).

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62 COX, Harvey, *Las Fiestas de Locos* (Feast of Fools), Taurus (Madrid, 1972), p. 12.

63 HICKEL, *Op. cit.*, p. 230.

64 SKIDELSKY, Robert, and SKIDELSKY, Edward, *¿Cuánto es suficiente? ¿Qué se necesita para una “buena vida”?* [How Much Is Enough? What Is Needed for a “Good Life”?], Crítica (Barcelona, 2012).

65 RABHI, Pierre, *Hacia la sobriedad feliz* [Towards a Happy Sobriety], Errata naturae (Madrid, 2013).

## APPENDIX: THREE REACTIONS TO THE CONFERENCE BY IMANOL

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### An Economy that Really Kills

*Miriam Feu. Department head at Caritas Barcelona*

The consequences of this necronomy which has been explained to us so clearly by Imanol are felt most of all by the persons who find themselves in a situation of greater vulnerability. They are people in a situation of exclusion, who in reality are persons who have been made invisible and with their most basic rights wounded, but whom we see and know from the social entities. According to the FOESSA Foundation, we are talking about 11 million people in a situation of social exclusion in Spain, and 2.2 million in Cataluña.

And we have seen how that right which was converted into material for speculation, housing, leaves people and their families out in the cold. They are surviving in situations on the street, in substandard housing and subletting rooms. I am stopping for a moment here because I would like for us to be conscious of what that means: permanent insecurity that they might be thrown into the street, a lack of defense from all kinds of abuses (from abusive prices, the fear of sharing common spaces with unknown people, difficulties of living together, schedules for using the bathroom, etc.), a high rate of turnover and difficulty getting rooted in the neighborhood, and everything all the more difficult when there are children who cannot make noise, have no space to study and cannot be left alone. The fear of not having enough money at the beginning of the month in order to pay for the room, united with being obliged to have to choose between living on the street or not eating. One's home is the place to rest, to feel secure, protected. How far away that sounds for more and more people!

The difficulty in facing the costs of housing and utilities is not only because of runaway rental costs, but also because of a bifurcated labor market, where employment is divided between "employment" and "labor precariousness". Where

working for a few hours a month forms a part of normalcy, since the salary is not enough to cover all of the most basic necessities. Where instability does not allow for planning for one's life, but rather surviving with water up to your neck. A professional career remains far off along with personal actualization at work, etc. Even having the most elemental thing which would be a labor contract is now only a dream for people in an irregular administrative situation. These are the people who are fired and made invisible including in the statistics where they don't count. They do not exist. But, on the other hand, they are essential, as has been recalled to us by Imanol. Only some "paper borders" mark the difference between citizens of the first and second class, or non-citizens directly.

It is possible to add here the lack of places for the culture of meeting one another, the lack of the production of ties to the community, the lack of social networks which makes people sit alone. It makes them isolated when we know that resiliency is built up in community, because it is not the same thing to face difficulties alone or in companionship.

And thus, breaches are opened up in the conditions of life which place women at a disadvantage as well as migrants, families with children and adolescents and more often young people. By means of the intergenerational transmission of poverty, future generations are more unequal, given that the children and adolescents that live in these conditions today have a greater probability of reproducing them in their own families tomorrow, while we do not have clear the right to care and the principle of a higher interest for the children.

Finally, a little note about the framework from which we observe in the present. It still is difficult for us to come out of the point of view of assisting and looking at it from the point of view of personal rights. It is difficult for us to think about a "we" that includes all others; it is difficult to give full meaning to values like solidarity, which today has been devalued and has lost the meaning of brother and sisterhood that it should have.

And if we the people have some fundamental rights, it is because as a society we have some fundamental obligations which guarantee them. Recalling Z. Bauman, the load-bearing strength of a bridge is not the average strength of the piers, but rather the strength of the weakest pier. What marks our worth as a society is how we treat those people who find themselves in situations of most fragility.

## **Expansion of Capital in Capitalism**

*David Murillo. Dean of the Department of Society, Politics and Sustainability of ESADE*

The social, political and ecological challenges that capitalism carries with it, emanate from the motor itself that drives it. We are referring to capital. If we use the

Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the principal indicator being used, to examine its evolution, we can observe a definitive element of the same thing: its expansive nature. If the world GDP for the year 2000 was \$48 trillion, in 2010 it was at \$64 trillion (\$16 trillion more than 10 years before), and in 2020, the year of a world-wide contraction due to the pandemic, it reached \$82 trillion (\$18 trillion above that of 2010).<sup>66</sup>

We know something else about this capital. We know that it is avaricious, colonizing, and a great externalizing machine of social and environmental costs that are reproduced at the same time. This is an expansion that implies the increase of the consumption of natural resources, and which, in turn, correlates with the global emission of gases with a warming effect. One cannot just turn the page on this. There is no growth without the extraction of resources or pollution.<sup>67</sup> There is no acceleration of one without an acceleration of the others. On top of everything, capital advances with the expansion of patterns of consumption by the so-called “first world”, which personify status and individual worth now on a global scale. Let’s recall that it is consumption in the so-called “industrialized” countries that represents between 60% and 70% of the GDP, and that therefore is converted into an objective for emulation on the part of what are called the “emerging countries”.

The expansion of capital is also transferred to the cultural, political and institutional spheres. This is a powerful locomotive, constantly in need of feeding, at the service of the promotion of values that are already known: individualism, quantification, positivism and the maximization of wealth. Obviously, it is important to add to that: power, understood as the capacity to effect change on our surroundings. The agency of transformation, then, is not situated in the person, but rather in this vaporous entity that we call capital, and which acts on another artificial construct, with limits that are more and more tenuous, that we call “the market”.

But let us continue on with mapping this expansion. If Rosa Luxemburg<sup>68</sup> has already defined the colonizing character of capital on new geographical spaces as a characteristic of the system, more recent works speak to us about the perfecting of this colonization in the sphere of the home, the family and the individual.<sup>69</sup> As we are reminded by the feminist critique, we look to nature as the space for civilizing and colonizing the invasion of capital into our private lives,

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66 Global GDP adjusted for inflation. Data from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund gathered at <https://www.worldometers.info/gdp/#gdpyear>.

67 WIEDMANN, Thomas, LENZEN, Manfred, KEYSER, Lorenz T. and STEINBERGER, Julia K., “Scientists’ Warning on Affluence”, *Nature Communications*, 11 (1), (2020), 3107.

68 LUXEMBURG, Rosa, “The Accumulation of Capital”, in *The Reproduction of Capital and Its Social Setting* (1913).

69 CRUZ ORTIZ DE LANDAZÚRI, Manuel, “Desde la Biopolítica de Foucault a la Psicopolítica de Byung-Chul Han [From the Biopolitics of Foucault to the Psycho-politics of Byung-Chul

into the area of leisure and domestic life, now placed at the service of productivity or the optimization of our productive capacity.<sup>70</sup> This is leisure seen as lost time, as the cost of opportunity, that awaits, or better yet demands, a better use: productive formation or the taking on of an extra job. Children are seen as the brake to professional progress.

If fifty years ago we were discussing the monetization of the area of care and the creation of a new type of employment tied to domestic tasks that had been externalized, today we are talking about the use of gaming techniques in our digital conduct: about incentivizing through prizes and virtual stimulants our interaction on networks. All of this ends up in the “war for attention” to which we subject our children, ourselves, increasingly captured by visual impacts that are full of emotions, of clickbait, or of game-like competitions that go to making possible spaces for advertising only if they maximize our presence on the internet. All of this, clearly, at the cost and risk of increasing political polarization and prejudicing the mental health of both younger and older people.

It might be in the area of ideology where the expansive effect of capital is most long lasting. What effects does it have? We have already seen the most immediate effect: the reduction of progress to growth and then that to a specific arbitrary indicator like the GDP.<sup>71</sup> It is an indicator that is immune to unsustainability, but that we continue promoting under the influence of an automated and self-reproductive greed that takes the form of university textbooks, free courses on investing in the stock market or in pension funds that are called “sustainable”. This is the de-politicization of capital, so well expressed by Bauman in the adage “politics proposes and the market disposes”, which normalizes the dissolution of human agency as the motor of social change. As a result, can we really be surprised about the multiplication of conflicts and tensions that go hand in hand with the domination of capital?

The sociologist Erik Olin Wright<sup>72</sup> in his day presented different strategies of resistance to defeat indifference or pessimism. On the one hand, the exercise of criticism. Denouncing the effects of this capital on society and the planet, its epistemological (what it says that it knows about the world) and ontological (the economic playing field in which it is situated) traps. On the other hand, making livable and promoting alternative spaces, at the same time both social and (re)

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Han], *Athea Digital. Revista de Pensamiento e Investigación Social*. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, vol. 17, #1 (2017), pp. 187-203.

70 FRASER, Nancy, *Los talleres ocultos del capital. Un mapa para la izquierda* [Hidden Workshops of Capital. A Map for the Left], Traficantes de Sueños (Madrid, 2020).

71 For a narration concerning the capture of the language around the notion of growth, see RAWORTH, Kate, “Change the Goal”, in *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economist*, Chelsea Green Publishing (Vermont, 2017), pp. 31-60.

72 WRIGHT, Erik Olin, *How to be an Anti-Capitalist in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Verso (London, New York, 2019).

productive, far removed from the logic of capital and the extractive paradigm. Finally, taking power, the conscious influencing in the realms of politics and debate of ideas with the goal of correcting the primacy of capital and again moving the person to the center. The roots of this movement of transformation are there and we can retake them. Each country and each culture will find their path. In the West, the humanistic ideal, which is part of our cultural baggage<sup>73</sup> can serve us again for a journey that is not only possible, but also necessary.

## Economic Counterpoint from the Social Doctrine of the Church

*Inma Naranjo Cruces, Company of Mary, administrator and provincial administrator*

The topic that was suggested to me to be a counterpoint to the presentation of Imanol Zubero is one for which I am passionate to be able to apply it to my service and as a part of my tie with the group of economists of *Cristianisme i Justícia*.

The social doctrine of the Church begins from a life of giving answers to everyday situations in the light of the Gospel, the Word of God, the fathers of the Church and the Magisterium. Within the Magisterium, Pope Francis is one who, in the most radical way, from the beginning of his pontificate, has criticized the reigning economic system. Let's remember that the social doctrine gives principles, not technical solutions nor alternative models, but rather it orients us to be critical.

So, in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), Pope Francis uses the word “to kill” in order to indicate the consequences which are produced by the current economy. “Just as the commandment not to kill lays down a clear limit to assure the value of human life, today we have to say “no” to an economy of exclusion and inequality.”

Along the same line, we can consider a part of the address that the Pope gave to the young people of Asis at the end of September, 2023, inside of the movement that he himself has promoted and which is known as “Francis’s economy”: “The economy that kills, that excludes, that contaminates, that produces war, is not an economy,” Francis declared. For him, “to economize means to take care of the common home, and this will not be possible if we do not have eyes that are trained to see the world from the peripheries: the view of the excluded, of the last”. As Imanol commented, this point emphasizes the importance of the point of view from where we are looking here in the “first world”. Francis continues to point out that “the integral economy is the one that is done with and for the poor.” Bergoglio recalls that “in an economy there also exist great ones and small

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73 SADIN, Eric, *La siliconización del mundo. La irresistible expansión del liberalismo digital* [Siliconizing the World. The Irresistible Expansion of Digital Liberalism], Caja Negra (Buenos Aires, 2016).



ones, poverty and wealth, and many other opposing pairs.” In order to escape from this paradigm, he defends the idea that the economy has to be “a place of inclusion and cooperation, of continual generation of value for being created and put into circulation with all the others.” At this point, I would like to emphasize that in the alternatives proposed by Imanol, he started from the personal, the conversion, *metanoia*, moving toward the global and structural. Also, in the social doctrine of the Church, Pope Francis proposes it in this way. Thus, the call to work together, to collaborate not as isolated individuals, but rather as a group of humans, as a community.

Another point that I would like to note in the work of Imanol is the importance that he has given to the feminine vision and the role of the woman. Also, in the address to the young people in Asis. Francis introduces this significant variable. The Pope assumes that the vision of the world that has always been the prevalent one is that of “generally Western men”. Then he intones a *mea culpa*: “During the last centuries we have left on one side – among other things – the viewpoint of women; if they had been present, they would have made us see fewer goods and more relationships, less money and more redistribution, more attention to those who have and those who don’t, more reality and less abstraction.” “Therefore, it is a special joy for me,” he confesses in his written text, “to see so many young women as protagonists in Francis’s economy.”

In addition, we should not lose sight of the principles of the social doctrine: the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity, having at its center the human person as opposed to the capitalist vision of reification, of seeing the person as the object and not as the subject, exactly as it has been developed in the social doctrine of the Church. One of the constants in the social doctrine has been to point out the human character of the economy, a humanized economy at the service of people.

Confronting this, fierce capitalism has been rejected by the social doctrine since it places economic interests first, ahead of the satisfaction of basic necessities. It points out that an economic system that puts into the center the economic subject and not the human person is unjust from its very roots. We should not forget that waste has been shown as a condition making capitalism possible.

Another point that I would like to note from the work of Imanol and related to this point of waste is the ladder of capitalism, more drastic even than the pyramid of capitalism. Inequality is ever greater and, through experience in the area of finance, in moments of greater economic crisis, this grows even more because those who have more wealth have earned more in the financial markets.

In this sphere, Pope Francis has urged us to concrete actions like disinvestment in fossil fuels which he mentioned in *Laudato Si*’ and repeated again in his recent *Laudate Deum*. And also to make investments that are consistent with that and with positive social impact.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

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- 1.** For what reason does the author argue that capitalism, more than an economic system, is also a social system?
- 2.** Provocatively, Imanol says that for a large part of the Christians of the Western world capitalism suits them well. In what sense do you think that “it suits us well” and in what ways does it deteriorate our lives and those of our communities?
- 3.** From the different proposals and alternatives that the author makes in Chapter 3, which do you think is the most urgent or important to take on? Why?
- 4.** After reading the Booklet, do you think that it is an exaggeration to speak about “Necroconomy” or an “economy that kills”?

Cristianisme i Justícia (Lluís Espinal Foundation) is a study center that was created in Barcelona in 1981. It brings together a team of volunteer scholars and activists who desire to promote social and theological reflection that will contribute to the transformation of social and ecclesial structures. It is part of the network of Faith-Culture-Justice Centers of Spain and also of the European Social Centers of the Society of Jesus.

## Booklets CJ

184. *Wasting Food*. J. C. Romero, J. Tatay
185. *Recognition of LGBTQ+ Persons in the Church*. M. Escribano, E. Vilà
186. *The Coronavirus: Mirror of Beliefs*. J. F. Mària
187. *On Technology*. O. Quintana
188. *Fictitious Commodities*. G. Casasnovas (ed.)
189. *The Sequestration of Truth*. J. García del Muro, F. J. Vitoria, S. Herrera
190. *The Passion, Death and Resurrection of Human Rights*. J. Ordóñez
191. *What Is the Purpose of Crying?* J. Laguna
192. *Cultural Democracy*. J. Picó
193. *Against the Necronomy*. I. Zubero

## Cristianisme i Justícia

Roger de Llúria, 13. 08010 Barcelona (Spain)  
+34 93 317 23 38 • [info@fespinal.com](mailto:info@fespinal.com)  
[www.cristianismeijusticia.net](http://www.cristianismeijusticia.net)

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