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PENSAMIENTO ECONÓMICO Y CAMBIO SOCIAL: HOMENAJE A JAVIER IGUÍÑIZ



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WELL-BEING AND LIVING LIFE TO THE FULL: REDUCING INJUSTICE WITH THE CAPABILITY APPROACH AND MORAL THEOLOGY

*Séverine Deneulin and Augusto Zampini Davies*¹

INTRODUCTION

The subject of the social sciences is the study of social, economic and political realities, of whatever humans are making, producing and shaping through their own actions. The subject of theology is the study of the ultimate reality, which many believe to be what or who underpins the human-made world, and on which humans choose, or not, to build their own human actions. This paper explores how the social sciences and theology can mutually enrich each other in their respective analysis of human realities. More concretely, it explores how the specific reality of urban marginalization in Buenos Aires can benefit from a cross-fertilization between the social science framework of the capability approach and the moral theology contained in Catholic social thought.

¹ An earlier version of the paper was presented at an international symposium on Well-being and Social Justice: *Theology and the Capability Approach*, held at the University of Roehampton, London, on 22-24/8/2013. We thank participants for comments on an earlier draft, and Javier Iguíñiz for pioneering the interaction between Sen's capability approach and Catholic moral theology.

Villas miseria, or «towns of misery», is the name given by Argentines to the informal areas situated on vacant urban land, otherwise known as «slums». This land is mainly occupied by families who migrated from the rural areas to the city, or by migrants from neighbouring countries. The *villas* appeared in Buenos Aires in the 1930s when large-scale migration from rural to urban areas started with the government's industrialisation policies. They grew further with the import-substitution policies pursued by many Latin American governments in the 1960s and 70s, and continued their expansion with the economic crisis of the 1980s, the 1990s economic liberalization policies, and the early 2000s economic crisis which ensued from these. In 2010, nearly 6 per cent of the total population of the city of Buenos Aires was estimated to live in *villas*, a threefold increase from 1991². What was once temporary settlement has become a permanent urban feature. As their name already suggests, the *villas miseria* represent a reality of social exclusion and marginalization. How to assess, judge and transform this reality towards greater inclusion and integration? The aim of this paper is to seek an answer to this question with the help of the capability approach and moral theology.

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 briefly introduces the capability approach. Section 3 analyzes the *villas* of Buenos Aires and underlines some limitations of using the capability approach on its own to assess, judge, and transform social realities from the perspective of human freedom it advocates. Section 4 justifies the engagement between the capability approach and moral theology as expressed in Catholic social thought. Section 5 examines some contributions moral theology can make to reducing injustices in the contexts of the *villas*, by drawing on Trinitarian anthropology and parables of the New Testament.

² In absolute terms, the *villa* population amounts to about 165,000, which is a 223 per cent increase from 1991. The real figure may however be much higher given illegal immigration (Macció & Léopore, 2012, pp. 52-53).

The paper concludes by discussing the relevance of our argument beyond Christian theology and Latin America.

THE CAPABILITY APPROACH AS NORMATIVE LANGUAGE

The concept of «capability» first appeared in the late 1970s in Sen's Tanner Lectures entitled «Equality of What» (1980). If we are concerned about equality, Sen argued, then the most appropriate space to assess it is not income or resources but opportunities people have to be or do what they have reason to value, or «capabilities». Measuring inequality in terms of income is important but income is only a means to other ends such as being healthy, being sheltered and hospitable to others, being educated and informed, or being esteemed by others or appearing in public without shame.

Sen talks of this novel approach to assess realities as «a moral approach that sees persons from two different perspectives: *well-being* and *agency*. [...] [E]ach aspect [well-being and agency] also yields a corresponding notion of freedom» (1985, p. 169). Freedom is both the opportunity one has to do what one has reason to value and the process by which that is achieved, whether through one's own involvement or the decision of others. Applied to international development, this moral approach conceives development as a process of emancipation or liberation towards greater freedom, that is, towards greater well-being and agency (1999).

Within the capability approach, well-being is not about how much a person has but about how s/he functions, what s/he succeeds in being or doing: «The primary feature of well-being can be seen in terms of how a person can «function». I shall refer to various doings and beings that come into this assessment as *functionings*. These could be activities (like eating or reading or seeing), or states of existence or being, e.g. being well nourished, being free from malaria, not being ashamed by the poverty of one's clothing or shoes» (1985, pp. 197-198).

The moral approach which Sen presents is one in which the central moral question is, «What kind of a life is she [a person] leading? What does she succeed in doing and in being?» (p. 195). A social arrangement is good if it enables a person to achieve a set of valuable doings and beings. Sen does not give any indication as to what these may be, for his «functioning approach is intrinsically information-pluralist» (p. 200). A person functions in many aspects and there are many valuable activities or states she can do or be. The functionings that people in a fishing community in Valparaiso in Chile have reason to value as part of their human living may be quite different from those of a farming community in the Peruvian Andes.

To this «functioning moral approach», Sen adds another layer and shifts attention from the person's actual functionings to his or her *capability* to function so as to include the freedom a person has to achieve valuable sets of beings and doings. Capabilities are real opportunities people have to achieve functionings.

The third key word of the capability approach, in addition to functionings and capabilities, is agency. Agency is the «pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important» (p. 203). Agency and well-being are connected but do not always go in the same direction. A Brazilian nut farmer in the Amazon who resists illegal logging and campaigns to protect his livelihood may risk his own life. Sen justifies the inclusion of agency in the informational basis of moral judgement on the ground of recognition of responsibility. Persons are not only functioning, doing or being certain things, but they are also responsible (p. 204).

The moral approach which Sen presents does not say whether one type of information —functioning, capability or agency— is more important than another. Their importance varies according to context (p. 208). Agency is therefore also the «grammar» of the language. It is not only a word but also a verb. People are responsible for deciding

whether considerations of agency have priority over well-being, or, whether capabilities are more important than functionings in well-being evaluation, and which functionings to use as informational bases of moral judgements. Sen leaves it up to public reasoning processes within each social setting to decide on these matters (1992, 2004). Others, such as Nussbaum (2000, 2011) or Alkire (2002), have proposed an open-ended list of valuable capabilities or valuable dimensions of well-being.

With its key words and grammar, the capability approach could be compared to a normative language which can be used to construct moral judgments and frame decisions and actions. Each context of analysis will yield different uses and interpretations of the capability approach. The key words and grammar remain the same, but the combination of these will vary according to the contexts in which the language is spoken, the audience to which it is addressed, and the speakers who express the sentences and narrate the analysis.

Sen wrote primarily for neo-classical economists with the intention of demonstrating some problems with neo-classical economics (utility as an approximation of well-being), and for liberal egalitarian philosophers with the intention of demonstrating some problems with Rawls' theory of justice (primary goods as informational basis of justice). Therefore, because Sen developed the basic structure of capability approach with a specific intention within a specific reality and audience, it is subject to interpretation, in the sense that the meaning of the original texts is always to be reconstructed by the reader according to his or her own reality (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 158). The next section narrates the specific reality of urban marginalization in Buenos Aires with the normative language of the capability approach and highlights the work of interpretation needed.

NARRATING A REALITY WITH THE CAPABILITY APPROACH

The kinds of lives people are living

The key question for assessing states of affairs, Sen argued, was «What kind of a life is a person leading? What does she succeed in doing and in being?». What kind of lives are people leading in the marginalized areas of Buenos Aires? Do they have opportunities to achieve a set of what Sen calls valuable beings and doings? The first problem we encounter is how to select the relevant «doings and beings» for the assessment. We follow the practice of those working with the capability approach and use a mixture of data availability, assumptions or consensus about what valuable and participatory processes are (Alkire, 2008a y 2008b).

There is data availability about four capabilities: the capability to be adequately sheltered, to live long and healthy lives, to be educated and to work. Tables 1-4 present a clear pattern of inequality and segregation between how well people in the *villas* are able to live compared to the rest of Buenos Aires. Nearly half of the people in the *villas* live in over-crowded conditions, a figure five times higher than for the rest of the city. Nearly 80 per cent of those who live in the *villas* do not have private medical insurance, compared to 21 per cent of those outside. Women in the *villas* are three times more likely to have a stillborn baby than women in Buenos Aires as a whole. Those who live in the *villas* are at least twice less likely to have completed primary education. Of specific worry is the high percentage of young people, more than a quarter of the population aged between 18 and 25, who are neither working nor studying. More than twice as many heads of households in the *villas* are likely to be unemployed compared to the rest of the city. A very large proportion of the employed are working in the informal sector, where employment is typically more insecure and not linked to social security. The level of professional qualification is also much lower.

Table 1. Indicators of the capability to be adequately sheltered

	Buenos Aires	Non-villas	Villas
Percentage of households without adequate sanitation	0.4	1.2	17.3
Percentage of households living in housing unsuitable for permanent living	4.6	4.3	10.6
Percentage of households with two people or more per room	8.2	6.2	49.7

Table 2. Indicators of the capability to live long and healthy lives

	Buenos Aires	Non-villas	Villas
Percentage of people without private medical insurance	27	21	78
Percentage of children without private medical insurance	18	15	77
Percentage of women aged 14-49 who have delivered stillborn child	2.6	-	8.4

Table 3. Indicators of the capability to be educated

	Buenos Aires	Non-villas	Villas
Percentage of adolescents (13-18) with incomplete primary education	14	13	26
Percentage of young people (18-25) with incomplete secondary education	27	24	72
Average years of study of people aged 25 or over	12.5	-	8
Percentage of young people (18-24) who are neither in work nor at school	9	8	28

Table 4. Indicators of the capability to work and earn a living

	Buenos Aires	Non-villas	Villas
Percentage of active population unemployed	14.2	13.8	26.1
Percentage of young people (18-25) unemployed	26.6	26.3	31.2
Percentage of people employed in the formal sector	57.4	58.6	21.3
Percentage of households heads with professional qualifications	25.2	25.9	0.9
Percentage of household heads with technical qualifications	23.7	24.2	2.6

Source for all tables: Macció and Lépre (2012) on the basis of 2010 national census and 2009 household survey.

Capabilities have been interpreted in this specific urban marginalization context as functionings or achieved outcomes, and not as mere opportunities people have to be adequately sheltered, to live a healthy life, to be educated and work, should they choose to or not. Given the local context, it is very unlikely that adolescents in the *villas* are neither in work nor at school due to personal choice rather than lack of opportunities³.

Moving on from data availability to valuable capabilities/functionings coming from various lists, one could add information about women's capability for reproductive health and bodily integrity (Nussbaum, 2011), or information about aesthetic experiences and access to spaces of beauty which give inner peace (Alkire, 2002).

³ For a critical discussion of the capability/functioning distinction, see Wolff and De-Shalit (2013).

Another valuable capability often mentioned by Sen is the capability to participate in the life of the community. In a detailed study of civil society organizations in two *villas* conducted between December 2010 and August 2011, Mitchell (2012, p. 127) found a very high level of participation. Half the population was involved in at least one civil society organization. The organizations with the largest outreach were those associated with the Catholic parishes. However, moving beyond civil society organizations, political participation within state structures is extremely low. Only fifteen per cent of registered voters voted in the 2008 local elections (Mitchell, 2012, p. 175). A fifth of the people interviewed in the study did not even know that a *Junta de Vecinos*, the neighborhood association supposed to represent the inhabitants among state authorities, existed. Only one per cent of the people interviewed stated they were affiliated to a political organization (Lépure, 2012, p. 236).

As for the capabilities which people themselves value, two capabilities stood out from the interviews carried by Lépure and others (2012) in two specific *villas*: the capability to live in a drug-free, peaceful and secure environment, and to live in decent housing and have access to public infrastructure. Despite this, only eleven percent of all civil society organizations active in the two *villas* were dealing with drug violence, either at prevention or rehabilitation level, only three organizations dealt with housing, and no organization dealt with insecurity and violence (most civil society organizations are involved with nutrition, education and social work).

We are facing here one major area of interpretation within the capability approach literature, whether capabilities are properties of individuals only or whether they are at a level beyond individual reach. The capability approach has been said to be «ethically individualist», in the sense that states of affairs should be evaluated only according to whether they are good or bad for individuals (Robeyns, 2005, 2008). It is individuals, and the opportunities they have to function,

not groups, who are to be the units of moral valuation⁴. However, the capabilities that residents value most, living in a peaceful and planned urban environment, are capabilities which belong to any individual as such, for being free of drug-related violence or treated with respect in the city does not depend on any individual as such. It depends on how people relate to each other both at the inter-personal and structural level. An individual's capability to walk safely depends on other people treating his/her life with respect and not violating him/her, which in turn depends on wider structural considerations. What is the quality of economic, social and political structures in the *villas*, and in the city of Buenos Aires and Argentina? Do they provide the structuring conditions for people to live well in a shared space?

Unjust structures

Starting with economic relations, most people in the *villas* work in the informal sector and do not have access to adequate social protection. An analysis of the quality of the economic structure would require an investigation of the reasons for which the share of the informal economy as part of the overall Argentine economy grew and which specific economic policy decisions taken by specific actors contributed to the informalization of the economy. Other useful information for analyzing the quality of the economic structure relates to macro-economic stability. Of particular concern is the inflation rate which official government statistics grossly underestimate⁵. This has considerable

⁴ A reason for this commitment to ethical individualism is that a focus on groups or structures may hide oppression (Alkire, 2008), e.g. seeing «being part of a family» as valuable in itself, regardless of what this means to family members, passing over the suffering of women or children involved (Robeyns, 2008). See Deneulin (2008) for a discussion on how the capability approach accommodates structuralist interpretations.

⁵ The government puts the inflation rate officially at 10 per cent, but trade unions estimate it at 25-30 per cent. See <http://blogs.elpais.com/el-sur/2013/04/de-como-el-ministro-argentino-de-economia-combate-la-inflacion.html>

effects on the ability that people have to buy basic commodities and achieve a set of basic capabilities such as being adequately nourished and sheltered. Information about the government's monetary policy would be useful in this regard. The macro-economic and labour structures are not given, but are created by the deliberate actions of economic actors through policies such as public spending and fiscal and monetary policy. Other decisions which have accounted for the growth of the *villas* are government economic policies, especially the macro-economic mismanagement and exchange rate policies which led to the 2001-2002 economic crisis and the policies of labour flexibilization in the 1990s which led to the growing informalization of labour markets.

At the social level, relations between people in the *villas* are characterised by a limited sense of social cohesion and perception of common collective identity. This is due in part to the large migration from other countries, which is not conducive to generating a sense of unity to encourage strong political participation (Lépure, 2012, p. 206), and in part to the significant levels of violence, which limit their freedom of movement.

Addressing violence and the lack of urbanization not only requires local organizations to deal with addiction and housing problems but it also requires a state response. The fact that the social structure is characterised by conflict and discrimination is not an accident but the result of policy decisions taken, or not taken. The Argentine government has currently no proper drug policy regarding *paco*⁶, one of the most prevalent and devastating drugs in the *villas*. It is addressed as part of a wider addiction policy and has yet to be criminalized.

⁶ Paco is a chemical residue of cocaine manufacturing and is relatively cheap (1 gram sells for 1 peso), but its addiction effects are immediate and there is irreversible brain damage after six months of use. See <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/822406-crecio-200-el-consumo-de-paco>

The fact that economic and social structures are not conducive to people having opportunities to do or be what they have reason to value has its fundamental root in political structures being diverted from the aim of establishing the conditions for people's well-being, and more precisely, in the failure of political actors to act justly. The drug, violence, housing and work problems in the *villas* are not only the result of government actors failing to act towards providing the conditions for every person to enjoy a set of valuable capabilities, it is also, and arguably foremost, the result the inhabitants of the *villas* themselves failing to act collectively, as a group, towards that aim. In other words, it is a failure of collective agency.

When there is engagement with political structures, and when action is taken to press the government to respond to people's claims, it is usually targeted at gaining specific resources and dealt with in a personalized manner. Mitchell (2012, p. 174) reports an interviewee talking directly to leaders of the state organization responsible for providing public services in the *villas* to solve problems of electricity cuts, and another one talking directly to the ministry of education to demand that his cooperative business be awarded the contract of cleaning a state school which had just opened in exchange for a percentage of the contract being paid to the minister. These actions create further social and political fragmentation, perpetuating a political structure characterised by lack of transparency and corruption.

From the above analysis of the *villas* of Buenos Aires in the language of the capability approach, one can conclude that for the injustice its inhabitants suffer to be remedied, the extent and nature of their political representation is critical to establish the conditions for their well-being. The *villas miseria* are not a natural phenomenon. They are the result of human decisions, and can be transformed through human agency. It is in this specific area, we argue, that moral theology can make a significant contribution.

ENRICHING THE LANGUAGE WITH MORAL THEOLOGY

As a normative language to assess realities, the capability approach falls short of offering a concrete path to achieve the demanding endeavour of addressing the obstacles which prevent people from being or doing what they have reason to value, and freeing them from their suffering, apart from insisting on the need for public reasoning to remedy injustice. As Sen recently argued in a box in the 2013 Human Development Report, it is poor quality public reasoning processes, typically ones in which people are not able to express «what ails their lives and what injustices they want to remove» (2013, p. 24), which often lie behind unjust situations and the lack of opportunities people have to be or do a set of valuable things, as Drèze and Sen (2013) have widely documented in their recent book on India. But as such, the capability approach does not offer an agenda for social transformation. It is an open-ended language «with various bits to be filled in» (Sen, 1993, p. 48) which requires input from other disciplines.

There are several reasons for proposing an engagement between moral theology, in particular Catholic social thought (CST), and the capability approach, in order to address people's suffering and promote their liberation from unjust structures that prevent them from flourishing. We highlight two reasons: the universal reach of the kingdom of God and the converging arguments that the capability approach and CST share.

First, the constant novelty of the kingdom of God, a world where love and just relations prevail, is brought to bear on all the Earth and what it contains. Christians have a specific duty to participate in the mission of announcing the kingdom of God in this world, but its reception and announcement is not limited to them, as testified by countless «people of good will» who devote their lives to improving the lives of others and protecting our natural habitat. For example, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), in which Jesus describes those

to be considered as a neighbour in the Kingdom of God, is thoroughly addressed by Sen (2009) when he explains people's motivation to deploy their «agency» for helping others. For this reason, CST claims to have «an important interdisciplinary dimension» (*Centesimus Annus*, 59)⁷ with which it can exercise «a function of extraordinary effectiveness, because it allows faith, theology, metaphysics and science to come together in a collaborative effort in the service of humanity» (*Caritas in Veritate*, 30-31)⁸.

From a biblical perspective, the parable that epitomises the dynamic and advent of the kingdom of God is that of the sower (Mark 4:1-20). The parable tells the story of a man who went out to sow seeds. Some fell on the edge of the path and birds ate the seeds, some fell on stony ground and did not take root, some were choked by weeds and thorns and were never able to grow, but others fell on rich soil and grew tall and strong. This parable opens the door to the new life the kingdom can generate (Söding, 2009), in other words just relations between people and universal well-being always related to the gift of the Earth and the work of human hands, to the gift of the creative word of God and the interaction with listeners. From this «fertile» dynamism, novel ways of living on Earth can ensue.

The fact that the seed of the kingdom of God is sown in the earth, without distinction between parcels or ownership, implies that such a seed and its potential for new life is neither restricted to a particular group of people, nor does it depend on the reception of isolated individuals. It is for all, although the production of fruits depends on how inhabitants of different type of lands can receive it and cultivate it. The attitude of being open, half-open or closed to the seed of the kingdom, to the possibility of human flourishing, applies without distinction to all humans. As the growth of the seed depends on the

⁷ The encyclical was published by Pope John Paul II in 1991.

⁸ The encyclical was published by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009.

interaction with all kinds of soils and their particularities, so does the growth of the new life the kingdom brings. Its growth relies on the interaction and relationships between all kinds of peoples and their particular cultures. Hence, the fruits of the kingdom cannot be pre-determined. Different fruits will derive from different types of soil, and the way each land is organised and relates to the environment and its surroundings will definitively influence the production of fruits. The parable therefore is a reminder that the task of promoting human flourishing cannot avoid the question of how we relate to «the earth» and how we organise communal life in order to flourish as persons. Human flourishing is not a matter of isolated parcels receiving the seed of life. Rather, it is a question of how to enhance a broadly relational response to the seed that permits genuine development in people.

In short, the parable does not suggest an imposition of a particular religious view or an economic system that best promotes human flourishing, but rather offers a nutritious open and relational approach with which people can pursue their well-being and that of others through their own agency. This openness of the kingdom is one reason for which Catholic social thought is not a social proposition for Catholics or Christians only, but rather for all humankind⁹. It is also a reason for conceiving CST as interdisciplinary.

A second reason for engaging the capability approach with CST is that both contain converging and complementary arguments. The figure below summarizes the topics in which they converge and complement each other —the text in *italics* indicates areas of divergence.

⁹ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, paragraph 83-84, published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in 2004.

Figure 1. Comparison between the main ideas of the capability approach (CA) (as proposed by Amartya Sen) and Catholic Social Thought (CST)

CA		CST
a) Starting point (bottom-up approach): the poor & injustices		
Those who suffer injustice in the real world (not abstract vision of a just society)		Preferential option for the poor Reality (see-judge-act)
b) Basis for development & justice: freedom & relationality		
Promoting capabilities, or opportunities that individuals have to be or do what they have reason to value <i>Emphasis on the individual</i>		Human dignity (freeing freedom from sin) <i>Emphasis on personalism and social responsibility</i>
Agency & participation (relational emphasis)		Relationality: agency & the <i>common good & sin</i>
c) The aim: human flourishing for all		
Well-being	<i>Cultural rootedness in tension with universality</i>	Meaningful life (transcendent entity)
Human development for all		Catholicity/universality
Values and cultural beliefs		Values/cultural/ <i>religious</i> beliefs
d) Justice		
Practical		Virtue (practical)
Gradual		Gradual
Imperfect		Eschatological (never in total perfection)
Democratic/ dialogical process		Dialogical (<i>still ontological</i>)
Inter-dependence		Inter-dependence

CA	CST	
e) Common enemies		
<i>Consequentialism</i>	Utilitarianism	<i>Teleologism</i>
<i>Secular reasoning (not vs faith)</i>	Libertarianism	<i>Reason + Faith</i>
Human rights grounded on our shared humanity	Authoritarian regimes Positivism	Human rights grounded on human dignity
f) Economics		
	Market with a moral face Globalisation process as a positive alternative Linked with human rights (as moral injunction and not just legal mandate)	

Source: Sen (1993).

As the above figure describes, CA and CST can be *good interlocutors* of: a) the bottom-up approach to both human development and justice; b) the notion of freedom and relationality as the basis for a just development process; c) the aim of development as people’s well-being, which includes the respect for particularities of different cultures and their values, and the universal aspiration for development, i.e. without exclusion. They can also have interesting discussions on the notion of justice as practical and gradual (imperfect), given that for CST, justice is a virtue (practical) that can never be practiced in total perfection (eschatology). They will also be able to engage in a friendly discussion about justice as a dialogical process, although for CST such process is embedded in an ontological notion of the good and of nature

that Sen is reluctant to admit. And they will have mutually enriching conversations about justice as relational, based on the fact that we are all inter-dependent. This does not mean that Sen and CST have similar arguments, but that there is a common base on which their arguments can be mutually refined.

CA and CST are definitively allies against utilitarianism, libertarianism and any sort of political or economic authoritarian regime, as well as having a moral notion of human rights that transcends the legal dimension of rights, and an ethical notion of economics that transcends its engineering/technical side. Moreover, they are allies in their efforts to provide a «market» with a human face to society, and in approaching the globalisation process as an opportunity to increase the quality of life of all peoples, as well as in incorporating values and cultural beliefs into the public discourse. Furthermore, they are allies in the task of answering common questions, such as whether the cultural rootedness of development, i.e. respect for particular cultural values, hinders or fosters human well-being.

However, CST and CA diverge, and one could say that they are «rivals», regarding their emphasis on relationality and on individuality respectively¹⁰, and a teleological conception of the human good and social order, which Sen, and most Anglo-Saxon political philosophy, does not accept. In addition, Sen's optimism regarding reason fails to recognize adequately sin or human failure, which CST highlights, and may not always coincide with the Catholic integrated vision between reason *and* faith.

The next section discusses how CST, in its Trinitarian theology and vision of the kingdom of God, can enrich the CA and help transform the unjust situation of the *villas* of Buenos Aires.

¹⁰ For CST, human dignity can be promoted and safeguarded only in community (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church: 145).

TRANSFORMING A REALITY WITH MORAL THEOLOGY

Insights from Trinitarian anthropology

If God has created each one of us in his (their) image and likeness (Genesis 1:26: the biblical text is clearly referring to a plural pronoun: «our» image), and if God is a communion of three persons who give themselves to each other, then human relations are linked to the Trinitarian model of relations, and they are fruitful or unfruitful to the extent that they are «like» the Trinitarian relation between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. For Catholic moral theology, the more alike our individual, social and environmental bonds are to the Trinitarian ones, the more we are open to well-being and fulfilment. In this regard, the Trinity is not just the origin and root of our existence, but also the ground, space and model of our social being (Cambón, 2000, p. 7). By looking at the Trinity, we can deduce which kind of relations contribute to human growth and flourishing and which do not. As our analysis in section 3 already alluded to, there are clearly economic, social and political relations between people in Buenos Aires which are quite remote from the Trinitarian model of relations. It is therefore of no surprise that they are inhibiting well-being.

How Christians understand the Trinity is not static. As Cambón (2000, p. 27) argues, in each culture and time, certain aspects of Trinitarian relations are more clearly understood than others. For example, in our present time, in which we have developed a special sensitivity to participation and social dialogue, we can perceive more clearly that «in» the Trinity, participation and dialogue is expressed in such a way that each person can be confirmed in her identity due to the participation of the other, and that each member is reaffirmed in his own self by expressing fully and being totally received by the other. This has significant implications for the way «public reasoning»—so central to the capability approach—is conducted, as will be discussed further below.

With the risk of oversimplifying, there are three main characteristics of Trinitarian relations (pp. 18-25), which offer insights for reducing injustices such as that of urban segregation. The first is *perichoresis*: a special presence of mutual reception and reciprocal «com-penetration» between the divine persons, who are unified by distinguishing themselves, or distinguished by unifying themselves. The second is *kenosis*: to empty oneself in order to be fulfilled or found. The third is *agape*: a special kind of communication with which one can fully express oneself while being perfectly understood, a special kind of love with which one is given and accepted totally in a reciprocal way. How can these characteristics of the Trinity give insights for remedying unjust situations?

The analysis of the reality of the *villas* in Buenos Aires with the normative language of the capability approach, led us to conclude that the unjust situation in which many people live, in the sense of not having opportunities to do or be what they have reason to value, i.e. to live a flourishing human life, lies fundamentally in political relations being distorted, what Drèze and Sen (2013, p. 269) would call a «failure of public reasoning». Modelling political relations in the «likeness» of the Trinitarian model would first entail that every human being be able to participate as a social peer in matters which affect their life, what Nancy Fraser (2008) identified as the most fundamental sphere of justice. How to do this certainly requires a high dose of creativity, not confined to those who believe in the Trinity, but open to all those seeking for a fair public participation, especially the participation of those affected by injustices. Organizations linked to Catholic parishes in the *villas*, underpinned by the *perichoretical* and *agapean* values of equal and relational dignity, perform well in this matter. They have the highest level of social participation regarding the provision of basic services such as food and education (Mitchell, 2012). The question is whether they could go beyond social service provision. For example, and related to the functionings people in *villas* value most, can these

organizations be involved in political organizing in order to transform the very structure of policy decision-making, and affect decisions on drug and urban planning policy? The Trinitarian model offers a second insight (*kenosis*) regarding the characteristics of the relations in the *polis* that can help civil society organizations to further their pursuit for justice.

Political relations, following the Trinity in whose image all humans have been formed, are dynamic, always created and re-created. The coming of the kingdom of God, where the Trinitarian model of relations dwell in all humankind, promotes and enhances human freedom and espouses human ambivalence. The exercise of human freedom (or the achievement of capabilities) does not necessarily lead to greater well-being, because humans can freely decide to act against what contributes to well-being, e.g. by exploiting domestic workers, or against relations that can help us to flourish, e.g. by inflicting violence to relatives and neighbours due to drug issues (which Christians call «sin»). However, sin is not the ultimate fate of human beings, who have all been redeemed by the Trinitarian paschal dynamism¹¹. If all humans are created in the image of the Trinity, the re-creation and renewal of flourishing relations is always a possibility. The seed of the kingdom, which can help transform relations for the betterment of all in the likeness of the Trinitarian model, has already been planted on the earth, although we cannot experience it fully, which is theologically described with the word «yet» but as in «not yet» (eschatology). In other words, the renovating presence of the kingdom is not absolute or perfect, but can already be experienced in this world. This is what empowers people to seek for a more just world and more opportunities for human flourishing for all.

¹¹ *Kenosis* being the movement of God towards humanity and frailty, towards abandonment and death, from which emanates a risen strongest humanity, full of life and in full community (Cambón, 2000).

One of the consequences of this eschatological vision of the kingdom is a strong acknowledgment of ambivalent conduct, in the sense that humans always act in the midst of constraints. This entails that acting towards human flourishing may not always be fully possible. Still, ambivalent conduct and failure to act towards flourishing does not, in principle, prevent people from having hope in human flourishing. On the contrary, the lack of recognition of our failings and ambiguities can seriously compromise our actions for reducing injustice, as revealed in a parable which announces the kingdom of God.

Insights from a parable of the kingdom

We have chosen to focus here on the parable of the Crafty Steward (Luke 16:1-12) which gives us some interesting insights for transforming unjust situations with the language of the capability approach. The parable tells the story of a rich man who summons one of his stewards to render an account of his services, which he was about to terminate as they were reportedly fraudulent (vv. 1-2). Aware that he was going to lose his job, the steward decides to strengthen some personal business relationships so as to have people who would welcome him once he is dismissed. He chooses to reduce dramatically and gratuitously the arrears of his master's debtors (vv. 5-7). The master, instead of reprimanding the servant, commends him for his astuteness (v. 8).

For Söding (2009), the parable tries to drive the listeners towards their own life-judgements, including economic judgements, which are full of ambiguities. This happens not only in terms of the administration of goods, but also regarding the administration of relationships and life in general. Human well-being depends on this. Individuals, organisations and communities seeking to flourish are like those in the *villas*, directly or indirectly involved in business, economics or politics. To undertake their endeavour, they would need

to promote flourishing relationships in those environments, as the parable insinuates. But occasionally, there is a risk that they tend to disconnect the value of healthy relationships (such as those imbued in the Trinitarian model) with efficiency. Still, according to the parable, astuteness and competent management do not go against the reality of God's kingdom, for they are critical in offering opportunities for people to flourish. Good managers and wise entrepreneurs are needed, for example, to: i) provide training and employment opportunities for young people of the *villas* so they can gain self-confidence and contribute to economic and social life, and divert them away from gangs and drug addictions which attract them for lack of other opportunities; ii) supply basic social services to all, not just to some, in the *villas*; and iii) address the causes of structural injustice in the political arena. However, wisdom and astuteness should not be based on behavioural dishonesty. The parable not only criticises the steward's dishonesty in the use of money and his lack of loyalty. It goes further, suggesting that well-being, ultimately depends on relationships—even those at the economic level (Snodgrass, 2008)—and the extent to which they are fruitful according to the image of God. Materiality is part of human life and of God too¹², and needs to be managed well in order to enhance well-being. Nevertheless, good administration requires the acknowledgement of ambiguities and failures.

Indeed, it was only after the «dishonest administrator» of the parable recognised his own predicament that he was transformed. His decision to reduce the debts substantially opened the possibility of an unexpected outcome. Yet, according to the parable, the hope for better well-being is not grounded primarily on the steward's action to help debtors but on his master's benevolent judgement. The steward's recognition of his dubious behaviour and his response had just

¹² This is a direct consequence of the reality of the incarnation, of God made human in Jesus, which CST has taken and expanded in order to address topics related to economics (see Finn, 2012).

opened the door to the new reality of the kingdom, but not to the kingdom itself. Had the master condemned the unusual cancellation of debts (or the previous dishonest administration of goods), the steward's future would have been very different. In short, our freedom to administer goods, as the parable of the Crafty Steward illustrates, is closely related to our capacity to forge good relationships. When this is absent, and in order to enhance freedom, we need to evaluate our ambivalent decisions so as to open the door for change, as was the case in the parable. What CST and its theology can offer to this evaluation, is a wider comprehension of «sin» with which to redress sinful structures or attitudes so as to limit the damages caused by injustices.

This parable is particularly revealing for those living and working in the *villas*, where ambivalent behaviour certainly abounds. The notion of ambivalent behaviour and sin, as the parable illustrates, is necessarily connected to the possibility of liberation. The person liberated from sin (e.g. the crafty steward) is able to generate change and enhance others' freedom too. But this freedom will not be achievable if we do not acknowledge certain dimensions of human conduct.

We have already mentioned the omni-presence of ambivalent behaviour, and how its recognition is a first step to redress unjust situations. A second step, according to the parable, is the recognition of benevolence in all kind of relations, from which creativity flows and our liberating capacity for freedom recovers its effectiveness to promote human flourishing. Benevolence, especially in unwanted or desperate situations, is a fundamental dimension of freedom, which cannot be confined to family, churches or businesses. Complex socio-political scenarios, such as the structural injustices in *villas*, are not situations with ready-made solutions. Benevolence seems to be a «human key» with which to open creativity. The following example may help to illustrate this point.

London Citizens, a secular organization inspired by CST values (Ivereigh, 2010), has recently launched a creative campaign to improve the well-being of inner-city London citizens and challenge structural injustices, such as salaries below the living wage. Part of their success was the decision to appeal to the benevolence of socio-economic and political agents of the city to participate in their living wage campaign, from bankers to workers, from religious leaders to politicians, from anonymous parishioners to celebrities. Their relational creativity triggered novel ways for a gradual transformation of some economic relations at the centre of the financial world. If benevolence can be shown in what is known to be a greedy environment, why can it not be shown elsewhere?

To sum up, in the kingdom of God, sinners (or those who use their freedom wrongly) are still treated in a special way. The idea is that they can recover the true sense of their freedom and foster what is actually worthwhile for their well-being, viz. *perichoretical*, *kenotic* and *agapean* relations. In other words, God is promoting and enhancing actual freedom «within» human ambivalence and benevolence. This liberty can redress unwanted and hopeless situations caused by economic failures, because it strengthens people's capacities to administer goods and relations in order to set other people free.

CONCLUSION

We have argued that an engagement between the capability approach and Catholic moral theology is possible, and even necessary. This engagement not only provides a way to assess realities, such as urban marginalisation in Latin America; it also offers insightful anthropological views about how social agents can cultivate a liberating transformation of unjust realities. The paper has shown that neither the capability approach nor Catholic moral theology can, on their own, supply a narrative of social transformation.

The reality of the *villas* cannot be understood merely in terms of what its inhabitants have or lack, but also, and fundamentally, in terms of their real opportunities to function freely and live flourishing human lives. Although many organisations are already working in the *villas* in order to expand basic capabilities, such as health or education, not many are presently focused on the two sets of capabilities that people value the most: a drug-free peaceful society, and decent private and public infrastructure. One reason for this vacuum is the failure to connect their unjust situation to political participation. Because participating in political life is a «doing» which does not belong to any individual as such, but is invariably associated with how people relate to each other in the *polis*, when political relations are harmful and not oriented towards well-being, imaginative ways for restoring good relations and healing wounded ones need to be found.

This paper has shown that the newness that the kingdom of God offers to all, particularly in terms of reciprocal, realistic and constructive relationships, even in the political-economic realm, could be a key to unlock imaginative potential to redress unjust situations. Injustice, failure and ill-being cannot be the ultimate reality of human beings. Re-creating relations is always a possibility for humans.

Although the particularities of any realm need to be acknowledged when aiming at the promotion of well-being—we have focused here on the reality of urban marginalization in Argentina—expanding people's opportunities to function in a way they consider valuable for their flourishing is universal. And so is the newness of life the kingdom of God brings to different soils. The fruits may vary due to different terrains and interactions among its inhabitants, but the principle of fruitful, creative interconnectedness, in the likeness of Trinitarian relations, capable of producing inclusive well-being, remains valid for all.

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