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## Climate Change and Liberation in Latin America

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Climate Change and Liberation in Latin America

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to propose the liberation movements in Latin America as alternative philosophical frameworks to the crisis of climate change. These movements have provided the grounds to identify inequities and injustices and have practiced ethical methodologies to overcome them. Additionally, the movements seek to represent and reflect the value of non-traditional philosophical agents in Latin America. The work focuses on four major Latin American ecological liberation movements; theology, philosophy, pedagogy, and feminism. Eco-Theology advances the role of Religion as the practice of *Religação*, reexamination, and resetting our relationship with nature by reconnecting with it. Eco-Philosophy of Liberation offers a reflection on the ontological dichotomy of center/periphery. Ecopedagogy provides for a *conscientização* of the epistemic forces of oppression intending to revolutionize the pedagogical approach into a tool for liberation where the teacher-student distinction disappears. Finally, ecofeminism offers a unique framework to ground the epistemic bridge between the theoretical and *praxis*.

## INTRODUCTION

Facing Climate Change has proven to be humanity's most difficult challenge. It has opened wide-ranging windows of inquiry on many fields affecting systems and existences across the world and beyond the present. Climate change does not abide by political boundaries or cultural differences, yet, certain political powers and economic theories are, generally speaking, the root causes of the crisis. The industrial revolution opened the gates of the era of the human carbon pulse. Therefore, climate change is an anthropogenic phenomenon.

The inception of climate change is the burning of fossil fuels by Western developed nations. In contrast, the forces of its effects are disproportionately experienced by vulnerable populations, particularly in underdeveloped countries all around the world. Because climate change is the direct result of traditional behavior and conventional conduct in the Western developed countries, the mitigation of climate change demands new alternatives and ways of thinking to come to the frontlines to identify and mitigate problems, and to adapt to the effects of such a daunting crisis.

The purpose of this dissertation is to propose the liberation movements in Latin America as provisions of such frameworks. The reason of this proposal is that these movements have provided the grounds to identify inequities and injustices and practiced ethical methodologies to overcome them. Additionally, the movements seek to represent and reflect the value of non-traditional philosophical agents in Latin America.

I focus my efforts on filling a gap in the scholarship on the liberation movements in Latin America by unifying in a single work a general historiographical sketch of the liberation movements' respective ecological turn. It surveys the liberation movements' adoption of ecology as a central theoretical and practical component of the struggle for justice. Also, I explore the conceptual intersections of oppression and aim to articulate the methodologies of *praxes* to overcome inequalities and injustices.

One example of these is to show how liberation movements provide forewarnings and protections to avoid further injustices, as in the concept coined by Eduardo Gudynas of a new "green colonialism." Liberation movements offer epistemic groundings that might prevent repeating the oppressive tactics of the past, as in the case of colonialism and its aftermath, and which might be implemented in the present and perpetuated into the future.

I will outline how the liberation movements emerged out of a practical need to empower the alienated and disenfranchised while making great strides in their emancipatory mission. This work also describes how these movements linked their ecological efforts to their mission of practicing justice, and as they move towards liberation, offer unique ontological, epistemological, and ethical frameworks suited to address the many challenges of mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

This dissertation frames the gap between theories and *praxes* captured by Ricardo Rozzi, an Argentinian philosopher who notes, "Among Latin American graduate students in conservation, as well as among ecologists, some government authorities, and ecotourism and protected areas managers, I perceive a growing desire to better know and incorporate philosophical notions into their approaches."<sup>1</sup> Conversely, it is equally essential for theorists to

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<sup>1</sup> Ricardo Rozzi, "Future Environmental Philosophies and their Biocultural Conservation Interfaces," *Ethics and the Environment*, vol. 12, no. 2, (Autumn 2007): 144.

recognize practice-based knowledge from stakeholders outside the centers of philosophical and empirical research. Both are necessary conditions for human beings to become agents of change through the production of a culture of sustainability through the practice of freedom. Therefore, this work is not exhaustive but rather an introductory syncretic outline for future research. To this end, I have divided the chapters as follows:

The first chapter offers some empirical background establishing Latin America's social, economic, and natural circumstances to call for approaches that are organic to the place, rather than exclusively governed by internationally imposed policies.

The second chapter aims at summarizing the relevant historical points that the liberation movements draw upon to formulate their methods of liberation. I offer an account of the history of oppression, exploitation, and dependence in Latin America, establishing how those modes seized from Latin Americans their resources, dignity, and identities, and dimmed the chances to achieve a good life. I proceed to offer how philosophy (specifically Marxism) provided a practical methodology to respond to European imperialism and neocolonialism and laid the foundations for the liberation movements to take action on urgent social issues.

The third chapter explores how Leonardo Boff defends Liberation Theology's mission of assuming a defense of the poor (by including earth) as a focus of liberation. He highlights the importance of the inclusion of nature in our scope of moral duties. Liberation Theology advances the role of Religion as the practice of *Religação*, reexamination, and resetting our relationship with nature by reconnecting with it.

The fourth chapter on Philosophy of Liberation offers a reflection on the role of the philosopher as a liberator. It follows Dussel's efforts to include ecology in his project to overcome the ontological dichotomy of center/periphery (an identity issue) to achieve authentic



liberation (the good life as the ethical dimension of liberation) through the voice of the philosopher. I also include Abelardo Barra Ruatta's rejection of an ecology of the center in a call to develop an organic Latin American eco-philosophy.

In chapter five, I outline Eco-pedagogy's methodology as framed by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Therein, he offers an analysis of the awareness of the essential roles of power between the teacher and student relationship. His method provides for a conscientization of those forces of oppression intending to revolutionize the pedagogical approach into a tool for liberation where the teacher-student distinction disappears. He promotes a pedagogical environment that does not involve authority, and that is inclusive and focused on critical thinking.

Finally, in the sixth chapter, on ecofeminism, I build on Santana Cova's argument that patriarchal societies have systematically made women invisible, while at the same time, perceived nature as an "external system" independent of humanity. I am highlighting again the need to rediscover women's identities and our relationship to nature through the indigenous cosmovision of an interwoven dynamic. From this, I argue that ecofeminism can offer a unique framework to ground the epistemic bridge between the theoretical and *praxis*.

## CHAPTER 1: LATIN AMERICA'S STATE OF THE CLIMATE

This chapter has two main goals. First, I will provide empirical grounding as to how climate change is affecting Latin America's natural and social ecosystems. Specifically, I will provide summaries from both the last two Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change<sup>2</sup> (IPCC) Assessment Reports on Latin America and evidence from various studies sponsored by the United Nation's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). These frameworks are the observed bases for the alternatives proposed in this work to articulate methodologies that would help bridge the gaps of injustice, inequality, alienation, and oppression. Second, I will conceptually outline how precisely these Latin American victims are also poised to provide unique cultural and conceptual solutions and show that they represent, in a way, one of the alternatives civilizations need now.

### **Climate Change and its Challenges: Empirical Bases**

The following discussion is from the IPCC Assessment Reports, AR4, and AR5. Their emphasis is on the regions of the Caribbean, Central, and South America. This empirical basis lays the foundations for my project to situate Latin America's liberation movements in the efforts to address the climatic crisis. I intend to frame why Latin America is vulnerable to climate change

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<sup>2</sup> From the IPCC's website: "The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing climate change." "The IPCC is an organization of governments that are members of the United Nations or WMO. The IPCC currently has 195 members. Thousands of people from all over the world contribute to the work of the IPCC. For the assessment reports, IPCC scientists volunteer their time to assess the thousands of scientific papers published each year to provide a comprehensive summary of what is known about the drivers of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and how adaptation and mitigation can reduce those risks."

and how climate change is problematic for the different Latin American regions. I will also show how the Latin American ecosystems are (natural and social) victims of climate change.

The liberation movements in Latin America have taken an ecological turn, providing alternative ontological, epistemological, and ethical perspectives adequate to the complex demands of climate change. In a way, Latin America has long been suffering from natural and social effects that climate change is predicted to produce in the near- and long-term future.

In this region, natural and human resources have been systematically exploited since the European invasion. Documented liberation movements against this exploitation began in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, providing a philosophical basis, with some degrees of success, in mitigating and adapting the effects of that exploitation.

The 2014 Assessment Report, AR5, echoes this necessity to mitigate and reduce the effects of climate change to achieve the common goal of sustainability with an emphasis on the eradication of poverty. It also states that historical emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) affect populations that have contributed very little or nothing at all to the carbon footprint of humanity. These unequal carbon emissions raise issues of fairness, equity, and justice, not only for the present vulnerable populations but also for future generations in general, who will be disproportionately affected. These challenges are discriminately and distinctly unique to the circumstances across space and time.<sup>3</sup>

The report stresses that we must collaborate, rather than pursuing individual solutions, while warning that acting individually might have unforeseen consequences and adverse effects on others (AR-5 3.3). It asserts that these collective actions are crucial to achieving

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<sup>3</sup> IPCC, 2014: *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, 151.

sustainability. Specifically, the report claims that "Transformations in economic, social, technological and political decisions and actions can enhance adaptation and promote sustainable development (*high confidence*)."

### **Evidence for the heightened vulnerability of Latin American people**

In general terms, the AR5 assesses that "Vulnerabilities to climate change, GHG emissions and the capacity for adaptation and mitigation are strongly influenced by livelihoods, lifestyles, behaviors and culture (*medium evidence, medium agreement*). Also, the social acceptability and/or effectiveness of climate policies are influenced by the extent to which they incentivize or depend on regionally appropriate changes in lifestyles or behaviors" (AR5 4.1). It adds that "Climate change exacerbates other threats to social and natural systems, placing additional burdens particularly on the poor (*high confidence*)" (AR5 SPM 4.5). This makes the vast majority of Latin Americans and the rest of the underdeveloped world genuine and special victims of climate change.

Consistent with the point that the most vulnerable have not contributed to the carbon footprint, Latin America, with 8.4% of the world's population, emits 4.3% of global greenhouse gases. Roughly half of those emissions are due to deforestation and land use.<sup>4</sup> Current trends suggest there will be a substantial reduction in forest areas, including a massive loss of biodiversity.

The United States of America is the world's most significant historical contributor to GHG's and currently second to China. In 2017 the U.S. and China emitted roughly 15% and 27% of the World's GHGs, respectively. Climate change is the result of the human carbon pulse,

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<sup>4</sup> IPCC, 2007: *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, Pachauri, R.K and Reisinger, A. (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, 593.

which involves time as a dimension. To put this in context a more equitable way of assessing national contributions to GHGs emissions is to look at national per capita emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> over time.

On CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita,<sup>5</sup> The United States and Canada emitted in 2000, 20.179, and 15.716 metric tons, respectively, while China emitted 2.697. In 2014, the latest figures available from the World Bank reports that the United States and Canada emitted 16.503 and 15.159 respectively, while China emitted 7.544.

In comparison, Latin America's emissions for the same time-periods were 2.291 in 1990, increasing to 3.102 in 2014. In disaggregating the data to show the top three Latin American economies, Brazil emitted 1.402 in 1990 and increased its emissions to 2.613 in 2014, Mexico emitted 3.793 in 1990 and increased its emissions to 3.99 in 2014, and Argentina emitted 3.438 in 1990 and 4.782 in 2014.

The U.S. and the U.K. and other developed countries have been emitting greenhouse gases carbon and benefitting the longest, and hence their cumulative part of the perpetration of climate change is higher than that of any other country. For Dale Jamieson, the perpetrators and the victims are defined as follows, "When we view nation-states as climate change actors, it is obvious that the rich countries of the North disproportionately emit greenhouse gases while the poor countries of the South disproportionately suffer the damages."<sup>6</sup>

These historical disproportions in the emissions of GHGs are directly associated with the development and the accumulation of wealth of historical emitters and the correlation with national and social inequalities. Historically, the critical issue of countries, endowed by rich and

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<sup>5</sup> World Bank's weighted average of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (metric tons per capita).

<sup>6</sup> Dale Jamieson, "Energy, ethics, and the transformation of nature," In *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, ed. Denis Arnold, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 32.

robust natural resources, have been able to have a trust fund of natural resources at their disposal by which they can preserve and manage their wealth, grow their economies, and have better distributions of natural and social services. Good examples of these are the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Norway.

In order to address these historical inequalities, developed nations in the West ought to assume their proportionate responsibility to reduce their emissions and allow for an egalitarian distribution of emissions worldwide. Enabling developing economies like China, India, and Brazil to increase their developmental capacity by creating policy mechanisms could help emerging economies to develop their social capacities to better adapt to climate change. Some of the mechanisms considered are variations of "cap and trade," "carbon taxes," or "command-and-control regulations" that follow a market-based model to redistribute emissions based on legislation.<sup>7</sup> It seems that these policy mechanisms are not immune to the same vices of corrupt lobbying by special interest groups that might, in some cases, tilt legislation in their favor or create political gridlock according to their particular economic advantage. Thus, special interests' whims might end up crippling or preventing any of the potential benefits such policies offer.

### **Climate Change's Effects Against Natural and Social Systems in Latin America**

According to the 2007 Assessment Report, AR4, the great diversity of Latin America's ecosystems, human population, and cultures is exposed to a "heightened vulnerability of human systems to natural disasters."<sup>8</sup> These include concentrated El Niño events, severe flooding due to

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<sup>7</sup> Some philosophers, most prominently Dale Jamieson, Stephen Gardiner, Simon Caney, Luc Bovens, consider the potential effectiveness and shortcomings of these policies.

<sup>8</sup> IPCC, 2007: *Climate Change 2007*, 584.

intense and vigorous precipitations, droughts in the Amazon region leading to massive fires that result in considerable deforestation, and intense hurricanes that have already caused great devastation, laying bare inadequacies of governmental preparations and responses to those final reports. Low-lying island nations are sitting in the general trajectory of hurricanes.<sup>9</sup> The projected trends suggest a future magnification and intensification of all of these events.

Concerning over-exploitation of natural resources, the AR4 reports coastal destruction is affecting food supplies (fishing), urban expansion with a lack of planning (including resorts for ecotourism that do not take into account their harmful effects on the environment) and the oil industry.

The effects of climate change cause demographic pressure in the form of migration from rural to urban areas or to other countries altogether. Demographic pressure results in social problems such as unemployment and overcrowding, which in turn lead to health issues, stress on infrastructure, and potential breakdowns in providing adequate social services.<sup>10</sup>

The most vulnerable recipients of these effects are the most impoverished communities. A compounding effect, according to the AR4, are the "non-climatic stressors," such as demographic pressure and over-exploitation of natural resources, and economic development.

The AR5 provides enhanced climate projections of future changes across Latin America and doubles down on previous projections from the AR4 concerning social projections. Worth noting is the AR5 evaluation of the inequality of services throughout Latin America, which situates the root causes for the emergence of an ecological response in the liberation movements

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<sup>9</sup> A particular example of this was the U.S. response to the devastation caused by Hurricane María in 2017 to the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico. More than 3,000 lives were lost due to poor energy infrastructure and the inefficient response by the U.S. federal government to deliver and distribute relief supplies to the island.

<sup>10</sup> IPCC, 2007: *Climate Change 2007*, 587.

in Latin America: “Associated with inequality are disparities in access to water, sanitation, and adequate housing for the most vulnerable groups—for example, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, children, and women living in poverty—and their exposure to the effects of climate change.”<sup>11</sup>

As Dale Jamieson puts it, “Climate change is largely caused by rich people, wherever they live, and is suffered by poor people, wherever they live,”<sup>12</sup> and despite poverty levels are slowly trending downwards, in most Latin American countries, poverty remains high.<sup>13</sup> Already existing factors make the region vulnerable, such as fragile infrastructure, access to basic services, water, sanitation, and health,<sup>14</sup> exacerbate the capacity of adaptability to climate change, especially the poor.

An estimated 610 million people in Latin America live within 200 kilometers from the coast. The population density of the region is concentrated in coastal areas. Moreover, it is estimated that three out of 4 people in these areas are especially vulnerable to events caused by climate change. Coastal areas are susceptible to sea-level increases causing flooding and saltwater damage. Some of the results will be extensive depletion of key ecosystems.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> IPCC, 2014: *Climate Change 2014*, 1516.

<sup>12</sup> Dale Jamieson, “Energy, ethics, and the transformation of nature,” page 32.

<sup>13</sup> Poverty levels in most countries remain high (45% for CA and 30% for SA for the year 2010) in spite of the sustained economic growth observed in the last decade. The Human Development Index varies greatly between countries, from Chile and Argentina with the highest values to Guatemala and Nicaragua with the lowest values in 2007. The economic inequality translates into inequality in access to water, sanitation, and adequate housing, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, translating into low adaptive capacities to climate change. 1503-1504.

<sup>14</sup> Changes in weather and climatic patterns are negatively affecting human health in CA and SA, by increasing morbidity, mortality, and disabilities, and through the emergence of diseases in previously non-endemic regions. Multiple factors increase the region’s vulnerability to climate change: precarious health systems; malnutrition; inadequate water and sanitation services; population growth; poor waste collection and treatment systems; air, soil, and water pollution; food in poor regions; lack of social participation; and inadequate governance. 1545.

<sup>15</sup> The AR5 Reports that: “Large coastal populations are related to the significant transformation marine ecosystems have been undergoing in the region. Fish stocks, places for recreation and tourism, and controls of



Climate change's ripple effects will cause Latin American countries to generally, yet heterogeneously, decrease their eco-systems' carrying capacities. Here we can also highlight another crucial disproportion between developed countries' ecosystems in the global north in contrast with developing countries.

Paul Ehrlich's ideas on overpopulation state that it is a relation between a geographical area or country's average carrying capacity against the population density.<sup>16</sup> Then, Mexico has 130 million people (2017). Norway has 5.3 million people (2019). Mexico's population density is 57 persons/km<sup>2</sup> (2020) and Brazil's 25 persons/km<sup>2</sup>. Norway's is 15 p/km<sup>2</sup> and Canada's 4 persons/km<sup>2</sup>.

As an example, on population, climate change will significantly affect Mexico and Brazil more than Norway and Canada due in part to changes in biome structures on different latitudes. Forests in Central and South America get ecologically stressed because it gets too warm, and so they are undergoing processes of erosion and desertification. Climate change creates extreme weather and makes fertile regions less fertile. It increases sea levels and makes low-lying regions more vulnerable to damage. Meanwhile, ecosystems in the far north, by contrast, get boosted for the same reason (more warmth) where frozen tundra are thawing and become fertile grasslands.

Therefore, there exists a high probability that climate change will make Mexico and Brazil more highly populated and shrink their eco-systemic carrying capacity, and at least it will not stress the carrying capacities of Norway and Canada, and at best expand their respective carrying capacity. If you have a worsening relation of carrying capacity & population density, all of the factors listed here are integrated in a causal structure, and will get worsened. This verifies

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pests and pathogens are all under pressure."

<sup>16</sup> See Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (Cutchogue, NY: Sierra Club/Ballantine Books, 1968).

Jamieson's claim that the rich countries of the North benefit, or at least will not be as badly affected, while the Global South gets majorly hurt.

### **Pathways toward Sustainability**

- The recognition of nature as a moral agent.
- The recognition that poverty is something to be overcome.
- Access to equality, justice (the production and acquisition of) knowledge, and decision-making for those agents that have been historically excluded (The Poor, The Other, The Oppressed.)

Focus on these considerations of justice is essential to the aim of liberation movements to advance toward sustainability.

Here I would like to reflect on the pathways towards sustainability articulated in the developed world in climate ethics. After discussing some general points, I will argue that those approaches are inadequate to the demands and stressors climate change is imposing (and will impose) on Latin America. The ecological turns of the liberation movements are better equipped to serve as the ontological, epistemological, and ethical grounding for the mitigation and adaptation to climate change in Latin America because those movements *already* have played these roles in the advancement of social and natural justice.

Climate change has awakened the need to tackle issues that address the emerging crisis. In the field of ethics, there are various proposals to deal with mitigation, adaptation, and general responsibilities to other human beings, including both present and future generations. These views, generally speaking, appear in the works of Garvey, Gardiner, Caney, Bell, and others.

This section seeks to, first, go over the main arguments that occupy the ethical debates, particularly in the developed world, and second to highlight the context in which each argument

takes place. I will suggest that these arguments, although they broadly address some general features that affect everyone, are nevertheless articulated within cultural, political, and economic frameworks that are not universal. Furthermore, these arguments are often disconnected from the realities of other societies and ultimately may be rendered ineffective, incomplete, and inadequate in the context of climate change.

The leading cause of climate change is the systematic emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere by the human-induced burning of fossil fuels, mostly carbon dioxide. These fuels have been the catalysts of economic development since the Industrial Revolution. However, such development has not taken place uniformly across the globe. On the contrary, a few countries, particularly in the geographical north (Europe and the United States), are the historical agents of industrialization. They have been the contributors and have derived benefits from such activities.

In contrast, underdeveloped countries (economies of the periphery) in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia have been the target of human and natural exploitation for the direct developmental and industrializing benefit of the developed world. Central global economies are primarily responsible for the historical emissions of greenhouse gases. Currently, emerging markets are beginning to outpace the usual agents of emissions. China and India are the two new top emitters of greenhouse gases. These new trends and agents have sparked some interesting debates about approaches to control, reduce, or allow countries (depending on their developmental economic stage) to emit greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

### **Developed Countries: Climate Skeptics & Refusals to Act**

In the political sphere, some steps to address the issue of reducing carbon emissions have taken place at various moments (Stockholm '72, Rio '92, Kyoto '97, Johannesburg '02, Copenhagen '09, Cancun '11, Paris '15). Nevertheless, no significant enforceability for any of the agreements has

been reached due to the failure of the commitment of big historical and current per capita polluters. As Gardiner points out, "politically, the most common objection raised to action on climate change is that of scientific uncertainty,"<sup>17</sup> a claim that found its most fervent proponents during the Republican administration of George W. Bush in the United States and has been aggressively affirmed by the Trump administration.<sup>18</sup> The objection focuses on the IPCC's probable projections, deeming them unreliable, and therefore not providing good models to justify any action. It will be assumed, for this work, that actions are indeed required, and it must not necessarily depend upon the interpretation of scientific data or a collective sense of denial of a few political agents.

### **The Cost of Acting**

Another argument is that combating the emergency of climate change is too costly, and it is adequate to put forth the economic resources to better adapt to the upcoming changes in the world's environment. This cost/benefit analysis has been met with some sound objections, for example, the precautionary principle.

Gardiner suggests the use of a "core precautionary principle,"<sup>19</sup> which generally states that measures ought to be taken, given any possibility of causing any threat in harming humans or the environment. In practice, Gardiner argues that "One obvious first step is that those changes in present energy consumption that would have short term, as well as long term,

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<sup>17</sup> Stephen M. Gardiner, "Ethics and Global Climate Change," in *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings*, ed. Stephen M. Gardiner, Simon Caney, Dale Jamieson and Henry Shue (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8.

<sup>18</sup> The Trump administration is bluntly denying the veracity and threat of climate change. The President himself has made several false claims that climate change is a hoax produced by the Chinese government. The administration has rolled back regulations on emissions standards. Moreover, the administration has also formally withdrawn the U.S. from the Paris Accords.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen M. Gardiner, "Ethics and Global Climate Change," 13.

economic benefits should be made immediately. Also, we should begin acting on low-cost emissions-saving measures as soon as possible.”<sup>20</sup>

Another objection to a cost analysis of climate change is that developed countries will have to contribute significantly more because they are in a better economic position to do so. This advantage raises questions about what methodologies should be implemented in order to address the adaptation problem from a cost analysis perspective. Two choices come to mind: each nation can be left to adapt on its own, leaving underdeveloped countries exposed to a much more difficult position, or an international agreement should be reached to allocate economic funds to help those underdeveloped countries to adapt to climate change. Moreover, is that if developed countries need to contribute more because of better economic growth, then rich developed countries will always have to contribute more than the developed economies in virtue that they are richer. For example, in Copenhagen, the U.S. refused to help developing countries with the cost of mitigation. China insisted on this kind of help. As a result, Germany intervened and sided with China. Out of these interactions, the Green Climate Fund was created as a donation organization to finance developing countries both in their mitigation efforts (lower carbon emissions) and to pay for impacts (extreme weather and hurricane damage).

### **International & Collective Responsibilities**

Philosopher James Garvey proposes addressing climate change by employing an international agreement based on “Equal per Capita shares”<sup>21</sup> of global emissions. He particularly emphasizes the notion of Contraction and Convergence as the most coherent version of equal per capita shares. Contraction and Convergence seek to establish a global limit to emissions within an

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<sup>20</sup> Stephen M. Gardiner, “Ethics and Global Climate Change,” 13.

<sup>21</sup> James Garvey, *The Ethics of Climate Change, right and wrong in a warming world* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 126.

agreed timeframe to meet those limits. Simply put, countries that emit more than their share will be required to reduce it, and those under their share will be entitled to an increase in their per capita emissions.

This approach has raised some concerns about the moral responsibilities of those nations guilty of historical emissions. The methodologies for adjusting their reported historical emissions to current emissions would be unfair to current emitters that have not significantly contributed to said historical emissions. For instance, the United Kingdom, which has been one of the significant historical emitters, would need to reduce its current emissions much less than, say, China, because its current emissions are significantly lower. However, as mentioned before, China's historical and current per capita emissions are far from being proportionally comparable to those of Europe as a whole and the United States.

Another interesting point is that *Contraction and Convergence* do not take into account what kinds of emissions are being burned. On the one hand, developed countries have disproportionately more luxury emissions than developing countries. On the other hand, subsistence emissions in developing countries come from 'dirty industries' because of their financial inability to put in place the necessary infrastructure for 'clean technologies.' This example may serve as a frame of reference to underscore an argument about the failure of existing and forthcoming technologies as a universal solution to the problem of climate change. Technological advancements take place within specific socio-economic conditions that are predicated on the very problems to be solved. The infrastructure to develop and implement certain technologies is obtained through the same faulty methodologies that allowed the emergence of the crisis in the beginning. On this point, Garvey rightly asserts that technological rescue ought not to detain other efforts to find alternative approaches.

## **Past, Present, & Future Generations**

Much of the ethical debates on climate change gravitate around a *temporal* or spatio-temporal framework. The conversations refer to the responsibilities of other human beings in the present time or the future, but also the inclusion in the moral realm of past behaviors that have affected other peoples at different spatio-temporal points.

The primary considerations for past behaviors hinge, as mentioned before, upon the burdens of responsibility of historical emitters to assume a proportionate amount of reduction in emissions. Perhaps even historical emitters will have to assume liability and economic responsibility to indemnify and compensate those who have suffered the effects of their historical emissions.

One of the main objections to this principle of historical responsibility is the excusable-ignorance argument. It broadly advocates for an exemption of accountability based on the epistemic grounds of lacking the complete causal relations of their behavior. Derek Bell offers an argument against the excusable-ignorance claim in favor of limited liability. He concludes, "Excusably ignorant emitters should be liable for the costs of climate change associated with their wrongful emissions-generating activities as long as the costs do not exceed the benefits that they have derived from those activities."<sup>22</sup>

Concerning moral responsibility towards future generations, the general environmental theory argues that the standard of life of present generations ought to decrease in order to project a better quality of life for future generations. There is a duty to fulfill the basic needs and rights of future generations, that is, to at least provide the same level of quality of life to future generations.

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<sup>22</sup> Derek Bell, "Global Climate Justice, Historic Emissions, and Excusable Ignorance." *The Monist*, Vol. 94, No. 3, (2011), 407.

## **Individual Responsibilities**

After having considered corporate policies and principles on current and future population, let us now turn to individual responsibilities. Simon Caney limits most of his inquiry to institutions and nations. Some objections may arise because he mostly assumed, he is speaking to an elite of persons that are in a better position to act than others and he ignores the concept of individual action from others outside this selective group.

Infringements on fundamental human rights are other central concerns about the consequences of climate change. Caney contends that climate change infringes upon the intrinsic and instrumental notions of human rights. He makes the argument that anthropogenic climate change will violate fundamental human rights such as the right to life, the right to health, and the right to subsistence because it entails severe climatic changes that may result in the loss of life<sup>23</sup> In this vein, he continues by saying, “the threats to life health, and subsistence that many face, and that many more shall face unless mitigation and adaptation occur, are threats that are the products of the actions of other people.”<sup>24</sup> His approach, as we will explore next, is akin to Latin American ethics, although, as we shall see, Caney anchors his arguments mostly by projecting future expectations about climate change, as seen through the lens of scientific data.

## **Latin American Environmental Ethics**

What I articulated above is a conceptual overview of some of the ethical priorities in traditional (European and U.S.) environmental ethics. Now I will focus on giving some objections from a

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<sup>23</sup> Simon Caney, “Climate Change, Human Rights and Moral Thresholds.” in *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), ed. Steven M. Gardiner, Simon Caney, Dale Jamieson, and Henry Shue, 166.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.



Latin American perspective as to why these arguments and objections are not entirely suited to address the issue of climate change in Latin America.

Climate change in the geopolitical north has been consistently and mainly considered through the optics of the natural sciences. The ethical debates mostly depend on empirical data about natural phenomena.

The concerns, as we have seen, revolve around large-scale reduction of emissions, the sharing of responsibilities for those emissions framed in time, and the responsibility for present and future generations' quality of life from a wholesale naturalistic/biologist approach; a paradigm that seeks practical solutions through the collection of empirical data about nature's processes and the projection of changes of behaviors towards the future.

In contrast to this notion, Latin American philosophers acknowledge that unlike the environmental perspectives of the developed world, climate change is better understood in the Latin American context through the lens of social inequalities and injustices over a selective approach of natural degradation. This is not to say that environmental analyses from the developed world lack pertinence in Latin America. Instead, those approaches from a perspective of development emphasize priorities that are not necessarily universally suitable.

Alternatively, there is a danger that those methodologies endorsing models of action, might have intended or unintended consequences that might be considered new forms of control under the veil of environmentalism. Latin American liberation movements recognize that human exploitation and oppression cannot be ontologically separated from the exploitation and degradation of natural resources. This view stems from the first-hand witnessing of the systematic historical exploitation of Latin America, which has caused significant social and natural degradation for the past 500 years.

The exploitation of nature is synonymous with the exploitation of humans. Generally speaking, the economic history of Latin America reminds us that the region has served as a basket of resources and commodities to help develop other regions. Out of this process of natural and human exploitation, Latin America has suffered high poverty and misery.<sup>25</sup>

Under this framework, some interesting differences arise between the environmental ethics of the north and those articulated for Latin America. On these grounds, some have claimed that often, the northern approach to climate change involves pure luxuries that Latin America cannot afford. In sum, the northern paradigm concerning climate change is epistemically disconnected from the realities of the south.

#### **On the case of Equal per Capita Shares and the Excusable-Ignorance Argument**

The literature on climate ethics generally agrees that there ought to be some form of compensation from the developed countries to the developing countries. Nevertheless, the arguments seem to ignore the human factor in the equation of compensation. Namely, it accounts for the quality of life of those developing countries, through the useful distinction of luxury emissions and subsistence emissions. This distinction would entitle developing countries to emit more in order to satisfy the basic needs for a dignified quality of life.

Nevertheless, this ignores that historical emissions of developed countries are inversely proportional to the pain and suffering of those past generations in developing countries. In my view, this adds a new dimension to the discussion of equal per capita shares and the plausible ignorance argument. On the one hand, emissions have been, by definition, unequal, and the identification of the systemic historical pain and suffering of developing countries has been a well-known fact for centuries.

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<sup>25</sup> See Eduardo Galeano's *Open Veins in Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (Uruguay: Monthly Review Press, 1997).

## On Cost Analysis & Adaptation

It will be challenging for a region without the economic and infrastructure capacities to technologically adapt to a problem that is not forthcoming but is part of their actual reality. If some action were to be executed to promote adapting to climate change in Latin America, it could arguably result in the perpetuation of the political and economic practices of the twentieth century and thereby continue to have catastrophic effects in Latin America. The region would be forced to maintain the patterns of inequality and the paradigm of the developed world, compounding ever more its epistemic and ontological problems.

ECLAC highlights the inadequate provision of public goods that illustrates (albeit not exhaustively) widespread exclusion in Latin American and Caribbean societies:

“The use of privileged conditions to capitalize the exploitation of natural resources with little value-added, take advantage of a cheap labour force to hold down production costs and compete without major innovation effort, use financialization to appropriate speculative rents or perpetuate a weak tax system and the use of public funds for private gain—all these draw from a common well. Privilege is manifested here in the form of exclusive access to these sources of rent, and it uses different guises to perpetuate the selective and concentrated appropriation of wealth opportunities with low levels of investment and innovation and high levels of inequality.”<sup>26</sup>

This quote recasts the cycle of dependency that reigns on Latin America for the more significant part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, some Latin American economists and social scientists, as in the case of Martinez Alier<sup>27</sup> and Eduardo Gudynas,<sup>28</sup> warn that the failed

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<sup>26</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *The Inefficiency of Inequality* (LC/SES.37/3-P), Santiago, 2018, 219.

<sup>27</sup> He also contends that capitalism, in general, is at best not well suited, if not outright incompatible with sustainability.

<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Eduardo Gudynas, in his article "Múltiples Verdes," vigorously warns against the threat of what he calls "green colonialism." These are discourses aimed at veiling the imposition of "green" policies to advance economic agendas that lack environmental value.

economics of profit is still a danger to a sustainable future and might serve to perpetuate the old systems of oppression.

### **On Present Over Future Generations**

ECLAC estimates that inequality between generations entails a cost in future productivity as the production services of the ecosystem fall. Meanwhile, inequality within current generations also has an impact on the environment and productivity. <sup>29</sup>

In a Latin American context, unlike in developed nations, it is less reasonable to propose a decrease in the standard of life because it will presuppose a further decrease in the quality of life. Therefore, Latin American climate ethics ought to focus on present generations' efforts to improve the quality of life through liberation practices. Climate change for Latin America is not a future phenomenon, but one that currently affects society and nature.

Although Caney is right in asserting that climate change will bring about infringements of human rights in the future by meteorological phenomena, a parallel claim can be made concerning the present state of human rights in Latin America from an ecological perspective. If we frame climate change as a social problem in Latin America, then what follows is the acknowledgment that human rights are being infringed by social activities associated with climate change without having to invoke any natural phenomena as the culprit of the human rights violation.

The ECLAC literature identifies “The Virtuous cycle of sustainability.” <sup>30</sup> The cycle hinges upon recognition of human rights, access to those rights, information, and public

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<sup>29</sup> ECLAC, *The Inefficiency of Inequality*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Access to information, participation and justice in environmental matters in Latin America and the Caribbean: towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (LC/TS.2017/83), Santiago, 2018; 27-28.

participation in decision- and policy-making. This report claims that such a cycle enables a general betterment in the quality of life.

Some Latin American countries have included within that right of participation in the environment. The report states: "A right of public participation in environmental affairs is recognized by the constitutions of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. Additionally, countries such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, and the Plurinational State of Bolivia have passed laws on public participation, which, while not explicitly environment-related, recognize and guarantee citizens' right to participate in public affairs, including environmental ones."<sup>31</sup> These provisions also include the participation of historically excluded communities such as indigenous peoples and women and their participation in political affairs.

There are still many challenges rooted in history. The report highlights the forces that have deaccelerated equality and justice for the natural and social systems in Latin America: "In his 2013 report on extractive industries and indigenous peoples, the former Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, James Anaya, draws attention to the power imbalances between public or private agents and indigenous peoples in consultations over extractive projects, owing to what are usually wide gaps in technical and financial capacity, access to information and political influence." He suggests that certain deliberate steps should be taken to correct these imbalances and reach sustainable and just agreements with indigenous peoples over the taking of resources from their territories. These might include employing independent facilitators for consultations or negotiations, establishing funding mechanisms that would allow indigenous peoples to have access to independent technical assistance and advice, and

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<sup>31</sup> ECLAC, *Access to information*, 74.

developing standardized procedures for the flow of information to indigenous peoples regarding both the risks and potential benefits of extractive projects.”<sup>32</sup>

While progress has been accomplished on paper, the execution has proven difficult. The report states that "On occasion, there is no more participation than required to comply with formal requirements, it takes place when most decisions have already been taken, it is not suited to the social, economic, geographical or gender characteristics of communities, and there is no proper response to the contributions of individuals and organizations."<sup>33</sup>

Other challenges include going beyond the recognition of the rights of underrepresented groups to allow for participation. Enormous efforts need to be put forward and concentrated on emphasizing inclusionary strategies that recognize the diversity of languages and cultures and welcoming of those differences as a practice of inclusion. There seems to be a disconnect between the articulation of policies on equality and justice, and the meaningful application of those policies and principles.<sup>34</sup> “This means there is a need to establish mechanisms for inviting and hosting participation that follow a criterion of differentiation, being context-appropriate and giving special consideration to specific or vulnerable groups, and including initiatives to identify vulnerable communities and consider which media and formats can best be used to keep them informed in a way that ensures respect for their cultural characteristics.”<sup>35</sup>

Access to environmental justice means having the opportunity to obtain a full and prompt solution from the authorities, whether through the courts or administrative or other procedures, to

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<sup>32</sup> ECLAC, *Access to information*, 102.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>34</sup> Countries with constitutional articles protecting the environment are Argentina, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Uruguay.

<sup>35</sup> ECLAC, *Access to information*, 105.

any legal conflict of an environmental character. This implies that everyone must have access on an equal footing to justice and a fair outcome, both individually and collectively. Such access is not limited to the protection of rights pertaining to the environment and nature but extends to the protection of the rights of access to information, participation, and prior consultation.<sup>36</sup>

A sufficient guarantee of access to justice in environmental matters requires a framework of appropriate, swift, and effective redress as well as remedial measures such as restoration and compensation. In several countries of the region, the obligation to restore environmental damage is enshrined in the constitution.<sup>37</sup>

### **Violence and the Environment**

The growing number of socio-environmental conflicts relating to the management and exploitation of natural resources is a cause for concern in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>38</sup> In many cases, there is also a persistent crisis of political representation and social fragmentation, coupled with the State's difficulties in reaching out to the entire national territory. These challenges are compounded by the limited capabilities of local subnational authorities and civil society leaders, as well as of public and private agents, to create spaces for discussion, dialogue, and constructive participation in preference to confrontation or violence. The region still faces the challenge of building and strengthening democracy; the surest way of achieving this is to narrow social gaps and ensure that growth is inclusive, that natural resources are exploited in an

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<sup>36</sup> ECLAC, *Access to information*, 109.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>38</sup> ECLAC defines this as: "Socioenvironmental conflict is a type of social conflict whose dynamics turn on the control and use of natural resources and access to these, and the environmental effects of economic activities. The socio-environmental conflicts observed in the region usually arise in a context of growing economies with persistent poverty and extreme poverty, especially in rural areas, and a marked expansion in extractive activities such as mining, oil, and gas, fisheries, forestry, and hydropower. In some countries, a dearth of land use planning policies 131.

environmentally and socially responsible manner and that the authorities and citizens adopt dialogue as both a means and an end has also strained relationships between the State, firms and local communities and constitutes a potential source of socioenvironmental conflicts.”<sup>39</sup>

A further concern in Latin America and the Caribbean is the use of violence in socioenvironmental conflicts. Although the intensity of this varies, several cases of abuse against communities have been documented, including intimidation and criminalization of people leading the opposition to projects and the use of armed personnel. Several reports identify Latin America as the riskiest region in the world for those upholding rights relating to territory, the environment, and access to land.

### **The Movements of Liberation in Latin America**

As previously argued, the most important contributions of Latin American thought are the liberation movements that began emerging during the 1960s. These movements began a critical engagement against oppression and the forces that created it. They offer a form of resistance to the economic practices of the north imposed in the south, particularly developmentalism and dependency theories. Also, they denounce the epistemic oppression put in place by colonization, and the plundering of natural and human resources. Three general movements of liberation can be identified: liberation theology, liberation in education, and philosophy of liberation.

All converge on the view that all people ought to be liberated from colonization and oppression to begin addressing the betterment of its society. It begins from the liberation of humans out toward the liberation of nature. Securing one's well-being will signify, for Latin America, an increase in quality of life and an entailed abandonment of the practices that led to natural and human degradation. Conversely, the increase of the standard of living in the north

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<sup>39</sup> ECLAC, *Access to information*, 131.



has not necessarily increased, proportionally, the quality of life of persons, but has indeed affected the natural world for the worse.

In liberation theology, the work of Leonardo Boff evidences the broadening of the scope of inquiry from a theological perspective. As noted by Mary Judith Ress,<sup>40</sup> “liberation theology emphasized the economically and politically poor; in the 1970s the definition was extended to the culturally poor and included indigenous peoples, blacks, and other discriminated minorities; in the 1980s emphasis was given to the question of gender and the oppression of women; and now in the 1990s, liberation theology has begun to hear the cry of the earth”<sup>41</sup>

The enormous costs of modern society are already affecting those people at the fringe of power, as Enrique Dussel refers to the periphery as the Other. For Dussel, there is a dire need to overturn the power structures of modern society and to allow the periphery to access the same resources and voice their concerns.

Similarly, the inception of Christianity hinges upon the notion of social egalitarianism. The wretched poor did not bring their predicament on themselves; it is instead a blunt injustice. In education, there are also the oppositions of core and fringe, center and periphery, teacher and students, rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed, male and female. Boff, Dussel, and Freire weave a common notion of liberation from the underside and, by consequence, the liberation of all.

These three thinkers serve as a template for 20th Century Latin American philosophical emancipatory thought. Their efforts toward liberation generate endless possibilities to foster eco-philosophical reflection originating in and for Latin America. For instance, Leonardo Boff

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<sup>40</sup> Mary Judith Ress will be a pivotal figure to articulate a feminist perspective from the principles of Liberation Theology.

<sup>41</sup> Mary Judith Ress, *Ecofeminism in Latin America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 32.

summoned the principles of liberation theology and applied them not only to human beings but to nature as a whole. Similarly, Dussel, as a founding member of the philosophy of liberation in Latin America, finds himself tailoring liberation theology to fit the ecological dimension appropriately. In turn, Paulo Freire managed to challenge the educational status quo while articulating a philosophical formula engendered for the benefit of the oppressed and seeking an end to oppression through education.

Nature, Earth, is suffering from the same ailments and injustices as the poor, the Other, and the oppressed. It is from this notion that a Latin American eco-philosophy ought to emerge.

### **Eco-Liberation Methods: An Outline**

The following outline is a sketch of what Latin American *philosophizing on eco-liberation* must necessarily, but not sufficiently, include as methodological criteria:

1. Non-Eurocentric: To avoid new forms of epistemic and pragmatic colonialisms.
2. Non-imitative: To have the epistemic independence to critically evaluate (incorporate or reject) adequate (practical) philosophies (internal or external to Latin America) coherent to the specific realities of Latin America.
3. Sound connections and relationship between theories and practices. Methodologies to bridge gaps between academics and activists working toward liberatory movements.  
These methodologies ought to be sensitive to be inclusive and diverse. The relationship must have what Nuccetelli refers to as an applied philosophy (and a form of weak universalism) as a starting point to avoid theoretical utopias.
4. Non-androcentric, non-racist, and non-gendered:
5. Historically, philosophy, in general, has been one-sided and dominated by race (white) and gender (male).

6. Non-anthropocentric: Must be sensitive to include non-human entities in a moral account.
7. Must be done freely (or aimed at liberation as a practice): Must be a process critical to maintaining the aim of epistemic decolonization, oppression (in its many forms), and a cultural change of politics or a political change of culture.

These liberation movements shall stand in opposition to countries that take action to protect the economic interests of a few in lieu of climatic catastrophe. The U.S. is an outstanding case of both perpetrator and perpetuator through skepticism, policy, and gridlock. This is made worse by the international policy choices the U.S. has endorsed and the positions it has affirmed since the 1990s. Namely, the reduction of benchmark emission limits (against the scientific advice) and the later rejection of the Kyoto protocol.

In Copenhagen, the U.S. pushed for policies that negatively affected the interests of developing countries and protected, developed countries. Additionally, the U.S. lobbied to disarm the Paris Accord of any punitive mechanisms for violators of the treaty to a later withdrawal from the Paris Accord.

This is also made worse by Obama's fateful decision to expand US natural gas production capacity. What Obama ignored is that producing natural gas creates leaks of CH<sub>4</sub> (methane gas), which is a very potent GHG. The Trump administration is reversing key policies, such as fuel emission limits, weakening methane regulations, eliminating the "Clean Power Plan," allowing for public lands and off-shore drilling, canceling any positive benefit, and perhaps exacerbating the problems against the achievement of meaningful progressive landmarks to adequately address climate change.

In the following chapters, I will offer an account on the historical processes by which liberation movements in Latin America turned their focus to ecology and climate change. I will

also offer how some of these approaches work in tandem to offer alternatives to the Western paradigm of political and economic progress and in contrast against the perpetrators and perpetrators of climate change.

## CHAPTER 2: THE HISTORICAL EMERGENCE OF THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

The following chapter aims at surveying and tracing the theoretical roots of Latin American thought and its liberation movements. It sketches a brief historiography of Latin American thought to give the reader the historical context within which Latin American environmental philosophy developed. I will focus on periods and perspectives of particular relevance to liberation movements. I have chosen to provide this chronological account, rather than include the particular periods within the individual chapters to avoid a sense of historical disconnect.

This short account will also include indigenous mythologies that have a significant influence on both the theoretical and practical conditions of Latin Americans. I will also discuss the influence of European Scholasticism and the Enlightenment. These two movements began efforts to evangelize, Europeanize (through acculturation), and systematically inventory the resources of the Americas. Positivism and its political consequence of authoritarian conservative states culminated with the emergence of Marxist revolutions as alternatives to the political effects of positivism. As we will see, Marxism is at the heart of the development of the dependency theory and the liberation movements discussed in this work.

### **The Pre-Columbian and Colonial Periods: Indigenous Thought**

Before the arrival of Christopher Columbus, there were three significant civilizations in the region now comprehending Latin America; the Mayas, the Incas, and the Aztecs. There have been debates whether those civilizations produced philosophical systems of thought and if so, are to be included within Latin American philosophy. Some scholars have attributed such systems to

them, arguing that those systems have greatly influenced Latin American thinking and philosophical production. Nuccetelli makes a point of suggesting that much as the cosmovisions of the Pre-Socratics are often accepted as ancient Greek philosophy (despite the mythologies intertwined in their views), Pre-Columbian cosmovisions deserve a place in the historiography of Latin American thought and philosophy.

James Maffie magnifies this point in his “Pre-Columbian Philosophies.”<sup>42</sup> He pays particular attention to Andean and Aztec philosophies. He argues that Andean philosophy revolves around relationships of “dualistic equilibrium.”<sup>43</sup> The ontological structure of Andean philosophy is based on dualities or “Complementary dualisms.” According to Maffie, this ontological structure supports an “ethics of reciprocity.”<sup>44</sup> Human beings interact in these dualities, and through wisdom, know when, where, and how to perform actions to ensure the continuation of the *Pacha* (cosmos). Similarly, Maffie argues that Nahua philosophy was centered on the question of equilibrium and human flourishing. Nahua ontology (pantheistic) claimed the existence of a single force “teotl” (energy in motion, the forces creating Becoming). Maffie explains that “Nahua metaphysics may be viewed as a form of pantheism. Everything is bound together by an all-inclusive and interrelated sacred unity: teotl. Everything does not merely exist inside teotl, and teotl does not merely exist inside everything (as pantheism claims). Rather, everything is identical with teotl.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> James Maffie, “Pre-Columbian Philosophies,” in *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, eds. Nuccetelli, Susana, Ofelia Schutte, and Otávio Bueno (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 9.

<sup>43</sup> These worldviews will be of high relevance for Boff’s Eco-Liberation Theology turn.

<sup>44</sup> James Maffie, “Pre-Columbian Philosophies,” 11.

<sup>45</sup> James Maffie, “Pre-Columbian Philosophies,” 13

The *Popol Vuh*<sup>46</sup> is a mythological account narrating the ontological views of the Mayan culture. Luis Fernando Restrepo argues that “it may be read as an act of resistance to Christian thought and the Spanish colonization” and also “as a moral treatise.”<sup>47</sup> Representing Aztec thought, Restrepo identifies the Florentine Codex “as the most comprehensive description”<sup>48</sup> of the culture.<sup>49</sup> Part of the invaluable contribution of the Florentine Codex is that it captures the intercultural exchanges between the Aztecs and Europeans within the setting of a school designed to Westernize and evangelize the natives. The school taught the students Spanish and Latin, and under the supervision of the Franciscan order, promoted some Aztec cultural aspects necessary for the evangelizing goal. The Florentine Codex, then, became an intercultural repository of European and Aztec thought, which was deemed too dangerous and consequently censored.

### **Andean Thought**

Out of Andean stories of creation, known as the Otavalos, Cañaris, and Wakamayas, emerged mythologies that were foundational for the Quechua people. These mythologies identified the *Pacha mama*, as the mother of the universe and *Sumak Kawsay* represents an ethical “good life” with *Pacha mama*. *Sumak Kawsay* includes actions and values concerning the *Pacha mama*, contributions to the community through labor, a sense of solidarity towards family and community, and mutual reciprocity and harmony with nature. Walsh summarizes *Sumak Kawsay* as follows:

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<sup>46</sup> Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte, and Otávio Bueno (eds), *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). See also *Cantares Mexicanos*, and *Libros de Chilam Balam*.

<sup>47</sup> Luis Fernando Restrepo, “Colonial Thought” in *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, Nuccetelli, Susana, Ofelia Schutte and Otávio Bueno eds., (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 43.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

In its most general sense, *Buen vivir* denotes, organizes, and constructs a system of knowledge and living based on the communion of humans and nature and the spatial-temporal harmonious totality of existence. That is, on the necessary interrelation of beings, knowledge, logic, and rationalities of thought, action, existence, and living. This notion is part and parcel of the cosmovision, cosmology, or philosophy of the indigenous peoples of Abya Yala.<sup>50</sup>

### **European Thought: Form Scholasticism Through the Enlightenment**

Bernardo Canteñs argues, colonial thought in Latin America was heavily influenced by the scholastic methodology of philosophical thought in Spain. **Bartolomé de las Casas**, known as the “Apostle of the Indians” was the first European to articulate and support the rights of colonized indigenous people (something that José Mariátegui and Rigoberta Menchú will continue later on in history). His concerns arose because of the oppressive economic system known as the “encomienda.” This system was a feudalistic economic system giving Europeans ownership of conquered land and peoples.<sup>51</sup>

The following are excerpts from Bartolomé de las Casas’s description of the native population and the horrors committed by the conquistadors against them:

“And of all the infinite universe of humanity, these people are the most guileless, the most devoid of wickedness and duplicity, the most obedient and faithful to their native masters and to the Spanish Christians whom they serve. They are by nature the most humble, patient, and peaceable, holding no grudges, free from embroilments, neither excitable nor quarrelsome. These people are the most devoid of rancors, hatreds, or desire for vengeance of any people in the world. Furthermore, because they are so weak and complaisant, they are less able to endure heavy labor and soon die of no matter what malady. The sons of nobles among us, brought up in the enjoyments of life’s refinements, are no more delicate than are these Indians, even those among them who are of the lowest rank of laborers. They are also poor people, for they not only possess little but have no desire to possess worldly goods.

For this reason, they are not arrogant, embittered, or greedy. Their repasts are such that the food of the holy fathers in the desert can scarcely be more parsimonious, scanty, and poor. As to their dress, they are generally naked, with only their pudenda covered

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<sup>50</sup> See Catherine Walsh’s “Development as *Buen Vivir*: Institutional arrangements and (de)colonial entanglements.” *Development*, vol. 53, issue 1 (March 2010): 15–21.

<sup>51</sup> The alienation of indigenous people will be of great concern to the liberation movements — the invisibility of populations and their exclusion from society.



somewhat. And when they cover their shoulders, it is with a square cloth no more than two varas in size. They have no beds, but sleep on a kind of matting or else in a kind of suspended net called bamacas. They are very clean in their persons, with alert, intelligent minds, docile and open to doctrine, very apt to receive our holy Catholic faith, to be endowed with virtuous customs, and to behave in a godly fashion. And once they begin to hear the tidings of the Faith, they are so insistent on knowing more and taking the sacraments of the Church while observing the divine cult that, truly, the missionaries who are here need to be endowed by God with great patience in order to cope with such eagerness. Some of the secular Spaniards who have been here for many years say that the goodness of the Indians is undeniable and that if this gifted people could be brought to know the one true God they would be the most fortunate people in the world."

"Yet into this sheepfold, into this land of meek outcasts there came some Spaniards who immediately behaved like ravening wild beasts, wolves, tigers, or lions that had been starved for many days. And Spaniards have behaved in no other way during the past forty years, down to the present time, for they are still acting like ravening beasts, killing, terrorizing, afflicting, torturing, and destroying the native peoples, doing all this with the strangest and most varied new methods of cruelty, never seen or heard of before, and to such a degree that this Island of Hispaniola once so populous (having a population that I estimated to be more than three million), has now a population of barely two hundred persons. "The island of Cuba is nearly as long as the distance between Valladolid and Rome; it is now almost completely depopulated. San Juan [Puerto Rico] and Jamaica are two of the largest, most productive and attractive islands; both are now deserted and devastated. On the northern side of Cuba and Hispaniola are the neighboring Lucayos comprising more than sixty islands including those called Gigantes, beside numerous other islands, some small some large. The least felicitous of them were more fertile and beautiful than the gardens of the King of Seville. They have the healthiest lands in the world, where lived more than five hundred thousand souls; they are now deserted, inhabited by not a single living creature. All the people were slain or died after being taken into captivity and brought to the Island of Hispaniola to be sold as slaves. When the Spaniards saw that some of these had escaped, they sent a ship to find them, and it voyaged for three years among the islands searching for those who had escaped being slaughtered, for a good Christian had helped them escape, taking pity on them and had won them over to Christ; of these there were eleven persons and these I saw.<sup>52</sup>

### **The Birth of the Modern Latin American States**

In the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Spain and Portugal controlled the geography now known as Latin America. During this historical period, most colonies tried to claim independence from European rule. The main reasons for the upheavals were the colonial structure of power. New

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<sup>52</sup> Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Brief Account of the Devastation of the Indies*, (1542). It is important to note that he was writing polemically, romanticizing the original peoples. Nevertheless, Las Casas is denouncing what became a long and brutal history of exploitation including the environmental devastation incurred thereafter.

classes of Latin Americans, known as the criollos, mestizos, and mulattos, sought to acquire political and economic participation. This led to a massive struggle for independence that will culminate with Simón Bolívar's,<sup>53</sup> known as "the Liberator," efforts to unify the colonies under one Republic, "Gran Colombia."<sup>54</sup>

These wars of independence exacerbated the precarious economies of the region crippling for generations to come the ability to develop prosperous economic systems, and in turn, led to political turmoil and instability.

### **Positivism and Anti-Positivism in Latin America<sup>55</sup>**

Meri Clark asserts that "Latin American positivism emerged after a period of competition between scholasticism and Enlightenment philosophies, which led to a break with Spain that the Spanish American elite deemed necessary – if not entirely viable."<sup>56</sup> Politically this process started with the wars of independence and the establishment of the modern Latin American states.

Philosophically the end of positivism starts with the significant publication of *Ariel* by the Uruguayan writer José Enrique Rodó,<sup>57</sup> a new paradigm of Latin American philosophy. *Ariel*

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<sup>53</sup> And it is important to note that Bolívar corresponded with Jeremy Bentham in the efforts of independence and the establishment of the new political apparatus.

<sup>54</sup> While Bolívar was leading the fight in the northern part of South America, San Martín and Bernardo O'Higgins were fighting the Spanish and Portuguese from the southern region of South America.

<sup>55</sup> Positivism, and particularly the political derivation of positivism motivated the rise of Marxist revolutions. An example is the 1910 Mexican revolution.

<sup>56</sup> Meri L. Clark, "The Emergence and Transformation of Positivism," in *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte and Otávio Bueno eds., (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 54.

<sup>57</sup> Rodó contrasted two forms of society. One, identified with Caliban, was materialist and utilitarian. This Rodó linked to the influence of the United States. The other, symbolized by Ariel, was the product of an elite capable of sacrificing material advantage to spiritual concerns. For Rodó himself, this altruism was still part of the philosophical heritage of ancient Greece, but gradually Arielismo came to be associated with a search for national essences, which, in turn, were increasingly thought to possess Pre-Columbian roots

stands against Caliban, representing positivism. This essay will later motivate thinkers such as the Cuban essayist Roberto Fernández Retamar, and the politician Hugo Chávez<sup>58</sup> to rearticulate the Ariel-Caliban dichotomy by identifying Latin Americans as Caliban and not Ariel.

According to Meri Clark, “The common threads of Latin American positivism were that it emerged from liberal idealism, it transformed into strong state conservatism, and it often helped to justify authoritarianism.”<sup>59</sup> For this reason, philosophers such as Antonio Caso in Mexico in 1909 opposed the positivist regimes of their time. Marxism made its way into Latin America as a political alternative to positivist authoritarian states, specifically, in Mexico with the revolution of 1910. It was a revolt against the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. He was running for his seventh reelection term when a group of oppressed laborers known as the antielectionists helped the candidacy of Francisco Madero. Díaz arrested Madero, and that caused the upheaval of the laboring class. After the revolution, the philosopher José Vasconcelos wrote the *Cosmic Race*,<sup>60</sup> in defense of the indigenous population of Mexico. Thus, revolutionary movements beginning with the wars for independence to the 20<sup>th</sup> century were from the beginning entangled with issues of colonialism and the indigenous peoples. This will be of great concern, discussed in the next section, to one of the first Latin American Marxists, José Mariátegui.

### **Marxism in Latin America**

Since its introduction in Latin America, Marxism has been the object of profound discussion and many varieties of interpretations. Some of these differences range from a direct application of

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<sup>58</sup> Discurso de Hugo Chávez en Inauguración IV Cumbre de Petrocaribe. 21 de Diciembre de 2007.

<sup>59</sup> Meri L. Clark, “The Emergence and Transformation of Positivism,” 53.

<sup>60</sup> Published in 1924, the *Cosmic Race* is a rejection of the racist social values of Porfirio Díaz in Mexico. Díaz believed in the superiority of the "white" race. In his work, Vasconcelos argues against the positivist social Darwinist idea that some races are superior to others. Instead, he rejects racial hierarchies and argued in favor of creating a new (cosmic) race out of a mix of all the other races.

Marxist ideas to the adaptation of Marxist analyses to particular Latin American circumstances.<sup>61</sup> Often the multiple manifestations of Marxist thought in Latin America emerged as oppositional forces against political and economic oppression from the state.

Equally important is the fact that within these Marxist views, there is a great deal of dissent and violent disagreement. As Wiarda points out, these variations of Marxism led to a widespread perception to discredit Marxism as a viable political solution in Latin America.<sup>62</sup> However, Marxism's strong influence still permeates Latin American idiosyncrasy. It is the purpose of this chapter to compare and contrast some of the Marxist frameworks against the most prominent Latin American eco-philosophical movements.

Interestingly Marxist thought in Latin America underwent a similar dynamical process as to Marxist movements in Europe. Wiarda<sup>63</sup>claims that it was not uncommon for Latin American Marxists to anchor their views in utopian (French) socialism and anarchist (Russian) views. The appeal of Marxism, particularly to Latin American intellectuals, depended upon the notions of social equality as well as the ideological and practical vindication of the oppressed. Marxism consolidated a general theory that offered a framework against the political and economic *status quo*; this is the case of the Peruvian thinker José Mariátegui.

### **Marxism as Liberation**

Mariátegui sought to include the grossly oppressed and socially ignored and marginalized Indian population in an active role in the society of which they were supposed to form a part and in

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<sup>61</sup> Which is the case of the Cuban Revolution. On a classical Marxist analysis, a proletarian revolution presupposes an existing industrial infrastructure. That was not the case in Cuba. Cuba's economy was overwhelmingly dependent on mono-agricultural products, e.g., sugar and coffee.

<sup>62</sup> See Howard Wiarda's *The Soul of Latin America: The Cultural and Political Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 218-219.

which they were supposed to participate. He was not an orthodox Marxist, in that he was receptive to multiple elements that, as he states, "cannot be considered exclusively Socialist."<sup>64</sup> Acknowledging the power of the Church, he maintains diplomatically, "The revolutionary critic no longer disputes with religion and the Church the services they have rendered to humanity or their place in history."<sup>65</sup>

He concludes that the "problem of the Indian" is a moral problem. As such, the possibilities for the Indian to overcome its oppression depend on finding a way to revive their Inca social (religious) traditions and their logically practical implications. As he notes, "Because of its identification with the social and political regime, the Inca religion could not outlive the Inca state. It had temporal rather than spiritual ends and cared more about the kingdom of Earth than the kingdom of heaven. It was social, not an individual discipline."<sup>66</sup> Rather than following an ideal, Mariátegui is one of the first Latin American thinkers to appropriate particular Marxist elements, instead of attempting to dogmatically implement a different doctrine in order to articulate a liberating discourse. Mariátegui embodies the inception of the later Marxist philosophies after the 1960s.

The most successful Marxist movements based their efforts on the adjustment of Marxist views to the particular circumstances of the region. Politically, the Cuban revolution, with its later identification as a Marxist-Leninist movement, stands as the most prominent prosperous Latin American Marxist State. The Cuban State refers to itself as "La Revolución" as a way to

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<sup>64</sup> José Carlos Mariátegui, "Indians, Land, and Religion in Perú," in *Latin American Philosophy: An Introduction with Readings*, Susana Nuccetelli and Gary Seay, eds. (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2004), 242.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 245.

exemplify that it is an “ongoing” revolution. That the State is the process towards emancipation, culminating in communism.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, other Latin American countries, such as Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, amongst others, have claimed to follow Marxist philosophical principles. However, unlike Cuba, they attained political power through a democratic process. This difference acknowledges a less radical process to seize rule in favor of the economic emancipation of the poor.

Other prominent movements that are informed by Marxist views and have adjusted their outlook to fit the realities of the region are liberation theology and liberation philosophy. Both of these outlooks emerged out of relatively similar social critiques based on inequalities of wealth, which engendered oppression against one side and accumulation and exploitation on the other. Liberation promises to dynamically erase the abyss between economic classes and to improve societal relations in Latin America. Nevertheless, both liberation theology and liberation philosophy retrieve Marxist ideas that serve as an ideological background to articulate a coherent practical approach, and both liberating currents stand parallel to one another in this respect.

### **Latin American Philosophy: The Starting Point**

Some common ground between most philosophers discussed above is that Latin American philosophy, as such, must have a starting point in the concrete. This starting point must be addressed carefully. Eurocentric philosophies, as applied in Latin America, have created the exploitation of peoples and places. As mentioned above, the Spanish conquest utilized scholasticism as a system to colonize Indigenous communities in the Americas.

The Enlightenment brought about scientific methodologies that, by better understanding, the principles and mechanisms of nature, enabled the efficient and systematic exploitation of

natural and human resources in the Americas for the benefit of European wealth. During the nineteenth century, positivism influenced a broad political spectrum, from democratic governments to dictatorships.<sup>67</sup>

Marxism offered the first practical philosophy to squarely address the issues of inequalities, abject poverty, oppression, and exploitation. The main pitfall of Marxism was the application of its theory to the practical realities confronting the revolutions across Latin America. The best example of this is the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Marxism became a grandiose messianic promise of liberation.

It is not difficult to imagine why Eurocentric philosophies in Latin America failed to appeal to liberatory projects. These projects, in turn, have actively sought critical approaches to decolonize Latin American thought. A recent work addressing critical theory's methods of decolonizing critical theory is Amy Allen's *End of Progress*.<sup>68</sup>

Allen's work resonates with significant strands of decolonial theory. She outlines how conceptual and political issues surrounding ideas of progress, logics of domination, and practices of colonization are deeply entangled. She argues that critical theory ought to be decolonized by jettisoning universalists notions out of the normative projects. This rejection, she argues, will offer alternative perspectives that are not Eurocentric, and that also serve to oppose Eurocentrism in general.

As I hope to have illustrated, the history of Latin American philosophy consists of a plethora of syncretism between Amerindian cultures and Western thought. These rich and broad

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<sup>67</sup> Some examples of this spectrum are Argentina's President Domingo Sarmiento, Brazil's national motto of "Order and Progress," and Mexico's Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship.

<sup>68</sup> See Amy Allen's *End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

influences shaped the identity and philosophy of Latin America in general. Nevertheless, more specifically, the complexity of these historical processes is reflected and at the core of the liberation movements in Latin America.

### **Dependency Theory**

Departing from Marxist analysis, some Latin American sociologists identified the economic and political practices across Latin America after decolonization as new forms of colonialism. This assessment, in turn, enabled the continuance, and in some cases, the intensification of human oppression and exploitation.

Dependency theory was a method of identifying and tracking the roots of oppression and inequality in Latin America. Specifically, it was a response to the post-war efforts, emphasized by the Kennedy administration to secure economic interests through political power. The economic process described by dependency theorists<sup>69</sup> articulated a cycle by which developed countries would exchange obsolete technologies for cheap labor. These theorists, known as *dependentistas*, argued that the cycle of dependency enabled developed countries to enrich themselves, while at the same time perpetuating a state of underdevelopment in other countries. Dependency theory formulated a model of a “center” or a “core” constituted by developed countries, and a “periphery” constituted by the countries of the underdeveloped world. Moreover, this development of countries was possible because of the cycle of dependence and underdevelopment as a direct consequence of extracting resources and exploiting people through cheap labor in the peripheral countries. These neo-liberal institutions imposed a political

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<sup>69</sup> For example, the seminal work of the Argentinian sociologist Raúl Prebisch advocated the creation of policies fostering domestic markets. Andre Gunder Frank argued that the solution to dependency is to disassociate peripheral countries from the core through socialism.



infrastructure that in allowing countries to finance politics and create national credit lines led to burgeoning national debts.

Dependency theory, as construed in the '50s and '60s, emerged from and was inextricably linked to Marxist theory. With the prevalence of neo-liberalism and free markets and the fall of the Soviet Union, Marxist theory and its ancillary theories in Latin America were dimmed by the failure of political socialism. One of the theoretical casualties was the dependency theory, with an additional critical caveat of lacking empirical grounding.<sup>70</sup>

### **The First Liberation Movement: Liberation Theology<sup>71</sup>**

Liberation theology started with a small group of Latin American theologians as a response to the many social injustices against the poor. This theological movement, which offers a Biblical hermeneutical interpretation favoring the poor and the oppressed, has spread all over the world, blurring political, social, and religious boundaries.

One of the first liberation theologians is the Brazilian Leonardo Boff. Theologically he was greatly influenced by Meister Eckhart, Francis Assisi, and Saint Augustine, among others. Boff earned his Doctorate in Theology under the supervision of Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and later admonished by the Catholic Church due to his "radical" ideas concerning the poor and the oppressed. It should be noted that he later abdicated his priesthood.

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<sup>70</sup> See Omar Sánchez's "The Rise and Fall of the Dependency Movement: Does It Inform Underdevelopment Today?" *E.I.A.L.*, vol. 14, no. 2, (2003).

<sup>71</sup> The founders of this movement: (From Concise History of Liberation Theology): Catholic Theologians: Gustavo Gutierrez, Peruvian philosopher. First liberation theologian Segundo Galilea, Chilean theologian. Juan Luis Segundo, Uruguayan theologian (hermeneutic circle) against "epistemological presupposition regarding the priority of praxis." Boston Collaborative encyclopedia of theology Lucio Gera, Italian born, naturalized Argentinian. The precursors of a theology of liberation by creating a theology of the people. Jon Sobrino, Spaniard theologian. Hugo Assmann, a Brazilian priest. Pablo Richard, Chilean Protestant: Emilio Castro. Julio de Santa Ana. Rubem Alves. Jose Míguez Bonino. Gustavo Gutierrez "described theology as a critical reflection on praxis." (1964, 1971 Published Teologia de la Liberacion).

Boff was not only a forerunner of the liberation theology movement but as I will outline in Chapter 3, he also pioneered the inclusion of ecology into the framework of liberation theology. His first publication on this matter was *Ecology and Liberation* (1993), which was translated into English two years later. Boff extends the argument of liberation theology in favor of the poor and the oppressed to include nature and the environment, and as we will later see, he argues that nature deserves the same ontological access to justice as the poor.

In Leonardo Boff's own words, "Liberation theology is in communion with the political aspirations of many social groups that seek a society concentrated on the dignity of the human person and a form of participation that, through labor, satisfies the basic needs of food, shelter, health, education, and leisure, and opens up areas of freedom for creativity and the collective building up of society."<sup>72</sup>

These conditions are also compatible with, if not identical, to the consensual requirements of behavioral change to mitigate the climate crisis. Liberation theology seeks an increase in quality of life in an ecologically sustainable way. Boff asserts: "The best projects, practices, and organizations are those that do not aim exclusively at the quality of goods and services, but at the quality of life, in order to make that life truly human. Society as a whole should make a life of this kind its goal. The alliance that is in the course of establishment between men and women and nature, in terms of brother-sisterhood and veneration, also forms part of human well-being."

Boff stands as a pioneer in the inclusion of nature and the oppressed in the Latin American environmental discourse, and he settled the grounds that enabled peripheral groups, such as the poor, women, and indigenous populations, to participate and contribute to Latin American social and environmental conditions. As the Brazilian theologian points out, "On the

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<sup>72</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 126.

basis of this struggle on behalf of the oppressed, liberation theology adopted certain arguments from the Marxist tradition.”<sup>73</sup> This is also the case for some facets of liberation philosophy.

### **Philosophy of Liberation**

Enrique Dussel, a liberation philosopher, acknowledges his indebtedness to Marxist philosophy. He proposes an interpretation of Marx's views that includes the earlier philosophical and economic writings of the German philosopher as a means of distancing his Latin American liberating philosophy from the dogmas of old Marxist interpretations, which ignored Marx's early writings. This was one of the effects of the "New Left," opening up novel aspects that were often ignored by the old Marxist Left. The New Left, which emerged in the 1960s, directed its efforts to revitalize, through critical inquiry, the struggles against the social ailments that have plagued the Latin American continent. Dussel argues that the philosophy of liberation "is the magisterium that functions in the name of the poor, the oppressed, the other"<sup>74</sup> He maintains Marx's dialectic as an unfolding process from theory to praxis, namely, from metaphysics to ethics.

The sampling of these two liberating movements serves a twofold purpose. Theology of liberation encompasses Christian principles and Marxist elements to attempt to formulate an approach to justice in accord with the practical teachings of Jesus Christ. By its inception, it implies recognition of the cultural importance of the Catholic Church in Latin American society. The second liberation philosophy addresses a longstanding debate in Latin America about the question of the existence and nature of a *strictly* Latin American philosophy such as Dussel

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<sup>73</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 98.

<sup>74</sup> Enrique Dussel, *Filosofía de la Liberación*, (Bogota: Editorial Nueva América, 1996).

affirms.<sup>75</sup> This alleged philosophical system emerged from dependency theory analyses that structured the economic relationship between developed and underdeveloped countries and its collateral, social effects.

### **Pedagogy of Liberation**

Some ecological movements stem from Latin American Marxist thought. Others use Marxist principles to lay the foundations for a critique of neoliberal practices identified as the culprits of the climate crisis. Of course, within the ecological frameworks, there are significant differences in their political and economic outlooks, some of which endorse the most robust forms of neoliberal practices, while others support renewed forms of Marxist manifestations to cope with the crisis. *Prima facie*, it could be argued that some of these ecological movements are nothing but a disguised repetition of history—the old capitalism versus communism dichotomy.

However, others are attempting to form constructivist, synthetic methodologies that account for the historical mistakes that have resulted in so much violence through repression, oppression, and misery for so long. In tune with what Zolov advocates, a “grassroots left”<sup>76</sup> gravitates toward designing ways to solve the most basic universal problems. Climate change is one of these, if not *the primary issue* that humanity has ever faced as a species.

In order to promote conservation, mitigation, adaptation, and other forms to cope with the climate challenge, a plethora of options ought to be on hand. Intellectual movements, like the examples discussed here, must develop a sensitivity to include and expand the scope of the struggles and issues they are tackling. Liberation theology and philosophy alike have managed to

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<sup>75</sup> Enrique Dussel, “Philosophy in Latin America in the Twentieth Century,” in *Latin American Philosophy: Currents, Issues, Debates*, Edited by Eduardo Mendieta (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 32.

<sup>76</sup> Eric Zolov, “Expanding Our Conceptual Horizons: The Shift from an Old to a New Left in Latin America,” *A Contra Corriente*, vol. 5, no. 2, (Winter 2008): 47-73.

accomplish this conceptual broadening to include formerly excluded non-human forms within the realm of ethics. For instance, Boff recognizes the need to include nature as an ethical agent. He states, “There is a human and social right, but there is also an ecological and cosmic right. We do not have the right to what we have not created.”<sup>77</sup>

Both frameworks, although methodologically different, share similar factors and have followed parallel conceptual patterns. Their philosophical schemes have provisioned, and in fact, incorporated ecological attitudes that neatly fit their previous worldview. The following chapters will discuss, beginning with Liberation Theology, followed by Philosophy of Liberation, Pedagogy of Liberation, and Ecofeminism, the ecological turn of the liberation movements in Latin America.

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<sup>77</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 30.

## CHAPTER 3: ECO-THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

In the second chapter, I laid out a brief account of the historical emergence of Liberation Theology by providing an overview of its significant figures and theoretical frameworks. Following the historiography of Liberation Theology, I will now turn my focus to Leonardo Boff's theology and examine how he renews Liberation Theology to include ecology as part of the project of liberation. Also, I will sketch Leonardo Boff's chronological evolution of ecology and outline what he calls a "new alliance" between humans and nature, which will serve as the new ethical framework for Liberation Theology.

Moreover, this chapter will highlight the influence of Liberation Theology on the articulation of Latin American political ecology, ecofeminism, the recognition of indigenous epistemologies as alternative paradigms, and the inclusion of Western ontological worldviews derived from contemporary theoretical physics, as well as Lovelock's Gaia theory.

Finally, I will examine how the goals of Eco-Liberation Theology warrant a practice of liberation from *Religião*.<sup>78</sup> This can be evidenced by the recent institutional acknowledgment of Eco-Liberation Theology in Pope Francis's Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si': On Care of Our Common Home*, published in 2015 and *Querida Amazonía*, published in 2020.

### **Liberation Theology's Renewal Through Ecology**

Liberation theology developed in Latin America in the 1960s by addressing the profound division between poverty and wealth, exploitation, and accumulation. Liberation theology

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<sup>78</sup> Along with what Freire will call *Conscientização*. A central epistemological and critical approach to achieve liberation in pedagogy.

emerged as an option for the poor. It was a movement meant as a practical or 'applied' theology. Liberation theologians sought to anchor their practice in dependency theorists of the '50s and '60s.

Liberation Theology, Boff argues, emerged exclusively out of economic inequality. Later on, the movement revolved around "awareness" of cultural oppression (against indigenous populations and slaves) and sexual oppression. The project of theology as liberation has the poor as its central focus. Boff claims that "Never in the history of Christianity have the poor become so central, in the sense that they should be agents of their own liberation."<sup>79</sup> This expansion of the scope of Liberation Theology led to the eventual inclusion of the Earth as an entity, based on Lovelock's Gaia argument, just as the preferential option of the poor to justice requires liberation.

In response to the failure of the dependency theory, Liberation Theology attempted to survive and overcome the pitfalls of the dependency theory by grounding its theory on *praxis*. Liberation theologians, particularly Boff, maintained the Marxist economic analysis to give the poor an ontological standing. Boff sees Liberation theology as an alternative epistemology to Western epistemology.

Marxist economic analysis on poverty and praxis is the core of Leonardo Boff's Liberation Theology and ecology. He justifies the survival of the project beyond Marxist theory. He resets the project without Marxism by anchoring Liberation Theology with a syncretic/eclectic discourse between ancient mythologies (*Pacha Mama*, *Sumak Kawsay*, *Gaia*) modern physics (quantum entanglement), and Liberation Theology, the teleological project of discovering and preserving relationships (the new nature-human alliance). His goal is to provide a more general demand than Marxism.

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<sup>79</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), EPUB, 143.

He identifies Liberation Theology's mission to have a common goal with the ecological discourse on sustainability. He states, "The wound of poverty breaks the social fabric of millions and millions of poor people around the world. The other wound, systematic assault on the Earth, breaks down the balance of the planet, which is under threat from the plundering of development as practiced by contemporary global societies."<sup>80</sup>

Boff articulates his Liberation Theology and ecology in four stages: The foundational stage, the building stage, the settling-in stage, and the formalization stage. He argues that the opposition to Liberation theology was due to skepticism about the application of the Marxist methodology in theology, seeking just a change of a socio-economic superstructure. This Marxist influence on liberation theology, according to Boff and Gutierrez, has been exaggerated and is a factual misrepresentation of the applied method of theology. Instead, they argue that Liberation Theology works alongside those that wish to create a better humanity. Marxism provides a critique of forces of systematic oppression, and in that sense, it worked as a framework to liberate the poor. However, the political turmoil of the '60s and '70s created a polarized approach to politics that, as such, polarized philosophical perspectives.

During these decades, Liberation Theology was considered a form of Marxism.<sup>81</sup> This led the Vatican to censure and distance the Church from Liberation Theology.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, with the fall of the Soviet Union, and the apparent failure of socialism, Liberation Theology was also

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<sup>80</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, EPUB, 2320.

<sup>81</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*. trans. C. Ina & J. Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973).

<sup>82</sup> March 11, 1985, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) wrote a letter declaring that Boff's ideas "endanger the sound doctrine of faith, which this Congregation has the task of promoting and safeguarding." This letter resulted in an order to silence Boff for one year. Later on Boff told *Newsweek International*, "In 1992, they wanted to silence me again. Finally, I said no. The first time was an act of humility and I accepted. The second time was humiliation, and I couldn't accept it."



considered to be dead. Boff, however, attempts to renew the movement of Liberation Theology to include within its scope, the ecological crisis. The cry of the Earth is now for Boff, equal to the cry of the poor.

### **Liberation Theology as Ecological Responsibility**

Following Gutierrez's definition of liberation theology as "a way to understand the grace and salvation of Jesus in the context of the present and from the situation of the poor"<sup>83</sup> (Cambridge companion p. 19), Boff articulates the inclusion of ecology in Liberation Theology analysis in his works *Ecology and Liberation* (1995), *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (1997), *Sustainability, What is and What Isn't* (2012), and *Toward an Eco-Spirituality* (2015).

In *Ecology and Liberation*, Boff sets out an ethical project with the aim of defeating utilitarian and anthropocentric views of nature. These views, according to him, give humans the false impression that they are the "masters" of nature and motivate violence against it. In this work, he outlines an "essential principle" as the starting point for such an ethical project: "That is good which conserves and promotes all creatures, especially living creatures, and among living beings, the weakest; that which is bad is everything that prejudices, debases, and destroys living creatures."<sup>84</sup> For Boff, this is the foundational principle of Eco-liberation theology. It starts from a deontological approach that highlights a new framework of ethical responsibility. He argues that because of the existence of human rights, and humans belonging to a broader community of beings, there must be ecological and cosmic rights.

These rights, according to Boff, are being infringed and violated by some human beings through anthropocentric and utilitarian motivations. Namely, through economic profitability

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<sup>83</sup> James Maffie, "Pre-Columbian Philosophies," 19.

<sup>84</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 30.

resulting from the unabashed exploitation of nature and its resources for the accumulation of wealth.

Consistent with the older programs of Liberation Theology, Dependency Theory, and Marxist theory, he argues that the impetus of economic forces, through the accumulation of wealth of a minority, coupled with cultures of consumerism, resulted in the exploitation of human beings, and violence against nature in general. Boff considers the latter a “broken alliance between humankind and nature.”<sup>85</sup> He candidly accepts that Christianity has contributed significantly to and thus has absolute responsibility for the ongoing ecological crisis. The main flaw of theology as a discipline, argues Boff, is due to a literal interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

Churches ought to "have their own contributions to make to the construction of, and to the education of those responsible for, a new alliance of humankind with nature."<sup>86</sup> This alliance "must come from the heart." An ecological outline has the mental as the first stage, the social as a second stage, and the environmental as the final stage.

He also highlights an epistemic gap between Religions and technology. He argues that technology should work with nature and not seek to dominate it, and he is clearly opposed to the idea that civilization should rely on technological solutions as exclusive actions to solve the challenges of climate change, which can lead to technological messianism.

In *Ecology and Liberation*, Boff argues that the ethical task is to begin a healing process and a new relationship between humans and nature. This will involve multiple steps to accomplish the goal of *practicing* ecological liberation. In his work, *Cry of the Poor, Cry of the*

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<sup>85</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 30.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

*Earth*, Boff understands ecology to be defined as “knowledge of the relations, interconnections, interdependencies, and exchanges of all with all, at all points, and at all moments.”<sup>87</sup>

One of these first steps is what he calls the intellectual project as mental ecology. He regards the state of the outer world as a reflection of our inner psychological life. For him, violence against nature, manifested through human actions to create ecological imbalances, represents our negative individual psychological experiences. For him, positive formative psychological experiences require a balanced relationship with nature. Similarly, at a collective level, he sees the success of political and economic systems only if they “persist” in the human mind. Mental ecology is a process of self-examination to form a balance with nature from within.

### **Mental Ecology**

Boff's mental ecology involves three things: First, to recover the value and love of nature. Second, to recharge the positive psychic energy of humans to face our existential contradictions. Third, to promote the spiritual (mystical) dimension of human experience. Boff conceives as necessary a revolution of the mind, to reestablish the alliance with nature.

The spiritual project, or what he calls Cosmic Mysticism, sets out a stage to embrace the totality of things, something that he thinks mental ecology cannot do. Mental ecology is a process of inner liberation with oneself (inward reflection), while cosmic mysticism reflects outwardly. Symbolic reason plays the intermediary between mental ecology and spiritual ecology. The lack of inner reflection manifests itself through ecological challenges as a "crisis of profound meaning in our way and system of life, and in our model of society and development."<sup>88</sup> Power (political

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<sup>87</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, EPUB, 224.

<sup>88</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*, 37.

or individual) should not be used to dominate but rather to safeguard life. (Starting from the least favored, e.g., the poor).<sup>89</sup>

These epistemic projects are intended as critiques of Western epistemology. Boff claims that Descartes' and Bacon's epistemic frameworks have justified systematic inequality and oppression of the (technologically) disadvantaged and promoted exploitation and domination of nature. Boff calls for an epistemic shift towards the framework of Francis Assisi, Teilhard de Chardin, Augustine, Bonaventure, and Pascal. He finds coherence between these epistemic frameworks and sees a connection with the discoveries in modern physics. These frameworks offer a relationship with nature based on compassion and, therefore, non-destructive relationships with nature.

### **The Social Stage: Political Ecology**

For Boff, it is not enough to guarantee survival (as a negative right) to life without actively safeguarding and promoting life. He is arguing that politics in an eco-democracy ought to secure, by enforcing (as a positive right of people) the universal right to a healthy life in harmony with the rest of nature. This administration of power will "include ecological welfare"<sup>90</sup> measured in terms of quality of (all forms of) life as a universal goal, because for Boff, "Life and Freedom are the most desirable goods."<sup>91</sup>

He endorses the creation and description of an Ecologico-Social Democracy. Such a political system ought to use a method that is "beyond anthropocentrism," where there is no

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>91</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*, 130.

longer a justification (Descartes and Bacon) of violence against nature. It should also include the feature of "acceptance of the otherness."<sup>92</sup>

Drawing upon the epistemological principle of interconnectedness, Boff derives the following deontological principle: "Everything that exists and lives has the right to exist and live." This principle becomes deontological as it lays responsibility on human beings to uphold this obligation to recognize rights to all forms of life.

Social ecology in the form of democracy equates social injustice with ecological injustice and human poverty with ecosystemic degradation (natural poverty).<sup>93</sup> Therefore, the prioritization of actions ought to be focused on eradicating poverty (the most threatened) as a duty to uphold the rights of present and future generations.<sup>94</sup>

In his later work, *Sustainability, What Is and What Isn't*,<sup>95</sup> Boff argues that the developed world's notion of progress, as defined by the industrialized, capitalist, and consumerist culture, is anthropocentric, and the economics of such capitalist production is contradictory. It is anthropocentric insofar as it subordinates nature and, at the same time, considers humans as being beyond or above nature. It is contradictory because this notion of development must be constant, linear, and promote the exploitation of nature and yielding inequality. Namely, capitalism's notion of progress and development assumes nature as a bountiful "basket of goods" with limitless carrying capacities that will yield steady economic growth *ad infinitum*. In short, consumerist carbon-based capitalism is predicated on an unsustainable premise. Constant

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>95</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Sustentabilidade: o Que é: o Que Não é* (Brasil: Vozes, 2000), 26.

economic growth, under its current capitalistic framework, is incoherent against the realities of the capacities of the environment. Nature has a limited capacity, and we have reached its threshold.

Boff's solution is to shift instead, to cultivate a different type of capital. He states: "Human and spiritual capital are such that the more they are used, the more they grow, in contrast to material capital, which decreases as it is used. This may well be the larger message of our current crisis."

In his most recent work, *Toward an Eco-Spirituality*, Boff proposes a move from a "dependency on material capital to human or spiritual capital"<sup>96</sup> The dependency on material capital is what Boff would call the cause of the ecological crisis. Human beings created an ontological paradigm where they placed themselves at the top of the hierarchy of the universe. This self-imposed assessment implies that nature is there to be manipulated and controlled to fulfill the unlimited desires of the human will. Our violent and egoistic tendencies have led, throughout history, to build an anthropocentric paradigm that considers nature an unlimited fount of resources into the future for the benefit of *some* human beings.

This version of progress, according to Boff, is wrong because it confuses an effect (poverty) with the cause of ecological degradation. Instead, he raises the issue of the incompatibility of capitalism and the accumulation of wealth by a few with sustainable ecological existence. Hence, for Boff, the concept of sustainable development becomes incompatible with the economic system of modernity.

Additionally, the establishment of this economy of profit as a paradigm destroys the alliance of human beings with the universe. In order to reverse this paradigm, he applies

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<sup>96</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Toward an Eco-Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2015), 23.

Liberation Theology as a hermeneutical 'looking back' in order to map out, and construct ways to achieve what he calls a "new alliance."

This new bond or alliance, Boff argues, is needed at the mental level (individuals ought to reason), where logic must not be in service of anthropocentrism. The individual realizes that reason ought to be operating in the function of living in harmony with all other existing beings. Boff identifies eight models that have surfaced as possible paradigms of the ecological crisis and delineates a normative hierarchy as follows:

1. The Standard model. For Boff, the standard model is the *status quo*. The model that has promoted and practice exploitation in the function of the accumulation of capital and wealth.
2. The neocapitalist model, which for Boff, is unsustainable because, like the standard model, it promotes unbounded extraction of natural resources and creates social inequality.
3. Natural Capitalism is for Boff a weak form of sustainability. This model of sustainability is illusory. It still considers nature a "basket of goods" in the service of profit.
4. Green Economy Model or Green Capitalism, is the model endorsed by people like Al Gore. This model calls out environmental injustices but still supports social and economic practices that are contrary to a sustainable model.
5. Ecosocialism as a political model is necessary but insufficient for sustainability.
6. Eco-development. This form of economic development is sensitive to ecosystems and ought to have an organic bio-economy. For Boff, this model has a necessary economic component for the possibility of ecological sustainability.

7. The solidarity economy is based in micro-sustainable (communitarian) economies that practice the management of resources bio-economically.
8. Good living or ‘Sumak Kawsay,’ the desired achievement of an ecologically just practice. This is the model of Boff’s “new alliance.”

According to Boff, the leading causes of unsustainability assume that nature is a basket of goods for human profit. This is the understanding of nature through a mechanistic-patriarchal hierarchy.<sup>97</sup> This vision cements the anthropocentric illusion of owning nature and the economic premise of unlimited growth as a fundamental function of progress and development<sup>98</sup> These processes lead to economic and political dynamics that affirm competition of resources, placing material capital above human capital.

Boff's integrative, sustainable, ontological principles include Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis, according to which Earth is considered as a living organism. Humans are the consciousness of Earth. Humans ought to develop a spiritual sense, by which science and religion interact. This spirituality accepts that we owe Earth a rational sensibility and cordiality. Out of these, he endorses the ethics of care towards *Gaia* based on nurture.

### **Eco-Theology’s Ontological and Epistemic Frameworks to Achieve Sustainability**

Boff’s paradigm of sustainability is entrenched in the Quechua concept of the *Sumak Kawsay*,<sup>99</sup> Now a constitutional principle in the plurinational states of Ecuador and Bolivia. At the State level, these two countries have managed to include all the ethnic, social agents in the

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<sup>97</sup> A mechanist-patriarchal vision of nature draws upon the notion that nature is understood through rigid causal relationships, and the functioning of nature ought to be understood in order to be manipulated in favor of human production and consumption.

<sup>98</sup> — both in capitalism (free-market competition) and socialism, e.g., Stakhanovites.

<sup>99</sup> For a discussion of *Sumak Kawsay*, please see Pablo Alonso González and Alfredo Macías Vazquez’s “An Ontological Turn in the Debate on *Buen Vivir – Sumak Kawsay* in Ecuador: Ideology, Knowledge, and the Common,” in *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies Journal*, vol. 10, issue 3, (2015), 315-334.



constitutional system of rights. Interestingly, both countries have also adopted the inclusion of nature within their constitutional framework of rights by recalling the notion of *Sumak Kawsay*.

The Andean notion of good living may appear somewhat vague and simplistic. Since it is, perhaps, a response that stems from outside the dominant ontological framework, it may be epistemologically difficult for *Sumak Kawsay* to coexist with the paradigm of neo-liberalism. The concept entails the notion of humans living in harmony with their surroundings. It sets itself apart from the dependence of economic growth, commodification of nature, and accumulation of capital. Good living, in this sense, serves as a cultural alternative to neoliberal practices that have had an extremely negative impact on Latin America.

Of particular interest is how this alternate concept stemming from an opposite worldview survived its neglect and dismissal by neo-liberalism. Since the wars of independence in Latin America over the last two centuries, merging states established political agendas to invisibilize<sup>100</sup> “non-European” groups in order to present themselves as cultural continuums of Europe.<sup>101</sup>

The emergence of alternative ontological, epistemological, and ethical views, as in the case of ‘good living,’ creates resistance to the ongoing exploitation of humans and ecosystems in these regions. Although some meaningful progress has been made, there are still many struggles and challenges taking place and ignored. It is also true that there have been some critical internal strategic challenges as well as global challenges. For instance, multinationals continue to profit from the exploitation and degradation of ecosystems in Latin America.<sup>102</sup> These corporations

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<sup>100</sup> José Carlos Mariátegui y Guillermo Rouillon, *Siete Ensayos De Interpretación De La Realidad Peruana* (Editorial Universitaria, 1955).

<sup>101</sup> An example of this is the emergence of *criollismo* and the establishment of the elite Latin American intelligentsia. See, for example, Domingo Sarmiento's *Civilization and Barbarism*. The archetype of progress is the urban Latin American city resembling a stereotypical conventional (European) life, as opposed to the rural communities being perceived by the “civilized elites” as barbaric and backward.

<sup>102</sup> See “Corporate Conquistadors: The Many Ways Multinationals Both Drive and Profit From Climate

deplete resources and pollute water supplies while actively and sometimes violently resisting any attempts to make them responsible for their actions.

In Boff's interpretation, there is no supporting argument that the ancient Greeks and their myth of Gaia and the Andean *Pacha Mama* are connected. Some scholars have suggested that the Andean notion of *Sumak Kawsay* (often translated as Good Living) and the ancient Greek concept of the Good Life (virtue) are fundamentally different.<sup>103</sup> These raise concerns as to whether the two mythologies represent the coherence Boff is trying to articulate between ancient mythologies and modern science (and the problem of entropy) and religion as part of a syncretic teleological project to save creation.

### **Science and Religion in Eco-Theology**

Boff conceptualizes the new alliance between nature and human beings in the theoretical framework of the "new physics."<sup>104</sup> In particular, the dynamics of entanglement is an ontological basis to formulate a normative function of the universe where entities have intrinsic, entangled relationships that we are just now beginning to understand.

The realization of Earth as an organism (Lovelock) is for Boff a confirmation of ancient Amerindian cosmologies, as in the case of *Pacha mama* and *Sumak Kawsay*. Boff, in calling for a new alliance of human beings with Earth, including our epistemic reflection on who we are and

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Destruction.”

<sup>103</sup> Eduardo Gudynas, “La Dimensión Ecológica del Buen Vivir: Entre el Fantasma de la Modernidad y el Desafío Biocéntrico,” *Revista Obets*, 4, (2009), 49-53.

<sup>104</sup> "New physics" encompasses, for Boff, the theoretical frameworks of quantum mechanics and relativity theory. There is a leap (left unmarked by Boff) that justifies the descriptive causal relationship of phenomena with a normative judgment about what ought to be (or represent) through this new human alliance. Boff also overlooks the justification to claim that ancient Amerindian cosmologies *meant* or *intended* their cosmologies to represent a coherent position with the contemporary frameworks of theoretical physics. Additionally, Boff seems to be relegating science to an ancillary activity to support a theological (normative) project of saving creation, starting with the most vulnerable and being, ultimately, anthropocentric.

the place we occupy in the universe, advocates for a religação (reconnection) to achieve the practice of a sustainable ecological paradigm. The new alliance through religação with Earth is summarized here by Boff, “Both seek liberation, a liberation of the poor by themselves as active subjects who are organized, conscious, and networked to other allies who take on their cause and their struggle; and a liberation of the Earth through a new covenant between it and human beings, in a brotherly and sisterly relationship and with a kind of sustainable development that respects the different ecosystems and assures a good quality of life for future generations.”<sup>105</sup>

Boff claims to achieve this new alliance through a joining of masculine and feminine principles. He says, “If we seek to work out a new covenant with nature, one of integration and harmony, we find sources of inspiration in women and the feminine (in both man and woman).”<sup>106</sup> Here he suggests that there are unique (intrinsic) essential qualities of the feminine that need to be adopted, perhaps, through imitation, by both men and women.

He continues,

"women do not allow themselves to be ruled by reason alone; they more holistically incorporate intuition, heart, emotion, and the archetypal universe of the personal, group, and cosmic unconscious. Through their bodies, by which they enjoy a relationship of intimacy and wholeness quite different from that of men, they help overcome the dualisms introduced by patriarchal and androcentric culture between the world and human beings, Spirit and body, and interiority and efficiency. They have developed better than men a consciousness that is open and receptive, able to see the sacramental character of the world, and hence to hear the message of things, the beckoning of values and meanings that go beyond merely decoding intelligibility of structures. They are privileged bearers of the meaning of the sacred in all things, especially as related to the mystery of life, love, and death. They possess a special openness to religion, for they are particularly capable of connecting all things in a dynamic whole, which is a function that every religion sets for itself."

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<sup>105</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, EPUB, 2320.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 723.

Boff's essentialist position on the role of women in the ecological project is a point of vigorous contention that will be discussed later in chapters 4 and 6. Feminist philosophers will begin critically assessing these essentialist roles as oppressive modes of dominance and will articulate methodologies from anti-essentialist perspectives on gender.

### **Influence of Liberation Theology on The Church**

The election of the current Pope Francis can be seen as an affirmation of the importance of Latin Americans for the Catholic Church. Furthermore, the Pope, former Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, can be interpreted as a syncretic choice, a compromise between conservative and liberal views within the Church. In his second encyclical letter as Pope, *Laudato Si* (2015), he dedicates the reflection to the ecological crisis, despite Boff's earlier works on Liberation ecology being silenced by the Church. The influence of Boff is evident.

The following excerpts from Pope Francis's second encyclical letter, *Laudato Si*<sup>107</sup> clearly demonstrate the Church's appropriation of Liberation Theology's philosophical framework. The document signals a new progressive direction of the Church concerning climate change.

Similar to Boff's argument on the connection between Earth and the Poor the Pope writes:

2. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air, and in all forms of life. This is why the Earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the Earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

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<sup>107</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home, Encyclical Letter* (Vatican City: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2015).

Following Liberation Theology's economic critique against capitalism, the Pope criticizes the modes of production and consumption:

The destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift that must be defended from various forms of debasement. Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in "lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies." Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and "take into account the nature of each being and its mutual connection in an ordered system." Accordingly, our human ability to transform reality must proceed in line with God's original gift of all that is.

Acknowledging the Liberation Theology and Philosophy:

7. These statements of the Pope's echo the reflections of numerous scientists, philosophers, theologians, and civic groups, all of which have enriched the Church's thinking on these questions.<sup>108</sup>

Liberation Theology needs assessment:

14. I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation that includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concerns, and affects us all. The worldwide ecological movement has already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organizations committed to raising awareness of these challenges. Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest.

After a contentious history with Liberation theologians the Church's official position seems striking similarities as it concerns climate change:

15. It is my hope that this Encyclical Letter, which is now added to the body of the Church's social teaching, can help us to acknowledge the appeal, immensity, and urgency of the challenge we face.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 7.

<sup>109</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 12.

The following excerpts highlight Liberation Theology's connection between the "Poor" and earth and the interconnectedness of beings in nature and our ethical responsibilities towards all:

16. Although each chapter will have its own subject and specific approach, it will also take up and re-examine important questions previously considered. This is particularly the case with a number of themes which will reappear as the Encyclical unfolds. As examples, I will point to the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the grave responsibility of international and local policy, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle. These questions will not be dealt with once and for all, but reframed and enriched again and again. Furthermore, although this Encyclical welcomes dialogue with everyone so that together we can seek paths of liberation, I would like from the outset to show how faith convictions can offer Christians, and some other believers as well, ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters.<sup>110</sup>

88. The bishops of Brazil have pointed out that nature as a whole not only manifests God but is also a locus of his presence. The Spirit of life dwells in every living creature and calls us to enter into a relationship with him. Discovering this presence leads us to cultivate the "ecological virtues." This is not to forget that there is an infinite distance between God and the things of this world, which do not possess his fullness. Otherwise, we would not be doing the creatures themselves any good either, for we would be failing to acknowledge their right and proper place. We would end up unduly demanding of them something which they, in their smallness, cannot give us.<sup>111</sup>

91. A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion, and concern for our fellow human beings. It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining utterly indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted. This compromises the very meaning of our struggle for the sake of the environment.<sup>112</sup>

93. Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the Earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. For believers, this becomes a

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>112</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 67.

question of fidelity to the Creator, since God created the world for everyone. Hence every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective that takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged. The principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, is a golden rule of social conduct and "the first principle of the whole ethical and social order."<sup>113</sup>

Leonardo Boff's holistic approach to Liberation Theology is contributing to a shift in the Church's views on the responsibility (at least to denounce injustices) toward the environment, vulnerable populations, and social inequalities.

Boff's Marxist critique of Capitalism resonated with the Church in *Laudato Si* and, most recently in *Querida Amazonía*, published in February 2020. This last document is the response to the Amazonian synod, by the bishops of the Amazonian region, that took place in October 2019, titled "The Amazon: New Paths for the Church and Integral Ecology." There it was proposed to the Church the ordainment of married men into priesthood and admit women as clergy. In *Querida Amazonía* the Pope recognizes, just like he did in *Laudato Sí* that the "cry of the earth is the cry of the poor" invoking the title of Boff's central work on ecology and theology.

Both Papal pronouncements stand as the Church's palatable versions of both Marxism and institutional responsibility towards the environment, through a denunciation of economic inequality as the common denominator between the exploitation of the Poor and the ecosystems. However, the Pope's declaration on the Church's position is signaling towards an emphasis on the exploitation of nature concerning climate change, and less of a social crisis concerning inequality. For example, *Querida Amazonía* ignored the calling of the bishops of the Amazonian synod to ordain married men and include women as ministers of the Church.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

### **Hermeneutical *Religação* as Holism: A Critique**

The activity of *Religação*, namely the holistic process of syncretizing ideas from the empirical sciences, mysticism, and philosophy, is at the heart of Boff's ecological project. However, its method must be carefully and critically examined to avoid potential conceptual inconsistencies and misalignments.

The argument for this is to analyze the hermeneutical process to substantiate Boff's holistic approach by which all things accepted in this "remixing" of ideas are logically consistent and coherent with the ontological framework that he is attempting to construct.

There is a danger with this holistic approach that it might logically lead to a relativization of nuanced concepts, and in the process of hermeneutical translation and appropriation, the concepts might end up trivialized or void of meaning. An example of this epistemic weakness is Boff's understanding of the "poor."

Boff's reading of St. Francis of Assisi brings to the front of a Marxist class analysis. Boff claims that St. Francis opted for the poor in response to the subtle economic changes taking place during his time. Boff claims St. Francis refused to belong to the newly emerging bourgeoisie economy. Boff equates the Marxist goal of "universal fraternity" with St. Francis Assisi's liberation through the willful option of poverty. The dignification of poverty is St. Francis's way of achieving "fraternity." St. Francis's rejection of wealth liberated him from the rigid social role that he would have had to play.

This reading of St. Francis can be questioned as anachronistic. A charitable concession to Boff about St. Francis's motives for his renouncement to wealth and economic participation, still leaves room for questions about St. Francis's assessment of the economic shifts of the time. Also, it could be argued, that contrary to Boff's assertions about Assisi's emancipatory mission,



it was not liberation as a social phenomenon, but rather liberation as a true spiritual path towards God. In contrast, Boff conceives the Poor as the revolutionary class, the proletariat in Marxist terms, to revolutionize the means of production and the distribution of goods therein. For Boff, the Poor ought to revolutionize the Church to change its inner political workings.

A more useful interpretation of Boff's work on Assisi reveals a hermeneutical approach by Boff to ground liberation theology's project within the Catholic dogma. Boff is attempting to cohere a Marxist analysis on the "Poor" with historical precedents of the Church. St. Francis, being a revolutionary figure of the Church, without rebelling against the institution of the Church, substantiates that difficult justification of Marxist philosophy with the dogma of the Church. He is endorsing a reading of the Church's leading figures, to make universal applicability of Liberation Theology.

Liberation Theology provided the foundations for the emergence of Philosophy of Liberation, which is the next topic in the chapter that follows. Also, Liberation Theology greatly influenced the views of Paulo Freire's work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, discussed in chapter 5, and some of the most prominent Latin American ecofeminists discussed in chapter 6.

The critical approach to expand the scope of liberation (and its influence to renew Catholicism's dogmas) resulted in the inclusion of the ecological concern to its mission. The movement sought the inclusion of the marginalized as victims of epistemic and physical violence aimed at fostering self-empowerment and liberation. It emphasizes *praxis* at the core of liberation and proposes a psychological renewal to consider humans as part of nature and not as ontologically separate.

As we have seen in this chapter, Boff makes the ecological turn in Liberation Theology to include new perspectives, from science, from indigenous cosmovisions, to highlight the ethical duties towards lifeforms and organisms that constitute reality. His efforts within theology will

become the general template form the other liberation movements, as it will be discussed in the following chapter on Philosophy of Liberation, to include ecology into their emancipatory missions.

## CHAPTER 4: ECO-PHILOSOPHY OF LIBERATION

The previous chapter provided an overview of the emergence of Liberation Theology as a practical methodology of ecological empowerment. This chapter aims to illustrate the emergence of Liberation Philosophy as influenced by Liberation Theology. As such, Liberation Philosophy followed a similar pattern by later including ecology as a primary concern within its scope of inquiry and praxis. Like Liberation Theology, it also seeks to shift the ontological framework of the *status quo* (the center-periphery model) toward a new paradigm.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the philosophical questions in Latin America focused on the core meaning of *Ser Latinoamericano*. Is there a Latin American Being or Identity, given the multiplicity of Amerindian tribes colonized by Spain and Portugal? After the wars of independence at the turn of the nineteenth century, where the ruling class (mainly European descendants) took over political control, the *status quo* remained predicated on the pervasive European society. Later on, with the emergence of the United States as a political power, a new agent was added to the power struggles of the entire region.

After the Spanish-American War, the geopolitical map changed. New dynamics and new forms of political interactions, led by neoliberalism, became the new paradigm. All these factors contributed to the transformation of new identities and new forms of control and oppression.

In summarizing the impact of such cultural models, the intellectual class for most of the twentieth century pondered the existence of Latin American philosophy, opening up different optics about Latin American thought. Some argued that philosophical activity (the teachings and

discussions of philosophical topics in Latin America) warranted a definite answer. However, the premise that it was not "original" philosophy was implicit within this question. The underlying assumption, then, was that Latin American philosophy was not authentic philosophical thought, but rather a recasting of European philosophy.

The positivist and Marxist movements during the twentieth century provide evidence for this claim. Others have denied the existence of a Latin American philosophy based mainly on the claim that philosophy ought to be original in order to be accounted as philosophy as such.

A third group argues that there is a Latin American philosophy that is "original" and "authentic," created within Latin America by Latin Americans reflecting upon their immediate circumstances.<sup>114</sup>

These two general notions: first the "identity problem" and second the metaphilosophical question about "Latin American Philosophy" lay the foundations to properly frame how climate change affects philosophy in Latin America and to formulate the question as to whether Latin American philosophy offers valuable insight to cope with the web of complexity of climate change.

### **The 'Founders' and Contemporary Latin American Philosophy**

Philosophers in Latin America since the beginning of the twentieth century have often asked whether there is a Latin American Philosophy. The "Founders" of Latin American philosophy began, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to concentrate their efforts on the existential circumstances in post-colonial Latin America. Liberation philosophy is a method borne out of a questioning of Latin American authenticity in philosophizing, proper to the place, and the people.

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<sup>114</sup> See Risieri Frondizi, "Is There an Ibero-American Philosophy?" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 9, (1949), 345-355, and Jorge J.E. Gracia, "Ethnic Labels and Philosophy: The Case of Latin American Philosophy." In *Latin American Philosophy: Currents, Issues, Debates*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta, (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2003).

Sebastián Salazar Bondy calls out this need to be aware of inauthentic philosophy. He likens Latin American thinking to a “plagiarized novel and not the truthful chronicle of our adventure.”<sup>115</sup> He concludes, “Our thought is defective and inauthentic owing to our society and our culture.” Bondy, therefore, answers the question by responding that due to the colonial status of Latin American thinking, it is not possible to conceive of Latin American philosophy as a free activity of Latin Americans. He conditions the existence of such a philosophy on a process of liberation that has not yet taken place. For him, the practice of freedom is a pre-condition of doing philosophy. This approach is parallel to Albert Memmi’s and Frantz Fanon’s analyses of colonial epistemology. For both thinkers, the colonial condition prevents the colonized from autonomous thinking. The “mind of the colonized” recasts the mindset of the colonizer. Their analyses point out to an epistemic dependency from the colonized, mirrored by crises of identities. The colonized selves are inauthentic selves insofar as they are unaware of their condition.

Another philosopher who denies that Latin American philosophy is authentic is the former Argentinian president Risieri Frondizi. For Frondizi, who studied philosophy at Harvard, Michigan, and the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the answer depends upon whether the philosophical production by Latin American has universal validity. He does not find necessary nor sufficient conditions to justify a definite answer.

The Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea adopts a different approach to the question by arguing that Latin American philosophy is the interpretation of philosophical (universal) problems through the perspective of Latin Americans. In reading Zea’s work, it is possible to identify Ortega y Gasset’s existentialism. Zea was a student of Spanish philosopher José Gaos.

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<sup>115</sup> Jorge J. E. Gracia, and Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert. *Latin American Philosophy for the 21st Century: The Human Condition, Values, and the Search for Identity* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2004), 238.

Gaos, in turn, was a student of Ortega y Gasset. Similar to Zea's perspective, Jorge J.E. Gracia recasts the Latin American meta-philosophical issue on identity by formulating three questions: "Who is to be included in Latin American Philosophy, what criteria are we going to use to determine inclusion, and how are we going to conceive this philosophy in order to answer these questions?"<sup>116</sup> His proposal leads to the articulation of an "ethnic philosophy."

According to Gracia, the articulation of such philosophy "requires both the existence of the ethnos and a certain conception of philosophy by the ethnos."<sup>117</sup> He goes on to define "ethne" not as an essentialist concept of having specific intrinsic properties and characteristics, but rather as "groups of people who have been brought together by history."<sup>118</sup> As such, Latin American philosophy derives from thinking about its circumstances.

Gracia asserts that "It is only necessary that Latin American philosophy be whatever the historical circumstances that originated it and the ethnos that produced it made it. Because the unity of Latin American philosophy is historical and contextual, it becomes easier to account for its variety and for the inclusion of texts and figures that traditional Western philosophy might not consider philosophical, such as the *Popol Vuh* or the poems of Sor Juana."<sup>119</sup> They must be considered as such. Gracia seeks the inclusion of Pre-Columbian and indigenous post-invasion ontologies and epistemologies as cornerstones of Latin American philosophy.

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<sup>116</sup> Jorge J. E. Gracia, "Identity and Latin American Philosophy," in *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte and Otávio Bueno eds., (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 258.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>118</sup> See Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte and Otávio Bueno (eds), *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) and Gracia and Millán-Zaibert, *Latin American Philosophy for the 21st Century*.

<sup>119</sup> Jorge J. E. Gracia, "Identity and Latin American Philosophy," 260.

Susana Nuccetelli divides the problem into two main categories of philosophers, universalists and distinctivists. According to Nuccetelli, strong universalists oppose the existence of Latin American philosophy, and weak universalists make universalism compatible with distinctivists. She maps herself as a weak universalist endorsing an “‘applied-philosophy’ view.”<sup>120</sup>

Liberation philosophy emerges out of the examination of existential circumstances and the call to practice liberation. One of its founding figures, Enrique Dussel, approaches the issue through a phenomenological<sup>121</sup> And dualist perspective. The "Other" from the "periphery" or "alterity" represents the ontological framework leading to identify what is needed. The "center" is the ontological framework to which knowledge (epistemological power) is anchored. The philosopher, for Dussel, becomes the catalyst that will make the periphery to emerge onto Being.

Both Cerutti Guldberg and Ofelia Schutte object to Dussel’s notion of the *Other* as incapable of action-towards-liberation and in need of the intellectual to speak and act on their behalf. Liberation, in a strict sense, ought to include the possibilities of self-awareness, motivation, and practice to liberate oneself from oppressive conditions and unjust hierarchical dynamics of power.

Arturo Escobar seems to offer an alternative ontological framework to address the issue of oppression. His methodology calls for an anti-essentialism of roles between the center and periphery, something that will also apply to pedagogy (teacher-student) and feminism (male-female), seeking to break those hierarchies by de-essentializing those power structures.

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<sup>120</sup> Nuccetelli, Schutte and Bueno, *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, 345.

<sup>121</sup> Ofelia Schutte, “Origins and Tendencies of the Philosophy of Liberation in Latin American Thought: A Critique of Dussel’s Ethics.” *The Philosophical Forum* 22, (1991), 270-295.

Nevertheless, Liberation Philosophy attempts to articulate a framework to address Latin American philosophy's autonomy vis-à-vis European philosophy critically. In terms of liberation, Latin American thinking has been focused on identifying the genealogy of social (and correlatively) ecological oppression. Some of these manifestations have included the creation of the intersectional Latin American liberation movements of Eco-Theology, Ecofeminism, Eco-philosophy of liberation, and Eco-pedagogy.

Some philosophers of liberation maintain a philosophical program consistent with theology. Arturo Andrés Roig conceives of philosophy as practice. Ignacio Ellacuría considers praxis as human action to change reality. Osvaldo Ardiles is analytic, anti-historicist, and populist. He aims to “philosophize to politicize.” In other words, inject philosophical reflection in grassroots, populist political movements, sympathizing with Peronism, he advocated an auto-critical methodology for liberation.

### **Philosophers of Liberation and Ecology**

Three of the philosophers of liberation have been mentioned above, Cerutti, Schutte, Dussel, and the fourth, whom I will discuss in this section, Barra Ruatta, signaled to various degrees of focus, scope, and depth a new phase in the liberation philosophy as ecology.

In her essay “Continental philosophy and Postcolonial Subjects,”<sup>122</sup> Ofelia Schutte asserts a clear need to reformulate Liberation Philosophy with a critical approach to tackle current issues. She states:

“I embrace a critical reading of history, and of texts in general, in order to gain freedom from multiple oppressions. This standpoint also requires an ethical project large enough to include such still-to-be-attained ideals as gender equality, economic opportunities for the disadvantaged, and the conservation of global ecosystems. To the extent that the voices of difference are heard in Continental thought, it is hoped, we will grow wiser in the theorizing and practice of philosophy.”

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<sup>122</sup> Ofelia Schutte, “Continental Philosophy and Postcolonial Subjects.” in *Latin American Philosophy: Currents, Issues, Debates*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 161.



This gap between theory and practice identified by Schutte stands as a central issue of the struggle between the liberation movements in Latin America. Similarly, Horacio Cerutti Guldberg voices the need to address the issue of climate change boldly. In his “Thinking after 200 years,” Cerutti warns that “One has to be especially careful and avoid the essentialist naturalization of what is [was] historical.”<sup>123</sup> Additionally, he lays out a methodological starting point by saying, “It required an immense effort of invention, theoretical and practical, to achieve a transgression, evade, or overcome” and accept a holistic vision.<sup>124</sup> In other words, for Cerutti Guldberg, an adequate philosophical approach ought to be syncretic and sensible to new alternative approaches to avoid essentializing, totalizing, and alienating approaches that promote unequal hierarchies of oppression. This "holistic vision" must include synthetic processes. This will be the next subject matter.

### **Northern and Southern Ecologies: A Synthesis**

Several of the most fundamental differences between northern and southern ecologies can be summed up as follows. Some northern ecologies, for example, deep ecologists, stress the importance of individual responsibility toward the achievement of a sustainable lifestyle. The individual, as such, is the person responsible for modifying her behavior based on archetypal models to either retard, adapt, or enhance processes that will yield better environmental protections. There are several reasons to support this individualistic attitude. Some are anchored on the very premises of the liberal state, where politics and economics are ontologically collapsed. This collapse seems relatively obvious with notions about the apparent intrinsic nature

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<sup>123</sup> Horacio Cerutti Guldberg, *Pensando después de 200 años* (Monterey, N. L., México: Colección. Altos Estudios No. 28, Julio de 2011), 35.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46.

of democracy and capitalism. However, such notions fail to recognize that the very foundations of the liberal state are the main contributors to the climate crisis. Acceptance of this last claim will imply an overhauling of the political and economic dynamics of the liberal state.

Some northern ecologies rely on technological solutions. The first obvious objection is that some technological developments stand at the epicenter of the crisis. A stronger objection is that they lack perspective on the scope of the problem because they consider technology as the first token piece to solutions to climate change. Their response is that the historical unfolding of technological development has always found solutions to particular problems, albeit at a slower rate than desired. AN obvious problem with the reliance on technology as a do-it-all solution raises issues about the unequal distribution of said technologies to vulnerable populations.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, some ecologies from the global north see climate issues as future problems and focus their efforts on searching for viable alternatives for future generations. Individually, they are considered as plans of mitigation, plans of adaptation, or protection of the status quo to secure the well-being of such future generations.

In “Human rights, climate change, and the trillionth ton,” Henry Shue states that “Rapid climate change places current and future generations in precisely the kind of general circumstances that call for the construction of rights protecting institutions.” This task must be performed because, as he continues, “some humans are utterly at the mercy of other humans, but those others have the capacity to create institutions to protect the vulnerable against the forces against which they cannot protect themselves.”

He also suggests that the opportunity to replace old fossil-fuel technologies with new institutions that preserve the rights to life, health, and subsistence of human beings ought to be

intergenerational, as Caney argues. This would imply the need for immediate action to cut emissions to levels that would at least stabilize the rate of future increases in CO<sub>2</sub>.

Shue, however, purposely avoids the question: “Is a system of states really the best way to organize the globe?” His justification to avoid such a question is based on urgency. However, it seems that his suggestion about rethinking and creating institutions to preserve intergenerational human rights involves an inexorable attempt to answer it.

Such an attempt is required with equal urgency to address the issue between equality and fairness, as described by Shue. Furthermore, the task of liberation philosophers has been to answer this very question. For instance, Enrique Dussel argues:

“Eurocentrism has refused to accept that its civilizing project is leading us to the destruction of the ecology of the planet along with the annihilation of humankind. Hence, the only way out is to seek, in the world's societies, including Europe, a capacity to live with otherness or difference (alterity). This impulse, which is seen in the Asian Pacific, is also providing the Arab world, Latin America and African Nations with the possibility of creating a multipolar or transmodern cultural world, which protects life and encourages humans to live together instead of simply facilitating profit, private appropriations, and personal benefits. The Eurocentric point of view 'forgets' very quickly that it was precisely the plundered resources of the colonies that have allowed the European splendour of the last 200 years.”<sup>125</sup>

### **Liberation as Praxis**

In *Philosophy of Liberation*, Dussel identifies “an essential moment of metaphysics, understanding that metaphysics is the passage from ontology to the transontological, to the one who is situated beyond Being, in reality, the other.” He continues, “Liberation is not a phenomenal, intrasystemic action; liberation is the praxis that subverts the phenomenological

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<sup>125</sup> Enrique Dussel and Eduardo Ibarra-Colado, “Globalization, Organization and the Ethics of Liberation,” *Organization Articles*, Vol. 13(4), (2006), 489-508.

order and pierces it to let in a metaphysical transcendence, which is the plenary critique of the established, fixed, normalized, crystallized, dead.”<sup>126</sup>

The center's cultural production constitutes the framework of Eurocentric values that are portrayed by the center as a totality of universal truths, defined by places of epistemic power, rendering a definition of "modernity." This historical process of constructing Eurocentric modernity led to the appropriation of philosophical concepts, specifically rationalism, as an essential quality to Eurocentric values. In this sense, liberation philosophy's project is to overcome modernity, namely, Eurocentric values, through an articulation of the periphery's history and thinking from their own authentic standpoint.

According to Dussel, the epistemic process of assimilating, or perhaps incorporating a notion of alterity, along with a redefinition of civilization as a consequence, makes it imperative to begin a meaningful process toward ecological sustainability. In general, Dussel's project is to conjoin the ontic disconnect by relating what he calls the center of epistemic production with the ontological periphery, the Other. On this account, it becomes philosophy's task to bridge the gap by highlighting the difference of the Other, of Alterity, to the Center. Creating awareness of the difference, according to him, will yield social harmony (equality) insofar as the terms of such condition, i.e., differences, are in its core economic injustice through the systematic historical plundering by the center.

Dussel claims that the Center's concrete manifestation, i.e., its economic capitalist activity, bears the responsibility for climate change's crisis. He states:

In effect, nature as exploitable matter, destructible without limit, a cache of profits, a source of capital gains, a time-projected extension of the dominative attitude of the slave driver (who made the slave work that nature), is the interpretation adhered to by the center (Europe first, but now equally the United States). This change of person-to-nature

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<sup>126</sup> Dussel, Enrique. *Philosophy of Liberation*. translated by Aquilina Martinez and Christine Morkovsky. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003.

attitude started in the Industrial Revolution, and it reaches a hallucinating peak in the present state of monopolistic imperialist capitalism, the society of super consumption and aggressive destruction of nature as a mere mediation (a "logical corollary" of the previous destruction of oppressed peoples of the periphery). The goddess nature is now industrial raw material: iron ore, petroleum, coffee, wheat, livestock, wood.<sup>127</sup>

Dussel blames Eurocentric modernity for a fundamental shift with the relationship of humans beings with nature. For him, the epicenter and genesis of climate change emerged from capitalism, as one of the most destructive values, causing the shift of human behavior (through economic activity) to turn against nature. He continues on the perpetrators of the crises,

“That industrial center will never make the decision to reduce its own growth: its economy is founded on the (irrational) principle of ever accelerated profit. Will some technological miracles regenerate ecological equilibrium? [...] But the technologico-economic system of the capitalist social formation seems unwilling to change. Launched by its own logic to the maximization of profits, and hence of consumption-production and vice versa, imperialism continues its devastating course. Until when? To what limit?<sup>128</sup>

The answer to Dussel's questions will be answered until the oppressed formalize a paradigmatic ecological shift. Philosophy of liberation, then, "is a counter-discourse, a critical philosophy, that is born in the periphery with world pretensions. It has explicit consciousness of its peripherality, but at the same time, it has a planetary claim (a claim to mundialidad)."<sup>129</sup> Such philosophy requires a radical response from the Other, the oppressed, to act from alterity, against the center, the totality to reconstitute the "person-to-person" and the "person-to-nature" attitudes that were lost with the advent of "modernity." Dussel prescribes as a solution:

4.1.8.5 The political liberation of the periphery seems to be the essential condition for the possibility of the restoration of natural ecological equilibrium if true liberation, affirmation of the cultural exteriority, is undertaken, and not simply imitation of the

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<sup>127</sup> Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, 114.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>129</sup> Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1996).137.

economic process and destructive technology of the center. It would be the authentic humanization of nature, the development of culture in justice.<sup>130</sup> Dussel again sees as the only possibility for progress, for true liberation, the decisive action of the periphery to overcome the oppressive modes of the center. He delineates the action with a method he calls analectics.

### **Analectic Methodology**

Dussel envisions the method of change through what he calls the “analectical moment.” It refers “to the real human fact by which every person, every group or people, is always situated ‘beyond’ (ano-) the horizon of totality. [...] The point of departure for its methodical discourse (a method that is more than scientific or dialectic) is the exteriority of the other.”<sup>131</sup> This method for Dussel is the mechanism of change towards liberation.

However, against Dussel, it is not clear how the epistemic awareness of difference will modify the injustices leading to economic inequality and social injustice in any way. In part, this is so because the Other becomes unintelligible as an ontological agent. Questions such as: Who is the Other? The Poor? The Oppressed? and so on will inevitably lead to creating generic universal categories that, in some way, are intended to represent real people but fail to recognize the particulars, viz. the concrete people victims of inequalities and injustices.

Second, and as an appendix to the latter critique, philosophy acts as the agent of change. The philosopher is the one speaking for the Other as if the philosopher understands the categorical Other. Additionally, the Other is not able to communicate with anyone else unless philosophy is mediating. On the one hand, philosophy understands, because of its rationality, and on the other philosophy acts because of its intrinsic duty. The philosopher has the rational duty to speak for someone that philosophy does not in its purest form know.

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<sup>130</sup> Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, 116.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 158-159.

Third, the economic benefits that the *Center* is enjoying are not an adequate standard of measurement to predicate the well-being of people who will be worst off in the future. As Caney notes, “It would require an act of faith to think that the rich will be motivated to spend these resources enabling the global poor to adapt”<sup>132</sup> to a future in which “Rising sea levels, increased temperatures, and more freak weather events will wreak havoc with the aspirations of those in Asia, China, and Africa to develop economically.” I would add Latin America to this list, for its future development is very much limited by climate change.

In his doctoral dissertation, *Latin American Philosophy of Liberation* (1983), Cerutti articulates a critique of Dussel’s methodology as “the most populist.”<sup>133</sup> According to Cerutti, Dussel belongs to a “populism of abstract ambiguity.”<sup>134</sup> For Cerutti, some of Dussel’s philosophical liabilities involve articulating his project through the lens of Christianity, placing philosophy in the service of theology, and making God the ethical starting point for liberation. Cerutti also accuses Dussel of a mistaken interpretation of Marxism. Terminologically, Cerutti argues that Dussel mistakenly equates *el pueblo*<sup>135</sup> With Marx’s definition of *class*, the role of the philosopher as a teacher is problematic for Cerutti. The Pueblo becomes the subject of liberation; the professional philosopher becomes the mediator between the pueblo and the totality, a prophet of alterity, and a preacher of the promised liberation. The gravest problem is the Hegelian approach of the philosopher as the self-appointed messianic liberator.

Cerutti argues in favor of liberating philosophizing, defining it as an exercise of reasoning (that is what we need to learn instead of a philosophy of liberation) from the starting

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<sup>132</sup> Simon Caney, “Climate Change, Human Rights and Moral Thresholds.” 166.

<sup>133</sup> Cerutti Guldberg, Horacio, *Filosofía De La Liberación Latinoamericana*, 231.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>135</sup> Meaning “The People.” Cerutti points out that Dussel’s term of Pueblo is an abstract ambiguity.

point of (the local) history and its (immediate) reality. He endorses a philosophy emerging organically from the circumstances of the agents experiencing their environment. Along the lines of Cerutti Guldberg, Barra Ruatta formulates a rejection of foreign ecological notions by proposing a philosophical revision concerning ecology in Latin America.

### **Abelardo Barra Ruatta**

In his *Antiecológia: Apuntes de una filosofía y paradigma ecológico*, philosopher Abelardo Barra Ruatta proposes:

an ecological-philosophical revision that presupposes a symbolic *reanimalization* of the human being; by this I mean the necessity of abolishing ... the conceptual hypostasis that supplements the modest regularities and arrangements of nature, and of attempting instead an anthropological immersion in the immediate, or contiguous plurality of sensory and affective modalities by which the broadest dimension of human existence reveals itself most meaningfully<sup>136</sup> (p. 17, translation).

The symbolic reanimalization of the human being stands at the very core of Barra Ruatta's ecological project. Therefore, it seems appropriate to provide an overview of Barra Ruatta's work *Antiecológia's* main arguments. His is an attempt to articulate a philosophical grounding on which a Latin American eco-philosophy could flourish.

Ecology, Barra Ruatta says, has a "dual epistemological character."<sup>137</sup> Ecology is a concern for the natural sciences, but also, and perhaps more importantly, a concern for the social sciences. For Barra Ruatta, most Latin American ecological problems are best described and analyzed from a social or human perspective.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Abelardo Barra Ruatta, *Antiecológia: Apuntes de una filosofía y paradigma ecológico* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Espacio, 1996), 17.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.



In contrast, Barra Ruatta notes the “hegemonic ecological discourse of developed countries.” They conceive the majority of the eco-environmental problems within the epistemological realm of the natural sciences. Immediately this underscores a fundamental methodological distinction between the north and the south. He states that this approach led to real semantic colonization of the ecological terrain within the biologicist paradigm. This paradigm of taking ecology as an appendix of the natural sciences, he argues, “constitutes an aberrant scientificist simplification.”<sup>139</sup> Ecology, as the focus of both the natural and social sciences, becomes an ambiguous concept. As a natural science, it is constructed through the totalizing uniformity of Western rationality offered by the biologicist perspective, whereas ecology as a social or human science may find radically different outcomes. This construction, Barra Ruatta states, poses a “conflictual image of knowledge,” one by which he wishes to build a Latin American eco-philosophy and challenge the precepts of Western Eurocentric rationality.

The hegemonic ecological view of the north, with its entailing ecological scientificity<sup>140</sup>Created arbitrary archetypes of nature and humanity. Arbitrary or highly useful for the European man, his way of life and his environment became the standard mode of existence, and its ecological challenges have become universal standards. In short, Western society dictates environmentalism's solutions, although its culture is the main culprit.

In practice, this process of dominance began the early conquest of the New World. European culture imposed itself through violence exerted by a much more advanced technological infrastructure. The imposition of power and the plunder of nature alienated the indigenous populations of the Americas from political and economic participation. They were

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<sup>139</sup> Abelardo Barra Ruatta, *Antiecológica: Apuntes de una filosofía y paradigma ecológica*, 37.

<sup>140</sup> For Barra Ruatta scientificism is the approach by which science is used as an ancillary tool to exploit nature.

alienated and emerged as *the other*. Multiple groups were reduced to the 'indigenous,' having no considerations or sensitivity towards their distinct cultural differences. The alienation of the indigenous people, coupled with the imposition of a new culture, embedded in their minds the Western hegemonic model that led to an ontological de-sensibilization towards nature and an acceptance of Western rationality.

Latin America ought to follow an alternate ecological paradigm, an ecology of survival attuned with its existential condition, as opposed to an ecology of abundance that responds only to the hubris of profitable unlimited production and economic growth. Ecology of survival calls for a plane (with no hierarchies) ontology, a paradigm adequately equipped to coherently address the socio-political problems in Latin America. This philosophical anti-dualism is found across multiple efforts of liberation in Latin America. The Colombian Arturo Escobar proposes a framework for a Latin American political ecology that may shed some light on Barra Ruatta's anti-dualist perspective. For him, "Political ecology can be defined as the study of the manifold articulations of history and biology and the cultural mediations through which such articulations are necessarily established."<sup>141</sup> His work systematically pursues new ways of rethinking Latin America's situation by questioning fundamental concepts such as development, modernity, and progress. He first addresses the fundamental distinction between humans and nature as conceived from within neoliberalism. He states, "Historically, the production of surplus with the concomitant social and institutional differentiation allowed humans to emancipate themselves from nature, albeit at the price of enslaving part of the population."<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Arturo Escobar, "After Nature, Steps to an Antiessentialist Political Ecology" in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 40, Number 1, (February 1999), 3.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

While some parts of the global population can reach a high standard of living, others correlatively suffer the downside of the social transaction. At the same time, the costs to attain such a standard not only affect people but impose an excessive load onto global ecosystems. For Escobar, the task of political ecology is “to outline and characterize these processes of articulation, and its goal is to suggest potential articulations realizable today and conducive to more just and sustainable social and ecological relations.”<sup>143</sup> The first fundamental step to begin such changes is the reconceptualization of the relation of humans with nature. Such efforts must spring out of the philosophical exercise to reframe a new “anti-essentialist” view of nature, a notion that rejects the Western dualistic ontological model that conceives the self (mind) as detached from nature (body).

It is from this starting point that Barra Ruatta articulates his efforts for the possibility of a Latin American eco-philosophy. Escobar and Barra Ruatta seek a middle ground between two ontological views about nature. First, they hold the view that nature possesses immutable, unchanged properties independent of human perception. Second, they hold that the concept of nature is produced by history, culture, and social constructions. Escobar attempts to marry the two by acknowledging “the existence of a biophysical reality—prediscursive and presocial”<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, to some extent, we have notions about nature that are “artificially produced.”<sup>145</sup> Philosophically speaking, for Escobar, “This entails an unprecedented ontological and epistemological transformation which we have hardly begun to understand.”<sup>146</sup> The difficulty,

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<sup>143</sup> Arturo Escobar, “After Nature, Steps to an Antiessentialist Political Ecology,” 4.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

for him, lies in the structures of these models, their incompatibility and incommunicability with other ontological structures, i.e., non-dualist, non-essentialist ontologies and epistemologies.

These reorganizations entail the emergence of a different approach by which these epistemologies interact with each other. Escobar points out that these epistemologies, and upstream ontologies that support them, are not in any way negotiating stances that may lead to a synthetic practical/political outcome. Dominant epistemologies are structured as ‘vertical’ or hierarchically arranged. The subject ontologically supersedes the object, Culture supersedes Nature, and individualism champions the collective. These dichotomies stem from the liberal political tradition, based in Cartesian Dualism, and must be superseded in order to set forth an alternative model.

Essentialism that confuses nature as perceived by the subject with the biophysical structures that operate independently of human conception is often based on immutable, stable concepts, and ontological frameworks. For Escobar, it is imperative to de-essentialize these dominant epistemologies in order to enable them to interact more effectively with local, subaltern, or ‘peripheral’ epistemologies and ontologies. These “anti-essentialist” and “postconstructivist” epistemologies and ontologies break away from rigid “essential” conceptions about nature. They suggest a reevaluation of the human/environment relations.<sup>147</sup> The result sought from the proposed de-essentialization ought to promote what Escobar calls a “flat relational framework.” This would involve multi-directional channels that facilitate compatible interfaces between previously incompatible conceptions of reality.

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<sup>147</sup> For a detailed analysis, see, Arturo Escobar's "Ecologías Políticas Postconstructivistas." *De Zapatica*68, (4 de agosto de 2011), under “Settings” <https://forajidosdelanetwar.wordpress.com/2011/08/04/arturo-escobar-ecologias-politicas-postconstructivistas/>

It is from this perspective that Barra Ruatta conceives his symbolic reanimalization of the human being, one that encompasses a discourse about reality outside the precepts of Western rationality; one that enables the re-sensibilizing or reconnecting with nature, as a process of human beings, emphasizing the notions of pluralism, multiplicity, and complexity in both the experience of the world and the inward reflections of human beings. This paradigm, according to Barra Ruatta, calls for an “authentic” and “mature” anthropocentrism. Its direction will point toward an ethics that aims at the cancellation of poverty. Barra Ruatta says that this is an *anti-ecology* because it is against the hegemonic ecological discourse of the north that addresses its particular problems as if they were universal.

His ecological ontology must be anchored in the “non-negotiable value of human life”<sup>148</sup> because the “principal ecosystem in disequilibrium is Latin America’s social organization’s system.”<sup>149</sup> For instance, he argues, that infant death rates and famine are substantially more severe problems than erosion and deforestation, although erosion and deforestation can have a compounding negative impact on the poor as well.

Ecology of survival yields, according to Barra Ruatta, ecological wisdom that revindicates the holistic value of other cultural traditions. Accomplishing ecological wisdom requires the rejection of Cartesian dualisms. These dualisms serve as standards to demonize the subaltern side of the dichotomy. Western scientificism creates rigid dualist categories of inclusion-exclusion, meaning that endorsing a particular dyad under the framework of Western dualism entails the necessary epistemic demise of the other dyad. Breaking away from this paradigm, as both Escobar and Barra Ruatta suggests, enables the emergence of a Latin

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<sup>148</sup> Abelardo Barra Ruatta, *Antiecológica: Apuntes de una filosofía y paradigma ecológica*, 44.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

American eco-philosophy inclusive of indigenous cosmovisions and non-Western ecological perspectives.

Barra Ruatta's proposal is compatible with the views of Boff, insofar as he attempts to anchor his philosophy to liberation itself. Barra Ruatta's work is a continuation of efforts enabled by the liberation movements in Latin America. He seems to be building upon these liberation movements rather than rejecting their core missions.

### **The Future of Liberation Philosophy**

The AR 5 acknowledges the need for new and diverse ways to inform humanity's decisions on climate change. A task that philosophy must undertake. The report states:

**Decision-making about climate change involves valuation and mediation among diverse values and may be aided by the analytic methods of several normative disciplines.** Ethics analyses the different values involved and the relations between them. Recent political philosophy has investigated the question of responsibility for the effects of emissions. Economics and decision analysis provide quantitative methods of valuation, which can be used for estimating the social cost of carbon (see Box 3.1), in cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses, for optimization in integrated models and elsewhere. Economic methods can reflect ethical principles and take account of non-marketed goods, equity, behavioral biases, ancillary benefits and costs, and the differing values of money to different people. They are, however, subject to well-documented limitations.<sup>150</sup>

What the report recommends is not sufficient. These philosophical and ethical considerations must include methods to decolonize or avoid new forms of colonization "green colonization."

Philosophy of liberation can recast the interactions of climate change with the centers of epistemic production to identify oppressive frameworks, albeit unintentional oppression, under the urgency of climate change demands to mitigate and adapt. With mitigation, some responses to climate change might have detrimental effects (e.g. economic, developmental, pedagogical, etc.) to countries and peoples. With adaptation, because of its uncertainty over time, it is

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<sup>150</sup> IPCC, 2014: *Climate Change 2014*, 76

especially difficult to predict unintended consequences that might lead to oppression (epistemic, economic, political). For this, it is necessary a philosophy of liberation articulated from places where oppression is taking place and from people that are being oppressed. Such a philosophy then becomes situated right at the intersection between theories and praxes safeguarding against oppression and articulating an ethics of liberation that recognizes and acts from the ontologically and epistemically oppressed. This is the future of an eco-philosophy of liberation.

In the following chapter, I describe Freire's pedagogical process, which sets forth a similar methodology aimed at identifying the dichotomies of dominance and taking action to replace those structures.

In the next chapter, Paulo Freire articulates a specific epistemic methodology to overcome the relationship of oppressive dominance in the traditional student-teacher vertical hierarchy. Something that both Boff and Dussel failed to articulate concerning the "Poor" and the "Other." Freire, unlike Dussel's, will situate the oppressed in a concrete subject, the student.

## CHAPTER 5: ECO-PEDAGOGY

Access to education affects people differently. Vulnerable populations are most susceptible to exclusion, and therefore, lack of access to education and information literacy. People living in poverty are the most vulnerable, and climate change might pose additional risks that could hinder access to information and education in general. Access to both aspects are crucial for adequate responses to mitigate and adapt to the demands and realities of climate change. As mentioned in chapter 1, given that women and children are among the most vulnerable amongst the poor, they are the least capable of adapting to climate change. As such, access to these vulnerable groups to literacy and access to education, will not only strengthen their capacities to adapt, but also develop the skills to influence their participatory role and decision-making agency positively. One of the biggest challenges with participation is that quite often, women are often excluded in leadership roles, specifically in activism.<sup>151</sup>

In Latin America, most of the population living in a situation of indigence, poverty, and vulnerability have very few years of schooling.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> This exclusionary pattern will be discussed in the next chapter on ecofeminism.

<sup>152</sup> Promoting equality page 65 To respond to this situation, in 9 countries of the region, there are also 15 programmes that offer scholarships to counter secondary school dropout and to enable young adults who dropped out of the education system to complete their studies. These programmes use a variety of economic incentives: (i) cash transfers conditional on school attendance and achievement (for example, the School Attendance Bonus and the School Achievement Bonus of the Ethical Family Income in Chile, and the PROG.R.ESAR and the cash transfer basis of Argentina's "Youth with More and Better Work" programme); (ii) scholarships (the Educational Commitment Programme of Uruguay), and (iii) transport subsidies (+Capaz in Chile



Education access is also one of the benchmark elements to assess economic inequality. This inequality does not only have immediate individual and collective disadvantages, but it also affects the long term intergenerational capacities of development for communities because of the lack of human capital with the implied short and long-term effects.

The AR-5 reports that:

“The lack of interdisciplinary integrated studies limits our understanding of the complex interactions between natural and socioeconomic systems. In addition, accelerating deforestation and land use changes, as well as changes in economic conditions, impose a continuous need for updated and available data sets that feed basic and applied studies.”<sup>153</sup>

The research agenda needs to address vulnerability and foster adaptation in the region, encompassing an inclusion of the regions’ researchers and focusing also on governance structures and action-oriented research that addresses resource distribution inequities.<sup>154</sup>

The IPCC reports that “per capita income and inequitable distribution of resources; lack of education, health care, and safety; and weak institutions and unequal power relations fundamentally shape sensitivity, exposure, and adaptive capacity to climate impact.”<sup>155</sup>

Simon Caney conceives potential mitigating policy solutions in the following passage: “A successful mitigation policy might also include various other components including for example (i) incentivizing research into the development of clean technologies and the transfer of these technologies to

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<sup>153</sup> IPCC, 2007: *Climate Change 2007*, 1541

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 1542

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 1110.

developing countries, (ii) facilitating carbon capture and storage, (iii) using education to encourage environmental virtues [...]”<sup>156</sup> These prescriptions, while well intended, strike at the core of the dangers of a “green” epistemic and political colonialism.

Particularly, on his first (i) point, some concerning issues emerge. What will be the economic and political conditions for the “transfer” of those technologies entail? Will they become another arm of developed countries to exercise control over developing countries? Caney does not address those questions.

His third (iii) point about education entails an epistemic place of dominance, from those who know about "environmental virtues" and those who do not know. Presumably, people in power could arbitrarily determine those virtues derived from a particular culture and potentially alienating inter-cultural practices. Moreover, and even more dangerously, special interests' agendas might be advanced through educational curricula under the pretenses of endorsing virtues that could be misaligned with the policies' intended purposes. Again, Caney seems to attach good intentions to those processes naively.

Therefore, it is not merely a matter of access to information and education, but also to qualify the nature of both. Paulo Freire provides the critical normative framework to assess, qualitatively speaking, non-oppressive educational systems.

It is not enough to refer to vague educational processes hoping for the best results. As I will argue in this chapter, ecopedagogy uniquely provides the critical methodology to evaluate meaningful analyses to address those potential emerging issues adequately.

Education should include broader conceptions of knowledge in developing countries and not limited to exclusively economic correlations of income improvements through skills-development.

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<sup>156</sup> Simon Caney “Climate change, energy rights, and equality,” page 86.

Education ought not just to mean vocational education to boost the workforce. It ought to include a more rounded, diverse definition and not reduced as an ancillary function of economics. Ecopedagogy, then it must also be something more than environmental studies. It should be an emancipatory pedagogy that empowers people to create their own history (this ought to be informed by a philosophy of liberation's critique of history) their knowledge and make decisions informed by liberation.

The following chapter is intended to focus on the relationship between two of the points highlighted in the IPCC quote above, lack of education and unequal power relations. The core of the argument is that in pedagogy, the former obviously entails the latter. More importantly, as Freire makes us aware, but even with access to education, conventional Western education (i.e. banking-system education), is the epistemic social genesis of unequal power relations through the oppressive teacher-student hierarchy. His project is to dissolve the oppressive hierarchy and reconstitute the pedagogical relationships.

The IPCC recommends: “Building the capacity of individuals, communities, and governance systems to adapt to climate impacts is both a function of dealing with developmental deficits (e.g. poverty alleviation, reducing risks related to famine and food insecurity, enabling/implementing public health and mass education and literacy programs).”<sup>157</sup> The recommendation places Paulo Freire’s methodology front and center of the pedagogical projects required to address the epistemic and normative challenges presented by climate change.

The following is a presentation on Paulo Freire’s philosophy of education through an analysis of his seminal works, *Education for Critical Consciousness* ECC (initially published in 1967), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) PoO and *Pedagogy of Autonomy* PoA (1996) to highlight the efforts to replace the banking system of education and the role of *conscientização* as a crucial epistemic tool for liberation. With this move to replace the banking system, Freire

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<sup>157</sup> IPCC, 2007: *Climate Change 2007*, 1110.

situates the process of liberation as an epistemic process of the subject (the student), as an agent of change and practitioner of freedom.

Then I will critically evaluate Freire's views contrasted with the efforts to articulate, in conjunction with other thinkers, in particular, Moacir Gadotti, Francisco Gutiérrez, and Angela Antunes, an eco-pedagogy based on his philosophy of education. This eco-pedagogy of the land, as they call it, is normatively grounded to an ethics of care following the principles outlined in the *Earth Charter*.

Freire's first work, ECC, offers his initial analysis about the Brazilian literacy problem starting from a national, particular standpoint, looking through the optics of the Brazilian reality to find universalizable pedagogical principles. In the introduction of ECC, Julio Barreiro makes a clear and robust introductory analysis leading readers to understand Freire's overall project and the daunting task of his theory. Freire's project started as an initiative to alphabetize the Brazilian population. Through this process, the efforts are focused on creating a new approach of educating, instead of using the illiterate individual as a depository, or a recipient, but rather as an active participatory subject of his learning.

Freire states that traditional education has its base on fear, to which it implies a state of ignorance (of epistemic docility) in order to be able to control (through the transmission of knowledge). This practice establishes a hierarchical practice of dominance of the teacher transferring knowledge to the student. The assessments of students are unilateral tools of epistemic dominance, that promote a culture of fear (the prospect of failure) to reaffirm the structure of power and keep the students from owning their process of learning. This system eliminates the possibility of gaining conscientization (critical consciousness and action) through dialogue, preventing the practice of freedom in education.

Freire harshly condemns traditional education when he says, "To educate, then, is on the contrary, 'to make you think,' and even more, is the denial of all transformative possibilities of the individual roundabouts towards the natural environment and society where he will have to live in."<sup>158</sup>

Freire's theory sets out an educational method, whose starting point draws from the etymology of pedagogy, making it a transformative as much as a directive process. The teacher-student relationship, discussed at length in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, stands in stark opposition to the banking method of education because the "latter is horizontal and the former is not."<sup>159</sup> Freire's definition of the banking method is then, "an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories, and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat."<sup>160</sup> Education becomes a process by which expertise is conferred to the students based on the ability to mimic and replicate the teacher's body of knowledge. Knowledge that is unchangeable, unquestionable, and infallible.

### **Critical and Criticist Education**

Freire considers the historical process of colonization as the foundational exercise of epistemic dominance in the function of particular interest of "commercial exploitation of the land."<sup>161</sup> On the other hand, the absence of development of what he called "the democratic inexperience" left

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<sup>158</sup> Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2005), 13.

<sup>159</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition* (The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., New York, 2005), 104.

<sup>160</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 72.

<sup>161</sup> Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 61.

the colonized without a voice, denying the colonized the right of self-expression, or the right to voice grievances. Freire affirms that this “mutism” is not the inexistence of a response, but rather a response that is lacking a critical tenor.<sup>162</sup> Again, the voiceless, the colonized as subjects are considered knowledgeable insofar as they are able to digest and broadcast authority’s knowledge.

In this context about mutism, the colonized needs a new paradigm by which he can acquire a new form of education. This new method goes against and aims to reject wholesale, the banking method of education. The banking method of education keeps the colonized in a state of intransitivity and dehumanization. The new paradigm of education must bring the colonized, the oppressed, to dialogue. Dialogical education involves a critical focus, whose life depends on something other than “communiques” and the transmission of such. Freire cites A.N. Whitehead’s concept of “inert ideas.” Therefore, Freire endorses an ontological approach similar to Whitehead’s ontological/metaphysical processes as a way to represent reality as a dynamical, in-movement rather than settled, or essentialized.

The traditional banking system of education is based on the transmitted word of inert ideas. It lacks meaning for those who receive it. It is anti-dialogue, anti-analysis, closed to criticism, debate, or participation. The banking method is for Freire, empty words veiled by verbosity. This verbosity is, in turn, translated as the “theoretical,” but for Freire, verbosity is nothing more than pseudo-theory.

The banking system of education fails to move beyond the hierarchy of the teacher dominating the student. It is imperative to overcome the power structure as such in order to

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 63.

create an equitable relationship among the pedagogical participants; instead, the banking method promotes and cements a “practice of domination”<sup>163</sup> through fear and language.

As such, the teacher’s tactic is to intimidate students through language to construct a culture of fear, while at the same time serving as an epistemic device to reject ideas from the students. Freire insists on this point:

This blind and facile call for writing clarity represents a pernicious mechanism used by academic liberals who suffocate discourses different from their own. Such a call often ignores how language is being used to make social inequality invisible. It also assumes that the only way to deconstruct ideologies of oppression is through a discourse that involves what these academics characterize as a language of clarity.<sup>164</sup>

Here Freire points out how power is exercised through language, and the demands for clarity become the tools of oppression. The student seeks the approval of authority by a tacit acceptance of his epistemic inferiority. This epistemic process, rather than serving to achieve a goal of integration, generates, in fact, an epistemic distinction that manifests itself in a class difference.

### **Integration**

Colonization, then, was not an act based on integration with peoples and with the land. Quite the contrary, Europeans conquered, disrupted the land, and lacked a process of retaining the principal characteristics of integration. Here, it is useful to point out that Freire identifies the first characteristic in what he calls the “characteristics of dialogical action”<sup>165</sup> in the conquest of the Americas.

Macedo claims in his introduction to Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that the book “gave me a language to critically understand the tensions, contradictions, fears, doubts, hopes

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<sup>163</sup> Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 18.

<sup>164</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 20.

<sup>165</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 138.

and ‘deferred’ dreams that are part and parcel of living a borrowed and colonized cultural existence”<sup>166</sup> and “gave me the inner strength to begin the arduous process of transcending a colonial existence that is almost culturally schizophrenic: being present and yet not visible, being invisible and yet not present”<sup>167</sup>

According to Freire, integration is opposed to colonial alienation and is the logical consequence of the process of a human being searching for his insertion and sense of belonging in the world. The success of this integration will result in a meaningful active existence rather than merely passively existing in it. <sup>168</sup>

Freire's definition of integration goes well beyond the idea of existing in the world by adjusting to the circumstances and accepting imposed hierarchies of power. For him, integration implies the action to transform reality. Also, it entails a process of becoming an agent/subject in history, and not a passive/object, and the development of *conscientização*.<sup>169</sup> Freire validates a general universal framework where he sketches the conceptual processes from colonialism to liberation, from intransitivity to a naïve transitivity, and from this to the critical, as a criterion to establish the need to accomplish an education that will result in critical transitivity.

He outlines his new pedagogical method by formulating changes in the conventional educational nomenclature. Freire refers to schools as *circles of culture*, and teachers play the role of *coordinators of debates*, seminars, or conferences to become *dialogues*. Lectures are presented as *problems*, and students become *participants in the group*.<sup>170</sup> These new roles are

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 31.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 31.



designed to create a horizontal relationship between the participants to have the freedom to conduct inquiry and produce knowledge without the threat of fear, of uncritical judgments.<sup>171</sup>

These new interactions are practice-based and aimed at problem-solving approach.

Under this educational paradigm, the practice of a free education becomes self-directive and transformative. It is dialogical as an epistemological relationship between coding-decoding<sup>172</sup> and pursuing generative themes (epistemological curiosity) through investigations (research) based on observations and evaluations.

“To investigate the generative theme is to investigate peoples thinking about reality and peoples’ action upon reality, which is their praxis. For precisely this reason, the methodology proposed requires that the investigators and the people (who would normally be considered objects of that investigation) should act as *co-investigators*.”<sup>173</sup>

The process this way entails the universal participation of people as subjects, not objects. More importantly, it creates the space for each individual to be agents of transformative change of their immediate reality. Freire explains this goal by stating:

“The important thing, from the point of view of libertarian education, is for the people to come to feel like masters of their thinking by discussing the thinking and views of the world explicitly or implicitly manifest in their own suggestions and those of their comrades. Because this view of education starts with the conviction that it cannot present its own program but must search for this program dialogically with the people, it serves to introduce the pedagogy of the oppressed, in the elaboration of which the oppressed must participate.”<sup>174</sup>

Freire describes a dialectical process of the liberated student practicing an epistemic process of coding and decoding. It goes from the abstract to the concrete - from the particular to the general and back to the particular.

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<sup>171</sup> Conventional assessments designed to “measure” the acquisition of knowledge.

<sup>172</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 99, 105.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>174</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 124.

*Conscientização* encapsulates the process of pedagogical liberation through dialogue, but more importantly through *praxis*. Dialogue, as a pedagogical expression, becomes the functioning connector between theory and *praxis*.<sup>175</sup> If we begin to see the world through the eyes of dialogue, not a conversation, nor polemic, there will always be an open possibility, not a win-lose situation, but openness to new conclusions. These conclusions will open new questions, through the dialectical method; it will be an ongoing process of problem-posing, problem-solving in search of what he calls true learning, true knowledge. The process does not end, does not categorically conclude. Answers are necessarily incomplete. This process of learning and knowing, although lacking *prima facie* goals because of the many epistemic possibilities it produces and the many paths and manifestations of thinking, will lead to the practice of liberation. Instead of fear, it will be a practice of freedom based on human love and courage.

Education then becomes the process of *conscientização*, of critical reflection entangled with dialogue and *praxis*, or action to transform the ontological and epistemic structures of oppression. *Conscientização* then is for Freire the practice of liberation, which is incomplete as it is a dialectical process that is necessarily incomplete. It never ends in its inquiry and action, and it is not limited to specific contexts. In this sense, ecopedagogy emerges organically from the pedagogy of the oppressed.

### **Eco-pedagogy of Liberation**

Ecopedagogy was conceived as a concerted effort between Freire and Gadotti. They identified the urgency to search for ways to renew the efforts proposed by Freire's works and the need to reach new goals by applying his pedagogical methodology against the traditional banking method. The main objectives of Freire and Gadotti are to find new paradigms that may bridge

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 87.

gaps between the natural and social environments through the practice of freedom in and out of the classroom. They insist on the need to design a new educational model that will redirect the way of conceiving nature and our being-in-and-with the world.

The words of Aldo Leopold still ring true and cohere with the program of ecopedagogy.

The following passage identifies the mission of an ecopedagogy:

"One of the requisites for an ecological comprehension of land is an understanding of ecology, and this is by no means co-extensive with 'education'; in fact, much higher education seems deliberately to avoid ecological concepts. An understanding of ecology does not necessarily originate in courses bearing ecological labels; it is quite as likely to be labeled geography, botany, agronomy, history, or economics. This is as it should be, but whatever the label, ecological training is scarce."<sup>176</sup> Education can help articulate philosophical questions and provide a method to help us learn how to "work on the side of knowledge."<sup>177</sup>

### **Moacir Gadotti**

After Freire's death, Moacir Gadotti undertakes the Freirian project of pedagogical liberation and finds the need to bridge it with ecology and sustainability. He claims that it is imperative to keep asking whether we are constructing science and cultures, through the methods of conventional pedagogy (the banking system of education) that may be degrading both the Earth's ecosystem and human beings.

He tasks pedagogy to pose those questions, but also as a project to retain and rearticulate the mission of pedagogy of liberation. For him, the solutions must include a convergent theoretical framework of the oppressed, including environmental and social sustainability.

Parallel to Aldo Leopold's notion that "wilderness gives definition and meaning to the human enterprise,"<sup>178</sup> Gadotti argues that ecological sustainability needs to have a sense of

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<sup>176</sup> Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). 224.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, 201.

belonging in the universe that starts from early on, supplementing Leopold's argument, "There is as yet no ethic dealing with man's relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it. Land, like Odysseus' slave-girls, is still property. The land relation is still strictly economic, entailing privileges but not obligations."<sup>179</sup> Leopold argues that sustainability requires that we, therefore, reconceive the relationship between human enterprise and ecology in the direction of balance and peaceful change. "The combined evidence of history and ecology seems to support one general deduction: the less violent the manmade changes, the greater the probability of successful readjustment in the pyramid."<sup>180</sup> Ecopedagogy proposes a more ambitious pedagogical project than what Leopold advocates. Ecopedagogues, such as Freire, Gutiérrez, Antunes and Gadotti, propose a new pedagogical and philosophical approach because the project is not reduced to the study of the environment as a natural science, or the effects of climate change in society as a social science. Ecopedagogy's project is to construct a holistic epistemic framework where the student discovers in the process the ontological interactions of the universe grounded in a normative duty towards the planet.

### **Francisco Gutiérrez**

Gutierrez conceives learning, from what he calls biopedagogy, as a universal property of living beings to self-organize life (Gutierrez 2010). Learning is a process of creation that emerges out of a pleasure to investigate, to know the truth of things, a process of creating our being, and it is "necessarily dynamic, flexible, alive and consequentially holistic and complex."<sup>181</sup> Every living being learns beyond the capacity of merely accumulating/storing knowledge.

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>181</sup> See Francisco Gutierrez's "Las nuevas ciencias de la vida." *Polis: Revista Latinoamericana*, vol. 9, no. 25, (2010): 223-233.

For him, there is not a singular universal procedure for beings to create themselves by learning from the world, from nature. Each organism forms its unique structure and method of constructing and organizing reality through this experiential learning process. This process, Gutierrez accepts, “forces us to relativize educational contents (topics), teaching, and especially didactics.”<sup>182</sup> It is because of this, he argues, that the pedagogical foci of teachers must be on learning rather than the act of teaching itself. Teachers ought to “permanently promote, facilitate, create and recreate learning experiences.”

He argues that learning can become active only when it stems from life and life’s experiences. Total sensorial immersion can promote a sense of empathy and care. Here is Leopold’s vision of ethical responsibility:

“It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense. Perhaps the most serious obstacle impeding the evolution of a land ethic is the fact that our educational and economic system is headed away from, rather than toward, an intense consciousness of land. Your true modern is separated from the land by many middlemen, and by innumerable physical gadgets. He has no vital relation to it; to him it is the space between cities on which crops grow.”<sup>183</sup>

The disconnect between humans and nature, as identified by the liberation movements and Leopold’s ethical projects, derives from the separation created through production from the land. The solution is to formulate an ethical project to address that separation.

### **Angela Antunes**

Antunes argues that the Earth Charter ought to be the ethical foundation for an ecopedagogy of the land. The general principles of the Earth Charter<sup>184</sup> are the following:

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, 223-224.

<sup>184</sup> [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org).

1. Respect and care for the community of life
2. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems
3. Ensure social and economic justice
4. Create transparent democratic institutions

For Antunes (and Gadotti):

Antunes and Gadotti conceive ecopedagogy (EP) as an alternative to conserve and protect the environment. They draw from Freire's conscientization, or critical pedagogy, which aims at a critical reflection about the structures of oppression and the action required to make changes. Ecopedagogy's mission, through conscientization, is to create an integrative pedagogy defined by constant examination of the contradictions of oppression concerning the environment. It is in this sense that ecopedagogy's dialectical role of *conscientização* becomes utopian. As mentioned earlier, the pedagogical process is necessarily incomplete as a process of expanding its scope to change the structures of dominance and oppression. In this sense, ecopedagogy includes the natural ecosystems (natural ecology), the impact on the environment by society (social ecology), and the project to connect and reconnect (in the same sense of *religação*) and articulate an integrative process by which action or praxis is possible (integral ecology). For both Gadotti and Antunes, this constitutes the project of ecopedagogy. They conclude, "Therefore, it is associated with a utopian project: one that will be able to modify current human social and environmental relationships. Herein is the profound meaning of ecopedagogy, or Pedagogy of the Land, as we

call it.”<sup>185</sup> Derived from the principles of the Earth Charter, this pedagogy is life-centered<sup>186</sup> as it is sensible to expand its scope of conscientização to recognize diversity.

Ecopedagogy’s mission on sustainability is closely attuned to the other liberation movements, particularly as outlined by Boff. Antunes reaffirms that:

“Sustainability not only implies biology, economy, and ecology. Sustainability has to do with the relationship that we have with ourselves, with others, and with nature. Pedagogy must begin by teaching us how to read the world as Freire has taught us: a world that is the universe because the world is our first teacher. Our primary education is an emotional education that places us before and in close contact with, the mystery of the universe, generating in us the feeling of being part of this sacred and living being that is in constant evolution.”<sup>187</sup>

Ecological consciousness must be consistent with Freire's pedagogical process, a formative experience. Ecopedagogy is not only ecological in its scope (learning from the experience of being in nature). It is not just another pedagogy; its goal is to have an integral ecology (it implies a transformation in the structure of persons, economies, societies, and cultures). Ecopedagogy is fundamentally utopian and non-anthropocentric.

It is a perspective and a program that emerges out of its practitioners and not by specialists or experts, as agents of emancipatory change.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Angela Antunes y Moacir Gadotti, “La ecopedagogía como la pedagogía indicada para el proceso de la Carta de la Tierra.” *En AA.VV. La Carta de la Tierra en Acción. Hacia un mundo sostenible. Amsterdam: Kit Publishers*, (2006): 142.

<sup>186</sup> It is life-centered as it is grounded on one of the principles of the *Earth Charter* to “Respect and care for the community of life.”

<sup>187</sup> Antunes y Gadotti, “La ecopedagogía como la pedagogía indicada para el proceso de la Carta de la Tierra.” 143.

<sup>188</sup> Examples of these practices are the projects commissioned by the Paulo Freire Institute, under the leadership of Angela Antunes and Moacir Gadotti. I found some interesting research being conducted in Puerto Rico. See, María los Ángeles Vilches Norat, *M.A. Ecopedagogía y el programa de eco-escuelas en Puerto Rico: Propuesta para la integración de la carta de la tierra* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2016), [<http://hdl.handle.net/10481/42150>]. Additionally, there are some case studies on ecopedagogy and the Indigenous population in South America. See, Tristan Partridge, “Inheriting Struggle and Forming the Future: Indigenous Education-Creation Centres in Highland Ecuador.” *Journal of Sustainability Education*, Vol. 11, (February 2016).

In summary, Ecopedagogy then offers the framework to increase the adaptive capacities by grounding normative curricula to empirical-based knowledge. Ecopedagogy's critical approach is emancipatory because it abolishes the hierarchical power relationships between the teacher-student creating a community of learners that are self-motivated. Critical ecopedagogy is transformative because the student participates in the process of learning (ecology as an integral epistemic field) to act as an agent of transformation. This transformation from an ecopedagogical perspective is the considerations, following a problem-based approach, of climate change as a natural and social issue. These cooperative pedagogical relationships will culminate in cooperative producers of integral knowledge and apply it to a decision-making process. Ecopedagogy's project is set out to discover the mechanisms by which humanity will articulate a civilization that is sustainable and conducive to a life of dignity for all life forms.



## CHAPTER 6: ECO-FEMINISM IN LATIN AMERICA

Feminist ecological movements have had the aim of identifying oppressive patterns in gender relationships and connecting them with environmental problems. Many feminists turned eco into a methodology to explore relationships of power and find alternatives that might lead to an egalitarian approach to both gender and the environment. Ecofeminism seeks to pursue and practice gender-balanced participation and capacity-building initiatives that include non-exhaustively, knowledge-production, political activism, and leadership.

Some of the empirical grounds of these concerns stem from the claim previously mentioned that climate change affects people disproportionately. Among the many people that climate change affects and will affect, poor women and children stand as the most vulnerable, "particularly those who are dependent on working outdoors in agriculture, fisheries, and construction. In small-scale agriculture, women and children are particularly at risk due to the gendered division of labor."<sup>189</sup> They are less capable of mitigating and adapting to the demands of the crisis. Furthermore, the AR-5 reports:

Gender dimensions of vulnerability derive from differential access to the social and environmental resources required for adaptation. In many rural economies and resource-based livelihood systems, it is well established that women have poorer access than men to financial

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<sup>189</sup> K.E. Vincent, P. Tschakert, Barnett, J., M.G. Rivera-Ferre, and A. Woodward, 2014: Cross-chapter box on gender and climate change. In: *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Field, C.B., V.R. Barros, D.J. Dokken, K.J. Mach, M.D. Mastrandrea, T.E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K.L. Ebi, Y.O. Estrada, R.C. Genova, B. Girma, E.S. Kissel, A.N. Levy, S. MacCracken, P.R. Mastrandrea, and L.L. White (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, 105.

resources, land, education, health, and other basic rights. Further drivers of gender inequality stem from social exclusion from decision-making processes and labor markets, making women, in particular, less able to cope with and adapt to climate change impacts<sup>190</sup> Consistent with the previous chapter's main thesis, some mitigating factors include:

Encouraging gender-equitable access to education and strengthening of social capital are among the best means of improving the adaptation of rural women farmers (Goulden et al., 2009; Vincent et al., 2010; Below et al., 2012) and could be used to complement existing initiatives mentioned above that benefit men. Rights-based approaches to development can inform adaptation efforts as they focus on addressing the ways in which institutional practices shape access to resources and control over decision-making processes, including through the social construction of gender and its intersection with other factors that shape inequalities and vulnerabilities (Tschakert and Machado, 2012; Bee et al., 2013; Tschakert, 2013; see also Section 22.4.3 and Table 22-5).<sup>191</sup>

In sum, ecofeminism addresses the inequalities suffered by vulnerable groups, be it by social or natural inequalities, and to find methods to overcome such injustices. The goals of this chapter are: First, to give a brief account on the emergence of ecofeminism in general. Second, to conceptually situate Latin American ecofeminism as contrasted with other feminisms. Third, to propose the project of the liberation of ecofeminism in Latin America as fertile grounds to bridge the historically disconnected theories and praxes.

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<sup>190</sup> K.E. Vincent, et al., "Cross-chapter box on gender and climate change," 105

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

Historically the term “*eco-feminisme*” was first coined in 1974 by Françoise d’Eaubonne in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*. There she argues for an intrinsic ontological connection between women and nature. She draws from the analysis on colonialism from Albert Memmi.<sup>192</sup> Discusses Simone de Beauvoir<sup>193</sup> and articulates the goal of eco-feminism as a process of overcoming patriarchy through socialism that will lead to a new humanism.<sup>194</sup> This search for a new humanism remains the fundamental spirit of ecofeminist movements in general.

Naturally, ecofeminism has found diverse ways that are often in tension with one another. From the ontological frameworks about the meaning and function of femininity to the environment, ecofeminists have explored the purpose and role of women within society and nature, realms that often conflict. Because of the conservative possibilities of nature, some theorists have argued against assigning essential qualities of femininity. The essentialist/anti-essentialist debate within feminism precedes its ecological turn. While D’Eaubonne endorses some essential qualities to femininity, the first lines of Beauvoir’s *Secon Sex* asserts that gender is not natural, that it is a social choice.

Similarly, understanding the role of women as the threshold between nature and society has customarily meant conceiving of them as the caregivers of humanity. This bond was derived from feminist theorists examining the actions of female activists in underdeveloped countries. Ecofeminists like Karen Warren have worked to describe the feminine experience or standpoint of women and how they view and interact with nature through social interactions of power and dominance.

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<sup>192</sup> Françoise D’Eaubonne, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*, éd. Pierre Horay (Paris: Femmes en Mouvement, 1974), 24.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 10.

In her book *Ecofeminist Philosophy*, she lays out an empirical argument sustaining the claim that “there are important connections between the unjustified dominations of women, people of color, children, and the poor and the unjustified domination of nature.”<sup>195</sup> She also identifies disagreements amongst ecofeminists on the nature of those “important connections” between women and nature. Ecofeminism, she argues, encompasses a plethora of philosophical positions.<sup>196</sup> She summarizes her position as follows: “My point is this: One simply cannot make ecologically perfect decisions or lead an ecologically perfect lifestyle within current institutional structures characterized by unequal distributions of wealth, consumption of energy, and gendered divisions of labor. When institutional structures themselves are unjust, it is often difficult to make truly just decisions within them.”<sup>197</sup>

These feminist issues, according to Warren, are "conceptual frameworks" that foster oppression by maintaining relationships of domination and subordination. These relationships possess the following structures: 1. "value-hierarchical" (up-down), vertical relationships of power. 2. “value-dualisms” are oppositional and mutually exclusive (mind-body, reason-emotion, male-female) relationships of power that operate through a "logic of domination" that acts to justify value-hierarchies and value-dualisms. As a response to these two hierarchies of power, Warren identifies six features of an inclusive conception of social justice:

1. Distributive and non-distributive issues of justice.
2. Justice is situated.
3. (Beyond) Equality and sameness.

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<sup>195</sup> Karen J. Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: a Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters*. (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2000), 1.

<sup>196</sup> She lists liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism as some examples that substantiate the rich diversity of ecofeminist perspectives.

<sup>197</sup> Karen J. Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy*, 45.

4. Eliminating institutional domination and oppression.
5. Care in motivating and sustaining justice.
6. Taking into account both social and ecological contexts (as relational beings).

Warren's visionary role of ecofeminism as "quilting" stands as a metaphor against essentialist notions (and the unjustified burden of responsibility against women) as a way to conceive the projects of ecofeminism. Additionally, ecofeminism as a "quilt" underscores the spirit of inclusivity in applying to new alternatives and perspectives against oppressive forces and towards justice. Ecofeminism, in this sense, also has a pragmatic bent, namely the need to find practical solutions and not merely identifying oppressive systems; holding the premise that a just society *will practice* the just treatment of nature.

As we see in the samples above, and due to many of the same classical problems in environmentalism, ecofeminists disagree about the overall project of finding alternatives to our current environmental paradigm. On the one hand, some ecofeminists argue on the side of anthropocentrism that we ought to reframe our relationship with nature in order to reconstitute a more just treatment of women in general.

Other ecofeminists, such as Val Plumwood, argue against anthropocentrism<sup>198</sup> and endorse the position that nature ought to be recognized as having intrinsic value and that treating it as such will lead to a reevaluation of our relationships of dominance against women and nature. Additionally, she formulates a critique against social and deep ecologists. She says:

Social ecology stresses environmental problems as social problems, arising from the domination of human by human, but has little sensitivity to the domination of non-human nature, while deep ecology has chosen a theoretical base which allows its connection with various religious and personal change traditions but blocks its connection to the critiques

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<sup>198</sup> In her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Plumwood argues that anthropocentrism (and androcentrism in particular) is especially responsible for the precipitous environmental degradation.

of human oppression. It seems then that an ecologically orientated feminism is the most promising current candidate for providing a theoretical base adequate to encompass and integrate the liberatory concerns of the green movement.

In her book, *The Philosopher Queen*, Chris Cuomo follows Plumwood's argument in addition to endorsing critical theory's acceptance of a tendency to emphasize theory over practice.<sup>199</sup> Herein lies a crucial difference of Latin American ecofeminism, and consistent with the other liberation movements, the emphasis on praxis. Let us now turn to Latin American ecofeminism.

This point, as Karen Warren notes, is not only for women but also to include the environment as a central concern to feminist issues because:

"It is because a focus on 'women' reveals important features of interconnected systems of human domination: First, among white people, people of color, poor people, children, the elderly, colonized peoples, so-called Third World people, and other human groups harmed by environmental destruction, it is often women who suffer disproportionately higher risks and harms than men. Second, often female-gender roles (e.g., as managers of domestic economies) overlap with a particular environmental issue in a way that male-gender roles do not. Third, some of the Western ideologies that underlie the conception and domination of "nature" are male-gender biased in ways that are distinct from other sorts of bias."<sup>200</sup>

As stated in the introduction, Latin American ecofeminists seek to address climate change as a feminist *social* issue. This unique approach, rather than emphasizing individualism, endorses, in the case of feminist theologians, a holistic ecofeminism, while other Latin American feminists endorse a socio-political analysis about the patriarchal mechanisms of oppression against both women and the environment. These mechanisms include ontological and epistemological spaces created by patriarchy to inhibit and subordinate both women and the environment. Let me now turn to a discussion of Latin America ecofeminism.

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<sup>199</sup> Chris J. Cuomo, *The Philosopher Queen: Feminist Essays on War, Love, and Knowledge* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 54.

<sup>200</sup> Karen Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy*, 2.

## **Latin American Ecofeminists**

The ecofeminist, Nancy Santana Cova, argues that in order to address environmental issues, we have to treat those issues as being social issues first. This will empower women to participate in society fully and be agents of change, which will lead to a new environmental paradigm. In this vein, some feminists agree with the empowerment of women but, at the same time, argue for de-essentializing gender and sexuality. For these ecofeminists, anti-essentialism is a reflection of the intrinsic value of nature. This metaphysical objection to the essential qualities of things, they argue, has been socially constructed, along with the same systems and patterns of oppression and dominance. If those qualities are rejected, according to these ecofeminists, then the systems of oppression will be dismantled, and humans will be able to theorize their place in nature without arbitrary, oppressive social hierarchies and categories.

The social roles have delineated for women to engage in the production of food and bear responsibility for the maintenance and nourishment of the land that feeds the family. Lorena Aguilar notes that “women and girls in developing countries are often the primary collectors, users, and managers of water.”<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, “Rural women, in particular, are responsible for half of the world's food production and produce 60-80 percent of the food in most developing countries.”<sup>202</sup>

Moreover, women of Latin America have not only been first-hand witnesses to the systematic plundering of their environment but also the foci of violence thereof. Since the European invasion of the New World, the region that conforms to what is now Latin America has been the systematic focus of natural resource extraction because of its rich abundance of

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<sup>201</sup> Lorena Aguilar, “Women and Climate Change: Vulnerabilities and Adaptive Capacities,” in *2009 State of the World: Into a Warming World*, ed. Linda Starke (Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute, 2009), 60.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

precious minerals and biodiversity. The enslavement of the population to extract resources was a common practice that often leads to the complete annihilation of indigenous societies and their surroundings. Over five hundred years, Latin America has seen how the exploitation of nature resulted in the exploitation of humans. However, this exploitation has not been undertaken uniformly. Non-white populations have suffered the worst, and within those groups, further oppression is manifested in a hierarchy of oppression. Usually, the last recipients of oppression are the weakest, which historically have been women.<sup>203</sup> As mentioned, the universal mission of ecofeminism is an approach that focuses on the role of women and the environment, arguing against the patriarchal, violent practices against both. It is a movement that seeks gender equality and justice. However, with the socio-economic conditions in Latin America, compounded with the effects of climate change and ecological devastation, the most oppressed groups are indeed women. As Aguilar notes, “Although climate change will affect everyone worldwide, its impacts will be distributed differently between men and women as well as among regions, generations, age classes, income groups, and occupations. The poor, the majority of whom are women living in developing countries, will be disproportionately affected.”<sup>204</sup> In the case of Latin America, evidence shows that women are responsible for sustaining the household, implying direct hands-on experience with their environment, arguably much closer to ‘nature’ than men. It is an implied closedness due to stereotypical notions of the feminine assigning intimate interactions with natural resources managing the household. Conversely, the stereotypical masculine role places men in the workforce, creating culture and technology.

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<sup>203</sup> It is worth noting that women fall into every social class, and the situation of women, particularly 'white' women, in the higher social classes in Latin America bears only a relatively superficial resemblance to that of women in the lower classes, particularly among the indigenous people.

<sup>204</sup> Lorena Aguilar, “Women and Climate Change: Vulnerabilities and Adaptive Capacities,” 59.



As mentioned, Latin American ecofeminism, along with feminist theology, emerged out of the liberation theology movement<sup>205</sup> However, these movements have parted ways in their critiques. Liberation theology started as a movement that situates the Poor at the core of their practical discourse. Periodically, new analyses that included subgroups within the Poor began to emerge. In turn, Liberation Theology laid the foundations for feminist theology and ecofeminism to articulate their discourses. Gradual analytical processes have moved toward the inclusion of women and nature as victims of the oppression exercised by androcentric, patriarchal, capitalist entities. Ecofeminists argue that the victims of exploitation, including the ecosystems, are ultimately linked to the same practices. In other words, the Poor, Indigenous Peoples, Blacks, Women, and Nature, or more concretely—Planet Earth—all share the same genealogical tree of oppression; the same tyrannical forces have oppressed them. Moreover, some ecofeminists argue that women are interfaces between human and environmental exploitation, and some even go beyond this claim and assert that there is a stronger link between women and nature than men and nature.<sup>206</sup>

Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari describe the methodology of the task: “Feminist political ecology addresses the convergence of gender, science, and environment in academic and political discourse as well as in everyday life and in the social movements that have brought new focus to this issue.”<sup>207</sup> For instance, women are the backbone of ecological

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<sup>205</sup> Mary Judith Ress, *Ecofeminism in Latin America*, 30.

<sup>206</sup> Some debates have taken place among these groups. Some Liberation Theologists, as is the case of Clodovis Boff, object that the inclusion of nature into the liberation discourse disrupts the overall mission of Liberation Theology. They claim that including ecology shifts the attention away from the actual conditions of the Poor, trivializing their condition.

<sup>207</sup> Dianne E. Rocheleau, Barbara Thomas-Slayter, and Esther Wangari, “Gender and Environment: a Feminist Political Ecology Perspective,” in *Feminist Political Ecology: Global issues and local experiences*, eds. Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari (New York: Routledge, 1996), 9.

activist movements in Latin America. However, the higher the movement goes into the social hierarchy, the fewer the number of women are found. “Historically, women’s social contributions have been recognized by the movement’s leaders, but women have remained mostly in the background of the economic and political arenas.”<sup>208</sup> The next section is an attempt to address the many branches of Latin American ecofeminism and provide a general framework of its overall project. I present these Latin American ecofeminists in this work, according to their respective contributions. Each contribution scaffolds other feminist views, building a notion of ecofeminism as activism but also as the search for an ecofeminist theory from said praxis.

### **Mary Judith Ress**

Mary Judith Ress, founder of the Latin American journal “Conspirando,” establishes that ecofeminism is a movement in Latin America that follows Francois D’Eaubonne’s 1974 *Feminisme ou la Mort*. D’Eaubonne sketches in her book the persistent *machismo* (and the patriarchal relations of Cuba, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Saint Croix, Chile, Peru, Ecuador) in Latin America.

Contrastingly, Ress places Latin American ecofeminism claims specifically to search for a “more holistic theology and spirituality”<sup>209</sup> that could break away from the patriarchal patterns of traditional interpretations in theology. This holistic approach includes, as Ress mentions, four foundational persons as heralding characters in the Latin American ecofeminist movements. First, the “new science” founded by Einstein’s theory of relativity and quantum mechanics.

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<sup>208</sup> Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari, “Gender and Environment: a Feminist Political Ecology Perspective,” 28.

<sup>209</sup> Mary Judith Ress, “Las fuentes del ecofeminismo: una genealogía,” in “Ecofeminism: hallazgos, preguntas, provocaciones,” Santiago, Chile: Con-Spirando Revista Latinoamericana de Ecofeminismo, Espiritualidad y Teología, No. 23, Aguila, Elena, Helen Carpenter, Josefina Hurtado, Mary Judith Ress, Ute Seibert, Luz Maria Villarroel, (eds), (Marzo, 1998), 5.

Second, Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigm shifts. Third, Rachel Carson's holistic view of our immediate ecosystems. And fourth, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's concept of "cosmogogenesis,"<sup>210</sup> according to which the universe is conscious of itself and towards and evolutionary process that will culminate in the "Omega point."<sup>211</sup> For Latin American ecofeminist theologians this point of convergence is the culmination of ecological consciousness that includes justice for living beings.

For Ressa, these radical changes in the sciences (applied and theoretical), coupled with theology, led to a new awareness of the role of human beings in the universe.<sup>212</sup> Leading ecofeminism to embody these new ways of understanding the universe into its methodology to articulate a new paradigm towards liberation.

The term "ecofeminism" is a concept that combines the intuitions of deep ecology with that of radical or cultural feminism and liberation theology, whose origins coincide with ecofeminism. The movement taught that the patriarchal scheme was also embedded in the Christian definition of what women represented. Moreover, that exploitation, violence, and oppression against women and nature, was one and the same thing. Therefore, the first stage in ecofeminism's mission is to evolve to become an instrument of change within theology. This stage of Latin American ecofeminism evolved over the following decades into radical, anti-patriarchal hermeneutical approaches propose new inclusive interpretations calling for a non-patriarchal interpretation of theology's canon. Namely, ecofeminists within theology called

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<sup>210</sup> Thomas Berry was a student of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the thinker of "cosmogogenesis." Berry articulates a scathing analysis against patriarchal institutions as having a great deal of responsibility for destroying the planet. He names four institutions, specifically Classic empires, nation-states, the Church, and transnational corporations.

<sup>211</sup> See Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man*.

<sup>212</sup> This is consistent with Boff's eco-theological project, as discussed in chapter 3.

indeed for a total reconstruction of theology itself. Ivonne Gebara calls this phase “holistic feminism.” In this stage, they argue against the patriarchal vision through philosophy and religion, leading to the oppression of both women and nature. This process, ecofeminists argue, is justified through dualistic (essentialist) hierarchies, e.g., Heaven-earth, spirit-matter, male-female, culture-nature, human-animal, white-colored, center-periphery, us-other, etc. These dichotomies are reinforced, but not limited to, religion (Book of Genesis, the foundations of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Ecofeminists argue that male-centered interpretations demonize women (Eve as the corruptor of Adam) and animals (snake as representations of evil), scientific constructs (the enlightenment as a universal source of progress).

The hermeneutical revaluation of theology must be akin to pre-patriarchal conceptualizations of both women and nature. Ecofeminists, for instance, invoke mythologies of pre-patriarchal societies with symbolisms about nature, fertility goddesses (*Aphrodite*, *Pacha Mama*) that were gradually destroyed by patriarchal militaristic sky gods (*Zeus*). Ancient symbols of power were subverted and revalorized as evil or chaotic. Patriarchal societies constructed myths of progress predicated on the masculine.

Following this hermeneutical spiritual-religious perspective, there have been efforts to detach Latin American ecofeminism from its theological roots, ranging from concepts of the “cosmic body of God,” within Christianity to its postmodern deconstruction. Even with these stark disagreements, the majority of ecofeminists coincide on the urgent necessity to construct new paradigms from an ecofeminist standpoint. Laura Hobgood-Oster summarizes these tensions and the goals of the theory paradoxically: “Ecofeminism acts in both and neither of these broad

movements, simultaneously serving as an environmental critique of feminism and a feminist critique of environmentalism.” (Ecofeminism: Historic and International Evolution.)<sup>213</sup>

### **Elsa Tamez**

Tamez identifies three stages. In the first stage, there is total identification with liberation theology. In the second stage, there is a growing awareness and discomfort from feminists with liberation theology. In the third stage, the goal of feminism within theology becomes to challenge the patriarchal anthropology and cosmology in liberation theology and to call for a total reconstruction of theology from a feminist perspective.

During the 1970s (within the first phase), women were committed to liberation theology’s method and practice. Feminism in theology argued that women experienced double oppression as women and the poor class. During this phase, there was no relation to feminism conceived as an imperialist invasion from the north because it diverted poor women from the primary contradiction of their economic and political oppression as a class. Women in Liberation Theology began studying women in the Bible as leaders. The teachings of the Church in Latin America lacked inclusive language. God, as an entity, was always conceived as masculine, and the power structure of the Church is male-centered.<sup>214</sup>

In the 1980s, the second phase, there was an uneasiness that was beginning to be felt among Latin American women theologians and bible scholars about women being implicitly included in the category of the poor. This triggered a motivation to interpret the Bible from the

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<sup>213</sup> Some of them insist on the necessity of the construction of a new sacred point of view. A few examples of the new sacred are Ressa’s act of eating as the sacred (eating nature, being part of it). Gimbutas with her goddess approach. Sallie McFague’s “the universe as the body of God.”

<sup>214</sup> Just as mentioned in chapter 3, the Church’s official position still does not accept, despite some recommendations such as the Amazonian synod, to be inclusive of indigenous peoples’ traditions and women’s roles from within the Church.

standpoint of women. Disagreements arose in this period between male liberation theologians and their female counterparts on the oppression of women as women. During the mid-1980s, gatherings were also taking place to recognize black and indigenous theologies.

More and more activist Christian women became involved in theological and biblical reflection. There was an increasing awareness that liberation theology's discourse was tainted with androcentrism and patriarchal constructs. Liberation Theology's emphasis on economic oppression was especially challenged as it championed what they called the "option for the poor" often at the expense of cultural oppression and domestic violence. There were attempts, by Liberation theologians, to reach out to the region's feminist movements and first-world feminist theologians.

In a hermeneutical approach, women began to search for female images of God to refer to God as both mother and father. The Holy Spirit was seen as feminine. They set forth critical analyses of those biblical texts that were patriarchal and discriminated against women. This posture raised the question of the authority and inspiration of the Bible as the word of God.

At the point of the third phase, the 1990s, there was a radical, anti-patriarchal hermeneutical approach that proposed a new inclusive and non-patriarchal theology, indeed, a total reconstruction of theology itself. The inroads being made by Pentecostalism throughout Latin America are indeed remarkable. "Liberation theology may have opted for the poor, but the poor have opted for Pentecostalism." (Common phrase among Latin American pastoral). Gender analysis into their theological and biblical work, along with new insights coming from feminist anthropology and more open, welcoming attitudes toward Latin American feminism and colleagues in the first world, were introduced. Out of these new hermeneutical biblical interpretations, new non-gender specific names for the Divine emerged as a renewal of Christian

theology wholesale. Latin American theologian ecofeminists found it increasingly difficult to re-read the canonical theological themes such as Christology, the Trinity, and ecclesiology because of the concepts' implied and inherent androcentrism. Ecofeminists recognized that the implications of reconstructing theology are beyond orthodoxy.

### **Ivone Gebara**

Ivone Gebara describes three stages in the development of ecofeminism but not in chronological order. These stages often overlap, depending on the historical circumstance and level of feminist consciousness in a specific country or ideology. The first stage she presents is women's discovery of oppression as historical subjects and in theology, the Bible, and the Church. She credits the secular feminist movements for this discovery. Women are rediscovered in the Bible, an essential but not sufficient feat for Gebara. Women tended to overvalue the 'feminine' during this stage in the patriarchal trap, elevating domestic qualities historically associated with women such as motherhood, double-duty workdays. In the 1970s, women thought they were the "good" gender, spiritually superior, as compared to poor, weaker men. They desired to "even the score" with their male counterparts

In the second stage, there is a feminization of theological concepts. Women found a voice from within the Church and the liberation theology movement to present "women's perspective," Gebara calls this "patriarchal feminist theology." She finds that liberation theology, in general, did not challenge the underlying patriarchal structure of Christianity itself. The third stage is marked by the emergence of a "holistic feminism" in a post-modern paradigm. This paradigmatic shift that Gebara is endorsing seems to be connected with a Dusselian<sup>215</sup> analysis of history.

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<sup>215</sup> Enrique Dussel refers to that moment of overcoming modernity as the "transmodern."

Namely that ecofeminism is set out to overcome the affirmation of Eurocentric values<sup>216</sup> and the achievement of such revaluation will mark the beginnings of a new history, i.e. the post-modern era.

### **Ecofeminism as Ecophilosophy**

The efforts against colonization and neo-colonization enabled Latin American thinkers to find a space to theorize about their circumstances. Most of their original philosophical work focuses on sketching out the Latin American experience during and after colonization. These projects have aimed at finding ways to transform the colonial condition into one of universal inclusivity and equality. Naturally, due to the progressive, evolutionary processes of those projects, they have specialized in some particular dimension, running the risk of neglecting other equally essential elements to achieve their goals. Still, the projects and goals set forth by liberation movements are relevant. Furthermore, the incompleteness of such projects is, in many ways, reason to renew their efforts with more focused intensity and urgency.

In the essay, “Liberation in Theology, Philosophy, and Pedagogy,”<sup>217</sup> Iván Márquez analyzes the emergence, articulation, and evolutionary processes of liberation movements in Latin America whose principal aim is emancipatory praxis. He argues that these movements emerged in Latin America because of three constitutive factors in its identity, reality, and history: first, the process of discovery, conquest, and colonization of the Americas by Europe; second, the relative underdevelopment of Latin America as compared to First World nations; third, the highly unequal internal economic distribution of land and wealth.

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<sup>216</sup> As mentioned in chapter 4 Eurocentric values is labeled as “modernity” namely the historical ruling of Western thought.

<sup>217</sup> See Nuccetelli’s et al., *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*.



He concludes by noting that even though the notion of praxis of liberation seemed naïve and outdated in the face of religious war, conflict, poverty, climate change, environmental stress and the continued social marginalization of vast numbers of people, it is necessary to take a second look at the prospects of articulating new broad frameworks and proposals for radical change.

Latin American ecofeminism(s) captures the epistemic threads left by liberation movements and stands as fertile grounds to produce a new paradigm in Latin American thought. In the following section, I would like to sketch an outline of the future of ecofeminism and to explore how ecofeminist movements ought to continue weaving the localized experiences, circumstances, and knowledge of women across Latin America with the ontological and epistemic theoretical framework of Latin American feminist theory.

### **The Spectrum of Latin American Ecofeminism: Latin American Feminist Theory and Latin American Ecofeminism**

I want to begin this section with a chronological account of some of the most prominent ecofeminist authors in Latin America. Then I am going to highlight some of the most important and pressing issues within ecofeminism. Finally, I would like to pose some new questions based on the resulting critical analysis of the current state of ecofeminism and its contrasting relationship with Latin American feminism wholesale.

The previous section sketched a chronological account that also provides a conceptual mapping of Latin American ecofeminism. From its beginnings, ecofeminism was intimately related to liberation theology (Ress, Gebara, Tamez). Catholic and Protestant perspectives also differentiated the evolution of ecofeminism from liberation theology. Following the spirit of D'Eaubonne, there are also secular activists identifying the link between the violence against

women and nature. Later these activist movements began to differentiate ethnic, racial, and cultural differences within Latin American communities. Moreover, and especially during the '90s, the issue of gender emerged as a self-standing issue within ecofeminism, aided in part by the emergence of queer perspectives. This link contributed to sparking an activist movement favoring the protection of animals and their corresponding rights. Namely, queer perspectives helped broaden the spectrum of concern within ecofeminist perspectives. These perspectives will focus on the gap between theories and praxes within ecofeminism.

### **Theories and Praxes of Ecofeminism**

Ofelia Schutte proposes a “critical reading of history, and texts in general, in order to gain freedom from multiple oppressions. This standpoint also requires an ethical project large enough to include such still-to-be-attained ideals as gender equity, economic opportunities for the disadvantaged, and the conservation of global ecosystems. To the extent that the voices of difference are heard in Continental thought, it is hoped, we will grow wiser in the theorizing and practice of philosophy.”<sup>218</sup> Schutte here is signaling towards the direction philosophy of liberation and ecofeminism are headed. In a later essay, “Feminist Philosophy,” Schutte, with her co-author, Maria Luisa Femenías, identifies and examines some key methodological issues in feminist philosophy: the use of gender as a category of analysis, ethnicity/race, and multiculturalism. They identify the influence, use, and appropriation of Foucault’s discourse theory and Judith Butler’s deconstructionism on feminist theory.

The praxes of ecofeminism are manifested through case studies. One example of ecofeminist praxis is the essay titled “Ecofeminismo e comunidade sustentável,” the authors, Nascimento Flores and Dal Pozzo Trevizan, propose ecovillages as a model to create sustainable

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<sup>218</sup> Ofelia Schutte, “Continental Philosophy and Postcolonial Subjects,” 161.

communities. Their starting point, the ecovillage, is aimed to implement modes of sustainable existence by creating a harmonious communal experience with nature. This form of communitarianism, for them, is based on the organizational foundations and dynamics of the ecovillage. Such a community will, in principle, rearrange the relationships between humans and its environment by redefining the roles humans play among themselves and with nature.

Sustainability through the ecovillage project, they argue, becomes available by adapting ecofeminist perspectives, specifically those of Herrero (2007) and Angelin (2006). These perspectives are defined by, for example, the principle of social inclusion, non-hierarchical organization, non-discrimination, and localized economy, equal access to goods and services, equal division of labor (gender equality), low impact technologies, and a respect for nature's capacity of regeneration.

Moreover, according to Nascimento, the key socio-political propositions of both ecofeminism and ecovillages are the decentralization of power and participation in a direct democracy; equal access to markets including an ecological economy; low impact technologies (less aggressive on the environment); the assurance of food and shelter; and balanced gender, class, and race relationships that include the environment.

Nascimento argues in favor of the ecovillage as *praxis* informed by theoretical (professional) feminism, something that Schutte and Femenías identify as key to foster change. Both claim the need of “formulating feminist theory as the outcome of women's critical reflections on their lived experiences and on how the sense of a self, even a militant self, emerges specifically in interaction with and among women struggling for change.”<sup>219</sup> Although

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<sup>219</sup> Ofelia Schutte and María Luisa Femenías, “Feminist Philosophy,” in *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, Nuccetelli, Susana, Ofelia Schutte and Otávio Bueno (eds), (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 402.

Schutte and Femenías do not explicitly include ecofeminism as a feminist perspective, it fits within what they called the “activist/academic dichotomy. Ecofeminism, in this sense, is a way to bridge that gap between theory and praxis. Specifically, it is a way to incorporate, from the academic, professional feminist theorist, the “methodologies” necessary to create structures leading to meaningful change.

### **Nancy Santana Cova**

In her essay, “El Ecofeminismo Latinoamericano.” Venezuelan scholar Nancy Santana Cova argues that the construction of an ecologically sustainable society requires identifying and rejecting “the dynamics of domination presupposed by Western culture and all its derivatives, thereby revealing the mechanisms of, and connections between, the domination and the destruction of nature, and the domination of and violence against women” (45, translation). Toward this end, in a later article (Santana Cova 2005), Santana Cova extolls the potential of civil society in overcoming limitations of the technocratic Welfare State.

It seems useful to note that Santana Cova’s requirements for the construction of an ecologically sustainable society are common claims in ecofeminist theory in general. As the name indicates, ecofeminists tend to identify themselves as both feminists and ecologists, articulating both fronts: feminist critiques concerning ecology and ecological critiques concerning feminism. Vandana Shiva defines ecofeminism as both things simultaneously, a feminism and an ecologism. Some even argue that ecofeminism emerged out of the deep ecology movement. One such example is Mary Judith Ress. She says that “ecofeminism is a concept that combines deep ecology with radical or cultural feminism.”<sup>220</sup> She concludes that it is necessary

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<sup>220</sup> Nancy Santana Cova, Nancy, “El Ecofeminismo Latinoamericano. Las Mujeres y la Naturaleza como Símbolos.” *Universidad de los Andes-Trujillo: Cifra Nueva*, 39

to include as a reference the “indigenous wisdom,” “the indigenous cosmovision that has conceived the meaning of earth and the universe as an interconnected tissue.”<sup>221</sup> Similarly, she also stresses that all forms of oppression are connected, and the understanding of these relationships is critical to challenge and transform them fully.

Ress argues that “women are the ones that perceive directly and suffer in their own flesh the harm caused to their health and to their children’s health by the use of toxic substances in their workplaces, and the water and air contamination, commercial deforestation by multinational (corporations), what undoubtedly affects their crops and diminishes the possibility of having healthy food.”<sup>222</sup>

Santana Cova, in “El Ecofeminismo Latinoamericano. Las mujeres y la naturaleza como símbolos,” following the lines of ecofeminism in general, identifies patriarchal structures of power that unfold, generating the oppression suffered by both women and the environment. In Latin America, Santana Cova argues that the “ecofeminist perspective sees the cultural and symbolic patterns of patriarchal capitalism as the supports by which the exploitation of nature and women have been justified.”<sup>223</sup> Also, the mechanistic-scientistic patriarchal vision of modern societies has constructed spaces, public and private, and assigned roles to each of these spaces.

Within the framework of Western patriarchal society, the public space is occupied by men, who represent creativity and productivity as the carriers of progress and knowledge. In turn, women have been invisible, confined to the private space, the home, where they are

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<sup>221</sup> Nancy Santana Cova, “El Ecofeminismo Latinoamericano.” 40.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 43.

regarded as insignificant, inferior, unproductive, and without value<sup>224</sup> Similarly, the same paradigm regards nature as ontologically separated from human beings.

The patriarchal Western paradigms generally formulate the construction of dualistic categories, strategies to effectively subdue and exploit the weaker pole of the dichotomy, thus resulting in the intensification of oppression as it further deepens in lower hierarchical dichotomies. The Western paradigm regards economic growth as the ultimate end of modern society. The creation of mathematical-productive spaces allows for the treatment of nature in strictly utilitarian terms, extracting whatever is required in order to satisfy the demands of the market in the developed world. This model was tried through the implementation of development projects in Latin America.

While these projects were conceived as massive efforts to mitigate poverty and misery over regions that have been systematically exploited over many centuries, they have also contributed to other massive and equally harmful sets of problems. Armies of experts and professionals, from modernized countries, were deployed to assess the conditions of these non-developed countries. Their evaluations led to the creation of more projects to modernize these regions. The process of ‘modernization’ became synonymous with massive mono-agricultural projects in rural areas and the industrialization of metropolitan areas.<sup>225</sup> Thus, development is the process by which poor regions become industrialized in order to progress towards modernity. Progress was measured based on resources and human labor exploitation. The choice to progress offered to Latin America was at the expense of the depletion of its natural and human resources.

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<sup>224</sup> Nancy Santana Cova, “El Ecofeminismo Latinoamericano.” 41.

<sup>225</sup> An example of these practices is the United Fruit Company.

All this negatively affected these regions to an unimaginable degree, extended to almost every biophysical realm.

The notions of ‘modernity,’ ‘development,’ and ‘progress’ served the purpose of imposing *a stereotypical way of life* of developed countries as aim, end, and archetype. Development projects were created through the force of the authority of expert knowledge and sometimes against the welfare, livelihood, and the best interests of the region. It also deepened the perception of a neo-colonial assertion of power by developed countries and, at the same time, implying tacit incapability to progress to underdeveloped countries. In other words, the projects served as a reassertion of subordination and dominance.

As Saldaña-Portillo rightly points out, “Even as development emerged in concert with the universal right to self-determination, it nonetheless carried within it the traces of imperial reason, of an evolutionary hierarchy and racialized subordination.”<sup>226</sup> Thus the projects of development came about with new forms of dominance and oppression. The challenges of adapting to climate change pose threats to renewals of the mechanisms of dominance through new green developmentalism.

The standing development approach was to impose the set of values and work ethics from a capitalistic framework, while at the same time blocking any local emancipatory efforts due to being considered socialist agendas from the left. Another critical effect of development was the emphasis on individualism and subjectivity. Saldaña-Portillo notes that “The development imperative once again aims for the interiority of subjectivity: some men must be made ready to be ready to become the risk-taking, innovative subjects of capital, while others must be made

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<sup>226</sup> María Saldaña Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*, (Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2003), 22.

ready to be ready to become the disciplined subjects of monotonous wage labor.”<sup>227</sup> Latin America faces the need to address the intensification of neoliberalism and a renewed promise of progress through the clean energy projects promoted by developed countries. There is a danger of falling prey to the same illusions that the dawn of developmentalism offered.

Santana Cova envisions, from within the Latin American ecofeminist thesis of climate change as being a social issue first, a possibility to construct an ecologically sustainable society. In this sense, she argues that the world and its economy ought to be seen as a house (*Oikos*). Since it is in the house that most of the women's activities take place, this will, in turn, put them at the forefront of transcendent activities toward the proposed end, i.e., the good management of the house. According to Santana Cova, and given the roles assumed by women, they are better situated to deal with the practical situations of the ecological crisis. She argues that the breakdown of the Welfare state has enabled an evident paralysis on the part of the State and political parties to manage social problems such as poverty and unemployment adequately. The paradigm of free-market economies thus appears as a viable alternative in Latin America to the social hardships endured by the failure of political ineffectiveness.

In her later essay, “Los movimientos ambientales en América Latina como respuesta sociopolítica al desarrollo global,” Santana Cova still maintains, at the activists’ level, the project of continuing the efforts to capture spaces to manifest and articulate through public opinion the concerns and strategies necessary for a paradigm change. The inclusion of women in these spaces allows for their voices to be heard and for them to denounce emerging forms of oppression. It also enables the sharing of responsibility and the articulation of policy-making strategies that may bring about changes to overcome the patriarchal paradigm.

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<sup>227</sup> María Saldaña Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*, 31.



However, she argues that the environmental discourses have made their way into the political sphere in the developed world as such policymakers have adopted ecological discourses for the benefit of developed countries. In practice, this has led to the transferring of enterprises that pose environmental and health issues to developing countries for a supposed reduction in their national debt. Santana Cova notes that this only transfers practical environmental problems, and does not offer real solutions. Also, it adds layers of oppression by treating developing countries as the trash bins of developed countries.

Similarly, she notes that transnational corporations have appropriated environmental discourses in order to market their products as seemingly ecologically responsible without investing much in actually making them as such. Moreover, the appropriation of these discourses has fostered the emergence of new forms of industries that apply a superficial environmental approach by creating new businesses to manage the 'new demands' of ecological responsibility, generating huge profits in the process without having an authentic concern for environmental issues.

Nevertheless, this should not count as a failure for ecofeminism and social movements with a genuine concern for the rights of people and the environment. These responses are rather mercenary adaptations of the status quo that social movements ought to denounce; the continuance of seeking and occupying spaces is at the core of Santana Cova's ecofeminist practical project. In contrast, Vandana Shiva argues that it is not enough for women to reach their liberation through the occupation of public spaces, but that they must struggle to destroy the patriarchal patterns that exclude women from participating in them in the first place. Making a similar argument, Ivone Gebara argues that Christianity can no longer respond to the aim of equality, visibility, and the liberation of women. The paradigm has to shift in the direction of

values, turning it into a political struggle (Ecofeminism, an LA Perspectivep.98-99). (Vandana Shiva and Ivone Gebara).

In Santana Cova's work claims that women have been invisible victims of violence and exploited the same as nature. This similarity, she says, makes women the perfect subject to engage in the process to heal nature. In her later essay, she seems to make a stronger version of the same argument, stating that women have an "intrinsic potential to defend nature."<sup>228</sup> Her first point seems to adhere to the connection between women and nature on a practical level. However, her second version entails an ontological connection between women and nature.

Some interesting tensions arise from these positions. Santana Cova, while rejecting the dualist hierarchical structures of western patriarchal society, also identifies dualist distinctions as functions of oppression by which men, according to ecofeminism, stand on one side and women at the other side of the dichotomy. Here one has to question whether Santana Cova's ecofeminism indeed rejects a dualist ontology or hinges upon a dualist feminist notion of male-female (power-oppression). Under such a view, it would be difficult to articulate a critique of oppression without resorting to some essentialist position.

The dualist notion of 'dominant Western male- against oppressed Latin American women' establishes a connection based on opposing negative forces. Insofar as it is empirically verifiable that this dichotomy implies a form of oppression, it could be viewed in normative terms as a detrimental exclusion of one side, thus justifying its moral rejection. It is much more difficult to establish an intrinsic ontological connection between a dichotomy without some essentialist argument. The claim that women and nature have an intrinsic connection, distinct

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<sup>228</sup> Nancy Santana Cova, "Los Movimientos Ambientales en América Latina como Respuesta Sociopolítica al Desarrollo Global," *Maracaibo, Venezuela: Espacio Abierto, Asociación Venezolana de Sociología*, Año/Vol. 14, No. 004, (2005), 568.

from that of men and nature, or modernity and nature, presupposes an inclusive but rather positive normative relationship.

From this dualist standpoint, ecofeminism gets exposed to criticism for the rigidity and philosophical validity of such categories. Thus, critiques of totalizing, dualist approaches are sometimes articulated by independent voices (feminists) who seek to overcome these dualisms by imposing their own ontological dualist framework, which may result in new expressions of oppression. Indeed, some ecofeminists have argued that it is sometimes useful to resort to an essentialist view to explain ecofeminist methodologies in praxis. However, when the concern is to reject some patriarchal structure of power, ecofeminism relinquishes the essentialist position.<sup>229</sup> Ecofeminism has wrestled since its inceptions to manage a way out of this dualist trap.

The enterprise of ecofeminism, according to Santana Cova, operates in two dimensions: the practical and the theoretical. In praxis, ecofeminism has been the occupation of spaces formerly ontologically and epistemologically uninhabited by women due to exclusionary patriarchal dualist structures. On this front, ecofeminism has not only managed to identify the mechanisms of oppression that affect the core of Latin American society but also to empower the disenfranchised to take action towards liberation. Ecofeminism, in general, has made great strides articulating alternatives to the Western patriarchal paradigm by advocating for a new inclusive civil society. This practical aspect can help foster ethical responsibilities that maintain sensitivity and receptiveness towards the *Other*, the real subjects alienated and oppressed. Theoretically, it has also managed to identify the core ontological and epistemological problems

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<sup>229</sup> See Noel Sturgeon, "*Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory, and Political Action*". See also Chris Cuomo's "*The Philosopher Queen: Feminist Essays on War, Love, and Knowledge*".

that translate into the invisibility of women. Much work needs to be done in formulating methods that keep bridging the gap between the theorists and the activists.

## CONCLUSION

This work has aimed to demonstrate how Latin American liberation movements are alternatives to the conventional Western approach to climate change. An approach based on individualism, profitability, and skepticism.

The main reason why the status quo approach to climate change needs a viable alternative is, in many ways, this philosophical framework is the very superstructure to an economic basis of destroying the planet. Thus, it is nonviable both in principle (the unsustainable rationality) and in practice (the perpetrators and perpetuators are worsening situation because their politics have weaponized their unsustainable rationality and their policies are uninterested in making the radical changes to accomplish meaningful progress against climate change.

The first chapter provided the empirical foundations to justify three claims: First, Latin America's ecosystems and peoples (especially the vulnerable) are and will be disproportionately affected by climate change. Second, the historical perpetrators of climate change bear a responsibility to act but are not taking the necessary measures to make meaningful changes. Third, the liberation movements in Latin America are alternatives of change to the status quo.

The second chapter outlines the historical contexts of the importance and relevance of the liberation movements for Latin America. The chapter shows that the conceptual developments of the liberation movements are grounded on the history of systematic oppression and exploitation of Latin America, its people, and ecosystems. For these reasons, I thought it was necessary to

record these movements' ecological turn while attempting to frame their intersections as viable contributions to the most urgent challenge against humanity.

Each liberation movement contributes elements necessary to mitigate and adapt to the effects of such a daunting crisis. Overall the theories seek justice and equality through practice. In chapter 3, Boff makes the ecological turn in Liberation Theology by maintaining the emphasis to liberate the Poor. His novel move was the ontological inclusion of earth as a subject of oppression *as belonging* to the Poor. I argued that Liberation Theology provides *religação* as a methodology towards an inclusive understanding of reality, informing our practice of justice. This practice constructs a new alliance between our relationships (as human beings) with our environment (nature, the universe). Also, I presented Liberation Theology's influence in the "greening" of the Church.

In chapter 4, Philosophy of Liberation constructs a methodology to question the macro-structures of oppression, Dussel's argument showcased the center-periphery dichotomy and argued for a de-essentializing of those power structures of dominance against both human beings and ecosystems, in general, promoting inclusive epistemological perspectives. After Dussel's argument, I engaged with a critique of Dussel articulated by Cerutti Guldberg and Schutte. Cerutti calls for a need within Latin American philosophy to ground its reflection on the circumstances of the Peoples, while Schutte identifies a need to bridge the gap between theorists and activists. I presented the argument by Barra Ruatta articulating an eco-philosophy of liberation, from the perspective of the oppressed.

In chapter 5, Pedagogy of the oppressed provides an analysis of the epistemic processes of oppression situated explicitly in the teacher-student relationship. Freire argued that oppression occurs in the relationship through the application of the banking system of education. Consistent

with the other movements, liberation consists of *conscientização* (critical consciousness and action to transform one's circumstances) from the oppressed subject towards liberation. The ecological turn in pedagogy, as argued by Antunes and Gadotti, is grounded on the ethical principles of the *Earth Charter*. The revaluation of power relationships, especially in pedagogy, becomes central to articulate new paradigms of sustainability, from the perspective of the oppressed, that will create a sustainable culture through self-motivation and epistemic autonomy and actions based on integral knowledge.

Finally, in chapter 6, ecofeminism's methodological aim focuses on bridging the gap, brought up by philosophers of liberation, specifically Schutte, between feminist liberatory theories and praxes. The chapter explored some of the branches of ecofeminism wholesale, to then move specifically to Latin American ecofeminists. There I discussed some of the historical stages of Latin American ecofeminism and the contemporary developments in the theories and praxes of the movement. Specifically, ecofeminism, as it emerged, was framed by Ress, Tamez, and Gebara, which offered "holistic ecofeminism," and Santana Cova's analysis of political ecofeminism emphasizing the social aspect of feminism and climate change, by formulating a critical analysis against patriarchy and its concrete manifestations.

This dissertation was intended to lay the foundations for future developments in the history, theory, and praxis of the liberation movements. Much work is needed to address important questions that arise out of the issues of liberation. Some of the issues include, but are not limited to, climate change's "green" development (economic and technological, including carbon emission taxes) to avoid new modes of oppression and inequality.

Finally, this dissertation intends to be a contribution to the research on civilization's responses to the climate emergency. Specifically, the dissertation wishes to introduce an

alternative perspective of liberation from the oppressed that is future-oriented potential. As such, the goal of this dissertation is to stimulate and invite critical work to test the validity of the eco-liberation movements and also explore new possibilities out of them.



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