



Towards Postcapitalism

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TOWARDS POSTCAPITALISM
A DIALOGUE AMONG CHRISTIANS, MARXISTS
AND ECOSOCIALISTS

Rafael Díaz-Salazar

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*To Joan Garcia-Nieto
And to Francisco Fernandez-Buey
In memoriam.*

INTRODUCTION

The new relationship between Christians and Marxists has been made possible by the paths opened by the Second Vatican Council regarding dialogue with atheism and thanks to the new culture and political praxis towards the Christian world on the part of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and other political groups in the 1960s. In the encounter and dialog with Marxists between 1933 and 1964,¹ the pioneering work of Madeleine Delbrel should be acknowledged.¹ The convergence of Christians and Marxists in the liberation struggles in the countries of the global South has also been and continues to be a decisive factor in the extraordinary shift established regarding the ecclesial and communist positions that had prevailed since the 19th century.

Neither the thought of Marx nor that of his principal heirs (Antonio Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg, among others) is dead, nor is the practice of alternative social and political movements disconnected from the horizon they established. Likewise, liberation Christianity has not disappeared, nor has the Church in the institutional sphere abandoned dialogue with the Marxist world.

This publication includes a new phase of dialogue. As we will see later, Pope Francis has been promoting it since 2014. However, this is not the only existing practice.

With the title *Towards Post-Capitalism*, I want to show what is the horizon of a dialogue between cultures of faith and justice that draw from different sources but seek to learn from one another.

This booklet extends, with new forms and content, the practice of dialogue that has been developed in Spain since the mid-20th century. I dedicate it to two of its protagonists: Joan García-Nieto and Francisco Fernández Buey. The former was one of the founders of *Cristianisme i Justícia*. The latter, along with Manuel Sacristán, was the leading Marxist thinker in 20th-century Spain, as well

1 Madeleine DELBRÈL, *En dialogue avec les communistes*. Nouvelle Cite (Bruyeres-le-Chatel, 2014); *Ville marxiste, terre de mission*. Nouvelle Cite (Bruyeres-le-Chatel, 2014).

as a militant Communist and ecosocialist who wrote that “some of us had to understand the other Christianity in order to remain Communists.”²

This text that aims to provide a long-range perspective that may guide us on the path toward *the transition to post-capitalism*. The complexity of this transition and the limitations of a booklet make it necessary to expand the information in the notes. The goal is to learn more so that we can dialogue with depth about the requirements and ways to advance this process.

2 Francisco FERNANDEZ BUEY, *Sobre izquierda alternativa y cristianismo emancipador*. Trotta (Madrid, 2021), p. 23.

MEANING AND PREMISES FOR DIALOGUE

The theme of this booklet aligns with Pope Francis's proposal on the culture of encounter among people of goodwill who have as a common goal the emancipation of the impoverished and ecology. In *Evangelii Gaudium* (#257), he wrote the following: "As believers, we also feel close to those who, while not seeing themselves as part of any religious tradition, sincerely search for truth, goodness and beauty (...). We consider them as precious allies in the enterprise of defending human dignity, of building peaceful coexistence among peoples and of caring for creation."

To develop this culture, Pope Francis firmly rejects proselytism. He advocates that the action of Christians in the world should be centered on the testimony of lives dedicated to ecosocial justice, intercultural dialogue, and to a relationship with the God of Jesus by means of prayer and the liberation of the oppressed. In them, He is present as the one who is hungry, imprisoned, or an immigrant (Mt 25:37-40). They are the face and body of Christ in our societies.

The type of dialogue I propose does not pursue the conversion of Christianity into Marxism or to Christianize Marxism. There are different levels of dialogue between the two that adopt these approaches: 1) cosmic visional; 2) philosophical-theological; 3) seeking the meanings of religion, spirituality, atheism, critiques of religion and churches, and the relationship between science and religion; 4) ethical; 5) ecological; 6) objectives and practices of ecosocial action. In recent times, the dialogue has focused on the last three. However, they should not be the only ones, as the previous ones are also necessary and must be initiated or continued.

Tasks and Subjects of Dialogue

I believe that now the fundamental thing should be to concentrate on four actions:

1) *Dialogue* between individuals and organizations with different religious, identities, atheists, and agnostics who share a common diagnosis of the prevailing socioeconomic system but who want to replace it with another. In this text, I refer to it as *post-capitalism with an ecosocialist orientation*.

This dialogue must take place without hiding or erasing our identities and distinctiveness, without denaturing ourselves. It is essential to carry out a mutual “apprenticeship” between Christian cultures and non-religious cultures.

To diagnose and seek alternatives to capitalism, I believe that Pope Francis’s contributions are highly relevant, as they are full of radical social ecology and pacifism. I am referring primarily to those found in *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si’*, *Fratelli Tutti*, *Contro la guerra. Il coraggio di costruire la pace*, *Laudate Deum*, his speeches at the *World Meetings of Popular Movements*, and his messages for the *Economy of Francesco (of Assisi) gatherings*. Two of his statements in *Evangelii Gaudium* can serve as a starting point for dialogue: “The social and economic system is unjust at its root” (#59) and “This economy kills” (#53).

Francis and the popular movements have maintained a dialogue on this topic in various *World Meetings of Popular Movements* (WMPM), in which there participate grassroots organizations from different continents with a clear anti-capitalist orientation. These movements have articulated their analyses and actions in various documents.³

2) *Think* about a transition to another economy and way of organizing social life, which must be post-capitalist. I will address this issue in the final section.

3) *Work* together on anti-capitalist actions and building concrete alternatives to capitalism in daily life and in sociopolitical commitment.

4) *Disseminate* a moral culture that places at its center the primacy of those who are last, the common good above private interests, ecology, and the Samaritan culture. I conceive of this—drawing from the Parable of the Good Samaritan and an expression by Ignacio Ellacuría—as “taking responsibility for, bearing, and taking charge” of the problems of social victims created by victimizers, and of the environmental destruction on the Earth. In this culture, chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew on praxis with the impoverished is of utmost importance.

The participants in the dialogue are as follows: a) Marxists and ecosocialists who are not religious; b) Christian men and women who also self-identify as Marxists, communists, and ecosocialists; c) Individuals, movements, and organizations that declare themselves Christian, advocate for a non-capitalist economy

3 There can be read on the web more about the World Meetings of Popular Movements at <http://movpop.org>.

based on common goods held in common and who have anti-capitalist ways of life without being Marxist; d) Marxist inspired socialists; e) Popular anti-capitalist social movements, whether Marxist or not; f) Christian feminists and non-religious feminists; g) pacifists, trade unionists, and anti-capitalist environmentalists.

Marxists and ecosocialists in light of the ecosocial and pacifist thought of Pope Francis

The positive reactions and the reception of his proposals by prominent individuals and journals in the Marxist, ecosocialist, and ecofeminist spheres, as well as by activists from popular social movements across five continents, provide a very adequate foundation for developing this dialogue. Among them are Michael Löwy (the leading Marxist and ecosocialist thinker in the world today), Luciana Castellina, Rossana Rossanda, Alexis Tsipras, José Mujica, Evo Morales, Vandana Shiva, Naomi Klein, Serge Latouche, Ignacio Ramonet, Walter Baier, Michael Brie, José Manuel Pureza, Atilio Borón, Joaquim Sempere, the Italian journal *Critica Marxista*, and numerous leaders and activists from anti-capitalist popular movements involved in the WMPM. The following Latin American text expresses what Pope Francis's discourse represents for them:

The anti-capitalist struggle acquires a new and unexpected legitimacy with Pope Francis as its spokesperson, giving us support and encouragement, strength and capacity, hope and resilience. From the podium of the highest Catholic hierarchy, with the immense influence he holds over the minds of millions of people worldwide, the impact on popular consciousness is incomparably greater. The possibility is opened to us that revolutionary discourse, the discourse that questions the dominant system, opens a path, it assumes and is built upon a discourse rooted in the masses, thus acquiring unprecedented strength and legitimacy.⁴

In the Marxist, communist, and ecosocialist left, there is an awareness of the need to provide itself with a new deep-rooted culture that requires it to open itself to liberation Christianity.⁵

It is significant that in Italy, the book gathering Pope Francis's speeches at the WMPM was published by *Il Manifesto*, a communist newspaper (unrelated to

4 See on the blog of Jorge Reichmann: "¿Un papa anticapitalista en el Vaticano?" <https://tratarde.org/un-papa-anticapitalista-en-el-vaticano>.

5 Bonaventura DE SOUSA SANTOS, *Si Dios fuese un activista de los derechos humanos*. Trotta (Madrid, 2018); Francisco FERNÁNDEZ BUEY, *Op. cit.*; Michel LÖWY, *Cristianismo de liberación*. El Viejo Topo (Barcelona, 2019); Terry EAGLETON, *Razón, fe y liberación*, Paidós (Barcelona, 2012); Slajov ŽIZEK, *El frágil absoluto. ¿Por qué merece la pena luchar por el legado cristiano?*, Pre-textos (Valencia, 2009).

the extinct PCI). Additionally, Matteo Zuppi, who was then the Archbishop of Bologna and is now the president of the Italian Episcopal Conference, presented the book in the *Centri Sociali Occupati* of that city. Zuppi, who maintains close ties with pacifist movements, wrote a public letter encouraging participation in the national demonstration in Rome against the war in Ukraine, held on November 5, 2022; this letter was read at the final event. In 2023, he also participated in the national meeting of *Rifondazione Comunista*, engaging in dialogue with its leaders and activists about war and peace in Europe and the world.⁶

In Spain, the author of the foreword of these speeches (*Land, Housing, and Work*) is Pablo Bustinduy, a prominent former member of *Podemos* and the current Minister of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs, and the 2030 Agenda, and the director of Sumar. At the end of his text, he writes the following: “If today we atheists listen to Pope Francis, it is not to glorify him nor out of a desire to minimize or conceal our differences (on the contrary, we constantly look for them and emphasize them). Today, we listen to the Pope because in his discourse, there are many things we don’t have, *things we need*.”⁷

The rejection of Pope Francis’s ecosocial and pacifist thought by conservative European intellectuals who defend capitalism is significant. A good summary of this has been presented in several articles by Guy Sorman – translated in the ABC newspaper – and by Juan Manuel de Prada. The titles include “A Red and Green Pope,” “An Anti-capitalist Pope,” “The Pope of the Climate,” and “Francis, the Pope Who is Liked by the Left.

Where Do We Begin the Dialogue?

Some stages of the dialogue between Christians and Marxists: from yesterday to today

A decisive factor in the shift in relations between Marxists and Christians was the thought of Palmiro Togliatti, Secretary General of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), who introduced a substantial change concerning the thought of Marx and Lenin about religion. In 1963, he published *Il destino dell'uomo. Comunisti e cattolici di fronte ai problemi dell'epoca moderna*, in which he presented the following theses: a) The roots of religion are deeper than what Marxist materialist analysis assumes; b) Religious consciousness at various times leads to aspirations for socialism and is not always the opiate of the people; c) There are shared values between the Christian and Marxist conceptions of society and man; and d) The fulfillment

6 Zuppi alla festa di Rifondazione Comunista: Ce la metteremo tutta per la pace in Ukraina: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3ax5WfeFH0>.

7 Pablo BUSTINDUY, “La geopolítica del papa Francisco”, in Papa Francisco, *Tierra, techo y trabajo*, Altamarea (Madrid, 2021), p. 18.

of communism will not bring with it the suppression of religion, and within it, religion may be developed with freedom. He issued a call to the leaders and intellectuals of the PCI to rethink this topic.

In Spain, the dialogue and debate with Marxism and communism began in 1949 with the publication by Guillermo Rovirosa, the promoter of HOAC, of *El Manifiesto Comunitarista* and *El obrero en el mundo comunista* (1951). For decades, HOAC held courses on this topic. The dialogue also was established at the end of the 1950s within the Frente de Liberación Popular (FLP), a party to the left of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), created mainly by revolutionary Christians who connected Marxism and Christianity in a heterodox way. During the post-conciliar period, dialogues between Marxist and Christian intellectuals were established. In January 1973, *Cristianos por el Socialismo* [Christians for Socialism] was founded, a movement made up of Christians who openly identified themselves as Marxists. In the 1980s, a great debate took place between the Jesuits José Ignacio González Faus and Enrique Menéndez Ureña on certain issues related to the background theme of this dialogue.⁸

Leaders and intellectuals of Marxist parties promoted engagement with the Christian world which was committed to the struggle against the Franco dictatorship and involved in the creation of a new working-class movement. Francisco Fernández Buey stated that “the *recomposition* of the political spectrum in the Western world usually places, on the same side (that is, within the same anti-system movements), people with a deep-rooted religious faith and individuals with equally strong secular beliefs.”⁹

DIALOP: A European platform for dialogue between Christians and Marxists

Pope Francis has fostered a new phase of this dialogue. The beginning occurred with a private audience in the autumn of 2014, where Francis met with two prominent communist political leaders with a solid formation in Marxism: Luciana Castellina (PCI, *Il Manifesto* and *Rifondazione Comunista*) and Alexis Tsipras (Syriza, Prime Minister of Greece from 2015 to 2019). Also present was Franz Kronrief from the Catholic Focolare Movement. As the fruit of this meeting, in order to give structure to the dialogue between Christians and Marxists, DIALOP was created.¹⁰ Those participating in it were Christians, leaders and

8 José Ignacio GONZÁLEZ FAUS, *El engaño de un capitalismo aceptable*, Sal Terrae (Santander, 1983); Enrique MENÉNDEZ UREÑA, *El mito del cristianismo socialista*, Unión Editorial (Madrid, 1981); Enrique MENÉNDEZ UREÑA, *El neoclericalismo de izquierda*, Unión Editorial (Madrid, 1983).

9 Francisco FERNÁNDEZ BUEY, *Op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.

10 See the webpage of DIALOP: <https://dialop.eu/>. For an analysis of its work, see Michael Löwy, *Marxismos y cristianismos*, <https://www.sinpermiso.info/textos/marxismos-y-cristianismos>.

activists from the Party of the European Left which includes the majority of the leftist parties of the social democracy, the Transform Europe network and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. It is necessary to mention the presence of Michael Löwy, one of the leading Marxists and ecosocialists in the world. *L'Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican newspaper, published in its issue of June 28, 2022, an article about DIALOP in which the following is included:

It has been a long process, carried out mainly by Christians linked to the Folcolare Movement, though not exclusively, as well as by groups of Greek, Austrian, German, and Italian communists. [...]. Its goal is a common social ethic, in which the social doctrine of the Church can be combined with Marxist critique. It responds to the Pope's call against an economy that kills, a theme deeply felt by the left.¹¹

On January 10, 2024, Pope Francis received a DIALOP delegation on its tenth anniversary. In his speech, he stated:

I welcome you, representatives of DIALOP, who for years have been engaged in promoting the common good through dialogue between Socialists/Marxists and Christians. A fine program! [...] Faced with the rigid points of view that divide, let us cultivate debate and listening with an open heart. [...]. The measure of a civilization can be seen by how the most vulnerable are treated: the poor, the unemployed, the homeless, immigrants, the exploited, and all those whom the culture of tossing aside turns into refuse. [...]. A politics that is truly at the service of humanity cannot let itself be dictated to by finance and market mechanisms. [...] . There is always a great need for dialogue, so do not be afraid!¹²

This is one of the various initiatives of dialogue between Christians and individuals and organizations from the anti-capitalist left on different continents.

The economy that kills and the transition to post-capitalism

The term “economy that kills” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, #53) aptly summarizes the Christian rejection of capitalism and an economy based on proprietary interests as opposed to common goods held in common. Since there are ethical, religious,

11 <https://www.osservatoreromano.va/it/news/2022-06/quo-146/socialisti-e-cristiani-un-dialogo-possibile.html>.

12 <https://vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2024/january/documents/20240110-dialop.html>.

social, and economic reasons to overcome capitalism¹³, we must embark on the path toward post-capitalism. We Christians, Marxists, and ecosocialists, must seek another economic logic, a different way of understanding property, a new approach to production and consumption, and social relationships that stand in complete opposition to exploitation, exclusion, surplus value accumulation, and the devastation of the Earth.

There are highly interesting proposals regarding the identity of post-capitalism.¹⁴ There are various modalities: crushing capitalism, dismantling capitalism, taming capitalism, resisting capitalism, running away from capitalism.¹⁵ In different localities, there are very interesting experiences of ecosocial transition.¹⁶ In the final part of this text, I will reflect more extensively on post-capitalism, relating it to democracy, ecosocialism, and cultural change.

Christian and ecosocialist foundations for advancing toward post-capitalism

The initial keys for seeking a post-capitalist economy and culture have biblical roots and are supported by the social teachings of various Christian Churches throughout history:

a) The prophets' critique of the wealthy and their defense of the poor.

13 Rafael DÍAZ-SALAZAR, "Crítica cristiana de la civilización capitalista y construcción de un nuevo socialismo," in *Nuevo socialismo y cristianos de izquierda*, Ediciones HOAC (Madrid, 2001), pp. 135-183; Joan GARCÍA-NIETO, *El hombre y sus escritos*, Cristianisme i Justícia (Barcelona, 2004); Imanol ZUBERO, *Against the Necronomy*, Cristianisme i Justícia (Barcelona, 2025), Booklet 193.

14 For a first approach: Erick OLIN WRIGHT, *Cómo ser anticapitalista en el siglo XXI*, Akal, (Madrid, 2019); Jason HICKEL, "Vías hacia un mundo poscapitalista", *Menos es más*, Capitán Swing (Madrid, 2023), pp. 221-265.

In order to go deeper: Alberto ACOSTA and Ulrich BRANDT, *Salidas del laberinto capitalista*, Icaria (Barcelona, 2017); Michael ALBERT, *Parecon: Vida después del capitalismo*, Akal (Madrid, 2016); Al CAMPBELL, *Derecho a decidir: Propuestas para el socialismo del siglo XXI*, Edición de Joaquín Arriola, El Viejo Topo (Barcelona, 2006); Anatole ANTON and Richard SMITH (eds.), *Hacia un nuevo socialismo*, El Viejo Topo (Barcelona, 2011); Paul COCKSHOT and Maxi NIETO, *Ciber-comunismo*, Trotta (Madrid, 2017); David HARVEY, *Razones para ser anticapitalista*, CLACSO, (Buenos Aires, 2020); Michael LÖWY, *Ecosocialismo*, Biblioteca Nueva (Madrid, 2012); Thomas PIKETTY, *Capital e ideología*, Deusto (Barcelona, 2019); Kohei SAITO, *El Capital en la era del Antropoceno*, Debate (Barcelona, 2023); David SCHWEICKART, *Más allá del capitalismo*, Sal Terrae (Santander, 1997); David SCHWEICKART, *Democracia económica*, Cuadernos CJ, 53 (Barcelona, 1993).

15 See these modalities of capitalism in Erick OLIN WRIGHT, *Op. cit.*, pp. 54-112.

16 See the websites for *Red de transición*, *Foro transiciones*, *Transition Network*. Also read Juan DEL RIO, *Guía del movimiento de transición*, Catarata (Madrid, 2015). A sample of what is being done in Spain: José Luis FERNÁNDEZ CASADEVATE, Nerea MORÁN and Fernando PRATS (CORDS.), *Ciudades en movimiento*, Foro Transiciones (Madrid, 2018). See also the documentary *Mañana* directed by Cyril Dion and Mélaïne Laurent.

b) The teachings and practices of Jesus of Nazareth with the impoverished and his criticism of the reign of Money.

c) The socio-economic writings of the Fathers of the Church.

d) The movements of the poor who engaged in social struggles across different centuries since the Middle Ages.

e) The “red” component of the Protestant Reformation, well expressed in the works of Thomas Müntzer, by Friedrich Engels in *The Peasant War in Germany*, and by Ernst Bloch in *Thomas Müntzer, Theologian of the Revolution*.

f) Liberation theology.

g) The social documents and initiatives of the World Council of Churches.

h) The encyclicals and speeches of Pope Francis.

i) The anti-capitalist practices of thousands of communities and movements within liberation Christianity across five continents.

Also very important are the practices and thought regarding shared goods, common goods, and the common good that appear in the Acts of the Apostles, in the Holy Fathers, and in Saint Thomas Aquinas (who believed that, in a case of necessity, everything should be held in common), and in currents of Christian morality and theology. Today, they can be linked to reflections and practices concerning the communes and the pro-common, which are ways to recover the experiences of communal property from different historical periods. François Houtart asserts that these constitute a form of post-capitalism.¹⁷

In decades of the past and to the present century, the “red thread” running through the Bible (Ernst Bloch) has influenced different Christian currents that strongly criticize capitalism and seek another way of producing and of organizing the economy. This anti-capitalist perspective fosters dialogue with Marx, and Gramsci, with Marxisms, communisms, and ecosocialism. One of the bases of these currents is the work of Ignacio Ellacuría, in which he criticizes the capitalist civilization and proposes the alternative of a “civilization of poverty”.¹⁸

Pope Francis has correctly focused on the theme of the Christian pursuit of an economy that would be an alternative to the existing one, which is “an economy that kills” and is evidently none other than the capitalist one. He used the categories of *the invisible thread* and of *another logic*. At the Second WMPM, held in Bolivia, he stated the following:

17 Joan CARRERA and David MURILLO, *Recuperar los bienes comunes, reivindicar el buen vivir*, Cuadernos de Cristianismo i Justicia, 226 (2021). To go deeper: Adrián ALMAZÁN and Iñaki BARCEÑA (Coords), *Nuevos comunismos*, NeD Ediciones (Barcelona, 2023); François HOUTART, “De los bienes comunes al Bien Común de la Humanidad” and “Declaración Universal del Bien Común de la Humanidad”, in *Ética social de la vida*, Iepala (Madrid, 2013), pp. 141-174 and 215-226; César RENDUELES, *Comuntopía, Comunes, poscapitalismo y transición ecosocial*, Akal (Madrid, 2024).

18 Ignacio Ellacuría, *Utopía y profetismo desde América Latina*: <http://www.redicces.org/sv/jspui/bitstream/10972/1088/1/RLT-1989-017-A.pdf>.

You – in your letters and in our meetings – have told me about the multiple exclusions and injustices you suffer in every work activity, in every neighborhood, in every territory. They are as numerous and diverse as the many and diverse ways you confront them. However, there is an invisible thread that connects each of these exclusions. They are not isolated; they are linked by an invisible thread. Can we recognize it? Because these are not isolated issues. I ask myself whether we are capable of recognizing that these destructive realities stem from a system that has become global. Do we recognize that this system has imposed the logic of profit at any cost, with no regard for social exclusion or the destruction of nature? If this is the case, I insist, let us say it without fear. We want change, real change, a structural change. This system cannot be tolerated. The farmers cannot tolerate it, the workers cannot tolerate it, the communities cannot tolerate it, the people cannot tolerate it. Nor can the Earth tolerate it – our sister Mother Earth, as Saint Francis said.¹⁹

In *Fratelli Tutti*, after addressing social rights and the rights of peoples, he considers the fact that for these to become a reality, we need a radical change of perspective: “[...] We are dealing with a different logic. If we do not attempt to enter that logic, my words will sound like mere fantasy [...]. It is possible to accept the challenge of dreaming and envisioning another humanity” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 127).

His initiative on the *Economy of Francis* (of Assisi) is also valuable in considering and activating what could be considered today a Franciscan economy, based on the values and lifestyle of this saint. I see a connection between this project and the proposal of Jorge Riechmann in his book *Ecosocialismo Descalzo*.

From the ecosocialist camp, Michael Löwy states that there are seven areas of affinity and convergence between Marxism, ecosocialism, and liberation Christianity: a) the centrality given to the poor as victims of unjust social relationships; b) the liberation of the oppressed; c) the universalism of catholicity and internationalism; d) The critique of individualism and selfish competition in capitalism; e) the value of community life and the practice of sharing goods; f) anti-capitalism; g) the hope for a future of justice and freedom, of peace and fraternity among human beings.²⁰ In the final part of this text, I will deal more extensively with the ecosocialist proposals.

19 PAPA FRANCISCO, *Tierra, techo... Op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

20 Michael LÖWY, “Marxismo y cristianismo na América Latina”, *Lua Nova*, 19 (1989), pp. 8-10.

Why Revitalize the Dialogue and Praxis with Marxism?

Marx, Gramsci, and some Marxisms and communisms are an important path – though not the only one– to consider in the Christian search for a transition to post-capitalism. Those which base themselves on these perspectives critically and non-dogmatically form one of the few environments that considers a break with capitalism. To achieve this, we need to be more than just social democrats.²¹ Marx and various of his heirs are inserted into a broader current that runs through history: communism/communisms; that is, the struggles and practices to prioritize common goods and the common good, oppose proprietorship, and avoid slavery, exploitation, and oppression. They are a link in a communist tradition that exists both before and after them. The historical novelty introduced by Marx is twofold: the social scientific analysis of capitalism and the revolutionary organization of “suffering humanity.” His greatness lies in thinking of a project (with both light and shadows) to place the pariahs of the Earth at the center.

The longing for an economy and society based on common goods and, therefore, the aspiration to some form of communism will continue throughout history, even if the moment comes when Marxisms completely disappear.

Marx led the most profound critique of capitalism, and many of his contributions remain fundamental, although they must be updated in a new context to build an economy that makes possible the *good eco-life* in contrast to “the economy that kills.” The main ones, from my point of view, are as follows:

- 1) The exploitation of human beings and nature as a mandatory requirement for the functioning of capitalism.

- 2) Division, antagonism, and class struggle.

- 3) The accumulation of money and wealth as the central goal and internal logic of capitalism. This is achieved, among other ways, through the exploitation of countries in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania for centuries, the environmental devastation of the Earth, and the extraction of surplus value through the unjust appropriation of the value added by workers.

- 4) The philosophy of alienation.

- 5) The internationalist perspective.

- 6) The collectivization of private property of the means of production with non-state (workers’ councils) and state modalities.

- 7) A revolutionary theory to end oppression and class domination.

- 8) The goal of triple reconciliation: between humans, with the overcoming of class struggle; between humans and nature; and of human beings with them-

21 Rafael DÍAZ-SALAZAR, “Algo más que socialdemócratas. Luces largas para construir poscapitalismo ecologista e internacionlista”, in FRANCISCO FERNÁNDEZ BUEY, *Verde, roja y violeta. Una izquierda para construir ecosocialismo*, El Viejo Topo (Barcelona, 2023), pp., 9-82.

selves. This goal includes the progressive reduction of working hours and the power of the state through the non-capitalist logic of a self-regulating society.

The path opened by Marx deserves to be traveled and rethought in a heterodox and heretical way, against Marxism as an unchangeable worldview, I believe we must walk critically with Marx, with Gramsci, and other Marxists and communists, and learn from them. I also believe that we must go much further, expanding their horizon, incorporating both old and new non-Marxist contributions, and dissenting from some of their theories. The thinking of Marx and other Marxists contains very valuable elements, some of which are debatable, and others of which should be rejected. He himself said that he did not consider himself a Marxist.

I believe that it is possible to critically assume the thinking and the political and economic perspective of Marx and of Gramsci without necessarily adopting a total and exclusive Marxist identity.

With Which Marxism Should We Dialogue?

Marxism does not exist, but rather Marxisms. Communism does not exist, but rather communisms. Some are complementary, and others antagonistic. Sociologically, Christianity does not exist, but rather Christianities.

I think the best approach for dialogue is to start from a Marx without “isms”;²² that is, a reading of his work to understand well what he really meant.

We should take into account that Manuel Sacristán and Francisco Fernández Buey said that, for them, being Marxists was secondary. They considered themselves, first and foremost, heterodox communists; in other words, the main goal was to fight for an economic system and a type of society different from capitalism. They did not view Marxism(s) as an unchangeable ideology which one had to follow. They were inspired by Marx and Gramsci but based upon a reading subject to changing reality. For this reason, they were open to other liberation traditions, such as the Christian, the ecological, the pacifist, and the feminist.

I believe there are Marxisms that can be rejected: the Marxism-Leninism codified in the USSR, the worldview Marxism, the self-sufficient Marxism as the beginning of a new civilization, scientific Marxism, structuralist and anti-humanist Marxism.

I identify with the proposal of Sacristán and Fernández Buey for a Marxism as a rational praxeology and moral passion focused on “suffering humanity” and the situation of “the ones at the bottom.” A secular Marxism, and therefore open to other emancipatory currents that are not strictly Marxist. A self-critical Marx-

22 Francisco FERNÁNDEZ BUEY, *Marx (sin ismos)*, El Viejo Topo (Barcelona, 2004).

ism, aware of its limits and shortcomings. Fernández Buey wrote the following in *Nuestro Marx* [*Our Marx*]:

It is most likely that social movements and the more conscious labor sectors will orient themselves toward a new conception of the world in which pieces of revolutionary theory and Marx's emancipatory inspiration will merge with the conclusions of contemporary ecology and biology [...]. It is difficult to say whether the emancipatory movement will continue to call itself Marxist in the future [...]. It can already be foreseen that the development of Marx's statement "I am not a Marxist" will lead to an expansion of the critique of ideologies, in which the critique of Marxist ideologies will also have to be included... Marxism will be one, but not the only one, nor perhaps the main one, of the traditions that will become part of the emancipatory movement.²³

In his book *Marx a contracorriente* [*Marx Against the Current*], he states: "The socialist and transformative left of the future will probably emerge from a dialogue between the tradition that Marx inaugurated, the anarchist-libertarian tradition, the (heretical) Christian tradition of emancipation, and the self-critical reconsideration of science" (p. 15). Miguel Riera – director of *El Viejo Topo*, a magazine of Marxist and communist inspiration – expressed the reasons for this author's connection to that Christian tradition:

Paco (Fernández Buey) was a communist. He always defined himself as such, even though, at certain times and depending on who said it, this word was an insult. However, his communism was much closer to primitive communism – one could almost say evangelical communism – than to the communism that the Eastern European countries claimed to practice. Perhaps for this reason, Paco, who was an atheist, got along so well with grassroots Christians. They were united by their love for 'those at the bottom'.²⁴

Jorge Riechmann presents a very interesting perspective for the dialogue that we are dealing with here by his proposal of a *Leopardian Marxism*. Uniting Marx and the great poet Leopardi, so inclined toward pessimism, implies the introduction of a radical shift in Promethean Marxism and, moreover, opening it up to spirituality.

A Leopardian Marxism represents a very important corrective for the dominant culture within European leftist movements, which have been – and continue to be – optimistic and voluntaristic in their worldview. From the perspec-

23 Francisco FERNÁNDEZ BUEY, "Nuestro Marx", *mientras tanto*, 16-17 (1983), p. 80.

24 Francisco FERNÁNDEZ BUEY, *Sobre izquierda alternativa... Op. cit.*, p. 23.

tive of Leopardian Marxism, [...] the starting point differs from that which predominates in the Western left: rather than beginning with the recognition of injustice, it starts by assuming the Buddhist dukkha, the omnipresence of suffering. The goal is to generalize compassion before universalizing justice (without neglecting the latter). And it is understood that, along this path, socio-political struggle and what we commonly call spirituality must go hand in hand. Putting it another way: Leopardian Marxism, in a positive sense, must also be something like a Buddhist Marxism.²⁵

Joaquín Arriola, one of the most prominent Marxist economists in Spain, has made a striking proposal in *Nuestra Bandera* [*Our Flag*], a communist and Marxist magazine:

Perhaps the main question that the communist tradition can pose to the Christian tradition is not found on the moral level, but rather on the mystical one [...]. It is not compassion but rather mysticism, the cultural and moral force of Christianity, that requires a new interpretation by the emancipatory movements [...]. We find ourselves facing the possibility of a new stage in the colloquium interruptus between Marxism and Christianity, in which religion as a sociological phenomenon is no longer the terrain where communication is established (science-religion), but rather faith, as part of a faith-belief dialogue that can articulate an experience of human liberation in the 21st century.²⁶

Currently, the ocean that surges with Marx has paradoxically emptied into a river that runs through channels that may eventually form another socio-economic ocean: ecosocialism. There is continuity and discontinuity between the two. Regarding critical continuity, the elaboration of “an ecological Marxism and a green communism” has been fundamental.²⁷ In addition to the contributions of Marxists such as Sacristán, Fernández Buey, and Riechmann, those of Michael Löwy and Kohei Saito stand out. The latter advocates for a “downsizing communism” in *El capital en la era del Antropoceno*. Communism is Marxian; downsizing it is not.

We are facing a new paradigm stemming from a “red-and green Marx,” but beyond him: anti-capitalist ecosocialism. I propose that the new stage of the dialogue between Marxism and Christianity focus on this, considering the type of ecology present in *Laudato Si’*.

25 Jorge RIECHMANN, “Esperanza contrafáctica: pidiendo un Leopardi desde dentro”, in *¿Vivir como buenos buérjanos?*, Catarata (Madrid, 2017), pp. 260-261.

26 Joaquín ARRIOLA, “Sobre izquierda alternativa y cristianismo emancipador de Francisco Fernández Buey”, *Nuestra Bandera, Revista de debate político*, 251 (2021), pp. 277-278.

27 Manuel SACRISTÁN, *Ecología y ciencia social*, (Edited by Miguel Manzanera) Irrecuperables (Madrid, 2022).

ON THE ROAD TO POSTCAPITALISM

The eco-socialist transition from the current socioeconomic system to an alternative one needs pre- and meta-political cultures that inspire and orient it.²⁸ Christianity operates in this area. As do ecological knowledge and moral humanism.

To move forward on this path, a set of social issues must be addressed: 1) absolute poverty and international inequalities; 2) environmental destruction; 3) the primacy of labor over capital and the creation of decent jobs; 4) armed conflicts and wars; 5) the lack of housing, land, and work for millions of people; 6) migration; 7) social exclusion; 8) violence against women; 9) the construction of an alternative economy to capitalism.

To develop concrete policies in these areas, we must radicalize democracy, build ecosocialism, and foment a cultural and anthropological shift.

Radicalize Democracy

In various gatherings, Pope Francis has offered very interesting reflections on the need to redirect and expand democracy. At the III WMPM, he stated the following:

The gap between the people and our current forms of democracy is growing ever wider because of the enormous power of economic and media groups that seem to dominate them [...]. In this way, democracy becomes atrophied,

28 I have developed this topic in *La izquierda y el cristianismo*, Taurus (Madrid, 1998).

turned into nominalism, a mere formality. It loses representativeness, becomes disembodied, as it excludes the people in their daily struggle for dignity and the construction of their own destiny. You – the organizations of the excluded, along with many other organizations from different sectors of society are called to revitalize and refound democracies that are going through a true crisis.²⁹

Informational capitalism is producing diminished democracies that succeed in making the impoverished vote for capitalist-oriented candidates. In this way, citizen-servants are created. For example, in impoverished Ecuador, the last two elected presidents (Lasso and Noboa) belong to the small oligarchic and multi-millionaire class. A valuable analysis of the recent elections demonstrates the rise of “anthropologically neoliberal individuals” among the popular majorities and the consolidation of a “common neoliberal sense”:

A significant part of the electorate does not vote based on their material conditions; that is, according to material determinants related to their position within the classist structure of society. Instead, they vote guided by subjective ideal interests. The majorities do not vote according to how they live, but according to how they would like to live [...]. We must contest the neoliberal common sense.³⁰

In Spain, defending the neoliberal conception of freedom has become a successful electoral dividing line.

Post-capitalism is based on radical democracy. Capitalism is antagonistic to this type of democracy. It only tolerates liberal political democracy, which is based on civil liberties, the separation of powers, and parliamentarism. Capitalists oppose the deepening of democracy in economic, labor, and ecological spheres. They prefer a shrunken, low-intensity democracy. Without surpassing the prevailing form of democracy, we cannot move toward post-capitalism. Radicalizing democracy is the fundamental condition for making it possible.

At the first WMPM, Pope Francis acknowledged “the urgent need to revitalize our democracies, so often hijacked by countless factors.” He added that “it is impossible to imagine a future for society without the participation of the great majority as protagonists in a drama that goes beyond the logical procedures of formal democracy.”³¹ This theme of *hijacked democracies* is a powerful one, connecting to the lived experience of democratic deficits in societies that have universal suffrage, parliaments, and party pluralism. Many young Spaniards

29 PAPA FRANCISCO, *Tierra, techo... Op. cit.*, p. 34.

30 Elvin Calcaño, “¿por qué el progresismo volvió a perder en Ecuador a pesar del fracaso neoliberal de Lasso? <https://diariored.canalred.tv/americ-latina-por-que-el-progresismo-volvio-a-perder-en-ecuador-a-pegar-del-fracaso-neoliberal-de-lasso>.”

31 PAPA FRANCISCO, *Tierra, techo... Op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

expressed their democratic frustration during the 15-M movement with their chant: “They call it democracy, but it isn’t.” One triggering factor of the collapse of politics is the experience, among broad social sectors, that democracy is good for civil liberties, but it is incapable of substantially changing the material living conditions of those suffering from social and labor precariousness. They perceive that democracy strengthens those who are already well-off. For this reason, electoral abstention is higher in impoverished neighborhoods.

To move toward post-capitalism, I propose a multidimensional democracy that is delegated, conflictual, participatory, and internationalist.

Delegated Democracy

Delegated democracy is based on fundamental civic liberties: freedom of expression, association, and demonstration, accompanied by the separation of powers. Most people associate it with voting for party candidates during election periods. Once deputies and senators are elected, our political will is delegated to them, and we withdraw from political activism except for occasional criticism or support. In complex societies, delegation to candidates from various parties is inevitable, but this does not mean giving up citizen democratic participation between elections.

Conflictual Democracy

The dominant model of delegated democracy has many shortcomings and serves to maintain the power and wealth of capitalist elites, who by action or inaction become perpetrators of social and ecological victimization. For this reason, I also advocate for *conflictual democracy*. According to the Language Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy, this word refers to something that results in conflict or is conflict-generating. I start from the fact that the unjust distribution of wealth, power, and prestige is what determines social inequality. Democracy, if true to its etymology – *demos* (“people”) and *kratos* (“government”) – must promote a government by and for social groups that have less power, wealth, and prestige. Democracy must be, above all, a system for the maximal distribution of power, wealth, and prestige. The more power that is shared, the more democracy there is. The more concentrated the power, the less democracy exists, even though there are universal suffrage and parliaments. The more that wealth is concentrated, the less democracy exists. The more wealth that is distributed, the more democracy.

This democratic process of *disempowering* and *redistributing* wealth from some to *empower* and *enrich* others creates social conflict, with opposing groups seeking

to either block or advance these changes. The powerful and wealthy will not easily accept it. To overcome resistance, popular power to counter it is needed in civil society and in parliament. The redistribution of wealth and power aims to achieve the highest degree of justice and to make freedom a reality for all, understood as “non-domination” by capitalism in everyday life. Achieving this, nonviolent social conflicts are inevitable. Gandhi’s example should guide us.

An important warning: this is not just about fairly redistributing the wealth belonging to a capitalist society so that everyone can equally enjoy the material well-being this system creates in a few countries. The aspiration of millions of people to live in ways like that of the capitalist elites and the upper middle class is misguided. It is anti-ecological, internationally unjust, and ultimately unviable. Post-capitalism leads us toward a new ecological way of producing, consuming, and living well with less.

Participatory Democracy

This model has five dimensions: institutional, economic, labor related, social, and cultural. I will present them below before addressing the section on internationalist democracy. If it were limited to institutional politics only, it would be a mutilated democracy. To develop it, it is necessary for most of the people in a country to be willing to actively participate in public life to build an *expansive, high-intensity democracy* from civil society. The great problem we face is not the absence of transformational programs but the lack of social actors to support them.

a) Innovating institutional political democracy

Participatory political democracy requires the establishment of sector-based citizen assemblies as areas for the development of programmatic political policies. Through these assemblies, there should be promoted a process of listening on the part of political parties and the establishment of “contract programs” to ensure that what was promised during electoral campaigns is accomplished.

If we aim at creating politics based on permanent interaction between state institutions and movements in civil society, we need to establish relationships between sector-based citizen assemblies or platforms and parliamentary commissions. Participatory budgeting is one of the tools to build this type of democracy.

To advance participatory political democracy, we must learn a great deal from the periodic democratic referendums held in Switzerland. Open lists on each party’s election ballot would also be beneficial, as would debating how to install the deputy by circumscription, as practiced in the United Kingdom.

b) Economic democracy

Political democracy must promote economic democracy. If people do not experience *demos-kratos* (the rule/power of the people) in their daily lives and in the transformation of the material and cultural conditions of their existence, political disaffection will continue to grow. To build economic democracy, we must promote fiscal justice and pursue fraud in this area by creating a powerful National Intelligence Center (CNI) to combat financial crimes, the underground economy, and money in tax havens. Establishing a state-owned public bank and autonomous public banks is also urgent to support investment in employment and prevent abuses by private banks. Furthermore, practicing divestment from banking and directing our resources toward ethical and ecological banking is advisable.

Nationalizing strategic productive sectors, especially in the energy sector, is another priority. Additionally, the obscene wage gap must be eliminated by establishing floors and ceilings for wages.

c) Labor democracy

In this area, it is important to distinguish between the unemployed, precarious workers, and workers with decent working conditions. Also, between state-owned, private, and social solidarity economy businesses.

A fair relationship between democracy and work requires the promotion of a basic universal income and a new active employment training system. Pope Francis also advocates for a guaranteed universal salary. To create decent jobs, we need to strengthen the model of social solidarity economy with a high degree of self-management. Regarding the precarious workers, the key issue is a new unionization effort in this sector.

Control by the people over the fate of corporate surplus is essential. We cannot allow the continuation of neoliberal freedom, which turns workers into commodities that can be bought or discarded based on profit expectations. A principle that business profits should be used to create jobs should be included in the updated Constitution. Co-management in companies should also be another requirement if we wish to foster labor democracy.

d) Social democracy

Democracy must guarantee the fulfillment of social rights, especially for the most impoverished people, social classes, and groups. I am referring to the right to food, housing, decent employment, fair wages, healthcare, education, pensions, energy supply, and a decent and healthy living environment, which are lacking in

what are called the neglected neighborhoods. Other forms of social protection (unemployment benefits, basic income, care for the most vulnerable children, for abandoned elderly people, etc.) are also included. In Spain, there have been advancements since the beginning of democracy, but millions of people still lack these rights.

Access to decent housing shows the deterioration of democracy in Spain. The burden that many people, especially young people, bear regarding access to housing delegitimizes democracy. Housing is a basic social good that the public authorities must guarantee by disempowering and taking away wealth from those who have turned housing into a million-dollar business. A ceiling on rents based on the primacy of the common good over private property would bring changes in the behavior of many middle-class families who speculate with second homes for rent.

Properly addressing the policies against exclusion is crucial for the advancement of social democracy. Solidarity and care for the socially excluded and the most vulnerable victims of the capitalist system currently characterize Christian people, communities, and groups. This fact is of great significance given that, with some exceptions, the political left and the leftist trade unions do not know how to be or operate in these worlds. However, it is only fair to acknowledge that they have contributed to implementing public policies for these groups.

This valuable Christian solidarity is insufficient unless linked to the political dimension of the structural causes of poverty and ecological genocide, and if it does not contribute to the creation of popular social movements of the impoverished and socially excluded, like those who attend the WMPM supported by Pope Francis, and if it does not promote social and political struggles against the victimizers (both institutional and private) who produce victims. To achieve this, it is necessary to go beyond NGOs and volunteer workers, without eliminating either one, or adopt forms of collective action typical of the social movements. That is why Pope Francis speaks of “political love” (*Laudato si'*, 228-232; *Fratelli Tutti*, 176-192). In the first WMPM, he addressed the issue that I am now discussing and stated the following:

The poor no longer wait, and they want to be protagonists. They organize themselves, study, work, demand [...]. Solidarity is also fighting against the structural causes of poverty, inequality, and lack of work [...]. The scandal of poverty cannot be addressed by promoting strategies that turn the poor into domesticated and harmless beings. How sad it is to watch when, behind supposedly altruistic works, the other is reduced to passivity [...]. How beautiful change is when we see people in movement, especially their poorest members and the youth.³²

32 PAPA FRANCISCO, *Tierra, teco...* *Op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

The division of labor in this work is important. The level of human deterioration of the victims is sometimes so great that it is hard to go beyond welcoming and accompanying them; however, as shown by the WMPM, the impoverished also have the capacity for sociopolitical articulation. Pope Francis insists a lot on “the organized poor” as collectives for their own emancipation and warns against their domestication through social services that make them passive. A part of his speech at the third WMPM is very interesting and relates to my previous reflection:

Do not be afraid to get into the big discussions, into Politics with a capital P [...]. Do not let yourselves be confined. If you stay within the limits of ‘social politics,’ as long as you do not question economic policy or Politics with a capital P, you are tolerated. That idea of social policies conceived as a policy towards the poor, but never with the poor, never of the poor, and much less embedded in a project that reunifies the peoples, sometimes seems to me like a kind of bulldozer with makeup to remove the detritus of the system. When you, from your rootedness in what is nearby, dare to question the ‘macro-relationships,’ when you shout, when you scream, when you attempt to point out to those with power a more integral approach that is when you are not tolerated. They will not tolerate it because you are stepping out of bounds, you are entering the realm of the big decisions that some want to monopolize in small castes.³³

e) Cultural democracy

To develop this kind of democracy, it is necessary to eradicate educational poverty as a decisive factor in the reproduction of inequality. Poverty is something that is inherited, especially when the children of the impoverished suffer from educational failure. Affirmative discrimination is required to make a strong investment in human and economic resources with the goal of promoting cultural democracy in education.

We need to reinvent popular universities, multiply social educators and cultural facilitators who promote an emancipatory culture in neighborhoods and towns.

I want to draw attention to the evils, often-imperceptible, of audiovisual and digital obesity, which is making us sick, even though millions enjoy it. There is a significant challenge: how can we generate a counterculture against digital imperialism? Democracy is lost if *homo digitalis* continues to grow. It would be better to put an end to the ideology of digital natives, which is an anti-educational absurdity, and instead raise ecological natives.

33 PAPA FRANCISCO, *Tierra, techo... Op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

Having presented the various forms of participatory democracy, I will now address my final proposal, which is the most important of all.

Internationalist Democracy

If we do not promote a global social and economic democracy through a new internationalism, we will become inhabitants of what I call *demo-Nazisms*. The Western response to migration helps to illustrate this term. We live in democracies in countries that are islands of well-being surrounded by oceans of poverty. We only desire migrants who can fill the jobs that our fellow citizens refuse to take. For the rest, we implement repressive police and militarized policies. We are witnessing new forms of social extermination promoted by the action and inaction of Western democracies. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, billions of people live and die in countries where a kind of new socio-economic concentration camps prevail, which, in some ways, are heirs to the Nazi camps. It is enough to consider the figures: millions of deaths each month due to socio-economic causes with an international root.

Migration to wealthy, exploitative countries is only the tip of the iceberg of the great drama of our time: the abysmal international inequalities and the extreme concentration of wealth. Migration cannot be solved through repressive policies but through a fundamental change in the global distribution of wealth, using policies of global justice that go beyond cooperation for development. Only in that way will the right to not migrate and to have a decent life in one's own country become a reality.

In *Unveiling Inequality*, Roberto Korzeniewicz and Timothy Moran highlight shocking levels of inequality that, because of their grotesqueness, expose the radical injustice and blind selfishness of the world:

If the pet dogs of the United States were to form an independent country whose per capita income was the average household spending on pets, 'Dogland' would be classified as a middle-income country, ranking above Egypt or Paraguay, and better off than 40% of the world's population.³⁴

Internationalist democracy is the one that confronts global social problems and promotes an international agenda of global justice. We do not lack proposals. Some of them I have presented in my books *Networks of International Solidarity*, *Global Justice*, and *International Inequalities – Justice Now!* We know how much global

34 Roberto KORZENIEWICZ and Timothy MORAN, *Unwilling Inequality: A World-Historical Perspective*, Russel Sage Foundation (New York, 2009). Cited in César RENDUELES, *Comuntopia*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 351-352.

justice policies would cost and where we can obtain the necessary resources. One of the main sources of funding would be to interdict the 12 trillion dollars – approximately 15% of global GDP – that are hidden in tax havens. Spanish billionaires alone hold 140 billion euros in these havens, which is equivalent to 10% of our GDP.

The problem is: on the one hand, financial, corporate, military, and media power is in the hands of a few; on the other, a citizenry that is blind and indifferent.

The type of multidimensional democracy I have presented cannot be realized without transitioning toward an ecological post-capitalism.

Building Ecosocialism

Real capitalism is “an economy that kills” and a system of ecocide.³⁵ Since the 16th century, it has been based on the accumulation of profit and guided by the pursuit of economic benefits at any cost. Money is its God. This is its goal. Marx and Engels, in the *Communist Manifesto*, called it “cold interest” that bathes “in the icy waters of egotistical calculation.”

Capitalism exploits most of the world’s countries, it oppresses workers throughout the world, it is militaristic and patriarchal. It is the cause of the ecological disaster. It has been generated and continues to be generated by industrialist governments in non-capitalist states, such as the former USSR and China. Capitalism seeks to -resolve the current contradiction between capital and nature by cross-dressing itself in green capitalism, as a type of survival and of doing new business. Just as measures are taken which impose strict ecological regulations on capitalist companies and consumption by citizens, it is possible that it may not even expand as green capitalism, but rather as *eco-fascism*.³⁶

Ecosocialism³⁷ aims at overcoming the forms of the capitalist economy related to property, banking and finance, production and distribution of goods, social relations of production and life within companies and neighborhoods, pricing, wages, growth, and the organization of the times of production and life.

35 Naomi KLEIN, *Esto lo cambia todo. El capitalismo contra el clima*. Paidós (Barcelona, 2015).

36 RUIZ, Federico (2014), *Ecofascismo*, <https://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/29042/ecofascismo/>

37 For an initial approach, see Michael Löwy, “¿Qué es el ecosocialismo?”, https://www.anticapitalistas.org/IMG/pdf/TC_Ecosocialismo.pdf. Jorge Riechmann, “Para una caracterización del ecosocialismo en diez rasgos”, <https://www.fuhem.es/2013/02/11/para-una-caracterizacion-del-ecosocialismo-en-diez-rasgos/>.

To go deeper: Carlos ANTUNES and others, *Manifiesto ecosocialista*, Catarata, (Madrid, 2022) (Downloadable); Michael LÖWY, *Ecosocialismo... Op. cit.*; Jorge RIECHMANN, *Ecosocialismo descargo*, Icaria (Barcelona, 2018); Daniel TANURO, *Cambio climático y alternativa ecosocialista*, Sylone (Barcelona, 2016).

Ecosocialism is distinguished from social democracy by its ecological anticapitalism and maintains a relationship of continuity and discontinuity with Marxism.

Capitalist Corporations and Governments Against the Climate

The deep connection between greenhouse gas-emitting corporations and both right-wing and mainstream left-wing governments reflects the reality of raw, unfiltered capitalism. According to a study by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), public subsidies for fossil fuels reached a historic record of \$7 trillion in 2022. The study states the following fact:

Subsidies for oil, coal, and natural gas are costing the equivalent of 7.1% of global GDP. This percentage is higher than what governments allocate annually to education (4.3% of global income) and is about two-thirds of what they spend on healthcare (10.9%). [...] Eliminating explicit fossil fuel subsidies would prevent 1.6 million premature deaths per year, increase public revenues by \$4.4 trillion, and set emissions on track to meet targets for limiting global warming. It would also redistribute income, as fossil fuel subsidies benefit wealthy households more than poor ones.³⁸

From 2016 to 2023, the world's major banks provided €1 trillion in financing for new oil, gas, and coal projects by the most polluting companies. Among them are Banco Santander (€173 billion) and BBVA (€195 billion).

It is worth noting that *100 companies are responsible for 70% of greenhouse gas emissions*. In 2022, the world's five largest oil companies doubled their profits. In just one quarter of 2023, Europe's six largest oil companies, including Repsol, earned more than €25 billion.

Can anyone still believe that this situation will change through volunteer workers, NGOs, the 2030 Agenda, and wage increase policies that maintain the status quo of economic power?

Post-Capitalism Is Ecosocialist and Requires an Anti-Capitalist Transition

This discussion is not about the reduction of climate change through slow and short-term measures but about changing the system that produces it. That is why

38 Simon Black, Ian Parry, Nate Vernon, *Los subsidios a los combustibles fósiles se disparan hasta alcanzar un monto histórico de USD 7 billones*. <https://www.imf.org/es/Blogs/Articles/2023/08/24/fossil-fuel-subsidies-surged-to-record-7-trillion>.

we need a transition toward post-capitalism. This transition can only be achieved by implementing concrete anti-capitalist actions and creating experiences of an ecological economy and daily life that prefigure what post-capitalist society will look like on a macro level and give hope and the joy of living to those fighting to make possible another world. The ecosocialist transition begins with grassroots experiences, though it must also include other political actions.

Laudato Si' and its positive reception by prominent ecosocialists, whose names I mentioned in the opening pages, encourage dialogue and collective action. A comparative analysis of this encyclical and the main proposals of ecosocialism reveals the existence of significant affinities.

Ecosocialism links ecological and social issue problems. The specific thing about this project is the willingness to eliminate the capitalist causes of the ecological crisis. We know which sectors produce the most greenhouse gases: energy, industry, construction, transportation, agriculture, and waste disposal.³⁹ However, we cannot ecologically reorient them without dismantling the polluters: corporations, property owners, and anti-ecological consumers.

Thinking About What Needs to Be Done

There are numerous proposals for the transition phase to post-capitalism through ecosocialism.⁴⁰ The creation of new ecological forms of economy, politics, and social life in common requires urgent and substantial changes in the short-term: ecological taxation, an end to subsidies for polluting corporations, changes in transportation systems, new forms of food production and distribution, investment in renewable energy, alternative construction methods, new waste management systems, sustainable urban planning, and neo-ruralism. It also means

39 Hannah RITCHIE, Pablo ROSADO and Max ROSER, *Emissions by sector: where do greenhouse gases come from?* <https://ourworldindata.org/emissions-by-sector>.

40 For an initial approach, see: Jorge RIECHMANN, Luis GONZÁLEZ REYES, Yayo HERRERA and Carmen MADORRÁN, *¿Qué hacemos frente a la crisis ecológica?*, Akal (Madrid, 2012); Yayo Herrera et al., *Transición ecosocial justa*, Economistas sin fronteras, 52, 2024 (Downloadable).

To go deeper, see: Jorge RIECHMANN, “Ideas para un programa ecosocialista”, in Jorge RIECHMANN and FRANCISCO FERNÁNDEZ BUEY, *Ni tribunus*, Siglo XXI (Madrid, 1996), pp. 207-416; Jorge RIECHMANN and Óscar CARPINTERO, “¿Cómo pensar las transiciones poscapitalistas?”, in *Los inciertos pasos desde aquí hasta allá*, Editorial Universidad de Granada (Granada, 2014), pp. 29-124; Joaquín SEMPERE, *Las cenizas de Prometeo. Transición energética y socialismo*, Pasado y Presente (Barcelona, 2018); Daniel TANURO, *Demasiado tarde para ser pesimistas. La catástrofe ecológica y los medios para detenerla*, Sylone (Barcelona, 2020); Eric OLIN WRIGHT, *Construyendo utopías reales*, Akal (Madrid, 2010).

There exists another tendency: Emilio SANTIAGO and Héctor TEJERO, *¿Qué hacer en caso de incendio? Manifiesto por el Green New Deal*, Capitán Swing (Madrid, 2019); Naomi KLEIN, *En llamas. Un argumento a favor del Green New Deal*, Paidós (Barcelona, 2021).

ending the planned obsolescence of many products and implementing public control over banks. The program of *Ecologistas en Acción* is valuable to find out about concrete proposals in these areas.⁴¹

It is also necessary to shut down certain industries or, at the very least, to reduce their production. I think that this would include, among others, the automobile, chemical, petrochemical, agribusiness, plastics, and fashion industries. The latter is particularly harmful environmentally: fabric production for clothing is responsible for 20% of the world's freshwater pollution. The overproduction of plastics is devastating to seas, oceans and marine life, to human nutrition, and to ecological balance. Every minute, one million plastic bottles are sold worldwide, each taking 450 years to decompose.

I recognize what the changes in production bring with them for jobs. It is true that the creation of green jobs is increasing and will continue to grow, but if we reduce industries basing ourselves on “producing less, transporting less, working less, and consuming less”, changes are inevitable in employment policies. The bases must be “working less so that everyone can work,” workplace and economic democracy, control of the pricing systems, basic income, nationalization of the systems of energy and banking and free, high-quality education and healthcare.⁴²

Downsizing

Downsizing is a core proposal of ecosocialism.⁴³ From this perspective, *I believe that less should be produced and less consumed in order to live well with less on a planetary scale*. To make this feasible, ecosocialist economic policies and cultural changes must be promoted.

Downsizing is fed by ecofeminism and its culture of caring, a sense of limits, and a capacity for self-restraint. Downsizing is anti-capitalist because it defies the logic of growth at any cost, of the accumulation of the appreciation in value of labor and the environment and the constant stimulation of consumption. It

41 Ecologistas en Acción, Programa Ambiental. <https://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/quienes%20somos/programa-ambiental-de-ecologistas-en-accion/>.

42 Chema BERRO, “Decrecimiento y sindicalismo”, in Carlos TALBO, (dir.) *Decrecimientos. Sobre lo que hay que cambiar en la vida cotidiana*, Catarata (Madrid, 2011), pp. 95-108; Ulrich BRAND, “En la trampa del crecimiento. Los sindicatos y el cambio climático”, in *Crisis del modo de vida imperial y transiciones ecosociales*, Catarata (Madrid, 2023), pp. 83-96; Serge LATOUCHE, *Trabajar menos, trabajar de otra manera o no trabajar en absoluto*, El Viejo Topo (Barcelona, 2023); Joaquín SEMPERE, “Decrecimiento y paro”, in Joaquín SEMPERE, *Las cenizas... Op. cit.*, pp. 109-112.

43 Luis GONZÁLEZ REYES and Adrián ALMAZÁN, *Decrecimiento: del qué al cómo*, Icaria (Barcelona, 2023); Carlos TALBO, *El decrecimiento explicado con sencillez*, Catarata (Madrid, 2019).

is essential to *live well with less*⁴⁴ because it brings with it a stop to the acceleration imposed on us by a capitalist society, which robs us of the time to live because of its productivity-driven logic. Its proposals for *de-digitalization*⁴⁵ are also interesting. Downsizing is also advocated by political organizations and movements in the countries of the southern hemisphere that are struggling to end poverty but refuse to sacrifice life on the altar of ever-growing material wealth. Instead, they promote *buen vivir* (“good living”).

Internationalism

Ecosocialism is internationalist. It denounces the new forms of green colonialism in the current phase of extractivism of minerals and other resources from impoverished countries are essential to the current transition to green capitalism.⁴⁶ These extractivist practices are highly damaging to populations in Asia, Latin America, and Africa.⁴⁷ The environmental devastation they create, the impoverishment and loss of sovereignty of native populations, the destruction of their territories, and the climate-induced migrations they cause generate an enormous ecological debt on the part of neocolonial and imperialist countries. The wellbeing and consumption of the wealthy are directly tied to extractivism and other forms of injustice practiced by corporations from these countries.

From its internationalist stance, ecosocialism also denounces climate inequality: the wealthiest 10% of the world’s population generates 48% of greenhouse gas emissions, the 40% with middle incomes generates 40%, and the poorest 50% produces only 12%. This last group is the one that is suffering the most and will continue to suffer the most from rising global emissions. The *Climate Inequality Report* estimates that in the coming years, caused by environmental destruction, there will be a loss of 75% in the income of the poorest population, while the wealthiest 10% will experience only a 3% reduction.

Ecosocialism also is opposed to the tendency of many states in the Global South to imitate the model of development and of life of the countries at the center of capitalism.

44 Manfred LINZ, Jorge RIECHMANN and Joaquim SEMPÈRE, *Vivir bien con menos*, Icaria (Barcelona, 2007).

45 Jorge RIECHMANN, “Decrecer, desdigitalizar”: <https://www.15-15-15.org/webzine/2020/09/07/decrecer-desdigitalizar-quince-tesis/>.

46 Miriam LANG, Breno BRINGEL, and Mary Ann MANAHAN (eds.), *Más allá del colonialismo verde*, CLACSO (Buenos Aires, 2023).

47 Siddharth KARA, *Cobalto rojo. El Congo se desangra para que tú te conectes*, Capitán Swing (Madrid, 2023).

Pacifism

Ecosocialism is pacifist and denounces the militarism of capitalist countries and various dictatorships based on different ideologies. There is an enormous military expenditure that is directly linked to geopolitical domination, aimed at controlling resources and raw materials for the core countries of the world system, including China. Ecosocialism advocates for a pacifist strategy based on preventing conflicts and resolving them peacefully when they arise.

Citizen Activism

Ecosocialism is nothing without citizen activism in ecological movements and participation in other forms of political action. It values and encourages the virtuous practices of ecological action, both individual and collective, but warns that these are insufficient to address the structural causes of the ecological crisis. Pope Francis makes the same argument in *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*. Joan Martínez Alier and Naomi Klein have demonstrated the transformational capability of ecological praxis of social movements based on direct action⁴⁸ This goes from a disconnection from products of companies and financial entities that cause environmental devastation to the opposition to these corporations through boycotts in public places.

Driving a Cultural and Anthropological Shift Towards Alternative Lifestyles

The culture of citizens is highly determinant for both the present and the future. It must be recognized that capitalism is not solely based on those in power that govern it but also on the millions of people worldwide who believe this is the best of all possible worlds. What they truly aspire to is to climb the social ladder so as to integrate into the material well-being offered by capitalism.

Capitalism is not merely a mode of economic production; it is also an immensely powerful mode of cultural production that has achieved an overwhelming victory throughout the world at the moment of configuring the culture of daily life as well as its aspirations and objectives. By *culture*, I mean the ways of perceiving reality, of feeling, and behavior that people have. These elements are built up by the forge of character, in which the education of the deepest part of a being is determinative: the needs, desires, passions, and emotions. Capitalism has

48 Joan MARTÍNEZ ALIER, *El ecologismo de los pobres*, Icaria (Barcelona, 2021); Naomi KLEIN, *Esto lo cambia...* Op. cit., pp. 361-550.

managed to penetrate the deepest part of the human psyche, formatting it with a culture aligned with its mode of domination but in a persuasive, seductive, and gratifying way, even for those who lack the material means for a dignified life. That culture produces blindness and deafness to the cries of the Earth and the cries of the impoverished. According to the 2023 report *Jóvenes y Medio Ambiente (Youth and the Environment)* by the SM Foundation, 40% of young Spaniards state that “the ecological crisis is being greatly exaggerated.”

Capitalism disciplines the population in productive work and “liberates” it in non-working hours with its permanent supply of “opium of the people.” It operates here with a grand promise: the possibility of obtaining higher states of comfort, consumption, and material well-being. The asceticism of virtues has been replaced by the asceticism of labor to enjoy the material benefits of capitalism in the non-productive spheres, by esthetic-bodily asceticism, and by the categorical imperative of “enjoying oneself until death.” The result of this alienation project is the reign of possessive individualism and a society of “every man for himself.”⁴⁹

The central anthropological problem of capitalist civilization is the attachment to money as the most desired object by most of the population. This is evident across cultures and political regimes of different ideological orientations. It is a universal life goal. This fact reveals the immense failure of Christianity in its more than 2,000-year history. As Gramsci wrote, Francis of Assisi was but a fleeting comet in the Christian universe.

We must respond to the fundamental anthropological question: *What kind of humanity do we need, and how should we educate it?*⁵⁰ The anthropology contained in *Fratelli Tutti* is a highly relevant contribution to cultural change and ecological conversion. For a new ecosocial paradigm, the liberation theologies are a source of insights.⁵¹

Faced with the logic of the growth of economic benefit for capitalists and increased consumption by citizens creating more needs, we ought to respond vigorously to the following ecological questions: *What is a good life? How much is enough, once basic needs are met?* because to live is not to work and to consume. We must create the material and anthropological conditions so that it be desirable and possible to live well with less, to reduce our needs, to choose frugality, and prioritize the common good over private gain. This is an option for an anti-capitalistic life deeply rooted in both Christianity and ecosocialism. On the day that this has become *a new common sentiment of the masses*, the cultural change will have been achieved. There exists a similarity between the “blessed are those who

49 For more about these lifestyles, see Araceli CABALLERO, *Maneras de vivir*, Ediciones HOAC (Madrid, 2024).

50 See Rafael DÍAZ-SALAZAR, *Educación y cambio social*, PPC (Madrid, 2021).

51 Santiago ÁLVAREZ CANTALAPIEDRA, *La gran encrucijada. Crisis ecosocial y cambio de paradigma*, Ediciones HOAC (Madrid, 2019). See chapter 5: “Las religiones como ecosofías”.

choose to be poor” of the Gospel of St. Matthew and the proposal of “shoeless’ ecosocialism” concerning voluntary poverty and the capacity for self-restraint. Negri and Hardt have stated that “there exists an old story that can serve to illustrate for us a future life of Communist activism: that of St. Francis of Assisi.”⁵²

In conclusion, the theme of this Booklet goes beyond Marxism, ecosocialism and Christianity. It is a question of basic human dignity: to achieve a good eco-life for the humiliated and offended (to use the language of Dostoevsky), for “those at the bottom”, for the victims of “the economy that kills”, with the goal of fulfilling the desire of Jesus of Nazareth: that the last shall be first and that the reign of Money shall disappear. Without the struggle against that, from Christianity we have it clearly that the Kingdom of God cannot grow in this world. From Marx’s perspective, as expressed in *Capital, Volume III*, we know that in order to reach the *realm of freedom*—based on the reconciliation of man with others, with Nature, and with himself—we must overcome the *realm of necessity* in all its forms of exploitation and alienation.

52 Michael HARDT, and Antonio NEGRI, *Imperio*. Paidós (Barcelona, 2002), p. 374.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What reasons are enumerated by the author in the whole booklet for justifying the present dialog among Christians, Marxists and ecologists?
2. To what degree has the teaching of Pope Francis helped to recover the need for this dialogue?
3. In the second part of the booklet, the author proposes three necessary conditions for moving toward eco-socialism: radicalizing democracy, building eco-socialism, and advocating for a cultural and anthropological shift toward other lifestyles. Which of these conditions seems to you to be most needed and urgent in the current situation? Why?
4. In your personal or community surroundings, how can the dialogue proposed by the author in the booklet be concretized? Do you know of any successful experiences of this dialogue between Christianity and Marxism or between Christianity and social movements such as eco-socialism?

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

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