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Integral Ecology as a Liberationist Concept

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Abstract
The concept of integral ecology is at the center of Pope Francis's call for the renewal of our common home. However, throughout *Laudato Si'*, this concept remains somewhat under-defined. In this article, I clarify both the structural and qualitative dimensions of Francis's concept by demonstrating the ways in which it aligns with Gustavo Gutiérrez's classic concept of integral liberation. In so doing, I argue that through the concept of "integral ecology" Francis calls for the radical conversion of the political and cultural dimensions of the global system, a *metanoia* that he roots in a vision of God's desire for humanity and the earth.

Keywords
Gustavo Gutiérrez, Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, integral ecology, integral liberation, liberation theology, sustainable development, option for the poor, option for the earth

At the center of the political vision of *Laudato Si'* is the concept of integral ecology, to which Pope Francis devotes an entire chapter (chapter 4, "Integral Ecology"). In so doing, the pope draws on and extends the richness of integralist thought within modern Catholic theological discourse.[1] Nonetheless, Pope

1. "Integralist" here is in reference to the discourse that originates with Jacques Maritain's concept of "integral humanism." See Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom* (New York: Scribner, 1968). Pope Paul VI draws on this concept in calling for "true development" in his 1967 encyclical *Populorum*

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Francis does not offer a clear definition of the term. As a result, the precise meaning of "integral ecology" remains somewhat elusive. This lack of precision reflects not only the highly complex nature of the term, but also the pope's elliptical writing style. Pope Francis offers signposts suggesting something of what the concept connotes, but does not provide a single comprehensive definition. Thus, a basic question that deserves careful consideration is: To what precisely does the concept of integral ecology refer?

While this is undoubtedly the most fundamental question surrounding the conceptual key to *Laudato Si'*, it is not the only one. Pope Francis makes plain throughout the encyclical that any discussion of a "preferential option for the earth" is necessarily bound up with the question of "the preferential option for the poor."[2] However, he leaves somewhat less clear the question of precisely what type of politics—and for that matter, what type of political theology—the encyclical recommends for realizing these options.

In this article, I respond to these problems by arguing that the concept of integral ecology should be construed as a liberationist concept, one that calls for a paradigm shift away from the structural and ideological dimensions of the contemporary "global system."[3] In order to make this argument, I compare the concept of integral ecology to Gustavo Gutiérrez's concept of integral liberation, which he develops in his classic text *A Theology of Liberation*.[4] Through this comparison, I demonstrate the manner in which these two concepts align, both structurally and rhetorically, on a number of

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Progressio, (March 26, 1967), (hereafter referred to in text as *PP*) http://w2.vatican.va/content/paulvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html. In the encyclical Pope Paul VI describes true development as the movement from "less than human to more human conditions," which entails transformations in political economy, cultural values, and conversion to God (*PP* 20–21). Subsequent papal teaching has drawn on Pope Paul VI's concept (usually translating the term as "integral development") with Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* as the prime example. *Caritas in Veritate* (June 29, 2009), (hereafter referred to in text as *CV*), http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html.

2. On this point, Pope Francis is extending Pope Benedict XVI's appeal in *Caritas in Veritate* for the development of a "human ecology" that recognizes "*The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa*" (*CV* 51, italics original). Pope Francis's thought also aligns with environmental justice discourse, which seeks to link the issues of social justice and ecological degradation. For a representative example of this discourse, see Kristin Shrader-Frechette, *Environmental Justice: Creating Equality, Reclaiming Democracy* (New York: Oxford University, 2002).

3. "*Laudato Si*': On Care for Our Common Home," (May 24, 2015), 56 and 111, (hereafter referred to in text as *LS*) http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html. (All URLs cited herein were accessed Nov. 16, 2015).

4. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, 15th anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988). There are a number of reasons to turn to Gutiérrez here. Most basically, Gutiérrez's concept remains a "classic" in the sense described by David Tracy. As Tracy states, the classic is "always retrievable, always in need of appreciative appropriation and critical evaluation, always disclosive and transformative

points. In particular, I draw attention to the ways in which both concepts effect sharp denunciations of the status quo.

This evaluation also serves to highlight a key difference in the way Gutiérrez and Francis utilize their respective concepts. Whereas Gutiérrez's denunciation of developmentalism was accompanied by his call for a socialist order, Pope Francis's denunciation of the contemporary globalization project is marked by a call for dialogue. Francis, therefore, is notably more circumspect in his act of "prophetic annunciation" than was Gutiérrez.

Nevertheless, as I argue in the final part of this article, it is precisely within the moment of dialogue for which Pope Francis calls that liberationist methodology can ensure the concept of integral ecology is not co-opted by the very ideology the pope denounces. Specifically, I assert that it is necessary to draw on critical social analysis—as is proper to liberationist discourse—in order to demonstrate that the concept of integral ecology cannot be equated to the ubiquitous term "sustainable development" but instead represents an *inversion* of that term.

Integral Liberation

"To speak about a theology of liberation," writes Gutiérrez, "is to seek an answer to the following question: What relationship is there between salvation and the historical process of human liberation?"[5] In *A Theology of Liberation*, he develops an answer to this query by devising the concept of integral liberation. Through this concept, Gutiérrez elucidates a positive relationship between the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ and the process of human liberation. In what follows, I consider, first, the structure of Gutiérrez's concept and then its qualitative dimension.

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with its truth of importance, always open to new application and thereby new interpretation." David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 115. As a classic, "integral liberation" remains a concept vital to the ongoing work of theology. Also, Gutiérrez's concept, as part of the integralist tradition with which Francis engages, can be used to organize some of the pope's more disparate thoughts in order to help clarify the pope's argument. Finally, Gutiérrez's concept recommends itself for discussion over the thought of other liberationists who have engaged explicitly in eco-theological reflection because for Gutiérrez, as for Francis, Christian revelation remains the privileged source for theological reflection. In contrast, Leonardo Boff, for example, attempts to ground the option for the poor and the earth in an interpretation of evolutionary cosmology—one that, notably, justifies death and suffering. "In the evolutionary process," writes Boff, "there are falls, but they are falls on the way up. The emergence of chaos means the opportunity for more complex and rich forms of life to appear." Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997) 83. Boff's view of evolutionary history is debatable. However, it is unclear how an option for the earth or poor might issue from it. If every fall is a fall on the way up, then why is it desirable to care for the poor or even creation in general? Will not their destruction merely make way for new and more intense forms of flourishing? It is, therefore, more advisable to ground both the option for the poor and the earth in the God revealed by Jesus Christ.

5. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* 29.

The Structure of the Concept

According to Gutiérrez, integral liberation is realized at three "reciprocally interpenetrating levels" of human life.[6] Here, I term these the (1) sociopolitical level, (2) the cultural/psychological level, and (3) the theological level.[7] For Gutiérrez, the sociopolitical level refers to the dimension within which institutions and policies structure the patterns regulating the use of the world's economic and material resources. Thus, the sociopolitical dimension denotes especially the quantitative and empirically measurable elements of society. Liberation at this level, then, is realized through the transformation of unjust social structures and oppressive political systems.

If the sociopolitical level refers especially to the quantitative elements of society, the cultural/psychological level refers to a more qualitative dimension of human life. At this second level, it is the value systems, worldviews, and identities of human persons and their communities that are the particular objects of inquiry.[8] Thus, liberation at the cultural/psychological level denotes the transformation of the imaginations of human persons and the communities away from dehumanizing and degrading value systems and self-understandings.[9]

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6. Ibid. 24. In the original edition of *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez does not explicitly label this process "integral liberation." However, he does denominate it in this manner in the introduction to the 15th anniversary edition and in his subsequent book *The Truth Shall Make You Free*. See Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation* xxxvii–xl and *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990) 121.
7. I have modified Gutiérrez's terminology here. In *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez describes the first level simply as the "political." The term "sociopolitical," however, better captures the reality that Gutiérrez describes. He also designates the second level as "the level of human becoming in history." However, this obscure denomination has led to a great deal of confusion as to precisely what the term connotes. Therefore, I have chosen to use the term "cultural/psychological " which more clearly describes the second dimension. The term "ideological" might be included as well. See his discussion in *A Theology of Liberation* xxxvii–xl and 17–25. For further helpful discussions of this concept, see Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free* 105–40; Miguel Manzanera, *Teología, salvación y liberación en la obra de Gustavo Gutiérrez: exposición analítica, situación teórico-práctica y valoración crítica* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto: Mensajero, 1978); Dean Brackley, *Divine Revolution: Salvation and Liberation in Catholic Thought* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1996) 72–77; and James Nickoloff, "Church of the Poor: The Ecclesiology of Gustavo Gutiérrez," *Theological Studies* 54 (1993) 512–35.
8. At this level, Gutiérrez was especially concerned with the way in which the identities of "nonperson" and "the one-dimensional man" could be internalized. For more on this, as well as a more extensive examination of the relationship between the three levels of liberation in Gutiérrez's thought, see Daniel P. Castillo, "The Dynamism of Integral Liberation: Reconsidering Gustavo Gutiérrez's Central Concept after 'the End of History'" *Political Theology* (forthcoming).
9. Accenting the psychological dimension of liberation at the second level, Gutiérrez writes that liberation at this level "is a personal transformation by which we live with profound inner freedom in the face of every kind of servitude" See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of*

Finally, within Gutiérrez's schematic, the deepest level at which liberation is realized is the theological level. This dimension refers explicitly to the human person's relationship with God.[10] For Gutiérrez, liberation at the theological level denotes salvation: liberation from sin and communion with God (which, as Gutierrez makes clear, always begins with the divine initiative).[11] Here, however, two points need to be kept in mind. In Gutiérrez's view, the human person's love of God is intimately tied to her love of neighbor. (By "neighbor," Gutiérrez intends especially "the ones of no account," a priority that reflects God's own preferential option for the poor and oppressed.[12]) Indeed, as Gutiérrez asserts, "love of God is unavoidably expressed *through* love of one's neighbor."[13] Therefore, one's experience of communion with God will necessarily be expressed through a move toward a deeper solidarity with neighbor.[14] Second, Gutiérrez is keenly aware that the power of sin deeply disorders the sociopolitical and cultural/psychological dimensions of human life. This disordering is witnessed to by the monumental injustices and internalized dehumanization that characterize too much of the world, as well as by the disordered worldviews (of oppressors and oppressed alike) that reduce persons to nonpersons or mere instruments.

In light of these two points, it is impossible to separate the experiences of liberation from sin and communion with God from the sociopolitical and cultural/psychological dimensions of human life. Salvation, insofar as it is experienced proleptically, comes

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Liberation xxxviii. Here, then, liberation is lived out amidst the everydayness of life. This element of the liberation process is elaborated upon especially by Ada María Isasi-Díaz, though not necessarily in dialogue with Gutiérrez, through the category of *lo cotidiano*. See Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll: Orbis) esp. 66–73. The sense of liberation within the experience of everyday life also connects to the spirituality for which Francis calls in chap. 6 of *LS*, "Ecological Education and Spirituality."

10. Gutiérrez raises this distinction for analytic purposes only. In his view, "history is one" and the realities of sin and grace cannot be separated from the other dimensions of human life. See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* 83–105.
11. As Gutiérrez writes, "Christ the Savior liberates from sin, which is the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression. Christ makes humankind truly free, that is to say, he enables us to live in communion with him; and this is the basis for all human brotherhood". See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* 25.
12. This is why Gutiérrez argues that the preferential option for the poor is grounded in one's faith in God. On this point, see Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Option for the Poor Arises from Faith in Christ," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009) 317–26. See also Gutiérrez, "Option For the Poor," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993) 235–50.
13. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* 114. Emphasis is Gutiérrez's.
14. In *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez makes this point unrelentingly by tying communion with God to communion with neighbor throughout his argument. For a helpful consideration of the relationship between liberation and communion in Gutiérrez's thought, see Joyce Murray, "Liberation for Communion in the Soteriology of Gustavo Gutiérrez," *Theological Studies* 59 (1998) 51–59.

to be expressed through liberation from the sinful sociopolitical and cultural realities present in history. Likewise, the experience of communion with God is expressed through a deepening communion with one's neighbor. In these ways, Gutiérrez shows salvation to be positively related to the process of human liberation at the sociopolitical and cultural/psychological levels.[15]

The Language of Liberation

While the foregoing analysis helps to clarify the structure of integral liberation, it is also important to examine the qualitative dimension of the concept that is captured precisely by the term "liberation." As Gutiérrez himself maintains, the concept of integral liberation was patterned after that of "integral development," which is associated most closely with Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967). "With the help of this concept," Gutiérrez writes, "the pope showed how it is possible, without confusing the various levels, to affirm the deeper unity of a process leading from less human to more human conditions."[16] In terms of structure, then, there exists a "family resemblance" between the concepts of integral development and integral liberation. Both call for transformations in the sociopolitical and cultural dimensions of society and both root these changes in what God desires for humanity.

For Gutiérrez, however, the language of development could not express adequately the decisiveness of the transformation that was required within a context characterized by massive structural injustices, nor could this language capture the sense of immediacy that the situation demanded. Moreover, the very term "development" already had been captured by the hegemonic powers that were at work structuring the political economy of the West in the wake of the collapse of colonialism. It was "development" and "modernization," the world was told, that would bring redress to the injustices of colonialism.[17]

The developmentalist approach, as Gutiérrez asserts, was "synonymous with timid measures, really ineffective in the long run and counterproductive to achieving a real

15. Gutiérrez does not consider the possibility of an option for the earth in *A Theology of Liberation*. Indeed, there he tends to adopt an instrumentalist view of nature, uncritically appropriating the language of dominion/domination in Genesis 1 (Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* 168). In his more recent work, Gutiérrez has shifted his position, rejecting a purely instrumentalist view of nature and acknowledging the importance of caring for creation. On these points, see Gutiérrez, *The God of Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991) 118; and Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987) 74. In his commentary on *Rerum Novarum*, Gutiérrez also addresses the need for further theological reflection on the ecological crisis and its relationship to the crisis of material poverty. See Gutiérrez, "New Things Today: A Rereading of *Rerum Novarum*," in Gutiérrez, *The Density of the Present: Selected Writings* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999) 39–56 at 53–55.

16. Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, xxxviii.

17. See Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, 3rd ed. (New York: Zed, 2008) 47–108.

transformation."[18] In accordance with his view, Gutiérrez advocates for a social revolution: "Only a radical break from the status quo,"[19] that is, a paradigm shift away of the structures of developmentalism, would effect the requisite transformation. In Gutiérrez's view, the language of liberation best captures the urgency and dramatic nature of this break. As he explains, "Liberation in fact expresses the inescapable moment of radical change which is foreign to the ordinary use of the term *development*. Only in the context of such a process can a policy of development be effectively implemented, have any real meaning, and avoid misleading formulations."[20] Through the concept of integral liberation, then, Gutiérrez effects a radical denunciation of the development project.

The Epistemological Break

Gutiérrez's call for a paradigm shift away from the social order structured by developmentalism was rooted largely in his suspicions of the legitimacy claims of the project itself. As I have suggested, the validity of the development project rested largely on the assumption that it could correct the vast injustices wrought under colonialism. Its proponents asserted that developmentalism could in fact achieve this atonement through economic growth and technological development.[21] However, in adopting a critical social analysis of the development project, Gutiérrez and other liberationists argued that the project, in fact, served to perpetuate the sinful imbalances of the colonial era.[22]

Drawing on various critical social theories of the time, Gutiérrez argued that the development project, in fact, perpetuated underdevelopment in Latin America.[23] Thus, "the plausibility structures" of the development project were "obfuscation structures," aimed at obscuring the true face of developmentalism. Indeed, Gutiérrez

18. Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation* 17.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid. Emphasis is Gutiérrez's.
21. See Rist, *The History of Development* esp. 25–46. See also José María Sbert, "Progress," in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, 2nd ed., ed. Wolfgang Sachs (New York: Zed, 2010) 212–27; and Otto Ulrich, "Technology," in *The Development Dictionary* 308–22.
22. For example, see Jon Sobrino, "Five Hundred Years: Structural Sin and Structural Grace," in *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994) 69–82. See also Ignacio Ellacuría, "The Latin American Quincentenary: Discovery or Cover-up?" in *Ignacio Ellacuría: Essays on History, Liberation, and Salvation*, ed. with an intro. by Michael E. Lee (Maryknoll: Orbis: 2013) 27–38.
23. The most famous of these theories is the long-discredited theory of dependency, see André Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment," *Monthly Review* 18 (September 1966) 17–31. For Gutiérrez's most extensive reflection on the use of social analysis in the liberationist method, see "Theology and the Social Sciences," in *The Truth Shall Make You Free* 53–84.

found that the promises of development were an inversion of the truth.[24] Gutiérrez's call for a radical break in the social order maintained by the development project was, in part, reliant upon an "epistemological break" from the worldview constructed by hegemonic discourses.[25]

Here, of course, liberation theology is open to criticism. Its early appeal to "dependency theory" proved ill-advised as that theory was demonstrated to be overly simplistic in its analysis of the economic relationship between the global north and south.[26] Economic growth is not a zero-sum game. Nevertheless, the fact that there are weaknesses in this theory does not mean that the reality the theory sought to describe is also false.[27] Here, a historical reference is helpful.

Consider that it was actually US President Harry Truman who ushered in the era of developmentalism. In his inaugural address in 1949, often referred to as the "Four Point Speech," Truman lays out his vision for US foreign policy in the midst of the burgeoning Cold War with the Soviet Union. With the fourth point of his agenda

24. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* 16–22, 135–40. Gutiérrez's view has its roots in Karl Marx's concept of ideology. For a helpful overview of the dimensions of ideology and their relationship to those of utopia, see Paul Ricoeur, "Ideology and Utopia," in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1991) 300–16.
25. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* 19.
26. For an economist's critical evaluation of this theory see, Peter G. Moll, "Liberating Liberation Theology: Towards Independence from Dependency Theory," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 78 (1992) 25–40. Subsequent liberationist discourse has tended to draw a distinction between the theory of dependency, which needs to be abandoned, and the fact of dependency, which continues to characterize the death-dealing situation of poverty in the global south. See for example, Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989) esp. 164–76. Moreover, it should be noted that while dependency theory, as it was originally formulated by Gunder Frank, has been rejected, there is ongoing work in the field of sociology to rehabilitate the concept of dependency through a more nuanced theorization. Indeed, Gunder Frank's final published work attempts such a rehabilitation in a manner that is also sensitive to environmental concerns. See Frank, "Entropy Generation and Displacement: The Nineteenth-Century Multilateral Network of World Trade," in *The World System and the Earth System: Global Socioenvironmental Change and Sustainability Since the Neolithic*, ed. Alf Hornborg and Carole Crumley (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast, 2006). See also Alf Hornborg, *The Power of the Machine: Global Inequalities of Economy, Technology, and Environment* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2001).
27. Franz Hinkelammert has been perhaps the most steadfast voice in critiquing the disorders and obfuscations of contemporary global capitalism. See for example, Franz Hinkelammert, *The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986); "La Teología de la Liberación en el Context Economico-Social de America Latina: Economia y Teología o la Irracionalidad de lo Racionalizado," *Cristianismo y Sociedad* 32 (1994) 59–87; "Globalization as Cover-Up: An Ideology to Disguise and Justify Current Wrongs," in *Globalization and Its Victims*, ed. Jon Sobrino and Felix Wilfred (London: SCM, 2001) 25–34.

Truman proclaimed, "we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas." He continues in this vein, asserting,

> The United States is pre-eminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques. The material resources which we can afford to use for assistance of other peoples are limited. But our imponderable resources in technical knowledge are constantly growing and are inexhaustible. I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. And, in cooperation with other nations, we should foster capital investment in areas needing development.[28]

Truman's charge was soon echoed throughout the nominal First World with the United Nations proclaiming the 1960s "the decade of development."

Against this backdrop, it is noteworthy that in the year preceding Truman's grand and public call to "embark on a bold new program" of development, George Kennan, Truman's Undersecretary of State, authored a classified document in which he describes the goal of US foreign policy in the following manner:

> We have about 50% of the world's wealth but only 6.3% of its population. This disparity is particularly great as between ourselves and the peoples of Asia. In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. *Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity* without positive detriment to our national security . . . We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction.[29]

The dissonance between what Truman proclaimed publicly and what Kennan prescribed in secret is profound. It is the distance between these two claims that liberationists like Gutiérrez sought to expose through their engagement with critical social analysis. Indeed, they had good reason for seeking to do so, given the manner in which global economic disparity between the rich and the poor has not only been maintained but has increased from 35 to 1, to 72 to 1 in the last half of the 20th century.[30]

In sum, through the concept of integral liberation, Gutiérrez demonstrated the way in which the mystery of salvation was positively related to the process of liberation within the sociopolitical and cultural dimensions of human life. Furthermore, through his use of "liberation," Gutiérrez sought to emphasize both the magnitude and radicality of the transformation that Christian discipleship aimed to effect in society. Likewise, Gutiérrez's use of the language of liberation also functioned to resist the hegemonic

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28. Harry Truman, "Inaugural Address: January 20, 1949," *The American Presidency Project*, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13282.
29. See Section VII in "Review of Current Trends in U.S. Foreign Policy," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1948), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v01p2/d4. Emphasis is mine.
30. Cited in Leslie Sklair, *Globalization: Capitalism and its Alternatives* (New York: Oxford University, 2002) 48.

discourse of developmentalism, thereby protecting his critique from absorption. Finally, Gutiérrez's concept, particularly its use of the subversive language of liberation, relied upon critical social analysis aimed at specifying precisely why a radical transformation was required. I turn now to consider Francis's concept of integral ecology and the ways in which it aligns with Gutiérrez's concept.

Integral Ecology

"Ecology," the pope writes at one point in *LS*, "studies the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they develop" (*LS* 138). Although this definition is consistent with scientific approaches,[31] when Francis speaks of the need for an "integral ecology" he is referring to something that extends far beyond the normal disciplinary boundaries of the science of ecology. This is because, in Francis's view, the ecological cannot be separated from the social.[32] Thus, "ecology" when used in the term "integral ecology" is meant to signify the broader complex of eco-social relationships that order the world.[33] As Francis writes, "We are faced not with two separate

31. Consider Ernst Haeckel's classic definition: "By ecology we mean the body of knowledge concerning the economy of nature—the investigation of the total relations of the animal both to its inorganic and its organic environment; including, above all, its friendly and inimical relations with those plants and animals with which it comes directly or indirectly into contact—in a word ecology is the study of all those complex interrelations referred to by Darwin as the conditions of the struggle for existence." Cited in Robert C. Stauffer, "Haeckel, Darwin, and Ecology," *Quarterly Review of Biology* 32 (1957) 138–44 at 141.

32. On this point, Pope Francis's position aligns well with the emerging discourse of political ecology, which sees as interwoven the social and the ecological. For a helpful introduction to this field, see Paul Robbins, *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). See also Christiana Z. Peppard, "De-naturing Nature," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 63 (2010) 97–120, esp. 114–17.

33. Pope Francis's use of the term integral ecology, then, calls to mind the "*oikos* theologies" of some contemporary ecological theologians. As Ernst Conradie writes, "The root metaphor for this theology is the 'whole household of God.' Within such an '*oikos*' theology, the etymological link between economy and ecology . . . is usually emphasized. The discipline of economics reflects on appropriate laws or rules (*nomoi*) for the household. The science of ecology gathers knowledge on the 'logic' (*logos*) of the same household, that is, the incredibly intricate ways in which ecosystems interact to ensure the functioning of the biosphere. The earth, our planet, is indeed a single *oikos*." Conradie continues, observing, "The metaphor of the household of God is indeed able to integrate a variety of ecumenical social concerns, including a) the integrity of the biophysical foundations of this house (the earth's biosphere), b) the economic management of the household's affairs, c) the need for peace and reconciliation amidst ethnic, religious and domestic violence within this single household, d) a concern for issues of health and education, e) the place of women and children within this household, and f) an ecumenical sense of the unity not only of the church, but also of the human community as a whole, and all of God's creation, the whole inhabited world (*oikoumene*)." See Ernst M. Conradie, *An Ecological Anthropology: At Home on Earth* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005) 6–7.

crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental" (*LS* 139).

When the pontiff refers to "integral ecology," however, his aim is to be prescriptive rather than merely descriptive. In other words, when Francis calls for the development of an integral ecology, he is calling for the right ordering of the eco-social networks of the world so that they may best serve the common good (*LS* 23–26, 156–58). As I noted in the introduction, for Francis, an integral ecology must make manifest a preferential option for both the earth and the poor at every level of human life, while recognizing the interconnectedness of these two options. "Today," writes Francis, "we have to realize that a true ecological approach . . . must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*" (*LS* 49).[34] In the same vein, he maintains, "Strategies for a solution [to arrive at an integral ecology] demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature" (*LS* 139).

Moreover, Francis repeatedly asserts that the integral ecology for which he calls requires a personal and societal embrace of limitation, restraint, and humility (*LS* 11, 105, 177, 193, 204, 208, 223, 224). Even if it were to hear the cries of the earth and the poor, the pope finds, society cannot adequately respond to these cries through intensifying economic growth and control over the earth's ecosystems.[35] Correspondingly, through his reading of the signs of the times, Francis finds that the realization of an integral ecology demands a paradigm shift away from the politics, economics, and cultural formations that now structure the global system.[36] According to the pope, this global system is ordered by a "false or superficial ecology which bolsters complacency and a cheerful recklessness" (*LS* 59) in relation to the eco-social crisis.

In what follows I demonstrate how Francis's call for a *metanoia*—a total conversion—maps onto the levels of liberation delineated by Gutiérrez, while expanding the breadth of concern proper to integral liberation by also encompassing a preferential option for the earth.[37] I begin by considering the manner of Francis's denunciation of the status quo at the sociopolitical level.

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34. Italics original. It must also be noted that for Pope Francis, the cry of the poor also encompasses future generations of human persons who will inherit the legacy of human abuse of the earth. For example, the pope writes, "That is why the New Zealand bishops asked what the commandment 'Thou shall not kill' means when 'twenty percent of the world's population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive'" (*LS* 95).
35. On this point, see broadly chapter 3 of *LS*, "The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis."
36. In characterizing Francis's argument in this way, I am aligning the pope's position with a Latin American view of the option for the poor that emphasizes conversion. With regard to the distinct character of this emphasis, see Rohan M. Curnow, "Which Preferential Option for the Poor? A History of the Doctrine's Bifurcation," *Modern Theology* 31 (2015) 27–59.
37. As I underscore in the analysis below, for Pope Francis, as for Gutiérrez, these levels cannot be separated from one another. Instead, they are "reciprocally interpenetrating." Francis's own thought is perhaps most strongly influenced by the "teología del pueblo" which bears a number of affinities to liberation theology. The former is sometimes characterized as

The Sociopolitical Level of Integral Ecology

With regard to the sociopolitical dimension of human life, Francis is most concerned with the ways in which powers have structured the globalized political economy so as to privilege the maximization of short-term economic growth above all other considerations. As the pope laments, "The earth's resources are . . . being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production" (*LS* 32). Later, following similar lines, he writes,

> The economy accepts every advance in technology with a view to profit, without concern for its potentially negative impact on human beings. Finance overwhelms the real economy. The lessons of the global financial crisis have not been assimilated, and we are learning all too slowly the lessons of environmental deterioration. (*LS* 109)

That the lessons of the global financial crisis have not been assimilated speaks in part to the manner in which national and international political institutions, ostensibly charged with serving the common good, have been attenuated or captured by "the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule" (*LS* 56).[38] Against this backdrop, Francis decries the failure of the world's states and institutions to respond meaningfully to the ecological crisis. As the pope observes,

> It is remarkable how weak international political responses have been. The failure of global summits on the environment makes it plain that our politics are subject to technology and finance. There are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected. (*LS* 54)

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emphasizing the "cultural" over the "structural" dimension of society in a manner that, on this point, might contrast liberationist thought. Nonetheless, both theologies have emphasized the need for the preferential option for the poor, and with Gutiérrez the cultural dimension was of prime concern from the beginning. Furthermore, as I just noted, it is impossible to extricate the structural and cultural dimensions from one another. For a helpful introduction to the "teología del pueblo," see Juan Carlos Scannone, "Theology, Popular Culture, and Discernment," in *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979) 213–39. For an insightful theorization of the complex relationship between the structural and cultural, see William H. Sewell Jr., "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation," *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1992) 1–29.

38. In his classic essay on the future of the state in the era of globalization, Peter Evans argues that the state is unlikely to be eclipsed by transnational corporations. Nation-states will continue to exist, argues Evans. However, they will be placed increasingly at the service of corporate interests and less oriented toward safeguarding public goods. Evans's prescient analysis captures well the character of the still-unfolding neoliberal era. See Peter Evans, "The Eclipse of the State? Reflections on Stateness in an Era of Globalization," *World Politics* 50 (1997) 62–87.

He continues, "Consequently the most one can expect is superficial rhetoric, sporadic acts of philanthropy and perfunctory expressions of concern for the environment, whereas any genuine attempt by groups within society to introduce change is viewed as a nuisance based on romantic illusions or an obstacle to be circumvented" (*LS* 54).

These patchwork and superficial responses cannot attend adequately to the eco-social crisis. Moreover, according to Francis, they also fail specifically to redress the ecological debt that the global north owes the global south. As Francis writes, "A true 'ecological debt' exists . . . connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment, and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time" (*LS* 51). On this point Francis's analysis aligns well with that of sociologist Andrew Jorgenson, who argues, "Throughout human history, more powerful societies and nation-states have utilized their geopolitical-economic power to create and maintain ecologically unequal exchanges with less powerful and less developed societies and countries."[39] According to Jorgenson, the peripheral regions of the world are consistently coerced into functioning as both "environmental taps and sinks" for the powerful regions of the world. Along these lines, Jorgenson notes,

> With the continual globalization of trade, finance, and production of goods for core consumption comes the broadening and intensification of environmental destruction, *a form of ecological polarization in which the former colonies of the core absorb the environmental costs of natural resource extraction and consumption, many of which are spatially fixed*.[40]

In calling for an honest accounting of the ecological debt owed to the south by the north, the pope makes plain that the phenomenon of ecological polarization requires redress.

In short, for Francis, the structures of the contemporary globalization project have failed to respond helpfully to the complex eco-social crisis facing the world. Moreover, they appear ordered toward intensifying the problem. The structures of the globalization project must be transformed. However, for reasons I examine below, the structural dimension cannot be changed in any meaningful way unless the cultural/psychological dimension of the globalization project is also challenged and transformed.

The Cultural/Psychological Level of Integral Ecology

Early on in *LS*, Francis rejects two extreme positions as possible starting points for paths forward in responding to the global eco-social crisis (*LS* 60). The first position maintains that, by itself, technological advancement in the service of economic growth is capable of redressing this crisis. The second, and opposite, view holds that all human invention

39. Andrew K. Jorgenson, "Social Change, Natural Resource Consumption, and Environmental Degradation," in *Global Social Change: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Christopher Chase-Dunn and Salvatore J. Babones (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2006) 176–200 at 190.

40. Ibid. The italics are mine.

and intervention is irredeemably corrupt and only capable of worsening the crisis. While the latter position is certainly problematic, it is the former view that captures Francis's full attention. This is because the pope finds that the first of these two extremes has actually become the ideology through which the globalization project is structured. This is the ideology of what Francis refers to as "the technocratic paradigm."[41]

Central to this ideology is the belief "that every increase in power means 'an increase of "progress" itself' . . . as if reality, goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power as such" (*LS* 105). From this perspective, technological advancement in the service of economic growth is viewed as an end unto itself, inexorably producing the best of all possible worlds. Within this mindset, rationality is reduced to a form of instrumental reason that is solely intent upon generating advancement and growth as intensely and quickly as possible. Questions of social and environmental justice can be ignored because one assumes that technology and growth ultimately provide the proper answers. As a result, "Our capacity to make decisions, a more genuine freedom and the space for each one's alternative creativity are diminished" (*LS* 108).[42]

The pope also maintains that within the ideology of the technocratic paradigm, the earth is viewed in wholly desacralized terms. Nature is simply a mechanistic collection of atoms that exists to be rearranged and exploited in ever-more efficient and productive ways. "This," Francis writes, "has made it easy to accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology. It is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit" (*LS* 106). The ideology of the technocratic paradigm, in fact, rejects the possibility of limits and instead embraces a Promethean view of technological development aimed at "a lordship over all" (*LS* 108).

Closely allied with the ideology of the technocratic paradigm is the globalized culture of consumerism, which as Francis writes, "prioritizes short-term gain and private interest" (*LS* 184). Indeed, the pope finds, "Compulsive consumerism is an example of how the techno-economic paradigm affects individuals" (*LS* 203). If the technocratic paradigm leads the human person to fail to attend to the cries of the earth and poor by enclosing her within the iron cage of capitalism, then the culture of consumerism reinforces these attitudes by inducing indifference to these interrelated cries (*LS* 232). What emerges, then, is "an unethical consumerism bereft of social or ecological awareness" (*LS* 219).[43]

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41. On this issue see broadly *LS* chap. 3, "The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis."
42. Here, then, Francis's analysis recalls the Frankfurt School's concept of the "dialectic of the Enlightenment." See Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University, 2007). See also Tim Jackson, *Prosperity without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet* (London: Earthscan, 2009) 87–102.
43. Francis is also highly concerned that the culture of consumerism is destabilizing and degrading the world's diverse cultural heritage. He writes, "A consumerist vision of human

In order to understand why the culture of consumerism promotes indifference to the eco-social crisis, it is fruitful to consider Francis's position in view of the macro-social theory of Leslie Sklair. According to Sklair, the dramatic growth in advertising and communication technologies over the last century has allowed transnational corporations to create and promulgate the fictive persona of the consumer as the ideal person.[44] In describing this persona, Sklair writes, "the culture-ideology of consumerism proclaims, literally, that the meaning of life is to be found in the things that we possess. To consume, therefore, is to be fully alive, and to remain fully alive we must consume."[45] Here, then, one can discern why the culture of consumerism works to dampen any inclination toward a preferential option for the poor or the earth. Within the culture of consumerism, it is not concern for neighbor or care for creation that leads to a meaningful life but instead the incessant act of satisfying one's own (often artificial) needs. The culture of consumerism, then, disciplines unrelentingly the desires of the human person toward a disordered form of self-love. Thus, as Francis observes, "people can easily get caught up in a whirlwind of needless buying and spending" (*LS* 203).

Sklair's analysis is also helpful in conceptualizing the reciprocal relationship between the structural and cultural dimensions of society. Sklair observes that the ideal of person-as-consumer is essential to the life of global capitalism. This is because the functioning of the system is predicated upon continuous economic growth and it is the act of consumption that drives the process of accumulation: "Without consumerism, the rationale for continuous capitalist accumulation dissolves."[46] The culture of consumerism, then, is the "glue" that holds the structure of the system together.

Here, one can begin to grasp the immensity of the task of conversion to which Francis calls the world. Transforming the social structures of the globalization project is not just a matter of institutional or policy reform, it also requires a transformation of the normative value systems of the globalization project. Likewise, in attempting a conversion away from the Promethean ideology of the technocratic paradigm or the culture of consumerism, the person or community must contend with powerful political-economic agents that unceasingly endeavor to inculcate and reinscribe those very cultures and ideologies into the collective heart of the world.

Despite these difficulties, Francis finds, "An authentic humanity, calling for a new synthesis, seems to dwell in the midst of our technological culture, almost unnoticed, like a mist seeping gently beneath a closed door. Will the promise last, in spite of everything, with all that is authentic rising up in stubborn resistance?" (*LS* 112). Francis

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beings, encouraged by the mechanisms of today's globalized economy, has a leveling effect on cultures, diminishing the immense variety which is the heritage of all humanity" (*LS* 144). The pope makes clear that local cultures must be respected and that the rights of indigenous peoples must be prioritized when considering the merits of any type of development project (see *LS* 143–46).

44. Leslie Sklair, *Sociology of the Global-System* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1995) 47–48.
45. Ibid. 48.
46. Sklair, *Globalization* 116.

believes that there is indeed hope for an enduring conversion. However, the culture appropriate to an integral ecology "cannot be reduced to a series of urgent and partial responses to the immediate problems of pollution, environmental decay and the depletion of natural resources." Instead, something more comprehensive is required: "There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things . . . a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm. Otherwise, even the best ecological initiatives can find themselves caught up in the same globalized logic" (*LS* 111). This culture, if it is to endure, must issue forth from the deepest dimension of an integral view: the theological dimension.

The Theological Dimension

Francis avers that there is an urgent need for a conversion away from the ideology of the technocratic paradigm and the concomitant culture of consumerism. However, in a world in which immense economic and political powers are allied in an effort to perpetuate these ideological and cultural realities, the pope questions whether such a conversion can be effected in an enduring manner. How does the human person, or even more importantly any human community, steadfastly embrace a culture committed to making a preferential option for the earth and the poor?

With his critique of the hubristic technocratic paradigm in view, Francis observes, "It is not easy to promote [the necessary] healthy humility or happy sobriety" needed to bear witness to integral ecology. The pope maintains that this is especially true "when we consider ourselves autonomous, when we exclude God from our lives or replace him with our own ego, and think that our subjective feelings can define what is right and what is wrong" (*LS* 224). For Francis, then, the posture necessary for rightly ordering the household of the earth comes from understanding one's place in relationship to God. It is this understanding that serves as the ground from which a spirituality appropriate to, and generative of, integral ecology emerges.

In the second chapter of *LS* ("The Gospel of Creation") Francis most comprehensively discusses his theological vision. Here, I simply focus on what I take to be the central element of that vision. Early in the second chapter, Francis acknowledges that the term "dominion" (Gen 1:28), found in the first creation story of Genesis, has sometimes been used to encourage "the unbridled exploitation of nature" (*LS* 67).[47] The pontiff strongly rejects this understanding of dominion. As Francis writes, "This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church . . . we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over

47. There have been any number of attempts at clarifying this symbol with regard to ecological concern. For a thoroughgoing defense of Genesis 1:28, see Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture, Agriculture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2009) 42–65. For a somewhat more critical interpretation of the language of Genesis 1, see Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2010) 16–20.

the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures" (*LS* 67). In offering a vision to counter the distorted claims too often attached to dominion, the pope turns immediately to the key verse in Genesis's second story of creation.[48] There, Francis finds that the human vocation to "till and keep" the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15) more appropriately captures the character of the relationship that God desires for humanity to have with the earth. As the pope observes, while "tilling" refers to "cultivating," the term "'keeping' means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving" (*LS* 67). Thus, it is an ethic of care that properly characterizes the manner in which the human person is to act with regard to creation.

This ethic of care gains further complexity and theological density when one considers the manner in which Francis develops it through his reading of the story of Cain and Abel. Here, it is worth citing Francis at length:

> In the story of Cain and Abel, we see how envy led Cain to commit the ultimate injustice against his brother, which in turn ruptured the relationship between Cain and God, and between Cain and the earth from which he was banished. This is seen clearly in the dramatic exchange between God and Cain. God asks, "Where is Abel your brother?" Cain answers that he does not know, and God persists: "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground" (Gen 4:9–11). *Disregard for the duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with my neighbour, for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruins my relationship with my own self, with others, with God and with the earth*. When all these relationships are neglected, when justice no longer dwells in the land, the Bible tells us that life itself is endangered. (*LS* 70, italics are mine)

As Francis makes clear, the ethic of care to which God has called humanity does not define only the human–earth relationship, but also one's relationship to her neighbor. Indeed, these distinct relationships are tightly interwoven with each other—Abel's (presumed) cry is echoed by the cry the soil itself.

On Francis's reading, the human person is created by God to love God, love neighbor, and love nonhuman creation. Here, there is a threefold sense in which the human person is called to communion. Moreover, these three sets of relationships are so inextricably linked that the distortion of one echoes in the other two. Cain's murder of Abel leads him to flee both God and the soil. Thus, it can be argued that communion with God is realized through love of neighbor and love of soil. Likewise, in accord with Francis's vision, care for creation (both human and nonhuman) is most deeply rooted in love of God. It is a lifestyle and spirituality rooted in the love of God, then, that provides the human person with the firm ground out of which to cultivate a culture capable of bearing witness to an integral ecology at the cultural/psychological and sociopolitical levels.

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48. Claus Westermann maintains that Genesis 2:15 "is a decisive verse for the whole understanding of Gen 2–3." See Westermann, *Genesis 1–11* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985) 220.

Integral Ecology: A Liberationist Concept?

At this point, I am in a position to consider the ways in which the concept of integral ecology aligns with the concept of integral liberation. First, it should be observed that both Gutiérrez and Francis root their concepts in theological anthropologies that order their respective understanding of salvation. For Gutiérrez, love of God (which is always a response to the experience of God's love) is necessarily connected with love of neighbor. Indeed, as I have already observed, Gutiérrez emphasizes this connection in the strongest possible sense: love of God can only be expressed *through* love of neighbor. For Gutiérrez, salvation, which is the realization of communion-in-love with God, necessarily requires a solidaristic communion-in-love with neighbor. This is why, in a sinful situation of dehumanizing poverty and oppression, the (proleptic) experience of Christian salvation requires a radical transformation of the sociostructural and cultural realities that alienate humanity from itself.

Francis's theological anthropology broadens the dimensions of properly ordered human love. According to Francis, love of God is expressed through both love of neighbor and through love of nonhuman creation. While the pope does not express the connectedness of these loves as forcefully as Gutiérrez does, there can be no doubt that, in the pontiff's eyes, these three loves are inextricably interlinked with each other. Thus, Francis's vision implies that a Christian vision of salvation requires the realization of communion-in-love with both neighbor and earth. The pope's call for the realization of an integral ecology, then, is an invitation to enter into the Christian mystery of salvation.

This call, as I have shown, mirrors Gutiérrez's in terms of its radical denunciation of the status quo at both the structural and cultural levels of society. For Francis, the social structures of the globalized world have created massive economic disparity and ecological degradation. Moreover, these structures perpetuate an unequal ecological exchange at the global level, resulting in an unpaid ecological debt owed to the south by the north. Even further, the social structures of the globalization project continue to reinforce and intensify these phenomena by emphasizing economic growth and technological fixes as the primary means to establish eco-social justice. However, as I have observed, these "fixes" appear to benefit disproportionately the wealthy. This order, therefore, stands in stark contrast to integral ecology, which prioritizes making a preferential option for both the earth and the poor.

Furthermore, Francis echoes Gutiérrez's call for a cultural revolution away from the dominant ideologies of the time. Whereas Gutiérrez rejected the specter of the one-dimensional man, Francis calls for a radical break from the ideology of the technocratic paradigm and the concomitant culture of consumerism. Indeed, for Francis these latter two phenomena only work to reinforce "a false or superficial ecology" which deadens one's senses to the cries of the earth and poor, and "bolsters complacency and a cheerful recklessness" (*LS* 59). Thus, in his use of the language of liberation Francis's call takes on the immediacy of Gutiérrez's own exhortation for *metanoia*.

Francis's call for the realization of an integral ecology that is capable of adequately hearing and responding to the cries of the earth and poor is nothing less than an

exhortation for dramatic paradigm shifts within the structural and cultural dimensions of the globalization project. Indeed, since the structural and cultural dimensions of society are recursive, the implications of Francis's call for a bold cultural revolution extend far beyond the realm of culture. Simply put, in calling for an integral ecology, Francis is calling for the radical conversion of the entire global system.

All of this closely aligns the concept of integral ecology with the concept of integral liberation. However, a notable difference arises when these two pastoral thinkers turn to announce the new order that is to come. As I have noted, in *A Theology of Liberation* Gutiérrez ties his denunciation of developmentalism closely to the annunciation of a socialist society that would redress the economic injustices of the colonial and development projects.[49] There is a clear definition to the historical project that Gutiérrez announces. In contrast, while Francis offers a number of strategies for moving forward, his act of annunciation is characterized, most fundamentally, by a call for dialogue in order to determine how best to incarnate an integral ecology. The shape of the historical project that Francis announces is considerably less defined than that announced by Gutiérrez in the early 1970s.[50]

Nonetheless, this move by Francis actually draws him closer to the position of contemporary liberationists, who no longer have a clear alternative to global capitalism to which they can ally themselves. In light of this reality, Ivan Petrella argues that liberation theology must continue the difficult work of clarifying precisely how the preferential option for the poor is to be realized within the contemporary world.[51] This need not entail a wholesale rejection of capitalism, Petrella maintains, but instead can elucidate the structural changes that can be operationalized within a market economy in order to respond effectively to the cry of the poor.[52] In effect, then, Francis's call for dialogue places him in league with contemporary liberationists who have a clear sense of the enormities of the global system and continue to work to discern practical paths toward social and cultural transformation. An urgent call for dialogue is indeed necessary.

However, it is precisely within this moment of dialogue that it is most vital to connect Francis's thought with liberationist methodology. This is because there is a danger that, in dialogue, the forces perpetuating the "false or superficial ecology" that Francis decries can simply absorb the concept of integral ecology into their own hegemonic discourse. This would result in the concept of integral ecology coming to be identified with the very reality that Francis denounces. In light of this danger, it is necessary to adopt a liberationist hermeneutic of suspicion when entering into this dialogue: one that is capable of clarifying the nature and the terms of the false ecology that Francis rejects.

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49. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* 17.
50. Francis does, of course, offer a number of guidelines to help frame the dialogue for which he calls; see chap. 5 "Lines of Approach and Action."
51. Ivan Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology: A Manifesto* (London: SCM, 2006) esp. 1–23.
52. Ibid. esp. 93–120. See also Petrella's critique of traditional liberationist appraisals of capitalism in *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic* (London: SCM, 2008) 100–104.

Integral Ecology and Sustainable Development: Non-Identifiable Terms

In light of the foregoing analysis of the concept of integral ecology, it may be tempting for some to conceive of Pope Francis's term as a sort of theological equivalent to the ubiquitous secular term "sustainable development." This identification, however, is highly problematic. Indeed, it risks evacuating the concept of integral ecology of the meaning that the pope intends. This is because "sustainable development," as it has come to be appropriated into public discourse, now appears both to signify and legitimize the "false or superficial ecology" that Pope Francis condemns for bolstering "complacency and a cheerful recklessness."

The term "sustainable development" entered into public discourse with the publication of the Gro Brundtland's United Nations-commissioned report, *Our Common Future*.[53] The Brundtland Report sought to analyze the tensions between economic growth and ecological sustainability in order to help chart a way forward amidst these tensions. The report acknowledges that "painful choices have to be made" in order to respond effectively to the crises of both underdevelopment and ecological degradation.[54] With this acknowledgment, *Our Common Future* calls for a movement toward "sustainable development," which it defines as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[55]

As numerous commentators have observed, this definition is highly ambiguous.[56] Indeed, Gilbert Rist asserts that it is the very ambiguity of the term that has allowed for its success.[57] In demonstrating this vagueness, Rist observes that from one perspective sustainable development can be interpreted as referring to "a production level that can be borne by the ecosystem, and can therefore be kept up over the long term; reproduction capacity determines production volume, and 'sustainability' means that the process can be maintained only under certain externally given conditions."[58] In other words, from this perspective, the emphasis is placed on the need for production to respect the "planetary boundaries" of Earth.[59]

From another perspective, however, sustainable development comes to be interpreted in a manner that yields dramatically different results. According to Rist, this latter perspective presupposes that economic growth is *necessary* for meeting the needs of the present and future. Therefore, priority is placed on sustaining economic

53. Gro Harlem Brundtland, ed., *Our Common Future: The World Commission on Environment and Development* (1987), http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf.
54. Ibid. 3.30.
55. Ibid. 3.27.
56. For example, Herman Daly writes, "While not vacuous . . . this definition was sufficiently vague to allow for a broad consensus." See Daly, *Beyond Growth: The Economics of Sustainable Development* (Boston: Beacon, 1996) 2.
57. Rist, *The History of Development* 178–96.
58. Ibid. 192.
59. On the concept of planetary boundaries, see Johan Rockström et al., "A Safe Operating Space for Humanity," *Nature* 461 (2009) 472–75.

growth versus sustaining the resiliency capacity of the planet. Here, concern over the negative ecological impacts of growth is subordinated to the growth imperative. On this interpretation of the term, writes Rist, "It is not the survival of the ecosystem which sets the limits of 'development,' but 'development' which determines the survival of societies."[60] Rist concludes, "The two interpretations are at once legitimate and contradictory, since two antinomic signifieds correspond to the same signifier."[61]

The conceptual vagueness of the term "sustainable development" allowed for a consensus to emerge in support of it. However, for the reasons just considered, this consensus was illusory. Within public discourse, those who appealed to sustainable development called for different and even contradictory goals. Thus, according to Sklair, the concept of sustainable development came to be "seen as a prize that everyone involved in these arguments wanted to win."[62] The winner, of course, would get to determine the concept's *functional* definition.[63]

For their part, both Sklair and Rist suspect that it is the latter interpretation of sustainable development that has won out. Indeed, Rist suggests that, from the very outset, the Brundtland Report stacked the odds in the favor of the second position. Reflecting on the report, he writes,

> Although it recognizes that "painful choices have to be made," the Commission hardly proposes anything that would encourage the industrial countries to make basic changes in their consumption pattern; for them, too, it envisages annual growth of 3 to 4 per cent, so as to assure expansion of the world economy and an upturn in the "developing" countries.[64]

Thus, the prospect of harsh choices is deferred by the recommendation that a "business as usual" approach be adopted.

Michael Goldman's study of the World Bank confirms the suspicions of Rist and Sklair.[65] The World Bank is a particularly important institution to analyze in this discussion because, as Goldman argues, the Bank is the world's leading producer of environmental knowledge.[66] It, therefore, has been able to exert unique influence in determining what qualifies as "sustainable development" within the globalized political economy.[67] It is particularly notable, then, to find that the Brundtland Report's

60. Rist, *The History of Development* 193.
61. Ibid.
62. Leslie Sklair, *The Transnational Capitalist Class* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) 200.
63. Ibid.
64. Rist, *The History of Development* 185.
65. Michael Goldman, *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and the Struggle for Justice in the Age of Globalization* (New Haven: Yale University, 2005).
66. Goldman, *Imperial Nature* 100–80.
67. This is not to suggest, writes Goldman, "that the world is run by the World Bank president, but rather that the global political economy has at its core a set of elite power networks in whose reproduction the World Bank is deeply embedded." Ibid. 12. Similarly, Sklair focuses on the manner in which the "transnational capitalist class" (TCC) functions to

early acknowledgment that sustainable development would require painful decisions is lost altogether in the Bank's discourse.

According to Goldman, the Bank's production of environmental knowledge, in contrast to the Brundtland Report's admission, aims to substantiate "win-win" prospects for economic growth and ecological stability even as the Bank's economists are dubious of this possibility. In other words, the Bank has adopted the public position that economic growth is itself environmentally beneficial. As one environmental unit economist working for the bank told Goldman,

> When authors of *WDR* '92 [the highly influential 1992 *World Development Report* that featured the environment] were drafting the report, they called me asking for examples of "win-win" strategies in my work. What could I say? None exists in that pure form; there are tradeoffs, not "win-wins." But they want to see a world of win-wins, based on articles of faith, not fact. I wanted to contribute because *WDR*s are important in the Bank, [because] task managers read [them] to find philosophical justifications for their latest round of projects. But they didn't want to hear about how things really are, or what I find in my work . . .[68]

Here, the economist's observations attest to the fact that the Bank's policies (1) ignore the tension between sustaining economic growth and redressing ecological abuse, and (2) appear to be based on an ideological presupposition that departs from reality.

Indeed, much of Goldman's study elucidates the manner in which the organizational structure of the Bank dampens the possibility of any internal critique of the Bank's ideology. On this point Goldman's interview with the renowned ecological economist Herman Daly, who worked for the Bank from 1988 through 1994, is illuminating. As Daly reflects,

> Since the Bank pushes the concept that affluence through development is good for the environment, it's not possible to make a peep about how this might not be true. A few of us tried to get that point across in *World Development Report, 1992* but they would not allow it—not even a couple of pages. We even tried to publish a "minority opinion" as a separate document, with two Nobel prize winners as main contributors, but the Bank's censors in External Affairs wouldn't accept it. The Bank is a tough place to discuss different ideas.[69]

As Daly's comments make plain, within the Bank, sustainable development has come to be identified with sustained economic growth. This identification, in turn, allows for the continued legitimization of the very structures and ideologies of the globalization project that Francis decries.

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reproduce these same networks of power. Sklair finds that the TCC has co-opted environmental discourse in order to place environmentalism in the service of economic growth (Sklair, *The Transnational Capitalist Class* 198–254).

68. Goldman, *Imperial Nature* 128.
69. Ibid. 143.

In reflecting on the manner in which the concept of sustainable development has been captured by forces aimed at ensuring continuous growth, Rist comments,

> From this angle, "sustainable development" looks like a cover-up operation: it allays the fears aroused by the effects of economic growth, so that any radical challenge can be averted. Even if the bait is alluring, there should be no illusion about what is going on. The thing that is meant to be sustained really is "development," not the tolerance capacity of the ecosystem or of human societies.[70]

In Rist's view, then, the architects of the globalization project have effected the same type of ideological inversion that liberationists saw at work in the development project. Likewise, it appears that the concept of sustainable development functions as the chief obfuscating structure within the "false ecology" that Pope Francis rejects. From this perspective, then, the pope's call for the development of an integral ecology is not to be understood as the affirmation of the need for sustainable development. Instead, with the concept of integral ecology, the pope is calling for a radical conversion away from "sustainable development" and the paradigm that it functions to maintain.[71]

Conclusion

With the concept of integral liberation, Gutiérrez issues an urgent exhortation for the conversion of the Church to the side of the poor. His appeal, which he roots in the gospel, calls for the radical transformation of the sociopolitical and cultural dimensions of society, and casts a critical eye on attempts to obfuscate or justify the scandalous injustices perpetuated by the status quo. In *LS*, Pope Francis articulates his own denunciations of the structural and cultural dimensions of the contemporary global system that parallel those of Gutiérrez, while also impelling persons throughout the world to hear the "cry of the earth."

Francis's couples his sharp denunciations of the structural and cultural dimensions of the global system with an urgent call for dialogue to consider "comprehensive solutions" to the eco-social crisis facing the world. In the midst of any discussion regarding new ways forward, however, it is of paramount importance to focus and extend Francis's own suspicions about the presence of a "false or superficial ecology" ordering the world today. By exposing the superficiality of this ecology, women and men of goodwill can better discern the false paths that are to be avoided while searching for genuine solutions. For this reason, it is vital to cultivate a liberationist hermeneutic of suspicion, even in the midst of dialogue.

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70. Rist, *The History of Development* 194.
71. To be clear, I am not suggesting that Francis is calling for a rejection of all forms of development. Instead, I am arguing that Francis's appeal for an integral ecology must be understood as a rejection of the dominant conception of sustainable development, one that serves to perpetuate ecological degradation and asymmetric growth.

One should be particularly wary, I have argued, of identifying the concept of integral ecology with "sustainable development" as it operates in contemporary public discourse. To paraphrase Pope Paul VI, today it appears that sustainable development has become "the new name for peace" (*PP* 76). However, for the reasons I have given, Francis's call for an integral ecology is not an endorsement of sustainable development. Instead, the pope's call should be heard as both prophetic reprimand and lament, one that echoes Jesus' own cry when facing Jerusalem: "If this day you only knew what makes for peace!" (Luke 19:42, NAB). Francis's challenge, then, to every person on the planet, but especially to those committed to following the way of Jesus, is to come to know the things that make for peace and, in so doing, work toward an integral ecology, which is nothing less than a witness to salvation.

Author biography

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