

Thesis Title Contribution of Paul's Theology on Poverty for a Philosophical
 Reflection on Economic Poverty in the Modern World

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Abstract

Economic poverty in the modern world takes various concrete forms, but always in the social and political context of either of the two predominant economic systems of Capitalism and Socialism. As such, it could not be studied as if it were a separate issue from all other aspects of the human life. Economic activity presents itself as one of the most fundamental factors that model other superstructures of the existential condition of man, particularly the worldview and ethical judgment of reality. This does not mean a second to the view of dialectic materialism of Marx. It simply means an acceptance of the importance and relevance of the economic problem in the philosophical reflection on the realization of the person.

Poverty as the dialectic of economic prosperity is studied in this holistic view of the human person. In other words, economic life of a person becomes a function of self-realization. It means that its validity depends on whether it could contribute or not to self-realization, and at the same time, only self-realization through economic prosperity is the true solution to human poverty.

In this study, to tackling such a relevant problem as economic poverty in the modern world, the researcher makes use of two complementary methodology: analytical and critical functioning as the basis for a philosophical reflection on the problem of poverty. Specifically, the object of this study is the model of economic development. The first two models are the existing Capitalist and Socialist. Systems these two models are analyzed in the internal contradictions they present and the vicious consequences they originate: the perpetuation of poverty against their claim of liberation from needs. In fact, against the claim of being models of economic

development whose finality is prosperity for all, both models either preserve the *status quo* of the rich or transfer the rich class to another group, while the general population remain as poor as or even poorer than before.

Then two other new ideal models are presented for a critical study. First, the Functional Model of Herbert Gans, introduces the functional analysis of poverty to point out the positive function of poverty in human society. Four functions are discussed, namely economic, social, cultural, and political. In other words, the reality of economic poverty is not totally evil. Many of these functions, though idealistic, are verifiable in practice. The other model is the Personal Model, also an ideal model. In this model, the directive principle is delegated to the principle of the centrality of the person, and the ethical values that penetrate the economic laws of development are solidarity and justice. These two models are ideal in as much as they are not concrete models of economic development. They only state the ideal of what economic development should be.

The study of the four models and the findings are as follows:

- 1) Analysis of Social Teaching of the Church (Chapter II), in which the criticism of Socialism, especially on its opposition to private property (ownership) lead to the identification of personal values to be safeguarded in all economic systems. The result of this analysis is the emergence of three important idealistic concepts: Person, Solidarity, and Justice. In this way, two models are analyzed: the Socialist and the Personal Model. The first is an actual model, while the latter is ideal. Against the socialist claim of terrestrial Messiahism, the Personal model makes a criticism of its internal contradiction.
- 2) Analysis of Paul's thought on society and poverty (Chapter III) leads to the discovery and understanding of the source of the Church teaching, and help the researcher focus more correctly at the right point in the ideal model, namely at the person and his/her self-realization. From this analysis, what clearly emerges is the eschatological vision of human destiny that penetrates all human activity. The greatest contribution from Paul is exactly the way he

actualized the salvation history perspective in his worldview, especially in his view on poverty. The discovery of biblical poverty opens up new vision that sees, now still a-thematically, the positivity of poverty.

- 3) The critical study of two models in Chapter IV, the Functional Model of Poverty by Herbert Gans and the Personal Model of the Teaching of the Church, again, help better conceptualize the dialectic between the reality and the ideal. The reality of poverty is seen in a new thematic light by Herbert Gans in its four positive functions for the society. The same reality is seen once again in the light of the centrality of the person, the values of solidarity and justice. The important finding in this chapter is therefore the move towards conscious conception of the economic poverty in the worldview of the person.
- 4) The conclusive chapter (Chapter V) is a philosophical reflection based on the analytical and critical study made on the three models. In this chapter, the fourth model, the actual one, is analyzed to complete the picture: Capitalism. It seems so far that this model has never been questioned. In this chapter, its internal contradiction is briefly presented, just sufficiently enough to prove the necessity of a new model based on the ideal of the Personal model.

We conclude our study by proposing principles and ethical values that should become a guiding principle of a new alternative to the two existing model of economic development: the centrality of the person, solidarity, and justice. The new model should give appropriate weight to the dialectic of the Personal Model and the economic laws of development. What it is intended to affirm is that economic poverty is not solved by only ethical laws, nor by only economic laws, but by an appropriate integration of the two. The ethical laws and values direct and govern transcendently all human activity including economics. However, economic activity has its own laws. The transcendental relation between the two should inspire the reinvention of an alternative model of the economic development that totally liberate man from bondage to prepare for the auto-realization of the person.

The researcher finds the relevance of this type of study in how the specificity of a religious view on a reality could contribute to the philosophical reflection of that same reality. This becomes more evident if one considers the fact that a philosophical reflection always claims the universality of its assertion, while a religious view is more often accepted by its followers. An attempt such as in this study to give a universal impact of a religious view through a philosophical reflection is therefore a contribution that the researcher wishes to share.

Further research is needed to form an actual model of economic development. In this regard, the researcher sees that economic poverty is an anthropological problem that requires a holistic view of the person to be able to find a valid solution. It, therefore, requires an inter-disciplinary study on economic life, and the researcher suggests that philosophical reflections and social sciences should work out together a workable economic model that guarantee not only economic prosperity for all, but also economic prosperity at the service of the whole human person. To conclude, the human person is the finality of all social institutions of man.

