

PREFACE

This book is written with the hope of expanding popular understanding of the global structures of domination and the possibilities for a social transformation that would be the foundation for a more just world. In seeking to raise the consciousness of the English-speaking peoples of the North, I especially am focused on the people of the United States, who historically and culturally are many peoples, but who must become a united people in political practice, in order to take control of the political, economic, and cultural institutions of the nation to which all pertain.

The book does not conform to the bureaucratic academic structures that separate the disciplines of philosophy, history, economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology, thus fragmenting what would be a unified philosophical historical social science, if understanding were the highest goal. Rather, it is based on the reading of academics who were formed in various disciplines, as well as on intellectuals and movement leaders. Nor does it conform to a concept of objectivity in which the “researcher” ought to try to bracket values and to give an impression of detached neutrality, not appearing to take sides in social conflicts. To the contrary, the book is the result of sustained encounter with the movements formed by the colonized and neocolonized peoples of the world, in which the insights of past and present movement leaders and intellectuals are taken seriously as a foundation for understanding.

Accordingly, the book is interdisciplinary, and it is written from below. Rather than analyzing leaders and movements from a theoretical perspective, it draws upon the speeches and writings of Third World charismatic

leaders to formulate a theoretical understanding. It reflects the dialectical relation between theory and practice, for its insights have emerged from encounter with and participation in the political practice of the neocolonized peoples, and it calls for an alternative political practice of the peoples of the North, based on these insights.

The book reflects my own evolution. As the grandson of Irish and Italian immigrants to the USA, and growing up in a middle-class suburb of Philadelphia, my initial formation was shaped by the prevailing liberal-conservative consensus of the USA. However, as a student at Penn State in the late 1960s, I was influenced by the student/anti-war and black power movements. In my subsequent master's degree study at the Center for Inner City Studies in Chicago from 1970 to 1972, I encountered a colonial analysis of the modern world from the vantage point of the colonized, formulated by African-American and African professors who had earned degrees in political science, history, and anthropology. I could not possibly have overlooked the fundamental difference in assumptions and analysis between black thought and mainstream social science. I wondered if an objective analysis of society were possible, or if understanding necessarily and unavoidably is limited by social position.

I pursued this epistemological question in a doctoral program in sociology at Fordham University. Father Joseph Fitzpatrick and his philosopher colleague Father Gerald McCool introduced me to the work of the philosopher Bernard Lonergan. In two important epistemological works, *Insight* (published in 1958) and *Method in Theology* (1973), the eminent Jesuit scholar maintained that an objective understanding is possible, insofar as we place the desire to understand above other desires, and insofar as we move beyond the limitations of our socially grounded horizons through a process of encounter with persons of other horizons. In personal encounter, we take seriously the insights of others, which enable us to discover relevant questions that previously were beyond our consciousness. If we are committed to the desire to know above all other desires, we permit these new questions to lead us toward a reformulation of our understanding, until we arrive to the point that our reformulated understanding makes sense to persons of the other horizon.

Synthesizing Lonergan's cognitional theory with my previous encounter with African-American and African thought, I arrived to the epistemological method of cross-horizon encounter. The method is based on three premises. (1) Understanding of social dynamics, transcending the limits of social position, emerges through encounter with persons of other horizons, where encounter involves taking seriously the insights

of the other and permitting them to stimulate the discovery of relevant questions, leading to a reformulation of one's own understanding. (2) Inasmuch as the dominated and exploited understand the system of domination and exploitation more profoundly than the dominators and exploiters, the process of encounter must include personal encounter with those sectors of society that are dominated, exploited, and marginalized. (3) Encounter must give special attention to the social movements that have been formed by the dominated and exploited, because the social movements express in the clearest and most penetrating form their understandings, values, and aspirations.

In a subsequent study of Marx, I arrived to understand that Marx implicitly followed the method of cross-horizon encounter. Having been formed in the tradition of German philosophy and German radicalism, Marx, after moving to Paris in October 1842, encountered the movement constituted by Parisian workers, artisans, and intellectuals, many of whom had studied idealist socialism. At the same time, Marx obsessively studied the British science of political economy. By 1844, Marx was beginning to write an analysis of human history and of modern capitalism that was based on a synthesis of German philosophy and British political economy, formulated from below, from the point of view of the worker.

In my subsequent study of the work of Immanuel Wallerstein, I came to appreciate that Wallerstein did something similar to Marx on a scale that transcended Europe. He encountered the African nationalist movement during the 1950s and 1960s, which enabled him to understand that African nationalists looked at the world from the vantage point of the colonized and "the colonial situation." Wallerstein's encounter with African nationalism enabled him to arrive to the insight that the Western social scientific assumption of the "society" as the unit of analysis was dysfunctional for understanding, and that historians and social scientists ought to take the "world-system" as the object of their investigation. He proceeded to investigate the historical development of the modern world-system, beginning in the sixteenth century. His work established the foundation for understanding the colonial foundations of the modern world-system, consistent with the vantage point of the colonized.

Since my first encounter with the African-American movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I have been guided by the method of personal encounter, seeking to understand the insights of movement leaders and intellectuals of the colonized and neocolonized. This has included

years of direct and personal encounter in Cuba and Honduras, as well as the study of revolutions and the discourses of revolutionary leaders in a variety of lands, including Tanzania, Kenya, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Russia, Haiti, Mexico, and Chile. My orientation has been to seek understanding by taking seriously the insights of past and present Third World leaders and intellectuals, whose cultural and political formation was shaped by the movements that had lifted them up. The understanding that I acquired through this process provided the foundation for writing this book.

The method of cross-horizon encounter establishes the possibility for overcoming the fundamental difference in perspective between the peoples of the global North and South. In the North, as a result of a psychological need for unawareness of the roots of material privileges in domination and exploitation, there is insufficient awareness of colonialism and neocolonialism. In contrast, in the South, the human desire for social justice has given rise to social movements and to the emergence of revolutionary leaders that have educated the people toward consciousness of the structures of colonialism and neocolonialism. In the North, what may be called the “colonial denial” abounds, an infirmity that infects even progressive and reformist movements; whereas in the South, “colonial analysis” prevails, as political leaders and intellectuals continually name the colonial and neocolonial structures of domination that are the foundation of their underdevelopment and impoverishment. In the Third World, not only do the people have consciousness of the processes and structures of colonialism and neocolonialism, but also they consider it their duty to remember them.

The difference between the understandings of social scientists, historians, commentators, and philosophers of the North and those of the Third World is not merely a difference of opinion or points of view. The opinions of the former have been shaped for the most part by a denial of the importance of colonialism, thus ignoring a host of questions relevant to fundamental historical and contemporary facts. Colonial analysis, on the other hand, is rooted in the common experience among Third World peoples of colonialism and neocolonialism, but in addition, it has been shaped by encounter with the various social and philosophical perspectives of the modern world, including the principal currents of thought and social movements of the North. The points of view of the global South and North are not merely different; they are of unequal validity. The perspective of Northern social scientists and historians overlooks

relevant questions, whereas the Third World perspective is rooted in an engagement with relevant questions. In the North, the prevailing perspective functions as an unwitting legitimization of neocolonial structures of domination, but in the Third World, leaders and intellectuals are on the road to a universal understanding that is integrally tied to human emancipation.

Cross-horizon encounter engages and takes seriously the integral and comprehensive understanding, rooted in political practices, that has been emerging in the Third World for the last two hundred years, and that has acquired a renewed vitality during the last twenty years. For intellectuals and activists of the North, the method of cross-horizon encounter is necessary for an understanding beyond ethnocentrism. It is a moral duty in the present historical epoch, in which the neocolonial world-system increasingly demonstrates its unsustainability and increasingly shows signs of a new form of fascism as it discovers its incapacity to resolve its contradictions, problems, and dilemmas.

The method of cross-horizon encounter is a Marxist epistemological method. It affirms the Marxist concept of the dialectical relation between theory and practice, in which theory emerges from revolutionary practice. But in our time, the revolutionary subject is not the same as in the time of Marx. During the course of the twentieth century, and in the first decades of the twenty-first, the dialectical movement between theory and practice has been unfolding in the Third World. The revolutionary leaders of the Third World have been implicitly developing Marxist theory in their speeches and writings, which they formulated in a context of revolutionary practice. Such revolutionary leaders include Mao, Ho, Sukarno, Fidel, Nasser, Nyerere, Allende, Daniel Ortega, Chávez, Evo, Rafael Correa, among others. They have possessed insights into the global structures of domination as well as the potentialities for human emancipation. They were great synthesizers, drawing upon their own cultural and political traditions, yet incorporating the principal values of the bourgeois revolutions of the late eighteenth century and the later socialist and communist movements and revolutions, and with the emergence of new movements, incorporating the insights of women, the defenders of the nature, and the original peoples. Accordingly, they have been pointing the way to a universal human understanding of human history and social dynamics, transcending the colonial divide.

In writing this book, I have selected what I take to be the basic dimensions necessary for appreciation of the significance of the Third World

revolutionary project of national and social liberation. With respect to Cuba, these dimensions include the seeking of political power by the Cuban Revolution from 1868 to 1959; the evolving effort to transform neocolonial structures by the revolution in power, from 1959 to the present; and the structures of popular democracy, developed as an alternative to the increasingly discredited structures of representative democracy. With respect to the world-system, these dimensions include: the historic development of the structures of colonial and neocolonial domination of the world-system; the sustained structural crisis of the world-system, from the 1970s to the present; the incapacity of the global elite to respond to the crisis; the Third World project of national and social liberation, including its renewal since 1994; and the recent emergence of four Latin American nations that have declared themselves socialist. Reflecting on these fundamental historical and social facts, I include a chapter on the possibility for popular democratic socialist revolutions in the nations of the North. In addition, I include an appendix on the rise of Trump, whose election demonstrates the inability of the neocolonial world-system to resolve its contradictions and the incapacity of the US Left to offer an alternative to the people.

The book is comprehensive, and it has a hopeful interpretation. Such characteristics are standard fare in Cuba and among Latin American intellectuals and leaders of the Left. There are, to be sure, certain themes that have my own particular stamp: my formulation of the epistemological method of cross-horizon encounter, pointing to a universal understanding; my reliance on Wallerstein to describe the history of the world-system; and my reflections on the possibilities for socialism in the North. They reflect the fact that I am not Cuban, but a North American living in and committed to socialist Cuba. But the book's interpretations of Cuba, the Third World, Latin America, and the global crisis are very much in accord with the Cuban perspective, and they have been formed by sustained encounter with the Cuban revolutionary project.

The book narrates a story, a grand narrative that interprets human history and projects a possible future for humanity, and that sees the Cuban Revolution as central to this unfolding world historical drama. It is fashionable today to reject grand narratives as inherently partial and as not emancipatory. But the Cuban Revolution and other triumphant popular revolutions in Latin America demonstrate the necessity of grand narratives for mobilizing the people in defense of human needs, against amoral and concentrated forces that use enormous power in defense of particular interests.

The Cuban Revolution, above all, has demonstrated that the taking and holding of power by the people is possible. In the period 1958 to 1961, the Cuban Revolution took political power from the national bourgeoisie and the political elite, both of which were subordinate to US capital; it subsequently put power in the hands of delegates of the people, through the development of alternative political structures of popular power and popular democracy. From the fundamental fact of power in the hands of the people, other things follow: an excellent and free health care system; free education at all levels; high quality television news coverage, free of the ideological distortions of the major international news media; a dignified foreign policy and high-quality discourses at international fora, free of diplomatic claptrap; a public discourse that is knowledgeable and committed to universal human values; the legitimacy of the political system; safety in the streets; and many others things. They all imply a high quality of life, even if this high quality of life, when compared to the societies of the North, occurs at a relatively low material level. The emphasis is on spiritual rewards: a sense of meaning and self-satisfaction that comes from making personal, even if modest, contributions to a dignified national project.

In the late 1960s, we youthful protestors in the USA, with anger at hypocrisy and with hope for the future of humanity, proclaimed “Power to the people!”, a call that is as old as the nation itself. All of these years and experiences later, it seems to me a good idea, a possible idea, and a necessary idea.

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The Evolution and Significance of the Cuban Revolution

The Light in the Darkness

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