

From Dependency to Globalization

A Changed Context for Liberation Theology

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A Critical Appraisal of Dependency Theory

Dependency theory has received a barrage of criticisms since the 1970s. Alvin So summarized and categorized the results of these criticisms into three headings, namely: the methodology, the concept of dependency and the policy implications of dependency theory.¹

The methodology. Dependency theory came into existence as a critique of the failure of the modernization theory. In the eyes of dependency theorists, modernization theorists simply justified the continued exploitation of the periphery by the center. Exponents of the modernization theory meanwhile accused *dependentistas* of being unscientific. According to them, their methodological analysis lacked the scientific rigor and scholarship that befitted a truly scientific work. Their work is an exercise in rhetoric and pamphleteering if not a “propaganda fragment of Marxist revolutionary ideology.”² As a result “instead of providing a scientific analysis of what has actually happened in Third World countries, the concept of dependency has become an all-purpose explanation for everything that is wrong with Third World countries.”³ Aside from being allegedly unscientific, *dependentistas* were also accused of making a highly generalized and abstract analysis of dependent countries to the point of treating them in the same way. This

1. See also the critical evaluation of dependency theory by Rudolf von Albertini, “Colonialism and Underdevelopment: Critical Remarks on the Theory of Dependency,” in L. Blussé, H.L. Wesseling and G.D. Winius, eds., *History and Underdevelopment: Essays on Underdevelopment and European Expansion in Asia and Africa* (Netherlands: Leiden University, 1980), 42-52 and Edwin Hoffman Rhyne, “Dependency Theory: Requiescat in Pace?” *Sociological Inquiry* 60 no. 4 (Nov. 1990): 370-385. We should note here that most of these criticisms apply mostly to what Alvin So calls the classical dependency studies or to what Manfred Bienefeld refers to as crude forms of dependency arguments. It seems that Andre Gunder Frank’s work falls under this category. It follows therefore that these criticisms apply to his works and not to the more nuanced view of Cardoso. See Alvin So, *Social Change and Development: Modernization, Dependency and World-system Theories* (Newbury Oak, London and New Delhi: Sage, 1990); Manfred Bienefeld, “Dependency and the Newly Industrialising Countries (NIC’s): Towards a Reappraisal,” in Dudley Seers, ed., *Dependency Theory: A Critical Assessment* (London: Frances Pinter, 1981), 79-95.

2. So, *Social Change and Development* 131.

3. *Ibid.*

deductive approach put dependent countries into a sort of a straightjacket, thereby causing it to neglect “the historically specific development of each Third World country.”⁴

The concept of dependency. Classical Marxists alleged that dependency theory has greatly emphasized external dependency at the expense of internal dependency. They insisted that aside from the international division of labor, it is also highly important to study the issue of class struggle and the role of the state in these peripheral countries.⁵ Moreover, political struggle is less theorized in dependency theory for the simple reason that the periphery is presented as a passive victim of the maneuvering of the center. Contrary to the claim of the *dependentistas*, the peripheral countries do have certain degrees of freedom vis-a-vis the center.⁶

The policy implications. *Dependentistas* saw no hope in capitalist development. In their view, only socialism could bring about true development. Some criticisms have been voiced out against this.⁷ Accordingly, dependency and development can co-exist. South Korea, Taiwan and Canada are proofs of this view. These countries were dependent countries yet they achieved development. Furthermore, *dependentistas* were vague concerning their proposed socialist development. Critics argue that socialism “may not necessarily produce positive results for development.”⁸

The Demise of Dependency Theory

The oil crisis in the 1970s generated a variety of highly contradictory trends. This period brought about some extreme difficulties, mounting indebtedness and social and political polarizations in most of the developing countries. Oil producing

4. *Ibid.*, 132.

5. Alvin So brings here the observation of Richard Fagen and James Petras who argue that dependency theory does not adequately deal with issues of class formation, political struggles and the role of the state in their theorizing. See Richard Fagen, “Theories of Development: The Question of Class Struggle,” *Monthly Review* 35 (1983): 13-24; James Petras, “Dependency and World-System Theory: A Critique and New Directions,” in Ronald H. Chilcote, ed., *Dependency and Marxism: Toward a Resolution of the Debate* (Boulder: Westview, 1982), 148-155.

6. See Ellen Kay Trimberger, “World Systems Analysis: The Problem of Unequal Development,” *Theory and Society* 8 (1979): 101-126.

7. See Bill Warren, “Imperialism and Capitalist Industrialization,” *New Left Review* 81 (1973): 3-44. Warren questions the ‘development of underdevelopment’ thesis of dependency theory. He holds that capitalist development is highly possible in Third World countries and that this industrialization process is already happening since the Second World War. Not imperialism, but rather certain internal contradictions within the country should be blamed for being responsible for underdevelopment. He thinks that capitalism cannot be skipped; it is a necessary bridge to socialism.

8. So, *Social Change*, 134.

countries experienced unprecedented growth of incomes. This, however, did not bring about significant social and economic changes in their population. Meanwhile, industrial countries experienced increasing uncertainty, rising unemployment and economic instability. Finally, a number of countries entered the threshold of a NIC status (newly industrializing country). For these countries, there was sustained and phenomenal rapid growth based on an equally remarkable expansion of manufactured exports. These contradictory trends in the seventies signaled what some authors have called a world economic and political crisis of capitalist accumulation.⁹ For Andre Gunder Frank, the main proponent of dependency theory, the world crisis has left dependency theory bankrupt. He contends:

The evidence is accumulating that ‘dependence’-... has ended or is completing the cycle of its natural life, at least in the Latin America that gave it birth. The reason is the newly changing world economic and political reality that in a word may be summarized as the crisis of the 1970s.¹⁰

Frank believed that dependency theory had already served its purpose. However, he still held the view that in the context of what happened in the 60s (post-World War II crisis), dependency theory was the right response to the economic and political scene of that particular era.¹¹ The burgeoning world of the 70s made the theory of dependency *passé*. Alternatives – new scientific explanations and ideological orientations – that are more responsive to changing economic and political conditions in our times had to be sought.¹²

Contemporary Trends in Development Theory

Magnus Blomström and Björn Hettne pointed out alternatives to dependency theory. They studied the debate in development theory and the results indicated a weakening of dependency theory.¹³ Accordingly, the demise left “an awkward theoretical vacuum.”¹⁴ Developmental theorists offered a different alternative theoretical direction in place of dependency theory. In their research, they found out

9. See Andre Gunder Frank, *Critique and Anti-Critique: Essays on Dependence and Reformism* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), 250; 4 Clifton C. Black, *The Rhetoric of the Gospel: Theological Artistry in the Gospels and Acts* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 49.

10. *Ibid.*, 249.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, 248.

13. Magnus Blomström and Björn Hettne, *Development Theory in Transition: The Dependency Debate and Beyond - Third World Responses* (London: Zed, 1984); Björn Hettne, “The Development of Development Theory,” *Acta Sociologica* 26 no. 3/4 (1983): 247-266.

14. Hettne, “The Development,” 256.

that there was a common thread that ran among these alternatives, that is, “the fact that most theoretical departures beyond dependency tend to assume the existence of one strongly integrated world.”¹⁵ In short, the buzzword became interdependence. Hettne writes:

During the 1970’s several manifestations of a new global consciousness could be noted. Theories of the ‘world system’ were developed, ‘global modelling’ became popular, ‘world order models’ were again considered legitimate academic concern.¹⁶

The four alternative paradigms to dependency theory or the so-called contemporary trends in development theory include: (1) those that totally reject dependency theory: neo-liberalism-monetarism and Bill Warren’s neo-classical Marxism;¹⁷ (2) those that integrate the insights of dependency into their frameworks: Marxification of dependency by Geoffrey Kay¹⁸ and the modern structuralist approach of Osvaldo Sunkel’s trans-nationalization thesis; (3) those that appropriate a more Marxist approach: Ernesto Laclau’s mode of production approach;¹⁹ and (4) those that continue the lineage of dependency theory; here Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-system analysis comes to mind.²⁰

The fourth contemporary development theory is important for our purposes since this is a crucial link to what we call the globalization theory. The world-system approach is the obvious heir to dependency theory. Dependency theorists like Andre Gunder Frank have moved towards this direction. The recent works of Frank bear witness to his shift in orientation.²¹ The world-system approach shares many things in common with dependency theory such as the view that the world is capitalist. It broadens, however, the bi-modal division of the capitalist world into core and a periphery by including a semi-periphery. Blomström and Hettne maintain that:

The crucial point in Wallerstein’s theory – the point at which he progresses beyond the dependency theory – is the question

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Bill Warren, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1980).

18. Geoffrey Kay, *Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis* (London: McMillan, 1975).

19. Ernesto, Laclau, “Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America,” *New Left Review* 67 (May-June, 1971): 19-38.

20. See the exposition of Wallerstein’s world system approach in the succeeding sections.

21. See his “Global Crisis and Transformation” in Andre Gunder Frank, *Critique and Anti-Critique: Essays on Dependence and Reformism* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), 208-229.

of internal versus external factors; nor does he work with two kinds of capitalism, i.e., a 'central' and a 'peripheral' capitalism. Both of these pitfalls are avoided by the use of the central concept of a 'world system'.²²

A scheme is provided here to point out the differences between dependency theory and the world-system perspective.²³

Comparison of Dependency Perspective and World-System Perspective

	Dependency Perspective	World-System Perspective
Unit of Analysis	Nation-state	World-system
Methodology	Structural-historical: boom and bust of nation-states	Historical dynamics of the world-system: cyclical rhythms and secular trends
Theoretical structure	Bi-modal: core-periphery	Tri-modal: core-semi- periphery-periphery
Direction of Development	Deterministic: dependency is generally harmful	Possible upward and downward mobility in the world-economy
Research Focus	Periphery	Periphery as well as the core, semi-periphery, and the world-economy

The purpose of briefly naming and showing these different theoretical alternatives to dependency theory in the field of developmental studies is to demonstrate the fact that dependency theory has been made redundant by a complex world. Its power of analysis has simply been attenuated by the emerging political, economic, social and cultural transformations in our present world. This does not, however, mean that dependency theory is totally useless. Its impact on development theory will stay.²⁴

Liberating Liberation Theology from Dependency Theory

Michael Novak and Peter Moll pleaded for the release of liberation theology from the clout of dependency theory. Their quarrel with the theory revolved around its alleged failure to predict economic and social realities correctly.

22. Blomström and Hettne, *Development Theory in Transition*, 185.

23. So, *Social Change and Development*, 195.

24. Hettne, "The Development," 263.

Michael Novak

Michael Novak's *Will It Liberate? Questions About Liberation Theology* "constitutes the most extensive U.S. critique of liberation theology's' socio-economic analysis."²⁵ He attacks the anti-capitalist stance of liberation theologians. In the dependency analysis, Latin America is poor and underdeveloped because of its integration into the capitalist system. The only way out is to espouse socialism. According to Novak, the use of dependency theory has led to a wrong diagnosis of the Latin American situation. For him, Latin America is not capitalist at all. Rather, its present system is mercantilist and quasi-feudal. This is precisely the reason for its underdevelopment and misery. The Latin American culture lacks the spirit of economic activism that North America has. Moreover, the present order in Latin America protects the rich more than the poor. The poor are property-less. They are denied equal opportunities for business and credit.²⁶ Their economic talents are not given due attention by the laws created in Latin American countries.²⁷ He argues therefore that the whole structure of economic law in Latin America needs to be built on new pediments.

Novak argues that the highly successful capitalist development of countries like Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea falsified the claim made by the *dependentistas* that capitalism retards development and that it does not bring about improvement in the lives of the majority of the people. After World War II, these countries were poorer than most Latin American countries. But by 1970, they experienced unprecedented capitalist growth that uplifted the poor of their societies. Novak notes that the development process in these countries came from the bottom-up of society. In short, economic wealth was generated by the small businesses of ordinary people.²⁸ If Latin America had a negative experience of

25. Arthur McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989), 152.

26. Novak, overwhelmed by his own rhetoric, turns a blind eye to the fact that many North-American multinationals (e.g., the grape food company) - in connivance with local elites - deprive the poor of land ownership. He himself champions 'democratic capitalism', i.e., the fostering of entrepreneurship among the middle class. But he idealizes this middle class as if it were living in the U.S.A. Let us not forget, that Novak is associated with the study center for "democracy and religion", a sub-section of the North-American Institute in Washington for the furtherance of "free enterprise."

27. Novak, *Will it Liberate?*, 140.

28. Given the fact that Novak is an 'ideologue' of 'democratic capitalism', a more serious study should be conducted to determine the extent of special treatment the IMF and the World Bank have given, for "geopolitical" reasons, to the Asian tigers and Japan and the way in which Asian companies hire 'small business' to carry out subordinate tasks assigned to them by big companies. Only within this area is something like entrepreneurship of 'small business' conceivable.

capitalist development, it was because, Novak theorizes, of its lack of economic activism, entrepreneurship and the spirit of discovery.

Instead of less capitalism, the motto should be more capitalism. Instead of socialist experiment, it should be capitalist experiment.²⁹ It is in this sense that dependency analysis failed. It decried capitalism as the culprit of underdevelopment rather than the Latin American culture and law.³⁰

Peter Moll

Peter Moll is both an economist and a liberation theologian. He too pleaded for liberation theology to be freed from its use of dependency theory. He held that the basic tenets of dependency no longer correspond to the actual economic reality. Put precisely, dependency theory failed in its predictive power. The basic core theses that run through the works of liberation theologians are three-fold: first, the belief that poverty will continue to increase in the periphery due to capitalism; second, that even within capitalist countries there will be increasing inequality; and third, that world poverty will continue to rise. In all these three levels, dependency theory failed. These assertions might have been more relevant in the 1960s. The world of the 80's and the 90's go against these basic assertions.

Increasing poverty in the periphery. Moll observed that, contrary to the findings of dependency theorists, poverty was not increasing in the periphery; many of these countries were experiencing a general trend of improvement in their lives. Using the *United Nations Human Development Report* of 1991, he demonstrated that there was an overall pattern of increase in the wage levels and human development indicators such as life expectancy, lessened mortality rate, more people's access to water and food (calorie) supply, more enrollment in schools, etc.

The experiences of Japan and the four little dragons of Asia speak also against the view of *dependentistas*/liberationists that capitalism brought about doomsday to peripheral countries. These countries were poorer than Latin American countries during the post World War II era. Their highly improved economic status was due to their aggressive embrace of capitalist ideals. Moll believed that peripheral countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Botswana were on their way towards NIC-hood.

29. Novak, *Will it Liberate?*, 136-137: "I would wish, however, that the East Asian pattern had more appeal to Latin Americans than socialism appears to have. I would wish that liberation theologians thought more critically about what has gone wrong in so many socialist experiments during the past century."

30. *Ibid.*, 139.

Increasing inequality within nations. Moll argued that there was no truth to the belief that development brings about inequality within nations. He reacted to the findings of Simon Kuznets who “suggested that inequality increases in the early stages of development because the growth of the high-wage manufacturing sector drives a wedge between the cities and the much poorer rural areas.”³¹ Kuznets also held that inequality decreases in the later stages of development due to universal education and progressive taxation. Economists no longer hold this view. There is apparently no direct relationship between inequality and the level of economic development. Even in the case of disequalizing trends, nations can always devise economic policies (taxes and expenditures, trade regimes, health interventions, etc.) that will equalize distribution of income. “It is not difficult to devise combinations of policies that could induce or reverse a disequalizing trend.”³²

Increasing world inequality. Liberation theologians and dependency theorists were right, claims Moll, when they said that the world’s inequality was massively growing. They were wrong, however, when they attributed world inequality “to the ongoing exploitation through multinationals, unequal trade and the like.”³³ The right cause of growing inequality on the world scale, however, was due to a population boom in third world countries. “Thus the whole of the increase in actual inequality between 1965 and 1988 can be attributed to the change in populations.”³⁴ Rich countries are experiencing stationary, if not stagnant population growth compared to the rapid and unprecedented rate of two to three per cent annual increase in population in poor countries. The “faster population growth in the poor countries, which have large populations, could raise the inequality statistics even if the per capita incomes of rich and poor grew at similar rates.”³⁵

These are the reasons why he thinks dependency theory is bankrupt. He explains further:

These are among the reasons that most economists (as opposed to sociologists) never accepted dependency theory. Its predictions were not supported by the data. With the collapse of these three central assertions, the moral edifice of dependency theory disintegrates.³⁶

31. Peter Moll, “Liberating Liberation Theology: Towards Independence from Dependency Theory,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 78 (March, 1992): 31.

32. *Ibid.*, 32.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*, 33.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

Moll believes that massive poverty still characterizes our present world. Liberation theologians should continue their prophetic tasks of questioning the system that produces economic injustices. They cannot, however, rely anymore on dependency theory to bring about change in structures. He therefore suggests that liberation theologians do liberation theology in a new way. Their training curriculum should be restructured to give them opportunity to undergo a formal study of economics. Moreover, they should give up grand theorizing in favor of local, regional and national level of concerns. In addition, they should focus on equal job opportunities, land struggle/reforms, gender, sexuality and other related issues. Liberation theologians, therefore, should complement theory with informed empirical data.

Thus far, we have shown how and why dependency theory proved to be an inadequate tool for liberation theology.³⁷ We may disagree with, for example, the too positive evaluation of Novak about capitalism or Moll's too economic approach in doing liberation theology.³⁸ We agree, however, with their insights that capitalism brings about good things and that third world countries are not merely passive victims of capitalism. But most importantly, we believe that dependency theory has become too simplistic for our too complex world. We therefore suggest that liberation theology be liberated from dependency theory and propose a globalization thesis to view and understand our present world much better. We believe that it overcomes the pitfalls dependency theory has not been able to avoid. It is now to this theme that we turn.

Understanding Globalization: A Three-Fold Sociological Reading

The interest in globalization started in the mid-eighties. But it assumed a very

37. McGovern observes that nowadays liberation theologians have generally mellowed in their use of radical language. Instead of socio-political themes, they speak more of spirituality. On a similar vein, Georges De Schrijver notes that there is a paradigm shift in the discourse of liberation theologians from socio-political themes to more cultural ones. See McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989); See also Georges De Schrijver, "Paradigm Shift in Third-World Theologies of Liberation: From Socio-Economic Analysis to Cultural Analysis?" in Georges de Schrijver, ed., *Liberation Theologies on Shifting Grounds* (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 1998), 3-83.

38. Novak seems to erase every trace of the Marxist critique of capitalism by its overly optimistic, if not ideological, presentation of capitalism. As for, Moll's economic interpretation, we agree with Gregory Baum that the liberationists' embrace of dependency theory is not for purely economic reasons. Rather, liberation theologians saw in it a perspective to help them explain their situation of misery and find a way out of it. See Gregory Baum, "Correspondence: Gregory Baum Responds to Peter Moll," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 81 (Dec. 1992): 71-74.

prominent role in the contemporary scene only recently. Globalization has become the buzzword since the 1990's as seen in the popularity of the term.

Our task now is to give a sociological clarification of the globalization discourse by probing into the works of three respected specialists in the field, namely: Immanuel Wallerstein, Anthony Giddens and Roland Robertson. Immanuel Wallerstein is famous for his "world-system analysis". He is the Director of the Fernand Braudel Center (SONY-Binghamton). Anthony Giddens is another oft-quoted authority on globalization. He is allegedly the favorite intellectual of Britain's Prime Minister, Tony Blair. He is the Director of the London School of Economics. Roland Robertson is a professor of sociology at the University of Pittsburgh. Robertson's *oeuvre* on globalization has helped a lot in the development and crystallization of the notion as a sociological concept.

Immanuel Wallerstein and Globalization: The Growth and Development of the Capitalist World-System

In his introduction to the first volume of *The Modern-World System*, Wallerstein stressed the need to comprehend the great structural changes that made "the world of today qualitatively different from the world of yesterday."³⁹ This task requires "first of all a clear exposition of the nature and evolution of the modern world-system... and the range of possible developments in the present and the future."⁴⁰ Insight into the modern world-system generates power. This power "would be most useful to those groups which represent the interests of the larger and more oppressed parts of the world's population" in their search for a more egalitarian and libertarian world.⁴¹ Thus, Wallerstein made the task of comprehending the dynamics of the modern world-system urgent and necessary.

World-System Approach as Focus

Wallerstein's conceptual approach to social change departed from the theoretical and methodological approach of modernization or developmentalist studies

39. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, vol. 1 (New York & London: Academic Press, 1974), 3.

40. *Ibid.*, 10.

41. *Ibid.*

42. See Terence Hopkins, "The Study of the Capitalist World-Economy: Some Introductory Considerations," and Robert L. Bach, "On the Holism of a World-System Perspective," in Terence Hopkins, Immanuel Wallerstein, et al., eds., *World-Systems Analysis: Theory and Methodology* (London & New Delhi: Sage, 1982), 10-11, 160 ff.

that focus on the state in the abstract as a unit of analysis.⁴² World-system analysis therefore has emerged historically out of a discontent with the dominant modes of historical research and social theory. According to a modernization approach, “the globe consists of relatively autonomous ‘societies’ developing in relation to one another along roughly the same path although with different starting times and at different speeds.”⁴³ Each of these independent national states must traverse the road taken by developed countries like Great Britain or the United States if they want to reach the status of a truly developed nation. In this approach a social scientist’s role is to construct and to test out why some societies started earlier than others; why some have proceeded much further than others; why and at what costs some developed faster than others; and why developing societies are lagging behind and what they must do in order to catch up with already developed societies.⁴⁴ The key difference between a developmentalist and a world-system perspective, according to Wallerstein, lies in the point of departure. It makes a difference if one starts from the state as a politico-cultural unit or from an economic entity with a particular division of labor.

Wallerstein designates his conceptual perspective as a “world-system perspective.” By this he meant that the “modern world comprises a single capitalist world-economy”⁴⁵ which dates back to the sixteenth century. From this basic paradigmatic premise, it follows that national states do not have independent or parallel histories, economies or laws but that they must be seen as parts within the whole capitalist world-economy. In short, there is only one single world economy and with different sectors (states) performing different functions within this single world-system. What accounts for the different socio-economic profiles and distinctive politics among these states cannot be attributed to their “independent status” (economies, laws or politics) for they do not have one. Rather, they reflect the differing roles these states have played within the capitalist world-economy. If the world-system is the focus of analysis, if in particular we are talking of the capitalist world-economy, then divergent historical patterns and not uniformity are to be expected. These divergences are not anomalies but “the essence of the system.”⁴⁶ He asserts the unicity of the world-system – one capitalist economic system with different sectors performing different functions – and calls to question the ad-

43. Terrence Hopkins, Immanuel Wallerstein, et al., “Patterns of Development of the Modern World-System,” in Hopkins and Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis*, 42.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Present State of the Debate on World Inequality,” in Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy: Essays by Immanuel Wallerstein* (London & Paris: Cambridge University Press & Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1979), 53.

46. *Ibid.*, 60.

equacy of the notion of a bi-modal system (as if the core and periphery consist of two separate capitalist economies with two separate laws) of capitalist world-system.

The Basic Structure of the Capitalist World Economy

The logic of capitalism is the logic of profit accumulation. As Wallerstein himself puts it, capitalism is the only mode of production in which the maximization of surplus creation is rewarded per se. Adherence to this basic principle of endless accumulation of capital is what brings about a capitalist's salvation or damnation in the market.

The "market" is the locus where 'rewards' and 'penalties' are mediated. It is not an institution but a structure "molded by many institutions (political, economic, social, even cultural) and it is the principal arena of economic struggle."⁴⁷

This single market of a capitalist world economy is the venue where calculations of maximum profitability occur. It determines activities deemed productive. It also dictates areas of specialization that must be developed, the modes of payment for labor, goods and services and the utility of technological invention.

Moreover, Wallerstein holds that surplus is maximized not only for its own sake. But those who use surplus to accumulate more capital in order to produce still more surplus are further rewarded. Thus, the pressure is for constant expansion. We know that the capitalist world-system has historically become increasingly global. The "internal logic of its functioning, the search for maximum profit, forced it continuously to expand – extensively to cover the globe."⁴⁸ A brief exposition on the basic dynamics of this phenomenon known as the capitalist world-economy is warranted here. We start with its division of labor.

An Axial Division of Labor

One of the fundamental aspects of a capitalist world-economy as a social system is its single division of labor. An axial or single division of labor refers to the overarching global patterning of the economic processes where different geographical areas that constitute it occupy different places corresponding to their specialized economic roles in the overall functioning of the system.

47. Ibid.

48. Wallerstein, "Modernization: Requiescat in Pace," in Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy: Essays by Immanuel Wallerstein*, 134.

There is complementarity among these areas. However, complementarity does not mean equality. Rather, it signifies inequality and stratification, i.e., a spatial hierarchy of economic roles. Moreover, economic rewards differ in each region of the world-system. The three positions that constitute the single division of labor are the core, the semi-periphery and periphery.⁴⁹

In the history of the development of our present system, productive specialization has varied through time. However, whatever products were involved, each of the constituent areas manifested the same field of “expertise”: core areas involved “high profit, high technology, high-wage,”⁵⁰ and highly diversified production. On the other hand, peripheral areas focused their activities on largely low profit, low technology and less diversified production like agricultural and mining activities. The semi-periphery, meanwhile, has shown a mix of core and peripheral activities, trading externally in two different directions. The smooth interplay of this division of labor generates high level of profitability.

In referring to the dyadic relationship between the core and periphery, “what are we talking about?” he asks. “Well, we are talking about some kind of related set of production processes which are unequal; between their products there is unequal exchange.”⁵¹

Therefore, a relationship of unequal exchange is crucial to understanding the relationship between the core and periphery. It means that trade relationships between them are unequal. One (the core) takes more, benefits more and enriches itself at the expense of the other (the periphery). When we say at the expense of the other, we mean that the “other”, i.e., periphery, labors more, gives more to the system but in the end it is the core that will eventually reap the prize, not to mention the fact that it gave little in the process. Wallerstein articulates this reality by saying that, ultimately unequal exchange means that “the transfer of some of the surplus of one area to a receiver of surplus in another is the consequence of the fact that more

49. The terms ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ designate complementary portions of the world-economy and only derivatively pertain to its political divisions (e.g., as in the expression, “core-states”). See Terence Hopkins, “The Study of the Capitalist World-Economy: Some Introductory Considerations,” in Hopkins and Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis*, 11. See also Immanuel Wallerstein “Class Formation in the Capitalist World-Economy,” in Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, 223-224. In this article, he argues that the dynamics of the core, semi-periphery and periphery can be seen throughout all the institutions of the capitalist world-economy such as in “organizational structure of the productive process; in the tri-modal patterns of income and status distribution in core capitalist countries; in the tri-modal pattern of political alliances...”

50. Immanuel Wallerstein, “Semiperipheral Countries and the Contemporary World-Crisis,” in Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, 97.

51. Wallerstein, “World-System Analysis: Theoretical,” 92.

52. *Ibid.*, 94.

labor power has gone into producing the value exchanged in one area than in the other.”⁵²

Briefly stated, the process of unequal exchange is the mechanism that produces antagonistic and dyadic relationships between the core and periphery. As the word implies, it breeds inequality. Wallerstein, in speaking of this inequality, emphasizes the fact that, “[t]he key factor to note is that within a capitalist world-economy, all states cannot ‘develop’ simultaneously *by definition*, since the system functions by virtue of having unequal core and peripheral regions.”⁵³ Without unequal exchange it would not be profitable to expand the size of the division of labor nor would it be profitable to maintain the capitalist world-economy.

According to Wallerstein, the core and periphery relationship can become comprehensible only within the context of a third relationship in the economy, the semi-periphery. For him, “the semi-periphery is needed to make a capitalist world-economy run smoothly.”⁵⁴ Flexibility seems to characterize them. Not only do these areas play the role of a core to peripheral countries but they also play the role of periphery for the core areas. Hence, we call it a middle stratum. Wallerstein justifies the semi-periphery’s existence on two grounds: for primarily political reason and for politico-economic reason.

Wallerstein accords the function of a political neutralizer to the semi-periphery. As a middle stratum, a semi-periphery is an exploiter (of the periphery) and an exploited (by the core). This being the case, a semi-periphery functions as a political stabilizer in the sense that it prevents the direct confrontation between the “real” exploiters and the “truly” oppressed. The absence of a middle tier could signal a reverberating polarization in the system that may lead to its disintegration. A political equilibrium will hence be maintained. The last thing that the core areas want is a direct and unified opposition from the periphery.

The second justification veers towards the politico-economic. A semi-periphery is essential in moments of middle run contractions in the world-economy due to its cyclical rhythms. The semi-periphery creates tariff barriers that will stimulate local industry in response to interruption of trade flow.⁵⁵ Without the semi-periphery the capitalist world-economy will experience economic crisis.

53. Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Present State of the Debate on World Inequality,” in Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, 61.

54. Wallerstein, “Rise and Future Demise of Capitalism,” 21.

55. “In moments of world economic downturn, semi-peripheral countries can usually expand control of their home market at the expense of core producers, and expand their access to *neighboring* peripheral market, again at the expense of core producers.” See Immanuel Wallerstein, “Semiperipheral Countries and the Contemporary World Crisis,” in Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, 99.

The Logic of 'Asymmetry' and the Role of the State and the Bourgeoisie

We may say that state machineries play a significant role in the “effective functioning” of the social division of labor. Core states obviously have strong state machineries while peripheral states have weak ones. This implies that, in a way, the strength of the state in the core is derived from the state’s decline in the periphery.⁵⁶ The state power in the semi-periphery is somewhat in between. The fundamental duty of a state in a core is to “interfere” in the flow of the market, to reduce the freedom of the market, if you will, to ensure the proper functioning of the division of labor. The stronger the state the more ability it has to distort the operations of the market in favor of the interests it represents. There is a mechanism of distortion that is happening here. The strength of a state does not so much depend on the fact that it is authoritarian. Rather, the “strength of a state” lies in its ability (decision-making) to “distort” the market to maximize profits in its enterprises in the world-economy.

The Interstate System

The modern world-system is a capitalist world economy that has no single unifying political structure. This differentiates it from a “world-empire”. It does, however, have a political superstructure called an interstate system. There is an antinomy present in a capitalist world-economy. On the one hand, the single division of labor (economic) geared towards accumulation of capital tends to be globalized. On the other hand, the political sphere, i.e., its interstate system, limits the operation of the nation-state within its boundaries. Hence, the economic sphere is globalizing without restraints while the political sphere of interdependence restrains the autonomy of separate states. This is one of the cornerstones that make the capitalist world-economy move forward in Wallerstein’s system.

The interstate system is important in the sense that it guarantees a kind of “balance of power” among sovereign states to enable the capitalist world-economy to perform well. Briefly, an interstate system represents the rivalry, the alliances and, at times, the domination over one another (among core states) in their effort to expand their domination on peoples and weak nations. As a result, political boundaries are continuously redrawn or new ones come up. The states are not given fixed institutions. They are created and are constantly changing-in form, in strength, in

56. “The strengthening of the state machineries in core areas has as its direct counterpart the decline of the state machineries in peripheral areas. The decline of the Polish monarchy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is a striking example of this phenomenon.” See Wallerstein, “Rise and Future Demise of Capitalism,” 20-21.

boundaries through the interplay of the interstate system. Just as the world-economy has expanded over time, so has its political expression- the interstate system.

In an interstate system, systematic competition or conflict is expressed in three ways: 1) between strong and weak states (imperialism); 2) among the relatively strong states for primacy (struggle for hegemony); and 3) between different groups within states for control of the state-machinery (rivalry).

The Cyclical Rhythms and the Secular Trends

The capitalist world-economy being a historical system has a life span. It takes about 400-500 (*longue durée*) years or more for world-systems to expire.⁵⁷ As a historical world system, the capitalist world-economy undergoes regular cyclical rhythms and secular trends. Differently stated, as a historical system the capitalist world-economy follows certain defined patterns or structures and experiences historical development such as beginning, deepening and end. Cyclical rhythms (the historical development with its ups and downs) and secular trends (the deepening of the logic of capitalism, its permanent patterns and structures) go hand in hand. These are interrelated movements in the world-system. The former shows alternating patterns (expansion [A phase] and contraction [B phase]) that occasionally repeat (every 40-55 years) themselves. The latter movement demonstrates the rise and eventual demise of the capitalist world economy, a movement thus, that transforms the structure. Cyclical rhythms of the capitalist world-economy concern issues of self-expansion such as production processes, relationship between expansion and contraction and supply and demand in the modern world-system.

Meanwhile, secular trends try to deepen the very logic of the capitalist system. Secular trends are middle-run solutions to the immediate contractions occasioned by the lack of world effective demand or an economic downturn. For example, the expansion to new territories may result in new and immediate sources of high profit products and highly malleable new pools of low cost workers. Similarly, the mechanization of production reduces the production costs, creating more profit.

The crux of the matter regarding cyclical rhythms and secular trends lies in the latter. Secular trends contain the seed of a more structural problem for the capitalist system. Stated differently, the success of capitalism will eventually lead to its failure and/or demise. Since secular trends are immediate solutions to some structural pressures (e.g., economic contraction) in the capitalist world-economy, it will accumulate a series of contradictions that will, in the final analysis, undermine the capitalist system. In other words, secular trends (perpetual expansion of capital)

57. See Wallerstein, "Typology of Crises," 105.

58. Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Withering Away of the States," in Wallerstein, *The Politics of World-Economy*, 53.

cannot go on forever. Territorial expansion has an end and so is mechanization. Proletarianization and the process of political alliances (another secular trend) contain the “structural underpinning of crisis”⁵⁸ by threatening the logic of the system, that is endless accumulation of capital.

Giddens and Globalization: The Consequences of Modernity

One way of looking at Anthony Giddens’ sociological approach to globalization is by seeing it as a direct reaction to Wallerstein’s highly economic approach to globalization. In *The Consequences of Modernity* he proposed a multi-dimensional way of understanding globalization.⁵⁹ In another work, he writes:

Globalization is not, only, or even primarily, an economic phenomenon; and it should not be equated with the emergence of a ‘world-system’. Globalization is really about the transformation of space and time. I define it as action at distance and relate its intensifying over recent years to the emergence of means of instantaneous global communication and mass transportation.⁶⁰

Globalization as a Consequence of Modernity

A better way of approaching his views on globalization is to understand his theory of modernity. Modernity, which has its origin in seventeenth century Europe, is inherently globalizing.⁶¹ Modernity, at this point in time, has reached a level of worldwide influence. As indicated earlier, globalization is not purely economic. Giddens points out that although “the driving expansionism of capitalistic enterprise continues to fuel globalizing processes”⁶² but it is not the only reason, for globalization. Globalization, just like modernity, is fueled by a convergence of different elements. It is not “a single process but a complex mixture of processes

59. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 63-78.

60. Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 4.

61. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 63.

62. Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 87.

which often act in contradictory ways, producing conflicts, disjunctures and new forms of stratification.”⁶³

In Giddens’ mind, the worldwide dissemination of modernity and its forms of institutions constitute the initial phase of globalization. Referring to this worldwide spread of modernity, he avers that “[n]o other civilization made anything like as pervasive an impact upon the world, or shaped it so much in its own image.”⁶⁴ According to him, the first phase of globalization should not be confused with the current phase of globalization. The process of a “one-way imperialism”⁶⁵ characterizes the earlier phase of globalization. Globalization in its current form, however, is a two-way process and involves the interaction between three basic factors – the global, the local and the personal.

Globalization began its process of full maturity in the 1960s when the first communication satellite was launched into the skies. For the first time in history, instantaneous communication was possible from one side of the world to the other. The significance of electronic means of instantaneous communication lies not only in its content (the spread of news and information) but also in the changes it brings about in the fabric of day-to-day life. The spread of information technology made possible the interaction of the global, local and the personal. As a result, to speak of globalization merely in economic term is inaccurate. Globalization is really about the “transformation of time and space in our lives.”⁶⁶

The process of globalization has caused gargantuan changes in daily life. The combination of the global, local and personal are implicated simultaneously in its movement. In short, the boundaries among them become fuzzy. Globalization can then be defined as “the intensification of worldwide relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.”⁶⁷ This process involves the “intersection of presence and absence, the interlacing of social events and social relations ‘at distance’ with local contextualities.”⁶⁸ A decision to buy a particular brand of soap can have repercussions to factory workers in India or to the ecosystem. Similarly, the collapse of the Thai baht signaling the Asian crisis (1997-1998) sent reverberating ramifications to the conduct of stock exchange in New York or London. It slowed

63. *Ibid.*, 5.

64. Giddens, “Living in a *Post-Traditional Society*,” in Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 96.

65. *Ibid.*

66. Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 31.

67. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 64.

68. Giddens, *Modernity and Self*, 21.

down worldwide business transaction. Foreign investors withdrew their money out of Thailand within a twenty-four hour span –such a quick move in such a big world! On a local level, Slobodan Milosevic’s war against the Kosovars dragged not only the NATO alliance into it but the whole world as well. Another powerful example is the 9/11 bombing of the World Trade Center. This local event became an urgent global concern. This is what Giddens meant when he spoke of globalization being an “*action at distance*.”⁶⁹ This relates to the dis-embedding of time and space from their local context and their being “re-embedded” in another context.

Globalization: Its Three-Way Movements and the Nation-state

Globalization pulls, pushes and squeezes sideways. The movement of pulling away implies globalization’s effects on nation-states. Globalization pulls away from nation-states some of the functions or capabilities they used to enjoy. One of these capabilities is the state’s interference in economic power, particularly “those that underlay Keynesian economic management.”⁷⁰ While globalization pulls away some power from nation-states it also simultaneously pushes down on them to create “new possibilities for regenerating local identities.”⁷¹ This explains the rise of local nationalist movements such as the Scottish nationalism, the separatist movement in Quebec, or the Tamil Elam in Sri Lanka. In Giddens’ view, these local transformations are manifestations of reactions to globalization, specifically the global spread of its institutions (e.g. self determination, democratic rights, etc.). As globalization pushes down, it also squeezes sideways. Through this movement, globalization creates “new economic and cultural regions that sometimes cross-cut the boundaries of nation-states.”⁷² Examples of these are Hong Kong SAR and Silicon Valley in California.

The three-way movement of globalization indicates that boundaries are becoming fuzzier and that governance/sovereignty of nation-states is being rede-

69. Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 4.

70. Giddens, *The Third Way*, 31. John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) proposed an economic policy that advocated the government’s strong and active intervention in economic management especially on the level of demand. This policy is generally known as demand management policies. Keynes expects that governments take measures like boosting government spending, cutting on taxes, improving output, and generating employment during economic lull to generate effective demand. Meanwhile, in moments of economic boom, governments should increase taxes and cut on government spending to reduce demand. Keynesian economic management goes against the grain of classical economic theory espoused by Adam Smith who defended a “laissez-faire approach” to economic management. This view relied on the “invisible hand” of the market (free trade and free market) to correct discrepancies in the economy. See John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London: Macmillan, 1936).

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*, 32.

fined. Does it mean, however, that nation-states are disappearing? Nation-states have not disappeared with the event of globalization. But in the future, we may see a redefinition of their functions. In an era of globalization, nation states or their national political leaders are forced to rethink or “repackage” themselves to meet the challenges brought about by globalization. In order to continue to wield political power, the key point for nation-states is active collaboration with other “competing” agents (local, regional and transnational groups and associations) in the political scene.

Globalization and the Self

What happens to the self in globalization? Globalization brings about changes that impress themselves on the level of personal identities. These changes echo and reflect the global/local dialectic present in high modernity. The self, according to Giddens, becomes a reflexive project.⁷³ No longer is the person contented with what ever is handed down to him or her. No longer is s/he limited to what society has defined for him/her regarding what it means to be human. Today, s/he is confronted with a myriad of options and possibilities from which s/he can discover, construct or nurture his/her personal identity.⁷⁴ From the personal we move to the institutional level of globalization.

The Institutional Dimension of Globalization

Just like modernity, globalization has four main institutional dimensions, namely: world capitalist economy, nation-state system, world military order and the international division of labor.⁷⁵

Capitalism is the first institutional dimension. It is innately expansionary in character. Today, all extant nation-states espouse, in one form or another, this mode of production. Capitalism has become the worldwide dominant means of organizing economic activities. Transnational corporations manifest this globalizing power of capitalism. They have proliferated in third-world countries while maintaining home bases in the west. The biggest transnational corporations have budgets even higher than the gross national product of very poor countries. Giddens notes that although these transnational corporations wield immense economic power, in

73. See Giddens, *Modernity and Self*, 32; see also Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 81-82.

74. Giddens, *Modernity and Self*, 5. Abstract systems refer to dis-embedding mechanisms (taken together) that are involved in the development of modern social institutions. Abstract systems are of two kinds, that of symbolic tokens (e.g., money) and expert systems (e.g., a doctor's expertise).

75. The four institutional dimensions of globalization correspond to modernity's institutional dimensions, albeit extended or globalized. It is not difficult to understand why Giddens refers to globalization as a consequence of modernity.

terms of political clout the nation-state still has the last say. To be able to rule a particular territory, nation-states need to control the means of violence. Capitalist corporations, although worldwide in scope, do not have this edge.

The nation-state is the major actor in the political scene. It is the second institutional dimension. Almost all nation-states are capitalistic in their mode of production. But the mode of political organization worldwide is the nation-state system. Sovereignty plays a significant role in a nation-state's existence. Sovereignty implies a nation-state's autonomy or administrative control over a given territory. Concomitantly, it also means that other nation-states recognize its borders or territorial jurisdiction. The relationship between various nation-states constitutes what we call international relations. This pattern of interdependence among nation-states has become a global model for all. International relations mean the movement of nations and inter-governmental organization like the United Nations towards the creation of a single inter-related world.

The world military order is the third institutional dimension of globalization. This concerns the conduct of global military order, the military alliances among nation-states and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We have reached a point in time where even the poorest country can amass the most expensive weapons imaginable. Military budget remains a priority in most countries. Nuclear-capable countries have stockpiled weapons of mass destruction at stupendous levels. Joint military exercises exist among countries. Giddens contends that globalization of the world military order is not only about modern military capabilities. It is also about war itself. The two world wars remind us that a war of local significance can eventually have ripple effects to the rest of the world.

The globalization of division of labor forms the fourth institutional dimension. The diffusion of a capitalistic division of labor worldwide is of particular interest here. Giddens argues that since World War II, interdependence in the division of labor emerged globally. In this global division of labor, certain nation-states perform specialized roles for the functioning of the global economy. Certain economic regions are also put into place. For example, less industrialized countries (regional zones) function as producers of raw materials (specialized role) for the industries of highly industrialized ones. Moreover, this worldwide division of labor has recently allowed "shifts in the worldwide distribution of production, including the de-industrialization of some regions in developed countries and the emergence of 'newly industrializing countries' (NIC) in the third world."⁷⁶ In other words, global economic interdependence enabled some countries to become industrial-

76. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 76.

ized. It caused developed countries to rethink their economic policies, especially Keynesian economic principles.

Giddens gives an overwhelming positive evaluation of one of industrialism's offsprings, that is, technologies of communications. The four institutional dimensions of globalization hinge on cultural globalization specifically the technologies of communications. Instantaneous forms of mass media have propelled us into a status incomparable with traditional societies. "They [mass media] form an essential element of the reflexivity of modernity and of the discontinuities which have torn the modern away from the traditional."⁷⁷ The significance Giddens gives to mass media lies not only in its capacity to inform us about things we do not know but also in its capacity to bring into our consciousness events outside us (content). More importantly, it challenges us to pool together knowledge taken from various contexts of different spatially separated individuals and to come to terms with it. The institutions of globalization would not have been possible without it.

The Post-traditional Society: A Global Society

Post-traditional society is an offshoot of globalization. For Giddens, this type of society refers not to a national society but to a "first global society."⁷⁸ We are the first inhabitants of this global society. This is a world "where no one is 'outside' where pre-existing traditions cannot avoid contact not only with others but also with alternative ways of life."⁷⁹ In this first globalizing culturally cosmopolitan society, tradition does not completely disappear; rather, it is forced to change its status. As Giddens puts it, "[t]radition more and more must be contemplated, defended, sifted through, in relation to the awareness that there exists a variety of other ways of doing things."⁸⁰ In a situation, where abstract systems or expert knowledge proliferate, people are called forth to give justifications why they continue to hold on to their traditions. There is a need to undergo a process of de-traditionalization where "traditions only persist in so far as they are made available to discursive justification and are prepared to enter into dialogue not only with other traditions but with alternative modes of doing things."⁸¹ Otherwise, one falls into the pit of fundamentalism – defending tradition in a traditional way.⁸² In other words, one refuses to dialogue and be open to other truth-claims or even to question those handed over by tradition. In all of these, there is a need for social

77. Ibid., 77.

78. Giddens, "Living in a *Post-Traditional Society*," 96.

79. Ibid., 96-97.

80. Giddens, *Beyond*, 83.

81. Giddens, "Living in a *Post-Traditional Society*," 105.

82. Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 6.

83. See Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 38. Elsewhere, Giddens refers to social reflexivity as institutional reflexivity. By this he means "the reflexivity of modernity, involving the routine incorporation of new knowledge or information into environments of action that are thereby reconstituted or reorganised." See Giddens, *Modernity and Self*, 243.

reflexivity where global-cosmopolitan persons constantly examine and reform social practices or traditions in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character.⁸³

Roland Robertson and Globality: The Compression of the World and the Consciousness of the Global Whole

Robertson's theory of globalization⁸⁴ reacts to both Wallerstein's and Giddens' approaches. He faulted the former for his economic-functional-utilitarian reading of globalization while the latter he found wanting for simply situating globalization within the modernity-postmodernity debate. Robertson proffers a more cultural approach to globalization instead.

Having found Wallerstein and Giddens inadequate for being one-sided approaches, Robertson proposed a perspective that draws from these extant approaches but at the same time goes beyond them. He steers a middle course "between those who emphasize world systemicity and those who tend to think of current trends toward world unicity as having issued from a particular set of societies, as an outgrowth of the shift from 'the traditional' to the 'modern' and the theorization thereof."⁸⁵ Robertson describes "globalization as a "concept (that) refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole."⁸⁶

Robertson's description of globalization is two-fold. First, he speaks of the empirical reality of global interdependence. Second, he refers to the felt realization (idea) that the world, indeed, is ordered into a single place.

Concerning the first, Robertson agrees with Wallerstein and Giddens that there is an accelerating phase of physical global interdependence brought about by global economic activities and the instantaneous forms of mass communication. In Robertson's opinion though, the empirical aspect of globalization has dominated much of the discussion regarding globalization in recent years.⁸⁷ Robertson does not deny that such forms of globalization are taking place. What he suggests is to

84. Robertson's view is largely contained in his *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. (London: SAGE, 1992). The book is a compilation of his articles on globalization, most of which were revisions of earlier works.

85. Robertson, "Globalization as a Problem," in Robertson, *Globalization*, 14.

86. *Ibid.*, 8.

87. Roland Robertson, "Church-State Relations and the World System," in Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson, eds., *Church-State Relations: Tensions and Transitions* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transactions, 1987), 44.

go beyond the empirical side of globalization. Of equal importance is its cultural side. Here lies the significance of the second part of his definition.

In his view, there is a growing consciousness of the world being a single place. Robertson believes that such “consciousness has already been present in world-history for along time now.”⁸⁸ But it is only recently that it has been “realistically thought that ‘humanity is rapidly becoming, physically speaking, a single society’.”⁸⁹ Furthermore, it is only now that “considerable numbers of people living in various parts of the planet have spoken and acted in direct reference to the problem of the ‘organization’ of the entire, heliocentric world.”⁹⁰ This is Robertson’s conceptual entry point to the process of globalization. He is concerned with the “heavily contested problem of the concrete patterning and consciousness of the world, including resistance to globality.”⁹¹ Suffice it to say, at this point, that his interest lies in probing into the images or ideas that help shape (or de-shape) our world into a single place. Robertson describes aptly the relationship that exists between global interdependence and the consciousness thereof.⁹² Put precisely, there are numerous grounds on which to speak about the reality of empirical connectedness from an historical perspective, for instance, patterns of economic and political dependence and domination. But there is a more important task to come to grips with ideas and categories that are responsible for the world-system to be possible. There is a further need to synthesize these two levels of analyses separately.⁹³

The accelerated phase of material globalization and the accelerated phase of the consciousness of it contribute to the production of a single world. Robertson is quick to add that a single system does not necessary imply an integrated one. There are, according to him, anti-globalization gestures that are intrinsic part of it.

A Voluntaristic Theory of Globalization

Robertson also defines globalization “as a conceptual entry to the problem of ‘world order,’ in the most general sense- but, nevertheless, an entry which has no cognitive purchase without considerable discussion of historical and comparative matters. It is, moreover, a phenomenon which clearly requires what is conventionally called interdisciplinary treatment.”⁹⁴ This definition contains the elements that

88. See Roland Robertson, “Mapping the Global Condition,” in Robertson, *Globalization*, 53-54.

89. *Ibid.*, 54.

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Ibid.*

92. Robertson and Chirico, “Humanity, Globalization,” 220.

93. Robertson, “Mapping The Global,” 55.

94. *Ibid.*, 51.

make up Robertson's voluntaristic view of globalization. There are three important points to raise here.

First, Robertson envisions a multi-dimensional perspective to globalization. He refers to the fact that the globalization process implicates several global actors on the global scene. Robertson refers specifically to the four global actors that populate his global field: the individuals, societies, the systems of societies and humankind in the generic sense.⁹⁵ It is important to note that Robertson eschews any form of reductionism, that is, the reification of any of these global actors as the sole motivating force of globalization. All of them make up the contemporary global circumstance and form "one coherent analytical framework."⁹⁶

Second, by invoking cultural themes Robertson goes beyond the conventional explanation of the global world-system. He says, "I will argue that cultural pluralism is itself a constitutive feature of the contemporary global circumstance and that conceptions of the world-system, including symbolic responses to and interpretations of globalization, are themselves important factors in determining the trajectories of that very process."⁹⁷

Third, Robertson believes that globalization is an on-going process. He refuses to see it as a crystallized global reality. Instead, it is formed and reformed continuously depending upon the responses of the major players to it. The definite constitution of this world is "still very much 'up for grabs'."⁹⁸

The Structuration of the World Order

For Robertson, a systematic comprehension of the structuration of the world order⁹⁹ is a crucial consideration in the study of contemporary globalization. To do this, one needs to understand his concept of the global field. We have already indicated above that in dealing with the global field, Robertson pleads for the moral acceptance of global complexity in the ordering of the world in order to avoid fundamentalism. Moreover, Robertson's approach to his global field is cultural. This implies that while recognizing the driving force of global capitalism in globalization he highlights instead cultural discontinuities and differences among the

95. He sometimes calls it the global-human condition. The global field maps out in flexible ways how the world is ordered. In other words, it pictures out the ways in which global actors come together, interact, cross-cut each other or even deny the existence of one another.

96. Roland Robertson, "World-Systems Theory, Culture and Images of World Order," in Robertson, *Globalization*, 61. See also Robertson and Lechner, "Modernization, Globalization," 103-104.

97. *Ibid.*, 61.

98. *Ibid.*, 62.

99. Robertson, "Mapping the Global," 53.

global actors in the global field. These two factors we have already indicated above in relation to his voluntaristic view on globalization. There is a third factor (that we have not seen) that needs to be highlighted with regard to his global field. The global field involves processes of relativization. The “term is meant to indicate the ways in which, as globalization proceeds, challenges are increasingly presented to the stability of particular perspectives on, and collective and individual participation in, the overall globalization process.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, the different actors undergo different processes of differentiation in the global field. For example, the relativization that occurs between the self-humanity axis may confront the self with issues relating to reasons for one’s existence or the overall meaning of life.

Minimal Phase Model of Globalization

Robertson stresses the fact that globalization is not a very recent phenomenon. As he sees it, it even predates modernity and the rise of capitalism. In a sense, there are processes of mini-globalization or even anti-globalization gestures that, as antecedent occurrences, have continuously contributed to its recent crystallization or in their anti-globalization forms even have threatened its peak.¹⁰¹

Robertson sketches a five-stage development of globalization, as follows: the germinal phase (1400-1750); the incipient phase (1750-1825); the take-off phase (1875-1925); the struggle-for-hegemony phase (1925-1969); and the uncertainty phase (1969-92). Robertson locates in the uncertainty phase the present state of our globalized world which is characterized, among others, by an increased awareness of globality; space explorations; influence of post-materialist values; the rise of civil rights debates; the end of the Cold War but the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; problems arising from multi-culturality and poly-ethnicity; the complex concept of individuals due to gender, race and ethnic considerations; thematization of humanity through environmental issues; electronic instantaneous forms of global communication; rise of Islamic fundamentalism; de-globalizing/re-globalizing movements; the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

Robertson’s paths to globalization, while sketchy, are meant to point out the way in which the four touchstones of the global field have been increasingly conceptualized in time, leading to a world driven by global density and complexity. Their shifting configurations and selective responses have contributed to the formation of world as it is now. Moreover, the model emphasizes the point that globalization has its own inexorable logic independent of the development of nation-states or international systems of society while recognizing the historical signifi-

100. Robertson, “Globalization As A Problem,” in Robertson, *Globalization*, 29.

101. *Ibid.*, 54.

102. *Ibid.*, 58.

cance of nation-states in the process of globalization. The “diffusion of the idea of national society as a form of institutional societalism was central to the accelerated globalization which began to occur just over a hundred years ago.”¹⁰² Reflexivity differentiates the recent process of globalization from its earlier form. The task now, Robertson maintains, “is to consider the ways in which the world ‘moved’ from being merely ‘in itself’ to the problem or the possibility of its being ‘for itself’.”¹⁰³ It is as if, in a situation of global uncertainty, Robertson encourages global actors to consciously structure the world into a single place, in a more confident way. Ideas and conceptualizations then play important roles in the globalization process. We will continue to address this issue through a discussion of the place of culture in Robertson’s theory of globalization.

The Turn to Culture

We have reiterated the idea that Robertson’s approach to globalization is cultural. Robertson fears that the cultural aspect has been neglected in recent theorizations of globalization. So he signifies the need to reawaken our interest in culture in his discussion of the images of world order. These images are cultural responses to and interpretations of globality and globalization. “Images of world order (and disorder) – including interpretations of and assertions concerning the past, present and future of particular societies, civilizations, ethnic groups and regions- are at the center of global culture.”¹⁰⁴ They constitute what Robertson refers to as global culture. The “discourse of globality is thus, a vital component of contemporary global culture. It consists largely in the shifting and contested terms in which the world-as-a-whole is ‘defined’.”¹⁰⁵ Global culture is created through the interactions among global actors (who have different presuppositions) and their selective responses to the overall process of globalization.

Images of global culture are “very likely to frame the character of social theory, doctrine, ideology and political culture in the decades ahead.”¹⁰⁶ These competing images will determine the course of action that globalization will take in the future. Robertson provides us with four types of images of world order. These images go back to the classical themes of *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (society) popularized by the German author F. Tönnies.¹⁰⁷ In his scheme he has a global *gemeinschaft* and a global *gesellschaft*, each with two variants.

103. Ibid., 55.

104. Roland Robertson, “The Universalism-Particularism Issue,” in Robertson, *Globalization*, 113.

105. Roland Robertson, “Social Theory, Cultural Relativity and the Problem of Globality,” in Anthony King, ed., *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Binghamton, New York: Macmillan, 1991), 88.

106. Robertson, “Images of World Order,” 76.

107. Robertson, “Social Theory, Cultural Relativity,” 77.

In brief, the images of the world order point to a global cultural diversity – in the sense of the presence of various representations, even competing ones – of bringing order (disorder) in the world. More importantly, it inculcates into our minds that globalization is not merely about institutions or structures. It is also about ideas and ways in which we think of social life; the way we “want” to structure it and to locate our place within it. Closely linked to cultural categories of meaning is religion.

Robertson accords a special place to religion in a globalized world. He describes it as a “critical ingredient of globalization.”¹⁰⁸ He claims that religion is a form of discourse about “the serious life.”¹⁰⁹ It addresses the most existential questions that concern humanity (e.g. ultimate meaning, ultimate end). So Robertson notes that the “idea of religion has been involved in interactions between societies – and accordingly has constituted an aspect of recent processes of globalization.”¹¹⁰ Hence, Robertson calls for recognition of the value of “religious” ideas.

If we have understood Robertson properly, we should learn to be more conscious of the power of religious categories or ideas to order or disorder reality, i.e., the material construction of reality. Such for example is the power of the ideas of the so called “medieval Christian synthesis” that mandated the medieval Church’s aggressiveness to claim the whole world into its embrace; or of the Protestant ethics that gave impetus to Protestants to get more involved in the world. It is all about religious discourse’s ability “in the institutional ordering of national societies and international societies, as well as a form of discourse...called ‘the serious life’.”¹¹¹

Robertson focuses on the striking resurgence of religious and quasi-religious concerns in contemporary world. Of particular interest for him is the “extensiveness of church-state and/or religion-politics tensions across the globe.”¹¹² Examples of these are the rise of liberation theologies, mushrooming of fundamentalist movements in Christianity and other religions most especially Islam.

Besides this, Robertson indicates a growing global orientation of religious movements. Nothing can best demonstrate this than the case of John Paul II and

108. Roland Robertson, “Japanese Globality and Japanese Religion,” in Robertson, *Globalization*, 87.

109. We have already indicated earlier that Robertson was influenced by a Durkheim’s view of religion. See Robertson, “Community, Society,” 15 and “Globalization, Politics,” 20.

110. Robertson “Community, Society,” 3.

111. *Ibid.*, 15.

112. Roland Robertson, “Church-State Relations and the World-System,” in Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson, eds., *Church-State Relations: Tensions and Transactions* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction, 1987), 39.

the Catholic Church's visibility in the worldwide political scene. Some examples may be cited here. One is John Paul II's bitter relationship with Latin American liberation theologians leading to their 'condemnation' in 1984. Robertson cites the 1984 White House decision to resume full diplomatic ties with the Vatican boosting the significance of the modern papacy. The South Korean Unification Church is another globally oriented mega (big globalizing) organization.¹¹³ Aside from this, a growing interest in the making of world-theologies is catching up.

All these examples taken together of extensive worldwide religio-politico related activities stand for what Robertson calls the processes of "politicization of religion [theology] and religionization [theologization] of politics or governments."¹¹⁴

The Universal-Particular Connection

Another theme connected to culture is the universal-particular connection. Robertson observes that the question of identity in a global world, characterized by diversity and complexity, has generally received two responses, namely: relativism and worldism. The former refers to a "refusal to make any general, 'universalizing' sense of the problems posed by sharp discontinuities between different forms of collective and individual life."¹¹⁵ Postmodernism with its methodological "anything goes" belongs to this category. The latter holds that whether in matters of the world, politics, or culture it is possible to see them as a whole analytically; they "...can be explained, or at least interpreted in reference to, the dynamics of the entire 'world-system.'"¹¹⁶ The first approach is anti-foundationalism while the second is pro-foundationalism. Robertson steers a middle ground between these approaches. He describes his stance as a two-fold process of involving the interpenetration of the universalization of particularism and the particularism of universalism.¹¹⁷ An example is cited here to clarify the idea. In a global capitalist consumerist market, there is the interplay and interpenetration of the universalistic supply and the particularistic demand. The global market has to take into consideration the par-

113. *Ibid.*, 42.

114. *Ibid.*, 10. By politicization, "I have primarily in mind, first, an increase in concern on the part of ostensibly religious collectivities with governmental issues and, secondly, an inflation of interest among those with declared religious commitments in coordinating the latter with secular-ideological perspectives and programmes." By religionization, he refers "first to the way in which modern state has become involved in 'deep' issues of human life [e.g., debates about abortion, sexuality, morality etc.] ...second, to the Durkheimian theme concerning the ways in which the state-organized society has become, in varying degrees, an object of veneration and 'deep' identification." See "Globalization, Politics," 11, 14 respectively.

115. Robertson, "The Universalism-Particularism Issue," 99.

116. *Ibid.*, 100.

117. *Ibid.*

particular tastes or preferences of particular localities if it expects to sell. It involves “the tailoring of products to increasingly specialized regional, societal, ethnic, class and gender markets- so-called ‘micro-marketing’.”¹¹⁸ Thus, the presence of interpenetration between the particular culture and the world capitalist economy is displayed.

Robertson argues that the universal-particular has become a kind of global cultural discourse (not only as a principle) in the creation (structuration) of the world as a single place. So he advocates a global institutionalization of them. For him the “two have become tied together as part of a globewide nexus.”¹¹⁹ The particularization of universalism “involves the idea of the universal being given global-human concreteness”¹²⁰ while the universalization of particularism “involves the extensive diffusion of the idea that there is no limit to a particularity, to uniqueness, to difference and to otherness.”¹²¹

Conclusion

What we have done so far is to characterize the dramatic transformation of our world in recent times. These drastic transformations are what we referred to as the global context or the reality of intense and deep-seated connectivity that constituted a novel and a radically altered circumstance from the situation of dependence in the sixties. We are in the age of globalization. If liberation theology still aims to impact in the lives of the poor majority in this global village, it must take into account this new context. Globalization as a tool of analysis will be warranted to factor in these gargantuan changes.

What are the implications of the context of globalization to our present way of doing theology? How does globalization change the way we interpret some important theological themes in our tradition? For example, if we speak about ‘catholicity,’ an important element is the reality of intense and constant exchanges and dialogue amongst diverse cultures and religions. When we introduce these ideas, catholicity becomes less of a geographic or territorial presence. Instead it becomes more of an attitude of openness to other cultures, religions and other peoples. Another example is our understanding of ‘mission’. What opportunities and risks confront us in a globalized world? With its amazing advances in information and communications

118. Ibid.

119. Ibid., 102.

120. Ibid.

121. Ibid.

technologies (ICT), will it be an opportunity for intensive collaboration and networking on the part of the missionary? Will computers and telecommunications infrastructure produce more intelligent and knowledgeable missionaries? Or will these advances constitute threats and risks in doing mission today? These are some of the more relevant questions that we can ask in the face of globalization. For theology to advance and be more responsive, then it has to connect with issues confronting its people.

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