

Ellacuría on the Dialectic of Truth and Justice*

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Writing in the midst of war Ignacio Ellacuría asked “Is a different kind of university possible?”¹ He attempted to show that it is by re-shaping the university of which he was Rector. He sought a university that responds imaginatively and forthrightly to the question: How can the university integrate its core tasks and fundamental values with making a contribution, of a kind that only it can make, to bringing about greater justice in a context where the majority of people are suffering profoundly from lack of respect for human rights? Ellacuría’s question was

* Presented at the conference, “Modern Peacemakers,” Villanova University, March 21-23, 2002.

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¹ I. Ellacuría, “Is a different kind of university possible?” in J. Hassett & H. Lacey (eds), *Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador’s Murdered Jesuits* [TSSP] Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1991. See also Ellacuría’s other essays on the university in TSSP: “The challenge of the poor majority” and “The university, human rights and the poor majority,” and “The task of a Christian university,” in J. Sobrino, et al., *Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990.

posed with El Salvador specifically in mind, but it clearly lends itself to generalizations that have relevance anywhere. Fundamentally it concerns the dialectic of truth and justice. Taking it seriously and attending to it rigorously throughout its curriculum, research and teaching activities, and outreach programs constitutes the heart of the specific contribution that the university may make to the quest for peace. A university faithful to its core values will make this contribution. Although writing in the midst of war Ellacuría was not so consumed by its immediate demands that he left aside questions of universal urgency; on the contrary they heightened the importance for him of engaging in deep and original thought.

Ellacuría's main themes on the university

I will not attempt a systematic exposition of Ellacuría's thinking on the university and its roots in the theology of liberation.² Instead I offer selected variations on his main themes that, on my interpretation, involve coming to grips with the following ideas:

1. The core values of the university are (in dialectical interaction) the pursuit of truth and the formation of students for productive, fulfilling lives in service to the common good.
2. The university, *qua* university, should not subordinate these values to political, religious, economic or any other values. Nevertheless the university, *qua* institution in society, depends upon material, financial and social conditions whose availability may require the university's cooperation with projects in tension with these values.
3. The central object of investigation is concrete reality – "historical reality": charting its actual details and variations, analyzing their causes, attempting to identify the range of possibilities that the actually realized permits for the future. Historical reality includes the socially significant

² See J. Hassett & H. Lacey, "Comprehending reality from the perspective of the poor," Introduction to TSSP.

phenomena of one's times, those phenomena from which no lives are isolated, and response to which largely defines the moral character of one's times.

4. Truth cannot be pursued in abstraction from the complete lives and social relations of researchers, teachers, students, etc. It must be pursued in dialectical relationship with other values: *either* those highly embodied in society (e.g., those of the market, private property and consumerism), *or* those of (e.g.) justice, peace making and solidarity with the poor³ (in Ellacuría's theological perspective, the values of the Reign of God).
5. Some fundamental principles:
 - a) To understand the real one must seek out what is possible given the constraints of the actual.
 - b) There is a complex dialectic between the personal and the social.
 - c) Among the poor sources of novel (and liberating) possibilities may be present.
 - d) The perspective of the poor is essential for gaining a thorough grasp of reality.

Future possibilities

What I find most striking here is Ellacuría's emphasis on future possibilities. This reflects not only his judgment of the moral inadequacy of what is actually realized in current societies, e.g., the gross disrespect of human rights that he encountered daily in El Salvador, but also his acute awareness of the moral necessity for liberating possibilities to be identified and for movements that might serve their actualization to be supported. Attention to future possibilities also poses a challenge to the university. Moving towards the actualization of more liberating possibilities is a matter that calls for investigation and the gaining of knowledge. (Struggle uninformed by relevant knowledge cannot

³ H. Lacey, "Notes on the Dialectic of Truth and Justice," in B. Schwartz (ed.), *Educating for Social Responsibility in a Multicultural World, The Swarthmore Papers 1* (1993), 107-116.

be counted on to produce liberatory outcomes!) Investigation is the university's business. Ellacuría wanted to put at the center of the curriculum and the university's research efforts the question: What are the liberating possibilities that can reasonably be aspired to and what are the means towards their actualization? And he wanted it to be addressed with the most rigorous tools of investigation. Even in the midst of war he did not subordinate this task to the exigencies of immediate struggle or to commitment to any side of the war. Moreover, for him the task included addressing remote possibilities, a world in which human rights are widely respected and a world of peace, for he entertained the utopian horizon of a "civilization of work" that might replace the actual "civilization of capital."⁴

Epistemology

The principle, "To understand the real one must seek out what is possible given the constraints of the actual," is an important *epistemological principle*. (Attempting to do this is inextricably intertwined with describing and explaining the actually realized – understanding a phenomenon involves, in interaction, describing, explaining and encapsulating the possibilities allowed by the phenomenon.⁵) To know is to grasp the real, but the real is not identical to the actual for in the future possibilities may be actualized that currently are unactualized. The real includes the possible as well as the actual. Novel possibilities may be present in anticipatory form within the actual and the novel possibilities may include liberatory ones, better embodiments of justice, trajectories towards peace. With this principle Ellacuría avoided both determinism, that the possible is contained in the actual, and voluntarism, that the possible is not constrained by the actual. The actual both constrains and enables the actualization of novel future possibilities.

⁴ I. Ellacuría, "Utopia and prophecy in Latin America," in TSSP.

⁵ See H. Lacey, *Is Science Value Free? Values and scientific understanding*, London: Routledge, 1999: ch. 5.

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Methodology

Given this epistemological principle, a *methodological question* arises: How can we investigate – empirically, scientifically, with intellectual discipline – social possibilities that have not been actualized? The question is heightened by the fact that empirical data (reports of observations) are necessarily of the actualized. Thus one does not take the principle seriously if one limits empirical investigation simply to current dominant structures, their regularities and tendencies, and to presume that these tendencies will necessarily be continued into the future. To do so would preclude, methodologically, the identification of novel possibilities. It would also be a recipe for despair among those suffering from injustice. Note that in the natural sciences we can gain some insight into hitherto unactualized possibilities by means of experimental methodologies. We cannot do that, however, when we want to probe the possibilities of social structures because they are open, interacting systems that have become part of a world-wide network of relations.

A methodology that can adequately embody the epistemological principle needs to be consistent with the following two assumptions: (a) The regularities discovered in human behavior for the most part do not represent general laws. Rather they are just behavioral regularities that obtain within the limits of particular social structures, so that the actually obtaining regularities could change as a function of social transformation.⁶ (b) Always some of the behavior of some people fails to be subsumed under actual dominant regularities. These regularities admit of *anomalies*, so that institutionalized power never succeeds in suppressing all alternative sources of social change. These actual *anomalies* can be sources of social possibilities that might significantly develop in

⁶ See H. Lacey & B. Schwartz, “Behaviorism, intentionality and socio-historical structure,” *Behaviorism* 14 (1986), 193-210; and “The formation and transformation of values,” in W. O’Donohue & R. F. Kitchener (eds), *The philosophy of psychology*, London: Sage, 1996. These articles are also in H. Lacey, *Psicologia Experimental e Natureza Humana: Ensaios de Filosofia da Psicologia*, Florianópolis (Brazil): Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 2001.

the future. None of this contradicts the earlier point that dominant structures do constrain significantly the class of future possibilities, but they do not encapsulate all of them.⁷

Given these assumptions, we must pay attention to the *anomalies* in order to gain an adequate grasp of future possibilities (Principle 5 (c)). Therefore empirical investigation is needed to identify those groups whose practices, movements and communities represent, in anticipation, liberatory possibilities and the embodiment of “alternative” values with demonstrable capacity to grow towards a fuller embodiment. Ignacio Martín-Baró, Ellacuría’s colleague, points to the values of “solidarity and cooperation, sobriety and persistence, sensitivity and capacity to sacrifice” that he encountered among members of “popular organizations” as instances of such alternative values.⁸ Ellacuría, too, identified the popular organizations of Latin America, as well as Christian Base Communities, as key *anomalous* groups that anticipate liberatory possibilities.

One might object: Ellacuría is mistaken, for at present there are no genuine possibilities (to which it is worth aspiring) outside of the structures of the market, private property, formal democracy and the shadow of U.S. Military power. Perhaps! But one could not know this without investigating empirically the dynamic of the *anomalous* groups.⁹ Nevertheless, there may appear to be strong reasons to think that he is mistaken: the inertia of institutions and the openness of currently dominant institutions for a measure of reform, the ready use of power to defend dominant

⁷ See H. Lacey, “Neutrality in the social sciences: On Bhaskar’s argument for an essential emancipatory impulse in social science,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* (1997), 213-241.

⁸ I. Martín-Baró, “Towards a liberation psychology,” in TSSP; also in I. Martín-Baró, *Writings for a Liberation Psychology* (A. Aron & S. Corne, eds), Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994. Elsewhere, I have maintained that popular organizations are characterized by the following features: 1) Their struggles are rooted in group identities; 2) They combine grassroots styles and coalition politics; 3) They tend to state their objectives in the language of the full array of human rights; and 4) They strive for an “organic” unity between concrete demands for reforms and the quest for structural change. For details, see H. Lacey, “The legacy of El Salvador’s murdered Jesuits,” *Journal for Peace and Justice Studies* (1995), No. 2, 113-126.

⁹ For the reasoning here, see Lacey (1997), *op. cit.*

interests, the widespread actual internalization of individualist values and belief that these flow out of “human nature.” The context of his life *and death* ensured that Ellacuría was well acquainted with these reasons – but also with the evidence that challenges them.

We cannot know the future with certainty. Any projection we make about the future has an irreducible conjectural core and has to take into account that we are among the agents bringing it about. Projections about the future are mixtures of prediction and promise, of anticipation and intention. There is a common form of “realism” that insists that the future will (perhaps must) be framed by current dominant institutions. Of course, when those who occupy privileged places in dominant institutions insist on this, it probably means that they are “promising” to use their power to ensure that this is so or anticipating that the agents of alternative projects cannot be counted on to deliver a more just order, or that they will not stake their lives on commitments that would be needed to strive towards a different future.

The significance of popular organizations

Against this kind of “realism” Ellacuría counter-proposes:
1) These institutions embody a defective moral ideal. 2) They (capitalist institutions) cannot be universalized, for both social and ecological reasons. Socially their spread (e.g., with the thrust of the current neoliberal project) involves vast violations of human rights, and ecologically the world could not sustain everyone having a standard of living comparable to that of the majorities currently living in the technologically advanced countries. 3) Groups that actually embody non-individualist values are possible; we know that because they already exist, embodying these values to some extent, in the popular organizations and Christian base communities.

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A little elaboration will be helpful here. In recent times, popular organizations have been discussing at international meetings their values, how they contrast with those embodied in neoliberal policies and programs, and the programs in which they may be

further implemented. At the World Social Forum, meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil (February 2002), the relevant “alternative” values were labelled as those of “popular participation.” I summarized them with the following list: solidarity and compassion rather than individualism; social goods balancing private property and profits; ecological sustainability as subordinating the control of natural objects; non-violence to the extent that it does not involve the toleration of injustice; the well-being of all persons rather than the primacy of the market and property; strengthening a plurality of values rather than expanded commodification; human liberation as encompassing and qualifying individual liberty and economic efficiency; truthfulness that aspires for comprehensive understanding of the place of our lives in the world, that seeks to identify the liberating possibilities hidden within the predominant order, and that does not identify what is possible with the principal tendencies of this order; preparedness to submit to criticism and investigation the legitimating presuppositions of one’s practices (commitment to transparency) rather than to place them among “certitudes” that are seen to be beyond investigation; the rights of the poor and the primacy of life prioritized over the interests of the rich; participatory as encompassing formal democracy; and civil and political rights in dialectical relation with social, economic and cultural rights.¹⁰

The actual existence of popular organizations, aiming to further the embodiment of such values, and their growing numbers throughout the world, pose a choice for others, including people in the university: Whether or not to enter into solidarity with them, whether or not to put one’s causal agency at the service of bringing to actualization the possibilities that they represent. Whether or not these possibilities will actually be realized depends to a significant degree on the choices that people and institutions (including universities) make.

¹⁰H. Lacey, “Alternativas à tecno-ciência e os valores do Fórum Social Mundial,” in I. Loureiro & J. Correa (eds), *O Espírito do Porto Alegre*, São Paulo: Paz e Terra (forthcoming).

Investigating liberatory possibilities

In the different kind of university that Ellacuría sought to implement, the pursuit of truth is linked with the disciplined exploration of liberating possibilities, and this presupposes grasping – empirically and theoretically – current social realities from the perspective of those who need liberation (Theme 4): What prevailing conditions is the desired liberation to be *from*? What explains that these conditions are maintained in current social arrangements? Who are the agents of desired liberatory projects – the ones whom Jon Sobrino calls “the poor-with-spirit” and those who share this spirit?¹¹ What are the impediments they face? Can the impediments be overcome? Institutionally pursuing the dialectic of truth and justice has far-reaching consequences for the teaching and research activities of the university, and what these consequences may be can be interpreted in various ways.

Implications for the content of the curriculum

Recognizing that my interpretation does not preclude others, I suggest that the implications – based on the view of understanding stated above (Theme 5)¹² – can lead to bringing the following five clusters of questions, as matters for disciplined and multi-discipline inquiry, nearer to the center of the curriculum.

- 1) In what concrete ways is suffering manifested in the world today – and *especially in one's locale*? Among the poor? Among the materially well off? In what ways are human rights (economic/social/cultural as well as civil/political) being violated? What are the various dimensions of the sufferings? How are they connected? How do they vary in kind and intensity – with race? with class? with gender? with age? with educational level? with employment

¹¹J. Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988.

¹²See also H. Lacey, “Listening to the evidence: service activity and understanding social phenomena,” in C. D. Lisman & I. Harvey (eds.), *Beyond the Tower: Concepts and Models for Service Learning in Philosophy*, Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education, 2000.

or employment status? with nationality? with culture? with geography? with locale? with vitality of local community?

- 2) What are the various (interacting) causes of these sufferings and human rights' violations? To what extent are they inherited from the past? Derived from nature? From personal deficiencies, psychological deformities or vices, which may be widely shared? From misuse of power? From fundamentalist religious beliefs? From imperial domination? From the socio-economic structures that order the actual world? What are the impediments to contending with these causes, and thus the obstacles to the fuller experience of human well being? In what ways are the tendencies, potential reforms and expected innovations of current society likely to further or to ameliorate the sufferings?
- 3) What are the aspirations of those who suffer, especially the poor and marginalized? Indeed: How do poor people characterize themselves and what answers do they draw to the above questions in the light of their experience? How do they diagnose the causes of their condition? How do they express their hopes, and identify and articulate the possibilities they consider worthy of their aspiration? Who are their leaders? Who articulates their aspirations most authentically and authoritatively? What are their proposals, movements and practices for transformation? What values to they embody? How can we share educational programs with the poor, in collaboration with their movements and desires, so as better to address these questions? And so as better to be aware of the concrete reality of the poor and to be placed in order to collaborate with or to offer genuine service to them? These questions gain further significance (Principle 5 (d)) if one accepts that the people themselves, when their critical powers are being exercised, are the best articulators of their own lived reality – when the exercise of their critical powers leads them to gain a clearer

awareness of the possibilities that may be open for the future, e.g., with respect to creating institutions that nourish cooperation and service to others, or to creating effective, non-violent means of struggle, possibilities that may not serve the interests of the elites, and so which are not considered in mainstream social scientific analyses. Where are the sources of liberatory transformation – the *anomalies* – in one’s locale (Principle 5 (c))?

- 4) Does the way of life of university personnel and graduates depend upon socio-economic structures that contribute to maintaining or furthering the diminishment of the poor? Or upon structures that generate and maintain the many social pathologies that mar the world (and this nation) today: e.g., homelessness, drugs and increasing violence?¹³ What are the material and social conditions of the ways of life of university personnel and graduates? Do they require that others be oppressed and alienated? Do they further the irreversible destruction of nature? Could they be changed? How? With what practices? With what consequences? Would such changes be warranted in view of the positive achievements realized under these conditions and the interests of many to maintain them?
- 5) What are the predominant values currently embodied in society? And how are they articulated and legitimated by political leaders? Are the values they articulate the ones actually embodied in social institutions? How do they compare with the values of “popular participation”? What are the possibilities of moving now – as persons, participants in social institutions – to fuller embodiment of the latter values? What are the psychological and spiritual requirements of and impediments to moving in this direction?

According to this suggestion the *content* of the university curriculum should raise questions like these in order to respond

¹³Lacey (1993), *op. cit.*

the dialectic of truth and justice, in order to investigate what may be the future possibilities of justice, peace, liberation and a “civilization of work” (Theme 3). My suggestion is not intended to provide a fullblown alternative to current curricula. All the questions posed need to be informed by the best thinking from the standard disciplines and answers to them need to be tested rigorously against competing answers obtained with different methodologies from competing moral outlooks; in turn pursuing them will add depth to the disciplines and enable them better to engage the morally significant phenomena of one’s times. I intend the questions posed to have a national and worldwide reach while maintaining a local focus, for the local is part of the broader causal networks: we cannot understand the local without grasping its place in the socio-economic structures that have global proportions, and we cannot understand and morally appraise the global network without awareness of its effects on numerous locales.

Contact with the social anomalies

Addressing these questions in a disciplined, empirical way requires genuine *contact* with the actual reality and suffering of the poor and the movements for change among them, a contact that is immediate, involved, expressive of compassion and solidarity, and critically articulated. Without this contact, one does not have an adequate place (where the perspective of the poor can be engaged – Principle 5 (d)) for empirical investigation that would enable the discovery of the negative effects of dominant institutions and the identification of the *anomalies*, the sources of promising social alternatives. The contact is needed for the sake of the university’s task of gaining understanding of social reality; but it is not sufficient – gaining understanding also needs appropriate theoretical resources and methodological practices.

No doubt, in order to obtain appropriate contact there must be developed projects of service, participation and collaboration in one’s immediate locale. Such projects now appear as integral to pursuing the truth, and not simply as worthy, supplementary and optional activity of student, teacher or researcher. They are

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projects within which the gaining of understanding and works of compassion and solidarity are integral, mutually reinforcing moments (cognitive and moral) of a single liberatory process. (Hence, the dialectic of truth and justice!) They are means to bring the university into constructive interaction with the communities where there are sufferings crying out for release and where there are *anomalies*, sources of alternative possibilities. Ultimately this interaction needs itself to be institutionalized (though in an open-ended way) so that the university cannot ignore that the pursuit of truth includes the attempt to identify liberating possibilities; (and also so that new kinds of careers can be opened up for graduates).

Institutionalizing the contact

How can this be done? Elsewhere,¹⁴ reflecting on how service activities could be integrated into the unfolding dialectic of truth and justice, my collaborators and I have suggested that service activities normally should be part of a well planned set of programs, where the activities and programs embody the following four interacting levels:

- Each of the programs and activities has value by itself in virtue of its attempting to address a need identified by community members in an urban poor neighborhood – bringing resources, skills, training, and *above all* knowledge and the capability to generate knowledge into the community.
- They are integrated in a process of comprehensive community-wide (and, where possible, broader social) change – building institutions that all participants will share – directed towards goals established in collaboration with the community members.
- They are carried out at sites where students and others can perform community service that has been approved

¹⁴The ideas of this paragraph are developed more fully in Lacey (2000), *op. cit.*; see also in Lacey (1993), *op. cit.*

by the community and that is subject to ongoing supervision and evaluation; and where efforts are made to foster discussion and interaction between community members and those engaged in the service activities, to nurture respect and friendships, and to explore together further forms of collaboration.

- They are conducted with a spirit of reciprocity, with all involved conceiving what they are doing as part of a common task whose goals are important for all of them. University personnel, community residents, and representatives of other public, private and community organizations conceive themselves as working together for the same goals while playing different roles. The university personnel are not helpers or providers, but accompany and participate in the process of social change for the long haul, aiming, among other things, to create *a new kind of institution of learning* in which poor people can participate integrally and from which they can gain knowledge and research to inform their projects for social change.¹⁵

I offer this statement as a proposal for critical reflection to be tested against the practices implemented at the UCA and other institutions that have drawn inspiration from Ellacuría's ideas. Note that service *per se* need not interact positively with the quest for understanding and, if the right conditions are not in place, it may even hinder it, since brief and superficial contact, no matter how well intentioned, can easily reinforce stereotypes or lead to the poor being considered means to the university's ends.

¹⁵In those circumstances where the university draws employees (e.g., for food, environmental and grounds services) from the community, it is especially important that their wages, benefits and conditions of work be determined in accordance with sound principles of justice. I will not develop this point here, but it needs to be integrated with the four conditions.

Interplay of epistemological analysis and moral judgment

Ellacuría's quest for a different kind of university derives equally from epistemological analysis and from the moral judgment that projects to further liberatory possibilities in a world marked by severe injustice are addressing matters of great urgency. The moral judgment gives focus to the quest for understanding of current social reality; the results of inquiry should inform the liberatory projects. At the same time (Principle 5 (b)), actualizing this university would require the cultivation of certain virtues: courage, steadfastness, forthrightness, commitment, hope, humility, the capacity to form friendships with and to understand people from different walks of life and with different aspirations, the capacity to cultivate dialogue that, in turn, can foster mutual understanding and the sense of a shared future in which all can experience a measure of well being, a critical sensibility that is able to discern what movements embody the values of "popular participation" and to what extent they do (recognizing that no actual movement can be identified completely with the aspiration to liberation), and an unwavering faithfulness to truthfulness. These virtues must build upon and reinforce a deep spirituality.¹⁶ Commitment is crucial, even in the face of insecurity and uncertainty, for liberatory possibilities cannot be actualized or, often, even anticipated without the committed actions of numerous people (though no amount of committed action is ever guaranteed to succeed). Inevitably, the likelihood that liberatory possibilities will be actualized appears dim. That is a source of discouragement for many people. "If only," some of them say, "I thought there was a reasonable likelihood of success, I would become committed to the movements of liberation." But a reasonable likelihood of success cannot be predicted antecedently to or independently of commitment. Commitment is a key factor that increases such

¹⁶Sobrino's writings on spirituality, which in part develop ideas of Ellacuría, are particularly helpful (see Sobrino, *op. cit.*).

likelihood, as well as one that molds the concrete character of actualized liberatory possibilities.

The suggestion, that cultivating these kinds of virtues may be necessary for gaining adequate understanding of social phenomena, clashes with common notions that have come to the fore from reflections on the methodology of the natural sciences. These notions urge that the quest for understanding requires a stance of detachment, disinterest and antecedent skepticism (combined with commitments to follow the evidence where it may lead and to rigorously test any claims to knowledge that may be proposed) from the researcher in order to avoid the subordination of knowledge claims to moral and social values (or metaphysical or religious perspectives).

Ellacuría and I agree that knowledge claims should not be subordinated to moral and social values (Theme 2). What is cannot be derived from what is *good* or what *ought to be*! In the social domain, however, the way to do this is not generally to adopt a stance of disinterest. For what possibilities will (and can) be actualized depends in considerable measure upon human choices and the values they manifest. For the researcher to refrain from commitment is effectively to assume that the actual trajectories of currently dominant institutions will continue into the future; without an appropriate moral commitment one will not encounter the *anomalies* so that they could be a source of empirical data. Ironically, “disinterested” research is thus research that cannot investigate “alternative” possibilities and, by not providing understanding that might inform their development, it is likely to contribute principally to the consolidation of the values actually embodied in dominant institutions.¹⁷ Commitment to these values thus puts barriers in the path of research that might confirm that

¹⁷I have argued in detail elsewhere that notions of disinterest (and the like) lead to approaches to scientific research (including in the natural sciences) that exhibit mutually reinforcing relationships with specifically modern values concerned with the control of natural objects. See H. Lacey, *Is Science Value Free?* *op. cit.*; “The ways in which the sciences are and are not value free,” in P. Gardenfors, K. Kijania-Placek & J. Wolenski (eds), *Proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002.

there are possibilities (e.g., liberatory ones) not admitted in the dominant institutions, so that the knowledge claims that may actually be confirmed, given the methodologies of “disinterested research,” are subordinated to these values.¹⁸ It follows that disinterest does not fulfill its supposed epistemological and methodological function (Theme 4). Nevertheless sound knowledge claims are not subordinated to moral and social values; they rest solely on appropriate relationships with the empirical data and other epistemologically relevant factors.¹⁹ But gaining access to the relevant data (those pertaining to *anomalies*) and the imagination to entertain “alternative” possibilities depend upon cultivating the moral virtues listed above.

¹⁸Critics (including those who planned his murder) have charged that Ellacuría’s ideas involve the politicization of the university. To the extent that this charge rests upon the claim that he subordinates truth to political values or the interests of partisan programs, it is simply false. But it is full of political consequences to maintain that the truth cannot be pursued except in dialectical interaction with some social values. That invokes the counter-charge that his critics are likely to be subordinating truth to the values that are appealed to in order to legitimate their interests. This is linked with another often repeated theme of Ellacuría that injustice is an impediment to the pursuit of the truth. To uphold the primacy of the dialectic of truth and justice is not to deny that there are other dialectics of truth and values. Indeed this recognition is crucial if the products of one’s approach are to be submitted to the most rigorous empirical and theoretical scrutiny. It is not an *a priori* truth that there are liberatory possibilities. That there are liberatory possibilities needs to be demonstrated in inquiry and practice. (One cannot derive truth from values, but values point to what is worth investigating and to what are the significant facts.) Relatedly the two methodological assumptions made above (which tend to be denied in much mainstream research in the social sciences – Lacey, 1997, *op. cit.*) need to be vindicated in the course of successful research that will need comparison with the results of other approaches. Ellacuría’s university does not deny space to other approaches, but it insists on the legitimacy and indispensability of the dialectic of truth and justice. Elsewhere, in the context of discussing the physical and biological sciences, I have argued for the centrality of approaches to inquiry that have mutually reinforcing relationships with the values of “popular participation” while pointing to the need (based in both methodological considerations and the interests of democracy) for a plurality of approaches (Lacey, 1999; forthcoming, *op. cit.*).

¹⁹This is discussed in detail in the works cited in the previous note.

Conclusion

All of this poses a great challenge to the university. The university, *qua* social institution, requires material, social and financial resources: donors, fee-paying students, availability of jobs for its graduates. The sources of these resources tend to be closely related to the dominant institutions of society, who tend to value the university insofar as it provides the knowledge and qualified personnel needed to further their interests. Could Ellacuría's different kind of university ever gain the required resources? Perhaps it is more prudent to ask: Can his vision be institutionalized as an important part of the contemporary university? (Reflecting on the university becomes a particular case of the exploration of future social possibilities.) If the answer is negative, the university's task to understand social reality will remain diminished and its potential contribution to furthering justice and peace will remain unactualized.