

## INEQUALITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

JERZY ZUBRZYCKI

In his address given yesterday, John Paul II reminded us of the Apostolic Letter (*Motu Proprio*) establishing the Academy (January 1, 1994) and urged us to direct our thinking to the problem of human development. That topic, the Pope argued, must be viewed by this Academy within the wider framework of the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995.

Two points raised in the *Motu Proprio* have caught my attention. First, the Church is keen to promote social science research “to obtain concrete information for fulfilling the duties of her Magisterium” (“ut indicia definita eruat ad officia magisterii sui complenda accomodata”). Second, that the Church “needs constant and more extensive contact with the modern social sciences, with their research and their findings” (“oportet ipsa cum socialibus hodiernis scientiis earumque inquisitionibus et progressionibus continenter altam consuetudinem habeat”).

What then should be the task of the Academy set up to obtain “concrete information” and provide contact with “research and findings” of the social sciences? I would like to suggest that this particular task falls under the rubric “practical dimension” of the Church’s social doctrine as set out in *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church’s Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988). This document distinguishes three dimensions of social doctrine: theoretical, historical and practical. The practical dimension of social doctrine is concerned with the effective application of the theoretical, and historical dimensions, in practice “by translating them concretely into the ways and the extent that circumstances permit or require”. This statement then raises the issue of what the *Guidelines* call “technical matters” for which the Magisterium has neither the equipment nor the mission. As I interpret this argument the Academy’s role should be to provide empirical material for the analysis and evaluation of concrete social situations and

structures to which the Church's social teaching can and must be applied. In what follows, I propose to review two major areas of the Church's social teaching which loom large in the global context of the closing years of the twentieth century: the current model of economic development and its impact on population trends and the cultural dimension of growth. In both of these areas of interest to the Church there are a multitude of intricate "technical matters" requiring the expertise of the social sciences.

### 1. *Sustainable Human Development*

The notion of human development is rooted in the Church's critique of the current model of development as spelled out in the Encyclical *Populorum progressio* (1967) of Paul VI. The Encyclical set out to understand why there is such an imbalance between rich and poor countries. Recognizing the massive problem of poverty at the global level, the Pope sought a solution in "bold transformations" of the way in which the international economic order is structured — entailing in effect the replacement of the present structures of international capitalism. But the Encyclical's main thrust is its concern with the integral human development of each person and all peoples: the passage from less human to more human conditioning, i.e. to conditions that sustain human development.

The theme of development has been extended by John Paul II in *Redemptor hominis* and *Sollicitudo rei socialis*. The Pope's integral humanism leads him to express fundamental misgivings about the present state of society: we have adopted a type of development that has got out of control, that is no longer serving humanity as genuine development; what has been called "progress" does not really make us more human. I wish to argue that the central issue is that of sustainable human development and of defining its legal, economic, political and sociological dimensions.

The announcement of the World Summit coincided with the publication of the 1994 United Nations Human Development Report which reveals once again the extent of maldistribution of global prosperity: the richest fifth of the world's population generates and enjoys 85 per cent of world output; the poorest fifth struggles to survive on just 1.4 per cent.

The challenge of attaining a more equitable level of development is greatly compromised by what the UN Report identifies as the "power of environmental lobbies". The Report shows that once wealthy countries, under the influence of their environmental lobbies, have raised the standard of global sustainable development, they will once again face tricky moral choices. The developed countries have roughly one-fifth of the world's

population and consume 70 per cent of the world's energy, 75 per cent of its metals and 85 per cent of its wood. It could be argued, therefore, that if global resources are indeed limited, as environmentalists insist, then the rich countries' free access to these globally scarce assets cannot be justified.

The dilemma is further aggravated by inequality of participation and the ensuing insecurity in population trends. When the UN Conference on Population met in Rome 40 years ago the issue then debated was pressure on scarce resources. I wish to argue that the critical change over the last 40 years has been economic and social rather than arithmetical. Today we are preoccupied with access to employment, yet the development of industry and agriculture takes place in such a way as to minimise the requirement for human labour at exactly the moment when human beings are becoming vastly more numerous than ever before. It is this new factor of human redundancy and consequential *insecurity* which links developments in the over-populated Third World with those in the developed countries — where, by contrast, population growth has fallen in many cases to below replacement levels.

What the two parts of the world have in common is a *devaluation of human beings by the exclusion of increasing numbers from work* or other than marginal forms of production and thus, effectively, *from social and political participation*. The results, according to circumstance, can be a fall or an increase in human numbers. In some situations the human reaction to insecurity takes the form of an unwelcome fall in reproduction in the affluent West, while in others it leads to an equally unwelcome increase (the Third World). What both situations have in common is *insecurity as one of the basic causes of unmanageable increases or decreases in birth and death rates*. In both situations it induces the *perception of other human beings as enemies who ought not to exist*, whether they are the old, the young, the ill, the non-western, the unemployed or the unborn.

This profoundly dangerous development adds weight to the argument which the Church put to the Cairo Conference, namely that *society must adjust to human numbers* rather than depend, foolishly and often inhumanely, on the idea that human numbers must always be adjusted to society.

In the meantime, however, we must face up to the widespread and intransigent violations of human rights in those population-control programs that are contrary to the notion of sustainable human development: the folly of attempting to fast track the demographic transition which most demographers agree is inevitable in developing countries like China, Vietnam and Indonesia. For the danger is of replicating there the growing problems of post-transition Europe, namely

intergenerational imbalance and the ensuing insecurity which accompanies the prospect of a declining workforce supporting an aging population.

There have been so many arguments advanced in the vain attempt to halt the population control juggernaut. And to each argument the reply has always been to re-fashion the language, to re-construct the public face of the same old programs in more acceptable, more cunning disguise. It seems to me that the only possible stand that this Academy can take is to reiterate Stephen Hawking's conclusion in his famous study *A Brief History of Time* that if we could find the answer to why it is that we and the universe exist it would be "the ultimate triumph of human reason — for then we would know the mind of God".

I am convinced that it is only at this level of argument that the intellectually dishonest social development programs, such as the population control movement, can be defeated. For it is no use arguing about sustainable human development until population controllers can tell us why we are born and why we live. While ever these questions remain unanswered they cannot tell us why others should not be born, why others should not live. They cannot be allowed to sever human solidarity, to establish the concept of "wrongful life", or to divide the human population into those who have a right to be here, and those who have not.

## 2. Cultural Development

This area of social teaching of the Church has been highlighted by John Paul II at the Puebla Conference in 1979 and in his first Encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, in the doctrine of integral humanism embracing all dimensions of life, including the economic, the political, the cultural, and the religious. But like Paul VI in *Populorum progressio* the present Pontiff lays special stress on the cultural dimension. What is significant about his statements on culture is that there is no hint of dualism or escapism in them. One does not have any sense that he is stressing cultural development because it is easier and safer for a Church leader to talk about culture than about the more delicate and dangerous issues of economic and political development.

He spoke out strongly about cultural development already, early in his pontificate (Mexico 1979, United Nations 1980) because he saw people — particularly minority peoples — being injured and exploited in the area of culture as much as in the economic and political spheres. The cultural rights of people can be trampled on just as tragically as can their other rights. It is all part of the same process of marginalisation and impoverishment

against which the Church is bound to protest: "... nations as well as indigenous and other minorities are a human reality with a positive and irreplaceable value at the basis of inviolable rights ... and in particular, the right to their own identity and development" (*Redemptor hominis* n. 17 — my translation, JZ).

I suggest that this last statement opens up a vast field of social science inquiry into the practicalities and technical issues of public policies that would be necessary to provide an orderly passage from less human conditions ("the material deficiencies of those who are without the minimum essential for life; the moral deficiencies of those who are mutilated by selfishness and oppressive social structures") to more human conditions ("the possession of necessities; victory over social scourges, the growth of knowledge; the acquisition of cultural identity") as spelled out in *Populorum progressio*. I should add that from my disciplinary experience as a scholar and policy adviser in several major countries of immigration (Australia, UK, Canada, Sweden) the key practical issue is how much positive discrimination should be introduced to promote social equality of minority groups.

### *Conclusion*

My purpose in this paper has been, in the first instance, to identify the two dimensions of economic and social development which feature prominently in the Church's social teaching, namely human and cultural development. Secondly, I have attempted to discuss specific areas of research into the inequalities of development which constitute the "practical dimension" of those issues that have been dealt with in the long succession of papal encyclicals starting with *Rerum novarum*.

The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences has been created, as Louis Sabourin pointed out in his paper today, to be a "genuine laboratory" (*veritable laboratoire*) of social knowledge with a distinct moral foundation as well as a unique transcultural scope in the variety of disciplinary inputs and of its members' cultural backgrounds. By looking at the problem of barriers in the access to work, the ensuing insecurity of employment, the denial of minority and cultural rights and a host of related issues, the Academy will bring its insights to bear on the "technical matters" that lie outside the wisdom of the Church's Magisterium. In the words of its President, the Academy will provide the Church with the fruits of its research, into the "social realities and the determinants of social phenomena". And the study of human inequalities in relation to the betterment of the human condition will be central to this task.