



A Vexing Gadfly

The Late Kierkegaard on Economic Matters

Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez



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A Vexing Gadfly

The Late Kierkegaard on Economic Matters

ELISEO PÉREZ-ÁVAREZ

With a Foreword by Enrique Dussel



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To
My Regina

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Foreword

ONLY A *HISPANIC* THEOLOGIAN COULD HAVE UNCOVERED PREVIOUSLY unknown aspects of Søren Kierkegaard. I recall speaking with Eliseo on the subject more than ten years ago, when I was teaching a semester at Loyola University and at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. Since then, I have looked forward to the conclusion of his doctoral dissertation in order to find out about the interesting research on the economic problem in the anguished *Zeitgeist*¹ of Copenhagen, during the Golden Age of the Danish Empire. Kierkegaard was the vexing gadfly of this happy Denmark—in the eyes of the dominant classes of the bourgeoisie, of the state, of the Lutheran Church, and the conservative intelligentsia. The Kierkegaardian critique against the monarchic state, the traditional church, and its intellectual accomplices was well known whereas his critique of capitalism and the bourgeois class is less well known. Herein lies the uniqueness of this excellent work, which opens a new path in Hispanic liberation theology (if the author allows me to recognize his original discourse as such).

As a matter of fact, Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), the scholar of humble upbringing, of imperfect and sickly body (which would send him to his grave at the young age of forty-two) had a prophetic spirit and never measured the consequences of his criticism of the institutions that he would, like the prophets of Israel, pronounce against—“the most honorable” personages embodying the structures of domination of his native land in its Golden Age.

His doctorate in Copenhagen, and above all his stay in Germany during the period immediately following Hegel’s death, allowed him, thanks to Schelling, to use a “positive” and “material” dialectical theological narrative of unexpectedly fertile soil. His methodology disconcerted those who felt under attack by that “vexing gadfly,” like the

1. “Spirit of the age.”

Athenian Socrates,² apparently skeptical of all assertions. Kierkegaard, deep down, departed from a critical, creative source well rooted in an innovative reinterpretation of the Christian sacred writings. This was a true foretaste of the liberation theology of the twentieth century, and more so thanks to Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez's groundbreaking exposition in this work.

In fact, the great critic (at that time still conservative) has inspired many philosophers of the twentieth century, from Martin Heidegger to Carl Schmitt. The Kierkegaard of 1846 (barely thirty-three years old) was impelled by European social events of the decade in a Europe that was already suffering the crisis of growing metropolitan capitalism—with colonies, as Kierkegaard was well aware due to his father's and other relatives' experience. As Marx wrote his famous *Manifesto* in 1848, Kierkegaard initiated a transitional period in his life that would last until 1952; from that year until his death (only three years later), we encounter Kierkegaard's most definitive thinking. In all this Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez corrects Kierkegaard's most distinguished biographer Walter Lowrie. These biographical periods will be covered in chapters 2 and 3 of this innovative work.

Kierkegaard's *Two Ages: the Age of Revolution and the Present Age* (1846) is the most political of his books. Kierkegaard feels committed to a republican and democratic society. But in *Christian Discourses* (1848) he delves fully into the criticism of money, which, like Marx, he identifies as the mammon of the New Testament. Money is exclusionary: "What I have, another cannot have," quotes the author of our book time and time again. A rich person results in many poor ones. Kierkegaard takes charge of the prophetic criticism of economic riches, without "romantizing poverty."

The criticism of fetishist money runs alongside the criticism of political fetishist power, in the name of a "Christian state"—which Marx criticized at the time with almost the same terms.³ Kierkegaard

2. Kierkegaard at the time did not distinguish between Socrates's Indo-European death (the Athenian "gadfly"), and the death of Joshua of Nazareth from the Semitic tradition. While one rejoiced with the return of the gods for the "immortality" of the soul, the other would suffer to the point of sweating blood when facing death, although he affirmed the "resurrection" from death. Two totally different anthropologies (see Dussel, *El dualismo en la antropología de la Cristiandad*). The concept of "Christianity" in this research was explicitly Kierkegaardian—as in all my works.

3. See my *Las metáforas teológicas de Marx*.

also targeted the Lutheran Church, represented by Mynster and identified with the state in “Christendom” as well as *The Philistine Bourgeois*, referring to the capitalists who exploited the farmers and the slaves in the colonies. Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez takes great care to clearly differentiate “Christendom” from “Christianity” throughout the text. This Kierkegaardian distinction was adopted by the Latin American liberation theology proposed since 1963 by the great Uruguayan theologian Juan Luis Segundo. Professors such as H. L. Martensen or artists such as J. L. Heiberg were not spared his criticism either. The paradigmatic example was a poor, humiliated Christ, and not a *Pantokrator* that identified with the triumphant and metropolitan, illustrated and bourgeois, healthy and beautiful state Christendom.

All this is retrieved from works such as *Works of Love*, *The Sickness unto Death*, *Training in Christianity*, *For Self Examination*, *Judge for Yourself* or the *Instant*, and many others on which Pérez-Álvarez skillfully comments, forever extracting the themes referring to his research: the economic elements of his critical reflection.

Even the colonial matter is touched tangentially by our theologian, although one cannot say it was central in his critical discourse. The same applies to themes such as feminism or racism, distant from his progressive concerns.

Against what I myself had believed, and that which Pérez-Álvarez quotes explicitly, Kierkegaard deals with the “material” theme par excellence: if “matter” implies the *content* of human actions in regard to reproduction and the development of human life, such as eating, drinking, clothing oneself, or being hospitable to the homeless; such as affirming the culture of the oppressed, their gender, their race, their age (whatever it may be). All these “determinants” (in the Hegelian sense that Kierkegaard understood) illustrate the “positivity” of concrete Christianity, which is also expressed in the new economic realities of poverty, pain, colonialism, slavery, and the like. Kierkegaard did not forget these aspects, which are so relevant for a *Hispanic* theology, in solidarity with its people, where many are despised for being undocumented, many are economically exploited with low salaries, many are excluded from educational systems, etc. These essential “material” aspects are fundamental criteria of the Final Judgment expressed in Matthew 25, and thirty centuries before in the *Book of the Dead*, chapter 25, of the Egyptian Menfis by the great pyramids that Joshua of Nazareth already

must have admired, in his exile in these territories. A *Hispanic* theology, I repeat, has the sensitivity of discovering, given that it is analogically in the position of the Danish theologian facing the poor in the Golden Age of the Danish Empire.

Therefore, the post-Hegelian similarity between Kierkegaard and Marx is not surprising. Both criticize the “Christian state” as non-Christian Christendom—the sublime Sunday Christianity (or Saturday of the Jews for Marx), forgetting the “god” of the whole week that is an idol, a fetish. Kierkegaard (and it could just as well be Marx) writes: “If one . . . prays, but prays in a false spirit . . . in truth to God though he worships an idol.”⁴ It is like Bartolomé de la Casas, who understood (reading Ben Sira 34:24) in Cuba in 1514 that it means “to kill the son in the presence of the father,” to offer to God the goods robbed from the poor (the Indians). Idolatry covers modernity and colonialism. Bartolomé, Marx, and Kierkegaard belong to the same prophetic tradition.

Thus Kierkegaard was able to oppose the false “patriotism” of the great and powerful of his time and of his nation, as the prophet Nathan reminded David (the powerful) of his trampled duties. The perennial dialectic of the king and the prophet was highlighted innumerable times by professor Paul Ricoeur, the exiled evangelical French philosopher in Chicago, another contemporary Kierkegaard, my professor in La Sorbonne in the 1960s.

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May 7, 2008

4. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 179–80.

Acknowledgments

We live in a perichoretic, or totally related, society and cosmos; therefore it would be unfair to mention only a few names to which I am in debt throughout my graduate studies, because I am aware that the people who have accompanied me in this journey are legion. On the other hand, it would be sinful to universalize my gratitude without particularizing at least the closer people who shared my dreams. Therefore, in a telegraphic style, allow me to pay tribute to a small group of the wide loving community of sisters and brothers that surround me:

To Mark Thomsen for his unstinting help, valuable criticism and for the resonance I found in his Danish roots. To Cynthia Lund, whose efficient and kindly support in bibliographical research have been extremely helpful, for her hospitality during diverse events hosted in the Kierkegaard Library of St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota. To José David Rodríguez Hernández, whose accompaniment made my life and studies lighter and much more bearable. To Irene Connor for her warm and gracious encouragement at all times. To Bruce Kirmmse with deep appreciation for his hospitality and the vast generosity of his wisdom and time. For his intercession in prolonging my stay in Denmark from one semester to two. And to Hans Raun Iversen, a sharp theologian, a sensitive pastor, a trusting friend who, through a scholarship of the Danish Research Academy, hosted my wife and me for one wonderful year in Copenhagen.

I would be remiss if I do not acknowledge my thanksgiving to Catherine González and her husband Justo L. González for their mentoring and solidarity in publishing my book *Introducción a Kierkegaard; del cristianismo entretenedor al del Tenedor*. In the same vein I also recognize the valuable support of my editor Charlie Collier and his very professional team of Diane Farley, Jeremy Funk, and Patrick Harrison.

Abbreviations

AN	<i>Armed Neutrality: and An Open Letter</i> (1848–1849, 1851).
AUC	“Attack Upon Christendom” (Lowrie translation).
AUCb	“The Moment” and Late Writings (Hong translation).
CD	<i>Christian Discourses; and The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air; and Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays</i> (1849).
CUP	<i>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</i> (1846).
ED	<i>Edifying Discourses</i> (1843–1844).
E/O	<i>Either/Or</i> (1843).
EUD	<i>Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses</i> (1845).
FSE	“For Self-Examination” and “Judge for Yourself” (1851–1852).
FT	<i>Fear and Trembling (with Repetition)</i> (1843).
JP	<i>Søren Kierkegaard’s Journals and Papers</i> (7 vols.).
LD	<i>Letters and Documents</i> (2 vols).
PA	<i>The Present Age and the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle.</i>
Pap.	<i>Søren Kierkegaards Papirer</i> (16 vols. in 25 books).
PC	<i>Practice in Christianity</i> (Hong and Hong translation) (1859).
PV	<i>The Point of View of my Work as an Author: A Report to History, and Related Writings</i> (1859).
SUD	<i>The Sickness unto Death</i> (1849). (Hong translation)
SUDb	<i>The Sickness unto Death</i> (1849). (Hanney translation)

- TA *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and the Present Age: A
Literary Review* (1846).
- TC *Training in Christianity* (Lowrie translation) (1859).
- UDVS *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* (1847).
- WL *Works of Love: Some Christian Reflections in the Form of
Discourses* (1847).

Introduction

We must see the need of having nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men to rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

—Martin Luther King Jr.¹

[I was] consecrated and dedicated by the highest approval of Divine Governance to becoming a vexing “gadfly,” a quickening whip on all this spiritlessness, which in secularized mediocrity has blabbered Christianity down into something meaningless, into being spiritless impotence, suffocated in illusion.

—Søren Kierkegaard²

Right now we look like a cricket. What is a cricket? King of the insects; a little, tiny animal. All the cricket can do is [say] “cricket, cricket, cricket.” Just a noise, that’s all. But you know, if that cricket gets in the ear of the lion and scratches inside, there is nothing the lion can do. There is nothing; there is no way the lion can use his claws and jaws to destroy the cricket. The more the lion scratches himself the deeper the cricket goes.

—Reies López Tijerina³

A ONE-DIMENSIONAL AND SOMETIMES UNSYMPATHETIC READING OF Søren Kierkegaard has prevailed. That approach has portrayed him as an asocial, acosmic “single individual,”⁴ to use sociological terms; or as the father of existentialism, in philosophical jargon.⁵ But listening more

1. King, *Testament of Hope*, 291.

2. Pap. XI, 3 B53 n.d., 1854, JP, 6943. In my citations of quoted journal entries, the first citation is from the Danish edition (*Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*) and the second from *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers* (hereafter JP).

3. Busto, *King Tiger*, 1.

4. Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard*, xxi.

5. This is definitely a caricature of existentialism. For a vigorous interpretation of

closely, one discovers that the misuse of his pseudonymous books, as well as the selective forgetfulness of his last writings, have been the cause of many misunderstandings. I am more in agreement with those scholars who clearly distinguish the early and late stages in Kierkegaard⁶ and have been studying more carefully the late period. In order to substantiate my point, I would like to draw attention to his second authorship.⁷ It is my contention that in such understudied writings, through the use of a simple and sometimes more direct style, Kierkegaard, while making his powerful critique of Danish Christendom, addresses economic issues in a very enlightening way.⁸

Therefore, the critical point of this study is to assert that within Søren Kierkegaard's larger attack upon Christendom, his critique of economic matters is a fertile field for exploration. This will do justice to his thought despite many misreadings and will, above all, illuminate our current socioeconomic and political situation from the theological

Kierkegaard and existentialism, see Miranda, *Being and the Messiah*, 1–26. See also Garaudy, *Marxism in the Twentieth Century*.

6. Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark*; Nordentoft, *Kierkegaard's Psychology*; Nordentoft, *Søren Kierkegaard. Bidrag til kritikken af den borgerlige selvoptagethed*; Plekon, "Introducing Christianity into Christendom," 327–52. Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*.

7. By "second authorship," I am referring to the works written after *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* until his death in 1855. Kierkegaard planned to close his cycle of books with *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. An important shift is noted in this second period especially due to Kierkegaard's dispute with the media in 1846 and, above all, because of the political and social European revolutions of the late 1840s. Those events were the direct cause of the end of the Danish absolute monarchy in 1848–1849. Among the authors who make this distinction of the two Kierkegaards are Nordentoft, Kirmmse, Lindhardt, Bukdahl, Sløk, Deuser, and Plekon. This period includes the numerous entries in his diary, besides the following books and articles: *Two Ages: A Literary Review*, *The Book on Adler*, *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, *Works of Love*, *Christian Discourses*, *A Crisis and the Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, *The Point of View for my Work as an Author*, *Armed Neutrality*, *Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treaties*, *The Sickness unto Death*, *Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays*, *Training in Christianity*, *An Edifying Discourse*, *An Open Letter to Dr. Rudelbach*, *On my Work as an Author*, *Two Discourses at the Communion on Fridays*, *For Self-Examination*, *Judge for Yourself*, some articles in *The Fatherland*, "This Must be Said, so Let It Now Be Said," *The Moment*, "Christ's Judgment on Official Christianity," and "The Unchangeableness of God."

8. The problem of interpreting Kierkegaard in conservative ways comes partly from Walter Lowrie, his biographer and first English-language translator, who was himself an aristocrat. Lowrie influenced interpretations of Kierkegaard. See Pérez-Álvarez, "Walter Lowrie," 204–5.

point of view. It is a commonplace misconception to view Kierkegaard as a well-to-do theologian who had nothing to say about social and economic issues.⁹ In spite of that, it is my conviction that he is not only of interest but a very important interlocutor for our present time.¹⁰

A few scholars have introduced a new paradigm from which to read Kierkegaard (particularly his late writings), namely, from a social and political perspective. However, it is my claim that Kierkegaard's language about economics has not been fully appreciated. Furthermore, we can derive relevant contributions to the theological arena, such as Christianity's preference for the poor, the critique of dominant ideologies, the relinking of theory and practice, the denunciation of a competitive society, the illegitimacy of irresponsible wealth, the critique of the romanticization of poverty, and so forth. Consequently, this research is undertaken in order to demonstrate how the later Kierkegaard is worthy of our attention—in our case, specifically in relation to economic affairs.

The development of Kierkegaard's economic ideas should not be studied apart from his entire historical setting. Kierkegaard studies that have been undertaken from the biographic, hagiographic, and pseudopsychological approaches are legion. Therefore, I will refrain from utilizing those methods in this investigation. Instead, I will place Kierkegaard within his sociopolitical and economic context. At the same time, since I plan to deal with particular issues and concepts related to money and poverty, I will make use of the thematic method, developing it through a historical approach. In doing so, I will be quoting Kierkegaard extensively, in an attempt to counterbalance earlier misinterpretations with a general examination of the Dane's historical evolution.

It would not be right to interpret Kierkegaard without taking into consideration the specific socioeconomic, political, and cultural situation connected with his task of doing theology. His social critique starts with his concrete location, i.e., the Danish Golden Age (1800–1860). Denmark had been an absolute monarchy since the late seventeenth century. The crown as well as the families of the oligarchy shared the

9. González, *A History of Christian Thought*, 373. See also Best and Kellner, "Modernity, Mass Society and the Media," 36.

10 The relevance of Kierkegaard's thought for today is such that the idol of right doctrine is still alive in the Latin American context. Cf. Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*. For a blunt treatment, cf. Khan "Opposition within Affinity," 189–203.

rule of society. King Frederick VI substantially improved the conditions of peasants during his twenty-year rule until 1807. In spite of that, even in the late 1840s, 90 percent of Danes belonged to the menial agricultural working class.¹¹ It was not until 1848–1849 that, through a bloodless revolution, Denmark became a constitutional monarchy, pressured by economic, political, and nationalistic motives. From that followed the emergence of a new social class of emancipated peasants who, within the new representative government, were granted male suffrage. In addition to other changes, Kierkegaard passionately awaited the constitution of the new Danish folk church (*Folkekirke*), but it never materialized. The revolutionary events of 1848–1849 had prepared the ground for Kierkegaard's shifting of focus, but it was not until his last years (1852–1855) that this changing of paradigms was more obvious. That conversion did not happen in a political or social vacuum but rather in the midst of relevant historical events.

This research will be limited to Kierkegaard's "second authorship," that is, the books he wrote after his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, with which he supposedly had planned on ending his writing for good. Throughout this developmental approach, I am including both the Dane's published and unpublished writings. It is my contention that Kierkegaard's unpublished literature will shed much light on his published writings.

This study will focus on primary sources. Yet, critical secondary sources will be consulted as well, in order to better understand the way Kierkegaard's thought took shape. Special emphasis will be placed upon his treatment of economic ideas on both the structural and the individual level, within the historical matrix of Golden Age Denmark.

In order to reach the goal of this dissertation, I propose three chapters. The first is devoted to an in-depth analysis of the philosophical, economic, and social context of mid-nineteenth-century Denmark. This chapter focuses mainly on three areas: First, it provides a general historical overview of Kierkegaard's relationship with the academic world inside and outside his country and of his intellectual contacts with Hegel, Schelling, and the Young Hegelians. Here we find the irritating gadfly stinging his audience in the field of the ideas by questioning the idealistic rationalization of Christianity and the elitist and bour-

11. Kirmmse, "Out with it!" 16–17.

geois conception of the same. The second subdivision gives expression to Denmark's succinct economic history, particularly to the history of its colonies, which have been neglected in dealing with Kierkegaard. At this point, I will highlight revealing connections between the flourishing Golden Age Continental Denmark and its slavery and trade enterprises. We will perceive a different economic angle of Kierkegaard's family business and of notable Danish figures. Finally, I address the social-religious landscape in order to situate and appreciate Kierkegaard's contributions in the economic sphere. I explore the role clergy played in society as an instrument of social control, and I introduce the topic of the "ordinary person," namely, the poor peasantry and the urban proletariat with whom Kierkegaard sided.

The second chapter delves into Kierkegaard's economic language together with his important semantic differentiations of the concept of poverty and its correlation with wealth. In this segment I analyze Kierkegaard's views concerning his years of transition (from 1846 to 1852). The goal of this chapter is to fully grasp Kierkegaard's treatment of the interplay between wealth and poverty. The revolutionary gadfly manifests his concern with concreteness, actuality, specifically with economic matters, from the social, cultural, political, and religious dimensions. We delve into Kierkegaard's appraisal of social institutions such as the church, the theater, and the university alongside its top representative figures. Lastly, a word must be said about the well-disseminated portrait of Kierkegaard as a bourgeois. Consequently, I take issue with Kierkegaard's own fortune and his use of it, which will reveal the correspondence of his thought with his practice.

Central to the third chapter is Kierkegaard's radicalization of his judgments on economics. This is an important and neglected dimension of Kierkegaard's final, devastating critique of Christendom in Golden Age Denmark. This part is undertaken in order to demonstrate that economic issues are of major significance throughout Kierkegaard's final, prophetic years of 1852 to 1855. The first, socially conservative Kierkegaard planned to close his career as an author on February 1846 with his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. However, the effervescent years of the late 1840s played an important role in his thought. A month after he had finished writing *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, he wrote his *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and the Present Age*, followed by other works such as *Works of Love*, *The Sickness unto Death*, *Training*

in *Christianity*, and “*For Self-Examination*” and “*Judge for Yourself*.” In these major books Kierkegaard shows his move to a radical social critique. The shift of 1848–1849 from an absolute Danish monarchy to a democratic government, within the general framework of other political European revolutions of the same time, announced relevant social transformations. Since these expected changes were delayed, at least in the ecclesiastical arena, by 1852 there is a clear shifting of paradigms in Kierkegaard’s thought. During this period, he orchestrated his assault on the gospel of the prosperous, which consisted of the ideology of adaptation that privileged the rich to the detriment of the poor. He also denounced the hidden economic agendas of the religious and political rules of the state-church monism, better known as Christendom. I thus deal with the molesting gadfly’s task of combating the oppressive, self-complacent and static world order, as it had been sanctioned by the academy and the clergy. Within this historical framework and as part of my task of linking Kierkegaard’s thought with social and political events, I introduce three lesser time periods: the Voluntary Silence Stage (1852–December 18, 1854), the *Fatherland* Stage (December 18, 1854–May 1855), and the *Instant* Stage (May 26, 1855–October 1855). His treatment of economic themes (not in individualistic but in structural terms) will be more obvious in this segment of the research.

Finally, the fourth chapter summarizes and highlights the findings of the preceding pages by showing the relevance of the Dane’s thoughts for today.

1

Golden Age Denmark

ALLOW ME TO START BY PROVIDING A BRIEF HISTORICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, and geopolitical framework of Kierkegaard's Denmark. In doing so, it is necessary take into consideration a broader context. Therefore, I begin by highlighting the main consequences and contributions of the French Revolution. Hegel's influence upon the Young Hegelians and Kierkegaard is revisited in the philosophical map section. Last, I close this chapter with an overview of mid-nineteenth-century Danish geopolitics.

The French Revolution

This section addresses the general impact and the main contributions of the French Revolution to the theme of this dissertation, rather than a detailed report of its history.¹ Whether the French Revolution is the revolution par excellence is questionable; however, from that does not follow the denial of the role it has played in inspiring sociopolitical transformations all over the world.

The Secularization and Mechanization of Nature

The French Revolution is inconceivable without the Industrial Revolution. In fact, the beginning and closing of the French Enlightenment is commonly dated between these two events.² The French Enlightenment³

1. See Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*.

2. Silva, "Del empirismo inglés a la ilustración francesa," 37.

3. For the relevance of these movements to our study, let us consider the case of the Physiocrats' economic school of François Quesnay (1694–1774). Diderot's *Encyclopédie* included Quesnay's *Tableau économique* (1758), where this enlightened French economist stated the main Physiocrat thesis: that the only real productive sector of the

itself is rooted in the English empiricism personified by its founders, John Locke, and by Isaac Newton, David Hume, George Berkeley, and Francis Bacon⁴ among others.

English empiricism and the French enlightenment took their experimental method from Newton (1642–1727), switching the traditional *Weltanschauung*. Nature lost its enchantment. The world and the entire universe were interpreted through natural laws, particularly the gravitational one. Even though this great physicist never denied the existence of God, he set the foundations for the mechanistic view of reality ruled by natural laws and therefore subject to its manipulation through the knowledge of natural science and physics.⁵

economy is to be found in agriculture. Joseph Townsend introduced a new point of departure for political science by understanding humanity from the animal side and linking it with the laws of Nature: “Hunger will tame the fiercest animals, it will teach decency and civility, obedience and subjection, to the most perverse. In general it is only hunger which can spur and goad them [the poor] on to labor; yet our laws have said they shall never hunger. The laws, it must be confessed, have likewise said, they shall be compelled to work. But then legal constraint is attended with much trouble, violence and noise; creates ill will, and never can be productive of good and acceptable service: whereas hunger is not only peaceable, silent, unremitting pressure, but, as the most natural motive to industry and labor, it calls forth the most powerful exertions; and, when satisfied by the free bounty of another, lays lasting and sure foundations for good will and gratitude. The slave must be compelled to work but the free man should be left to his own judgment, and discretion; should be protected in the full enjoyment of his own, be it much or little; and punished when he invades his neighbor’s property” (Townsend, *Dissertation on the Poor Laws*, Sect. IV).

4. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) shared with Descartes the central place they represent in the emergence of modern Europe. In his *Novum organum scientiarum* (1620), he ventured his famous watchword “knowledge itself is power,” meaning that scientific knowledge can be derived exclusively by experience, advocating in this way the scientific method of induction. In his view, natural science provides humans power against *primitive* races of native people from Africa and America, against members of the same society, against women, and against nature. English Lord Chancellor Francis Bacon in fact was responsible for trials during the time he was in charge of the war against witches, extirpating them by torture methods. According to him, knowledge is power; it is useful in our dealing with nature and in exercising our dominion over Mother Earth. He literally recommended extracting the secrets from nature by torturing it, in the same way he extracted confessions from witches by torturing them (Duchrow, *Alternatives to Global Capitalism*, 54). See also Duchrow and Liedke, *Shalom: Biblical Perspectives on Creation, Justice and Peace*, 66.

5. “The invisible hand” of Adam Smith (1723–1790) found a fertile land in Newton’s thought. Although in a naive and dogmatic way, Smith was of the opinion that the laws of the market economy eventually would bring order in society and a natural freedom. Therefore, the only role of the state was to protect private property and the social con-

John Locke (1632–1704) earned his money from the slave trade.⁶ He was an investor in the Royal African Company and, as secretary to Lord Ashley, he transcribed the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina: “every freeman of Carolina, shall have absolute power and authority over his Negro slaves.”⁷

As a pioneer empiricist, Locke wrote in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), following Aristotle, that at birth the human mind is a tabula rasa, and that every one of our ideas come from the impressions of the senses. Reason then is not defined by eternal, innate ideas but by the way it works in reality; in fact, all true knowledge comes through the exercise of our senses, and all true knowledge is tested by the way it functions in reality. His *Two Treatises of Civil Government*

tracts, and not to block the path of the market economy. Smith reduced the state to the *laissez faire, laissez passer, le monde va de lui-même*. The invisible hand itself would keep the market working harmoniously. In his *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) Smith takes for granted that the competing market partners have the same decision-making power. Smith, the founder of economic liberalism and of the modern national economies as well, exalted the self-interests of entrepreneurs and confounded the common good with the well-being of the elite. This customs inspector’s theory that the market regulates itself was of the idea that inequity is the main force of economic progress; that the base of society lies in the competitive spirit; and that the social crisis that requires “necessary sacrifices” will be temporary because of Smith’s faith in the invisible hand of the market will redeem society. Since the market laws were inspired by Newton’s physics, in Smith we can trace the modern conception of economics as a “hard science,” although the mysterious and mystifying elements of the “invisible hand” are present (book 4, chapter 2).

From Smith’s work, modern economists such as Hayek have articulated the idea of necessary human sacrifices for the sake of the market. The people who are well integrated into the market have reached equilibrium in their interests; therefore they don’t have to die. Following the lead of Darwin’s social determinism, Hayek states that the self-regulated systems of the market assure the surviving of the fittest: “A free society requires certain ethics that, in the last resort, are reduced to keeping the people alive: but not keeping alive all the people because chances are that individual lives would need to be sacrificed in order to preserve a bigger number of other lives. Therefore, the only valid ethic is the one that leads us to the ‘calculation of lives,’ private property and social contracts” (Hayek, Interview in *El Mercurio*, quoted in Franz J. Hinkelammert, *La fe de Abraham y el Edipo occidental*, 89, n.5). It is not for nothing that Helmut Maucher, the managing director of Nestle Co. can rely on this authority: “Nobody can deny that the ‘destructive creativeness’ of the market creates extreme hardness . . . and with F. A. von Hayek I believe that the concept of ‘justice’ as a last resort, is irrelevant for the operation of the market mechanisms” (Hinkelammert, *Sacrificios humanos y sociedad occidental*, 165). See also Assmann, *Sobre los ídolos y sacrificios*.

6. Duchrow, *Alternatives to Global Capitalism*, 50.

7. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, 118.