

---

# THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF DIALOGUE IN POLITICAL RECONCILIATION PROCESSES.

ETHICAL ANALYSIS OF  
IGNACIO ELLACURÍA'S  
THOUGHT ON THE 25TH  
ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH  
(1989-2014)

---

*José Sols Lucia<sup>a</sup>*

**Abstract:** The idea of a just and lasting peace seems to be unachievable when people are suffering a civil or international war, a violent revolutionary process or a dictatorship, or when they are immersed in a long period of structural injustice. However, during the last decades there have been a number of attempted transitions from violent situations to a just peace through peace-making processes and talks, followed by reconcilia-

---

<sup>a</sup> Director of the Chair of Ethics and Christian Thought at IQS (Institut Químic de Sarrià) of Ramon Llull University and coordinator of the international research group LACS (Laboratory of Analysis and Social Criticism).

tion, some of which have been remarkably successful, whilst others are still open (e.g. El Salvador, South Africa, Northern Ireland, the Israel-Palestine conflict, among others). These processes, and their extremely technical complexity, are the object of analysis in the Political Science discipline; yet should they not also be the object of study in other disciplines such as Anthropology and Ethics? Opposing issues such as the possibility of self-aggression yet of radical transformation, the restoration of dialogue, the recognition of others as being equal, and the achievement of a just peace for all are at the centre of being human. In this regard, the work of Ignacio Ellacuría in the context of the civil war in El Salvador (1981-1991) is extremely interesting. This paper presents an analysis of his theoretical contribution structured as follows: the analysis of the concepts of *dialogue*, *social dialogue* and *political dialogue*; the context of violence in which he constructs his ethical and anthropological thought; his defence that social dialogue involves the affirmation of the possibility of moral transformation as an anthropological feature of human beings; the possibility to contest any of the multiple objections to dialogue with reason; his view that the reconciliation process goes from ideological monism to dualism, and from there to a wider and more well-defined pluralism; his conviction that political dialogue makes sense as the fulfilment of social dialogue so it can never replace the latter without losing legitimacy; his definition of the mediator as a key figure, essential to overcoming ideological dichotomy; his objective of achieving a just and lasting peace.

The Jesuit Ignacio Ellacuría was a theologian and a philosopher, a sharp political analyst, and a mediator in the Salvadorean conflict, where 75,000 human lives were lost in 10 years. He applied the “Philosophy of Reality” of his maestro Xavier Zubiri to the postcolonial and revolutionary reality of Central America from the 1960s to the 1980s. He was killed by the army in 1989. The 25th anniversary of his death (1989-2014) is an appropriate moment to undertake an anthropological and ethical analysis of his contribution to political and social peace processes.

**Keywords:** *Ignacio Ellacuría, Violence, Social dialogue, Political dialogue, Plurality, Peace talks, Just peace, Political reconciliation, El Salvador.*

## INTRODUCTION

The idea of true social reconciliation seems to be unachievable after a long-lasting violent conflict, whether this is an international or a civil war, a revolutionary process or a long period of structural injustice. The wounds inflicted by any form of violence (structural, repressive, revolutionary, military) are usually so deep that healing them seems very improbable, almost impossible.

However, historical experience shows that social and political reconciliation can be achieved. During the last few decades we have witnessed the creation of a culture of dialogue in political reconciliation processes at an international level. There is abundant literature on this subject. Nonetheless, dialogue has often been understood as a simple tool for practical purposes with the final aim of reaching an agreement: a negotiating table where the parties handle the situation as they would in a poker game, dealing with a good or a bad hand of cards with strategies and bluffs, creating diversions and making calculations. The notable difference is that behind each card there are thousands of human faces, whose urgent needs and hopes cannot be overlooked nor treated as objects. The risk of alienation can be extremely high in some peace processes.

It is therefore important to acknowledge the contribution of scholars who have researched the anthropological and ethical analysis of peace processes. The Basque Jesuit Ignacio Ellacuría was one of these. He was born in Spain but became a naturalized citizen of El Salvador. He was a philosopher (Xavier Zubiri was his mentor and close collaborator); a theologian (regarded as one of the founding fathers of the Liberation Theology movement in Latin America, along with Gustavo Gutiérrez, Jon Sobrino, Juan Luis Segundo, Leonardo Boff, Clodovis Boff and José Ignacio González Faus, among others); a political analyst during the convulsive decades of the 1970s and the 1980s; a mediator between the government and the *guerrilla* during the Salvadorean Civil War; and Rector of the José Simeón Cañas-Central American University (UCA) in El Salvador from 1979 until 1989, when he was killed by the national army along with five other fellow Jesuit priests and two housekeepers. The context of the works subject to analysis is threefold: the Salvadorean Civil War, which lasted ten years (1981-1991); the Central American conflict (200,000 human lives were lost as a result of violence in Guatemala alone, most of them civilians, and 75,000 more lives in El Salvador); and the situation of the Latin American subcontinent, which

suffered tremendously during that period as a result of the bitter confrontation between civil rights groups using peaceful means, revolutionary *guerrillas* and military dictatorships supported by national oligarchies and the US administration. The 25th anniversary of his death is an appropriate time to remember the figure of Ignacio Ellacuría and his contribution to the anthropological function of social dialogue in political reconciliation processes.

### THREE CONCEPTS: DIALOGUE, SOCIAL DIALOGUE, POLITICAL DIALOGUE

The well-known concept of *dialogue* became central to the philosophy of Plato and was an important concept through Classical times, both for Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy as well as for Christian theology.<sup>1</sup> The concept of dialogue conveys the exchange of knowledge between two or more people, which leads to the idea that the *logos* is not static but dynamic. The *logos* is not a definitive and permanent truth but the result of a process of cumulative knowledge through human communication. This idea shaped the *paideia* of ancient Greek philosophy:<sup>2</sup> the human being is in a constant process of learning. This *logos* does not flow in a single direction (from the mentor, who knows everything, to the pupil, who knows almost nothing). On the contrary, it constitutes a never-ending cycle of questions and answers through which the mentor helps the pupil to further his or her inner understanding, as a midwife would do with a woman in labour (the Socratic *maieutic* method, described in Plato's *Dialogues*). The dialogue can take place between mentor and pupil, in which case it would be asymmetrical. However, it can also take place between two people or two groups with opposing views. In this case, we talk about symmetrical dialogue.

In any of its forms, dialogue entails the following elements:

<sup>1</sup> For example, the well-known works by Saint Justin in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, *Dialogue with Trypho*, *the First Apology* and *the Second Apology*, in which he elaborated on the famous concept of *logos spermatikos*, initiating a tradition culminating in the current inter-religious dialogue (Raimon Panikkar, Jacques Dupuis, Javier Melloni), discourse ethics (Jürgen Habermas, Adela Cortina, Hans Küng) and intercultural philosophy (Raúl Fornet-Betancourt).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Werner Jaeger's excellent work, *Paideia*.

1. The conviction of all different parties that the other exists and that the other has something to say, something which is by no means obvious. For instance, the mere existence of the Jewish people was denied for centuries, so they were not considered a historical subject. In the same vein, for decades some have denied the existence of the Palestinian people, and continue to do so today. In South Africa, the white population denied the existence of a racial conflict in the country for years, so the black population was not considered a social subject with a voice of its own. In the Basque conflict, many maintain that ETA is not a political subject but merely a terrorist group, so there is no possibility of beginning a dialogue. Dictators do not recognize the existence of a nation or part of the population who can think differently from them. An authoritarian father does not envisage any form of dialogue with his children, as from his perspective they must simply comply with the father's rules. The acknowledgement of the other, of its mere existence as a subject of law, sometimes represents a historical victory attained after long years of demands and struggle. Unfortunately, for some this never happens.
2. The conviction of all different parties that nobody is in possession of the whole truth, which means the dialogue is distinguished by a certain intellectual humility.
3. The conviction of all different parties that the road to truth is an established process full of dialogue and dynamism.

The concept of *social dialogue* does not entail the idea of *representation*, which is present only in the political dialogue. Unlike interpersonal dialogue (between a mentor and a pupil; husband and wife; two friends or two neighbours) social dialogue takes place not between individuals but between social groups representing different interests shared by their respective members (at least in theory, as the characterization of certain groups is often too simplistic: "the Salvadorean people", "the Catalan people", "the Basque people", "the Catholics in Northern Ireland", "black South Africans"). It occurs where there is opposition between one group and another: the proletariat vs. industrialists in the 19th century England; the white vs. black populations in the 20th century South Africa; Irish-nationalist Catholics vs. Unionist Protestants in Northern Ireland during the second half of the 20th century; grassroots people vs. national oligar-

chies in post-colonial Latin America. Social dialogue is not characterized by the existence of clear leaders. It consists of an array of different types of dialogue that take place on the street, in debates at university, in radio and television news programs and in newspaper columns. This is a type of dialogue where, despite the fact that it confronts two groups which are apparently markedly different (in South Africa you can be either white or black; in Northern Ireland, either a Catholic or a Protestant; in Rwanda, Tutsi or Hutu; in Jerusalem, Jewish or Palestinian; that is, it is impossible to imagine that anyone can be part of both identities or communities) there are multiple voices beyond the two groups.<sup>3</sup> There are many who will engage in dialogue. When each group designates a person to represent them and when all the representatives of the different groups agree to sit down at the negotiating table, they are ready to cross the threshold to political dialogue.

Only the representatives of the social forces will take part in the *political dialogue*. As has already been mentioned, the idea of *representation* appears in this context. In the case of a dual conflict, only two individuals sit at the table (often with a third person, the mediator), along with their respective advisors, in the knowledge that both of them represent a large number of people. For example, this was the case at the 1993 summit with Yitzhak Rabin (representative of Israel), Yasser Arafat (representative of the Palestinian people) and Bill Clinton (president of the United States, acting on behalf of the international community). After this point, we do not consider social dialogue because political dialogue does not take place in society itself, but at a summit with greatly restricted access, where the parties strategically negotiate the future of an entire society, exchanging offers and threats, creating diversions and making calculations. The members of society are nowhere near the place where the negotiations are taking place and, unless a politician says something in his or her *memoirs*, which may be read many years later, or until historians gain access to secret files in fifty years' time, they can have no idea about what is being said within those walls. At the summit, both leaders engage in a process of power sharing. Each of them aims to secure the maximum

<sup>3</sup> In this sense, it is very interesting to read Kenizé Mourad's work, *Le parfum de notre terre. Voix de Palestine et d'Israël* (English version: *Our Sacred Land. Voices of the Palestine-Israeli Conflict*). She is a Swiss novelist and journalist of Lebanese origin and, in her book, she shows that in the Jewish-Palestinian conflict there is a wide range of positions beyond the often portrayed dualism.

share of power for their people while making sure they achieve the best possible position on a personal level.

There is no shortage of authors, such as Ignacio Ellacuría, William O'Neill (teacher at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University at Berkeley and international advisor in reconciliation processes) and Teresa Godwin Phelps (Phelps, 2004), including myself (Sols, 2011; 2013; Sols & Pérez, 2011), who maintain that political dialogue, also known as *dialogue at summit level*, should never precede social dialogue, also known in some circumstances as *national* dialogue. On the contrary, political dialogue should always be the fulfilment of a long (or perhaps a short but intensive) social dialogue process. The following section deals with the anthropological function of dialogue in the political reconciliation processes through the analysis of Ignacio Ellacuría's works. The aim is to further the understanding of social dialogue in its role of legitimizing subsequent political dialogue.

## THE ROLE OF DIALOGUE IN POLITICAL RECONCILIATION PROCESSES

This section presents an analysis structured as follows: 1) The starting point is a context of violence; 2) the defence of social dialogue involves the affirmation of the possibility of moral transformation as an anthropological feature of human beings; 3) the possibility of answering any of the multiple objections to dialogue with reason; 4) the reconciliation process goes from ideological monism to dualism, and, from there, to a wider and more well-defined pluralism; 5) political dialogue makes sense as the fulfilment of social dialogue; 6) the mediator as a key figure during the political dialogue, essential to overcoming ideological dichotomy; and 7) the final objective of achieving a just and lasting peace.

### A CONTEXT OF VIOLENCE

As noted above, the starting point of any reconciliation process is a situation of violence. Here we define *violence* as an "aggression suffered by a person or a group of people inflicted by another person or group of people, either directly or through a social structure, with the aggressor acting in reflective conscience, causing physical harm to a greater or



lesser extent to the subject attacked, from sharp pain to causing the death” (Sols, 2008, p. 20). This summary definition comprises different approaches (Galtung, 1975; Ellacuría, 1976; Keane, 1996) and clearly shows how violence is always a deliberate attack on human health or even human life inflicted through an unjust structure or as a result of an aggression between subjects (either individuals or groups). The pacification process, which could lead to future reconciliation, can only begin when the different parties in conflict perceive that the situation of violence is no longer bearable. In the same way as substance abuse therapists state that the disintoxication process can begin only when the drug addict is aware of the fact that his addiction is destroying his life, the pacification and reconciliation processes can only begin once the different parties involved are conscious of the fact that the conflict is destroying everything and everyone around them. The conditions to begin the process will not be fulfilled if violence is still perceived as something positive or heroic (e.g. the impassioned spirit characteristic of some revolutionaries, soldiers and dictators) and while the unjust structure is still perceived as correct and normal by any of the parties.

#### MORAL TRANSFORMATION AS AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL FEATURE

The view that it is impossible to transform human character is quite frequent in the midst of a conflict. Each party is absolutely certain that their position is correct and fair, so they will not change it. At the same time, each party is totally convinced that the other’s position is also firm because they are obstinate in not recognizing their error. The central issue is the double conviction that the moral transformation of oneself and the other is an impossible task. By contrast, those who have committed themselves to a negotiated settlement, such as Ignacio Ellacuría, are convinced that it is possible to reconsider their own position and to invite the other to reconsider theirs, as an essential anthropological feature. This is not only applicable to the Salvadoreans in the 1980s or the South Africans in the 1990s but to all human beings, which is the reason for using the term *anthropological*. The commitment to dialogue is based on this conviction; otherwise it would make no sense attempting to undertake dialogue processes on a worldwide scale. This is outside the domain of conversion as a radical transformation of existential orientation in Christian spirituality. Conversion can indeed happen during the process, but



we are not directly appealing to it along these lines. The aim is to reflect on the possibility of realizing that, in a dialogue process, one party can change its perception of historical reality through the exchange of insights with its opponent.

In the midst of the Salvadorean Civil War, Ellacuría made a thorough analysis of the political programs of both warring parties, showing that there were “certain minimum points of agreement” which “if not completely matching in the particular context and general framework, at least close enough to allow the building up of a greater consensus” (Ellacuría, 1993e, p. 1460). Ellacuría identified eight points of agreement between the opposing programs, which provided the basis for starting a national dialogue (Ellacuría, 1993e, pp. 1460-1463). On another occasion, he stated that there was a possibility of “coincidence, at least in the abstract, of the final objectives that should be pursued: the establishment of a just and free order, where the grassroots majority can enjoy a social justice state where their political freedoms are guaranteed” (Ellacuría, 1993c, p. 1314). All political projects, at least on paper, aim towards this goal.

The key to achieving the beginning of the moral transformation (a transformation that would represent a transition from the impossibility of recognizing the other as a political subject, and having a share of the truth, to granting some recognition to the potential value of its contribution) lies in putting the common good above any kind of partisanship. This can sound somewhat contradictory at first glance. All ideologies are supposed to be conducive to the common good through the implementation of a particular political program and a certain historical pathway. Nevertheless, Ellacuría invites all warring parties in any war, conflict or revolution to reflect on the fact that their ideology, their cause, no longer represents the common good, only the interests of one part of society. If the common good is at the heart of their real interests, they must open a dialogue. In this sense, Ellacuría reminds us of the words that Pope John Paul II addressed to the Salvadorean bishops on the occasion of his visit to Central America and the Caribbean in 1982: “We urge all parties in the conflict to drop any unyielding positions and to engage in a sincere, clear and loyal dialogue, inspired by good will and the spirit of real patriotism, putting the union of the Salvadorean family above any private or group interests.” (Letter of John Paul II to the Episcopal Conference of El Salvador, in: Ellacuría, 2002a, p. 27). Ellacuría makes a call to move from a position defending a particular historical ideology to the discovery of human dignity as a core principle: not

just the dignity of the Salvadoreans, but also the dignity of the army, the dignity of the working class, the dignity of the Catholics in Northern Ireland, and so on. “Ideologies should not be put before reality, and least of all before the reality of human beings, because this is the historical centre of gravity and everything revolves around it: the individual and all people” (Ellacuría, 2002b, p. 43). Sitting at a negotiating table with the sole purpose of sharing power in the best possible way is a mistake. One must attend with a certain culture of dialogue, with a willingness for personal and structural transformation. Otherwise, one oligarchy is bound to replace another; one dictator will be removed from power to make way for another, but in the end nothing will change. “Structural changes are useless without experiencing an inner change, a personal change, a change of fundamental attitudes” (Ellacuría, 2002b, p. 40). In this sense, we are coming close to the Christian theological concept of *conversion*, but no radical transformation is expected, only certain degree of openness to the other.

#### ANSWERING OBJECTIONS TO DIALOGUE WITH REASON

In any reconciliation process, there are always many who are against dialogue: many who do not believe the journey is not worth starting, or when they do, have an interest in its failure. The objections to dialogue are many. The reasons can be summarized in the idea that opening a dialogue with the enemy implies acceptance that there is some truth in the opponents’ position, that they have something worth listening to, which, in turn, undermines the position of the first party. That is why Ellacuría was convinced that, before beginning the journey of dialogue, it was first necessary to break the taboo of dialogue and, secondly, to clear up the doubts around its potential inconvenience, answering the main objections to dialogue. “The ice and the taboo have been broken” he stated, when some voices started to talk openly about opening dialogue in El Salvador, adding: “*never* has changed to *now*” (Ellacuría, 1993a, p. 1275). So, once the taboo was overcome, it was necessary to dismantle all the objections to dialogue one by one, using reason, and he committed himself to this task with all his intelligence (Ellacuría, 1993d, pp. 1284-1290).

## THE DISCOVERY OF PLURALITY

The first step on the complex road to dialogue is moving from monism to dualism, and the second is moving from there to pluralism. This may seem simple on paper, but sometimes even a whole lifetime is not enough to take the first step: as examples, it is simply necessary to read the biographies of Hitler, Stalin or Pinochet, among others. “Moving from monism to dualism” means accepting that a view different from one’s own can have a share of truth; and “moving from dualism to pluralism” means accepting the existence of a social voice not heard by either of the two opposing parties in the conflict (in Ellacuría’s words, *the third force*) and that it should have a say. This is what the historian Paul Preston, a specialist in the Spanish Civil War, referred to as the *Third Spain*.<sup>4</sup>

In order to move from monism to dualism, each party needs to recognize that it does not represent all people or the entire nation.<sup>5</sup> None of the opposing parties can pretend to possess the whole truth or represent all the people. Initially, it is common that “everybody appeals to the people, as if the entire population were behind their positions”. However, Ellacuría notes that “there is little opportunity for the grassroots people to express their will and show their interests”. In addition: “some political parties might even try to silence them, because they think of themselves as the only way or at least the more genuine option to represent the popular will” (Ellacuría, 1993d, p. 1419). That is why Ellacuría stated that the acceptance of dialogue is a success in itself, perhaps the most difficult step in this long journey: “This break with the past and the start of a new conduct are two fundamental milestones of real historical significance.” (Ellacuría, 1993b, p. 1341). The novelty of this situation is enormously positive: “Dialogue is something new in the conflict situation in the country. It is a new asset, which, properly managed, can move the process forward and closer to the real solutions” (Ellacuría, 1993b, p. 1342).

However, in the overwhelming majority of violent conflicts, and in particular in military and revolutionary conflicts, dualism corresponds to a simplification of reality. Ellacuría therefore stressed the importance

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Preston, P. (1999) *Las tres Españas del 36*. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés.

<sup>5</sup> In the Latin American political discourse, *the people* and *the nation* are synonymous. The discourse of the Left normally uses the concept of *the people* while the Right talks about *the nation*.

of the third force being able to take part in the dialogue. By this concept of third force he meant those voices that are part of the reality of the country but which are not captured by any of the hegemonic discourses. "There are many Salvadorean sectors that they do not feel fully represented by either of the two forces and there are very far-reaching issues that they should not be decided by these two forces by themselves." (Ellacuría, 1993b, p. 1355). On another occasion, he said: "Political parties have so far done very little in favour of dialogue. What is more, until recently they have been afraid to open dialogue, not because the people were not calling for it but because they feared the retaliation and punishment of the few very powerful people who were against it. The representatives of the third social force took the initiative for dialogue into their own hands, articulating the great popular demand. Those who have really fought to bring forward dialogue as a national issue and placed the country in a state of dialogue have been the trade unions, the cooperatives, the humanitarian organizations, the churches, the universities, the professional associations, etc." (Ellacuría, 1993d, p. 1419).

Indeed, the *state of dialogue* must follow the *state of war*. The state of dialogue is a situation in the country where everybody talks to one another, where words displace guns, where all voices are somehow listened to. Ellacuría asked rhetorically: "What does this *state of dialogue* involve?" He replied: "In short, it consists of the majority of the population becoming aware of the need for a national dialogue so this can begin, with the final objective of achieving the peace that is required" (Ellacuría, 1993d, p. 1419). And he elaborates further on this point: "Above all, it is necessary to construct a large collective subject. The more people who commit themselves to this task, the more people who organize themselves for this cause, and the more organizations of all kinds that work towards this end, the better for peace. It is a clear error and a trap to think that the problem belongs to the government and the revolutionary groups, just as it is entirely illusory to believe that this fundamental issue of national dialogue can be delegated to political parties, when they were incapable of promoting it. Certainly, the exchange of views and the negotiation between the two parties in the conflict is one side of the national dialogue, which means it is an issue of national interest that all people, as part of the national dialogue, call for and force dialogue between the government and the FMLN-FDR to begin as soon as possible. However, as important and urgent as it is, this is not all that should be expected from the national dialogue. National dialogue implies that the majority

of the population and most organizations of all kinds move into the state of dialogue; that is, they reflect on the best solutions to end the calamitous situation in which most of the Salvadorean population live. This implies not only that they express themselves, but also that they must listen to what other forces and sectors have to say, no matter how distant their opinions.” (Ellacuría, 1993d, pp. 1419-1420).

#### FINALLY, DIALOGUE AT THE SUMMIT

Only when all the voices have had the chance to state their views on the matter, in the sense of what Ellacuría named the national dialogue, would it be time to start the dialogue at the summit (the political dialogue) where all the representatives would negotiate a just peace. Ellacuría's studies of political dialogue are extremely comprehensive. However, he elaborates on the moral value of dialogue, first in a pacification process and then in the reconciliation process, in his works on the national dialogue. When he moves on to reflecting on the dialogue at the summit, he focuses on the content of the negotiations between the Salvadorean government and the FMLN-FDR, a topic outside the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, the dialogue at the summit should be achieved one day. It cannot be delayed *sine die*, or be underestimated in the purist spirit of genuine dialogue. Ellacuría was a mediator in the dialogue at the summit, which finally became reality after he was killed in 1989. The peace agreements were signed on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1991 in a ceremony conducted with great solemnity on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1992 at Chapultepec castle, Mexico City, in front of many representatives of the international community.

#### THE MEDIATOR, AN ESSENTIAL FIGURE FOR OVERCOMING DIVISION

As has been said above, Ellacuría was a mediator in the Salvadorean conflict and his work contributed to that historical moment although success unfortunately did not arrive until after his assassination. The mediator is an essential figure in all dialogue processes. The mediator has moral authority over the two parties in conflict and, as a historical interlocutor, helps them understand that the time for dialogue has arrived, that the fruits of dialogue will be much more beneficial to everybody than war and that nobody is in possession of the whole truth. The interlocutor

shares something with each party in the conflict, so both parties can recognize themselves in him or her.

The interlocutor can be a person of prestige (such as Ignacio Ellacuría, Rector of the UCA, the most important university in El Salvador and Central America, Jesuit priest, eminent philosopher and theologian, sharp political analyst and man of peace) but it can also be an institution, such as the Catholic Church, or even a group of countries, such as the Contadora Group (Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela), set up in 1983 to mediate in different Central American conflicts. As the interlocutor shares something with each party, it is a living symbol that peace is possible. It is able to introduce the idea of unity into the fragmented discourse and the ethical horizon all political projects seem to have lost sight of.

#### FINAL OBJECTIVE: ACHIEVING A JUST PEACE, A SAFE HAVEN

Not all peace processes succeed. Sometimes the discourse of peace is not well received and one of the parties can easily impose itself on the other. Nevertheless, in the last few decades there has been an increasing number of successful peace processes (e.g. El Salvador, South Africa and Northern Ireland), while others still remain open (e.g. Colombia, the Basque country or the Israel-Palestine conflict). However, if there is to be a successful outcome it can only be a just peace. That was Ellacuría's own belief when he stressed the relevance of the message given by Pope John Paul II on his visit to Central America and the Caribbean: "The final objective is clear: peace with justice, peace with dignity. The Pope wants and is looking for the way to end people's pain, to put a stop to the suffering of the majority, especially the suffering of the poorest in society. He is aware that there is a double cause of the suffering and pain: the fundamental one is structural injustice, the other is violence. (...) The Pope does not want peace at any cost." (Ellacuría, 2002c, p. 59). And he does not want this because "real peace implies putting an end to the root of all problems, including the lack of peace: structural injustice and unjust structures" (Ellacuría, 2002c, p. 60). So, only a fair socioeconomic and political system (that is, one that respects human and civil rights) can be acceptable as a final objective of a social and political peace and reconciliation process. With this aim in mind, along the way it would be necessary to analyse the deep-rooted causes at the heart of the conflict and to set up

a historical process of structural transformation to prevent these causes generating other conflicts in the future. In the Central American case, we already know Ellacuría's reflections on the deep-rooted causes: "Structural injustice, the unjust structures." Obviously, Ellacuría reached this well-founded conclusion after undertaking many thorough studies together with his research team at the university, although one might think it was a crystal clear hypothesis right from the start.

### CONCLUSIONS: THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF DIALOGUE

Violence means violation. Violence is a violation of human life. As stated above, it can adopt many different forms but it always consists of a violation of human dignity, in its physical or moral dimension or both at the same time. An expression of such violence is the lack of dialogue. Violence does not go with dialogue: it goes hand-in-hand with silence (structural violence), monologues (dictatorships) or interrogation (repressive violence), but never dialogue. True dialogue and violence, in any of its forms, cannot live together. That is why the restoration of dialogue as a tool to begin a pacification process (that could lead to a just peace in the future and maybe to reconciliation, although this is easier said than done) entails an anthropological function because it revives human nature where it had disappeared. This is one of the great legacies that processes such as the Commission of Truth and Reconciliation for South Africa have passed on to us.

And this is also the legacy of Ignacio Ellacuría, a man of peace right in the centre of the bloody Central American conflict of the 1980s. On the 25th anniversary of his death we honour his work as a great ethical contribution to modern history.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ellacuría, I. (1976) *Freedom Made Flesh: The Mission of Christ and His Church*. New York: Orbis Books.
- Ellacuría, I. (1993a) Diez tesis sobre un proceso de negociación. In: Ellacuría, I. *Veinte años de historia en El Salvador (1969-1989)*. *Escritos políticos*. Vol. III. San Salvador (El Salvador): UCA Editores, pp. 1271-1297. (First published: *ECA* 417-418 [1983], 601-628).



- Ellacuría, I. (1993b) El aporte del diálogo al problema nacional. In: Ellacuría, I. *Veinte años de historia en El Salvador (1969-1989)*. *Escritos políticos*. Vol. III. 2nd ed. San Salvador (El Salvador): UCA Editores, pp. 1327-1358. (First published: *ECA* 432-433 [1984], 729-756).
- Ellacuría, I. (1993c) Las primeras vicisitudes del diálogo entre el gobierno y el FMLN-FDR. In: Ellacuría, I. *Veinte años de historia en El Salvador (1969-1989)*. *Escritos políticos*. Vol. III. 2nd. ed. San Salvador (El Salvador): UCA Editores, pp. 1299-1326. (First published: *ECA* 434 [1984], 885-903, signed with the pseudonym "Tomás R. Campos").
- Ellacuría, I. (1993d) El Salvador en estado de diálogo. In: Ellacuría, I. *Veinte años de historia en El Salvador (1969-1989)*. *Escritos políticos*. Vol. III. 2nd. ed. San Salvador (El Salvador): UCA Editores, pp. 1417-1424. (First published: *ECA* 453 [1986], 525-533).
- Ellacuría, I. (1993e) Los partidos políticos y la finalización de la guerra. In: Ellacuría, I. *Veinte años de historia en El Salvador (1969-1989)*. *Escritos políticos*. San Salvador (El Salvador): UCA Editores, pp. 1449-1468. (First published: *ECA* 481-482 [1988], 1037-1051).
- Ellacuría, I. (2002a) Juan Pablo II y el conflicto salvadoreño. In: Ellacuría, I. *Escritos teológicos*. Vol. III. San Salvador (El Salvador): UCA Editores, pp. 17-33. (First published: *ECA* 405 [1982], 633-650).
- Ellacuría, I. (2002b) El viaje del Papa a Centroamérica. In: Ellacuría, I. *Escritos teológicos*. Vol. III. San Salvador (El Salvador): UCA Editores, pp. 35-44. (First published: *ECA* 413-414 [1983], 225-234).
- Ellacuría, I. (2002c) Mensaje ético-político de Juan Pablo II al pueblo centroamericano. In: Ellacuría, I. *Escritos teológicos*. Vol. III. San Salvador (El Salvador): UCA Editores, pp. 45-74. (First published: *ECA* 413-414 [1983], 255-272).
- Galtung, J. (1975) *Essays in Peace Research*, Vol. I: *Peace: Research, Education, Action*. Copenhagen: Christian Ejlertsen.
- Keane, J. (1996) *Reflections on Violence*. London: Verso Books.
- Phelps, T.G. (2004) *Shattered Voices, Language, Violence and the Work of Truth Commissions*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Sols, J. (1998) *The Legacy of Ignacio Ellacuría*. Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justícia.
- Sols, J. (1999) *La teología histórica de Ignacio Ellacuría*. Madrid: Trotta.
- Sols, J. (2003) *One Hundred Years of Violence*. Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justícia.
- Sols, J. (2008) *Atrapados en la violencia. ¿Hay salida?* Mexico City: Imdosoc.
- Sols, J. (2011) El pensamiento de Ellacuría en torno a la reconciliación. In: Forum Deusto (ed.). *¿Hacia una nueva era?* Bilbao: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Deusto, pp. 41-98.
- Sols, J. (2013) *Cinco lecciones pensamiento social cristiano*. Madrid: Trotta.
- Sols, J. and Pérez, J.C. (2011) El pensamiento de Ignacio Ellacuría acerca de procesos históricos de reconciliación política. Análisis de siete conceptos: conflicto, violencia, causa, diálogo, pacificación, paz, reconciliación. *Pensamiento. Revista de Investigación e Información Filosófica*, 251, pp. 103-124.