

Sebastian Pittl and Gunter Prüller-Jagenteufel, eds.

Unterwegs zu einer neuen "Zivilisation geteilter Genügsamkeit": Perspektivenu-topischen Denkens 25 Jahre nach dem Tod Ignacio Ellacuría. Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2016. Pp. 228. €45.

Assassinated almost twenty-eight years ago, Ignacio Ellacuría worked in diverse fields, including philosophy, theology, jurisprudence, politics, and education. As editor of the esteemed journal, *Estudios centroamericanos*, he sought out and published essays in an even greater range of fields, and as rector of the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas, he always insisted that the defining object of investigation for a university and all of its disciplines was the national reality in which it worked and which it had a mission to serve. It is thus appropriate that a volume assessing the continued validity of one of his most provocative theses—that the only appropriate “utopia” to act on today is one that envisions a civilization of poverty—should be undertaken from the perspective of multiple disciplines. The fifteen essays collected in this book (eight in German and seven in English) represent the disciplines of theology, philosophy, sociology, political science, poverty studies, and law. The guiding theme is that Ellacuría’s thesis is as necessary today as when he first formulated it in 1982, even though the challenges that confront it are in certain crucial ways different from and more daunting than the ones Ellacuría himself discerned in the 1980s. The essays provide valuable resources for assessing what it might mean to talk about a utopia at all today, and whether and in what ways the utopia of a civilization of poverty (or of “shared frugality,” as the title of this volume, following Jon Sobrino, renders Ellacuría’s ideal) can still orient our attempts to manage the unprecedented crises besetting our now globalized civilization. As with many collections, not all of the essays are as integrated into the whole as they could be, particularly to the extent that Ellacuría’s own envisioning of this utopia is meant to provide a point of reference for the volume as a whole. At the end of the day, however, the volume succeeds in showing that utopian thinking is still important today, and particularly so for Catholics who seek to respond to Pope Francis’s call to contest the “globalization of indifference,” and for Jesuits and other fellow travelers who contemplate a world in which, as the Jesuits gathered from around the world last October at the 36th General Congregation wrote, “the earth bears the weight of the damage human beings have wrought. Hope itself seems threatened; in place of hope, we find fear and anger” (GC 36, Decree 1, §1).

An initial section specifies what Ellacuría’s approach to the genre of utopia was and how he put this quite modern trope (most well-known from Thomas More’s seminal work) in conversation with more traditional

Christian concepts, such as prophecy, salvation, and the kingdom of God. Juan José Tamayo provides a reading of Ellacuría's key text for understanding his approach to them, "Utopia and Propheticism from Latin America," a lecture that he gave in Spain in 1988; Andrew Prevot locates his usage as species of political theology; Michael Lee further locates Ellacuría's usage as a novel and important form of soteriology ("historical soteriology"); Thomas Fornet-Ponse sees it as a theological working out of Pope John XXIII's and Vatican II's advocacy of "reading the signs of the times." Martin Maier offers an essay in practical theology advocating the importance of "the civilization of poverty" for the church's mission to the world today. This section is primarily expository and, to a lesser extent, apologetic, although some sections break new ground: for example, Lee's use of Ellacuría's thought to interpret Pope Francis's *Evangelii gaudium*, or Fornet-Ponse's articulation of Ellacuría's theology as a theology of the signs of the times, which consistently leads to his advocacy of a civilization of poverty.

The second section takes up utopian discourse from different perspectives. Hans Schelkshorn considers the role of utopia and utopian discourse in the history of Latin America, from Columbus to liberation theology (taking up Enrique Dussel, Franz Hinkelammert, and Horacio Cerutti-Guldberg, but, curiously, neglecting Ellacuría himself). Two essays assess whether we are, after all and irredeemably, in the age of the end of utopias. Walter Otto Ösch takes up neoliberalism as the quintessential anti-utopian utopia, and the sociologist Christoph Reinprecht suggests (somewhat soberingly) that changes in "the social presuppositions for utopia," particularly a radical pluralization of value systems in our post- or still-modern age, have sapped utopias of much of their power to mobilize change in our current "post-social" configuration. Michaela Moser calls for "decentering poverty" in liberationist discourses, in favor of an emphasis on (what I would name) a theology of creation that posits every being as created in fullness with a plurality of possibilities. Appealing to thinkers such as Hannah Arendt and Martha Nussbaum (and her "capabilities approach"), this creative and provocative essay would have been even more valuable if it had taken up how Ellacuría's approach could be reconfigured or changed after accommodating her critique. Finally, Juan Antonio Senent de Frutos considers how law and legal systems could become dynamic servants of an "ever greater justice" (an interesting allusion to the well-known Ignatian "ever greater God," and one of only a few echoes of Ellacuría's own thoroughly Ignatian mindset) that could put them more at the service of groups whose possibilities for flourishing are for the most part constrained or even diminished, rather than empowered, by society's legal structures.

A final section proposes contemporary theological-philosophical perspectives on utopia, with greater or lesser engagement with Ellacuría's own

thinking. Magdalena Holztrattner discusses the advocacy by Popes John XXIII and Francis of a church of and for the poor, proposing with Ellacuría's help that the theological-ecclesial principle, "option for the poor" is better rendered "option *with, by way of, and by means of* the poor," in order to avoid the potentially paternalistic features of the former formulation. The contrast with Moser's argument earlier in the book ("decentering the poor") is striking, and could have used further exploration. Gunter Prüller-Jagenteufel proposes Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theology as a model of a "utopian ecclesiology," which is very suggestive (and an important reminder for many who have now forgotten Bonhoeffer), but left me wondering whether Bonhoeffer's utopian ecclesiology can withstand the challenges raised in the volume's second section, or how it coheres with Ellacuría's approach. The final three essays constellate Ellacuría in a fascinating way with other modern/postmodern critics of modernity (whether they explicitly take up utopian discourse or not): Ivan Illich, Peter Sloterdijk, and Otto Neurath (Jakob Deitl's contribution); Friedrich Nietzsche, Theodor Adorno, Georg Simmel, and Slavoj Žižek (Isabella Guanzini); and Michel Foucault by way of Hans-Joachim Sanders's critique of liberation theology as paralyzingly utopian with respect to this theology's liberative intent (Sebastian Pittl). They show the continuing fertility of Ellacuría's work for contemporary theology.

The essays are clearly written (in German or English), accurate and nuanced. Because of their brevity they probably require antecedent knowledge of the thinkers and concepts treated in order fully to understand and build on them. In some cases, particularly in the second section, the reader is left to her or his own resources to work out how Ellacuría's original thinking on utopia fares given the the more contemporary developments detailed there. Nonetheless, we can be grateful to the authors and editors, as well as to the University of Vienna, for this bracing collection of essays that both presents the continuing importance and difficulties of utopian discourse in Christian theology today, and also highlights Ellacuría's own enduring contribution to that discourse thirty years ago.

Matthew Ashley

University of Notre Dame

jashley@nd.edu

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