

Globalization and the Multireligious Situation
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Response to Fr. Joseph Ogbonnaya on "Lonergan and Integral Development"
2 November 2012, 10 a.m., Raynor B & C

Thank for this thought-provoking paper. Not surprisingly, you recognize the inadequacy of the ongoing economic approach to development that has gripped the world. Your overview of efforts to globalize economic development clearly points to the woeful inadequacies and injustices inherent in globalization up to this time, because these efforts primarily benefit materially wealthy people while further impoverishing materially poor people and debtor countries that are struggling to develop their economies and thwarting their ability to make decisions about their futures.

You insist that the ongoing focus on economic development is inappropriate and unacceptable. You also insist that there are personal, social, cultural, technological, military, and, yes, religious aspects of globalization that are interdependent with the economic aspect and must be factored into discussions about development generally and development specifically. You draw wisely upon Bernard Lonergan's thinking about the Great Depression of the 1930s to provide an "integrated approach" to this task, an approach that is aimed toward promoting the good of each person and the common good of all people. Bravo.

This multi-faceted "pro-people" alternative to the economic focus on global development requires the societal, political, economic, technological, military, and religious institutions (1) to recognize the contribution each makes to the development of people and their common good and (2) to engage intentionally in a collaborative effort to orient their contributions toward the development of each person and the common good of all. As you note, this integrated approach is inclusive of the many facets of human life, an approach that contrasts with the ongoing exclusivity of global economic development that aims to make money for international corporations.

Of course, we cannot think about the good of each person and the common good of all people unless we recognize the common good that all people share – a life-sustaining planet. A life-sustaining planet has not been a goal of economic globalization up to this point any more than have the good of each person and the common good of all people been the goal of economic globalization. Studies have disclosed economic development projects throughout the world that threaten the health and well being of people now and into the future—especially the most poor and vulnerable. Studies have also disclosed the threats to the life-sustaining capacity of Earth that have ramifications for people now and into the future. For example:

Economic development projects that have destroyed the forest habitats of animal and plant species essential for human health and well being and for ecological systems in which we function;

Development projects that have filled in wetlands that perform filtering and other functions vital to human health and well being;

Projects that have plowed over prairies, leveled forests for cattle grazing, and built roads through prime agriculture lands;

Mono-cropping by agribusinesses that has depleted the nutrients of soil and turned vast areas into deserts, thereby making lands, especially in Africa, uninhabitable for human and other species;

Depletion of aquifers, streams, and rivers for agribusinesses at the expense of small farmers who also need water to sustain their lives;

Mining of tar sands, hydraulic fracturing of shale to obtain oil and gas, offshore drilling for oil, burning coal to generate electricity and to fuel industrial processes, and a plethora of other development projects that emit greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and are forcing changes on the global climate that adversely affect humans, especially poor and vulnerable people, as well as other species now and that are projected to adversely affect future generations who are not complicit in these projects and may never receive any benefit from them.

This inter-generational injustice is not the only injustice that surfaces when thinking about economic globalization. In all of these projects, funds to cover future

costs have not been put aside. Commonly referred to as “hidden” or “marginal” costs, the future costs of globalized economic development include the costs of adverse effects on human health and well being, displacement of persons, disruption of societies, and the backlash of diminishing biological diversity, the loss of services that ecological systems render (e.g., wetland filtering of water before entering rivers, lakes, and seas), and changes to the global climate. These costs are more than monetary. They are left to the future for others to pay somehow while multinational corporations bank their profits, give lucrative salaries and bonuses to their executives, and facilitate lucrative salaries and bonuses for executives of financial institutions.

Essentially, economic globalization efforts have commodified and subordinated people, other species, the land, waters, and air to the rules and powers of the market, multinational companies, and international trade. The good of persons and their common good cannot be achieved if globalization is approached from this exclusive economic perspective.

Taking the pro-people approach that Fr. Joseph proffers will posit the dignity of human life, the dignity of human society, and the good of all humans now and into the future which is a life-sustaining planet. Development from this perspective is not merely economic. Development from this perspective includes economy as one key aspect concurrent with and in collaboration with the promotion of human capacities, the promotion of human health, and the promotion of human security. Development from this perspective also includes the promotion of biological diversity, the promotion of human living cooperatively with other species within ecological systems, and the promotion of attitudes that view other species, ecosystems, and the biosphere with respect and gratitude to God for making them possible.

That is “integrated development.” I applaud you for bringing Lonergan’s perspective to our attention and to extending it. And, I thank you for providing an opening for me to underscore a life-sustaining planet as the common good of all people now and into the future.