

Preaching Justice: Dominican Contributions to Social Ethics in the 20th Century

Main themes in the book (numbers in brackets refer to chapter numbers)

- *Practical institution-building*, primarily either for workers and other excluded groups or for research and university education (though even in the second case, the motivation for developing the research centres or universities – in countries like Rwanda – was to support excluded or vulnerable groups). This is especially clear in the earlier part of the century: Rutten (1), Gerard and Gafo (2), Lebret (4), Lévesque (7), Spiazzi (11). Stratmann (3) and Pire (6) were also institution builders, though this time the focus was peace (see later).
- *Thomism as a basis for understanding and developing a healthy, open society*. This comes up in most of the contributions. It is of central interest to Todoli Duque (9), Spiazzi (11), Krapiec (13), the very important Walberberg school (16; see p. 344, for instance, where Utz's attempts to demonstrate "how important and current Thomist thinking is in discussions within and between disciplines" are discussed), as well as to most of the English school (including, and perhaps especially, McCabe; English Dominicans are discussed in chapter 18). It is the basis of the restrictions on modern warfare defended by Stratmann (3, see especially pp. 83 – 85), the human-centred economy of Lebret (4, see p. 117), Lévesque's approach to social sciences (7, see p. 153 for instance), the bioethics of Ashley and O'Rourke (10; see especially p. 226) and the dialogue with Marxism of the Croatian Dominicans (19; see p. 443, for instance, or the key phrase below from p. 448). Exceptions to this are the chapters covering South Africa (14, 15) and, to a lesser extent, Brazil (17); the words "Thomism" and "Thomist" are not to be found in these three chapters, though in the Brazilian contribution, several mentions are made of the importance of the thought of St Thomas for the Dominicans of that country.
- *The "Meeting with Marxism"*. This is the most complex theme, and has at least four aspects to it, largely connected to different periods of the history of the 20th century:
 1. *Early 20th century and the interest in religious socialism*: this is especially clear in Van Gestel, who studies the phenomenon in detail, but it is also found in Rutten (1, see p. 58), Welty and his search for a "Christian socialism" (16). It also returns later in the interest of *Vita Sociale* in the connection between Christianity and socialism (8, see pp. 181 – 187 for instance), and in Arntz' analyses of the sources of the Dutch Labour party's manifesto (12, pp. 261 – 263) as well as, in a very different form, in McCabe's interest in socialism (18). In a non-Marxist formulation, Bede Jarrett was also interested in the connections between socialism and medieval society (18).
 2. *Using concepts and economic theory derived from Marxist socio-economic analysis as a tool in understanding practical social problems and in finding ways to resolve them*: this is the way that Lebret (4) uses Marxist thought. This is mostly a middle 20th century form of meeting with Marxism
 3. *Dialogue with Marxism, associated with resistance against Communist regimes where Dominicans found themselves in countries with such governments*: this is clear in the Italian situation, through the analysis of *Vita sociale* (8, pp. 171ff), but

above all in the Croatian Dominicans (19). Amongst them, Tomo Vereš was the main exponent (pp. 459 – 464).

4. Liberation theology: including the idea of “contextual theology” preferred by Nolan. The main exponents here are the South Africans (14, 15), the Brazilians (17), as well as the writer of the preface, Gustavo Gutiérrez. As regards the South Africans in particular, their interest lies in identifying sinful structures, how they develop and what to do about them.
- Dialogue as a way of being: although part of this is already covered under the “Meeting with Marxism” theme, it deserves to be treated as a theme in its own right, as it is crucial not only in the dialogue with Marxism but also with regard to the last theme, peace. Pire has some very profound things to say about dialogue in this regard, especially in the creation of peace (6, see esp pp. 140 – 143). *Vita sociale* saw its dialogue with Marxism as part of its wider dialogue with the modern world (8, pp. 168 – 170). Dialogue also comes up in the two contributions on South African Dominicans: Nolan (14, p. 295) and Connor (15, pp. 306 – 307), and arises several times in the part of the Walberberg chapter on Utz (16, pp. 341 – 347). Tomo Vereš hoped that “dialogue [would become] a way of thinking and feeling, and the daily practice in the various human communities” (p. 460).
 - Peace-making: Stratmann (3) and Pire (6) are the most striking examples, Stratmann because he is one of the main theorists of the peace movement in Germany between the two wars and Pire because of his intelligent practical initiatives in favour of peace after World War II which earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1958. Jos Arntz (12) also made original contributions on the questions of conscientious objection and modern warfare.

Key phrases or ideas useful in promoting the book

- P. 51, the superiors of Georges **Rutten** in response to his request to go down the mines for his research: “The mission of a friar preacher is to preach and certainly not to go digging up coal . . .” (but the Master of the Order supported his request).
- P. 105, **Lebret**: “The greatest evil in the world is not the poverty of those without, but the lack of awareness of the well-to-do”.
- P. 107, **Lebret**: Activists are the veritable saints of modern times
- P. 141, **Pire**: ‘Fraternal dialogue has two aspects. It begins with a movement towards other people. “To dialogue means to look beyond the boundaries of one’s conviction for the duration of the dialogue to share the heart and spirit of the other, without abandoning any part of one’s self, in order to understand, judge and appreciate the real goodness and usefulness present in the thoughts, feelings and actions of the other. One must really fill oneself with the other. It therefore requires one to bracket off one’s self for a moment, who we are and what we think, so as to understand and appreciate the other positively, without necessarily sharing the other’s point of view. In this there is a profound renunciation of self.”’
- P. 156, **Lévesque**, when exasperated with the problems created between the French and English speaking communities in Québec when trying to solve social problems: “There is no French or English way of growing potatoes”.
- P. 398, **McNabb**: “I often admire the efficiency of the modern world’, remarked McNabb

sardonically in one of the quarterly's numbers. 'It does not know where it is going, but it is going there very efficiently'

- p. 447, **Bošković**: "modern philosophy does not really address the question of who man is".
- P. 448, **Barač**
 - In August 1944, the Dominican publishing house Istina published his doctoral thesis, translated into Croat, *Socialna filozofija boljševizma* (The Social Philosophy of Bolshevism) . . . his book was the first in the Croat language to address the phenomenon of Bolshevism as seen from the perspective of Thomist philosophy. The book cost him his life.
- P. 454, **Kuničić**
 - To all those who still think that in Russia 'paradise' has been attained under communist rule, my answer is simply this: if communist principles are applied in Russia, then they are living in hell; if they are living a 'heavenly life', then there are no communist principles being applied there.
- P. 460, **Vereš** "Dialogue is, first and foremost, an ontological model, an understanding of being and of conformity with being which is at the same time one and diverse. This means that everyone ought to conform themselves to the oneness of being and to its diversity: in all his relationships, let him tend towards oneness, while at the same time, respecting differences. . . dialogue only comes about when two persons, or two human groupings, share in their coming together, their thoughts and their projects, with the object of seeking the truth together and working together towards the common good."
- P. 465: "To overcome the lies of Socialism, one must seize the truth of Socialism"
Soloviev