

**Communication and Solidarity in the Era of Globalization
In Quest of Intercultural Philosophy**

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TEL. +82-062-530-0571~3

FAX. +82-062-530-0579

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Feminist Intercultural Theology: Understandings and Purpose

Prof. Dr. *Mar a Pilar Aquino*

Intercultural approaches to the social function of religious discourses have begun to effect changes in the theological sciences. Among the many explanations that may exist for this, I am giving relevance here only to two arguments that are important for the purpose of my reflection. The first argument points out that the multidimensional and simultaneous processes impelled by the current social model of capitalist imperial globalization are raising questions and concerns that the Western-European Christian tradition is not capacitated to address in any meaningful way.¹ Due to its kyriarcal²-monocultural and euro-centric character, this tradition seems to be obsolete and unable to of-

¹ On this, see S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Intercultural Hermeneutics: A Promise for the Future? Voices From the Third World, vol. XXIX, no. 1 (2006): 91

² The term kyriarchy is a feminist analytical category. This is "a neologism coined by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and derived from the Greek words for "lord" or "master" (kyrios) and "to rule or dominate" (archein) which seeks to redefine the analytic category of patriarchy in terms of multiplicative intersecting structures of domination. Kyriarchy is a socio-political system of domination in which elite educated propertied men hold power over wo/men and other men. Kyriarchy is best theorized as a complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social structures of superordination and subordination, of ruling and oppression," Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways. Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 211. Also, as explained by E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "the neologism kyriarchy-kyriocentrism (from Greek kyrios meaning lord, master, father, husband) seeks to express this interstructuring of domination and to replace the commonly used term patriarchy, which is often understood in terms of binary gender dualism. I have introduced this neologism as an analytic category in order to be able to articulate a more comprehensive systemic analysis, to underscore the complex interstructuring of domination, and to locate sexism and misogyny in the political matrix or, better, patrix .of a broader range of oppressions," Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 5.

fer visions which are convergent with the values and aspirations of the social, intellectual, and religious movements that seek responses to the increasing problems of social injustice. While more than two-thirds of the world population experience everyday the burden of the deep social inequalities produced by this model, only a privileged minority of the world's population enjoys its benefits. The most immediate experience of the majority of the people around the world is shaped by the anxieties of poverty, social violence, deadly illnesses, and increasing human insecurity. It is through this experience that people interpret their human and religious existence. From my site of experience in the Americas, it is clear to me that the kyriarchal Christian tradition not only has participated in the forging of systems that produce social injustice, but it also continues in failing to provide people with the reasons to affirm hope in that another world is possible.

The second argument indicates that the function of theological knowledge can be clarified through response to the question of what happens in the reality of the world when the presence and activity of God occurs there, and what happens to the reality of God when this reality occurs in the reality of the world. According to I. Ellacuría, the central concern of ~~the~~ theology is that of clarifying "which historical acts bring salvation and which bring condemnation, which acts make God more present, and how that presence is actualized and made effective in them."³ This concern leads me to recognize that in the current realities of the world, characterized by the universality of social injustice and by the subordination of women, the theological activity can and should understand its function in direct relationship with the currents of thought and with the emancipating social movements that seek to strengthen processes toward a social paradigm of justice. In my view,

³ Ignacio Ellacuría, "The Historicity of Christian Salvation," in *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J. and Jon Sobrino, S.J. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 251.

the processes of struggle to make possible that social paradigm in the world, they actualize in themselves the presence and the activity of God in the world. Consistent with the processes focused in fostering transformative visions and practices toward a new world of justice, feminist theologies of the liberation are increasingly being articulated within the frameworks of a critical intercultural thought.

The development of a feminist intercultural theology shows that alternative modes of critical thought are emerging from diverse contexts around the world. However, it is important to recognize that intercultural theological frameworks are not already-made, much less finished products. Moreover, these frameworks can only come to existence when there are people, such as you and I, who are interested in contributing to the creation of feminist intercultural processes and spaces. Intercultural perspectives do not happen outside of who we or what we do, but they grow there, in the metaphoric and physical border sites, where people re-learn to think: from the new situations of interaction, of contextuality, and of a new awareness affected by cultural diversity. This article represents a modest effort of reflection on my understanding of a feminist intercultural theology as an alternative ethical-political project, so that we can walk with adequate practical and conceptual instruments toward a different world of justice. In this sense, my reflection is only an invitation to the theological community to continue exploring the contribution that a feminist intercultural theology can make to the search of responses to the problems and concerns raised by the realities of today. I have divided my reflection into two parts. In the first part, I present some key understandings of the concept interculturality, as well as some approaches to the basic conditions to intervene in the intercultural deliberations that seek to strengthen a critical ethical-political paradigm⁴ of theological

⁴ On this paradigm, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 32-33.

interpretation. In the second part, I focus my reflection in a feminist intercultural theology as an intellectual activity that supports and develops knowledge for a new world of justice.

Feminist Intercultural Approaches: Understandings and Conditions

From the outset, I want to recognize that it is difficult for me to offer an unitary understanding of the meaning of the concept interculturality. In fact, the attempt at offering such an unitary understanding would be contrary to the character itself of intercultural frameworks because they are being elaborated and expanded in the process of cultural interaction.⁵ But cultures are not fixed products, but rather they are processes that change by human intervention and they affect the various levels of the social whole. In general, the common tendency of a kyriarchal mode of knowing, is toward seeking and establishing definitions to explain things in a clear and distinct way. And the monocultural and eurocentric character of kyriarchal knowledge functions as a key to close possibilities for those unilateral definitions to be modified by other modes of knowing. But also, the meaning of the concept interculturality cannot be encapsulated by closed definitions because people themselves are the actors and subject of intercultural processes. Therefore, people enter into dynamics of transformation as participants in the interaction of diverse cultures and as carriers of agendas for change.

In this line of thought, another difficulty to define that concept is that; on one hand, the meaning of interculturality is bound to the historical context of each people and each culture, and such a meaning depends on the realities, the resources, and the challenges of that context. For example, due to their peculiar configuration, the meaning

⁵ On this, see Raúl Fonet-Betancourt, *Filosofar Para Nuestro Tiempo en Clave Intercultural* (Aachen, Germany: Verlag Mainz, 2004), 12-14.

and implications of intercultural processes will be necessarily different in the contexts of Rwanda, of Guatemala, of Nepal, or of the United States of America. Naturally, the priorities, the strategies, and the resources involved in intercultural processes will show some variations related to the characteristic context of each people. On the other hand, in the contemporary world contexts, the processes engendered by capitalist imperial globalization instill simultaneous interaction - and typically in unequal terms - of the peoples and cultures around the planet. In this context, one would have to pose the question about what interests are represented worldwide, and who are those benefiting from such an interaction. With this, taking into account the difficulties mentioned previously, and being aware of the contextual and global dimensions of the intercultural processes, I also want to note the importance of generating - through critical deliberation, comparative approaches (for determining similarities and differences), and systemic analysis - the possible understandings of interculturality that may express shared commitments, and that we may hold in common across diverse cultural contexts. To this end, I briefly present here some understandings of interculturality that are of help to guide my reflection.

In its more existential dimension, interculturality is understood as a position before life or as a "conscious way of life in which an ethical position is forged in favor of living together with cultural differences."⁶

In this sense, interculturality is an experience that springs from daily life because it is there where human interaction occurs.⁷ That experience goes beyond the mere cultivation of tolerance, or mere recognition of cultural diversity, because it understands that diversity as an opportunity for greater human development through dialogue. As a social force for change⁸, interculturality

⁶ Unless I indicate otherwise, in this paragraph I am using as primary source: Fonet-Betancourt, *Filosofar Para Nuestro Tiempo*, 12-13.

⁷ Raúl Fonet-Betancourt, *Interculturalidad y Globalización* (San José, Costa Rica: Departamento Ecueménico de Investigaciones, 2000), 68.

is an international social movement composed of practitioners who are present at different levels of social institutions, and who operate in the diverse fields of human activity, including the churches and universities. For S.W. Ariarajah, "intercultural hermeneutics has been used to denote a number of movements within the theological scene that relates to interpretation and explication that involves two or more cultures."⁹ In its articulation as a framework of thought and action, interculturality is fundamentally understood as an alternative political-cultural project that seeks, according to R. Fonet Betancourt, "the reorganization of the current international relationships ... [and] to correct the asymmetry of power that exists in today's world of international politics."¹⁰

As such, interculturality has the purpose of transforming the relationships of domination and subordination rooted in today's cultures and societies. The goal of this transformation is for the creation of just conditions to affirm the human rights and dignity of the marginalized social groups.¹¹ As a new scientific paradigm or disciplinary model, interculturality is understood as a "methodology that allows us to study, to describe and analyze the dynamics of interaction among different cultures, and regards interculturality as a new discipline."¹²

In this approach, interculturality "is the theory and method of interpretation and understanding across cultural boundaries."¹³

Putting together these understandings of interculturality, I can discern their orientation toward the transformation of the existing realities to

⁸ On the understanding of the social forces that give orientation to historical processes, see Ignacio Ellacuría, *Filosofía de la Realidad Histórica* (Madrid: Trotta, 1991), 449-457.

⁹ Ariarajah, 93.

¹⁰ Fonet-Betancourt, *Filosofar Para Nuestro Tiempo*, 13.

¹¹ Fonet-Betancourt, *Interculturalidad y Globalización*, 85.

¹² Fonet-Betancourt, *Filosofar Para Nuestro Tiempo*, 13.

¹³ Ariaraja, 92.

the end of shaping a world where there is a place for all the peoples, and where the human dignity and rights of people are possible. In this new world, the subordination of women no longer exists because the kyriarchal cultures and religions have ceased to exist. But for this world to become possible, it is necessary to participate actively in the forging and expansion of the spaces of intercultural dialogue. The conditions to participate in this dialogue include the following.

According to Fornet-Betancourt, intercultural frameworks of thought raise, above all, a hermeneutic challenge that implies "the necessity of reappraising the presuppositions of our own theories of understanding.

"¹⁴

To intervene in theological dialogue in intercultural terms, at least four basic conditions are necessary.¹⁵ First, to historicize the hermeneutical question. This historization renounces to continue fostering the fragmentation and dispersion of the voices that come into contact in unequal terms, as in my opinion, it is fostered by postmodern relativism. Rather, an intercultural proposal undertakes the task of revising and evaluating the models of human knowledge that have dominated the world from antiquity to the present times. From a feminist intercultural perspective, these dominant models have been and continue to be kyriarchal-monocultural and eurocentric. Because these models continue to declare that they are universal, it is not unusual that they ignore or subordinate the emergent models of rationality, such as critical feminism, that propose emancipation and justice as the primary finality of knowledge. For our endeavors, however, a word of caution is raised by U. Narayan, in

¹⁴ Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, *Transformación Intercultural de la Filosofía. Ejercicios Teóricos y Prácticos de la Filosofía Intercultural Desde Latinoamérica en el Contexto de la Globalización* (Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer, 2001), 39.

¹⁵ See, Fornet-Betancourt, *Transformación intercultural*, 39-43. Sobre esto, ver también Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, *Hacia una Filosofía Intercultural Latinoamericana* (San José, Costa Rica: Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones, 1994), 19-26.

stating that we must avoid replicating the limitations of previous theories of understanding, including emancipatory theories that "constructed their emancipatory projects and subjects as Universals, even as they excluded many groups of people from their political vision. We need to remember that many political projects that sought to redefine and empower marginalized groups constructed their own forms of exclusion and marginalization."¹⁶

Second, to relativize one's own modes of thought. To enter into the spaces of intercultural dialogue, it is necessary that each participant in the dialogue relativize their own ways of understanding humanity and the world. This relativization means that the parties in dialogue renounce the prescribed certainties that kyriarchal-monocultural knowledge has given them. Historically, such certainties have prevented cultures and people from knowing and understanding other peoples and other cultures in terms of equal originality, dignity and worth. But due to the fact that the dominant modes of knowing only express the values and interests of the elites located in structural positions of power and privilege, this relativization of one's own modes of knowing also implies to make a shift toward the emancipatory modes of knowing developed by the subordinate cultures. Possibly, the greatest challenge here, is how to access those emancipatory modes not from the customary kyriarchal horizons of understanding, but from a new situation of egalitarian encounter and exchange. To reach a common future of well-being and justice, a discursive exchange in terms of equality is a must.

The third basic condition for an intercultural dialogue is to renounce dogmatic attitudes and unilateral positions. This renouncement means that the parts interested in dialogue understand that the world can and should be different, and they also understand that other models of

¹⁶ Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures. Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 37.

thought are possible to actualize a different world. In this sense, intercultural dialogue does not promote the retrieval or the reconstruction of kyriarcal-monocultural frameworks of thought, but rather it supports the radical transformation of the current models of knowledge. From a feminist intercultural perspective, the renouncement of conceptual absolutisms and of doctrinal dogmatisms is an imperative to make possible an egalitarian communication and open deliberation. For this perspective, the plural voices of theology are called to become involved in processes of exchange and of critical deliberation not only to the end of overcoming fragmentation, but also of working together for a new organization of religions and of the world. This way, the feminist practice of interculturality seeks both, to transform the supposedly universal character of kyriarcal-monocultural knowledge, and to offer emancipating models of knowledge so that justice becomes truly universal from within every culture and society. With this, intercultural theological approaches want to make universal a discursive proposal that affirms the dignity and rights of every person, and it promotes the integrity of creation in every part of the world. For this reason, intercultural theological frameworks not only accept and value cultural diversity, but they also recognize and affirm that it is in the ethical-political space of justice where cultures and religions can come together.

The fourth basic condition for intercultural theological dialogue is to adopt, as starting point, a clear awareness that the cultures known by humanity to the present times, have engendered values and ways of life that perpetuate a politics of inequality, especially in the relationships between men and women. In general, the existing cultures have found in religion the ethical-political arguments to establish patterns of thought and of behavior that force upon women positions of subordination. Therefore, intercultural approaches to religion and to theology avoid deliberately the romantization or the uncritical understanding of one's owncultural tradition. However, such approaches also recognize that in their diversity, cultures also offer emancipating visions

of the world and of human relationships that are helpful in the search for new ways of life that support the elimination women's subordination. In this sense, Fernet-Betancourt says that, as visions of the world, each culture "has something to say to all," in such a way that cultures come to be valuable resources "to seek a common strategy for the life of all."¹⁷

An intercultural understanding of religions and of the theological activity, then, entails a commitment to eliminate that politics of inequality because, theologically, it is contrary to the purpose of God for humanity and for the world. Fernet-Betancourt points out that cooperation or interaction between cultures can be deceiving if it fails to affirm clearly a politics of transformation "that combats in an unequivocal and effective way the asymmetry of power that characterizes the current world 'order,' and that it is made worse in the globalization under way. Only creating conditions of equality and of social justice at world level, the free interaction of cultures can be guaranteed ... so that mutual transformations in their ways of life can be promoted from within."¹⁸

Consequently, a feminist intercultural theology affirms that transformation of the cultures and religions that have rooted values and ways of life which are adverse to the human dignity and rights of women, is a religious ethical-political imperative.

These four conditions to intervene in theological conversations in intercultural terms are favorable to continue developing a feminist intercultural theology that contributes to the search for pertinent responses to the aspirations and struggles of the social groups committed to the

¹⁷ Fernet-Betancourt, *Transformación Intercultural*, 195.

¹⁸ Raúl Fernet-Betancourt, "Interacción y Asimetría entre las Culturas en el Contexto de la Globalización: Una Introducción," in *Culturas y Poder. Interacción y Asimetría Entre las Culturas en el Contexto de la Globalización*, ed. Raúl Fernet-Betancourt (Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer, 2003), 25.

transformation of kyriarcal cultures, religions and societies, and that gives support to the religious visions and spiritualities to sustain such commitment. In the current contexts of capitalist imperial globalization, cultural fragmentation, neoliberal homogenization of cultures, and social inequalities take place in a multiplied and simultaneous way. Due to the fact that the harmful effects of this situation affect women the most, a feminist intercultural theology responds better to the questions about the function religions to induce the social and cultural shifts from a politics of subordination to a global politics of emancipation. To the purpose of facing the challenges that these contexts raise for the theological activity, a feminist intercultural theology seeks to strengthen the development of a critical ethical-political paradigm of biblical and theological interpretation. Because the dominant paradigms of interpretation continue to be kyriarchal-monocultural and eurocentric, their transformation becomes a common task that the theological community shares in the diverse cultural environments. In the words of E. Schüssler Fiorenza, an emancipating feminist paradigm of interpretation understands that

"the task of interpretation is not just to understand biblical texts and traditions but to analyze their power of persuasion in order to change and transform western mainstream epistemological frameworks, individualistic apolitical practices, and sociopolitical relations of cultural colonization ... Biblical [and theological] interpretation, like all scholarly inquiry, is a communicative practice that involves interests, values, and visions. Only in such a rhetorical-emancipatory paradigm of biblical [and theological] studies will liberation theologies of all colors have the possibility of engaging the discourses of biblical [and theological] studies on their own terms and on equal terms with Eurocentric mainstream scholarship. By beginning with the religious experiences and articulations of the marginalized and colonized - of those wo/men traditionally excluded from interpreting the Bible, articulating theology, and shaping communal Christian self-understanding - they can change the

starting point of traditional biblical [and theological] interpretation." ¹⁹
 The braces in the paragraph are mine.

Feminist Intercultural Theology: For a New World of Justice

"Another World is Possible," is the statement that gathers every year hundreds of social movements, human rights groups, religious leaders, policy makers, scholars, intellectuals and activists from all over the world. Organized by the World Social Forum²⁰ this gathering brings together those people who "are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth."²¹ The guiding vision of this people supports their struggles to build alternatives for overcoming the processes and devastating effects of the current kyriarchal globalization. On my understanding of the term kyriarchal globalization,²² such vision speaks of a new type of globalization in solidarity that "will prevail as a new stage in world history. This will respect universal human rights, and those of all citizens - men and women - of all nations and the environment and will rest on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples."²³ The world-wide feminist theories and theologies share in this vision, but they insist in that systemic subordination, dehumanization, and sexual violence against wom-

¹⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza, 46-47.

²⁰ "Another World Is Possible," English version available from <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/>; Internet (accessed: November 14, 2006).

²¹ World Social Forum, "Charter of Principles," English version available from <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/>; Internet (accessed: November 14, 2006).

²² see "The Dynamics of Globalization and the University. Toward a Radical Democratic-Emancipatory Transformation," in *Toward a New Heaven and a New Earth: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 385-406.

²³ World Social Forum, "Charter of Principles."

en must be made explicit in every agenda for transformation so that they finally come to end in all cultures, societies, and religions.

Feminist theologies envision a new inclusive world and work towards new structures that are able to provide better social conditions for a world compatible with God's purpose of justice and liberation. In Christian terms, the content of this aim is understood as the expression of God's glory on earth. In the words of E. Johnson, "in biblical terms, yearning for salvation, for victory in the struggle with evil, for deliverance of the poor from want and of the war-torn from violence is consistently expressed in the hope that God's glory will dwell in the land or will fill the earth or will shine throughout heaven and earth."²⁴ The central role played by this vision in every struggle for change, means that in the present context of kyriarchal globalization, feminist theologies are committed to develop and promote knowledge and practices that transform adverse conditions to God's purpose. Their function is to foster and keep alive the visions of justice that inform every effort to change the present situation. For the Christian community, the duty of working for justice springs from the biblical affirmation that women and men are made in the image of God, and as children of God every human being is affirmed as equal to another in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28). Therefore, no human being is justified or permitted to subordinate others, nor to destroy God's creation. Because of this, everything that destroys the world and degrades humanity is contrary to God's purpose of liberation and formally constitutes a reality of sin that must be eradicated. For feminist theologies, the struggles for justice and for the transformation of the world are a historical, a theological, and an ethical-political necessity in a kyriarchal-monocultural world and religion.

If there is an aspiration that people of all cultures value and share

²⁴ Elizabeth Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets. A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 53-54.

in common, I suggest that it has to do with experiencing well-being and happiness in their daily lives. A peaceful existence with their fundamental emotional and material needs covered, is something that everyone cherishes for themselves and for those around them. But under the present model of society, this aspiration is truly unviable for more than two-thirds of the world population. That is why fostering visions of a transformed world is an activity that feminist theologians must continue to do. A new world of justice is the world that we can call home. M. Amba Oduyoye asserts that "our future as women is in living our true humanity in a world that we have helped to shape, and in which even now we have begun to live and enjoy, conscious of our situation and seeking consciously to change structures and attitudes. Even the prospect of being a part of this calls for celebrating."²⁵ To me, this change of structures and attitudes points towards the actualization of new cultural environments that respond to people's deepest aspirations. Moreover, people's involvement in the contemporary processes of change make explicit that the envisioned different future is already present among us across cultural boundaries. For many of us, the reason of our hope is that through our theological practices and commitments within diverse cultural settings, we are intervening together in the actualization of what M.C. Ventura calls, the "new possibilities to exist with human dignity."²⁶

From the stand point of intercultural frameworks of thought, those possibilities to live as humans with dignity are widen at world level because from within each culture, and from the global interaction of

²⁵ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa. African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 207.

²⁶ María Cristina Ventura, "Prácticas e desafios de la teología Afro-dominicana en un mundo globalizado," in *Teología Afroamericana II. Avanços, Desafios e Perspectivas. III Consulta Ecumênica de Teología Afroamericana e Caribenha*, eds. Antônio Aparecido da Silva and Sônia Querino dos Santos (São Paulo: Centro Atabaque de Cultura Negra e Teologia, 2004), 139. My translation from Spanish to English.

the cultures, an alternative political-cultural project is coming forth, and a critical ethical-political paradigm of biblical and theological interpretation is growing. A feminist intercultural theology clearly adopts and wants to express these developments in a systematic and coherent way both in its methods and contents. For a feminist theological activity, intercultural thought is of help to clarify the function of theology in the current contexts, and it contributes to visualize conceptual strategies to advance toward new cultural environments that support just and humanizing social relations. According to Fernet-Betancourt, cultures "are not already made roads, ready to be traveled with an itinerary previously arranged,"²⁷ My translation from Spanish to English. but rather they are concrete processes "by which a given human community organizes its materiality based on the ends and values that it wants to accomplish."²⁸ My translation from Spanish to English. Because cultures are not static historical formations, reality itself generates plural discursive practices that are often divergent, advocating for interests that are adverse to the aspirations of people. In this context, it is important for me to affirm that the feminist intercultural theological activity deliberately accepts its ethical-political dimensions in terms of its commitment to the struggles for human dignity, for the human and reproductive rights of women, and for a new world of justice.

The proposal of a feminist intercultural theology is not a recipe, or a finished product. I propose that it can be understood as a process of critical deliberation that, in interaction with other liberating theological languages, wants to contribute in the construction of different realities. With its religious language and resources, this theology seeks to participate in the processes of change to replace the paradigm of domination for the paradigm of justice, the paradigm of subordination for the paradigm of emancipation, the paradigm of capital for the paradigm of

²⁷ Fernet-Betancourt, "Interacción y asimetría," 24.

²⁸ Fernet-Betancourt, *Transformación Intercultural*, 181.

human dignity, the paradigm of predatory markets for the paradigm of inclusive communities, the paradigm of domesticating religion for a paradigm of transformative religion, the paradigm of absolutist Christianity for the paradigm of dialogue Christianity, the paradigm kyriarcal-monocultural interpretation for the paradigm of critical ethical-political interpretation as proposed by a feminist intercultural theology. Taking into account these expected changes, I have no doubts in recognizing that a feminist intercultural theology affirms an option for hope. In the words of Fonet-Betancourt, intercultural thought affirms "an option for hope" because it comes to the scene of today's reality "as an alternative to articulate the concrete hopes of every person who dares today to imagine and even rehearse other possible worlds."²⁹ My translation from Spanish to English. In the present of historical reality, the option for hope and the affirmation that another world is possible, are both ethical and religious imperatives for the theological community around the world.

To close my reflection, I also want to note that, adopting the insights of all other liberation theology, a feminist intercultural theology equally affirms that theological knowledge must function in church and in society as a principle of liberation.³⁰ It belongs to theology to abdicate its historical functioning as a mechanism to produce dehumanizing discourses and to validate systems of domination. Consequently, both in its purposes and in its contents, a feminist intercultural theology is articulated according to the criterion of that which damages or perfects "the act itself of people's living."³¹ In the same way, for its epistemological coherence and consistency, this theology takes the feminist option for the poor and oppressed as its fundamental principle of interpretation.³²

²⁹ Fonet-Betancourt, *Transformación Intercultural*, 209.

³⁰ Ignacio Ellacuría, *Conversión de la Iglesia al Reino de Dios. Para Anunciarlo y Realizarlo en la Historia* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1984), 211.

³¹ Ellacuría, "Conversión de la Iglesia," 86.

Finally, I want to suggest that this type of theological discourse is necessarily developed as a collective endeavor and as reflection that is rooted in the concrete contexts lived by our communities. As I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, the most common experiences lived by people in these contexts have to do with poverty and with lack of fundamental human rights. The immediate consequence for our theological endeavors is that of continuing raising questions about how religious languages operate in social life, what ethical-political implications they have, what kind of relationship they establish with the social and religious movements involved in social transformation, what is their impact on the local struggles to advance the justice, what type of responses they offer to the struggles for women's human and reproductive rights, what religious resources they provide to affirm human rights for the homosexual community, what is its incidence in the act itself of people's living, and what type of common future can we envision from the cultural and religious interpretive frameworks advocated by intercultural thought. Nonetheless, although it is necessary to conduct greater explorations, I believe that a feminist intercultural theology has many religious resources to offer visions and interpretative strategies to affirm the right of every person to live free of miseries, from fear, from violence, and from human insecurity. Also, a part of our tasks, as pointed out by U. Narayan, is that of continuing in opening spaces in the institutions of society for everyone to have a place, especially for "those who are socially marginalized and powerless, so that they may become active participants in articulating their interests, commitments, and visions of justice."³³ This is so because intercultural frameworks have as purpose fostering the interaction of cultures for the

³² On this, see María Pilar Aquino, "The Feminist Option for the Poor and Oppressed in the Context of Globalization, in *The Option for the Poor in Christian Theology*, ed. Daniel Groody (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2007), 191-215.

³³ Narayan, 37.

attainment of justice at world scale. Our work is called to continue strengthening the imagination of the theological community so that we can contribute better in shaping viable routes toward a common future for the whole humanity. With its language and religious resources, our work is called to show that another world of justice is possible in this world.