
ALFONSO IBÁÑEZ IZQUIERDO: FROM POPULAR EDUCATION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

I met² Alfonso Ibáñez (Arequipa 1948, Guadalajara 2016) in 1979 in an old castle in Cerisy la Salle, Normandy, which housed a prestigious cultural centre. This was the site of a long (10 days) and lively discussion organised by the philosopher Michaël Löwy to analyse and discuss, in a small group, the contributions by György Lukács and Lucien Goldmann. Participants included Á. Heller, F. Fehér, N. Tertulian, N. Rudich, Gy. Márkus, J. Gabel, M. Jiménez, L. Boella, V. Leduc, Z. Tordai, M. Ziemek, J.-L. Ferrier, S. Naïr and a few other scholars of the works of Lukács and Goldmann. The presentations and discussions dealt with, among other matters, the sociology of knowledge and literature, the transcendental and transindividual subject, ontology, the theory of tragedy, historicism, the hidden God, the dialectics of totality, artistic creation, the novel and women, the problem of individuality and the theory of social classes. Löwy invited three of his students, one of whom was Alfonso.

I am providing these details in order for the reader to understand that while he studied theology at the Centre Sèvres (Jesuits) in Paris and did his PhD in Philosophy at the Université Paris VIII, Alfonso frequented circles of intellectuals who had a clear ethical and political commitment to liberation. For everyone, the purpose was to think of the most successful way of practically engaging in the implementation of justice. Those who came from the “real socialism” of that time were also concerned with getting rid of the “dictatorship of needs” (terminology of A. Heller) that hindered the full deployment of human possibility.

Before this last stage of education, Alfonso received his basic education at Colegio San José in Arequipa, his initial Jesuit training and that on classical humanities in Huachipa (Lima) and his licentiate degree in philosophy from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru.

During his education, while taking advantage of windows that were half-open to alternative thought and getting involved in community and popular education, Alfonso learned not only to see the world from perspectives other than those that were dominant, but also to ethically engage in what resulted from them for social practice. I would go as far as to say -from what I discovered after Alfonso- that this well-matched union between alternative theory and social practice led Alfonso to take an ethical-

¹ **José Ignacio López Soria** is a philosopher and historian. University teacher in several different countries. He is currently a postgraduate lecturer at the National University of Engineering and the Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University in Lima, Peru. He actively participates in Peruvian intellectual discussion regarding the sociology of literature, Lukacsian Marxism, postmodern perspectives and the philosophy of interculturality.

Contact: jilopezsoria@gmail.com

² Moderately improved version with regards to the original that appeared in: Tarea. Education and culture journal. Lima, no. 91, July 2016, pp. 72-75.

ALFONSO IBÁÑEZ IZQUIERDO:
DE LA EDUCACIÓN POPULAR A LA FILOSOFÍA POLÍTICA.

ALFONSO IBÁÑEZ IZQUIERDO:
FROM POPULAR EDUCATION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

philosophical stance that could not develop in any other way than as a political stance. In light of this maceration, his original religious vocation began to cool.

I reconnected with Alfonso precisely at this stage when, at the end of his Jesuit life, he began to frequent the circle of Aníbal Quijano, then formed by Rodrigo Montoya, César Germaná, Mirko Lauer, Peri Paredes, Alberto Rocha, Roberto Arroyo, Felipe Portocarrero, Manuel Valladares, Alfonso and myself, if I am not forgetting any names. It was the beginning of the 1980s. The members of the circle, except for Lauer and myself, were, in one way or another, engaged in the Revolutionary Socialist Movement, a political group created by Quijano. And all together we prepared the journal *Sociedad y política* [society and politics], founded by Quijano in 1972, which, as pointed out by Rochabrún (2007, p. 378), responded to the clear understanding that existed at that time of the fact "that the left should raise its theoretical level". No one was more suited to the task -as we believed at the time with unacknowledged complacency- than those of us who had had the "privilege" of receiving good quality education.

I distinctly remember that Alfonso, who was clever although a man of few words, was far from this illuminist elitism, perhaps, to my mind, because he was close to people, because his work in the Ilo (pastoral) Education Centre, in the Tarea Association, in the Centre for Latin American Social Work and in El Agustino Educational Service was teaching him to look at reality from a perspective that he had not learned in his long academic career.

In the midst of this social work, Alfonso did not neglect his theoretical exploration: Mariátegui, Marx, Ágnes Heller, Cornelius Castoriadis and so many others. He approached the Peruvian socialist early, in 1978, with a book on revolution and utopia in Mariátegui (Ibáñez, 1978) and the paper "Mariátegui y los movimientos sociales" [Mariátegui and social movements] (Ibáñez, 1985), to later return with *Mariátegui hoy* [Mariátegui today], a book that he wrote together with the French philosopher Francis Guibal and published by Tarea in 1987 (Guibal & Ibáñez, 1987), and with "Mariátegui: los movimientos sociales y la democracia" [Mariátegui: social movements and democracy] (Ibáñez, 1995) and "Mariátegui: un marxista nietzscheano" [Mariátegui: a Nietzschean Marxist] (Ibáñez, 2001a), which led to the essays "La utopía del 'Socialismo Indoamericano' de Mariátegui" [The utopia of Mariátegui's 'Indo-American Socialism'] (Ibáñez, 2007) and "El hombre matinal de Mariátegui: un marxista nietzscheano" [Mariátegui's morning man: a Nietzschean Marxist] (Ibáñez, 2009). He learnt from Marx from that most important thing was "pensar la acción y actuar el pensamiento" [thinking about the action and acting on the thought] (Ibáñez, 1983, p. 61). He addresses the disciple of Lukács in the book *Agnes Heller: la satisfacción de las necesidades radicales. Una aproximación al pensamiento socialista de la Escuela de Budapest* [Agnes Heller: satisfying radical needs. An approach to the socialist thought of the School of Budapest], that appears in Lima in 1989 and later in San José (Ibáñez, 1989). Alfonso addressed the Greek-French philosopher, Cornelius Castoriadis (founder, with C. Lefort, J.F. Lyotard and several others, of the Luxembourgist and

ALFONSO IBÁÑEZ IZQUIERDO:
DE LA EDUCACIÓN POPULAR A LA FILOSOFÍA POLÍTICA.
ALFONSO IBÁÑEZ IZQUIERDO:
FROM POPULAR EDUCATION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

councilist group called *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and the journal of the same name) when he was already at the University of Guadalajara. In 2004, the paper entitled “Castoriadis o el proyecto de autonomía democrática” [Castoriadis or the project of democratic autonomy] (Ibáñez, 2004) appeared, and in 2006, along with Francis Guibal, he published the book *Cornelius Castoriadis: lo imaginario y la creación de la autonomía* [*Cornelius Castoriadis: the imaginary and the creation of autonomy*] (Guibal, 2006) which also appeared in Lima in 2009. Alfonso addresses Nietzsche in 2001 with “Nietzsche entre nosotros” [Nietzsche among us], and approaches the German theologian Franz Josef Hinkelammert, one of the exponents and promoters of liberation theology, in 2012 with “Hinkelammert: la rebelión del sujeto viviente ante la estrategia de globalización” [Hinkelammert: the rebellion of the living subject in the face of globalisation strategy] (Ibáñez, 2012).

However, Alfonso's intellectual work was not exhausted with the study and presentation of thought of other philosophers. A piece of text by Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez that Alfonso quotes at the beginning of his paper “La ética del discurso en América Latina” [The ethics of discourse in Latin America] (Ibáñez, 1999, p. 19) is still significant: “toda filosofía que aspire a descender del cielo de la abstracción a los problemas concretos que plantea el mundo en que vive, no puede ser indiferente a la necesidad de esclarecer sus problemas fundamentales, morales y políticos. Solo así puede contribuir ... a que lo que existe hoy, con toda su causa de miserias, injusticias, enajenaciones, sea de otra manera.” [Any philosophy that aspires to descend from the heaven of abstraction to the specific problems posed by the world it lives in cannot be indifferent to the need to shed light on its fundamental, moral and political problems. Only this way can it help ... what exists today, with all of its causes of misery, injustice, derangement, to be different]

In that paper, in order for what exists to be different, Alfonso worked to shed light on our specific conditions of existence with books such as *Educación Popular y Proyecto Histórico* [Popular Education and Historical Project] (Ibáñez, 1988), [*Alcances políticos y culturales de la educación popular*](#) [Political and cultural scope of popular education] (Ibáñez, 1991) and *Pensando desde Latinoamérica. Ensayos sobre modernidad, democracia y utopía* [Thinking from the perspective of Latin America. Essays on modernity, democracy and utopia] (Ibáñez, 2001b), and the essay “Los desafíos de la reforma intelectual y moral” [The challenges of moral and intellectual reform] (Ibáñez, 1996). However, in addition to shedding light, Alfonso took it upon himself to promote his commitment to utopia. He did so, firstly, in *Para repensar nuestras utopías. Materiales de cultura política* [To rethink our utopias. Materials of political culture] (Ibáñez, 1993) and continued with the theme in the essays “Reivindicación de la utopía” [Recognition of utopia] (Ibáñez, 2008) and “El profetismo utópico de la ‘civilización de la pobreza’” [The utopic prophecy of the 'civilisation of poverty'] (Ibáñez, 2010a), in the book *Utopías y emancipaciones desde Nuestra América* [Utopias and emancipations from our America] (Ibáñez, 2010b) and in the studies “Un acercamiento al ‘buen vivir’” [An approach to 'good living'] (Ibáñez, 2012) and “El Buen Vivir como un proyecto civilizatorio intercultural” [Good Living as an intercultural civilisation project] (Ibáñez,

ALFONSO IBÁÑEZ IZQUIERDO:
DE LA EDUCACIÓN POPULAR A LA FILOSOFÍA POLÍTICA.
ALFONSO IBÁÑEZ IZQUIERDO:
FROM POPULAR EDUCATION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

2014). The latter bring forward their final contribution, this time with Gloria Caudillo, with the book *El Horizonte de existencia intercultural del Buen vivir o Vivir bien. Aproximaciones* [The intercultural horizon of existence of Good Living or Living Well. Approaches] (Ibáñez, 2015).

In this relentless quest for utopian horizons, the intercultural perspective was also nurtured with care by Alfonso. Other texts can also be added to those mentioned, such as “El multiculturalismo en América Latina” [Multi-culturalism in Latin America] (Ibáñez, 2002) and “Los desafíos del diálogo intercultural” [The challenges of intercultural dialogue] (Ibáñez, 2011), or that dedicated to the Zapatista movement -“La utopía de ‘Un mundo donde quepan todos los mundos’” [The utopia of 'a world where all worlds fit'] (Ibáñez, 2009)-, a social process that, as I know from our epistolary exchange, particularly caused him to reflect.

I have not placed emphasis on his teaching work, nevertheless it is also testimony to the same theoretical and ethical-political stances. After working at El Agustino, Ilo and the Tarea Association, where his commitment to popular education was clear, he went on to predominantly carry out university work, firstly at the University of San Marcos in Lima, and then in the Department of Iberian and Latin American Studies in the Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Guadalajara (Mexico) and in the Department of Philosophy at the Western Institute of Technology (Jesuit University of Guadalajara). In this last institution, for example, he gives seminars on political theory, Habermas and philosophy of culture. Thanks to the quality of his academic work, he obtained the status of member of the National System of Researchers (SNI) of Mexico.

I will finish with a couple of notes. First of all, his Mariateguism was so pure that, like many Mariateguists, he was not taken with my *Adiós a Mariátegui. Pensar el Perú en perspectiva postmoderna* [Goodbye Mariátegui. Thinking about Peru from a postmodern perspective] (López Soria, 2007). I myself asked him to read it from a critical point of view and he certainly did so. His notes, entitled “J. I. López Soria, ¿un Vattimo limeño?” [a Vattimo from Lima?], were published, followed by my comments on them, in the journal *Hueso húmero* (Ibáñez, 2008). Alfonso upheld that weak Vattimo-style thought is conformist and eurocentric and that Mariátegui cannot be included in the ranks of modern thought, nor should we say goodbye to him because we continue in dominant and subordinating capitalism. Secondly, I will emphasise that out of the three dimensions of Mariátegui's work (constituting a new society based on fair and equitable social relations, performance of politics and providing meaning to social action through discourse), Alfonso was particularly interested in the first and third as they fuelled the theoretical and practical battle that reality and social problems caused him, a battle that can be summed up in the commitment to liberation and utopia, dedication to popular education, the quest for enrichment through exploring different intellectual territories and an approach to interculturality and "good living" in order to give theoretical density and practical meaning to his ethical-political stance due to the profound change in the forms of social coexistence. In short, this was Alfonso's

ALFONSO IBÁÑEZ IZQUIERDO:
DE LA EDUCACIÓN POPULAR A LA FILOSOFÍA POLÍTICA.
ALFONSO IBÁÑEZ IZQUIERDO:
FROM POPULAR EDUCATION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

ongoing commitment: to work in the field of theory and practice in order for what exists today, fraught with injustice and inequality, “to be different” ☺

Bibliography (please note that the list of work by Alfonso Ibáñez that we mention is merely a sample of his extensive intellectual output)

Guibal, Francis & Alfonso Ibáñez (1987). *Mariátegui hoy*. Lima: Tarea.

Guibal, Francis & Alfonso Ibáñez (2006). *Cornelius Castoriadis: lo imaginario y la creación de la autonomía*. Guadalajara: University of Guadalajara.

Ibáñez, Alfonso (1978). *Educación Popular y Proyecto Histórico*. Lima: Tarea.

----- (1978). *Mariátegui: Revolución y utopía*. Lima: Tarea.

----- (1983). Las fracturas de Marx. *Sociedad y política*, Lima, 4 (13), 61-63.

----- (1985). Mariátegui y los movimientos sociales. *Tarea*. Revista de cultura. Lima, (12), 38-41.

----- (1988). *Educación Popular y Proyecto Histórico*. Lima: Tarea.

----- (1989). *Agnes Heller: la satisfacción de las necesidades radicales. Una aproximación al pensamiento socialista de la Escuela de Budapest*. Lima: IAA/Sur, 1989). Also appeared in: (1991). San José: CEP ALFORJA-DEI.

----- (1991). [Alcances políticos y culturales de la educación popular](#). Lima: Descó.

----- (1993). *Para repensar nuestras utopías. Materiales de cultura política*. Lima: Sur/Tarea.

----- (1995). Mariátegui: los movimientos sociales y la democracia. *Espiral. Estudios sobre Estado y Sociedad*. Guadalajara, II (4), 17-26.

----- (1996). Los desafíos de la reforma intelectual y moral. *Espiral. Estudios sobre Estado y Sociedad*, Guadalajara, II (6), 45-57.

----- (1999). La ética del discurso en América Latina. *Espiral. Estudios sobre Estado y Sociedad*, Guadalajara, V (14), 19-48.

----- (2001a). Mariátegui: un marxista nietzscheano. *Espiral. Estudios sobre Estado y Sociedad*. Guadalajara, VIII (22), 11-24.

----- (2001b). *Pensando desde Latinoamérica. Ensayos sobre modernidad, democracia y utopía*. Guadalajara: U. of Guadalajara.

----- (2002). El multiculturalismo en América Latina. *Xipe Totek*. Quarterly journal of the Department of Philosophy and Humanities of Gnosis – Instituto Cultural Quetzalcóatl, Guadalajara, 11(2), 179-186.

----- (2004). *Areté*. *Philosophy Journal*, Lima, XVI (2), 207-241.

----- (2007). *Xipe Totek*. Quarterly journal of the Department of Philosophy and Humanities of Gnosis – Instituto Cultural Quetzalcóatl, Guadalajara, 16(3), 223-246.

----- (2008). *Hueso húmero*, Lima, (52), 153-161.

----- (2008). *Xipe Totek*. Quarterly journal of the Department of Philosophy and Humanities of Gnosis – Instituto Cultural Quetzalcóatl, Guadalajara, 17 (3), 260-263.

----- (2009). *Razón práctica y asuntos públicos*. *Ethics and political philosophy journal* [online journal], Lima, (12).

ALFONSO IBÁÑEZ IZQUIERDO:
DE LA EDUCACIÓN POPULAR A LA FILOSOFÍA POLÍTICA.

ALFONSO IBÁÑEZ IZQUIERDO:
FROM POPULAR EDUCATION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

- (2009). *Xipe Totek*. Quarterly journal of the Department of Philosophy and Humanities of Gnosis – Instituto Cultural Quetzalcóatl. Guadalajara, 18 (2), 138-153.
- (2010a). *Xipe Totek*. Quarterly journal of the Department of Philosophy and Humanities of Gnosis – Instituto Cultural Quetzalcóatl. Guadalajara, 19 (1), 22-39.
- (2010b). *Utopías y emancipaciones desde Nuestra América*. CEP Alforja- DEI-CEAAL, San José, 2010 and Lima: Tarea, 2011)
- *Xipe Totek*. Quarterly journal of the Department of Philosophy and Humanities of Gnosis – Instituto Cultural Quetzalcóatl. Guadalajara, 20 (1), 28-43.
- (2012). *Xipe Totek*. Quarterly journal of the Department of Philosophy and Humanities of Gnosis – Instituto Cultural Quetzalcóatl, Guadalajara, 21 (83), 218-259.
- (2012). Un acercamiento al “buen vivir”. *Xipe Totek*. Quarterly journal of the Department of Philosophy and Humanities of Gnosis – Instituto Cultural Quetzalcóatl, Guadalajara, 21(1), 22-40.
- (2014). El buen vivir como un proyecto civilizatorio intercultural. *Contextualizaciones latinoamericanas*, Guadalajara, 6(11), 1-7.
- (2015). *El Horizonte de existencia intercultural del Buen vivir o Vivir bien. Aproximaciones*. Buenos Aires: El Aleph.

López Soria, José Ignacio (2007). *Adiós a Mariátegui. Pensar el Perú en perspectiva postmoderna*. Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso de la República.

Rochabrún, Guillermo (2007). *Batallas por la teoría. En torno a Marx y el Perú*. Lima: IEP.