

ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Metaphor And Argument In: Ernesto Che Guevara's "Socialism And The New Man In Cuba"



It is difficult to overstate the symbolic significance of Ernesto "Che" Guevara in Latin America. One may doubt Fidel Castro's eulogistic characterization of him as the "model of a human being who does not belong to our time but to the future," "one without a single stain on his conduct" (quoted in Anderson, 1997, 741). After all, Che died a martyr for the ideals of the Cuban Revolution, and the coincidence of Castro's personal and political interests with Che's canonization may be taken as an indictment of his motives in such statements. Less easily dismissed, however, is the astonishing extent of Che's influence outside of Cuba. Rivalled only, perhaps, by José Martí, Che has become emblematic of socialist revolution, guerilla warfare, and lived commitment to political ideals. His fame is by no means limited to Latin America: A survey of U.S. university students taken the year after his death found Che to be the figure with whom most identified, more so than with any North American political figure or other media personality (A special kind of rebellion, 1969, 70-71). Around the same period, when students in Paris took over their dormitory in a social protest, they named the building "Che Guevara" for the same reason, Julio Cortázar (1969) would later write, "that leads thirst to water or man to woman" (94). Nor has this influence diminished with time. Biographer Jon Anderson (1997) writes of his surprise at discovering the veneration lent Guevara in contemporary contexts ranging from Burma and El Salvador to the Western Sahara and Muslim Afghanistan (xiv). Indeed, this and other indications confirm Mary-Alice Water's (1994) opinion that Che's socialist perspectives and lessons regarding political power have acquired an even greater relevance in the years since his death.

This essay considers the lasting achievement of Che's (1965) essay, "Socialism and the New Man in Cuba" (Socialismo y El Hombre Nuevo en Cuba). Widely regarded as his most famous work (e.g., Anderson, 1997, 636; Castaneda, 1997,

304), the essay advances Guevara's conception of revolutionary ideology and the role of the individual. Following its publication in March of 1965, it was to become the central text of the international politics of the revolutionary left in the sixties (Taibo, n.d., 510), and its central figure, the "New Man," would achieve lasting recognition as a Marxist political ideal. In this essay we argue that the success of the essay in significant measure is owing to the rhetorical virtuosity with which Guevara combined abstract political theory and familiar conceptual metaphor. We will demonstrate through a careful reading of the text that an epistemic framework enabled the articulation of three major metaphorical systems: Journey, Construction, and Oppression. These metaphors function within the text not as simple heuristics or explanatory aids, but as literal instantiations of Guevara's political theory. In what follows, we will consider not only the metaphors and their function, but also the ethical implications of such argument by analogy.

1. The Essay and Its Context

The broad outlines of Che Guevara's life provide an essential backdrop to understanding the essay. Born Ernesto Guevara de la Serna in 1928 to wealthy Argentine parents, Che spent his youth between Rosario, Buenos Aires, and Alta Gracia, Argentina. At the age of 20, he entered the University of Buenos Aires in pursuit of a medical degree. He interrupted his studies two years later to make a solo trip 4,000 miles throughout northern Argentina on a moped, followed by a journey undertaken with a companion around the entire South American continent. After graduating from medical school in 1953, Guevara conducted a second trip during which he became convinced of the need for radical political reform. He joined Fidel Castro the following year in Mexico and began training for an invasion of Cuba. The only foreigner in the group, Guevara was initially included because of his medical skills and developing friendship with Castro. However, "El Medico" quickly achieved respect for his revolutionary ideals and was named head of personnel at the training camp in Chalco, Mexico prior to the invasion. In 1959, following three years of guerilla warfare and the successful overthrow of Dictator Fulgencio Batista, Guevara served in a series of roles in the newly-established revolutionary government, including director of the national bank, minister of industry, and Cuban ambassador. In 1965 he left Cuba to incite socialist reform abroad, and participated in armed struggle in the African Congo. Upon returning to Cuba, he determined to organize a series of guerilla factions throughout Latin America. He was captured and executed near the town of

Vallegrande in Bolivia in 1967 at the age of 39.

“Socialism and the New Man in Cuba” was written during Guevara’s travels through Africa early in 1965. The work took the form of a letter addressed to his friend and compañero Carlos Quijano, the editor of the Uruguayan weekly *Marcha*. In it, Guevara meditated on the tension between theory and praxis, and argued for a series of propositions. Using Cuba as exemplar, he developed first a narrative of social development in which an individual leader – namely, Fidel Castro – initiated revolutionary consciousness. This consciousness led to guerilla struggle in which a vanguard mobilized, engaged in armed conflict, and served as a catalyst for expanding socialist commitment. From this first “heroic” period emerged the model of the “man of the future,” a revolutionary totally committed to the cause, capable of “exceptional deeds of valor and sacrifice” (198), and defined by that agency and commitment. The relationship between leaders and followers in a socialist system was described to be one of “dialectical unity” (200), and contrasted with the mass exploitation by leaders in capitalistic systems.

Turning from the Cuban narrative, Che next considered the nature of individual in relation to the state. Sustaining the individual, referred to as the “New Man,” and his revolutionary commitment in daily life and ordinary affairs represented one of the fundamental challenges for socialism. The New Man was always in the making, Guevara argued, “since the process [that creates him] goes forward hand in hand with the development of new economic forms” (203). This process was based in direct education and an ongoing commitment to action. Advancement was linked to conscious engagement in revolutionary change and willing participation in production. In sum, the New Man was educated to “total consciousness as a social being” for the “reconquering” of human nature, thus achieving the capacity to fulfill all aspects of social duty (205-206).

In the final portion of the essay, Che attended to the risks of socialism, noting the dangers of dogmatic extremes, “cold” scholasticism, and “blunted” revolutionary zeal (212). These dangers, and the inevitable sacrifices en route to achieving social freedom, he argued, were justified by the social and individual achievement of the New Man. The essay concluded with a series of axioms drawn from the completed argument: Socialists are more complete and freer than capitalists; the process of achieving socialism is well under way; the costs of achievement are familiar and welcome; the New Man is constantly remade in the process of social transformation; the individual plays a vital role in mobilizing the masses; the

vanguard, the Party, represents the “best among the good”; youth are the promise and hope of socialism. He ended the work with the familiar charge, “*patria o muerte*”! (Homeland or death!) (214).

The nature and success of Che’s arguments become apparent when we examine his essay in light of its epistolary structure, its dependence on testimonial narrative and the metaphoric conceptions that establish Che’s position on socialist revolution. It is to that examination that we now turn.

2. *Metaphoric Analysis*

We assume what Kenneth Burke has termed a dramatic approach to language, assuming that language is a part of symbolic action as it “necessarily directs the attention into some channels rather than others” (Burke, 1968, 45). As a form of symbolic action, language is at once a reflection, selection, and deflection of reality (Burke, 1968, 45). In the act of naming, all language selects a portion of the thing to be described, a boundary that limits that which is named and in its selectivity it deflects the reader/hearer from other possibilities. As such, language serves as a frame or terministic screen, focusing our attention, masking certain things, highlighting others, and suggesting, precisely because it is not neutral, a program of action.

Metaphors extend the linguistic potential of definition as they assert a new perspective, and expand the concept of definition. “Indeed, the metaphor always has about it precisely this revealing of hitherto unsuspected connectives which we may note in the progressions of a dream. It appeals by exemplifying relationships between objects which our customary rational vocabulary has ignored” (Burke, 1965, 90). In this fashion, the construct offers us perspective by incongruity and argument by analogy as it asks us, in Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) terms, to “understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another” (5). The danger inherent in this process is literalization, wherein the analogous similarity becomes an identification, a perceived inherent characteristic. Instead of analogy, literalized metaphors assume the role of proof and reify the suasive interests of those who use the terms. They constrain our conceptual imagination because the metaphor is no longer a figure but a taken-for-granted as accurate description or framework for interpretation. What begins as a linguistic figure becomes ingrained thought and incipient action.

Literalized metaphor, in Burke’s conception, becomes the motive for particular action. When an argument for socialist revolution literalizes capitalism as an oppressive master and the worker as indentured, then freedom is only possible

when the capitalist system is overthrown. In literalizing the relationship of bondage between an economic system and those who work in the system, the metaphor hides any aspects of capitalist enterprise even those which may be positive by supporting economic development and its subsequent rewards. Literalized metaphors highlight those analogous characteristics that further the claim and hide other characteristics which might challenge the assertion.

2.1 The Epistolary Metaphor

The essay's frame as correspondence evokes an epistolary function. The familiar salutation, "Dear compañero," establishes an intimate tone at the outset. This tone is strengthened by an apology for the lateness of the letter and reference to a promise made to write, and by the use of the familiar voice. In addressing subsequent topics such as the bureaucratization of the revolution, art and education, and the critique of capitalism, Guevara stressed the informality of his arguments by calling them "notes" and by emphasizing that they had been written "in the course of [a] trip through Africa" (197). Although he acknowledged that his theme of socialism and man in Cuba "may be of interest to Uruguayan readers" (197), the work retains the intimate tone of one friend addressing another.

This frame poses a choice for the reader: The work may be read as an objective text, a private letter written from one person to another. From this perspective, the essay is of little interest aside from the voyeuristic glimpse into Guevara's life that it provides. Alternatively, the reader may assume the perspective of the friend to whom the work is addressed, and so metaphorically treat the letter as one's own. The work clearly privileges the second of these options by providing attractive tokens of warmth and familiarity with virtually no specific references to the particulars of the relationship that might serve as jarring reminders that the reader is, in fact, a stranger to Guevara.

For the reader, certain expectations are borne from the epistolary structure, since a letter expresses a desire of talking to an absent being, and provides us with the illusion of being able to communicate, to dialogue. In her study on epistolary fictions, Linda S. Kauffman asserts that "epistolary texts combine elements usually regarded as opposites: discourse and narrative, spontaneity and calculation" (26). Guevara was thus able to employ a series of strategies that are usually separated because of their contradictory nature; his essay brings forth all of these rhetorical devices and puts them at the service of his argument in defense of socialism.

Che frames his letter as a narrative, “[l]et me begin by broadly sketching the history of our revolutionary struggle before and after the taking of power” (197). Cuba becomes the scene for his narrative, the New Man is the protagonist, and the initial plot a disaster story that was turned around when the revolution put its trust in the New Man, when “the triumph or failure of the mission entrusted to him depended on his capacity for action” (198). Guevara traces two moments in the emergence of socialist struggle: on one front the guerrillas serve as a vanguard for a journey from alienation and subjugation to liberation; a second and more important moment takes place with the awakening of “the still sleeping mass” (198) and its transformation into the New Man.

In this narrative he resourcefully employs several epistolary strategies; he seduces the readers by the lure of becoming the New Man of the future who will fulfill the potential of “a dual existence as a unique being and as a member of society” (201). The seductiveness of this promise lies in the fact that humankind has its destiny in its own hands while at the same time its most altruistic feelings are awakened. Because this man is an “unfinished product” for the seduction to be effective we have “to compete fiercely with the past” (201) and consciously divest ourselves of an outmoded and destructive way of seeing the individual in relation to society; only then do we break “the chains of alienation” (205). He consistently throughout his essay points out capitalism as an opiate that “lulls the masses, since they see themselves as being oppressed by an evil against which it is impossible to struggle” (203).

Once the reader has been seduced by the image of the New Man one must be persuaded into action. Although Che is exposing his opinion and attacking a capitalist position frontally, he is not defending his position because he is writing for a sympathetic audience, a friend who shares his convictions. Formal support and citation are unnecessary, even inappropriate, in a letter between friends; so Guevara avoids the obligation to provide the sort of grounding for his argument that would be required in other contexts.

In place of the need for such formal grounding, the epistolary framework asserts the credibility of testimonial. Che’s facility with the genre is clear by this point in time. He had kept careful journals of his travels throughout Latin America as a young man, and later rewrote these into a testimonial travelogue. This habit would be continued in his *Bolivian Diary*, a clear example of the so called *literatura de campaña* (Battlefield Literature), a forerunner of the testimonial genre. In such work he takes the role of not only a witness but also an actor, a

comandante who has actively constructed socialism in Cuba and who after his tour through Africa feels the urgency of solidarity, of presenting a united front against imperialism, and of the need for a New Man now more than ever. Thus, he stands for the collective memory and identity of revolution. These characteristics definitely echo George Yúdice's definition of testimonial literature as:

An *authentic* narrative, told by a *witness* who is *moved* to *narrate* by the *urgency* of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.). Emphasizing *popular oral discourse*, the witness portrays his or her own *experience* as a *representative* of a *collective memory* and *identity*. *Truth* is summoned in the cause of *denouncing* a present situation of exploitation and or oppression or *exorcising* and *setting aright* official history (Gugelberger and Kearney, 1991, 4).

By employing an epistolary metaphor and testimonial qualities, Guevara develops arguments without the need for formal proof, advanced as by a friend, and dictated by his personal experience. Within this framework, a series of additional metaphorical perspectives are subsequently enacted.

2.2 *The Journey Metaphor*

It is perhaps not a coincidence that Che chooses to make extensive use of the metaphor of a voyage/trip to symbolize his quest for revolution while "in the course of [his] trip to Africa" (196). The man who loves to travel as his *Motorcycle Diaries* show, and believes in taking the revolution wherever he goes finds in the journey metaphor its most appropriate expression. The journey metaphor is part of a literary tradition based on the quest. Che seems to reinforce this imagery and as the chivalric men before him sets off on his journey. At the end of this trip, however, is not the heavenly damsel of courtly love but the New Man waiting, eager to construct a new society. Another source for this imagery might well be his own guerilla background. That is, Che relies on the imagery of movement, of laying down the path, of being a vanguard or leader to the New Man and socialism. What we see in common with these images is the importance of leadership, of the knight or guerrilla actively seeking to fulfill a dream; there is no space for passivity, because the New Man must be built (202), must be completed (201). As part of this strong commitment, this vision for change, incentives are important to mobilize the masses (202).

In the first half of the speech, Che conceptualizes the revolution as a journey in which capitalism and oppression lie behind the travelers in the wrong turns and blind alleys; socialism and freedom lie ahead. The move away from capitalism is the beginning of the journey: "There remains a long way to go" that will not be an

easy journey; “the temptation is very great to follow the beaten track of material interest” (202). If Cuba and other nations try to follow the capitalist path, to use the remnants of capitalism they will be led into “a blind alley. And you wind up there after having traveled a long distance with many crossroads, and it is hard to figure out just where you took the wrong turn” (202). The road to socialist success will lead to rewards: “[t]he prize is the new society in which men will have different characteristics: the society of communist human beings” (204). But Guevara warns his readers that the journey is “beset with perils” and that although the “reward is seen in the distance; the way is lonely” (201). Uneducated individuals “take the solitary road” and have a “tendency to walk separate from the masses accompanying them” (203); those who are educated into the value of socialism understand their role as the “motor” of society. The masses recognize that the “road is long and full of difficulties. At times we lose our way and must turn back” (204). But Guevara metaphorically holds out the promise of a better life if the journey is completed.

The challenge in this road trip is to discover the right pace for conducting the journey. Che writes “At times we go too fast and separate ourselves from the masses. Sometimes we go too slow and feel the hot breath of those treading at our heels” (204); but always advocates moving ahead, “clearing the way” (204) and advancing rapidly. The task for the emerging socialist nations is to find the right road, the one cleared by the vanguard group, and “not wander from the path” (213) if they want to “create the man of the 21st century” (209) and flesh out the “skeleton of our complete freedom” (213), which the socialist revolution has already formed. Cuba is the case study, the ground for envisioning the proper road, the rejected paths and destinations and the ultimate destination, a place of individual freedom and integration.

Movement, struggle, initiative are key words Che uses to depict the process of constructing a new society. Through incentives that must be both moral and material, education will be the means of raising the consciousness that will become the motor of society (204). Movement as the metaphor that captures the shift from the old to the new is pervasive throughout the imagery of the road and travel. Although he uses all of these metaphors of movement and energy, Che realizes that this activity to promote real change must go through its “institutionalization as a harmonious set of channels, steps, restraints and well-oiled mechanisms that facilitate the advance” (204). It is at this point that he introduces the element of leadership or what he calls the vanguard, those

individuals who “have their eyes fixed on the future and its reward” (204), and who are part and parcel of the masses and “walk in unity” (204) with them. The vanguard is made up of the individuals who perceive clearly the values of socialism, which are only partially understood by the masses. Furthermore, these are the individuals who lead by example, whose ideology is advanced, whose sacrifices enable the masses to see the path clearly.

2.3 The Construction Metaphor

Since Guevara acknowledges that, even in the case of Cuba, the “institutionalization of the revolution has not been achieved” (205), the predominance of a journey metaphor turns into a construction metaphor, emphasizing the need for building the socialist society at the end of the road. It is in enacting the socialist journey that both the New Man and the envisioned society are built. The New Man can be “built without any of the old vestiges” (210) from “malleable clay” (210); and this “basic clay of our work is the youth” (213). Che’s passion and belief in youth stems directly from one of his intellectual heroes, the Cuban Jose Martí. Martí in his well known essay, “Our America” presents a plan for ideological and cultural independence for the region based on an original education of the future generations. Che also is aware of the reproductive nature of education as it certainly reinforces the values and attitudes of society. Thus a socialist education would be based on the idea of preparing young people to live and serve their society and to become a conscious ideological instrument at the service of socialism. Thus, this education to be truly socialist must promote change. Undoubtedly these ideas fueled the much successful 1961 Cuban literacy campaign which not only succeeded because of its Marxist foundations but because it was based on “ a spontaneous response to the experience of teaching and learning” (Mtonga 4). Some like Kozol even argue that it was through the experience of this campaign that Cubans were transformed into communists.

Continuing with the construction metaphor, for Che there are “two pillars of the construction of socialism: the education of the new man and the development of technology” (207). This latter pillar, technology, lays the “basic foundation” (207) while educating the New Man creates a “superstructure” (207) that will topple the “complicated scaffolding” (207) of capitalism. Che’s argument is that socialism requires both “new material foundations” and “build[ing] the new man” (202) through education, hard work, and sacrifice, despite the “difficulties of construction” (210).

2.4 The Oppression Metaphor

We have, throughout this essay, referred to Guevara's characterization of the New Man who can be shaped in the process of socialism and who actively shapes him/herself. This ideal person is contrasted with the oppressed individual, an argument that relies on a cluster of metaphors evoking bondage. Capitalism is personified as a slave master who controls via "a pitiless law" which is "blind" and "invisible" to the masses, yet serves as an "umbilical cord, the law of value" which "acts upon all aspects of one's life, shaping its course and history" (200). Capitalism is imaged as exploitative; as a system that "weakens the combativity of the masses in imperialist countries" (201) and the masses in this argument are depicted as seeing "themselves as being oppressed by an end against which it is impossible to struggle" (203). Capitalism turns the masses "into a docile servant" (207). Its technology, although necessary to socialism as well, is envisioned as a machine that subdues anyone who rebels against the capitalist ideology and except for a few whose "exceptional talents" allow them to "create their own work" the masses "become shamefaced hirelings or are crushed" (207).

The dialectic between oppressor and oppressed is an idea that is pervasive throughout the essay. Che clearly identifies the capitalist system as responsible for indenturing the masses. He uses a series of zoomorphic metaphors to describe the animalistic condition of humankind; he even refers to those who rejected the revolution and abandoned the island as having been "completely housebroken" (208). People under capitalism are like sheep (199) because they do not think, are like wolves (201) because they are competing against each other in a selfish and individualistic manner, and are like monkeys "performing pirouettes" (208) for individual honors. All of these metaphors reflect the sickness of the system and confirm the dehumanization, the lack of awareness fostered by capitalism, and the loneliness resulting from the commodification of the human being. The system, however, continues to entice people who have lost their consciousness and have believed the myth of the self-made man and the idea that people who behave will be rewarded in the next world. It is precisely this idea which liberation ideology would address as one of their main concerns in their choice for the poor.

Given the oppressiveness of the existing system, what does Che see as the key to breaking the chains of oppression? For the masses to reject capitalism and then recognize and embrace socialism they must go through a process of education. As Paulo Freire argues in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, it is through education that they realize the duality between being and seeming to be. The internalization of a

way of life that is assumed as the only possible one (Che claims that the laws of capitalism “are invisible to ordinary people” (200)) leads the ‘seeming to be’ person to the understanding that to be less oppressed means to become an oppressor. This explains, according to Guevara, how the working class lost its internationalism as they became accomplices in the exploitation of the dependent countries. Hope to change this situation comes from the New Man, who is the one who rises above, is not afraid of embracing his true self and of being free; freedom comes with becoming a vanguard of the revolution. As Che points out, the New Man is no longer concerned about “how many kilograms of meat one has to eat, nor of how many times a year someone can go to the beach, nor how many pretty things from abroad you might be able to buy with present-day wages” (211). The New Man is freed internally and externally from these burdens because with socialism he feels “more complete, with much more internal richness and much more responsibility” (211). The metaphors of master and slave that characterize Che’s depiction of capitalism and education and liberation that characterize socialism and its New Man are literalized in his essay. Che seeks the concrete, the black and white world that these images connote.

3. Consequences of Literalized Metaphors

In promoting his ideas, and in practicing propaganda, Che creates analogies that he perceives as holding inherent values. Even the most pedestrian metaphors are used to educate the reader - to establish the conceptual frame for the Uruguayan readers - and to convince them that socialism and the New Man are the way of life. The first metaphor that he literalizes is the metaphor of the oppressor and the oppressed, the slave and the master. His strategy to persuade his readers and to awaken the conceptual imagination is borne from embracing the non-neutrality of language. Guevara nurtures in his metaphors a concreteness of meaning that stems directly from experience. Since socialism by default is the obvious route to take, it is very likely that his contemporary readers of *Marcha* were easily convinced of his arguments and sided with his vision of capitalism as a dehumanizing system with little to offer the masses. Guevara succeeds in diminishing the distance between language and reality, making a powerful and unmediated call for change to his readers. The power of hindsight allows us to admire his strong idealism and desire for revolution.

Yet, there is a key problem with his argument. For the 21st century reader it is a strain to accept these literalized metaphors that act as master narratives which polarize reality so neatly between desired/undesired, good/bad,

socialism/capitalism. Although we can see in Cuba today a community that is strong and where the interest of the people is primary, they have still needed some material incentives since the individual's selfishness has not necessarily been obliterated by socialism. However, there are many examples in which solidarity and altruism have played key roles in the dissemination of socialist belief. For example, Cuba's continuous aid in moments of emergency to other nations (Nicaragua after the earthquake, Honduras after the hurricane), or their eagerness to help out with medical aid or education either by providing technological support or know-how to poorer countries reflects altruism. Thus, in some ways Cuba has become a vanguard in Latin America although the individuals in its society have had to continuously grapple with this issue. Che warns us several times that the process toward socialism is a lengthy and slow one, but perhaps he did not realize how slow or lengthy it could really be. Furthermore, he did not take into consideration other kinds of diplomatic, economic, cultural, or historic problems that would influence and hinder the development of the New Man.

For Guevara the New Man is a reality and he invests him with a series of values: he will be a leader of the vanguard, he will be guided by true revolutionary love, he will be responsible and more complete, and will inspire by his example. Yet the New Man can not come to fruition until socialism has taken place and socialism can not come to fruition without the New Man. As a true Marxist-Leninist, Che believes the Party will mediate between socialism and the New Man. Although he recognizes that the Party can have its faults, as for example, when in March 1962 due to sectarian policy there was a "decline in collective enthusiasm" (199). Also, the Party must keep a fine-tuned balance of not converting the mass into a flock of sheep because it follows its leaders blindly. What would happen if the leader of the party would not follow the people's aspirations? Because of his experience, Che believes that Fidel is a strong and good leader who mediates between the mass and the individual, seeking "a dialectical unity" (200). He defines a good leader very much as the Cuban people define him today; that is, the leader is followed not as a result of a temporary event or because there is a cult of personality, which inspires ideas that "live only so long as the individual who inspires them" (200), but because he has fused himself with the people. Che says, "Fidel and the mass [...] vibrate together" (200). The New Man depends on all of these factors coalescing to nurture him. As with socialism, the effect of literalizing the New Man metaphor leaves the reader with few options and engages us in

change: either we embrace socialism and the New Man or we are doomed to a system that is corrupted, sick, and can only ensure our slavery.

4. Conclusion

Che writes from experience and because he played such an important role in the Cuban Revolution his words were received with respect, love and admiration. When he writes about his faith in the New Man and he supports his statements about the Party, the vanguard, and socialism with his testimonial of the Cuban revolution, his Montevidean readership was very likely to unquestioningly read and accept his letter. We could say that the power of testimony supports his discourse and that the epistolary structure of his statements shapes his message in a reader-friendly simple manner, reaching out to a public and actively persuading them into action with his beliefs. But to the contemporary reader the literalized metaphor is a major hurdle. We read in a critical manner because of our historical and cultural context and hindsight. We question the existence of the and of the possibility of creating a system in which revolutionary love would be the sole impulse driving human actions, especially since we know that the Cuban Revolution has been faced with the problem of incentives and because the New Man is still a project in the making. Although as rhetoricians the literalization of metaphors bothers us, for Che it was a very natural step in his proselytizing discourse to employ such metaphors. He probably saw the constructions of literalized metaphors as weapons that by creating a polarized world and turning reality into two camps, us and them, would engage people in change. Che's zeal stems from his own context, one in which there is no middle ground since the revolution was at stake together with the revolutionary movements in the developing countries in Africa and Latin America.

It is interesting after reading Che's essays that their impetus is timeless. He still awakens in us the desire for a better world in which humankind will be able to display and pursue its full potential. It is outdated, however, when we analyze his rhetorical strategies. He pursues narratives that are clearly defined; he dislikes gray areas and prefers the clarity marked by a final goal, a revolutionary society. Although he acknowledges the difficulty of reaching the goal, of the dialectical movement marked by success and defeat, he also openly embraces the fact that "in a revolution one wins or dies" (1994, 71).

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