

Review of: "How can Ecological ethics assist in the progress of man? - Towards a reflection on the Encyclical letter Laudato si'" data-bbox="57 104 925 184"/>

Guillermo Kerber

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article is a most welcomed effort to deal with one of the burning topics of today, the ecological crisis, building on the reflection of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, especially through the three last popes.

Showing how the ecological question has already been addressed in relevant documents by John Paul II and Benedict XVI, the author presents pope Francis' encyclical Laudato si' as a major development in the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church regarding creation and human beings within it.

It is interesting, however, to note that instead of speaking about "integral ecology", the concept used and developed by pope Francis, the author prefers "human ecology", the term used by pope Benedict. The author links human ecology with integral development, but the latter, as the notion of progress referred to in the title, poses many questions on its contents given the unlimited growth perspective inherent to *de facto* development strategies and policies implemented for more than fifty years in various parts of the world. As German theologians have noted, the adjective "integral", being applied to ecology or development, is very problematic in German language as it refers almost exclusively to mathematics. As the author expresses, German authors have preferred to use *Nachhaltigkeit* (sustainability) instead of integral development.

I wonder whether the anthropocentric point of view needed, according to the author, by Catholic Environmental Ethics, should not be overcome. Hasn't it already in many Catholic theologians? At least I think the affirmation of the author that "it will be up to man alone, by virtue of his position in the environment, to recognize the moral importance of other creatures" should be revised with the affirmation that "other creatures must be respected for their values in themselves and not just for utilitarian reasons". In fact, the intrinsic value of each creature can be seen as a challenging affirmation of pope Francis in Laudato si' and later reaffirmed in the exhortation Querida Amazonia (QA 54).

Furthermore, an enlarged perspective of Christian ethics beyond the Catholic Church, following pope Francis' recognition of the leadership role played by ecumenical patriarch Bartholomew I (LS 3), would enhance the article, for instance in relationship to "environmental sins" mentioned by the author and addressed by the ecumenical patriarch in several of his encyclicals and addresses. On the ecumenical fora, decades long initiatives like Time for Creation (now rebaptized Season of Creation) could also be recognized.