

Review of: "How can Ecological ethics assist in the progress of man? Towards a reflection on the Encyclical letter Laudato si'" data-bbox="58 104 926 184"/>

Elvira Wepfer¹

¹ The Schumacher Institute

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The overall argument – that an ecological ethics is needed to tackle and overcome today's environmental challenges, and that this ethics must ground in a spiritual connection to nature while also taking material responsibility that counteracts globalized capitalist consumerism – is sound. I believe this is an important argument that is worth making from different angles, and as such, the theological angle the author chooses adds to an interdisciplinary and important discourse.

The first reviewer has pointed out two main problems with the text: the language use and the theological tint. To me, too, these seem the main problems arising within the article, and what follows is a summary of my observations, given as constructive feedback and as encouragement for the author to review and improve what is a hopeful if bumpy draft.

The problem of gendered wording remains a strain on both the reading flow and the content's credibility. In 2023 academic writing, it is no longer acceptable to refer to humans as 'man', as much as this may reflect historical practice or faith-based bias. Similarly, the pronoun 'he' no longer suffices, if it ever really did: it is at least s/he, better 'they' and, if this does not sound smooth in singular, you may change nouns to plurals (i.e. 'people' – 'they').

In a similar vein, although less socio-politically urgent: as there is only one author, references to 'us' and 'our' confuse the reader: keep to 'I', and own it.

The author uses terms such as 'ethics', 'globalization', 'capitalism', 'freedom', 'truth' etc. without critical discussion, although they refer to long-standing philosophical themes, complex multi-stakeholder debates and nuanced interdisciplinary discourses. This reduces the paper's academic validity.

It is important to unpack, explain to the reader what you mean, and show that you are aware of current academic debates.

The author employs Christian concepts such as 'sin', 'morality', 'justice', 'grace' etc. as given facts or truths, rather than situating them within a framework of religion. In the same way, the author quotes religious leaders without contextualizing their role. Through this, critical discernment is lost.

Take the courage to engage critically with these concepts or in the very least, be specific about who frames them – as you indeed do in the second last paragraph, where you write 'Since Christians assume that creation was...'

Some terms are used wrongly, e.g. 'anthropological' is used interchangeably with 'anthropocentric' (one is an academic

subject, the other a worldview!). Others, like 'the Hindu or Indian tradition', are reified into monolithic, seemingly self-evident references. Others again, like 'human ecology' are copied from quotes of religious leaders in complete disregard of their academic meaning.

These are problematic glitches which you need to address.

In many sections, especially after direct quotes, it is not clear whether the author continues to sum up the referenced argument or is making an argument of their own. This leads to confusion about the author's argument and positionality.

Be precise! Who says what? What are you saying? And why are you saying what you do? Don't wait for the conclusion to reveal your stance: be upfront about it, be solid.

After reading the draft, I am not yet clear what the Laudato Si is. Introduce the reader to it early on and in clear words, and introduce them to your argument and your main concepts too. Then take them on a journey about what you want them to understand.