Martin Rhonheimer, *Market Capitalism and Christian Social Ethics: A Contradiction?*

Capital – the investment of wealth – precedes returns. Even if the returns – or the profit – have not yet materialized, and even if it is uncertain whether it will ever materialize, the worker already receives his contractually stipulated wages. The worker's wages are always an advance payment. The capitalist gives without knowing whether he will receive his share, and even risks losing it. It is therefore not against justice if the returns or the entrepreneur's profits – depending on the success and the added value – are correspondingly high. With today's corporations acting on a global market, such profits can be many times higher than in previous times. Increasing inequality within economically sophisticated and technologically highly innovative societies is no more than the flip side of the increase in global prosperity caused by such businesses, who act on a global scale on globalized markets.

Profit is not only, as the Encyclical *Centesimus annus* correctly teaches, an indicator of the well-being or well-functioning of the firm. Economically speaking, it is much more: it is an indicator of a fulfilled social responsibility of the firm and of a specific business: the creation of economic value. To make a profit means that the value created by business activity exceeds costs and, therefore, both consumer needs have been met and resources have been productively used. Through meeting consumer demand, society's wealth and prosperity have been increased and, thus, the common good has been served.

The capitalist economy, thus, is both structurally and systemically social. While capitalism is an economy based on giving, socialism is the economy based on taking away – in socialism, expropriation and distribution continues until everyone is equally poor. Where market capitalism is allowed to flourish, it eliminates the most fundamental social problem of humanity: mass poverty. Capitalism does not create equality, but mass prosperity. Socialism in turn creates equality – together with mass poverty.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

The technocratic paradigm also tends to dominate economic and political life. The economy accepts every advance in technology with a view to profit, without concern for its potentially negative impact on human beings. Finance overwhelms the real economy. The lessons of the global financial crisis have not been assimilated, and we are learning all too slowly the lessons of environmental deterioration. Some circles maintain that current economics and technology will solve all environmental problems, and argue, in popular and non-technical terms, that the problems of global hunger and poverty will be resolved simply by market growth. They are less concerned with certain economic theories which today scarcely anybody dares defend, than with their actual operation in the functioning

of the economy. They may not affirm such theories with words, but nonetheless support them with their deeds by showing no interest in more balanced levels of production, a better distribution of wealth, concern for the environment and the rights of future generations. Their behaviour shows that for them maximizing profits is enough. Yet by itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion. At the same time, we have "a sort of 'superdevelopment' of a wasteful and consumerist kind which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation," while we are all too slow in developing economic institutions and social initiatives which can give the poor regular access to basic resources. We fail to see the deepest roots of our present failures, which have to do with the direction, goals, meaning and social implications of technological and economic growth

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Economies of scale, especially in the agricultural sector, end up forcing smallholders to sell their land or to abandon their traditional crops. Their attempts to move to other, more diversified, means of production prove fruitless because of the difficulty of linkage with regional and global markets, or because the infrastructure for sales and transport is geared to larger businesses. Civil authorities have the right and duty to adopt clear and firm measures in support of small producers and differentiated production. To ensure economic freedom from which all can effectively benefit, restraints occasionally have to be imposed on those possessing greater resources and financial power. To claim economic freedom while real conditions bar many people from actual access to it, and while possibilities for employment continue to shrink, is to practise a doublespeak which brings politics into disrepute. Business is a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving our world. It can be a fruitful source of prosperity for the areas in which it operates, especially if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good.

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It should always be kept in mind that environmental protection cannot be assured solely on the basis of financial calculations of costs and benefits. The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces. Once more, we need to reject a magical conception of the market, which would suggest that problems can be solved simply by an increase in the profits of companies or individuals. Is it realistic to hope that those who are obsessed with maximizing profits will stop to reflect on the environmental damage which they will leave behind for future generations? Where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention. Moreover, biodiversity is considered at most a deposit of economic resources available for exploitation, with no serious thought for the real value of things, their significance for persons and cultures, or the concerns and needs of the poor. Whenever these questions are raised, some react by accusing others of irrationally attempting to stand in the way of progress and human development. But we need to grow in the conviction that a decrease in the pace of production and consumption can at times give rise to another

form of progress and development. Efforts to promote a sustainable use of natural resources are not a waste of money, but rather an investment capable of providing other economic benefits in the medium term. If we look at the larger picture, we can see that more diversified and innovative forms of production which impact less on the environment can prove very profitable. It is a matter of openness to different possibilities which do not involve stifling human creativity and its ideals of progress, but rather directing that energy along new channels.

George Monbiot, *The Impossibility of Growth*.

Let us imagine that in 3030BC the total possessions of the people of Egypt filled one cubic metre. Let us propose that these possessions grew by 4.5% a year. How big would that stash have been by the Battle of Actium in 30BC? This is the calculation performed by the investment banker Jeremy Grantham. Go on, take a guess. Ten times the size of the pyramids? All the sand in the Sahara? The Atlantic ocean? The volume of the planet? A little more? It's 2.5 billion billion solar systems. It does not take you long, pondering this outcome, to reach the paradoxical position that salvation lies in collapse. To succeed is to destroy ourselves. To fail is to destroy ourselves. That is the bind we have created. Ignore if you must climate change, biodiversity collapse, the depletion of water, soil, minerals, oil; even if all these issues were miraculously to vanish, the mathematics of compound growth make continuity impossible. Economic growth is an artefact of the use of fossil fuels. Before large amounts of coal were extracted, every upswing in industrial production would be met with a downswing in agricultural production, as the charcoal or horse power required by industry reduced the land available for growing food. Every prior industrial revolution collapsed, as growth could not be sustained. But coal broke this cycle and enabled – for a few hundred years – the phenomenon we now call sustained growth. It was neither capitalism nor communism that made possible the progress and the pathologies (total war, the unprecedented concentration of global wealth, planetary destruction) of the modern age. It was coal, followed by oil and gas. The meta-trend, the mother narrative, is carbon-fuelled expansion. Our ideologies are mere subplots. Now, as the most accessible reserves have been exhausted, we must ransack the hidden corners of the planet to sustain our impossible proposition. On Friday, a few days after scientists announced that the collapse of the West Antarctic ice sheet is now inevitable, the Ecuadorean government decided that oil drilling would go ahead in the heart of the Yasuni national park. It had made an offer to other governments: if they gave it half the value of the oil in that part of the park, it would leave the stuff in the ground. You could see this as blackmail or you could see it as fair trade. Ecuador is poor, its oil deposits are rich: why, the government argued, should it leave them untouched without compensation when everyone else is drilling down to the inner circle of hell? It asked for $3.6bn and received $13m. The result is that Petroamazonas, a company with a colourful record of destruction and spills, will now enter one of the most biodiverse places on the planet, in which a hectare of rainforest is said to contain more species than

exist in the entire continent of North America. The UK oil company Soco is now hoping to penetrate Africa's oldest national park, Virunga, in the Democratic Republic of Congo; one of the last strongholds of the mountain gorilla and the okapi, of chimpanzees and forest elephants. In Britain, where a possible 4.4 billion barrels of shale oil has just been identified in the south-east, the government fantasises about turning the leafy suburbs into a new Niger delta. To this end it's changing the trespass laws to enable drilling without consent and offering lavish bribes to local people. These new reserves solve nothing. They do not end our hunger for resources; they exacerbate it. The trajectory of compound growth shows that the scouring of the planet has only just begun. As the volume of the global economy expands, everywhere that contains something concentrated, unusual, precious will be sought out and exploited, its resources extracted and dispersed, the world's diverse and differentiated marvels reduced to the same grey stubble. Some people try to solve the impossible equation with the myth of dematerialisation: the claim that as processes become more efficient and gadgets are miniaturised, we use, in aggregate, fewer materials. There is no sign that this is happening. Iron ore production has risen 180% in ten years. The trade body Forest Industries tell us that "global paper consumption is at a record high level and it will continue to grow." If, in the digital age, we won't reduce even our consumption of paper, what hope is there for other commodities? Look at the lives of the super-rich, who set the pace for global consumption. Are their yachts getting smaller? Their houses? Their artworks? Their purchase of rare woods, rare fish, rare stone? Those with the means buy ever bigger houses to store the growing stash of stuff they will not live long enough to use. By unremarked accretions, ever more of the surface of the planet is used to extract, manufacture and store things we don't need. Perhaps it's unsurprising that fantasies about the colonisation of space – which tell us we can export our problems instead of solving them – have resurfaced. As the philosopher Michael Rowan points out, the inevitabilities of compound growth mean that if last year's predicted global growth rate for 2014 (3.1%) is sustained, even if we were miraculously to reduce the consumption of raw materials by 90% we delay the inevitable by just 75 years. Efficiency solves nothing while growth continues. The inescapable failure of a society built upon growth and its destruction of the Earth's living systems are the overwhelming facts of our existence. As a result they are mentioned almost nowhere. They are the 21st Century's great taboo, the subjects guaranteed to alienate your friends and neighbours. We live as if trapped inside a Sunday supplement: obsessed with fame, fashion and the three dreary staples of middle class conversation: recipes, renovations and resorts. Anything but the topic that demands our attention. Statements of the bleeding obvious, the outcomes of basic arithmetic, are treated as exotic and unpardonable distractions, while the impossible proposition by which we live is regarded as so sane and normal and unremarkable that it isn't worthy of mention. That's how you measure the depth of this problem: by our inability even to discuss it.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

A technocracy which sees no intrinsic value in lesser beings coexists with the other extreme, which sees no special value in human beings. But one cannot prescind from humanity. There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself. There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology. When the human person is considered as simply one being among others, the product of chance or physical determinism, then "our overall sense of responsibility wanes." A misguided anthropocentrism need not necessarily yield to "biocentrism", for that would entail adding yet another imbalance, failing to solve present problems and adding new ones. Human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless, at the same time, their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued. Nor must the critique of a misguided anthropocentrism underestimate the importance of interpersonal relations. If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships. Christian thought sees human beings as possessing a particular dignity above other creatures; it thus inculcates esteem for each person and respect for others. Our openness to others, each of whom is a "thou" capable of knowing, loving and entering into dialogue, remains the source of our nobility as human persons. A correct relationship with the created world demands that we not weaken this social dimension of openness to others, much less the transcendent dimension of our openness to the "Thou" of God. Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God. Otherwise, it would be nothing more than romantic individualism dressed up in ecological garb, locking us into a stifling immanence.

Celia Deane-Drummond, *People or Animals*

Some members of my extended family are puzzled by the attention many of us are prepared to give to animals, especially our pets. I can still hear the rhetoric: 'Why do so many people devote so much time and money on their pets, when there are people still dying of starvation in other parts of the world?" I'm not interested so much in convincing those who are already self professed vegetarians to show more compassion to animals, but in trying to open up the idea of why animals are significant for all of us. I want to challenge those who think that there are too many big human problems in the world to bother too much about animals. So, is this is an issue of compassion fatigue? Is it that we simply don't have the energy to extend compassion to other creatures once the extent and depth of human suffering and violence to other humans comes to the fore?

Much the same sort of challenge is posed towards those who care about the natural environment; why worry about degraded landscapes or a loss of biodiversity when people's

lives are under threat? Environmental philosopher Holmes Rolston III famously suggested that you can't feed people and save the planet; sometimes we have to make tough choices and that might mean that for the sake of saving species near extinction at least some human lives out of the billions on the planet are put at risk. Of course, rhetoric like this is hugely controversial, but those engaged in animal welfare rarely talk about the ethics of saving species or biodiversity; environmental questions are split off from those about animal welfare. Why is this the case? One reason is historical: environmentalists are most concerned with the functioning of the ecosystem and ecosystem health, so if that means culling deer in order to keep the overall system in balance, then that is the approved action. Those engaged in animal protection, on the other hand, shiver at such a method, and prefer, at best, some indirect method such as contraception that avoids direct killing.

My own belief is that it is wrong to pitch people against animals or the natural environment as if a choice in favor of one automatically reduces concern for the other. After all, we are animals too! Even ancient philosophers like Aristotle and Aquinas recognized this; so for Aristotle humans are political animals, and for Aquinas we are rational animals. Somehow along the way we have lost that sense of connectivity, both with other animals and with the wider ecological niche that both humans and other animals share.

One of the topics I have been working at in my own research is developing a new theological anthropology; one that moves away from more traditional images of humans finding their identity through an assertion of their difference or dominance over other creatures. Lyn White, coming up to half a century ago now, accused Christianity of encouraging an exploitative attitude towards the natural environment. But that attitude of exploitation is not just about the natural world in general, it takes specific form in all kinds of abhorrent practices that treat other animals as objects and valuable only insofar as they are useful to us. I don't need to mention the unmentionable, we all know what this means. Now, it is clear that biblically informed Christianity did not intend such attitudes by the call for 'dominion' over other animals in Genesis 1.28; but those already bent on exploitation have used such texts as a way of justifying their behavior.

What if we go back deeper into history, further back to the time even before such texts were written and recorded? I have become fascinated by the origin story of humans in evolutionary anthropology and I have traced out some of this in a theological anthropology in a new key; *The Wisdom of the Liminal: Evolution and Other Animals in Human Becoming* (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 2014) and *ReImaging God's Image: Humans and Other Animals* (Pandora, 2014). If we look into this tale, then we were prey not predator at a formative stage in our evolutionary history in the Pleistocene, when large threatening megafauna roamed the landscape. The memory of this time has lodged itself in the human mind, so that attempting to kill other animals seems natural to us. But another very early story runs in parallel to this violent one, and that is a story of intense human compassion towards each other and the widening circle of this compassion towards those other animals

that eventually became our companion species. The well-documented domestication of dogs from wolves, for example, goes back perhaps as far back as 30,000 years ago. Cross species affiliations are not unique to humans either; there are some remarkable associations that ethologists have recorded; such as that between a tortoise and a horse. Domestication is sometimes thought of as the way humans managed animals for their own benefit; but some recent research suggests that at least some domesticated arrangements are voluntary on the part of the animals concerned. The point is that the animals in question recognize the benefit of being associated with humans as it protects them from other predators.

In contemporary times, our urbanized social worlds have shrunk from the rich, thick social landscapes with other animals and creatures that still is common in many more impoverished indigenous communities around the world. So, we should not aim just to make those communities more like us in our destructive habits of consumption and production, but the learning needs to go the other way round, to recognize that animals who share our social space are subjects, and not just objects. Further, we have become who we are in association with animals. If we cut out concern for those others in one sense we have denied our own identity and deep history.