

### III. Commoning – Vollzugsformen planetarer Verantwortung



# A pluriversal Common? Thinking about the “common good” in the face of planetary challenges

*Michelle Becka*

## *Abstract*

In the face of multiple planetary crises, the question arises as to how we can act together to overcome them. This article explores the extent to which the common good tradition of Catholic social teaching provides a starting point for this. On the one hand, an orientation towards the common good proves to be necessary; on the other hand, it is subject to the danger of leveling out differences. Following Dipesh Chakrabarty and Bruno Latour, it is shown that a “we” to overcome the crises must take existing inequalities into account and needs a new point of attraction for this joint action. Latour calls it the terrestrial. “Commoning” is located on this track – as a model of thinking and living that takes into account the signs set by Chakrabarty and Latour.

## *Key-Words*

Common Good, Solidarity, Commoning, Climate Crisis, Planetary, Terrestrial, Anthropocene, Christian Social Ethics

The freedom of the individual and communality are not opposites. They belong together, that is the basic assumption of this contribution. Freedom is realized relationally: with others and in relation to the non-human world. Of course, this implies a certain understanding of freedom<sup>1</sup> as well as of communality. This article explores the question of how communality or the common is to be thought against this background. Specifically, its aim is to inquire whether the concept of the “common good” of Christian tradition still is helpful in this context and how it could be developed further.

The reflection sets out from the tradition of Catholic social teaching and finds itself facing current challenges. To do this, I will briefly highlight some basic insights from the Catholic tradition of the common good

---

<sup>1</sup> For an understanding of relational freedom see Becka/Ulrich 2022.

and from more recent environmental ethics (within theological ethics). Both, the common good and environmental ethics, must be asked the same question: Are these approaches enough today, given different present threats and crises?

To discuss this question, I will present selected aspects from the thinking of Dipesh Chakrabarty and Bruno Latour. My assumption is that they give important impulses to face the current planetary challenges together – and to influence Christian social ethics. Finally, this “common” is substantiated with reference to current “commoning” discourses, which emphasize that commons are not simply given, but become commons.

### *1. The common good*

The concept of the common good is important in Catholic social teaching<sup>2</sup> – but it is ambivalent. We need the idea as a corrective to excessive self-interest, but in determining what exactly the common good consists of, the danger of essentialism and exclusivism is high:

It is a core principle of Catholic social teaching that the person must be the center of institutions, and that the dignity of the human has to be protected. This kind of normative individualism is essential<sup>3</sup> and must be distinguished from other concepts of individualism that build on the concept of an isolated self. The individual good can become problematic if it is isolated from the interests of the others, if it is understood as an egoistic interest. And, in the sense of the Latin American *Buen Vivir* (see Becka 2018), it cannot be morally right to speak of freedom and well-being of *some* when it is denied to *so many others*. Because it is a welfare of some at the expense of others. A perspective of “something common” is needed.

Therefore, Catholic social teaching highlights the sociality of human beings – not as secondary or added but as inherent. “For the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human

---

<sup>2</sup> I distinguish between Catholic social teaching, referring to the social proclamation of the Church magisterium, and Christian social ethics as a form and theory of reflection on societal issues, while also critically interpreting the texts of Catholic social teaching.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to highlight this aspect, because, despite this principle, the Catholic Church has struggled a lot (and in some parts is still struggling) to accept individual liberty rights. My search for a concept of communality here is not against but connected to a normative individualism in its sense of respect for dignity and rights of every person.

person which for its part and by its very nature stands completely in need of social life" (Gaudium et Spes 25).

The idea of the common good – that there has to be something good for all – is related to the sociality of the person. It prevents a strong individualism and a very egoistic view. At the same time, the common good should not replace the individual good, but serve the individual. It is characterized as "all social conditions which favor the full development of human personality" (Mater et Magistra 65). We could say, the common good is needed for the flourishing of the individual.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, there exist certain problems with the common good. It is not necessarily obvious what the common good is (beyond of being a promising and important idea). For who defines what is good for all? In recent decades, postcolonial and decolonial critiques have emphasized this problem again. The experience of the non-privileged is that all too often, concepts that seek to say something *for all* end up generalizing only *particular* claims. Accordingly, serving the good of all is rather unlikely, since most of the world's population is not involved.

The question of who gets to define is old: In a certain (and in 19<sup>th</sup> century dominant) natural law tradition, a supra-temporal, or natural source of the good for all is assumed. This "good" is what corresponds (better: is considered to be corresponding) to the *nature of man* as it is recognized and normatively interpreted in the Catholic moral doctrine.<sup>5</sup> Here, the common good, in this problematic understanding of natural law, precedes the individual good, and politics had to carry out the universal good, which was defined by the Church. This line of tradition in the 20th century was met with another understanding and became part of the so-called conflict between the Jesuits and the Dominicans. While the Dominicans were more strongly attached to the understanding of a predetermined common good, the Jesuits emphasized the procedural character of the common good: Nell-Breuning and other Jesuits emphasize structures of social cooperation for the realization of individual and common goals. The common good here is a more functional concept that is understood also as a goal. It has

4 For an insight into the controversial discussion on the common good see the different contributions in Heimbach-Steins, Marianne (2020), especially, Lesch, Walter (2020: 25-43). He highlights the variety of ways in which the common good can be understood. A peculiarity of German is that its plural is more difficult to form than in other languages, and thus a singular understanding of the good for all prevails.

5 See Spieß 2020: The assumption of a good for all comes with as many difficulties as an essential understanding of human nature. Neither can be discussed here.

more of an “a posteriori” character, defined in a certain procedure. It is about balancing interests in favor of the good of all people cooperating in a society, i.e., in favor of the general good (Spieß 2020: 69). As Spieß points out, in this concept, the interests of individuals are upgraded and are no longer subordinated to an ontologically understood common good. Individual welfare and common welfare are interrelated, but no common good shall take precedence over the individual good (Nell-Breuning 1985: 41f.). The common good for Nell-Breuning, on the one hand, is the unifying bond of society and, on the other hand, denotes the totality of conditions that enable the members of the community to achieve their own good (Nell-Breuning 1985: 34; 36). What these exactly are has to be discussed, making this understanding much more participatory than the older concept. But it is an important step to an “unexcited understanding of the common good” (Lesch 2020: 38)<sup>6</sup>, which refers to the material and immaterial facilities society and its members provide to all members of society to fulfil certain interests they have in common.

But the idea of the common good is also questioned by another development that sees it as too narrow, because it does not consider the ecological question.

## 2. The ecological question

At least since the 1970s, in addition to the questions of social interaction, the non-human world has come into view in ethics. With the beginning of environmental ethics, an important change took place: The scope of human responsibility is extended beyond human interaction to the nonhuman environment. The concept of sustainability becomes central, shaped in particular by the 1987 report of the United Nations *World Commission on Environment and Development* (WCED), known as the *Brundtland Commission*: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987: 37). Christian social ethics and, with *Laudato si'*, also the Catholic social teaching take these questions seriously and into account. This was an important step.

---

<sup>6</sup> Lesch refers to Waheed Hussain and his definition in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

With growing knowledge of the consequences of man-made climate change, the situation has become more acute. Windows of opportunity are closing. There is not only a great need for reflection, but an urgent need for action. *Environmental ethics* has long ceased to be an area of ethics among others – the reflection on the relationship with the non-human world is a fundamental ethical issue. The triple planetary crisis (see for example: UNFCCC: 2022) – climate change, air pollution, and the loss of biodiversity – are influencing all areas of human and non-human life. Some use the term Anthropocene to make it clear that human intervention is massively changing the earth itself including the non-living one.<sup>7</sup> What seemed impossible for a long time has become real: Humans are affecting geophysical conditions. The earth-system is no longer an unchangeable background for our actions but is influenced by them – and in response, it influences our actions.<sup>8</sup>

In view of this, one can ask whether the reflections of social ethics are still sufficient here. The thesis is that they are not. Thus, I am embarking on a search for an answer to the question of how we can think further. Indigenous cultures – such as, but not limited to, those of Latin America – are an important source of inspiration.<sup>9</sup> For example currents like *Teología india* are highly relevant for the whole of theology, and it is a blessing for Church teaching that Pope Francis breaks through Eurocentrism when he emphasizes in *Laudato si'* the importance of other worldviews, especially indigenous ones.

In this article, other sources of inspiration will be discussed. Very partially I refer to some thoughts of Dipesh Chakrabarty and of Bruno Latour because they help us to rethink the relationship between the human and the non-human world and the consequences for ethics.

### *3. Chakrabarty and the Dimension of the Planetary*

Dipesh Chakrabarty is a historian and one of the main representatives of subaltern studies and postcolonial approaches. Postcolonial studies, exam-

<sup>7</sup> This is not the place to discuss the concept of the Anthropocene, whether it is necessary or not, or when it started. As introduction in the debate about the concept see Chakrabarty 2022, Adelman 2020.

<sup>8</sup> For early reflections on this see among others Serres 2015.

<sup>9</sup> See Querejazu's contribution in this volume.

ine the impact of colonialism in our contemporary systems of thought and knowledge, the terms we use, our politics, economics, and more. These studies are characterized by a great skepticism about generalizing terms, such as *women* or *orient*, because they homogenize and level existing differences. Another example would be the term *humanity*, because it is usually a particular group meant from which to infer all, yet *all* are not seen. In addition, there is a strong critique of capitalism, because it promises equality (specifically equal opportunities for prosperity for all) but ignores the existing unequal conditions, which ultimately increases the inequality of opportunity.<sup>10</sup>

Chakrabarty, as a postcolonial scholar, is used to emphasize difference and warn against the subsumption of difference in a generalized reference to the *We*. In his book *The climate of history in a planetary age*, however, Chakrabarty now speaks of the necessity of a *We*. He does this, because the condition humaine has changed (Chakrabarty 2021: 32), the crisis we are facing requires collective action. He is aware of the danger that the interests of humanity will be determined by a few, but at the same time, he says, we need this overarching category of one humanity. These two requirements are in tension with each other, and it is important not to ignore this tension. With Chakrabarty (2021: 74), I think, we need to speak of a *We*, but we must be careful and see all its old and new excluding mechanisms, as well be aware of how speaking of “species” veils domination.

In addition to the first difficulty of how to understand a *We*, Chakrabarty confronts the question of why it is so difficult to move to action in the face of the catastrophic situation and the threats we are confronted with. He comes up with two pairs of terms: he says that if we think beyond national boundaries at all, it is in the category of the global we think of. But the global is something like an extension of the local; it concerns only the networked technosphere, as he calls it (Chakrabarty 2021: 16f.; 110; 120). Referring to it as a period of time spans only the history of mankind. But besides the global, there is a dimension which he calls “the planetary”. By this, he means everything which concerns the earth system. This is far older than the history of mankind: more than 4 billion years, with first life forms dating back to 3.5 billion years ago. The problem now is that we cannot

---

10 See also Fraser 2022. It would be fruitful to combine Fraser’s and Chakrabarty’s thinking, but this cannot be done here.

experience the planetary. The planetary cannot be experienced as such<sup>11</sup> and a planetary responsibility is too big for us because we think in the political, which includes the nation state – or in the global as a kind of extended version of the national.

This often leads to the assumption that the planetary does not concern us, that it has nothing to do with us. According to Chakrabarty, with reference to Latour, this overlooks the fact that we are not confronted with the planetary but are part of it. So, we can't ignore it. And we depend on non-human life – from trees to microbes. At the same time, he highlights that, for all the emphasis on the planetary, we should not ignore the role of capitalism, which has (partly) brought about the present situation – and which distributes the consequences unequally. There is no homogeneous *We* since we are not equally affected. The most vulnerable are the poor, often those, marked by racism, and often women. Therefore, we need to think about a common, which does not deny what separates human beings (Chakrabarty 2021: 328). And at the same time, all politics of human wellbeing must not lose the connection to the question of the habitability of the planet and the consciousness that human history is only a part of a history of complex life (Chakrabarty 2021: 330).

Introducing this category of *habitability* Chakrabarty undertakes a radical change of perspective: *sustainability* is not enough, because it remains in the global and does not consider the needs of other living beings. Habitability moves the human being out of the center and can therefore be considered to be post humanistic. What follows from this, and how this works concretely, remains vague and cannot be presented here anyway. But the category of the planetary, to me, seems helpful and purposeful to enable us to think of “common” without being blind to difference. So, the question of how to come to a new policy – to practice the common – without denying what separates people already now remains.

---

11 We can have certain ideas about planetary dimensions; for example, the images of planet Earth from space from the Apollo 8 mission have strongly influenced thinking about planetary boundaries through the sensory experience (seeing) of Earth's beauty. Chakrabarty does not mention this important example. He says that planetary forces and time scales cannot be the direct object of experience. Cf. Chakrabarty, 87 f. He sees this as an obstacle to appropriate political action.

#### 4. Latour and the Terrestrial

We follow a thought that has already been echoed by Chakrabarty (2021: 110-116; chapter 3 and others) and was lent from Bruno Latour. Latour criticizes the sharp juxtaposition of man and nature. In the concept of *nature* the earth became the counterpart of man, which could be appropriated by him. On the one hand, the understanding of nature was too broad, denoted a “great miscellany” (Latour 2018: 87), on the other hand, the cognition of nature was much too narrow, namely natural scientific. Latour does not reject scientific epistemology generally, only their exclusivity. Furthermore, our conception of nature is too passive, even the earth is capable of action in a certain sense, which is something we will come back to later in this essay.

As an alternative to a concept of nature that serves only as a background foil for our actions or resource storage, Latour chooses the concept of the terrestrial. To understand what the terrestrial is and what its function is, however, we have to go back a bit further, for there are certain dangers he wants to avoid with the concept.

For Latour, our political action, which fails to do anything about the planet's current multiple crises, moves along a (more or less) linear axis: from the local to the global. The local denotes attachment to a particular ground, something very concrete, whereas the global stands for world attachment, something more open (Latour 2018: 20-25; 35-37). But there is a modernization movement toward the global, which then becomes synonymous with progress: globalization. Now, he says that *globalization* can mean two very different things:

To move from a local point of view to a global or world-encompassing should actually mean to increase the points of view, to grasp a greater diversity, to consider a greater number of beings, cultures, phenomena, organisms and people.

Apparently, however, today “globalization” is understood as the exact opposite of such. Namely, that a single view has prevailed over everyone and everywhere, is fundamentally provincial, proposed by a small group of people, represents a tiny number of interests, is limited to a few measuring instruments, standards, and forms (Latour 2018: 21).

The global could not keep its promise. It appears as a liberation to some, but a threat to many others. For between the two poles (those who benefit from globalization and those who perceive it as a threat), Latour identifies

a barrier to modernization: Some remain behind it, others have overcome it. This strong inequality is a problem, it is a social problem. In addition, there is no earth large enough to contain all the ideals of the progress project for everyone, especially for those on the other side of the barrier of modernization (Latour 2018: 25). So we have a second problem; an ecological one.

These problems cannot be solved by more progress. Perhaps the barrier can be shifted, likely at the cost of violating the planetary boundaries even more, but it cannot be erased. Therefore, another attractor is needed, a point of attraction that does not lie on this line, with which the usual system of coordinates is left behind. This one he calls the *Terrestrial* (Latour 2018: 51ff.). The idea is that this terrestrial links the advantages of the local and the global without succumbing to the constrictions, and allows opposing the planetary crises. The terrestrial inherits from the local the materiality of the soil, the humus, and a certain adherence to the ground. But it is a soil that cannot be appropriated:

In the negotiation – the fraternization? – between the adherents of the LOCAL and TERRESTRIC, the importance, the legitimacy, the necessity of belonging to a soil must be brought up, but without this – and therein lies the whole difficulty – being immediately confused again with the ingredients that are mixed with the LOCAL: ethnic homogeneity, musealization, historicism, nostalgia, false authenticity (Latour 2018: 65).

At the same time, it inherits heterogeneity and a multiplicity of possibilities from the (positively understood) global openness. The terrestrial is thus grounded and worldly. *Nature* now becomes more than a research object of natural sciences and more than a background of our practices and cannot be reduced to a production factor.<sup>12</sup> It is an *agent*, and it calls us to action. Exactly because the concept of nature is still in danger of being set against the social or against culture, while Latour wants to emphasize specifically the connectedness, he largely dispenses of the concept of nature and includes the central contents in the concept of the terrestrial. The terrestrial, too, is an agent, but its political role is different from the modern concept of nature (Latour 2018: 104).

---

12 Latour here is close to Nancy Fraser (2022) and her concept of a “third notion of nature”. It would be inspiring to bring Latour in dialogue with Frasers critique on capitalism which destroys its foundations. However, this cannot be done here.

This new perspective requires new politics:

Politics needs a common world that has to be progressively composed. Such composition is what is required by the definition of cosmopolitics. But it is clear that such a process of composition is made impossible if what is to be composed is divided into two domains, one that is inanimate and has no agency, and one which is animated and concentrates all the agencies (Latour 2014: 14).

For Latour, it is not about reconciling nature and human society, because this would mean to still thinking in opposites.<sup>13</sup> He wants us to understand that there are different forms of agency, and that what we call *nature* has agency in different ways. Forms of politics are needed which accept these forms of agency and allow for a fair distribution of agency, in the sense that all agencies have to be respected and to be made possible. What *happens* in nature then is no longer a disturbing factor to politics but part of politics: "Forces will not enter the political arena as what stops the discussions but as what feeds them" (Latour 2014: 16). Only politics that consider the agency of the earth can be able to make changes.

Thinking about *the common* and the common good today must not ignore the good for/of the non-human world. Of course, the difficulties mentioned before about who defines the common good will get even more complicated if we want to define what is good for the non-human world and a lot of conceptual work has to be done; and perhaps we find out that the concept of the common good does not fit at all. But Latour might offer us a possible way to think further. Two aspects are considered to be especially helpful: First, with his proposal to expand and diversify the concept of agency, he opens ways to think the common differently – not in distinction from but in connection with the non-human world. In doing this, however, he does not deny the special responsibility of humans: It is the humans who have to act, and the Global North (especially Europe), that caused the majority of the worldwide problems, has a special responsibility (Latour 2018: 115-123). And second, we have to highlight that his concept of the terrestrial represents an openness in how to think, how to make politics, without forgetting the grounding, the *terroir*.

---

<sup>13</sup> This shows that he is inspired by Serres' natural contract but rejects the idea to overcome this opposition (Latour 2014: 15).

## 5. Common(s) and commoning

On this basis, we can now think again about the common or the common good, having learned that if we want to stick to the concept it has to be understood in a more open sense, dynamic instead of static, non-homogenizing and non-exclusive – and not separate from the non-human world. We can find inspiration for this in commons movements and commons research, which, until now, have a low resonance in Christian social ethics.

The history of increasing economization and individualization is always accompanied by projects and grassroots-movements that try to oppose these developments with a different way of life. These can be the very big projects, like Mondragon in Spain or the more politically oriented Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. But there are also numerous small movements and projects that try out other ways of living and organizing, with a lot of networking happening between them. And there is research – academic and non-academic – on these projects. Sometimes the research and the projects are closely related, sometimes they are not. While in economic research, many follow Hardin's ideas of the *tragedy of the commons*<sup>14</sup> and therefore do not see it as helpful, it has been clear to many others, since Nobel Prize winner Elenor Ostrom at the latest, that the general statement of commons being uneconomic is not tenable.

But the topic goes far beyond economics, reaching towards questions such as that of the management of goods. The understanding of the commons, that I want to highlight here, is about relationality and the organizational forms of it. Or with David Bollier:

The commons is an active, living process. It is less a noun than a verb because it is primarily about the social practices of commoning-acts of mutual support, conflict, negotiation, communication and experimentation that are needed to create systems to manage shared resources. This process blends production (self-provisioning), governance, culture, and personal interests into one integrated system (2015: 2).

Because commons are not thought of statically, but dynamically, the verb “commoning” is preferred (see also Foster/Swiney 2022: 1-14). It stands for the processual and unfinished nature of the commons and puts the focus

<sup>14</sup> In his influential article from 1968, Hardin argued that the common use of resources does not work, because people, acting in rational self-interest, tend to over-use it, and may end up destroying its value altogether (see Hardin 1968: 1243-1248).

on common action. This is important because, as we know, any form of communality, common or common good, has a propensity to solidify. Then the common becomes exclusive; then the commons or common good are after all again dependent only on the power of definition of some.

This contribution stresses that the concept of commoning makes an important contribution to understanding social-ecological transformations, for example, through forms of shared use of goods, the alternative design of organizational forms and the associated reflection on normative guiding concepts, to name but a few. We have to be aware that nationalism and other exclusive understandings of a (however defined) “We” could also be understood as a form of commoning that contributes to socio-ecological transformation but mostly in a destructive, entropic sense. In contrast to this, I understand commoning with the breadth of current commoning research as non-exclusive project, being committed to democracy and constitutional norms. And the relationality that connects people also connects humans and the non-human world – in whatever way. It is about a good life in relation to others and the non-human world in fair institutions that make this possible. So, it is not surprising that the commoning discourse is linked to the discourse on the Anthropocene and overcomes the nature/culture or social/cultural divide (Grear 2020). One important thing we gain from framing commons as commoning of different agents (human and non-human), is “its focus on co-negotiation, contingency, and the need to analyse critically what counts and for whom and why in a messy play of world-making” (Grear 2020: 352).

Commoners, like David Bollier, emphasize the importance of grassroot movements and concrete projects, calling them islands or peninsulas within society. They have a great importance because they show alternative ways of life and make these tangible. They have model character.<sup>15</sup> Overall, there are many of these movements and projects and they offer more than life models. Escobar (2020: 75) names the “emergence of projects based on different ontological commitments and ways of worlding, including commoning” as *pluriversal* in nature: There is not only one way of understanding and of living, not only one approach to the world but many. “The pluriverse is a tool, first, for making alternatives to the one world plausible to one-worlders; and second, for providing resonance to those other worlds that interrupt

---

15 In my understanding, however, institutions and the state are needed at the same time. These structures have to be designed in a certain way, and commoning can inspire this design.

the one-world story" (Escobar 2020: 75). So, another accomplishment of commoning, is offering different world stories.

But commoning can accomplish something further: In the particular way of living on a small scale, the terrestrial (or planetary), as we have come to know it, shines forth. Corinne Pelluchon says we must learn to adapt our sensibility and imagination to our power to act. Human action has an impact on the earth's system, but our perception of it is very limited (Pelluchon 2021).<sup>16</sup> Commoning projects can be places of perception and places of learning. They allow for relationality – the relationship to others and to the non-human world – to be experienced; they are fields of experimentation. To a certain extent, they can visualize what Latour's terrestrial suggests: groundedness and openness. They offer pathways towards understanding how forms of communality do not become exclusive and that they remain – in the sense of Chakrabarty – aware of difference.

## *6. And the common good? Back to Christian social ethics*

In the end, this leads us back to the traditions of Christian social ethics – and the common good. Via Chakrabarty, Latour, and commoning, the concept of the common good can be broadened. The link with commoning could prevent the concept of common good from becoming too narrow, static, rigid, and exclusive. Commoning is rooted in practice and experience. These aspects can, with some difficulties, be integrated in common good thinking. However, I want to conclude with saying that there is also another traditional concept in Christian social ethics which is very close to what has been developed here. This is solidarity, which in the tradition of Catholic social teaching is closely related to the common good. It builds on the connectedness and dependency between people. As John Paul II writes in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38:

When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a 'virtue,' is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.

---

16 Also Chakrabarty faces this problem as seen before.

The starting point of solidarity is particularity – not in the sense of identity factors, but the commitment to common goals. That is to say: joint action. In joint action, solidarity grows. The first step towards solidarity is the sensitive perception that something is wrong, the perception of injustice, the attentive and empathetic looking at and recognizing of the suffering and a violation of the dignity of the other. From the recognition that justice is lacking in these situations follows solidarity action, which is a commitment to justice, in the sense of a “more just” situation. Solidarity is thus characterized by its dynamic and processual nature.<sup>17</sup>

More easily than with the common good, solidarity can be thought in the plural. This means that it is not necessary for solidarity to spread to all people at once. Rather, what is needed is a network of solidarities. Such an understanding can counteract two dangers. Precisely because solidarity is based on particularity, it is sometimes reduced to ties within specific groups (often based on certain identity markers). This is a narrowing of identity, which is also often linked to a friend-foe mentality and which gets exclusive. Or solidarity is extended to such an extent that it loses its impact. Both should be avoided.

Jon Sobrino (1982: 4) once said: “The root of solidarity lies in what unleashes human co-responsibility”. It takes a trigger or a catalyst for people to recognize themselves as co-responsible. Joint action in the sense of commoning could have such a catalytic effect: It could sensitize and motivate.

This dynamic understanding of solidarity – which is also rooted in the Christian tradition – must be defended and further developed: From Chakrabarty, the category of the planetary and the idea of habitability for all and for everything that lives should lead us further, and the tension that that necessary common must not deny what already separates people, and that it should certainly not increase this inequality must be taken to heart. In addition, Latour’s idea of the terrestrial, the openness with grounding, can help to think broadly in connectedness, and at the same time prevent unnecessary polarization into progressive and conservative. Commoning then, on the one hand, is a practice of connectedness that creates in dynamic ways commons and also a consciousness of *a common*

---

17 See more detailed: Becka 2020: 19-54: 42. Solidarity is closely linked to experience. Especially Dietmar Mieth’s distinction of experience of contrast, experience of sense and experience of motivation is helpful to understand the dynamic of how to come from injustice to common action. See Mieth 1977: 120-124.

in the sense of what connects people. Surprisingly, this is much closer to the traditional concepts of solidarity than of the common good. However, so far, solidarity has hardly been extended to the non-human sphere. This is something to think about.

### *Ecclesiastical Documents*

Pope Francis: Encyclical Letter “Laudato Si” on Care for our Common Home, 24.05.2015: [[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)] (last accessed: 26 March 2024).

Pope John Paul II: Encyclical Letter “Sollicitudo Rei Socialis”, 30.12.1987: [[https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30121987\\_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html)] (last accessed: 26 March 2024).

Pope John XXIII: Encyclical Letter “Mater et Magistra” on Christianity and Social Progress, 15.05.1961: [[https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_15051961\\_mater.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html)] (last accessed: 26 March 2024).

Second Vatican Council: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern World “Gaudium et Spes”, 07.12.1965: [[https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_ge.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_ge.html)] (last accessed: 26 March 2024).

### *Bibliography*

Adelman, Sam: Modernity, Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and the Climate Crisis, in: Anna Greal, David Bolliger (ed.): *The great awakening: New Modes of Life amidst Capitalist Ruins*. Punctumbooks 2020, 23-56.

Becka, Michelle/Ulrich, Johannes: Herausgeförderte Freiheit: Konturen eines Begriffs von Freiheit mit anderen, Kirche und Gesellschaft, herausgegeben von der KSZ, in: Grüne Reihe 495 (2022): [<https://www.gruene-reihe.eu/artikel/herausgeförderte-freiheit>] (last accessed: 26 June 2024).

Becka, Michelle: Buen Vivir: Von einem schillernden Verfassungsprinzip und einer Vision von Gerechtigkeit und Frieden, in: Margit Eckholt, Virginia R. Azcuy (ed.): *Friedensräume*. Münster 2018, 191-204.

Becka, Michelle: Kritik und Solidarität: Zu einem sozialethischen Verständnis von Kritik, in: Michelle Becka et al. (ed.): *Sozialethik als Kritik*. Baden-Baden 2020, 19-54.

Bolliger, David: Commoning as a Transformative Social Paradigm. Open source 2015: [<https://base.socioeco.org/docs/davidbolliger.pdf>] (last accessed: 7 November 2023).

Chakrabarty, Dipesh: *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*. Chicago 2021. Deutsche Ausgabe: *Das Klima der Geschichte im planetarischen Zeitalter*. Berlin 2022.

Escobar, Arturo: *Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible*. New York 2020.

Fraser, Nancy: *Cannibal Capitalism: How our System is Devouring Democracy, Care, and the Planet and What We Can Do About It*. London, New York 2022.

Foster, Sheila R./Swiney, Chrystie F.: Introduction, in: Sheila R. Forster, Chrystie F. Swiney (ed.): *The Cambridge Handbook on Commons Research Innovations*. Cambridge 2022, 1-14.

Gear, Anna: Resisting Anthropocene Neoliberalism: Towards New Materialist Commoning?, in: Anna Gear, David Bollier (ed.): *The Great Awakening: New Modes of Life amidst Capitalist Ruins*. Punktum books 2020, 317-365.

Hardin, Garrett: The Tragedy of the Commons, in: *Science* 162/3859 (1968), 1243-1248.

Heimbach-Steins, Marianne et al. (ed.): *Globales Gemeinwohl: Sozialwissenschaftliche und sozialethische Analysen*. Paderborn 2020.

Latour, Bruno: Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene, in: *New Literary History* 45/1 (2014), 1-18.

Latour, Bruno: *Das terrestrische Manifest*. Berlin 2018.

Lesch, Walter: Vom Nutzen und Nachteil des Gemeinwohls als Leitbegriff: Semantische und pragmatische Differenzierungsversuche, in: Marianne Heimbach-Steins et al. (ed.): *Globales Gemeinwohl: Sozialwissenschaftliche und sozialethische Analysen*. Paderborn 2020, 25-43.

Mieth, Dietmar: *Moral und Erfahrung*. Freiburg im Breisgau 1977.

Pelluchon, Corinne: *Das Zeitalter des Lebendigen*. Darmstadt 2021.

Serres, Michel: *Der Naturvertrag*. 2nd Edition, Berlin 2015.

Sobrino, J. A. Vila: Conlleaos mutuamente: Análisis teológico de la solidaridad cristiana, in: ECA: *Estudios Centroamericanos* 31 (1982): [<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Conlleaos-mutuamente-%28an%C3%93Allisis-teol%C3%93B3gico-de-la-Sobrino/dc99f143c6flef61183298a4ala53d67bc0b8eaf>] (last accessed: 7 November 2023).

Spieß, Christian: Gemeinwohlbegriff zwischen neuscholastischem Naturrecht und politischem Liberalismus, in: Marianne Heimbach-Steins et al. (ed.): *Globales Gemeinwohl: Sozialwissenschaftliche und sozialethische Analysen*. Paderborn 2020, 61-75.

UNFCCC secretariat (UN Climate Change): What is the Triple Planetary Crisis?, 13.04.2022: [<https://unfccc.int/blog/what-is-the-triple-planetary-crisis>] (last accessed: 8 November 2023).

von Nell-Breuning, Oswald: *Gerechtigkeit und Freiheit: Grundzüge katholischer Soziologie*. München 1985.

World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED): *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*. New York 1987.