Human Development and the Catholic Social Tradition

Towards an Integral Ecology

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2   Anthropological visions

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2 Anthropological visions

Conceiving development as being about improving human lives inescapably raises questions about what it means to live a human life. The previous chapter addressed these questions by arguing that, for Sen's capability approach and the conception of development it undergirds, one aspect of being human is about being able to live a life one has reason to value and to be an agent, an author of one's life. While not being prescriptive about policy priorities, there is an implicit assumption that a main policy priority is to provide the conditions for each human being to live a minimally acceptable human life. The Catholic social tradition, as it has been articulated in recent years, goes further than Sen's by connecting the types of lives that humans live with how well ecosystems function, and the flourishing of human beings with that of the flourishing of the whole web of life. This chapter further explores how both Sen's capability approach and the Catholic social tradition conceive what it is to be human. As in the previous chapter, it does not aim to be an exhaustive summary of Sen's works, nor a discussion of Catholic theological anthropology. Rather, it highlights some central features of each and draws some implications for development theory and practice.

How one conceives what it is to be human, whether, for example, as a self-interested maximizer of one's own utility or whether as an interdependent carer for others and the earth, is not without practical and policy implications. A greater awareness of human interdependence with the natural world translates into different social practices and sets of regulations and policies (UNDP 2020, cf. Conclusion). At an individual level, this greater awareness can translate into practices such as stimulating biodiversity and protecting endangered species in one's garden. At a policy level, this could translate into policies that seek to combine the protection of the biodiversity of forests with economic livelihoods – in the case of Brazil, for example, it has been demonstrated that the financial gains of fostering a bio-economy in the Amazon region would be greater than the

gains of soya and beef production which drive deforestation (Nobre and Nobre 2019).

This chapter follows the same structure as the previous one. It starts by examining the underlying anthropological vision in Sen's capability approach to development. Each person is considered as an ultimate end and as having equal moral worth, but the human person is also considered within a complex web of relationships. The faculties of listening, speaking, interacting with others, showing empathy, taking the suffering of others as one's own, and reasoning with others about which courses of action to take are seen as core human faculties. Given its open-ended nature, the anthropological vision of Sen's capability approach can facilitate dialogue with other similarly relational anthropological visions, such as that of indigenous cosmologies. The chapter then discusses how the Catholic social tradition views what it is to be human and how it extends that of Sen's. It describes how the Catholic social tradition maintains the principle of each person as an end but puts a stronger emphasis on how well people's relationships are doing, with each other and with nature. It also goes further in connecting the socio-environmental crisis with the exercise of human freedom, which, of course, may not always be oriented to the good of others and nature. It similarly emphasizes the core human faculties of listening, interacting, empathy, and reasoning but extends listening to the non-human world and emphasizes gratitude. The chapter concludes by examining how Sen's capability approach to development could itself contribute to the Catholic social tradition with its greater focus on reasoning and on women's marginalization.

The anthropological vision of Sen's conception of development

Each individual person, in relationships, as an end

Sen's conception of development emerged from a critique of utilitarianism and its focus on the greater good for the greatest number and on its disregard for what happens in the life of each individual. A country like Peru can increase its gross domestic product through more extractive activities and redistribute some of the public revenues which arise from these activities through a public pension scheme and expansion of public services, but the lives of a few thousand people who live on land used for new mining explorations may be negatively affected, with the loss of agricultural livelihoods. From a utilitarian perspective, these negative consequences can be justified as long as the lives of other Peruvians are improved sufficiently to offset the loss. Illustrating this logic, a former president of Peru, Alan Garcia, therefore argued that 400,000 people who are opposing mining projects had no

right to undermine the general good of 28 million Peruvians and that one could not let mineral-rich land idle (what he called 'the dog in the manger syndrome').[1] In contrast, from a capability approach perspective, the life of each person matters. The moral justification for harming some lives for the sake of expanding public revenues and the reach of public services is more complex than achieved from a simple utilitarian metric. Each person is regarded as an ultimate end and with equal moral worth.

This principle of each individual person as an end has been called 'ethical individualism' (Robeyns 2008, 2017), for what matters ultimately is what happens not to a group or country as a whole but to each person. Following Nussbaum (2011), Robeyns (2017) sees ethical individualism as part of treating all human beings as moral equals. Some considerable misunderstanding has been generated by the term 'ethical individualism'. Many have criticized the capability approach for being too individualistic because it focuses on each individual person as an end and not groups, ignoring the inherent social dimension of human existence.[2] This section aims at clarifying why Sen's capability approach is not individualistic and argues that its underlying anthropology is fundamentally relational.

A first ground for misinterpreting Sen's perspective for being too individualistic lies in its open-ended nature. As the previous chapter has highlighted, Sen has proposed an *approach* for thinking about questions of development and justice, and not a theory. It is from that specific approach, what he calls that specific 'line of thinking', that a certain way of conceiving what counts as 'development' or 'good social change' has emerged. A side effect of such open-endedness is vulnerability to misinterpretation. The naming of the principle of each person as an end, of every individual person as having an inalienable worth (which could be seen as akin to the principle of human dignity of the Catholic social tradition), as 'ethical individualism', has unfortunately led to the perception of the approach as excessively concerned with individuals and their freedoms.

Questioned on how he viewed the individual–society relation, Amartya Sen commented that it was a 'folly' to separate the individual from the social connections which made the person who she is, and that an individual's faculties 'to think and value are linked to his or her social existence and connections with each other'.[3] To be a human being is to interact with others (Sen 2015: 81). As he puts it in *The Idea of Justice*, it is hard 'to envision cogently how persons in society can think, choose, or act without being influenced in one way or another by the nature of the working of the world around them' (Sen 2009: 244–5).

Seeing each person as having equal moral worth does not mean that *only* what happens to the lives of individuals should be taken into account when assessing situations. Considerations about structures can also be included,

such as the caste system, political systems, and cultural and social norms. For example, one can assess the situations of indigenous peoples in the Amazon region according to what each individual person can be or do, whether she is able to avoid hunger or diseases, or be in relation with the forest. Seeing each person as a moral equal does not rule out an analysis of political structures that prevent people from having a say in the decisions which affect their territories and their lives.

According to Robeyns (2017), whether one extends the evaluation space beyond individual considerations depends on the nature of the evaluative exercise, but it is not a requirement of the capability approach as such. It is optional, as far as the evaluative exercise is concerned, to analyse the structures themselves, such as how political systems function to exclude certain groups (e.g. how indigenous peoples in the Amazon are excluded from the policy decisions which affect the Amazon region), how patriarchal social norms discriminate against women (e.g. a woman not being able to study or work because her husband prevents her from doing so), or how a consumer culture is creating plastic islands in oceans that destroy ecosystems or large amounts of electronic waste which are affecting children's health (WHO 2017), or generating significant socio-environmental damage through 'fast fashion' (Niinimäki et al. 2020). In its *Human Development Reports*, the UNDP has taken the step to extend the evaluation space of development beyond individual considerations to include 'structures of living together' (UNDP 2016: 89–91),[4] such as social norms that create and maintain racism, or social norms that favour carbon-intensive and unsustainable lifestyles, and structures of inequality, such as how political systems are structured to include the voices of the most marginalized and those most affected by climate change (UNDP 2019, 2020), or the voices of future generations (Stewart 2020).

There is some ambiguity in Sen's own writings about whether the evaluation of how people's lives are doing should be limited to considerations about individual lives or whether it should include information about structures of living together and the extent to which they facilitate, or undermine, the flourishing of people (and ecosystems). In *The Idea of Justice*, Sen argues for limiting the evaluation space to individual considerations and that it is sufficient to recognize interdependence and interaction, and the ability of individuals to participate in social life: 'In valuing a person's ability to take part in the life of society, there is an implicit valuation of the life of the society itself, and that is an important enough aspect of the capability perspective' (Sen 2009: 246). However, in his writings on India co-authored with Jean Drèze, there is a departure from focusing exclusively on how individuals are doing to how they relate to each other and the way a society as a whole is structured. In *An Uncertain Glory*, Drèze and Sen (2013: 213)

talk of the 'grip of inequality', of gender, caste, and class, on India's society. They emphasize that these require a full analysis that is not achieved by simply looking at the effect structures have on individual achievements, like health or educational outcomes.

In order to evaluate how people's lives are doing beyond individual considerations, some have proposed to extend the evaluation space to collective capabilities or relational capabilities.[5] As attractive as the idea of collective capabilities might be in order to highlight that humans can only flourish in relationships, the idea risks introducing a false dichotomy between individual and community. Two problems can be highlighted. First, the concept of capability implies the action of deciding or choosing. Individual human beings do indeed think and act only in relationships, but it is not the relationship as such which acts or decides. A collective decision is not detached from what individual persons decide. Costa Rica may have taken the collective decision, as a country, to become carbon neutral by 2050 and adopt a National Decarbonization Plan which both addresses social inequality and climate change,[6] but such a collective decision is not separate from how individuals, in the past and present, have taken decisions.[7] The bold policy decisions that Costa Rica's political leaders took in the 1940s to introduce a universal social security scheme have formed the background of current policy decisions to introduce a national decarbonization plan that fully incorporates social equality and human rights considerations (Araya 2020).

A second problem with the idea of collective capability is that it has come to mean whatever people can be and do as a result of collective action. In her critical review, Robeyns (2017: 116) argues that 'what makes the idea of "collective capability" plausible, is that a group or collective is needed to engage in collective action in order to reach the capability that the members of that group find valuable'. She refers to Sen (2002) pointing out in his response to his critics that, to a great extent, any capability is a 'socially dependent individual capability', that is, 'a person's capability, which that person enjoys, but for which the person is dependent on others to have that capability realised' (quoted in Robeyns 2017: 116). She concludes that

> the fundamental reason to keep and use the term 'collective capability' is that we may want to make a distinction between [a person's] capabilities that are only realisable with the help of [one or more] others, versus capabilities that require a group or collective to act in order to secure a capability for the members of that group.
>
> (Robeyns 2017: 116)

For example, the capability to eat of an 80-year-old computer-illiterate British person who is shielding from Covid-19 is a 'socially dependent individual

capability' because it depends on others, such as neighbours doing the shopping for her, but the capability to eat of a 50-year-old farmer in the Amazon whose land has been contaminated by extractive industries would be a 'collective capability', as it requires a collective action to regulate the activities of extractive industries and protect his land from contamination.[8]

Speaking, listening, empathy, and reasoning

It is in a box featured in the *Human Development Report* 2013 and entitled 'What is it like to be a human being?' that Amartya Sen probably most succinctly describes the anthropological vision underpinning his conception of development. To speak, to enter into dialogue, to reason with others – these are central to what it is to be human. He uses the analogy of a person wearing an ill-fitting shoe to illustrate his argument that the abilities to speak, to express oneself, and to listen are fundamental to remedying injustice: 'Only the wearer may know where the shoe pinches, but pinch-avoiding arrangements cannot be effectively undertaken without giving voice to the people and giving them extensive opportunities for discussion' (Sen 2013: 24). As he has put it elsewhere, 'To be able to speak to each other, to hear one another, cannot but be a central capability that we human beings have great reason to value' (Sen 2015: 88).

To be able to express oneself to others and articulate the pain, or the 'pinch', that certain social and political arrangements are causing is a critical human faculty. The social protests of Black Lives Matter and #MeToo are recent illustrations in the Anglo-Saxon context of the centrality of this human faculty of expressing oneself for addressing injustice, in these cases for addressing the pain that many suffer because of abuse, humiliation, and discrimination because of skin colour or one's gender. In his 2013 *Human Development Report* box, Amartya Sen talks of the Arab Spring as an example of the policy impact of people expressing themselves:

> The political significance of such initiatives as the so-called Arab Spring, and mass movements elsewhere in the world, is matched by the epistemic importance of people expressing themselves, in dialogue with others, on what ails their lives and what injustices they want to remove.
>
> (Sen 2013: 24)

Such expression needs, however, to meet listening ears; in the Middle East the public expression of the pain of corruption and political authoritarianism has not always been met with listening ears by those in power and thus has ended in civil war in Syria.

This faculty for expressing oneself, and what ails one's life, goes beyond the directly affected. Being able to feel the pain of others, including distant ones, is another central characteristic of how Sen conceives what it is to be a human being. He talks of these 'dialogical responsibilities' as needing to 'include representing the interest of the people who are not here to express their concerns in their own voice' (Sen 2013: 24). And he continues:

> [H]uman beings do have the capacity to think about others, and their lives, and the art of responsible and accountable politics is to broaden dialogues from narrowly self-centred concerns to the broader social understanding of the importance of the needs and freedoms of people in the future as well as today.
>
> (Sen 2013: 24)

This ability to empathize with the lives of others, the ability to put oneself in the position of another person, is what Sen (2009: 414–5) sees as a core human faculty, along with the ability to reason. Speaking about the importance of reasoning and empathy in the context of famines, he writes:

> The political compulsion in a democracy to eliminate famines depends critically on the power of public reasoning in making non-victims take on the need to eradicate famines as their own commitment. Democratic institutions can be effective only if different sections of the population appreciate what is happening to others, and if the political process reflects a broader social understanding of deprivation.
>
> (Sen 2015: xxxvii)

A lack of openness to the lives of others, and especially those who suffer from deprivations and are denied the conditions to live a minimal acceptable life, has implications for public policy priorities. In their analysis of the social and political contexts of India, Drèze and Sen (2013) document how the lives of the poor are not often the subject of discussion in the media – with news about the Indian cricket team being more prominent than news about child malnutrition. They underline the importance of the marginalized to form social movements and political organizations to make their voices heard (see Chapter 3).

These faculties of relating to one another, expressing oneself, listening to others, entering into another person's life and feeling her pain, taking the removal of her pain as one's own responsibility (such as taking the removal of other people's hunger as one's own commitment), and reasoning with others about the remedial action are the foundational elements of Sen's anthropological vision. All these faculties are at play in what Sen

calls 'public reasoning', that is, discussion at all levels of society, from student union debates to street protests, from academic publications to social forums to UN or other intergovernmental summits, from newspaper articles and radio programmes to parliamentary debates and elections (see Chapter 3).

Open-ended anthropological vision

Sen's capability approach is not a theory of development that might explain why some groups are marginalized and do not have access to the conditions for a minimum acceptable life. It limits itself to proposing a certain line of thinking for interpreting situations of deprivation and seeking remedial action. All it argues is the following: that when assessing how well a society is doing, one has to pay attention to the kinds of lives people are living, whether they are able to achieve a minimum set of valuable beings and doings; and that a critical ingredient for addressing situations where people's lives are not going well is public discussions, in which humans are conceived as persons-in-relation, interacting through speaking and listening, showing empathy, and reasoning together about remedial action. His conception of development may be perceived as overemphasizing freedom as both an end and a means (cf. Sen 1999), but as this chapter has sought to clarify, its underlying anthropology is much richer than simply conceiving the human person as a free agent. The focus on freedom is linked to a corresponding focus on responsibility, listening to others, showing empathy, and self-critical examination.[9]

In addition to the critique of Sen's capability approach for being too individualistic, there is the critique that it is too anthropocentric in that it focuses on assessing situations from the perspective of the kinds of lives that humans live, and not from the perspective of how other living organisms are doing. Thus, to assess the situation of the Amazon region today, the focus would be on collecting information about the kinds of lives that people in the Amazon live and not about how the Amazon rainforest, as an ecosystem, is doing and its ability to continue being a carbon sink for humanity.[10] This critique is somewhat misplaced, however, given the open-ended nature of the capability approach. Information about the kinds of lives people live is not the *only* information one should consider for assessing states of affairs. Information about people's capabilities/functionings does not exhaust the informational basis on which to make value judgements – as the Conclusion will discuss, the 2020 *Human Development Report* makes ample evaluations of how ecosystems or earth systems are doing. And it does not reject either the relevance of information about incomes, resources, or subjective feelings of happiness in some contexts.[11]

The concept of capabilities is not a winner-takes-all concept, and questions of justice and redistribution, and development, require a much richer conceptual apparatus. As Sen (2017: 358) has insisted,

> it would be misleading to see the capability approach as standing on its own as a guide to justice, since it focuses only on some specific aspects of well-being and freedom, and there are other concerns . . . that need to be brought in to get a fuller understanding of justice than can be obtained within an exclusively 'capability approach'.

Similar conclusions can be drawn with regard to its anthropological vision. The human being is viewed as a subject-in-relation and as a reasoning subject. All Sen's conception of development points out is that, when thinking about questions of justice and development, one needs to take into account the socially interactive nature of human lives and the capacity of human beings to empathize and reason with others to remedy 'what ails their lives and what injustices they want to remove' (Sen 2013: 24).

Two important underexplored aspects of Sen's anthropological vision are particularly in urgent need of further exploration for thinking about questions of development today. One concerns the interconnectedness between the flourishing of individual human beings and that of ecosystems (Capra and Luisi 2016; Capra and Jakobsen 2017; Raworth 2018; UNDP 2020); the other concerns the faculty of human beings to inflict harm on others. Work has already started on the first by bringing Sen's conception of development in dialogue with indigenous cosmologies – as the Conclusion will discuss, the 2020 *Human Development Report* rethinks the capability/human development approach in the light of this interconnectedness of all life systems, human and non-human.

In his discussion of whether the capability approach's core principle of valuing each person as an end is compatible with its other core principle of value pluralism,[12] Kramm (2020) argues that, when incorporating the values of Māori culture, the principle of valuing each person as an end cannot be sustained.[13] According to the Māori vision, to be a human being is to be in a network of relationships with others, humans and non-humans, and with human and non-human ancestors, what they call *whakapapa* or their genealogy (Kramm 2020: 2; Watene 2016; UNDP 2020: 90–1). Within *whakapapa*, a river is valued in the same way as a human being, for there is no separation between humans and non-human entities. Both rivers and humans are seen as equal givers of life with which any newborn human subject enters into relationship. Kramm therefore proposes to restrict the notion of functionings not only to humans but also to rivers, forests, oceans, and other forms of life. This would entail, he argues, shifting the principle

of ethical individualism to that of 'ethical ancestoralism' to include 'everything that the Māori regard as equal partners in their relationships, including ancestors and ecosystems' (Kramm 2020: 7), and thus modifying the capability approach to create what Robeyns (2017) has called a 'hybrid version'.

Indeed, as such, Sen's capability approach with its principle of each (human) person as an end does not accommodate seeing the river as an end. It tends to see the river as instrumental to human flourishing. If a river is polluted, this will be reflected in the local people's health outcomes. Strictly speaking, then, the perspective is anthropocentric, and the focus is on what people are able to do and be, and not on how river systems function. However, seen within its context of opening up a different line of thinking, which shifts the focus from incomes or resources to what people are able to do and be, there is no reason why its informational basis for value judgements, and for assessing situations, could not be extended to include non-human systems – which is a direction the 2020 *Human Development Report* has taken (cf. Conclusion). With such inclusion of anthropological visions that see humans as part, and not separate, of the wider web of life, Sen's capability approach will probably have to outgrow itself. The approach that ensues would then no longer be called the 'capability approach' but something else.

As Krushil Watene has recently argued, Sen's capability approach creates a platform for having a conversation about values; it opens a door, but it cannot continue to hold the conversation when entering into dialogue with Māori cosmologies.[14] What it does is highlight the importance of discussion, of interaction among humans with different values and visions of what it is to be human, and of how to relate to the rest of nature.[15] Amartya Sen has opened the door for bringing questions about what it is to be human into questions about development and progress. The next section continues this conversation by bringing in another anthropological vision.

The anthropological vision of the Catholic social tradition

Each individual person, in relation with others and the earth, as an end

The Catholic social tradition has long emphasized that it is the human being who is the ultimate end of development processes and that the growth of national production and consumption is only a means towards the end of human flourishing. In words reminiscent of Sen's, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* affirms that

> the social order and its development must invariably work to the benefit of the human person, since the order of things is to be subordinate

to the order of persons, and not the other way around. . . . Every political, economic, social, scientific and cultural programme must be inspired by the awareness of the primacy of each human being over society.

(PCJP 2005: 132–3)

This primacy of each human being, in her own uniqueness, echoes Sen's anthropological vision. There are, however, some different points of emphasis and areas which are extended. This section highlights two: the interaction in which human beings engage is not only among humans and its anthropological vision is not limited to serving evaluation purposes, but it also serves as a framework for diagnosis and action.

While Sen's capability approach privileges the language of interaction, the Catholic social tradition privileges that of interconnectedness. That 'everything in the world is connected' is a recurrent theme in *Laudato Si'* (LS 16, 70, 91, 117, 220, 240). There are, along with others, connections among the social, economic, cultural, political, economic, and ecological dimensions (LS 101–136). Taking the example of deforestation in the Amazon, the political dimension interconnects with the economic dimension, with Bolsonaro's government stimulating agribusinesses; this economic dimension interconnects with the cultural, in the habit of daily meat consumption, which stimulates demand for beef; this cultural dimension interconnects with the ecological one, granted the indirect impact of demand for meat on land use in the Amazonian rainforest. But above all, these dimensions interconnect with how the human being is conceived in relation to the wider web of life of the universe, whether as part of it or separate from it. Like in Sen's perspective, the human being and her flourishing are the ultimate end of economic development, but the human being is conceived as intimately connected with every other form of life, whether plant or animal. For the Catholic social tradition, to be a human being is not only to interact with other humans but also to connect, to enter into communion, with others, whether human or non-human forms of life.

Pope Benedict XVI wrote in *Caritas in Veritate* of the 'book of nature' being 'one and indivisible (CV 51, LS 6), for there is no separation between the natural and human world:[16]

There is need for what might be called a human ecology, correctly understood. The deterioration of nature is in fact closely connected to the culture that shapes human coexistence. . . . Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others.

(CV 51)

Because of this interconnectedness with the whole web of life, humans have special responsibility to love and care: 'Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another' (LS 42).

The Catholic social tradition thus takes Sen's anthropological vision a step further. Humans are not only interacting with each other and reasoning with other humans; they are also in interaction with other creatures. This extends listening to those who suffer in the non-human world. *Laudato Si'* makes it clear that 'nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it' (LS 139). This interaction between humans and non-humans also has a purpose, that of entering into communion, into harmony. *Laudato Si'* invites every person on the planet to grow in 'a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures but joined in a splendid universal communion' (LS 220). The post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia* talks of indigenous peoples as expressing the striving for 'good living', as a striving for 'personal, familial, communal and cosmic harmony', which 'finds expression in a communitarian approach to existence, the ability to find joy and fulfilment in an austere and simple life, and a responsible care of nature that preserves resources for future generations' (QA 71).[17]

Because each person is in relation with each other and the rest of the web of life, the good of an individual human being is indivisible from the good of all, of other human beings and ecosystems, which the Catholic social tradition calls the 'common good' (Hollenbach 2002; PCJP 2005: 164–84), with some theologians calling it the 'cosmic common good' (Scheid 2016). The Catholic social tradition conceived this interdependence as a moral category, which establishes the foundation of solidarity with and responsibility towards each other and the earth. In his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* published in 1987, John Paul II defined solidarity as 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' (SRS 38).

As everything is interdependent, the way we use our freedom has consequences for others and the whole of nature (LS 33, LS 205). Pope Francis describes interconnectedness as an invitation to 'develop a spirituality of global solidarity' (LS 240), for there is a relation between 'a sort of super development of a wasteful and consumerist kind which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation' (LS 109, CV 22). There is an interdependence between how certain people choose to exercise their freedom – to accumulate and abuse their

power, to be concerned with themselves only – and the lives of others. In words that echo Sir David Attenborough's call that to address biodiversity loss 'we require more than intelligence; we require wisdom',[18] *Laudato Si'* connects wisdom, and a wise use of the power that humanity has, to the recognition of our interconnectedness and affirmation of all forms of life:

> Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely, particularly when we consider how it is currently being used. We need but think of the nuclear bombs dropped in the middle of the twentieth century, or the array of technology which Nazism, Communism and other totalitarian regimes have employed to kill millions of people, to say nothing of the increasingly deadly arsenal of weapons available for modern warfare.
>
> (LS 104)

In his first homily after his election, Pope Benedict XVI, sometimes dubbed in the media as the 'green pope',[19] talked of 'external deserts in the world growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast' (quoted in LS 217). There is a connection between the 'internal desert' of lack of solidarity, of concern for others who suffer from climate change, of concern for forests which disappear, and the spreading of 'external deserts'. A shaman from Greenland expressed this argument in his context as 'the Artic is warming and the ice is melting because our hearts have grown cold'.[20] More than in Sen's, the Catholic social tradition ties the exercise of human freedom to these sets of relationships and the good of all. It recognizes that the exercise of human freedom is not always for the good and that one can act, directly or indirectly, in a way which undermines relationships with each other and other forms of life on earth. At the individual level, each person can choose the lifestyle she wants; at a societal level, each society can choose which lifestyles and behaviours to discourage through regulation and taxation (e.g. taxing more air travel, banning plastic packaging, subsidizing renewable energy, and public transport). Within such an anthropological vision, however, there are certain ways of exercising human freedom which are better than others because of their consequences for others and how they express solidarity and concern for others.

More than Sen's, the anthropological vision of the Catholic social tradition recognizes the fallible nature of human life. It recognizes that human beings can exercise their freedom to enhance or undermine the lives of others. Given our interconnectedness, the actions of some in one place have

consequences for the lives of others elsewhere. When these actions accumulate, they create what this tradition calls 'structures of sin'. John Paul II defined them in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* as

> [t]he sum total of the negative factors working against a true awareness of the universal common good. . . . [Structures of sin] are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove.
>
> (SRS 36)[21]

One such structure of sin that Pope Francis mentions often is that of a 'throwaway culture', a culture of overconsumption, a culture which discards what is no longer needed or whom one no longer sees as useful for society (LS 16, 22, 43). In his latest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, he talks of a 'throwaway world':

> Ultimately, persons are no longer seen as a paramount value to be cared for and respected, especially when they are poor and disabled, "not yet useful" – like the unborn, or "no longer needed" – like the elderly. We have grown indifferent to all kinds of wastefulness, starting with the waste of food.
>
> (FT 18–21)

Despite this reality of wrongdoing, the possibility of change, of turning away from one's wrong, always remains a possibility, offering a 'chance for new beginning' (LS 71), opening the way to hope. The actions of past generations may have severe consequences for current generations, such as the burning of fossil fuels in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, yet there remains always the possibility of turning away from harmful actions and beginning something new, of making different choices, of choosing to do things differently (UNDP 2020). This process of discerning how to act in a way which is not harmful to others and the environment is however a never-ending process given the ambivalence of relationships and human activities. Renewable energy has environmental costs too. Hydro-energy entails the building of dams which often carry socio-environmental conflicts in their wake.[22] The building of electric cars generates a demand for rare earth minerals, and their extraction creates significant environmental strain on local ecosystems.[23] This is why, like Sen, the Catholic social tradition sees development, or the reduction of injustices, as an ongoing circular process, but, as the next section discusses, it adds some further elements to the process.

Listening, empathy, and reasoning, earth and gift

As in Sen's perspective, it views human beings as being able to express what 'ails their lives' (Sen 2013: 24), whether through social movements, representative organizations, media, or others, and as being able to be attentive to what is happening to others' lives. It puts, however, greater emphasis on mutual listening. Such attentiveness, known as the 'seeing' stage, is the starting point for any remedial action.[24] The biblical parable of the Good Samaritan, narrated in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 10, offers a paradigmatic illustration of this. To be fully human is to see the world with compassion and to take action to address suffering. The text narrates the story of a Priest and a Levite who saw a wounded man lying half-dead along a road and who passed by on the opposite side, as they were more preoccupied by their religious duties than being attentive to the world around them. In contrast, a Samaritan – Samaritans were seen as inferior by those to whom the parable is addressed – passed by, saw the victim, went near him, treated his wounds, lifted him onto his own animal, took him to an inn, and paid for his care. Jesus tells this parable in response to the question posed to him: 'Who is my neighbour?' – who one is responsible for and who one is commanded to love. In *The Idea of Justice*, Sen (2009: 171–2) discusses the parable to underpin his argument about responsibility and universal concern for others, and the need to transcend religious and geographical boundaries.[25]

The parable of the Samaritan features prominently in Pope Francis's latest encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, to introduce this dynamic of attentiveness and mutual listening and to show 'how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others . . . and act as neighbours, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good' (FT 67). Like Sen's *Idea of Justice*, the encyclical urges for the need to transcend our religious and national boundaries and 'being a neighbour to another person' (FT 1, 8, 32) – in the parable, the neighbour is not only the wounded person on the road but also the one who shows mercy (FT 56). The encyclical discusses at length the importance of 'the ability to sit down and listen to others' (FT 48), of 'silence and careful listening' (FT 49), which it associates with interpersonal encounters characterized by love. It puts also greater emphasis than Sen does on this 'aspect of our common humanity', that 'we were created for a fulfilment that can only be found in love' (FT 68), 'in the sincere gift of self to others' (FT 87). Within this (theological) anthropological vision in which humans find their fulfilment in love and gift of self to others, being indifferent to suffering is dehumanizing (FT 68).

This listening and attentiveness to what happens to the world around us is not limited to the suffering of human others but extends to the non-human others (Deane-Drummond 2019b). Being human implies the faculty of

listening 'to *both* the cry of the earth and of the poor' (LS 49). On the basis of the listening exercise that preceded the Amazon Synod, with more than 80,000 people from the Amazon region taking part, Pope Francis expressed in his post-synodal exhortation *Querida Amazonia* this joint cry as a 'cry that rises up to heaven' (QA 9). A shaman from the Yanomami indigenous group in Brazil talks of the environment being 'what remains of the forest and land that were hurt by their [i.e. white men] machines. The earth cannot be split apart. If we defend the entire forest [i.e. both its human and non-human residents], it will stay alive' (Kopenawa, Bruce and Dundy 2013: 396).

This listening to the voice of nature is something that Pope Francis's namesake, Saint Francis of Assisi, prophetically practised. Animals and plants and all parts of the cosmos are 'brothers and sisters all', as his Canticle of the Sun, which opens *Laudato Si'*, expresses it.[26] The encyclical talks of the need 'to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it' (LS 19). The Catholic social tradition takes the empathy of Sen's perspective further by taking the reduction of human suffering and that of ecosystems, coral reefs, and animal and plant species in danger of extinction as the commitment of all. It talks, following St Francis of Assisi, of falling in love with nature:

> Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever he [Francis] would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise. He communed with all creation . . . for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection.
>
> (LS 11)[27]

Laudato Si' argues that this human faculty for awe and wonder, for appreciation of beauty, is what guards us from seeing other human beings or nature as objects to be used or exploited:

> If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on our immediate needs.
>
> (LS 11)

It links this attitude of master and exploiter to a failure to recognize all human life and nature as a gift (LS 76, 220), as something that has been entrusted to us and that will be passed on to those who come after us (LS

159). In his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI writes that 'the human being is made for gift' (CV 34), and when this capacity of gift of oneself to others and receiving others as gift is lost, there is a risk for the human being to be 'wrongly convinced that he is the sole author of himself, his life and society' (CV 34). Failure to recognize this logic of gift has consequence for the way socio-economic development is conceived and pursued. This self-sufficiency, Pope Benedict XVI continues, may lead humans to think that they can themselves bring about their own fulfilment, through their own efforts:

> The conviction that man is self-sufficient and can successfully eliminate the evil present in history by his own action alone has led him to confuse happiness and salvation with immanent forms of material prosperity and social action. Gift by its nature goes beyond merit, its rule is that of superabundance.
>
> (CV 34)

This is why, he concludes, socio-economic development needs, if it is 'to be authentically human', 'to make room for the *principle of gratuitousness* as an expression of fraternity' (CV 34, emphasis original). When we fail to recognize each human being and nature as a gift, we risk ending up abusing the gift, not using it responsibly and respecting the balance of creation (CV 48).

This view of seeing 'earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone' (CV 51) has strong resonance with views held by indigenous communities, for whom 'land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values' (LS 146). In his conclusion of the Amazon Synod, Pope Francis talks of an 'indigenous mysticism that sees the interconnection and interdependence of the whole of creation', a 'mysticism of gratuitousness that loves life as a gift', a 'mysticism of a sacred wonder before nature and all its forms of life' (QA 73).

For the Catholic social tradition, this viewing of all life as a gift entails special responsibilities for care, which can be exercised in many ways, such as leading frugal and low-carbon lifestyles, adopting sustainable agriculture, and engaging in policy advocacy to protect biodiversity. As Chapter 3 will elaborate, in Sen's perspective as in the Catholic social tradition, processes of public reasoning are central for discerning remedial action. One of the most illustrative cases of such a process was the attention drawn to the impact of the pesticide DDT on ecosystems by Rachel Carson in 1962 in her groundbreaking book *Silent Spring*. This led to a wide public debate

on human destruction of nature and contributed to the eventual banning of the pesticide in the United States of America (Lytle 2007).

To the dynamics of speaking, listening, empathy, and public reasoning, the Catholic social tradition adds one small but important feature, that of the importance of rest and contemplation which opens up space for listening and attentiveness. One has to make silence in order to be attentive and listen to the world around us:

> We tend to demean contemplative rest as something unproductive and unnecessary, but this is to do away with the very thing which is most important about work: its meaning. We are called to include in our work a dimension of receptivity and gratuity, which is quite different from mere inactivity. Rather, it is another way of working, which forms part of our very essence. It protects human action from becoming empty activism.
>
> (LS 237)

Contemplative rest, taking time to be present to the reality among us, helps to nurture the dispositions of gratitude, attentiveness, and care (Castillo 2019). It helps us to listen to the suffering of the earth and each other, and to sustain commitment to grow in solidarity, especially with those whose lives have been undermined by an ever-increasing demand for commodities to satisfy the unlimited desires and overconsumption of some.[28]

Concluding remarks

This chapter has sought to bring the anthropological visions of Amartya Sen's conception of development and the Catholic social tradition into conversation. It has highlighted some contributions that the former makes to the latter for thinking about development, such as a vision that connects the flourishing of individual human beings to that of others and the whole web of life, a greater recognition that human freedom can sometimes be misused and not directed at the common good of society and the cosmos, a stronger emphasis on listening and attentiveness to the suffering of other people and of the earth, and a consideration of nature as a gift bestowed on humans to be bequeathed as gift to others.

As highlighted in the Introduction, the Catholic social tradition is however not static. It is in constant interaction with the context to which it speaks, and its anthropological vision has evolved over the course of centuries. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis lamented that, and questioned why, the Catholic Church had been so slow in condemning slavery as an unjust structure which violates human dignity and treats people as objects

(FT 86, 24). In *Laudato Si'*, he acknowledges that Christianity's frequent misinterpretation of the Genesis text in which God grants humans dominion over the earth has 'encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature' and bears some responsibility in the current environmental crisis (LS 67, cf. also White 1967). But there is one major area which the Catholic social tradition continues largely to ignore in its analysis of contemporary social realities: gender inequality and women's marginalization. As Chapter 1 mentioned, *Laudato Si'* does not make any mention of the large scholarship in the social sciences which demonstrates how women disproportionately suffer from climate change.[29] Its references to the specific issues that affect women, like maternal mortality, are never mentioned. Every day, more than 800 women die globally in childbirth because of lack of proper medical attention.[30] Yet these concerns are not represented in the official documents of the Catholic social tradition (Beattie 2016). *Fratelli Tutti* may mention several times violence against women (FT 23, 24, 227) and observe that 'the organization of societies worldwide is still far from reflecting clearly that women possess the same dignity and identical rights as men. We say one thing with words, but our decisions and reality tell another story' (FT 23). Yet the Catholic social tradition falls short of according to the issue of women's marginalization the same lengthy analysis and treatment that it does to other social and economic issues. The 'technocratic paradigm' (LS 101) and the 'utilitarian mindset' (LS 210) have been widely discussed in *Laudato Si'*, but the patriarchal mindset, and its damaging effects on human lives, is yet to receive a similar discussion. The term 'gender inequality', ubiquitous in the social sciences, has so far not appeared in a papal encyclical.

As an institution, the Catholic Church still has a long journey to make in translating its words into decisions and showing by its living reality that women should indeed receive the same treatment and be shown the same respect as men. That religious brothers had a right to vote at the Amazon Synod but not religious sisters was a gross violation of the Church's own teaching (Hansen 2019). When the title of Pope Francis's latest encyclical was announced, *Fratelli Tutti* or *All Brothers*, there was a strong reaction to the lack of inclusion of 'Sisters' (*Sorelle* in Italian) in the title. The justification for the title was faithfulness to the exact words of St Francis to an all-male audience in the thirteenth century. Even if the text is gender-inclusive throughout, its title, and the way the document will be cited in different languages, ignores women's existence.

A combination of Sen's emphasis on speaking and expressing oneself, through public protests or other actions, and the Catholic social tradition emphasis on listening and attentiveness could lead to women's voices being included more in its official documents. Such a process has started with the

Amazon Synod. For the first time in the history of the Church, the papal document which summarized the Synod discussion (the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia*) did not have the last word. It is to be read in parallel with the document that summarizes the Synod discussions in which women participated.[31] The hermeneutical cycle of speaking, listening, empathy, and reasoning has been set in motion, which is forging pathways for transformation at all levels. The third and final chapter turns to this.

Notes

1 According to this idea, indigenous peoples are the 'dog in the manger'. They consider their land as a sacred inheritance from their ancestors to be passed on to future generations and therefore choose not to exploit it, thus preventing the entire country from taking advantage of natural resources in order to generate economic growth. For further details on the discourse of the 'dog in the manger' and its social implications, see Larsen (2019).

2 See, among others, Stewart and Deneulin (2002), Stewart (2005), Deneulin (2008), Ibrahim (2020). See Robeyns (2017: 115–18) for a summary of the critiques and counter-critiques.

3 Amartya Sen, 'Connecting Capabilities: Amartya Sen in conversation with Elaine Unterhalter', Recorded interview for the International Conference of the Human Development and Capability Association, 9–11 September 2019, University of London. See www.hd-ca.org (member access only).

4 The term 'structures of living together' is taken from Paul Ricoeur's ethics *Oneself as Another*; see Deneulin (2008). Paul Ricoeur's original definition refers to the notion of institution: 'By institution, we understand the structure of living together as this belongs to a historical community, a structure irreducible to interpersonal relations and yet bound up with these' (Ricoeur 1992: 194).

5 See Ibrahim (2020) for a summary of the literature on collective capabilities and Giraud, L'Huillier and Renouard (2018) for the design of relational capabilities indices to complement indices of individual functionings.

6 Costa Rica is one of the countries that has the best performance in addressing both social and environmental imbalances in the new Planetary Pressures–Adjusted Human Development Index (UNDP 2020, cf. Conclusion).

7 I have referred to this as 'socio-historical agency' to emphasize that any decision is always embedded in a social and historical context which makes certain decisions possible and others not. The fact that Costa Rica had initiated public universal primary education in the 1880s (enabling social mixing between different income groups), introduced a social security system in the early 1940s, and abolished its army was the result of the decisions of key individuals which would not have been possible in another historical context (Deneulin 2006, 2008).

8 For a discussion of 'dispossession by contamination' in the Amazon, see, among others, Leifsen (2017).

9 See Gasper and van Staveren (2003) for a discussion on how Sen's underlying anthropology can be enriched by insights from feminist economics about the

importance of caring for others. See Deneulin (2014: chapter 3) for how freedom is linked to responsibility in Sen's works.

10 According to a report by the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research led by Luciana Gatti and Antonio Nobre, the Amazon has reached in 2020 a tipping point and a fifth of the forest is now a net carbon emitter; see www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-51464694, accessed 9 January 2021. See also Lovejoy and Nobre (2018).

11 See Walker (2020) on the importance of resources and incomes in the capabilities of lower-income students in South Africa to pursue higher education.

12 See Robeyns (2017) for the core principles of the capability approach, which, she argues, any application or theory based on the approach has to respect.

13 Kramm (2020) puts forward this argument in the context of the Whanganui River in Aotearoa, New Zealand, which was ascribed the legal status of a person in 2017.

14 Personal communication at the Human Development and Capability Association Conference 'New Horizons: Sustainability and Justice', 30 June–2 July 2020, Auckland, New Zealand.

15 A similar argument can be made to extending the capability approach to ubuntu-ethic. In contrast to what Hoffmann and Metz (2017) have argued, it is not a question whether the focus in Sen's works on individual capabilities and individual agency is compatible or not, or can be reconciled, with more community-focused visions, but how it can be extended to include an additional focus on ecosystems and relationships.

16 Christian theological ethics takes as its basis that humans are made in the image of God, following the account of the book of Genesis in the Bible. This however does not mean that humans are separate from nature; they share their createdness with the whole of creation. This entails that human flourishing as the ultimate purpose of development is connected with the flourishing of the non-human world. For a discussion on humans made in the image of God and its implications for international development, see Theos, CAFOD and Tearfund (2010). See also Deane-Drummond (2019b), who argues that the belief of humans made in the image of God entails a narrative of uniqueness, or distinctive human dignity, within one of interconnectedness in which other creatures also bear some forms of dignity.

17 The literature on *buen vivir* (good living) is extensive, including regarding its risks of being co-opted by political agendas which favour extractivism. See, among others, Beling et al. (2018), Vanhulst and Beling (2014, 2019), Villalba-Eguiluz and Iker Etxano (2017).

18 David Attenborough, *A Life on our Planet*, documentary broadcast in 2020 on Netflix. For a discussion on wisdom in the context of environmental degradation, see Deane-Drummond (2006, 2019a, 2019b).

19 See www.theguardian.com/environment/blog/2013/feb/12/pope-benedict-xvi-first-green-pontiff; www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/2/130228-environmental-pope-green-efficiency-vatican-city (accessed 9 January 2021).

20 Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq, Song of the Wind, performed at a conference on 'Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals', 6–8 March 2019, Vatican City.

21 See Shadle (2018: chapter 13) for a discussion on John Paul II and structures of sin.

22 See, for example, the Agua Zarca hydro-electric dam in Honduras which led to the murder of indigenous activist Berta Cáceres and other similar conflicts in the Brazilian Amazon (Riethof 2017). There are currently more than 200 socio-environmental conflicts in relation to hydro-electric power (Del Bene, Scheidel and Temper 2018).

23 For the case of the lithium extraction in Northern Chile and demands for electric cars, see, among others, Liu and Agusdinata (2020).

24 For a discussion of the 'see-judge-act' methodology of the Catholic social tradition in dialogue with Sen's capability approach, see Deneulin and Zampini-Davies (2017).

25 For a discussion on the use of religious narratives in Sen's works and the role of parables in the Catholic social tradition, see Deneulin and Zampini-Davies (2020).

26 For the prophetic attitude of St Francis and his spiritual revolution in Christianity of turning round the dominion of man over nature, see White (1967). This 50-year old five-page article already foresaw the content of *Laudato Si'*.

27 Lane (2019: 41) describes the process of falling in love with nature as moving from being a user to becoming an explorer, to becoming a celebrant, and to becoming a lover and seeking union (see also LS 234).

28 For rest as a biological rhythm and its importance for environmental action, see Deane-Drummond (2004, 2017), Grey (2020).

29 See, among others, the summary 'Gender and Climate Change' published in 2015 by the International Union Conservation of Nature, www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/import/downloads/gender_and_climate_change_issues_brief_cop21__04122015.pdf, accessed 9 January 2021; the summary by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at https://unfccc.int/gender, accessed 9 January 2021; the overview report on gender and climate change by Emmeline Skinner by the Institute of Development Studies at www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/bridge-publications/cutting-edge-packs/gender-and-climate-change; the UN Report published in July 2020 on Gender, Climate and Security at https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1065982, accessed 9 January 2021.

30 The World Health Organization estimated that in 2017 approximately 810 women died every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth; see www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality, accessed 9 January 2021.

31 www.synod.va/content/sinodoamazonico/en/documents/final-document-of-the-amazon-synod.html, accessed 9 January 2021.

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