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## **Towards common Christian response to the anthropological challenges? Pope's Francis encyclical letter *Laudato si'* and the *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation* programme of the World Council of Churches**

Abstract

The article contains a comparison of the way of formulating the challenges posed by and facing Christian theological anthropology in the Catholic approach of Pope Francis in *Laudato si'*, as well as documents that impose on the program of the World Council of Churches: *Justice, peace and integrity of creation*. The diagnosed challenges relate primarily to the protection of human life from direct danger and in a wider scope of protection of the natural environment as necessary to sustain life, including human life on Earth. Many of the threats humanity faces today have their source in distorting the understanding of man as a creature of God endowed with inalienable dignity, which results in his inborn rights. To overcome the reductionist vision of a man, an "anthropological conversion" is needed. The way of overcoming the threats is also indicated by the concept of the "economy of life" developed in the WCC documents.

**Keywords:** theological anthropology, homo oeconomicus, anthropocentrism, economy of life.

### **Ku wspólnej chrześcijańskiej odpowiedzi na wyzwania antropologiczne? Papieska encyklika papieża Franciszka *Laudato si'* oraz program *Sprawiedliwość, pokój i integralność stworzenia* Światowej Rady Kościołów**

Streszczenie

Artykuł zawiera porównanie sposobu formułowania wyzwań stawianych przez i stojących przed chrześcijańską antropologią teologiczną tak w katolickim ujęciu papieża Franciszka w *Laudato si'*, jak i z dokumentami składającymi się na program Światowej Rady Kościołów *Sprawiedliwość, pokój i integralność stworzenia*. Diagnozowane wyzwania dotyczą przede wszystkim ochrony życia ludzkiego przed niebezpieczeństwem bezpośrednim oraz – w szerszym zakresie – ochrony środowiska naturalnego jako niezbędnego do podtrzymania życia, w tym życia ludzkiego na Ziemi. Wiele zagrożeń, przed jakimi staje

dziś ludzkość, ma swe źródło w wypaczeniu pojmowania człowieka jako stworzenia Boga obdarzonego niezbywalną godnością, z której wynikają przyrodzone mu prawa. Dla przewyciężenia redukcjonistycznej wizji człowieka potrzebne jest „nawrócenie antropologiczne”. Drogę pokonania zagrożeń wskazuje też koncepcja „ekonomii życia” rozwijana w dokumentach SRK.

**Słowa kluczowe:** antropologia teologiczna, homo oeconomicus, antropocentryzm, ekonomia życia.

## **Introduction: to overcome distorted anthropocentrism**

“Man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but he is also nature” – Pope Benedict XVI did say in German parliament<sup>1</sup>.

The issues raised in this article belong to the field of theological anthropology. In addition, I intend to present the main challenges of this theological anthropology in a concise manner and in an ecumenical approach by comparing two great trends of anthropological and theological thinking. The first is the presentation of the issues given in the encyclical of Pope Francis *Laudato si'* which is much more social encyclical than ecological one. The second is a vision developed within the World Council of Churches, known as a set of documents making up the *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation* program. Because in such a short article it is impossible to thoroughly discuss both of these visions, they will be briefly analyzed in view of the challenges of the theological anthropology that Christianity and the contemporary world are facing today. Many of the threats humanity faces today have their source in distorting the understanding of man as a creature of God endowed with inalienable dignity, where from the man's inborn rights result.

Christian theological anthropology today faces the challenge of correctly defining man and his self-understanding, and further his place in the constantly changing world, as well as references to himself, the world of nature, the world of human activity in economy and politics. The same Christian anthropology with its understanding of these issues today challenges contemporary world. Hence the formulation of the title of this speech: the challenges of Christian anthropology, and the challenges facing it. Responsibility for creation means that man is responsible for himself first, that is, for the protection of human life, and then this responsibility covers the whole created world. The diagnosed challenges relate primarily to the protection of human life against direct danger (abortion, euthanasia, hunger, wars, etc.) and, more generally, protection of the natural environment as necessary to sustain life, including human life on Earth.

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<sup>1</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Address in the Bundestag, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 2011*, AAS 103 (2011), p. 664.

According to the diagnosis of Pope Francis: “Modernity has been marked by an excessive anthropocentrism which today, under another guise, continues to stand in the way of shared understanding and of any effort to strengthen social bonds”<sup>2</sup>. This modern anthropocentrism has already met with criticism of John Paul II, who pointed to the need to respect nature: that given to man as his surroundings and that which he received himself as the internal structure of his existence: „Not only has God given the earth to man, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given to him, but man too is God’s gift to man. He must therefore respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed”<sup>3</sup>. Recognizing the dependence of man on this double gift he has received is the recognition of his relationship of dependence on God the Creator.

Overcoming skewed anthropocentrism seems to be a matter of basic importance. Perverted distorted anthropocentrism is “despotic anthropocentrism, not interested in other creatures”<sup>4</sup>, and this is not found in the Bible.

It is impossible to deduce absolute control over other creatures from the fact of being created on God’s image and the command of making the earth submissive. The dominion over the earth, which the Book of Genesis speaks of (1.28), this “cultivating” means “looking after”, “protecting”, “guarding”, “keeping”, “defending”, “watching”. This entails a relation of responsible reciprocity between man and nature<sup>5</sup>.

## 1. Threats in understanding a human being

### 1.1. Man (not) dependent on his Creator

From what answer we will give to the question about the source of human dignity depends further justifying the rights of the human person. Christian anthropology from the earliest times derives the dignity of the human person from the fact of creating man in the image of God. Every human being is created in the image of God and has infinite value, regardless of his physical or mental characteristics<sup>6</sup>. The image of God can be illegible in a man who chooses separation from God, but can-

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<sup>2</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*. *Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home*, London 2015, no. 116.

<sup>3</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Centesimus annus*. *Encyclical Letter on the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, London 1991, no. 38.

<sup>4</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*, no. 68.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, no. 67.

<sup>6</sup> FAITH AND ORDER COMMISSION OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology. A Faith and Order Study Document* (Faith and Order Paper 199), Geneva 2005, nos. 12, 45, 127.

not be removed in any way<sup>7</sup>. The irremovability of God's image in man also means the inalienability of his inherent dignity<sup>8</sup>. Churches generally agree on the unique value and dignity of every human life that results directly from the creation and love of every human being by God<sup>9</sup>. Human dignity in history has been threatened many times and is now also facing threats<sup>10</sup>.

Every human being is created in the image of God, so it is an ontological category, but the similarity belongs to those only who perfect themselves in love and achieve moral efficacy<sup>11</sup>. The presence of God's image in every human being at the same time reveals the relational character of human nature and emphasizes human dignity, potentiality and creativity, as well as the limitations of this nature: creation, finiteness and defencelessness<sup>12</sup>.

Pope Francis in the encyclical *Laudato si'*, which is a great cry for the renewal of anthropology, denounces "perverted anthropocentrism": "When human beings place themselves at the centre, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative"<sup>13</sup>.

## 1.2. Man reduced to the role of producer/consumer

There is a mutual correlation between the degradation of the dignity of the human person and the degradation of the natural environment as a habitat of human life. Pope Francis expressed this relationship as follows: "Human beings too are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness, and endowed with unique dignity. So we cannot fail to consider the effects on people's lives of environmental deterioration, current models of development and the throwaway culture"<sup>14</sup>. The Pope develops this thought saying that "(...) a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor"<sup>15</sup>.

Understanding of the human nature, present in the dominant economic and political systems based on the neo-liberal paradigm, is excessively reductionist.

<sup>7</sup> FAITH AND ORDER COMMISSION OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Christian Perspectives*, no. 83.

<sup>8</sup> FAITH AND ORDER COMMISSION OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology*, no. 118.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 77.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 17.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 86, 120.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 82, 127.

<sup>13</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*, no. 122.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 43.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 49.

To describe this fragmentary concept of a man who is associated only with the system of economic dependencies, scholars have created the category of *homo oeconomicus*, which completely ignores questions of good and evil<sup>16</sup>.

*Homo oeconomicus* is an “economic man”, “managing man” or “economist”, although by definition the sense of the concept as a “rational man” rather follows. Tomáš Sedláček, the author of the famous book *Economy of Good and Evil*, shifts the definition towards the notion of profitability of man’s actions: “*Homo oeconomicus* is a module that constantly calculates costs and usability, pricing the cost of doing nothing and cares for the optimal allocation of resources”<sup>17</sup>.

Since according to the above definition the basic criterion of human activity is the achievement of profit through economic activity, then the humanity of the human person in this sense is reduced only to material purposes. Man is a consumer, a seller, a buyer, but above all a producer of material values. The motive of his actions and decisions is not altruism, but the care for his own state of ownership and the desire to multiply it. There is no room for other aspects that create the entire richness of the human person. The existence of man would therefore be closed within material values, and its economic potential would be a measure of its value. Man could be priced like all things and services. Therefore, a man would only be worth as much as his market value can be determined, and this must be considered as reducing humanity to the world of material references, or far-reaching dehumanization. Thus, understanding – due to the degradation of the human person – has little to do with Christian anthropology. The *homo oeconomicus* paradigm is inscribed in consumerism, which in turn is rooted in capitalism. “I am consuming – therefore I am” – *homo oeconomicus* could say about himself.

Criticism of the reductionist vision of the “man managing” from the point of view of theological anthropology was taken up in the work of the bodies that are part of or cooperating with the World Council of Churches. In the rich set of documents of the World Council of Churches dealing with social, anthropological and economic issues, the very term *homo oeconomicus* arose relatively recently. It is referred to in the *São Paulo Statement: International Financial Transformation for the Economy of Life*<sup>18</sup>, published 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2012.

The concept of *homo oeconomicus* originates directly from the deformed definition of anthropology contained in neoliberal ideology. The human person is de-

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. T. SEDLÁČEK, *Ekonomia dobra i zła. W poszukiwaniu istoty ekonomii od Gilgamesza do Wall Street*, Warszawa 2012, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> T. SEDLÁČEK, *Ekonomia dobra i zła*, p. 302.

<sup>18</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *International Financial Transformation for the Economy of Life, 2012*, [http://www.ekklezia.co.uk/files/sao\\_paulo\\_statement.pdf](http://www.ekklezia.co.uk/files/sao_paulo_statement.pdf) (12.09.2018) [further: São Paulo Statement].

fined there by its financial and economic value, not by the inherent dignity of the person resulting from the creation of man on the image of God. In the *São Paulo Statement* the rejection of such anthropology is categorical: “This anthropology has nested in humanity, colonising our mind and our dreams. This definition leads to racism, sexism and other forms of categorisation, exclusion and oppressive behaviour. This is a sin against God, humanity and all creation”<sup>19</sup>.

A significant problem resulting from the pursuit of profit from the production and sale of goods in the closed cycle of unrestrained consumption, which is pointed out in the *São Paulo Statement*, is the destruction of nature as a creation of God. There is no doubt that it is human economic activity that has caused such extensive destruction in nature and natural resources. “Over the years, big businesses, governments and multinational corporations have been reckless through policies and practices of unlimited growth which have led to pollution, destruction of forests, overproduction and the alienation of the poor and of farm workers from the land. Natural resources are limited, (...) and market mechanisms do not lead to an optimal social distribution. Therefore, political regulation is required to optimise sustainable social welfare”<sup>20</sup>.

As it has been shown, this system is not focused on the good of every human being, nor on the good of the human community, but only on the good of individuals with capital. American Nobel laureate Kenneth Arrow showed that to ensure fair distribution of wealth, the “invisible hand of the market” is not enough, but a regulatory role of government is needed that supports the internalization of such invisible values as the principles of ethics and morals<sup>21</sup>. Pope Francis diagnoses here the “culture of relativism”: “The culture of relativism is the same disorder which drives one person to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects (...). The same kind of thinking leads to the sexual exploitation of children and abandonment of the elderly who no longer serve our interests. It is also the mindset of those who say: Let us allow the invisible forces of the market to regulate the economy, and consider their impact on society and nature as collateral damage (...). This same «use and throw away» logic generates so much waste, because of the disordered desire to consume more than what is really necessary”<sup>22</sup>. The criticism of neo-liberal ideology taken in the documents of the eighth General Assembly of the WCC in Harare is based on the unmasking of a blind faith in the charitable activity of the “invisible hand of the market”, which is to ensure continuous growth and prosperity. Meanwhile, the ideology of the free market

<sup>19</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *International Financial Transformation*, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7–8.

<sup>21</sup> K.J. ARROW, *Discounting, Morality, and Gaming*, in: K.J. ARROW, P.R. PORTNEY, J.P. WEYANT (ed.), *Discounting and Intergenerational Equity*, Washington 1999, p. 13–21.

<sup>22</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*, no. 123.

introduces oppositions: individualism instead of community, competition instead of cooperation, consumerism and materialism instead of spirituality<sup>23</sup>.

The economic growth to ensure the promised well-being appears to be a kind of secular salvation. Economic growth itself does not cause social development or improve the redistribution of income. It must be accompanied by an active policy of governments that care for the alleviation of social consequences and the protection of the rights of economically disadvantaged groups<sup>24</sup>. Otherwise, a consequence for many people of the unrestrained growth of rich countries will be social and ecological destruction, especially visible in poor countries. Unjustified belief in the possibility of achieving beneficial effects for society through the constant stimulation of economic growth Jean Baudrillard rightly called the “homeopathic treatment of growth through growth”<sup>25</sup>.

In this context, it is reasonable to ask questions of a fundamental nature: who does economic growth serve? Who uses it? Whose expense is the wealth of the rich? What kind of vision of man is contained in neo-liberal ideology? Finally: is there an alternative to the neoliberal paradigm of the free market and global greed? The last question was to find answers in the document *Economy of Life*.

At the basis of the publication of this document is the growing in the bosom of Churches and Ecclesial Communities associated in the WCC belief in the need to oppose the unfair global economic system and at the same time seeking new solutions, not referring to the bankrupt communist or utopian ideologies. Hence the deeply bitter diagnosis of the current state: “People and the Earth are in peril due to the over-consumption of some, growing inequalities as evidenced in the persistent poverty of many in contrast to the extravagant wealth of a few, and intertwined global financial, socio-economic, ecological and climate crises”<sup>26</sup>. It is not only about personal sins, but about such a shaping of the global economic system, that one can already talk about the “sinfulness of systems and structures”<sup>27</sup>. Hundreds of millions of people live both in urban and rural areas in permanent poverty and oppression in structures shaped by global greed.

The basic sin inscribed in global economic liberalism is greed, widely sanctioned in Western consumer culture. “Greed has become the basis of growth” –

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<sup>23</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Together on the Way. Official report of the eight assembly of the World Council of Churches*, D. KESSLER (ed.), Geneva 1999, p. 258.

<sup>24</sup> POF. P. TULLOCH, *Globalization: Blessing or Curse? Buzz-word or Swear-word?*, in: J. DE SANTANA (ed.), *Sustainability and Globalization*, Geneva 1998, p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> J. BAUDRILLARD, *The Consumer Society. Myths and Structures*, Los Angeles – London – New Delhi 1999, p. 39.

<sup>26</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Economy of Life, Justice, and Peace for All: A Call to Action*, in: R.R. MSHANA, A. PERALTA (ed.), *Economy of Life. Linking Poverty, Wealth and Ecology*, Geneva 2015, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

diagnosed the World Council of Churches in a letter to the club of countries forming the so-called G20. “Greed has become officially sanctioned in our economic systems which have as inherent goals: limitless growth, the generation of wealth and the highest possible returns in the shortest time frame, and the maximization of utility or pleasure from the consumption of material goods”<sup>28</sup>.

The dominant ideology of a free, unrestricted market in practice effectively re-directs the flow of goods primarily to those who are already rich, and also allows for unlimited plunder of natural resources to multiply their wealth. At the same time, no mechanism of self-control is included in the neo-liberal paradigm of the free market, which could effectively counteract the worsening of the impoverishment of a large number of marginalized people<sup>29</sup>.

The basic effect of implementing the neo-liberal paradigm, and at the same time its internal feature, is the accumulation of capital in the hands of a small group of individual and corporate holders and the programmed inequality in the distribution and consumption of goods. This inequality has now reached a disastrous level and continues to deepen. In a figurative way disproportions in the possession of goods are presented with a glass of champagne, wide at the top and tapering downwards: the top of the glass is 20 percent of the population, having 83 percent of the world’s resources. The next 20 percent of the population already has only 11 percent of the resources, while for the remaining 60 percent of humanity is available only 6 percent<sup>30</sup>.

The concentration of wealth in the hands of the narrow elite will continue. The British Oxfam organization has published a report on wealth in the world. It turns out that in 2014, 48 percent of the world’s property was in the hands of just one percent of the inhabitants of the globe – of course, the richest ones. The remaining 52 percent had the rest of the people. According to Oxfam, in two years, one percent of the world’s population will already have more than 50 percent of the property existing on the globe<sup>31</sup>. Back in 2009, one percent of the richest held “only” 31 percent of the world’s assets in their hands<sup>32</sup>.

Already at the General Assembly of WCC in Harare it was pointed out that the effect of the intentional globalization of production, capital and trade is the concentration of economic power in the circle of around 30 countries and 60 mega-

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<sup>28</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Economy of Life*, p. 28–29.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5–6.

<sup>30</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *AGAPE – Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth. A Background Document*, Geneva 2005, no. 2.1.

<sup>31</sup> W. ROGACIN, *Jeden procent populacji ma prawie tyle pieniędzy, co... pozostałe 99 procent*, in: [http://www.polskatimes.pl/arttykul/3720682\\_jeden-procent-populacji-ma-prawie-tyle-pieniedzy-co-pozostale-99-procent,id,t.html](http://www.polskatimes.pl/arttykul/3720682_jeden-procent-populacji-ma-prawie-tyle-pieniedzy-co-pozostale-99-procent,id,t.html) (19.09.2018).

<sup>32</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Economy of Life*, p. 16.



corporations with powerful financial centres in the global market<sup>33</sup>. As a result of the progressive deepening of economic stratification, many people were immersed in poverty, brought to overwhelming debt, marginalized and often eradicated from their previous backgrounds<sup>34</sup>.

### 1.3. Man as a threat to himself – manipulation of human life

With all the complexity of the problem of man being reduced to the role of consumer-producer, it turns out that the danger is also in the very tendency of man to create a threat to himself by manipulating human life from the earliest stages of its development.

The moral evaluation of abortion, abortifacients, techniques of assisted reproduction and genetic manipulation, including cloning, will depend on how we determine the beginning of a person's life. The key here is the question of determining the moment of human existence: is the embryo from the moment of combining the gametes fully human or is it only potentially? The Roman Catholic Church is of the opinion that the human embryo has the full status of a human person, and hence the fullness of the human rights from the very moment of conception. It is impossible, therefore, to adopt the concept of the so-called delayed animation<sup>35</sup>. Many Churches, including Protestant and Anglican churches, are inclined to grant this status to the embryo from nidation (implantation), recognizing the embryo less than fourteen days old to be worthy of ethical respect, but not as a fully human being who is entitled to the full rights of the person<sup>36</sup>. This results in a difference in approach to biomedical techniques performed in the embryo. Among them, there is a preimplantation genetic diagnosis, if it is used for selective abortion of embryos bearing genetic defects. The same applies to the prohibition or admissibility of *in vitro* fertilization procedure, assuming the destruction of unimplanted embryos and the selective abortion of so called embryos supernumerary embryos implanted<sup>37</sup>.

The statements of the Catholic Church leave no doubt that human life must be protected from conception to natural death. Pope Francis explicitly states: "(...) concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with the justification of abortion. How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail

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<sup>33</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Together on the Way*, p. 255.

<sup>34</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Economy of Life*, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> POF. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH, *Quaestio de abortu*, AAS 66 (1974), p. 730–747, no. 12.

<sup>36</sup> *Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology*, no. 61.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 62.

to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties”<sup>38</sup>. Pope Francis repeats after Pope Benedict XVI: “If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of the new life is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away”<sup>39</sup>.

Not all biomedical techniques pose a threat to human existence, and thus a challenge for theological anthropology<sup>40</sup>. The „Faith and Order” Commission of the WCC encourages the Churches to make a joint effort with the scientific community to develop new, responsible technologies relating to the beginnings and ends of human life, such as selective reproduction, stem cell research, cloning and euthanasia<sup>41</sup>. In the face of most of these techniques, the Churches that share the Roman Catholic approach occupy a definitely negative position. Their use directly violates the dignity of the human person and his right to life is also an unauthorized interference in the creative action of God. The exception is research on stem cells not derived from human embryos.

Care for the natural environment should also include the human environment in the prenatal phase. Meanwhile, as Pope Francis notes, “(...) it is troubling that, when some ecological movements defend the integrity of the environment, rightly demanding that certain limits be imposed on scientific research, they sometimes fail to apply those same principles to human life. There is a tendency to justify transgressing all boundaries when experimentation is carried out on living human embryos. We forget that the inalienable worth of a human being transcends his or her degree of development”<sup>42</sup>.

## 2. The ways of rescue for human beings

### 2.1. An integral concept of a human being – *homo integer*

The concept of *homo oeconomicus* originates directly from the deformed definition of anthropology contained in neoliberal ideology. The human person is defined there by its financial and economic value, not by the inherent dignity of the person resulting from the creation of man on the image of God. Pope Francis points out at the damage done by this erroneous concept to the culture “A consumerist vision of human beings, encouraged by the mechanisms of today’s glo-

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<sup>38</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*, no. 120.

<sup>39</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in veritate. Encyclical Letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth*, London 2009, no. 28.

<sup>40</sup> *Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology*, no. 19.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 129.

<sup>42</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*, no. 136.

balized economy, has a levelling effect on cultures, diminishing the immense variety which is the heritage of all humanity<sup>743</sup>.

The question remains, what exactly could it be to overcome the reduction of man to the dimension of *homo oeconomicus*? In short, it is about restoring the integrity of the human person, its fullness and freedom. For this, we first need to acknowledge that human life cannot be commodified, but that it is a value that exceeds all material values. It must be remembered, however, that this kind of “anthropological conversion” cannot be limited to a purely economic dimension. Hence the postulated in the Document of São Paulo to create a new world financial and economic architecture should be accepted as a necessary element, or even a condition for departing from the reductionistic vision of man as *homo oeconomicus*, as part of the foundation, not the whole building. However, the foundation is necessary to build an integral vision of humanity on this basis: *homo integer*. This new vision presupposes taking into account all dimensions of human existence, above all its inherent connection with God through the act of creating and placing God’s image in man. In contrast to its opposite, the written under the codename of *homo oeconomicus*, a human being understood fully in his humanity, an „integrated”, holistic person, or *homo integer*, is also a completely free man: *homo liber*. This is the idea of an integral human, perceived far beyond its economic value, endowed with inalienable dignity, the right to life and respect, being as a man and woman collaborating with the Creator in continuing creation, finally converting from sins, also from the sins of unrestrained consumption, egoism, greed and domination over another human being. Pope Francis also draws attention to the integral development of man in the context of the principle of the common good he formulated. This principle results directly from the teaching of *Vaticanum II* in *Gaudium et spes* no. 26: “The common good is «the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment»<sup>744</sup>. The respect for human person as a result of this principle allows for its integral development<sup>745</sup>.

## 2.2. Theology and the economy of life – sustainable development and the affirmation of life as the reversal of the neoliberal paradigm

In this context, it is reasonable to ask questions of a fundamental nature: who does economic growth serve? Who uses it? Whose wealth are growing at the expense of wealth? What vision of man has been included in neo-liberal ideol-

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 144.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 156.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, no. 157.

ogy? And is there an alternative to the neoliberal paradigm of the free market and global greed? As Pope Francis notes: “The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet’s capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world”<sup>46</sup>.

When looking for a remedy for these unfavourable results of globalization, the concept of sustainable development was reached. This notion is also often characterized by the adjective “long-term”. The concept of sustainable development is to some extent “civilization” of the free market striving to stimulate and achieve unrestrained growth. From concern for economic development per se, it goes into the care for the quality of this growth. It is achieved when the basic human needs are secured, the raw material base is preserved, the population is renewable, and human communities are involved in decision-making processes and can decide for themselves<sup>47</sup>. In the circle of the World Council of Churches, the notion of sustainability also gained popularity. According to the definition proposed by Visser’t Hoof, sustainability means such a development of societies in which the world is left with the natural resources and possibilities with which it was inherited. “This means that renewable resources are consumed no faster than they can be renewed, that non-renewable resources are consumed no more rapidly than renewable substitutes can be found, that wastes are discharged at a rate no greater than they can be processed by nature or human devices”<sup>48</sup>.

Pope Francis also points out our responsibility to future generations here: “The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others (...). Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us”<sup>49</sup>. For the effective opposition to the globalizing paradigm of unsustainable development, the report from Harare proposes to refer to the concept of “life-centred vision”, in other words, to the multifaceted “affirmation of life”<sup>50</sup>. This concept has been described by four key

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<sup>46</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*, no. 161.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. F. WILSON, *Sustainability, Full Employment and Globalization. Contradictions or Complements*, in: J. DE SANTA ANA (ed.), *Sustainability and Globalization*, Geneva 1998, p. 63.

<sup>48</sup> *Sustainable Growth – a Contradiction in Terms?: Economy, Ecology and Ethics After the Earth Summit: Report of the Visser 't Hooft Memorial Consultation*, The Ecumenical Institute, Chateau de Bossey, June 14–19, Geneva 1993, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*, no. 159.

<sup>50</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Together on the Way*, p. 259.

words: participation, equity, accountability and sufficiency. It assumes the implementation of four important elements described: “participation as the optimal inclusion of all involved at all levels, equity as basic fairness that also extends to other life forms, accountability as the structuring of responsibility towards one another and Earth itself, and sufficiency as the commitment to meet basic needs of all life possible and develop a quality of life that includes bread for all but is more than bread alone”<sup>51</sup>.

The concept of affirmation of life was further developed in the 2012 study: *Economy of Life*, in which the “economy of life” was clearly opposed to the “economy of greed”. In order to reverse the effects of the “economy of greed”, unfavourable for the greater part of mankind and the planet itself, the World Council of Churches proposes the introduction of “transformative spirituality”<sup>52</sup> which renews our bonds with others<sup>53</sup>, motivates us to serve the common good, encourages opposition to all forms of marginalization, relies on life-destroying factors and looks for innovative alternatives. This spirituality, affirming the fullness of life for all and appearing against all forms of denial of life should be proper to the community of Jesus’ disciples<sup>54</sup>. It leads in a straight line to reject the neo-liberal paradigm of unbridled development through the free market, proposing in return justice and sustainable long-term development of economics and society, taking into account the protection of the Earth as a natural environment of human life<sup>55</sup>. The “spirituality of change” will be able to resist the factors that ruin human life and overcome the “conspiracy for the economy of greed”<sup>56</sup>.

The reestablishment of the human person as a value superior to economic factors, and therefore non-personalistic in nature, results directly from the assumptions of Christian anthropology, according to which man as the bearer of God’s image enjoys inalienable dignity and cannot be reduced to the role of homo oeconomicus: producer and consumer in a system of economic references.

The economy of life is based on cooperation, solidarity and reciprocity. Its features are: connecting people and resources for the benefit of every person and every community of people in society; demanding solidarity and responsibility, along with recognizing interdependence with other people and all creation; reliance on people who take responsibility for their lives and society; replacing capi-

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>52</sup> See: K. GREENAWAY, *Transformative Spirituality: a spirituality of encounter*, in: *World Council of Churches Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace*, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/spiritual-life/transformative-spirituality-a-spirituality-of-encounter> (18.09.2018).

<sup>53</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Economy of Life*, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3–4.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

tal with human work, knowledge and creativity; basing development on the rights of individuals and societies.

The theological and spiritual affirmation of life results, therefore, directly from the Christian acceptance of the biblical truth about the creation of the world and man by God and the belief in a perichoresis of the life of creatures with the life of the Creator. “Good life” in this sense consists in shaping it like the Holy Trinity in mutual references, shared partnership, justice and kindness<sup>57</sup>. In order to reverse the destructive tendency of the appropriation of wealth by a small group of economic elites and the blaming of billions of people for falling into poverty, it is necessary to take Jesus’ call to conversion, *metanoia*. This call includes first and foremost conversion from the sins of greed and egotism. It is also a necessary condition to renew the image of God in itself and become a partner of the Creator in the affirmation of life<sup>58</sup>.

### 2.3. Human ecology – integral ecology

Conversion from the logic of greed that causes unrestrained growth of consumption, and thus degradation of the entire environment of human life and then the transition to the logic of the affirmation of life leads to living in accordance with the moral law inscribed in the nature of man. Pope Benedict XVI spoke here about human ecology, pointing to the fact that “man has a nature that he should respect and which he cannot manipulate according to his own discretion”<sup>59</sup>, and for Pope Francis the term “human ecology” means “the relationship between human life and the moral law, which is inscribed in our nature and is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment”<sup>60</sup>.

## Conclusion

In addition to constant reflection on God’s revelation and the formulation of the content of truths revealed in the language of a given epoch and culture, theology should interpret phenomena occurring in the modern world, helping people understand the world, and helping them to give a creative response in line with the challenges facing humanity. As we have seen, both in the Roman Catholic Church and in a large part of Christianity cooperating within the framework of

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<sup>57</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Economy of Life*, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Address in the Bundestag, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 2011*, AAS 103 (2011), p. 668.

<sup>60</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato si’*, no. 155.

the World Council of Churches, such an answer to anthropological and biological problems is formulated. Dissemination of this idea in societies may contribute to the change of consciousness, and thus to the improvement of the human condition within its own natural environment, which also includes the economic and social environment. Recognizing his dependence on the Creator, man can creatively fulfil his task of good management of the Earth entrusted to him by God.

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