

# THE PAPAL ENCYCLICAL *LAUDATO SI'* A FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY ATTENTIVE TO THE POOR

ANN-MARIE KENNEDY

*(corresponding author)*

*Department of Management, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship*

*University of Canterbury*

*Christchurch, New Zealand*

*ann-marie.kennedy@canterbury.ac.nz*

NICHOLAS J. C. SANTOS, S.J.

*College of Business*

*Marquette University*

*Milwaukee, Wisconsin, U.S.A.*

*nicholas.santos@marquette.edu*

**Abstract.** This article seeks to reflect upon *Laudato Si'*, the papal encyclical on ecology and sustainable development, and uncover its apparent philosophical and practical approach to the environment. It begins with a discussion of paradigms of thought that outline the new ecological paradigm (NEP) suggested in the ecological literature, thereby helping to situate the ecosophy of *Laudato Si'* within current thought. As we will show, *Laudato Si'* differs from the NEP by linking the poor to our approach to sustainability and in its consideration of integral ecology. Specific principles for sustainability in business are then identified and strategic approaches are recommended, as are guidelines for an eco-justice approach to business and business education.

**Keywords:** sustainability; *Laudato Si'*; ecosophy; New Ecological Paradigm; Western Dominant Social Paradigm; poverty; Roman Catholic Social Teaching; integrative justice model

## INTRODUCTION

*Laudato Si'* (hereafter referred to as LS), the papal encyclical on the environment released in June 2015, has been recognized "as one of the most significant events in the modern environmental movement" by the *Financial Times* (Linden, 2015) and is something that *The Guardian* claimed "the world should pay attention [to]" (Guardian, 2015). It has also gained criticism, however, from free market conservatives due to its attack on capitalism, and from those who do not believe in climate change (Yardley & Goodstein, 2015). Linking the consumerism of developed nations and the drive of capitalistic economic growth with the demise of the environment and the poor, Pope Francis (2015) questions the belief that technology and economic growth are the answers to poverty and environmental degradation. LS thus follows integral ecology, where care for the environment is linked to a morally good and "just" type of economic development that seeks to provide freedom, education, and meaningful work to all.

Current sustainability-focused business practices, however, tend to emphasize implementing sustainability to increase consumption of sustainable products and create efficiencies with sustainable operations for the purposes of economic growth. Much of this behavior is justified by the growth imperative that underlies the current Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) of the West. Unfortunately, according to Prothero, McDonagh, and Dobscha (2010), this way of thinking is flawed and does little to further global sustainability goals. As such, there have been calls for a shift to an eco-centric and holistic view in the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) to help realize truly sustainable objectives (Kilbourne & Polonsky, 2005).

Not surprisingly, environmentally-based normative guidelines and many studies on sustainability are entrenched in the DSP at present. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Global Compact guidelines for MNCs espouse a precautionary approach, emphasizing more environmentally friendly operations and products to enable better resource productivity and economic growth (OECD, 2011; UN Global Compact, 2015). To enable future resource use and sustained societies, the Caux Roundtable principles go further in terms of respect for the environment to achieve business goals (Caux Roundtable, 2010). The CERES principles, the most thorough regarding sustainability, recognize that companies are changing too slowly in their sustainability behavior (Moffat, 2010) and are founded on economic growth as a goal (Blood, 2010).

Unfortunately, such a belief in unending economic growth is no longer viable given the ecological limits that have been acknowledged over the past few decades. Support for the current DSP, which is the basis for the guidelines outlined above, has led to the acceptance of behaviors that cause environmental degradation and a lack of support for policies needed to protect the environment (Pirages, 1977). Environmentalism has been reduced to policy issues and fixes instead of exploring the causes of such issues (Rodman, 1980). Concepts such as reduce, reuse, recycle, and regulate, along with the notion of eco-efficiency, remain grounded in an anthropocentric viewpoint (McDonough & Braungart, 2002) which pursues competitive advantage rather than preservation of the environment. Such an anthropocentric view of the world means that real change in environmental behaviors has not occurred even with a heightened concern about the environment (Kilbourne, 2010). Environmental focus and change in organizational practices cannot happen, then, while organizations base their processes on value creation and exchange, and while consumers value goods acquisition as a route to happiness and wellbeing (Wang & Wallendorf, 2006) which in itself is impossible (Haller & Hadler, 2006).

In contrast with the DSP's position, LS offers a perspective that is theocentric and humanity affirming, where human persons play an important role in the continuation of creation via stewardship and care for the earth rather than via dominion or exploitation. This position also departs from the NEP's ecological holism that explicitly rejects a human focus and that, in fact, could be amoral to the concerns of the poor. Instead, LS focuses on an approach to sustainability that is particularly cognizant of the poor and disadvantaged (Martin, 2015). Such a perspective, often lacking in other discourses about sustainability, is the core of LS's distinct value proposition.

This article will thus analyze the NEP and LS to deduce not only points of overlap between these two paradigms but also points of departure, particularly regarding the core assumptions of the NEP. As has been done with previous encyclicals such as *Centesimus Annus* (Abela, 2001) and *Caritas in Veritate* (Yuengert, 2011; Vaccaro & Sison, 2011; Klein & Laczniak, 2013) as well as with the pastoral letters of the Roman Catholic Bishops (Curran, 1988), we will then list some of the implications that LS has for the poor and provide policy implications for business as well as suggestions for business school educators.

## ECOLOGICAL WORLDVIEWS

An ecological worldview is the “cognitive and perceptual capacity to see the world through the lens of ecology, which is essentially the relationship between species and their environment ... [and] our interdependence” (Schein, 2015). Such paradigms are so inherent that they shape behaviors and decisions without being explicitly acknowledged. However, concern about the unquestioning acceptance of a dominant social paradigm may occur when we consider that the paradigm also shapes our evaluations of effectiveness and approaches to research (Kuhn, 1962), as well as our view of what constitutes worthy approaches to knowledge discovery and even of what is worthy knowledge in the first place (Buttle, 1994).

There have thus been calls to change the approach to sustainability research and marketing given that current studies under the Western DSP have not amounted to substantial change. A complete paradigm shift, however, is needed for such a transformation to occur (Kilbourne, 2010). On that note, there is much support for a shift to the New Environmental/Ecological Paradigm (NEP) (Kilbourne & Polonsky, 2005; Stern, Dietz, & Guagnano, 1995) which has eco-centrism as its core instead of anthropocentrism. Based on the work of Dunlap and Van Liere (1978), this paradigm contrasts greatly with the DSP.

What follows is an explanation of the basic philosophical basis of the NEP. The terms NEP and DSP will be used throughout as opposed to “economism” or “ecosophy” or any other terms. This is because each paradigm encompasses much more than what the concepts of economism or ecosophy do, as will be seen in the following sections.

## THE NEW ECOLOGICAL PARADIGM

The New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) is first and foremost based on eco-centrism, a view that sees nature as having inherent value beyond its usefulness to human persons (Dobson, 1990; Purser, Park, & Montuori, 1995; Schein, 2015). Eco-centrism emphasizes a belief in holism rather than in atomism, thereby helping the eco-centrist to understand that human persons are part of a larger whole and are thus limited in what they can do. For instance, ecosystems are acknowledged to have systemic import (Rolston, 1994) to not only produce value but support life in general. Human persons, therefore, are a part of that system rather than above it and controlling it. It is a line of thought that brings about differences in priorities and decision-making.

Holism thus speaks for the belief that human persons are just one part of an interrelated web of life. They are not at the center as the main focal point, for each strand of that web needs to work in equilibrium with the others (Luckett, 2004). Therefore, while nature should be used to ensure that human persons survive, it should not be destroyed nor largely interfered with (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995). A spirit of co-operation is espoused as the functional approach for such equilibrium to be maintained, one in which organizations, regulators, and individuals must work together for larger systemic goals (Ketola, 2008).

Nature, then, is vulnerable, and technology needs to have minimal impact on it. Natural resources, for instance, must be used sparingly, for technology can never replace them. In fact, a truly humane technology would put the needs of people first and enable human relationships, belongingness, and self-actualisation (Robertson, 1983). With such a relationship orientation, it would seek a steady state economy and encourage sustainable growth aimed at equilibrium (Schumacher, 1973). There are multiple views of what political philosophy will work in this regard (see Eckersley, 1992), although there is some agreement on decentralized and local political arrangements (Robertson, 1983; Eckersley, 1992; Saward, Dobson, MacGregor, & Torgerson, 2009). In such cases, "capital must be rooted in community, and trade must be restricted to the exchange of true ecological surpluses. Small scale community-based economies defined by natural regional boundaries ... are [thus] most appropriate" (Gladwin et al., 1995: 888).

The core philosophy behind the NEP comes from Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher who states in his seminal work that such ecological harmony or equilibrium is a necessary precursor to scientific pursuits such as ecology (Naess, 1973) in that normative, prescriptive, and descriptive components can be drawn from it and be used for understanding and developing the future. His view of deep ecology is one of internal relatedness, that not only is there an intrinsic relationship between things but that those things would not be as they were without it.

Eckersley (1992) develops this position, stating that we are all interrelated and made up from (or of) those interrelationships in a dynamic web of creation where a series of events and interactions rather than independent things creates, maintains, and lives in the world (Birch & Cobb, 1981). In contrast to anthropocentrism, this ecosophy does not provide a vivid dividing line between beings and considers human persons and non-human creatures as equals. It also points to *biospherical egalitarianism*, a view where each aspect of the ecosystem has an equal right to live and thrive at least "in principle," for realistically there is a

need for “some killing, exploitation, and suppression” (Birch & Cobb, 1981: 95) to (presumably) ensure human survival.

There are five main assumptions one must hold to follow such a paradigm (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978; Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig, & Jones, 2000; Hawcroft & Milfont, 2010). Recognition of the ecological, human, psychological, and even conceptual limits of growth is the *first* assumption. The *second* is a belief in the fragility of the balance of nature and the power of human persons to upset that balance. It is important to accept that such a balance needs to be maintained, and that there are not only physical limits for space and resources but also social limits for industrial growth due to its inherent social costs (Robertson, 1983).

A rejection of anthropocentrism, the view that nature exists primarily for human use, rounds out the *third* assumption necessary for one to maintain the NEP. The *fourth* assumption is a rejection of the idea that human persons are exempt from the global consequences of their behavior, and believes instead that human persons are a part of nature and so are constrained by, and responsible for, its limits (Borland & Lindgreen, 2013). This follows on from the third assumption, for anthropocentrism holds that human persons are exempt from nature's constraints since they are masters over nature. Lastly, the *fifth* assumption, outlined by Dunlap and Van Liere (1978), is a belief in and acceptance of an eco-crisis rather than a blinkered approach.

It has been found that people who hold to these assumptions not only have a higher level of belief in the NEP and an eco-centric worldview. They are also more likely to support environmental regulations and funding as well as personally try to preserve the environment (Hawcroft & Milfont, 2010; Schein, 2015).

These assumptions contrast greatly with the four base assumptions that lead to the current Western DSP, which are: 1) that human persons are independent and inherently different from nature, and so are dominant over it; 2) that they are in control of their own futures; 3) that the world has unlimited potential for creating opportunities for human persons; and 4) that human progress can be maintained by human ingenuity, often in the form of technology (Catton & Dunlap, 1980). Therefore, since the assumptions of the DSP do not support the development of a more sustainable future, it is only appropriate that we compare *Laudato Si'* with the assumptions of the NEP rather than the DSP.

## **LAUDATO SI' AND THE NEP ASSUMPTIONS**

The recent encyclical of Francis, *Laudato Si'* (which literally means "Praise be to you," a phrase taken from St. Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Creatures*), is divided into six chapters and 246 paragraphs. It builds on the tradition of the Church's social teaching (n. 15) and incorporates many of the concepts of Roman Catholic social thought, such as human dignity, solidarity, stewardship, the common good, and the preferential option for the poor. Several main themes that flow through the encyclical (mentioned at n. 16) are the following:

- the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet;
- the conviction that everything in the world is connected;
- the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology;
- the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress;
- the value proper to each creature;
- the human meaning of ecology;
- the need for forthright and honest debate;
- the serious responsibility of international and local policy; and
- the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle.

It should be noted that the basis of the Church's ecological teachings begins with Genesis, particularly in the propositions that nature is "good" and that we have a duty to care for it as stewards and have dominion over it (New Mexico Bishops, 1998). However, as Pope John Paul II (1987) points out in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, this dominion has moral limitations and is not absolute. In a reflection of the web of which we are part, St. Francis of Assisi, the patron of ecology, wrote on the care and love we must show to nature and the poor (John Paul II, 1990). Such teachings are described and expanded upon in encyclicals such as *Rerum Novarum* (Leo XIII, 1891), *Mater et Magistra* (John XXIII, 1961), *Pacem in Terris* (John XXIII, 1963), and *Populorum Progressio* (Paul VI, 1967). Subsequent teaching from John Paul II onwards and from groups of bishops would then develop a rich body of Roman Catholic social thought on the environment which LS will eventually draw upon.

In the following sections, we will discuss some of the teachings of LS while considering the assumptions of NEP.

***NEP Assumption 1: Ecological, human, psychological, and conceptual limits of growth***

Roman Catholic Social Teaching (CST) cautions against a reductionist view of nature where one holds “that an infinite quantity of energy and resources are available, that it is possible to renew them quickly, and that the negative effects of the exploitation of the natural order can be easily absorbed” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004: n. 462). According to CST, “a correct understanding of the environment prevents the utilitarian reduction of nature to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004: n. 463).

John Paul II, in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, was the first to state the limitations of nature back when its abundance was always being cited. He wrote about “the growing realization that the heritage of nature is limited and that it is being intolerably polluted...” (1981: n. 353), and reiterated the same in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (John Paul II, 1987: n. 411) with statements on the limits of resources. In that encyclical, he also discussed the boundaries of consumption where “super development, which consists in an excessive availability of every kind of material goods ... makes people slaves of ‘possession’ and of immediate gratification...” and states that resources are limited, that some are non-renewable, and that this is of concern for future generations of human persons (John Paul II, 1987: n. 412).

The assumption of limits to growth is also explicitly stated in LS:

We all know that it is not possible to sustain the present level of consumption in developed countries and wealthier sectors of society, where the habit of wasting and discarding has reached unprecedented levels. The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty. (n. 27)

Yet, even then, “many people will deny doing anything wrong because distractions constantly dull our consciousness of just how limited and finite our world really is” (LS, n. 56). Francis thus cautions against the technocratic paradigm that we appear to have adopted where we subscribe to the idea of infinite or unlimited growth: “It is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth’s goods...” (LS, n. 106). Such a paradigm assumes that the negative effects of the exploitation of nature can be easily absorbed. We need to focus, therefore, on “eliminating



the structural causes of the dysfunctions of the world economy and correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment” (LS, n. 6). Industrial development and a particular growth model, for instance, were highlighted in previous CST as causing environmental and public health degradation due to pollution (John Paul II, 1987: n. 418).

***NEP Assumption 2: Fragility of the balance of nature and human capacity to upset that balance***

*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* recognizes that ecosystems are fragile, interconnected, and must be preserved (John Paul II, 1987: n. 411). The encyclical discusses the “greater realization of the limits of available resources, and of the need to respect the integrity and the cycles of nature and to take them into account when planning for development....” John Paul II thus advocates a holistic approach to the environment that considers all impacts of human behavior to protect nature for future generations: “On another level, delicate ecological balances are upset by the uncontrolled destruction of animal and plant life or by a reckless exploitation of natural resources...” (1990: n. 7).

Therefore, while CST acknowledges the positive roles that science and technology play in human development, it also recognizes that some discoveries, particularly in the fields of industry and agriculture, have produced harmful long-term effects (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004: n. 459), and that “the conquest and exploitation of resources has become predominant and invasive” (n. 461). Francis thus highlights the need for balance while recognizing the human ability to create imbalance: “The impact of present imbalances is also seen in the premature death of many of the poor...” (LS, n. 48), and “the degree of human intervention, often in the service of business interests and consumerism, is making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more limited and grey...” (n. 34).

LS also states that “although change is part of the working of complex systems, the speed with which human activity has developed contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution” (n. 18). The encyclical points out in numerous places how human persons have contributed to ecological degradation. Francis thus reminds us of the ecological concerns raised by previous popes: John XXIII (n. 3), Paul VI (n. 4), John Paul II (n. 5), and Benedict XVI (n. 6). Each of them had warned against our irresponsible use of the environment and about the ecological damage resulting from it.

We are thus reminded that “if we acknowledge the value and the fragility of nature and, at the same time, our God-given abilities, we can finally leave behind the modern *myth of unlimited material progress*” (LS, n. 78, emphasis added). The assumption that we can dump or release any amount of waste into the oceans or toxic gases into the air with no adverse effect on the environment is a mistaken one. Like in the NEP, LS emphasizes that the balance of nature is fragile, and not only do we have the capacity and power to upset that balance, but the damage that we have already inflicted upon nature places on us a moral obligation to devise “intelligent ways of directing, developing and limiting our power” (n. 78).

***NEP Assumption 3: Rejection of the anthropocentric view that nature exists primarily for human use***

While CST upholds the prominent place of human persons in creation, it cautions against an arbitrary use of the earth as if human persons own it. When people behave in such a manner, they set themselves up in the place of God and end up “provoking a rebellion on the part of nature” (John Paul II, 1991: n. 37; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004: n. 460). Instead, human persons are meant to be co-operators with God in the continuous work of creation.

*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* states that one may not use nature for economic benefit only but must “take into account the nature of each being and its mutual connection in an ordered system, which is precisely the ‘cosmos’” (n. 418). Thus, while dominion over nature exists, absolute dominion does not:

the dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to “use and misuse,” or to dispose of things as one pleases.... [When] it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity. (n. 418)

In LS, a whole chapter is devoted to a reflection on an anthropocentric view of the world: “We have come to see ourselves as lords and masters, entitled to plunder at will” (n. 2), “to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption” (n. 5). In the end, we are reminded that it “is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential ‘resources’ to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves” (n. 33).

Francis thus echoes Benedict XVI's position that creation is harmed when we mistakenly think that everything is our property and to be used for ourselves alone (cf. LS, n. 6). He tries to correct an erroneous interpretation of Genesis 1:28 where the human person is granted "dominion" over the earth, pointing out that dominion does not justify absolute domination over other creatures but instead implies a relationship of mutual responsibility (n. 67). He states that "the Bible has *no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism* unconcerned for other creatures" (n. 68, emphasis added). Instead, we are invited to recognize the intrinsic value of the rest of creation, particularly of other living beings (n. 69), and to understand "dominion" more properly as "responsible stewardship" (n. 116).

LS, therefore, does not reject anthropocentrism as much as it rejects a tyrannical version of it, one that mistakenly considers human persons as owners of the earth and having the liberty to exploit it at will. However, this "is not to put all living beings on the same level nor to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails" (n. 90), for while LS aligns with the thinking of the NEP regarding the systemic and intrinsic value of ecosystems (of which human persons are a part), it affirms the supremacy of the human person over the rest of creation: "Christian thought sees human beings as possessing a particular dignity above other creatures" (n. 119). Thus, in contrast to NEP which upholds the equality of all things (living and non-living), LS subscribes to a hierarchical system where living beings (with the human person at the top) have a higher standing or status over non-living ones.

#### ***NEP Assumption 4: Rejection of human exemptionalism***

According to Lannan (1999: 366), "the most basic principle of humanity's relationship to the environment is that humanity is part of creation." CST, however, recognizes that human persons are not just a part of creation but that they have a special role to play in terms of caring for it. This of course does not make them exempt from the constraints and limitations of creation; instead, it imbues them with a special responsibility as stewards. Such a rejection of exemptionalism was first mentioned in *Octogesima Adveniens* (Paul VI, 1971: n. 273) and is advocated as well in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* in "that one cannot use with impunity the different categories of beings, whether living or inanimate—animals, plants, the natural elements—simply as one wishes, according to one's own economic needs" (John Paul II, 1987: n. 418). This is because we have a moral obligation to care for nature and one another, thereby requiring that subsidiarity be applied in this respect (John Paul II, 1990).

LS laments our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods of the earth when we think that we are its “lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will” (n. 2). Moreover, “the deterioration of nature is closely connected to the culture which shapes human coexistence. Pope Benedict asked us to recognize that the natural environment has been gravely damaged by our irresponsible behavior. The social environment has also suffered damage” (n. 6). Francis reminds us that “we have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen. 2:7); [that] our very bodies are made up of her elements, [that] we breathe her air and [that] we receive life and refreshment from her waters” (n. 2). He adds 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” (n. 139). “Once the human being declares independence from reality and behaves with absolute dominion, the very foundations of our life begin to crumble” (n. 117).

LS, however, goes beyond the NEP assumption that human persons are not exempt from the constraints of nature and holds that we are intricately connected with nature and that we affect it by our actions (like NEP Assumption No. 2) in both positive and negative ways. In keeping with “responsible stewardship” and our special role as co-creators (vis-à-vis NEP Assumption No. 3), LS advocates proactively seeking ways in which “human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator” (n. 83). Examples of such positive interventions mentioned in the encyclical are cleaning up polluted rivers, restoring native woodlands, and the production of non-polluting energy, among others (cf. n. 58).

***NEP Assumption 5: Belief in and acceptance of an eco-crisis rather than a blinkered approach***

The first acknowledgement of an eco-crisis in CST was from *Octogesima Adveniens* (Paul VI, 1971); before that point, the abundance of the environment was just assumed. The encyclical clearly stated that a

transformation is making itself felt, one which is the dramatic and unexpected consequence of human activity. Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation. Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace—pollution and refuse, new illness and absolute destructive capacity—but the human framework is no longer under man’s control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable. (n. 273)

Throughout LS, there is direct mention of the idea of an “environmental crisis.” One example of this can be seen in the following: “Due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation ... [of an] ecological catastrophe under the effective explosion of industrial civilization” (n. 4). LS thus cautions against “the rise of a false or superficial ecology which bolsters complacency and a cheerful recklessness” (n. 59) in which people tend to think that the environmental situation is not that serious and that the planet can continue as it is for some time. This perspective grants people who subscribe to it the license to continue with their unsustainable lifestyles:

Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. (n. 14)

More than just believing in and accepting the ecological crisis, LS also links it with a social and ethical one. For instance, it states that “environmental deterioration and human and ethical degradation are closely linked” (n. 56), and that “the human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; [meaning] we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation” (n. 48).

## THE DISTINCTIVE VALUE PROPOSITION OF *LAUDATO SI'*

While LS might agree with most of the assumptions of the NEP, there are some (particularly nos. 3 and 4) which the encyclical either differs in perspective from or takes a little further. For instance, a differentiating point between LS and the NEP is on the notion of creation—while LS resonates with the NEP in acknowledging the intrinsic (and not instrumental) value of nature, it distinguishes between nature and creation: “nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all” (n. 176). In contrast to the NEP which upholds an eco-centric view of the world, LS promotes a theocentric view in which God, and not human persons or any other created reality, is at the center. The best way, therefore, “to restore men and women to their rightful place, putting an end to their claim to absolute dominion over the earth, is to speak once more of the figure of a Father who creates and who alone owns the world. Otherwise, human

beings will always try to impose their own laws and interests on reality" (n. 75). At the same time, however, Christian thought as communicated in LS acknowledges that God gratuitously shares this theocentric space with human persons, elevating them to be co-creators and entrusting them with the responsible stewardship of creation.

Another major departure from current thought on sustainability and ethics in LS seems to be the acknowledgement of integral ecology as well as a forceful discussion and very clear focus on the impact of environmental degradation on the poor. For instance, the encyclical states that "a sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings" (LS, n. 90), those who are poor, voiceless, and who often have to bear the brunt of climate change. Francis asks us to "not only keep the poor of the future in mind, but also today's poor, whose life on this earth is brief and who cannot keep on waiting" (LS, n. 162). The encyclical lays out very clearly 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*" (LS, n. 49, emphasis in original). The Holy Father reminds us that "the human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; [that] we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation" (n. 48). In his discussion of St. Francis of Assisi, he specifically notes that the saint "shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace" (n. 10).

For Francis, the effects of environmental degradation will also impact developing economies the most:

Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and eco-systemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited. (LS, n. 25)

Nevertheless, the poor are entitled to "the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity" (n. 30). "For poor countries, the priorities must be to eliminate extreme poverty and to promote the social development of their people" (n. 172).

Christiansen (2015) points out that "*the Holy Father's view of the poor is unromantic*" (emphasis added). In LS, the Pope identifies the many ways

in which the poor suffer from environmental degradation and climate change, such as lack of clean water and energy, forced migration, and human trafficking, among others. Consider, for example, the millions of tons of used electronic goods that get dumped in poor countries, thereby creating a phenomenal amount of toxic e-waste that the poor in these countries have no idea about (Vidal, 2013). Such waste creates a health hazard that they must bear through no fault of theirs.

Indeed, the kind of eco-centrism displayed by LS places the condition of the poor and the marginalized at the center of the ecological conversation and debate—the encyclical states that “the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet” (LS, n. 48). Unfortunately, it needs to be said that, “generally speaking, there is little in the way of clear awareness of problems which especially affect the excluded. Yet they are the majority of the planet’s population, billions of people” (n. 49). LS is therefore critical of how the poor are often treated in international political and economic discussions, saying that “one often has the impression that [the poor’s] problems are brought up as an afterthought, a question which gets added almost out of duty or in a tangential way, if not treated merely as collateral damage” (LS, n. 49).

LS thus advocates shifting from a focus merely on the natural order to a view of sustainability that places considerable emphasis on the condition of the poor and marginalized. It promotes a solidarity with the poor that involves making their situation better, whether it be in constructing clean and good neighbourhoods, generosity in the transfer of clean technologies to poorer countries, or even in the protection of people’s jobs. What follows, therefore, are some thoughts on base principles for normative business guidelines, followed in turn by examples of their embodiment in strategy. Such principles aim to attain sustainability for both people and the planet, with a special view of the poor and marginalized.

## **POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS**

Laczniak and Kennedy (2011) identified comprehensive sustainability as a hyper-norm across the codes of conduct of multinational companies. They found that consideration and respect for the environment were key, including prevention and care for future generations through sustainable development, safe waste disposal, energy conservation, and environmental restoration (CERES, 2009; American Marketing Association, 2008; Caux Roundtable, 2010; OECD, 2011). However, firms often adopt sustainable business practices primarily for financial

gain, and differing perspectives on what sustainability is and what its appropriate actions are create many tensions (Hahn, Pinkse, Preuss, & Figge, 2015) that erode trust in business environmental reporting, especially when the use of the triple bottom line lacks a complete application of sustainability (Gray & Milne, 2002, 2004; Moneva, Archel, & Correa, 2006). In fact, there are some who hold that the economic position of LS is deeply flawed, particularly in its attack on free markets (cf. Gregg, 2015).

It may appear at first glance that LS is indeed promoting an anti-business rhetoric, as there are numerous places where Francis does criticize business. However, as Cardinal Turkson (Lubov, 2015) points out, the encyclical is actually reminding businesses of their responsibility to society. According to the International Association of Jesuit Business Schools, sustainability in the context of business is defined as the responsibility to take into consideration “the broad set of interconnected issues that encompass, but are not limited to, achieving environmental conservation, social justice, poverty eradication, social entrepreneurship, desirable production and consumption patterns, species preservation, and spiritually rich lives” (Stoner, 2013: 2). Specific and normative guidelines can thus be derived from this understanding of sustainability and taught as an eco-justice approach in business schools. Such guidelines are unique because of the different philosophical bases of LS, and they acknowledge that justice for the poor in human sustainability is linked with the suffering they endure due to environmental degradation and lack of resources (Brown, 2009).

LS’s rejection of the DSP, move toward the NEP, and unique outlook of integral ecology also provide us with an extended and more thoughtful set of guidelines for sustainable corporate social responsibility. According to the Catholic Climate Covenant (2013) and the St. Francis Pledge, these guidelines may include 1) the duty to care for the environment, the poor, and the vulnerable; 2) education on causes of climate change; 3) the assessment of contributions to climate change in terms of energy use, consumption, and waste; and 4) the reduction of contributions to climate change. Most Jesuit university business schools are already following such an eco-justice approach (Sabbaghi & Cavanagh, 2015).

The first guideline, the duty to care for the environment, the poor, and the vulnerable, prescribes the use of sustainable business practices and prioritizing the impact of business decision-making on the environment and the poor, especially when it comes to environmental degradation from production processes, resource use, product or service use, and disposition, to name a few. This also includes any business practices which perpetuate the situations of, or mistreat, the poor and



vulnerable, such as using a developing nation's natural resources to the detriment of their ability to do the same, possibly because it increases the price of the resource or decreases its availability.

This guideline would have an organization commit not just to implementing piecemeal environmental or community initiatives such as recycling or sponsorship, but also to having such initiatives as part of the business philosophy behind all strategic decision-making. Asking about the impact of every decision on the environment and the poor, and making that a part of formal decision-making criteria, are steps toward such a commitment. It is a perspective that must be considered at all points in the supply chain up, until and including disposition.

If employees understand the consequences of day-to-day decisions only in broad strategic strokes, a truly sustainable philosophy cannot permeate throughout the organisation. Hence the second guideline—educating them about the concerns outlined above and on the causes of climate change. Orientations, internal newsletters, and ongoing training would be practical options in this regard.

The third guideline, assessment of contributions to climate change, encompasses not only a baseline of current performance but also policy, formal decision-making processes, and criteria. Ongoing audits can also potentially use sustainability tracing assessments such as AASHE ([www.star.aashe.org](http://www.star.aashe.org)).

The final guideline, reducing contributions to climate change, requires action from the organization. It will be necessary to set goals regarding previously assessed impacts, monitor progress, and work toward reducing those impacts.

In addition to all this, the Integrative Justice Model (IJM) (Santos & Lacznia, 2009; Lacznia & Santos, 2010) provides even more guidance for implementing social justice and sustainability within an eco-justice approach. It posits that business has a responsibility to all parties within a stakeholder perspective (e.g. Freeman, 1984). Indeed, while some have warned that seeing the environment as an independent stakeholder is erroneous, a view toward human sustainability can be a more objective and unifying principle of sustainability across businesses. Human sustainability, in its contribution to human welfare, cares for the environment without doing it any harm (Gibson, 2012); in fact, a view of human sustainability may embody more fully the view of sustainability espoused by LS.

In conjunction, therefore, with the discussions on the NEP, LS, IJM, and human sustainability, we may offer the following values for the firm, particularly with regard to the poor: 1) authentic engagements with customers and the environment which are non-exploitative; 2) co-creation of value with customers and the environment so that all parties are better off; 3) investment in creating holistic eco-systems that all can participate in without endangering the environment; 4) representation of the environment and the poor in decision-making; 5) long term profit management to ensure support for the poor and the environment instead of maximization of business profits.

Authentic engagement refers to interactions with customers and the environment that are not just about financial gain for the organization. Co-creative opportunities, for instance, are overlooked when only engaging with customers to sell them products or services, or gain ideas for product development. Co-creation implies that the customer gains more than just a product or service from the interaction, such as personal insights or community membership.

Co-creation applies to the environment as well. For example, instead of either just taking resources or allowing waste to degrade nature, organizations need to not only give back to the environment but to improve it, such as with clean technology development, environmental renewal, and conservation programs. In short, ensuring that interactions with people or the environment result in all parties (and not just business alone) being better off is paramount.

As with the St. Francis pledge, the IJM also suggests (although more explicitly) that the poor, vulnerable, and environment be included in decision-making. This implies that any potential impact on them must be considered among decision-making criteria.

Finally, pursuing long term profit management to support the poor, vulnerable, and the environment moves away from a growth model exclusively for profit's sake, and toward a more humanistic approach to profit distribution that does not tolerate the excessive use of resources or negative outcomes in exchange for short term gains.

Such principles likely run counter to a culture that subscribes to the DSP, where economic liberalism and growth are the base principles and placing quality of life before profit entails a complete turnaround in business decision-making and objectives. These principles also go against the consumerism championed for economic growth, and question the assumption that humans are truly free when they purchase what they

want when they want it. Instead, they encourage authentic freedom, which is about personal fulfilment, peace, joy, and having no need for excessive consumerism to achieve such.

Seeking sustainable *and* equitable development thus brings to the fore the inclusion of the poor in the business distribution of goods and resources. It recognizes that the poor possess the same human dignity as the rich, and that the rich, by satiating their appetites, also use up the poor's resources, leaving them unable to meet their own needs. The fair and just distribution of goods and resources, along with seeking sustainable business practices and development, need to be at the heart of business policy, for seeking the common good is a duty for all businesses.

Some examples of strategies that embody these principles are as follows:

- *Support for local self-sufficiency, possibly through co-operatives.* In addition to helping create local self-sufficiency, the identification and development of needed resources through business partnerships with locals can also realize benefits such as knowledge sharing and a strong, productive, and thriving community. For instance, businesses can support the development of local enterprises and co-operatives by providing start-up training and capital. They can also use the location of suppliers as a decision-making criterion, even if places further afield are less expensive. An excellent example of this is that of the Mondragon Co-operative, which played a big role in helping the Basque region of Spain achieve economic self-sufficiency (Gonzales & Phillips, 2013).
- *Using production that is energy efficient, low in pollution, and light on resources.* Clean technology and upgrading production facilities to more efficient systems take waste generation, processing, collection, transportation, and disposal into consideration. Product design-for-environment as described by Fuller (1999) gives specific steps and issues regarding such, and also looks at the sources of materials and effects of their usage. Unilever, for example, has committed to achieving zero net deforestation in its supply chains by 2020 (<http://www.unilever.com>).

- *Removing products that are energy inefficient, polluting, and heavy on resources.* Making products that are durable or use less materials overall from non-renewable sources is one way of modifying the materials mix in support of the environment. Designing in view of recycling processes, disassembly, or re-use can also be considered (Fuller, 1999). Examples of such strategies in action, as carried out by Yealands Wines in New Zealand (<http://www.Yealands.co.nz>), are reductions in packaging weight and the use of renewable energy sources and bio-diesel.
- *Creating cradle-to-cradle production and consumption of business outputs.* As the end goal of the previous two points, the complete product system life cycle, which includes raw materials extraction, materials-components manufacturing, finished products manufacturing, product use or consumption, and waste disposal (Hunt, Sellers, & Franklin, 1992), needs to be considered. For example, instead of just aiming to create as little waste as possible for terminal disposal, a firm may use reverse waste management, re-use, or recycle to further mitigate actual waste produced. New Belgium Brewery in Colorado has managed to achieve this through efficiencies such as re-using waste water to create power. They have managed to divert 99.99% of their waste away from the landfill (<http://www.newbelgium.com>).
- *Promoting diversified agriculture to support biodiversity and species protection.* Companies must ensure that all parts of the ecosystem are thriving and that they are not supporting specific species to the detriment of others. This applies to the farming of raw materials as well as the production, consumption, and disposition of business offerings. Sustainable agriculture in the form of organic farming is one option in this regard.
- *Modifying consumption behavior to focus on needs instead of appetites.* Redesigning products with dematerialization in mind so that consumers receive the same benefits but with less impact on the world is a start (Herman, Ardekani, & Ausubel, 1989). Since consumers often do not realize the consequences of their consumption patterns, education on how these affect the environment, the poor, and the vulnerable is necessary. Patagonia is a company that does this in many ways; one example is their Tools

for Grassroots Activist Conferences which empower and educate consumers (<http://www.patagonia.com>).

- *Accounting and pricing that include the costs of business side effects on physical and mental health, local economy and culture, public safety, quality of life, and environmental degradation.* One method to achieve this is through lifecycle assessment that aims to measure impacts and improvements, along with inventory analysis which can provide physical measures (Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, 1991). Moreover, while pricing for the environment includes the product's eco-costs, it might also be used to acknowledge change from a growth model to a steady state one. Full-cost/environmental accounting for this concern is currently being developed (Keoleian, 1996).

## CONCLUSION

This article sought to uncover the base philosophical orientation of LS by outlining its standpoint alongside the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) and the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP). With its rejection of the assumptions and characteristics of the DSP and its alignment with some assumptions of the NEP, LS provides a starting point for business and society to begin implementing more humane and sustainable practices and change their thinking regarding sustainability. Its major departure from the NEP, along with a focus on the poor and integral ecology, can thus be its major contribution to thought on sustainability.

Unfortunately, limited acceptance of the paradigm illustrated by LS is firmly wedged in the unthinking pursuit of economic growth as a goal for society along with economic and political liberalism. Changing such views may be the single biggest barrier to change and a more sustainable future, for “the principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, is a golden rule of social conduct and the first principle of the whole ethical and social order” (LS, n. 93) that sustains all people.

Future research into policy, ethics, and behavioral interventions that can change the prevailing paradigm is desperately needed. Combining such research using integral ecology may be the very first step, but to end with the words of Francis: “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" (LS, n. 43).

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