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THE FLOURISHING OF HUMAN LIFE: FOSTERING A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND THE CAPABILITIES APPROACH THROUGH DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Introduction: The Capabilities Approach as a New Way of Measuring Human Well-Being

How best to measure human development? For a long time, the answer to that question has been: by measuring a country's GNP. Recent decades, however, have seen the rise of a new and major interdisciplinary approach to measuring human development—the Capabilities Approach (CA). It was originally conceived in the field of development economics by Nobel-prize winning economist Amartya Sen.[1] The core contention of the CA is that development is not primarily assessed by measuring the increase of wealth, defined in GNP, but rather by establishing to what extent people have the ability to fulfill their potential as human beings—"their real opportunities to do and be what they have reason to value."[2] Vitally important in this regard is *freedom*. As Sen says, in *The Idea of Justice*: "In assessing our lives, we have reason to be interested not only in the kind of lives we manage to lead, but also in the freedom that we actually have to choose between different

1 He first introduces this idea in Amartya Sen, "Equality of What?," in Sterling M. McMurrin, ed., *Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 195−220. Further outworking of Amartya Sen's initial statement are, among others: *Resources, Values, and Development*, revised edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); *Commodities and Capabilities* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); and *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

2 Ingrid Robeyns, "The Capability Approach," in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Summer 2011 Edition*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/capability-approach> [accessed 3 December 2015].

styles and ways of living."[3] This freedom implies, Sen notes, the ability not only to discern between various alternative ways of living and being able to evaluate these, but also the ability to achieve these alternatives—freedom, then, demands a number of *capabilities* to be present. In his own words:

> The capability approach to a person's advantage is concerned with evaluating it in terms of his or her actual ability to achieve various valuable functions as a part of living. The corresponding approach to social advantage—for aggregative appraisal as well as for the choice of institutions and policy—takes the set of individual capabilities as constituting an indispensable and central part of the relevant informational base of such evaluation.[4]

What exactly these capabilities are is something Sen also pays attention to; throughout his work, he identifies several key capabilities, such as literacy, health, and political freedom. He refuses, however, to draw up a definite list of capabilities—he takes issue with "one pre-determined canonical list of capabilities, chosen by theorists without any general social discussion or public reasoning."[5] Being strongly rooted in development economics, he is, as Ingrid Robeyns points out, much more involved in applied field work on poverty in development countries. Furthermore, she points out that Sen's background is in the field of social choice, where the methods of mathematical reasoning take precedence—this discourages outworked philosophical arguments.[6] This open-endedness and deliberate incompleteness, however, has also given rise to criticisms. What to do, for example, in a situation where people disagree about which sets of functioning they value? How are such conflicts resolved? Since Sen does not provide a definitive list of capabilities, this remains an open question.[7]

Despite these and other problems,[8] Sen's account of the CA has become very popular. As an alternative to the crude and unrealistic measurement of human development by the GNP index, the CA has given rise to new measuring indices. Based on Sen's work on the CA, the celebrated Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq created the Human Development Index (HDI), which forms the basis on which the

3 Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, 227.

4 Amartya Sen, "Capability and Well-Being," in Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, eds., *The Quality of Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 30.

5 Amartya Sen, "Human Rights and Capabilities," *Journal of Human Development* 6.2 (2005), 151–166, citation on 158. For his deliberate choice to remain open-ended; see also Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, 2.

6 Ingrid Robeyns, "The Capability Approach: An Interdisciplinary Introduction," <http://commonweb.unifr.ch/artsdean/pub/gestens/f/as/files/4760/24995_105422.pdf> (December 2003), 24 [accessed 22 December 2015].

7 This problem has been described by Robert Sugden, "Welfare, Resources and Capabilities: A Review of Inequality Reexamined by Amartya Sen," *Journal of Economic Literature* 31 (1993), 1947–1962.

8 For an overview of other criticisms, see Mozaffar Qizilbash, "Amartya Sen's Capability View: Insightful Sketch or Distorted Picture?," in Flavio Comim, Mozaffar Qizilbash and Sabina Alkire, eds., *The Capability Approach: Concepts, Measures and Applications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 53–81.

United Nations Development Programme bases its annual Development Reports.[9] The HDI describes a country's progress by measuring three key areas of human development, namely 1) health, 2) education and 3) standard of living.[10]

While Sen laid out the basic idea of the CA, and continues to work on developing his theory, it has also attracted other scholars who contribute to it in various ways, whilst also proposing revisions. One of the most notable of these is American philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum—she and Sen are often seen as the two 'parents' of the CA approach in general. While their versions of the CA have much in common, there are also important differences between their accounts. One of the most important ones is that, in contrast to Sen, Nussbaum argues for a specifically defined set of capabilities.[11] She identifies ten central capabilities, namely 1) life, 2) bodily health, 3) bodily integrity, 4) senses, imagination and thought, 5) emotions, 6) practical reason, 7) affiliation, 8) other species, 9) play, and 10) control over one's environment. This last capability she specifies as having two parts: a) political, and b) material.

This list is the outcome of her conviction that it is both possible and necessary to speak about universal values. Writing specifically in the context of women's rights, she turns herself against the currently predominant tendency towards relativism when it comes to values—she points out that cultural relativism results in an inability to criticize culturally indigenous evils, such as the abuse of women. According to her, rather than betraying a colonial mindset, it is precisely the oppressed and downtrodden of the planet who need universal values which they can appeal to, and that can be appealed to on their behalf. Therefore, according to her, it is necessary to see capabilities as having value in themselves and to assert them—hence her list of ten central capabilities.

This does not mean, however, that there is no longer room for alternatives, or for critical discussion about her particular version of this list. First, Nussbaum asserts that the list is formulated broadly enough to allow for what she calls 'multiple realizability'—in any given society, people can specify the list, concretizing it in line with their own beliefs and culture. Secondly, she argues that some items on the list (e.g. bodily health) are more important than others (e.g. relationship with other species)—in this respect her list is open-ended. Furthermore, she readily accepts that her emphasis on literacy and education indicates that this is a modern

9 United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev> [accessed 4 December 2015]. Among Mahbub ul Haq's work is his important book *Reflections on Human Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

10 Sabina Alkire and Maria Emma Santos, "Poverty and Inequality Measurement," in Séverine Deneulin and Lila Shahani, eds., *An Introduction to the Human Development and Capability Approach: Freedom and Agency* (London: Earthscan, 2009), 121–161.

11 For her list, see Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 78–80.

list, rather than a timeless one. Yet with these nuances firmly acknowledged, Nussbaum nevertheless asserts her list of central capabilities to be important for human development.

The Interaction between Christian Theology and the Capabilities Approach

The CA has developed into a major grounding theory within the humanities. In light of the quick growth of the importance of this approach in recent decades, it is surprising that the theological response to this theory has been limited—only a few attempts have been made in this direction,[12] with only one article addressing the CA from a Protestant (more specifically: Reformed) perspective.[13] That article, written by Jonathan Warner, is indicative of the lack of thorough engagement by theologians with CA, not just by being the only Protestant interaction with CA that I could find, but also by its argument.

Warner briefly sets out a summary of the main tenets of CA. Then, he moves on to describe what he calls "a Reformed Christian alternative." While he says that "[i]t would not be surprising if most of Nussbaum's list was consistent with the teachings of the Bible,"[14] he nevertheless argues that the starting points, as well as the underlying presuppositions, are different. The starting point for Christian theology, he argues, is the will and the nature of God—on his view, it is God's plans we have to look for to discover the proper vision of the 'Good Life.' With Jonathan Edwards, he identifies this vision to be 'the glory of God'—that is the purpose of creation and hence also the purpose of human life. In answering the question of how we are to know in which way human lives serve God's glory best, Warner directs us to the Bible, from which he derives the primarily principles for the 'Good Life.' Whilst, on the basis of the biblical commandments, he can agree with and underscore some of the capabilities Nussbaum asserts, he nevertheless finds fault with some of them. Concerning Nussbaum's third capability, for example, "bodily integrity," he notes that the opportunities for sexual satisfaction it entails are to be restricted to heterosexual marriage. Similarly, concerning the seventh capability, that of "affiliation" which includes the right to protection against discrimination, he argues that from a Reformed Christian perspective, some roles are best per-

12 For a Catholic perspective, see Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Justice for Women: Martha Nussbaum and Catholic Social Teaching," in Sévenine Deneulin, Mathias Nebel and Nicholas Sagovsky, eds., *Transforming Unjust Structures: The Capability Approach*, Library of Ethics and Applied Philosophy 19 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 83–104. See also Michael Skerker, "Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach and Religion," *The Journal of Religion* 84.3 (2004), 379–409.

13 Jonathan Warner, "God and Martha C. Nussbaum: Towards a Reformed Christian View of Capabilities," in Flavio Comim and Martha C. Nussbaum, eds., *Capabilities, Gender, Equality: Towards Fundamental Entitlements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 437–463.

14 Ibid., 445.

formed by one gender—which in effect means that he does not agree with full protection against discrimination.

In effect, then, Warner considers the CA to be useful whenever it concurs with what he identifies to be a Reformed Christian perspective—but in those cases in which it differs from this perspective, the CA should be rejected. His position is best understood in terms of one of the solutions to a classical problem in ethics, namely the Euthyphro dilemma. Central to this dilemma, introduced in Plato's works, is the question, asked by Socrates, "Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?"[15] Translated into the terms of Christian theology, and applied to the CA, this question can be reframed as follows: "Is the full development of human capacities something that God wants because this is good in itself, or is this full development only good because God wants it, in the specific way the Bible speaks about it?" Warner's answer to the dilemma, formulated in these terms, would be the second one.

Apart from the CA being appropriated from a religious perspective, there have also been attempts the other way around, with writers from within the CA trying to understand and interpret religious viewpoints on human flourishing. Nussbaum recognizes the importance of religion, not just as a historical and social force, but also as a deep, existential motivation.[16] She herself adheres to Reform Judaism, and she addresses the role of religion on a number of occasions in her work. In *Women and Human Development*, when writing about the rights of women, she takes issue with the streams of what she calls 'secular humanism' and 'traditionalist feminism' which according to her have dominated feminist studies. While understanding aversion to religion (since religious groups have often been a negative influence on the lives of women), she also recognizes the good that religion can bring, mentioning the movements of U.S. abolitionism and the civil rights movement as examples.

Instead of denouncing religion, Nussbaum gives it an important place, recognizing the freedom to practice religion as one of her list of ten central capabilities. According to her, "religion is one extremely important way of pursuing these general capability goals."[17] Religious capabilities have an intrinsic value, according to her, and a liberal state will therefore protect these. However, she also asserts the need for the state to sometimes draw boundaries to religion, according to what she calls the 'principle of moral constraint.' What this means is that religion is pro-

15 Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 1, trans. Harold North Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 10a, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DEuthyph.%3Asection%3D10a> [accessed 22 December 2015].

16 Her most thorough work on the issue is Martha C. Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

17 Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*, 179.

tected, except "when its practices harm people in the areas covered by the major capabilities."[18] As an example, she mentions the Hindu caste system, but also the refusal of Hindus to let Hindu women go outside to work. She asserts that this does not open the way to external mingling with matters internal to religion; but it does mean that core constitutional principles must be defended. Nussbaum asserts the existence of a critical standard of 'the good'—while, in her view, versions of this standard can be found in all religions, neither of these religions have an exclusive claim on it. Significantly, the asserts that the central human capabilities she argues for transcend specific religious concerns and are truly universal.

In terms of the Euthyphro dilemma, then, the approach of Nussbaum can be identified with the other 'horn,' namely the identification of God's will with an already existing notion of what 'the good' is. This is confirmed by the story Nussbaum tells about a young Muslim wife from Bangladesh, who protested against the local mullah's prohibition of working alongside men in the fields, saying that Allah would have sinned, if he would really require her and other women to stay home and stay hungry.[19] After recounting this story, Nussbaum notes: "if we're agreed that God is just and good, and if we can show you that a certain form of conduct is egregiously bad, then it follows that this conduct does not lie at the heart of religion, and must be a form of human error, which can be remedied while leaving religion itself intact."[20]

The precendence of 'the good' over 'the will of God' in Nussbaum's outworking of the CA is also noted by others. Martin Kavka, for example, notes that for Nussbaum,

> no normative account of the nature of the transcendent and authoritative goodness that characterizes (or is) God can responsibly ground any constructive ethical project. Even a theological ethic […] does not require this theological foundation for its claims. The model for the good that this theological ethics would offer is a human model, rooted in the contingencies and particularities of mortal life, in which the divine conveniently happens to share.[21]

On the basis of statements such as these, it can be concluded that authors from within the CA are not always prepared for a meaningful, dialogical relationship with religion either. This perspective, then, resembles the second alternative to solving the Euthyphro dilemma: declaring that God always wills the good, thereby effectively judging the veracity of theological statements about human well-being

18 Ibid., 192.

19 Ibid., 196.

20 Ibid., 197.

21 Martin Kavka, "Judaism and Theology in Martha Nussbaum's Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31.2 (2003), 344.

by means of non-religious philosophical principles.

Casting the different approaches to the relationship between theological ethics and the CA in the terms of the Euthyphro dilemma helps to clarify the problem—but does it also help to provide the solution? Christian theologians have time and again sought to solve the dilemma.[22] One of the ways to do so is the refusal to be drawn into choosing one of the contrasting approaches the model presents, but by questioning the dilemma itself. One example of the solution this could provide is offered by Nullens and Michener. Placing themselves in the Thomistic tradition, they reject the false distinction between an idealized conception of 'goodness' and a supposedly separate will of God. According to them, "something is neither good because God loves it […] nor does God love something because there is some prior ontological goodness. Instead, goodness is inherently an aspect of God's character from all eternity, and he is the source of anything ascribing the attribute of goodness."[23]

Recognizing the falseness of the terms of the Euthyphro dilemma, which up until now has—although not explicitly—dominated the relationship between the CA and Christian theology, can help to give way to a new way of approaching this relationship—a way that recognizes the significant overlap between the concerns of the CA and those of Christian faith. The model called for by this recognition is that of dialogue. This model presupposes that the two parties involved are on an equal footing and able to engage each other on a topic of mutual interest, with the aim of furthering understanding and insight, and—ultimately—the further realization of 'the good life.' In helping to foster this dialogue it seems that, especially on the side of Christian theology, most of the work has still to be done—while the CA presupposes a common good, which has precedence over specific religious claims, it nevertheless shows a deep understanding of—as well as appreciation for—the complexity of the world's religions, an effort that, as we saw, Christian theology has up until now not replicated conversely.

In helping to bring about this dialogue from the side of theology, I will, in this article, draw on the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, bringing him into conversation with the version of the CA as it is developed by Nussbaum. I focus on Nussbaum's version of the CA, rather than Sen's, because more than Sen, Nussbaum develops the CA in the field of philosophy and ethics, and because she claims universal normativity for her account—in contrast, as we saw, to Sen. This normative and universal character of Nussbaum's theory is something it has in common with

22 For an overview, see Richard Joyce, "Theistic Ethics and the Euthyphro Dilemma," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 30.1 (2002), 49–75.

23 Patrick Nullens and Ronald T. Michener, *The Matrix of Christian Ethics: Integrating Philosophy and Moral Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 154.

Christian theological ethics. I choose Bonhoeffer as an interlocutor on the side of Christian theology, because of his groundbreaking work in Protestant ethics precisely when it comes to the importance of human flourishing. I will compare both authors on one specific issue: the importance of bodiliness.

Bonhoeffer and Nussbaum on the Rights of Bodily Life

Important in Nussbaum's list of central capabilities is the dimension of human embodiment—this dimension is reflected in several capabilities. It is particularly important for the first three capabilities she explicates: 'life;' 'bodily health' and 'bodily integrity.'[24] However, it is also central to the other capabilities. The capability for emotional development, for example, is closely connected to the ability of bodily integrity—in a situation where that integrity is compromised, and a human being must struggle for survival, emotional development is not possible. Also, for the blossoming of the other capabilities it is necessary for there to be a body.[25]

To be human, vitally, means to have a body, and this body needs to be protected and preserved. This emphasis on the body is particularly important in the context of the fight for women's rights, which forms the background of Nussbaum's main work on the CA (her book *Women and Human Development*). In her continuing work, Nussbaum has further delved into this theme, through her study of shame and disgust. In her book *Hiding from Humanity*,[26] she digs deeper to discover the aversion to the body, which she asserts exists. Focusing on disgust (for example: directed against gay people), she argues that this strong emotion differs from fear in that it is "unreasonable," as it embodies "magical ideas of contamination, and impossible aspirations to purity, immortality, and nonanimality, that are just not in line with human life as we know it."[27] According to her, disgust is meant to hide from us the decay that is part of our being human. It is also there that she lays the connection with shame, which, according to her, is disgust-turned-inwardly: we are ashamed of our own bodies, hence we are disgusted by the reminders of other people's bodiliness. While she sees some uses for shame, she sees none for disgust; in general, her aim is to help foster "a society that acknowledges its own humanity, and neither hides us from it nor it from us; a society of citizens who admit that they

24 Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*, 78.

25 It is important to note that Nussbaum does not use the language of human rights in this context. She points to the many problems connected to the rights tradition, and the many misunderstandings to which it leads. She recognizes a similar intention between those using the language of rights, and those—like herself—preferring the language of 'capabilities'—she proposes, actually, to see rights as 'combined capabilities.' Despite the overlapping concerns, however, she argues that the language of capabilities yields more than that of rights. See Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*, 96–101.

26 Martha C. Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

27 Ibid., 14.

are needy and vulnerable, and who discard the grandiose demands for omnipotence and completeness that have been at the heart of so much human misery, both public and private."[28]

Like Nussbaum, Bonhoeffer strongly emphasizes the importance of human bodiliness. An early instance of this emphasis can be found in his lecture series *Basic Questions of a Christian Ethic*, delivered during his vicariate in Barcelona, Spain, in 1929. There he notes how his time is characterized by an increase in attention for the body: "The generally increasing value given to the physical—for example, in sports—has […] prompted us to concede new rights to the body."[29] This seems to be an indirect reference to the *Körperkultur* of Germany at that time—that reference seems to be confirmed by Bonhoeffer's mention of sport. He judges this increasing attention positively, stating: "Nature originates in God no less than does spirit, perhaps even more immediately. This realization, doubtless a genuinely Christian one, begins to sink in."[30] This emphasis on the body is continued by Bonhoeffer in his lecture series on Gen. 1−3, at the University of Berlin, in 1933. There, he emphasizes on several occasions the fundamental 'earthiness' of human beings—for example in his commentary on Gen. 2:7, where he says, among other things: "Humankind is derived from a piece of earth. Its bond with the earth belongs to its essential being. The 'earth is its mother;' it comes out of her womb."[31] While he thus grounds the assertion of the fundamental bodiliness of human beings in Scripture, he doesn't yet specify this assertion theologically.[32]

Although his lectures on Christology would have been a perfect occasion to do so, it is only in his *Ethics* that he does so.[33] There, he addresses it in his manuscript "Natural Life," which contains a section entitled "The Right to Bodily Life." There, he starts off by asserting that "[b]odily life, which we receive through no action of our own, intrinsically bears the right to its preservation. This is not a right that we have stolen or earned for ourselves; it is in the truest sense a right that is 'born with us,' that we have received, that was there before our will, that rests in what

28 Ibid., 17.

29 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Barcelona, Berlin, New York: 1928−1931*, DBWE 10:376.

30 DBWE 10:376.

31 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1−3*, DBWE 3:76.

32 While Bonhoeffer's grounding of the importance of bodiliness in Scripture is important and creative, it is nevertheless not unique to him. In asserting the importance of this bodiliness, rather, he stands in a larger 19th century philosophical tradition that emphasizes bodiliness. See on this my own work, Steven C. van den Heuvel, "Human Life as Embodied Existence," in "Bonhoeffer's Christocentric Theology and Fundamental Debates in Environmental Ethics," PhD thesis, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit & Theologische Universiteit van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, 2015, 95−102.

33 It has been noted by Clifford Green, however, that "[i]n the Christology lectures[,] there is an implicit foundation for a theology of bodily life. The suggestion is that the *one* Christ, who is the reconciler and liberator of 'human existence [which] is always both history [*Geschichte*] and nature [*Natur*],' re-establishes a proper interdependence of spirit and body in an integrated person." Clifford J. Green, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*, revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 233, emphasis original.

actually exists [*im Seienden*]."[34] He asserts that bodily life is a means to an end, and may never be treated, reversely, as only a means to an end. 'Bodiliness' and 'being human' are indivisible, he asserts. He uses the language of rights to assert his point: "it is important that the *rights* of bodily life include its preservation not only as a means to an end but also as an end in itself."[35]

From his assertion that the body is an end to itself, Bonhoeffer draws the conclusion that human beings therefore also have a right to bodily *joys* – there need not be a further, higher purpose to be served by enjoying the body. As concretizations of these joys, Bonhoeffer mentions "housing, food, clothing, recreation, play, and sexuality."[36] As biblical support for enjoying these, he mentions a number of texts from Ecclesiastes, namely:

> Eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with good cheer; for your work is pleasing to God. Let your garments always be white; do not let oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that God has given you under the sun, as long as your vain life endures, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun (9:7ff);
> Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes, and know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment (11:9);
> For apart from him [God], who can eat or who can have enjoyment? (2:25).

This right to bodily joys are then further specified by Bonhoeffer, in relation to the dimensions he already mentioned, namely housing, food, clothing, relaxation, play and sexuality. Regarding housing, for example, he notes that "[u]nlike an animal shelter, a human dwelling is not intended to be only a protection against bad weather and the night, as well as a place to raise offspring. It is also the space in which human beings may enjoy the pleasures of personal life in the security of their loved ones and their possessions."[37] Most of Bonhoeffer's attention, however, goes to ensuring the right to bodily integrity. He asserts that the body is always 'my' body—and that even in marriage, this right is not abolished. This, in turn warrants the right against arbitrary killing. He says that "[t]he preservation of life has an incomparable priority over destruction. Life may claim all grounds to validate itself."[38]

As has often been pointed out, the background of Bonhoeffer's assertions concerning the rights of bodily life is that of the practices of the Third Reich, where the

34 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, DBWE 6:185.

35 DBWE 6:186, emphasis added.

36 DBWE 6:186.

37 DBWE 6:187.

38 DBWE 6:187.

arbitrary killing of innocent life was rampant. The practices of forced euthanasia of those deemed unfit for life, ethnic cleansing and non-discriminative warfare were systemic. Bonhoeffer was aware of these and his *Ethics* manuscript can be read as a veiled condemnation of these practices.[39] In the course of doing so, as we saw, Bonhoeffer uses the language of rights, and makes recourse to the notion of 'the natural life' as well (also see the title of the manuscript as a whole). This is a new emphasis in Protestant theology—as Rasmussen points out, "Bonhoeffer may in fact be the first German Protestant theologian to speak of 'rights.'"[40]

Conclusion

This brief overview of the theme of bodiliness in both Nussbaum and Bonhoeffer illuminates the remarkable convergence on the theme of bodiliness between the two authors. Nussbaum develops her theory of bodiliness as part of her outworking of the CA, in the context of development economics and feminism. Bonhoeffer's context was very different, writing in the midst of the struggle against Nazism, and drawing on biblical and Christian theological motifs. Yet they both end up defending the human body as an end in itself, as well as every human being's right to joy, nourishment, and play, among others.

It is important to note this convergence, as it helps to debunk the notion that Christian theology and the CA are distinctly separate normative theories which may have elements in common, but are nevertheless engaged in a battle for supremacy. It turns out that, on a matter of such vital importance as bodiliness, they quite agree. As such, it shows the unhelpfulness of all-too-ready choosing of one of the horns from the Euthyphro dilemma in approaching the relationship between them, and the aptness of the model of dialogue.

However, there are limits to the extent a dialogue can be established between Nussbaum and Bonhoeffer on the issue of human flourishing. Bonhoeffer wrote before the emergence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, before theories of justice such as the one established by Rawls were developed, as well as before the era of feminism—nor was he aware of development economics. It has not been the aim of this article to describe how such a further dialogue might be shaped, but merely to illustrate both its possibility as well as its necessity, in order for Christian theology to contribute constructively to the task of furthering the blossoming of human life.

39 See Robert Vosloo, "Body and Health in Light of the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," *Religion and Theology* 13.1 (2006), 23–37.

40 Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*, Ecology and Justice (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 308.

The Flourishing of Human Life: Fostering a Dialogue between Theology and the Capabilities Approach through Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Abstract

In recent decades, the Capabilities Approach (CA) has developed into a major interdisciplinary theory, especially relevant for development economics. Proposing to measure development not so much in terms of GNP, but in the freedom of human beings to develop themselves—measured by several core capabilities—this paradigm is seen as a much richer and more precise way to measure human development. Despite the CA's remarkable growth in importance, there is a notable lack of dialogue between this approach and Christian theology—on those rare occasions when the two interact with each other, they seem to be talking past each other. In this paper, I seek to help foster, instead, a constructive dialogue between the CA and Christian theology. In doing so, I make recourse to Bonhoeffer's theology—I focus on the rich appreciation of the bodily life in his theology and then show how his account is in deep accord with that of one representative of the CA, Martha Nussbaum. On this basis, I argue that a true dialogue between Christian theology and the CA is both possible and necessary.