

OUR HOME IS ON FIRE: A FIVE-LAYERED APPROACH TO PRESERVE NATURE, HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN LIFE

NOSSA CASA ESTÁ EM CHAMAS: UMA ABORDAGEM EM
CINCO CAMADAS PARA PRESERVAR A NATUREZA E AS
VIDAS HUMANAS E NÃO-HUMANAS

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ABSTRACT

This essay aims to provide an initial discussion on how environmental problems have been analysed, in which we will propose that the analyses so far were composed by four types of approaches, not necessarily articulated with each other, and because of it, they are not enough to overcome obstacles to preserve Nature, human and non-human life. Our proposition intends to deal with the necessity to make the different layers of discussion on ecological matters explicit, and also to add a fifth layer, that would help to address these issues – for instance the deforestation in Brazil – using two theological-spiritual notions from the XIV Dalai Lama and Pope Francis. The proposed layers are composed by levels or depths: first, the biological; second, the economic; third, the institutional; and fourth, the worldview of rational thought. The fifth would be one of ecological conversion/education of hearts (universal responsibility) as proposed by the Dalai Lama and Pope Francis. In this layer conversion/education does not mean the same as the reason thinking process, but a shift in the way we live and see reality. This multi-layered approach is needed to address these urgent and complex issues we face in the times we live in; our home is on fire. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss a shift in how we perceive local matters on a global scale and vice-versa, as well as the necessity to analyse ecological issues in layers to understand why and how we can solve the problems that now threaten our lives.

Keywords: Interfaith Dialogue, Environment, Universal Responsibility, Ecological Conversion.

RESUMO

Este ensaio tem por objetivo apresentar uma discussão inicial sobre como os problemas ambientais têm sido analisados, na qual proporemos que as análises até agora foram compostas por quatro tipos de abordagens, não necessariamente articuladas entre si e, por isso, insuficientes para superar os obstáculos à preservação da natureza e das vidas humanas e não-humanas. Nossa proposta pretende lidar com a necessidade de explicitar as diferentes camadas de discussão sobre questões ecológicas e também acrescentar uma quinta camada, que ajudaria a abordar essas questões - por exemplo, o desmatamento no Brasil - usando duas noções teológico-espirituais do XIV Dalai Lama e do Papa Francisco. As camadas propostas são compostas por níveis ou profundidades: primeiro, a biológica; segundo, a econômica; terceiro, a institucional; e quarto, a visão de mundo do pensamento racional. A quinta seria a conversão/educação ecológica dos corações (responsabilidade universal), conforme proposto pelo Dalai Lama e pelo Papa Francisco. Nessa camada, conversão/educação não significa o mesmo que o processo de pensamento racional, mas uma mudança na maneira como vivemos e vemos a realidade. Essa abordagem em várias camadas é necessária para tratar dessas questões urgentes e complexas que enfrentamos nos tempos em que vivemos; nossa casa está em chamas. Portanto, é necessário discutir uma mudança na forma como percebemos as questões locais em escala global e vice-versa, bem como a necessidade de analisar as questões ecológicas em camadas para entender por que e como podemos resolver os problemas que agora ameaçam nossas vidas.

Palavras-chave: Diálogo inter-religioso, Meio Ambiente, Responsabilidade Universal, Conversão Ecológica.

RESUMEN

Este ensayo tiene por objetivo presentar una discusión inicial sobre cómo se han analizado los problemas ambientales, en la que proponemos que los análisis hasta ahora se componen de cuatro tipos de enfoques, no necesariamente articulados entre sí y, por lo tanto, insuficientes para superar los obstáculos a la preservación de la naturaleza y de las vidas humanas y no-humanas. Nuestra propuesta intenta responder a la necesidad de explicitar las diferentes capas de discusión sobre las cuestiones ecológicas y también añadir una quinta capa, que ayudaría a abordar estas cuestiones - por ejemplo, la deforestación en Brasil - utilizando dos nociones teológico-espirituales del 14° Dalai Lama y del Papa Francisco. Las capas propuestas se componen de niveles o profundidades: primero, la biológica; segundo, la económica; tercero, la institucional; y cuarto, la cosmovisión del pensamiento racional. El quinto sería la conversión/educación ecológica de los corazones (responsabilidad universal), como proponen el Dalai Lama y el Papa Francisco. En esta capa, la conversión/educación no significa lo mismo que el proceso de pensamiento racional, sino un cambio en la forma en que vivimos y vemos la realidad. Este enfoque de múltiples capas es necesario para abordar estas cuestiones urgentes y complejas a las que nos enfrentamos en los tiempos que vivimos; nuestra casa está en llamas. Así pues, es necesario debatir un cambio en la forma de percibir las cuestiones locales a escala mundial y viceversa, así como la necesidad de analizar las cuestiones ecológicas por capas para entender por qué y cómo podemos resolver los problemas que ahora amenazan nuestras vidas.

Palabras clave: Dialogo interreligioso, Medio Ambiente, Responsabilidad Universal, Conversión Ecológica.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine we are sleeping inside a house on fire. The fumes, heat, and destruction are all over the place. Some have awakened and went on waking others in order to deliver them to safety outside the house. Some do not want to wake up; others may be in panic and incapable of making decisions. But all are inside the same house – our home – and the house is on fire.

Brazil's forests are burning, it is not new, but it has reached its limit. According to Ailton Krenak, a Brazilian indigenous leader and environmentalist, "If the Earth gets sick, we get sick too. There is no way to be healthy while the planet is all broken" (Trip, 2020).

Until now almost all environmental issues have been dealt with different approaches, varying from Natural Sciences, Economics, and Philosophical Rationality, among others. Modern rationality, with its analytical logic, is not able to account for the complexity of the ecological crisis. These issues are also discussed from the notion of the complexity of the problems we face. In this sense, we can see that there are at least four main articulated approaches: the biological perspective (or science and diversity); the institutional (law and social structures); the economic (or economic profit); and worldview of rational thought (education on complexity and rationality).

In our presentation, we will organise these four approaches in the form of four layers, from the closest or most visible level of everyday life to the least visible. Thus, we will start with the layer of biology, second the economic system, third the institutional level and fourth the cosmovision level. However, we think that these four layers are not enough to overcome the ecological crisis, since each of these layers have been used with different variations of combinations, but no significant improvement could be perceived.

An education that leads people to understand the problems on biological, economic, and institutional level is not enough if people and societies do not want to change their desires and their personal interests.¹ Therefore, we need to add in our reflection a fifth layer, that of spirituality and ethics, what Pope Francis called "ecological conversion", or what the Dalai Lama calls adherence to an ethics of universal responsibility.

¹ The websites and social media of different organizations provide many data for the general public, ranging from individual layers (like layer 1 that involves scientific arguments) to the combination of layers (like layers 1 and 2 together), but data alone does not convince change in people, making thus necessary personal identification and experience with the cause. Greenpeace, WWF, and even the UN provide these different layers of information to the wide public.

FIRST LAYER: SCIENTIFIC ARGUMENTS ON NATURE

For over decades Science has been providing arguments and data regarding climate change and the inter-relation between destruction of the Environment and several consequences, from wildlife destruction to diseases and increase in natural disasters related to climate.²

We can use Brazil as an example of how Science is a valuable asset in proving interconnection between survival of life and preservation of Nature. Brazil has been in the headlines since Bolsonaro assumed as president, in 2018, as a country destroying Nature and life, surpassing all records the first few months of 2021 (Ansa, 2021). We can easily see why, especially if we quote Franz Alt (2020, p. 12), “In Brazil, in August 2019, twice as much forest was burning as the year before, and the deforestation rate was 222 percent higher than in August 2018”.

We tend to see only the Amazon Forest as the world’s lungs. It is impressively huge, the equivalent of two times the size of India in area, or 6.7 million km² (WWF, 2024). But the deforestation is also as impressive, since it impacts all forms of life, and it is in a deadly increasing spiral stimulated by the previous Brazilian government and agrobusiness sectors.

But there are other ecosystems at greater risk, the Atlantic Forest and Pantanal, for example. The Atlantic Forest has been severely devastated, to the point that between 2021 and 2022 over 20,000 acres have been destroyed (Lucena, 2023). But the previous year – from 2020 to 2021 – over 21,000 acres were deforested. Even though there was a slight decrease from 2020/2021 to 2021/2022, this destruction has been largely promoted by the government.

The Pantanal was blazed by fires in 2020, being rapidly destroyed, losing the equivalent of five times the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro combined, which means 18646 km² (Correia, 2021). Worldwide repercussion of this can be found aplenty online, and it is heartbreaking (Einhorn, Arréllaga, Migliozi, Reinhard, 2020). The Pantanal is a Natural Heritage of Humanity and Biosphere Reserve, recognized by UNESCO, but it is burning.

The Atlantic Forest was the second largest biome in South America, according to the WWF (2024) and today is but a mere ghost of its original glory, with only 12,4% remaining intact (Pinto, Voivodic, 2021). All of these biomes would now be only legends if not for those who struggle to reforest and end illegal deforestation³.

2 Nathanael Rich’s *Losing Earth: A Recent History*, published in 2019 provides plenty of scientific evidence that was disregarded by decades due to political and economic interests.

3 SOS Atlantic Forest, SOS Pantanal, SOS Amazon, and others.

Aside from climate change, Science also tells us deforestation leads to a rise in infectious diseases, as well as the possibilities of new generation of pandemics. MacDonald and Mordecai wrote an article, published in 2019 about the relation between deforestation of the Amazon Forest and the rise in malaria transmission. An article published in *Nature*, in August 2020, by Tollefson brings us to the reality that pandemics are associated with deforestation and extinction of wildlife.

As for the Atlantic Forest, the NGO SOS Atlantic Forest published in December 2022 about the importance of restoring this biome. If, according to their data, 15% of the forest is recovered, this would avoid 60% of the extinction of species as well as capturing almost 30% of carbon emissions in the atmosphere (SOS Atlantic Forest, 2022).

This would alleviate the effects of climate change since the forest is crucial for the survival not only of the biome, but for the survival of crops and agriculture in Brazil, and even though this layer sends us constant warning signs, it still is not enough to produce the changes needed to alter the future.

Deforestation and desertification walk hand-in-hand, and this leads to widespread famine, misery, massive migration, shortage of water, and more pandemics. But climate change does not stop if we stop addressing its causes. Science provides data and shows us the importance of reversing the tides of destruction, but data alone does not make change possible and that is why we move to the next layer.

SECOND LAYER: ECONOMIC LAYER

When Economy is used to discuss environmental issues, it is important to understand that economic interests differ regarding local, regional, national, and global views. There are many different schools regarding economic views. And it is beyond the scope of this text to discuss theoretical and political differences between economic theories regarding environmental problems, but rather pointing out the two great economic myths of the 20th and 21st centuries: the myth of economic development and the neoliberal myth of the “Free Market”.

The problem of these myths is that the most basic premise is that not everyone will be able to have their needs fulfilled, and this means inequality would persist. The second myth, we can associate it with neoliberalism and its ideals, in which the poor are poor because they are

not willing to follow the system. In the first myth, because of the scarceness of riches, there is no possibility that everyone can have the means to all their needs, and in order for all basic needs to be attended for, it means the wealthiest would have to give up on their unlimited desires in order to fulfill the basic needs of others. But the problem is that there are many other types of needs, not restricted to the basic needs of food, housing and proper working conditions.

When we discuss deforestation in Brazil, or in other Global South countries, we are discussing other types of needs, not restricted to food, housing and work, but of a healthy environment, of the maintenance of forms of life that can look useless when we think of the most immediate needs. Economy is based in models, in founding myths, and currently the models and myths are not being able to suffice for the problems we are facing, especially when it comes to global warming, destruction of ecosystems and pandemics.⁴

In other words, there are other needs prioritised because they are more profitable than preserving ecosystems. We tend to imagine the impact on companies, industries and the wealthy or powerful if priority was given to restore ecosystems, but the rich can move to different places and rebuild their empires. What this means is that actually the poor in rural areas or in urban peripheries would be impacted the most – they already face food insecurity in one of the most productive agricultural countries.⁵ But, for the Market, sacrifices are necessary in order to have economic progress.

This progress was already a main objective, in the second part of the 20th century, even though the world was divided between capitalist and communist countries. Still, the two main ideologies of the world shared the same myth, that of economic development. That is, they believed that economic development driven by modern science and reason would lead all mankind to the satisfaction of all material needs and the fulfilment of human desires. More importantly, the ultimate foundation of that promise was the notion of universal human rights. All human beings have the right to live, to be free, and to pursue happiness, thus satisfying their needs.

⁴ See Franz Hinkelammert, *Sacrificios humanos y sociedad occidental: Lucifer y la bestia*. Also, Jung Mo Sung, *Idolatria do Dinheiro e Direitos Humanos*.

⁵ At least 116 million Brazilians face some level of food insecurity, meaning roughly 54% of the population, not having access to proper food, because of almost no income, and the food they can afford is industrialized, which makes them unhealthy. See VIGISAN 2021 *National Survey of Food Insecurity in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Brazil*.

The main difference was which path to take: that of the capitalist market or the socialist state. The myth that there would be no human or natural limits to the realization of the “new world” was shared by almost everyone. The recognition, from the 1970s onwards, of Nature’s limits was a fundamental breakthrough for ecological consciousness, so as to halt the increasing consumption pattern of all humanity.

The problem is that people do not want to easily give up their desires. Thus, many prefer to deny the limits of Nature, while others rely on new sciences and technologies to maintain the modern myth that their unlimited desires are possible. On the other hand, neoliberalism has elaborated another economic myth, that of the “Free Market”, in which it maintains the right and duty to fulfil all desires, only now it is no longer for all, but only for the ones included in the Market. With this, the limits of Nature would be solved. Reducing the number of consumers entitled to the satisfaction of their desires would solve the problem. However, this implies a process of massive exclusion of the poor.

One fundamental point is that neoliberal culture has broken with one of the central tenets of modern civilization: the notion of human dignity of all people, and thereby that of fundamental Human Rights. For neoliberalism, the notion of Human Rights is a false invention. There would be no Human Rights, but only the rights born by contract, of buying and selling in the Market. In this sense, there would be no social rights and no duties of the state regarding social responsibility, thus people excluded from the Market would have no right to eat and live.

The emergence of neoliberalism as a culture and dominant economic policy has created a more inhuman world. If there are no Human Rights, hardly anyone can speak of the rights of Nature nor of the need to limit the use of natural resources. The *spiritual* force that drives the current global economic system is the desire of consumers for profit maximization.

The problem is that the desires of consumers, motivated by the logic of maximizing corporate profits, are continually driven towards unlimited consumption. With this, we have two articulated problems: social exclusion and environmental crisis. Here we have an economic-social-environmental problem based on an irrational and inhuman myth, and an anthropological misconception.

As human beings, there is a natural inclination towards desiring things at all moments, after their basic needs are satisfied, as pointed out by Girard, with his mimetic theory (2001, p. 15):

Humankind is that creature who lost a part of its animal instinct in order to gain access to 'desire', as it is called. Once their natural needs are satisfied, humans desire intensely, but they don't know exactly what they desire, for no instinct guides them... The essence of desire is to have no essential goal.

Girard's notion of desire gives us a better understanding of the gigantic issue of consumerism, as well as its impacts on Environment. The neoliberal views on desire stimulates the culture of consumption, giving a false impression that the consumer is all powerful and has happiness, as pointed out by Sung (2015, p. 49):

In our culture, consumption has become the measure of a well succeeded life, as well as happiness and human decency. Thus, the notion of limit for human desire has been erased and the idea that everyone has the right and obligation to fulfill all their consumption desires has been established.

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The neoliberal ideas of the Market tends to address all decision making as something rational, but desire is far from being rational. Ricard discusses desire and decision-making contrary to this rationalist myth, in which gut feeling and emotions are influenced greatly by afflictions – or desires (2015, p. 763), “Even though we are generally convinced that we are rational, our decisions, economic or otherwise, are very often irrational and strongly influenced by our immediate gut feelings and emotions”.

This grave problem of dehumanization is not properly faced, since the main argument behind it is a false notion of being rational (which will be later explained in the fourth layer). So, once again, this layer alone cannot solve environmental problems, and this leads us to the third layer.

THIRD LAYER: INSTITUTIONS, LAW, AND ENFORCEMENT

When we discuss the necessity to organise social structures and relations between people, or even between nations, there is undoubtedly the need to create and maintain laws and institutions that preserve the application of these laws. With that comes the discussion about hierarchy among institutions, and if an international institution could be hierarchically superior to a country's own sovereignty.

With that spirit of building solid relations between countries, the UN was created, and then international courts and other structures came to exist, such as the International Criminal Court. It is interesting to note that the creation and actions of these courts are not of universal consensus, and there are countries that oppose them. Institutions and law therefore cannot be applied without jurisdiction, leaving an open wound when it comes to international collective solutions towards local problems that impact globally or global problems that impact locally.

Brazil had been a pioneer for decades on implementing environmental policies, but during the reign of Bolsonaro has changed its direction completely entering the spotlight due to scandals regarding the destruction of the Environment. Brazilian Constitutional Law⁶ stresses the importance of preserving the Environment as the right to live in an ecologically balanced environment – a fundamental Human Right.

In 2000 Brazil signed an international treaty on the creation of the ICC, ratified in 2002, resulting in a paragraph inserted into the Brazilian Constitution, to article 5, containing the following: “Brazil submits itself to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court whose creation it has manifested its adherence”.

By doing so Brazil does not lose its sovereignty but submits itself to the court concerning Human Rights violation. Thus, people behind places of power can and should be held accountable for their actions, and by this there is no tolerance for rulers or groups that hide behind ideas of “Je suis la Loi, Je suis l'État; l'État c'est moi”⁷.

It happens that even though the protection of the Environment is considered a Human Right, it is not explicitly present in the ICC's Elements of Crime Document. Even if a country ratified it, there are problems with how to prosecute such cases, since there is no explicit defi-

⁶ Article 225 of the Brazilian Constitution.

⁷ This phrase is attributed to Louis XIV, spoken to the Parisian Parliament in April 1655.

inition of what this kind of crime is. However, Phillipe Sands and others tackled the problem of absence of definition and proposed one – ecocide (Stop Ecocide Foundation, 2021). They have proposed amendments to the Rome Statute, in order to include a definition for ecocide.

There is a dire need to improve our political, legal, and social views on Environment not only locally but internationally as well, creating limits to actions that endanger Nature, in order to have accountability. COP is hugely important because these issues must be discussed, and solutions are often born from this diversity in perspectives and worldviews. Even though legal definitions, law, enforcement, and institutions were created to solve conflicts, this layer alone cannot solve the environmental issues at stake.

FOURTH LAYER: EDUCATION BASED ON REASON AND RATIONALITY

In this layer, the discussion will regard the reasoning process – or what usually is admitted as part of rational arguments in favour of the founding myth for economic models and politics. The question of reason is very important for our discussion, not only in terms of discussions on environmental science or the irrational rationality present in exclusionary and environmentally destructive economic myths, but also because of the challenge of environmental education.

Modern education is centred and rooted in the notion of reason, as opposed to emotion and human religiosity or spirituality. The problem is not only the exclusion of emotion and spirituality of human beings in the educational process and the understanding of human reality, but also within modern rationality itself. A deeper discussion on the critique of modern reason and/or post-modern reason is not our focus, but it is important to highlight the irrational character of modern reason, which leads to the neoliberal logic that denies the human dignity of all human beings, justifying the sacrifices of human lives and environment in the name of accumulation of wealth. Enrique Dussel and Franz Hinkelammert, two Latin American authors – among others – have insisted that modern and neoliberal reason are expressions of a reason that justifies irrational violence against dominated peoples and the poor excluded from the Market.

In light of the growth of religious or secular fundamentalism that does not dialogue with the different, it is our intent to clarify that we are not against reason, but critical of modern and neoliberal rationality, marked by irrational violence. Much of what is taught as modern rationality is nothing but a rationalization of irrational violence against oppressed and dominated human beings and Nature.

Unless this type of rationality is criticized, the important task of ecological education will not be properly accomplished. However, we must be aware that a new education, with a more critical rationality, must also articulate the aspect of emotion in the process of thinking, teaching, and learning.

Nonetheless, ecological education, as much as it articulates reason and emotion in the process of learning and teaching, cannot be reduced to a subject-object process, in which the central focus is the knowledge of objects, outside the ethical relationship of subject-subject or intersubjective relationships.

For, when we talk about human desires that destroy Nature, or violent impulses that oppress and dominate other human beings, or even unhealthy selfishness that leads to obsessive attachment to possessions, we are talking about deeper aspects of humanity, far beyond reason or rational argumentation.

FIFTH LAYER: EDUCATING HEARTS THROUGH UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

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All other layers have both contributions and limitations when analysing the problems at hand, so we will address what we consider the most important and subtle layer, that leads to the construction of myths and reasoning that later develops into legal policies, economic models, and the lens through which we produce science. So, in order to be able to mobilize changes, this fifth layer is of utmost importance, and all others depend on how well rooted are these elements.

In Varela, Thompson and Rosch's words, grasping is the root problem of our societies (2017, p. 52):

We repeat that this is not a merely philosophical dilemma; it is also ethical, religious, and political. Grasping can be expressed not only individually as fixation on ego-self but also collectively as fixation on racial or tribal self-identity, as well as grasping for a ground as the territory that separates one group of people from another or that one group would appropriate as its

own. The idolatry of supposing not only that there is a ground but that one can appropriate it as one's own acknowledges the other only in a purely negative, exclusionary way. The realization of groundlessness as nonego-centric responsiveness, however, requires that we acknowledge the other with whom we dependently cooriginate. If our task in the years ahead, as we believe, is to build and dwell in a planetary world, then we must learn to uproot and release the grasping tendency, especially in its collective manifestations.

All other layers depend on our gut feelings, as stated earlier by Ricard. And this is a very difficult change if we do not address the issues properly. The articulation of emotions, spirituality and ethics are ignored and left aside in rational discussions, but there is no room for change if this layer is left out. Understanding this layer enables us to analyze the increasing culture of consumerism and the growth in nationalist movements, fundamentalisms and rage manifestations against the poor, outcasts, foreigners, different genders, religions, and Nature as well.

We will briefly address the concept of universal responsibility (Tib. རྒྱ་སེམས་) – of the XIV Dalai Lama⁸ – and ecological conversion – by the Pope, in order to propose a dialogue on how this change can be possible. Both ideas enable change, producing a state that is similar to an internal ‘click’. At first one is not able to put it in words, but this process is so intense that the person no longer sees the world as before. It is the unveiling of the veil of illusion, *māyā*, in Buddhist terms. It is like in the Christian sense what happened to Paul the Apostle, being cured of his blindness – he was then able to see.

After this experience the person is able to think and put into words what has happened. This process is a deep internal change, named conversion, *metanoia*, a profound change of one's desires and worldviews. And in a Buddhist perspective it is about converting to see reality as it is, interdependent.

The Dalai Lama spoke about climate change and the need to educate hearts, because (2020, p. 26):

⁸ Regarding the concept of universal responsibility: Palazzo Tsai, Patricia G. *Responsabilidade Universal: Dialogando Dalai Lama e Direitos Humanos*.

Unless we all work together, no solution can be found. Therefore, our key responsibility is to commit ourselves to the ethical principles of universal responsibility beyond profit and religion, and to place the well-being of all sentient beings and future generations above our egoism. Climate change is an issue that affects the whole of humanity.

To educate a heart is more than just filling our minds with information, as was thoroughly developed by Paulo Freire, in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It is not the banking model of education, but rather it is the process of developing empathy and compassion. Our human nature is not limited to reasoning.

Therefore, we can understand universal responsibility as a result of this education of the heart. As said by the Dalai Lama (2020, p. 23), “We need a sense of universal responsibility as our central motivation to rebalance our relations with the environment and with our neighbours”. And this is nurtured by interdependence, *pratītyasamutpāda* (Tib. རྟེན་འབྲེལ་; Wyl. *rten ‘brel*), interconnecting local and global, as simple, and complex interdependences⁹.

In the Buddhist *Vinaya*, or monastic moral code, it is stated by the *Buddha* himself, that every nun and monk should take care of the Environment, water, flora, and fauna¹⁰. This is not a rule that one should take lightly since there is no possible way to achieve happiness if the world is unhappy and sick. Even though trees are not suitable to receive or maintain monastic vows, some are willing to do unthinkable acts from Buddhist standards, such as ordaining trees in order to protect Nature (Barua, 2018; Bridges, 2015).

The oneness of humanity that the Dalai Lama speaks of is an example of how we are interconnected by interdependence, and then he opens for a dialogue (2020, p. 28):

9 In Tibetan རྟེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་བར་འབྱུང་བ་ (*rten cing ‘brel bar ‘byung ba*). Interdependence is a key concept in understanding reality from a Buddhist view. According to Plínio Tsai, in his *Sermão do Grande Fundamento*, p. 220, there are two types of interdependence, one of the five aggregates (simple interdependence flux) and the other of the world (complex interdependence flux).

10 The rule is present in both Theravāda and Mahāyāna monastic codes; there are rules present in the *Bodhisattva* vows concerning environmental preservation also.

I welcome Pope Francis's Encyclical on the environment. I also see similarities between the Pope's Encyclical 'One human family, one common home' and my message of the oneness of humanity. Since global warming and climate change affect us all, we have to develop a sense of the oneness of humanity and universal responsibility.

Pope Francis also speaks of interdependence and interconnections between us all and Nature. Right in the first moments of the text we are invited to reflect upon the Pope's recollection of Francis of Assisi, in which (Laudato Si, §11), "Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human."

There is the need to go beyond the previous layers, and understand the importance of what the Pope calls "the heart of what it is to be human" since this is necessary in understanding how the dynamics in religion and the public sphere work together, but not in a fundamentalist manner. On the contrary, it can only function if the human aspect is understood. And this human aspect can be accessed by what the Dalai Lama calls universal responsibility, and what the Pope calls ecological conversion (§217).

Moreover, the need to transcend the language of mathematics and biology is a very important aspect to comprehend, since these languages cannot produce change in the hearts and desires of men and women alone. They use logic and reasoning, and as pointed out earlier, logic and reasoning are not guided by themselves, but depend on volition or volitional intention, which in the Buddhist traditions is called *cetanā*¹¹.

This can relate to the Pope's contribution that ecological conversion is in this volitional basis because it has to do with the desire to be guided by a spirituality that is capable of inspiring an interior impulse of change, giving meaning to act towards oneself and the collective (§216).

Both the Dalai Lama and Pope Francis bring forth hope as an important factor in their arguments, that this change is possible and can be done. Hope is an utopic horizon that binds humanity and inspires change, be it by Buddhist motives, Christian, Islamic, Hindu or others.

¹¹ *Cetanā* is fundamental to understand how *Abhidharma* follows moral interpretation on theories of *karman*. Tsai, in his *Sermão do Grande Fundamento*, p. 407, discusses that *cetanā* is one of the factors belonging to the class of universal factors in the category of concomitant thoughts, that has the power to participate in the conditioning of the flux that realizes the functioning of connections between factors.

FINAL REMARKS

Until now many issues have been addressed – and continue to be – by one sided interests or independent theories, that use one or more layers of the four-layered structure, but little or almost no change could be perceived. Since the first Environmental Conferences by the UN, in 1972, many others have been made and resolutions were proposed, but even though international laws and policies were implemented, adhesion was insufficient, and these problems still persist.

Even though there is plenty of data, arguments, alternatives, and all sorts of possibilities to change, this change does not occur sufficiently. By using a fifth layer lens to analyse, it is possible to use other aspects that were left behind by the age of reasoning, in case, the dynamics of constructive emotions that produce not only individual change, but also social change.

These elements are crucial to the development of an education of desires, hearts, and minds, giving back a sense of belonging, of community that enables a dialogue, in this case between universal responsibility and ecological conversion. This fifth layer can help identify and mobilize responses, that can be effective not only on a smaller scale, but also uniting efforts of many communities on a global scale.

In a world that propagates a level of individualism never before seen, along with consumerism and environmental destruction, solutions can never be one-sided – they must be as complex as our societies are. That is why the Dalai Lama, Pope Francis, and many other religious leaders constantly alert us that the solutions are at the palm of our hands – by educating desires, hearts, and minds through grassroots movements towards expressing love for oneself and others, and this love is possible only by understanding our own humanity, the humanity of others and the world we live in.

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