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Sustainability and Climate Justice from a theological perspective

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1. Methodological approach: what the theology of sustainability isn't

Which hastily-drawn conclusions and dead-ends can we expect when a theologian starts on the subject of sustainability? I want to touch on a few: by doing so, from this negative perspective and by a process of elimination, I hope to fumble my way towards a defensible standpoint.

(a) For many, Christian theology, with its human-centered (anthropocentric) ethics seems to be more part of the problem than part of the solution. Which begs the question; is sustainability compatible with Christian ethics? For over 30 years, Christian ethics have been in the defensive against Deep Ecology criticism, which sees Christian ethics at the cultural and historical root of the modern-day environmental crisis.

(b) The specifically ethical-religious approach is often linked to the term Creation. But one can question whether the theological elevation of ecological imperatives is really necessary; in these times of climate change, the view that we are in the middle of destroying the basis for our very existence should alone be sufficient. We don't need religion in order to shore up the environmental-historical imperatives. The talk of creation is a mere distraction, perhaps even a weakening of the ethical argument, because it sets conditions which cannot easily be integrated into scientific teachings.

(c) The main conceptual problem in the realization of sustainability is its broad content. We're talking about so many things at the same time, and getting stuck in diffuse, non-committal statements. Won't interference from theologians simply make the matter worse? After all, theologians tend to explore the moral and even metaphysical aspects of a particular theme, rather than containing and limiting it by employing a specific methodological approach. And science needs the objects of its attention to be contained.

(d) The promise of sustainability is characterized by an excess of optimism; society should develop not just in terms of ecological balance, social responsibility and energy efficiency, but also in terms of global and inter-generational justice. Isn't the sustainability program just aiming at an eco-social panacea that would be better served by being subjected to a critical ideological analysis, rather than being granted theological blessing? Wouldn't theology do better to take up position opposing this new form of societal utopia (as Oliver Reis suggests¹)? In the following section I will give a brief outline of some answers to these questions.

Anthropocentrism

The absolute dignity of human life, which is bound together with the idea of the human being as a moral subject, is indispensable as the starting point for democratic and enlightened ethics. We need not overcome the turn to the subject, which was reflected in Kant's ethics of human rights. What we do need is an ecological enlightenment of anthropocentrism: we must engage more with the biological and social-cultural conditions of our self-awareness as moral subjects, and find ways to enshrine these conditions as obligatory in the form of eco-social imperatives. My aim is not the overthrow of anthropocentrism, but the revealing of its conditions and limits in the context of an ecological humanity.

You can find this distancing of the ecological counter-ethos from self-reflective modernity in many variations at the heart of debates about sustainability:

- in advocating technical innovation to enable better conservation of natural resources, rather than a rejection of technology;
- in advocating an ecological-social market for less resource-heavy prosperity, rather than a rejection of the pursuit of wealth and the free market;
- in perceiving a "second age of modernity" rather than post-modernity; in ethical terms:
- in promoting ecological humanity, rather than ecocentrism.

For some, this is simply not radical enough. And a second glance indicates that critics are often correct when they suppose old structures to be behind these

¹ Reis 2003.

fine new words. This is why we need this debate about the correct understanding of anthropocentrism.

The driving principle of sustainability is however clear: it is in its origins a concept pertaining to the use of nature, and thus is clearly anthropocentric. On the initiative of developing countries, who wish to protect themselves from nature conservation measures which come at the cost of their right to development, the first principle of the Rio Declaration (the 27 ethical maxims of sustainability formulated in Rio in 1992) is “Human beings are at the centre of sustainability.”

The enlightened anthropocentrism of sustainability has weathered the polarisation between ecological and developmental-political ethics and made its key demands (at least in terms of political definition of targets) the subject of widespread consensus. The critical questions of ecocentrism remain relevant to Christian ethics. But they are not central to the concept of sustainability. And this is liberating for discussions on this subject, for the most important single factor for a viable ethical standpoint is the recognition of the inseparability of the protection of humanity and the protection of nature.

What do we mean by “Creation“?

The 1980s and 1990s saw a renaissance in the doctrine of creation in Christian theology (according to Moltmann and Welker²). Creation had long been in the shadow of the doctrine of salvation, partly because of the difficulty of presenting creation as a rational idea in the context of a world-view shaped by Darwinism and scientific enquiry. This has had huge consequences for Christian ethics, as it caused its dislocation from its roots in anthropology and in nature.

The rediscovery of the ethics of creation has however often been only superficial. Creation is misused as a convenient hook on which to hang sentimental ideas of ecology; a rhetorical figure, serving merely to add weight to ecological imperatives and increase moral pressure. In a literal understanding, the concept of “safeguarding creation”, something which both the Protestant and the Catholic Churches have repeatedly appealed for since 1989, the start of the conciliar process in Europe, is absurd; as if creation were

² For a new interpretation of the „constructive correlation“ from cosmology and soteriology see Bergmann 1995, 175-352.

an object of social care. We ourselves are only a tiny part of creation. The idea of creation as an object of our ministry places an impossible burden on the shoulders of well-meaning eco-activists, with the backing of the church. Those who want to save the world can't, in the end, be saved themselves.

The second mistake supported by this charitably reductive idea is the naturalistic wrong conclusion. As if nature itself was inherently good, and the moral and political challenge purely the maintenance of this good order. Evolution, however, is a creative process, not a potential object of conservation.

Sustainability is misunderstood as a new variant model of ecological balance, in which, at the end of the day, the entirety of human civilization is a disruptive force. But it is neither possible nor useful to reform all social and economic processes in human society according to models of sustainability taken from nature. "In the end we have to recognize that the cultural development of humanity, especially in its industrial stage, has set itself beyond the sustainable organization of nature, and irreversibly so."³

An ethically-qualified definition of sustainability does not derive from the purely ecological level, but rather is found in the exclusive context of socially and culturally shaped views of justice and a good life. Without this reference to societal goals and interests, which set the observation plane through their structures of time and space, sustainability is an empty concept. Only on this level is the ethical significance of a belief in creation relevant; ecology and biology are descriptive sciences, which are therefore not qualified to make judgements about good and evil.

The specific quality of the Christian belief in creation lies - in my opinion - in the fact that it is not characterized by ecological ideas about harmony, but sees nature as a system of order in which conflict, existential struggle, death and suffering also play their part, without it losing its quality as a place and source of healing. This allows us to see nature as a cultural challenge, and to combine positions of radical life-affirmation with humility in facing up to the limits of nature within and around us. The ethos of this kind of creation-based spirituality can be found for example in the teachings of Francis of Assisi, who today is mostly subjected to excessively naive interpretations of his ideas about

³ Haber 1994, 13, transl. K. Ritson.

ecological harmony.

Thus, a theological ethics of sustainability does not teach ecological salvation. It is not naturalistic ethics. Rather, it sees nature as an open order, an irresolvable tension between nature and culture, between safeguarding and renewing. This is the basis on which an ethical model, one able to handle conflicts of modern technology, can build.

How does theology delimit its specific perspective on sustainability?

The thematic delimitation of sustainability does not work according to the traditional pattern of isolating an object. It is programmatically concerned with problems at the interface of ecological, economical and social factors.

At the logical core of the sustainability principle is the paradigm shift from linear to networked thought processes, from the concentration on individual objects and linear chains of cause and effect to the focus on more complex systems of interactions and network-like units with their own tempo and rhythm. This eye for connections and contexts, non-linearity, feedback loops, dynamic balances and order out of chaos in situations that are far from balanced has revolutionary consequences for social ethics, which are currently discussed above all in the context of social system theories (e.g. that of Niklas Luhmann).

The perspective on sustainability given by system theory leads to a new quality of the links between natural and social sciences. Current research on climate change is an example of the necessity of such an approach. Theories of complex systems provide the natural and philosophical basis for sustainability. The German Conference of Bishops has introduced for this the expression “Retinität” (thinking and acting in networks and systemic relationships)⁴.

With this in mind it should be apparent that sustainability needs to be understood as something far more significant than merely a juxtaposition of ecology, economics and social concerns. The frequent definition of sustainability as a model of three-column parity is meaningless. One cannot directly compare the ethical value of ecology, economics and social concerns. Nor is it the sum of these three things, but the way in which they interact with each other which is at the heart of sustainability.

⁴ DBK 1998, No. 42; Vogt 2009, 347-372.

Critiquing utopia

The critique of sustainability as a secularized salvation is a fourth aspect of critical views which I will examine later in the context of ideas of progress. For the isolation of sustainability from the type of societal utopias with which we have had such awful experiences in the 20th century is a substantial interest for me in the context of this essay.

2. A new contract for global and inter-generational justice.

Ethics without boundaries?

The concept of sustainability outlined in Rio does not employ a discursive logic that is specifically ecological. Rather, it is grounded in the extension of ideas of justice across global and generational divides (global and intergenerational justice). This extension is the logical consequence of technology and globalization: the long-term effects, and the way that social interactions are no longer subject to spatial/territorial constraints, call for a matching lifting of the constraints on ethics.⁵ This is why safeguarding the functioning of the biosphere is one of the most important social contributions we can make to the future, and to the fight against poverty.

The shortage of drinking water, the desertification and erosion of fertile lands and the climate-related changes to the potential of natural habitats in the 21st century are some of the main causes of poverty, as well as being the consequences of poverty. There is a close connection in global terms between ecological and social problems.⁶ There is no justice without environmental protection, and no environmental protection without justice.

Sustainability is often derived from two ethical principles. 1. That future generations should have the same right to life. 2. That all people should have the same access to globally available resources. I regard this new global and inter-generational egalitarianism, which is scarcely questioned in ethical-political and scientific texts, to be urgently in need of qualification, yet at the same time revolutionary and, in any case, lacking in viable alternatives. Some further remarks on this:

⁵ Höffe 1993, 179-195.

⁶ UNDP 2007, 9-35. Lienkamp 2009, 95-155.

The right to life for future generations

One wishing to avoid the “objective nature teleology” proposed by Hans Jonas⁷ as a means of reasoning the concept of intergenerational future ethics, can take the argument of fair dealing, in this case postponed to the next generation in the chain. This principle calls for a provision of care for the next generation to the same standard that one has received oneself. This is “not a vague consideration of solidarity” but an inescapable obligation to justice.⁸ One can also base an argument on the Golden Rule; applying this to the next generation is an elementary commandment, that the parent generation does not harm the children’s generation more than they would have liked to have suffered at the hands of their own parents.

The postulate of intergenerational justice brings ethics face to face with a series of methodological difficulties, since the future cannot be calculated. In particular, the needs and abilities of future people are wholly unknown to us. So the idea of an equal distribution of resources across the generations is of limited help. The scope of the aim should rather be to leave our successors with a world that offers them sufficient means and freedom to take their own decisions.⁹ Just as vital as the safekeeping of our natural and social habitats is the development of the cultural competencies necessary to solve unforeseeable problems in the future (i.e. through education and science).

Right to access globally available resources

Currently, around 20% of the world’s population uses well over 80% of the world’s resources. The decisive question in justice theory is whether it can be argued that all people have the same claim to make use of globally available resources. Since the difference just/unjust is only applied to actions and structures within society, not to inequalities that are a product of nature¹⁰, this demand is primarily pertinent to the framework conditions of the world

⁷ For a critical view on this, see Hasted 1991, 167-173.

⁸ Höffe 1993, 183. (transl. K. Ritson)

⁹ Weikard 2001, 42f.

¹⁰ Ricken 1998, 72.

economy, and areas of risk sharing, for which there exists a global solidarity agreement (i.e. the Agenda 21 and the Climate Framework Convention). Since world market imports of raw materials are often mechanisms for exploitation, and the needs of the poorest are usually neglected, the unequal distribution of resource use represents a huge injustice.

The UNEP assumes that the majority of the population of poorer countries can only have adequate opportunities for development if the industrial nations reduce their utilization of nature in the long term by 90%. I count myself among these advocates of the “factor 10 solution”.

For such goals are not by definition unrealistic. In the past, and in the present, there have been numerous areas in which proportionally similar reductions of “the utilization of nature” have been achieved, in the sense of deliberate reductions in harmful substances or particular practices, for example through the mandatory use of filters in industrial combustion plants in the 1980s, the introduction of catalytic converters, and the worldwide ban on CFCs. In methodological terms, it is vital that the category “use of resources” is not simply discussed as a given entity, but defined in terms of concrete parameters.

Climate justice as an ethical and political litmus test for sustainability

According to estimates by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), by the year 2100 the average temperature of the atmosphere will have risen by something between 1.1° C and 6.4° C degrees, leading to a rise in the sea level, the melting of glaciers and an increase in the number of extreme meteorological occurrences.¹¹ Current statistics indicate that we are heading alarmingly towards the upper limit of this scenario. Climate change “represents what is most likely the greatest threat to the existence of the current and future generations, and to the continued existence of non-human life on earth.”¹² It is an existential threat to human rights concerning the food, safety and habitat of hundreds of millions of people.¹³ Climate change is increasingly recognized as the central issue in foreign and security politics. In the long-term and on a

¹¹ IPCC 2007, Part I.

¹² The German Bishops 2007, Nr. 1; IPCC 2007; UNDP 2007.

¹³ WBGU 2008, bes. 1-24 und 181-190.

global scale, the securing of humane living conditions will not be possible without measures to reduce climate change - mitigation - and adaptation to its consequences.

Climate change is primarily anthropogenic, i.e. caused by humans. So, from an ethical perspective, it is not a question of fate, but of justice. The excessive use of fossil fuels in industrial countries is ecological aggression, robbing millions of people in developing countries of their right to life; it should be recognized as a new form of colonialism (this time carried out anonymously via the atmosphere). Climate protection is the litmus test for sustainability in the 21st century.

Since our climate is common property, its damage affecting all of us and its individual beneficiaries scarcely discernible as such, investments in climate protection are easy to exploit. Thus, sustainability is impossible without specific institutional protection for climate regulation. A new global agreement on sustainability and cooperation on climate protection measures¹⁴ is needed, as well as a new independent organization for environmental issues within the UN, with the power to impose sanctions.

The ethical core of climate justice is the distribution of CO₂ emission rights. In light of current CO₂ emissions, a compromise made up of four key justice principles will be necessary:

- (1) absolute distribution of the rights for carbon use and emissions (for Germany, this means a reduction in CO₂ emissions from 11 t to a maximum of 2 t per person und year);
- (2) equality of relative effort (reduction in percent);
- (3) demands set according to ability to contribute and involvement in the cause of the problem (so, greater contributions from industrial nations as these bear the most responsibility for climate change);
- (4) recognition of compensation measures (e.g. forestation to reduce carbon emissions, development of CO₂-reduced technology in other countries).

Up until now there has been, in my opinion, no adequately clear model for an appropriate weighting and allocation of these four different approaches for climate justice. If one compares the intensive research on the empirical facts of climate change with the research on ethical, political and legal conflicts, one

¹⁴ Edenhofer/Flachsland 2008, 24-33.

can only wonder at the massive discrepancy. The research by the humanities disciplines into sustainability is, when compared with scientific research, the lesser by several orders of magnitude. Perhaps the LMU's new institute for humanities research into the environment (Rachel Carson Center) will help to improve this situation.

For me, the most exciting aspect is to see whether and how the threefold crisis of climate, energy and economy might be seized as a chance to change the political direction. This is on the one hand difficult, since the pressure to find short-term solutions is immense, but on the other hand, the fact that these three different crises intersect gives valuable space for creative solutions. The solving of dilemmas using networks and synergies (e.g. a green form of Keynesianism, which solves problems of economy, of climate change and of energy supply simultaneously) is the core of the political and strategic meaning of sustainability.

3. Managing contingency: future ethics between fear and utopia

Climate change reflects an experience on the edge of society's ecological, social and economic expectations. The ethical and political principle of sustainability answers this experience with a new definition of the conditions, limits and aims of progress. Instead of a permanently increasing tally of goods and speeds, the safeguarding of the ecological, social and economical stability of human habitats has prime place in the development of society and in political planning. "Faster, higher, further" has proved to be an inadequate ideal of progress. Only wealth built on fewer resources, open to as many people as possible, is capable of providing justice.

Sustainability is not the byword for a social and economic program for conserving resources, but is an ethical and cultural reorientation. The contemporary paradigm of progress as unlimited growth needs to be replaced by a concept of development governed by the cycles of resources and the rhythms of nature. Long-term economic success needs to be measured by how well it is integrated into the whole, i.e. the economy of creation. The "Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare" can serve here as a means of measuring and checking progress, evaluating prosperity not merely in terms of the gross

national product, but according to criteria of sustainable development.¹⁵

Our current model of progress is based on the nature philosophy of Newton's mechanics, which sees time and space as empty vessels, as something lacking both direction and structure, both a beginning and an end. Time and space are merely obstacles to be overcome. Our accelerated society, which is managing to use up millennia of resources at a breakneck speed and defines the pace of our lives by the maxim "everything, now, forever", is a consequence of our interpretation of nature. Belief in creation leads us to search for alternatives to this view of nature, and can today base its nature philosophy on process theology.¹⁶

Sustainability is a precaution for the future, its motivating hope is not belief in everlasting progress, but the vision of a well-lead life within the limits of nature. In the Christian faith you can find such a view of life. It's not founded in the idea that things are constantly improving and that humans will be able to build a perfect society, but in fact in the opposite, in the existential consciousness of the limits of humanity, which can be turned into hope if humans recognize that human life is a gift and moreover that everyone is dependent on the existence of a human community.

This ethos should serve as a corrective to some interpretations of sustainability which have become the main 21st century utopia of a global, eco-social and economic management. Without the profound insights of critical anthropology and nature philosophy, sustainability is a deeply ambivalent utopia.

Seen from a theological perspective, sustainability demands a rejection of the utopia that politics and science can solve all problems. This will only be met with acceptance if humans stop projecting their needs for a horizon of clear purpose into the future, and start looking for this horizon in the midst of all the mysteries of life.

How these experiences on the edge can be turned into new opportunities is an exciting research agenda for interdisciplinary dialogues between Psychology, Theology and Cultural Studies. Perhaps economists would be able to find

¹⁵ Diefenbacher 2001, 133-170.

¹⁶ R Faber 2003; other approaches come from trinitarian cosmology or from theology of liberation; see Bergmann 2005, 57-171. 269-321.

analogies here too, going by the motto of “today's needs are tomorrow's markets”.

Even the agreements drawn up in Rio offer us the chance to give a critical analysis of the deeply ambivalent promises which paper over the cracks of these existential boundaries; we are promised a utopian, global management of ecological and social problems, while behind the scenes, the same old models and power networks are pursued. The talk is of sustainability, but what is really meant is the traditional prosperity model, which, according to the trickle-down principle, makes the supply and accommodation of the poorest in society dependent on the growth and surplus of the rich part of society. The experiences of the last two decades show that this is misleading promise. The rejection of the fossil-fuel-dependent economy and way of life are just the beginning.

The utopian excess of this model of sustainability, as it is currently communicated politically, is open to question. The promise of the 2-degree target in climate politics is, in my opinion, already unconvincing. CO₂ emissions are still increasing rapidly. The methane emissions from the melting permafrost have exceeded various worst-case-scenarios and we are well on the way to accelerating this process further.

Given this, and other pertinent facts, there has been return in sustainability debates to the apocalyptic visions of the 1970s. How can Christian theology, based on its gospel of good news, negotiate a path between Scylla and Charybdis, between playing down the danger on the one hand and a discourse of fear on the other? Christian faith has nothing in common with a belief in progress. It is hope quite separate from the expectations of security and prosperity which we have got used to in the West. It is a way of managing contingency in the face of the ambivalence of progress and setbacks, security and risk, joy and suffering, life and death.

If we assume that managing contingency is a primary function of religion,¹⁷ then it is here also that we find the specific competence of theological ethics in the discourse on climate change and sustainability; managing contingency is vital to answer the postmodern breakdown of the belief in progress which is the starting point for debates on sustainability, without resorting to ecological apocalypse scenarios or to a new version of the utopia of permanent growth. The specific competence of churches and religious communities in the context of climate change is based in the fact that they embed moral claims in a cos-

¹⁷ Luhmann 2000.

mology and a symbolic or ritual communication.¹⁸ In such a way embedded moral claims have more opportunities to change human behavior. The Catholic Church is the oldest global player on earth and the biggest global institution; therefore it has specific duties to fight for a globalization of solidarity. All religions define themselves through a long-term perspective. On this basis they have a very fundamental approach to the ethics of sustainability.

Christian ethics of sustainability do not constitute a closed system of self-serving nature ontology, a guarantee of equality or a utopia of human progress; rather, they offer a form of seeking a way forward in the dialectics of progress and risk.

And this is exactly what Hans Jonas meant with his responsibility principle as a counter-argument to the principle of hope as formulated by Ernst Bloch. He demands an ethics of caution, the acceptance of limits and the “heuristics of fear”.¹⁹ Others talk about “intelligent self-restraint” (A. Honneth), for it is not the limits of nature, but the seemingly limitless desire of humanity in connection with the extreme rise in knowledge of its availability which are today the main threats to our future. The ability to enact self-restraint is a precondition for the redirection of technical and economic development to serve the wellbeing of humanity and creation.

4. The principle of sustainability: its place in Christian social ethics

Sustainability has not until now been a systematic part of Catholic social doctrine. The term sustainability does not appear in papal documents. There have indeed been impassioned calls for a “return to ecology” but these have not made it past the level of individual ethical virtues, while on the level of political systems there has been no systematic reflection on the relationship between environment and development. This is why I would like to postulate an extension of social principles - that along with personality, solidarity and subsidiarity, sustainability should be recognized as a fourth social principle.

¹⁸ Gardner 2003; Vogt 2004, 91-118.

¹⁹ See Jonas 1994, 63f. The “heuristics of fear” as suggested by the religious philosopher need further differentiation in my opinion, in terms of society and of decision theory. We need different models to enable analysis and to manage different kinds of risk. Renn illustrates this under the heading of risk maturity; Renn 2008; Vogt 2009, 369-372.

This is the core argument of my book in terms of the systematic aspects of Catholic social ethics.²⁰

Sustainability is the “missing link” between belief in creation and social discourses on the environment. Just as the Christian idea of charity was for centuries only understood ethically on the level of a personal virtue, and only became politically effective in connection with the solidarity principle, belief in creation needs a translation into ethical categories, so that it can become politically viable and justiciable, and clarify concrete consequences of organizational structures and economic decisions in the context of climate change. Belief in creation without sustainability is, in terms of structural and political ethics, a form of blindness. Sustainability without belief in creation (whether Christian or not) runs the risk of losing out on ethical depth.

Sustainability joins up and refreshes the traditional principles of social ethics by opening up the problem-horizon of the ecological question, gaining hereby a constitutive part of its definition, its ethical motivation and an organizational structure drawn from its close referential relationship to the known social principles:

- without a foundation in the principle of personality, that is to say the absolute dignity of human beings and their ethical and systematic centrality as active and responsible subjects, an attempt to give the wide-ranging demands of the sustainability principle an ethical basis would end in a naturalistic disaster.
- without the solidarity principle and all of the many institutions enlisted in the fight against poverty, the sustainability principle would essentially exist in a political and societal vacuum, isolated and - as the UN concept has shown - without any stringent foundation for its social and political elements.
- without the context of the subsidiarity principle, the concept of sustainable development would lack an organizational motor. Ecological imperatives could be abused to demand more state control, more regulation and more centralization, rather than structures that embrace freedom and adaptation to socio-cultural and natural habitats.

These considerations, with regard to the ecological dimension of traditional social principles, give non-human nature a voice only via other issues. An

²⁰ Vogt 2009, 456-494.

understanding of ecological factors as merely an interpretation of social or economic responsibility does not do justice to the problem at the heart of the matter. It contradicts the sustainability principle, which sees the ecological dimension as a target variable of societal development.

Ecological social ethics

A crucial factor for the acceptance of sustainability as one of the fundamental principles of Catholic social teaching is finally that it summarizes effectively the social-ethical diagnosis of the “signs of the times” and gets to the heart of the associated challenges for society and the church. “The social explosiveness that the question of solidarity introduced at the end of the 19th century is being reformulated at the start of the 21st century in terms of the question of sustainability.”²¹ Sustainability is a synthesis of the social-ethical diagnosis, and on this basis also a barometer for the way the future will be managed in all political dimensions.

Sustainability shows up justice loopholes. It is the issue at the interface of all of the main questions about the future, often displaying surprising parallels and structural similarities to different dilemmas in different contexts. Sustainability introduces the dimensions of Time and Nature into socio-political debates. It opens the way for new analyses and solutions for the complex interplay between local and global phenomena.

Such a central function can however only be realized by sustainability discourse when this submits to ongoing questioning of its boundaries. This is where theology can be a useful tool in opening up sustainability’s search for hope and meaning, which stretches beyond that which is achievable by human, societal or technical effort. This critical expansion of this sustainability horizon is crucial in view of the risk of sustainability discourse closing itself off and mistaking its integral nature for an omnipotent power to solve.

Sustainability needs an accompanying critical ideology, to be provided by philosophy, theology, sociology and cultural and historical studies.

²¹ Wulsdorf 2005, 12, transl. K. Ritson.

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