

RESEARCH ARTICLE

PACHAMAMA MEETS MOANA: SOUTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE ON ECO-THEOLOGY AND WELL-LIVING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PUBLIC THEOLOGY¹**Carlos Caldas**Professor in the Post-Graduate Department of Religious Studies of Pontifical Catholic University in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. carloscaldas@pucminas.br**Abstract**

One of the hardest problems humankind has ever faced—perhaps the most difficult problem ever—is the care of the environment. Humans have been modifying the environment since the very beginning of their existence on this planet, but never in the fast and dramatic ways the world has witnessed at least since the last century. For the sake of ‘progress’ that begets immense profit, entire biomes have been destroyed. What can be done in the face of such a complicated situation as this? This article aims to reflect on that, from the vantage point of a dialogue between the South American Andean philosophy of *Buen Vivir*—‘well living’—and the South Pacific Moana theology. The overall perspective of the article is that dialogue is an exercise of Public Theology, something highly necessary in the world today. The article presents a critique to capitalism that defines the value of one’s life by its power of consumerism. The article proposes the effort of an epistemology that takes seriously the perspectives of peoples and societies from the Global South, proposing that this South–South dialogue can suggest practical measures that will be good for the whole world.

Keywordspublic theology, *Buen Vivir*, ecotheology, South-South, epistemology

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Introduction

This article intends to propose a dialogue between two worldviews of the so-called Global South, specifically, between South America and the South Pacific: the Andean philosophy of *Buen Vivir* (BV)—‘well living’—and a Pasifika theology of creation. The article intends to present convergencies and divergencies between these two worldviews. The basic presupposition of the article is that such a dialogue is an exercise of public theology.

This is illustrated through the article’s structure: first, the geographical and cultural contextualisation of the BV philosophy, followed by some considerations about Public Theology (PT). The third part of the article deals with the idea of an epistemology of the South with some practical considerations concerning the BV philosophy. The fourth part of the article will present some elements of a Pasifika theology of creation. This article remains open-ended, as concluding remarks leave room for a continuation—particularly, an expanded exploration of the Pasifika perspective on eco-theology.

To begin with, it is important to present a conceptual difference between South America and Latin America—are these two concepts synonymous with each other? The answer is: no. South America is a geographical concept, and Latin America is a cultural concept. Let us begin with the easiest concept, which is the geographical one: South America comprises the countries south of Panama: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guiana (the former British Guiana), Paraguay, Peru, Surinam, Uruguay, and Venezuela. From Panama northwards to the Mexican border there is Central America, composed of continental countries and island nations as well: Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Costa Rica, Curaçao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Granada, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. And finally, the three countries of North America: Canada, Mexico, and the United States of America.²

Latin America, in turn, is a cultural concept: it has to do with countries that suffered Iberian (Portuguese and Spanish) colonisation. In the Americas, some countries experienced colonisation processes from European powers other than Spain and Portugal: it is true, especially concerning most of the Caribbean countries that suffered British, French, or Dutch colonisation.

Being so, Latin America is a concept that has to do with an Iberian cultural, symbolic, and religious matrix. As far as the religious element is concerned, this matrix is, by and large, of strong Roman Catholic influence, which contrasts with the Anglo-Saxon cultural, symbolic and religious matrix of the North American countries of Canada and the United States, which have Protestant influence.

2 The three lists were presented in alphabetical order.

The focus of this article is on the Andean South and Latin American countries known as Andean America or Andean States, that is, the countries of Western South America crossed by the Andes mountain range: from north to south: Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. But in a more specific way, the philosophy of BV comes from Bolivia and Ecuador. As it will be seen in the continuation of the article, BV is a tradition of sageness rooted in the ancestral wisdom of the Quechua and Aymara peoples of these regions.

Public Theology: What is it All About?

According to Marty (1974), Public Theology (PT) is a Christian reflection on issues that interest society as a whole, and not only the Christian community. After Marty and his pioneer intuition, American Catholic theologian, David Tracy (b. 1939) gives another important theoretical contribution to the understanding of what PT is supposed to be. In *The Analogical Imagination*, he proposed what he called ‘the three publics of theology’, or, the publics with which theology dialogues: the church (in this situation we have a confessional denominational theology), the *academia* (now we have a ‘scientific’ theology that is not necessarily confessional or denominational) and society, which is the most difficult of all three. If theology intends to speak to a public broader than its first audience (the church), it needs to hear what experts in other fields of knowledge have to say. Especially today, more than in any other time in history, a theology worth the adjective *public* must engage in a dialogue with people of other faiths—or none. And in all of this, public theology must not quit the *proprium* of Christian theology, that is, what is essential to the Christian faith. If one intends to be a public theologian but does not include in his/her discourse the essentials of the faith, this discourse will be anything except a public theology. In every case, PT is a two-way street. By its own definition, PT is a dialogical exercise, which establishes a contrast with the aforementioned confessional theology (following Tracy’s classification) and academic theology as well, because in these two situations, there is no dialogue, but one who speaks—the priest or pastor in confessional theology and the professor in academic theology—and the others who limit themselves to hearing what the religious or academic authority has to say.³

Theology—Public, Practical, whatever—is always contextual. Theology is not a reflection that happens in a vacuum, in an ethereal space. Rather, it always reflects the particularities of the live context the disciples of Jesus are in. It is important to remember that we must be alert to the similarities and dissimilarities between our two life contexts, if we want to establish this South–South dialogue.

3 This situation of just one person who speaks and others who hear what has been said was described and criticised by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (2018).

Public Theology and Epistemology: Perspectives from the South

There are similarities and dissimilarities between the Latin American context and the Pasifika context. These two contexts are in the so-called Global South, and if there is the intention to establish a dialogue between them one needs a theoretical basis for such dialogue. To establish this theoretical basis, one needs aid that comes from *epistemology*. In the philosophical tradition, epistemology is the theory of knowledge. The question epistemology wants to respond to is: how do we know what we know? Epistemology deals with questions such as: How does someone know what is true or real? How do we acquire knowledge? What are different types of knowledge? How can we be sure that it is true, not error or illusion? Therefore, epistemology tries to explain the origin, nature, types, and methods of knowledge. At this moment of our reflection, it is important to reckon the contribution of Portuguese sociologist, Boaventura de Souza Santos (2014) in his seminal work *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. However, before we proceed, it could be useful to be reminded of a Brazilian proverb that says that in some situations, it is necessary ‘to go forward and come backward’. What does this folk saying have to do with this issue? It means that on the one hand, Santos (2014) has the merit to be the very first to criticise what he calls ‘abyssal epistemology’, that is, the classical and traditional epistemology done in the North Atlantic (North America, the UK, and continental Europe). He proposes valuing knowledge traditions from the ‘South’—Latin America, Subsaharian Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pasifika—this is ‘going forward’ (Santos 2014). However, on the other hand, he could be blamed for what he criticises because he belongs entirely to this Northern hemisphere existential framework, be it geographical (as a Portuguese, he is European) or educational, as he was academically trained in Portugal, Germany, and the USA (he received his doctorate from Yale). Besides, he worked as a professor in the United Kingdom and in the USA. Therefore, he is totally in the North Atlantic life context—this is ‘come backward’. Notwithstanding, some trueborn Global South thinkers have been proposing this epistemological approach from the South. One of them is the young Argentinian theologian and sociologist, Nicolás Panotto. In *Descolonizar o saber teológico na América Latina* [Decolonizing Theological Knowledge in Latin America], Panotto (2019) responds to the question of what theological education is like in a post-colonial time and how theological education is if it is seen through the lens of decolonial critique (17). In the ‘prehistory’ of this concern of formulating a critical thought from the perspective of the South, is the late Catholic Argentinian philosopher and theologian, Enrique Dussel (1934–2023). He was one of the first to think about a ‘philosophy of liberation’, that is, a philosophy thought according to the premises and

particularities of Latin America.⁴ In his theoretical elaboration, Dussel stressed particularly philosophical ethics, a central theme in the life setting of Latin America, characterised by poverty and oppression. In this same line it could be mentioned the work of the Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez (b. 1958) with his *El giro decolonial: Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica mas allá del capitalismo global* [The Decolonial Turn: Reflections on an Epistemic Diversity Beyond Global Capitalism]. These examples are enough to demonstrate that not only Santos but thinkers native to Latin America are reflecting on this theme of an epistemology below the Equator line.

This issue of an epistemology 'of the South' is sensitive, because one could reason by saying truth is truth, no matter the geographical or cultural context one is in. Truth is truth indeed. However, at the same time, the *Sitz im Leben*—geographical, historical, economical, political, social, symbolical, cultural, religious, etc.—one is in can influence one's worldview. Truth is and always will be truth, but how we look at it and understand it is influenced by our contexts. As the Brazilian Catholic theologian Leonardo Boff once said, in an aphorism that became very famous, 'Every point of view is seen from a point'.⁵ This is exactly Santos's emphasis: the way one in the Global South looks and, consequently, interprets and understands the complexity of reality and its multiple challenges, is oriented (not necessarily determined) by the very context of the Global South.

Santos's proposal of an epistemology of the South has to do with two contemporary concepts that, even though they are related somehow to each other, are not necessarily synonymous: postcolonialism and decolonialism. According to South African postcolonial scholar Benita Parry,

there has been a fluid, polysemic, and ambiguous usage of the term 'postcolonial' within and beyond specialist circles. The plenitude of signification is such that 'postcolonial' can indicate a historical transition, an achieved epoch, a cultural location, a theoretical stance – indeed, in the spirit of mastery favored by Humpty Dumpty in his dealings with language, whatever an author chooses it to mean. (2004, 66)

It is not easy to define postcolonialism, as it is used in many fields of knowledge, such as literary criticism, political theory, and religious studies. Considering this, some

4 A prolific author, Dussel's magnum opus is *Para una ética de la Liberación latinoamericana* [For an Ethics of Latin American Liberation], in five volumes published between 1973 and 1980.

5 The assonance and wordplay of Boff's aphorism in Portuguese cannot be captured when the phrase is translated into other languages: *tudo ponto de vista é visto de um ponto*.

scholars prefer to refer to it as postcolonial theory instead of postcolonialism.⁶ But for this chapter, putting it in simple terms, postcolonialism is, or intends to be, a subversive worldview. The word *subversive* sounds problematic or troublesome, as it is generally understood as something radical that intends to undermine a given institution or even the state itself. But this is not how we use it: in this chapter, we are using *subversive* in its literal meaning. The English word *subversive* comes from Latin: it is formed by the conjunction *sub*—‘under’—plus the noun *versio*—‘version’. Therefore, subversion is a ‘version under’, or, in other words, an alternative version. Of what? Of a worldview, a view of the world, of life, death, the here and beyond. So, if postcolonialism is a kind of worldview, it is a sort of epistemology or theory of knowledge. The idea of postcolonialism is to suggest an epistemology that is an alternative to a traditional North Atlantic Eurocentric worldview.

Decolonialism, in turn, is different from postcolonialism, even though it can echo it somehow. It has to do with decolonisation, the struggle of many Pasifika, African, and Asian countries to regain their political autonomy from European colonialist powers that took place after the Second World War. The ideas of decolonialism and decoloniality are close to each other, but they have their distinctions. Argentinian philosopher, Walter D. Mignolo (b. 1941) enlightens the difference between these two concepts and also explains the pioneer role in the formulation of these ideas of the collective Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (a collective entirely formed by Latin American scholars) and also the influence of Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (Mignolo 2024). In the words of sociologist Gurinder K. Bhambra,

The traditions of thought associated with postcolonialism and decoloniality are long-standing and diverse. Postcolonialism emerged as an intellectual movement consolidating and developing around the ideas of Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri C. Spivak. While much work in the area of postcolonial studies has directly addressed issues of the material, of the socio-economic, there has also been a tendency for it to remain firmly in the realm of the cultural. In contrast, the modernity/coloniality school emerged from the work of, among others, the sociologists Aníbal Quijano and María Lugones, and the philosopher and semiotician, Walter D. Mignolo. It was strongly linked to world-systems theory from the outset as well as to scholarly work in development and underdevelopment theory and the Frankfurt School critical social theory tradition Postcolonialism and decoloniality

⁶ There is a plethora of publications about this issue, since the pioneering work of Edward Said, first published in 1978 (Said, 1995). But even before Said, one can locate in Martinican author Frantz Fanon’s work *The Wretched of the Earth*, first published in 1961, the seeds, or the remote root, of what would later be called postcolonialism (Fannon 2021). The same can be said regarding the work of Anglo-Indian author Homi Bhabha (b. 1949), especially his book *The Location of Culture* (Bhabha, 2004). See also, inter alia, Young (2001, 2020).

are only made necessary as a consequence of the depredations of colonialism, but in their intellectual resistance to associated forms of epistemological dominance, they offer more than simple opposition. They offer, in the words of María Lugones, the possibility of a new geopolitics of knowledge. (2014, 115–21)

‘A new geopolitics of knowledge’, Maria Lugones said—has to do with the proposal of an epistemology of the South, and, consequently, with the aim of this article, *viz.*, a dialogue between these two South worldviews, that are the Latin America idea of *Buen Vivir* and Moana theology. This is certainly not an easy task. After all, Global South is not a homogeneous entity. There are, of course, many differences between Latin America and Pasifika life settings, but there are similarities as well. On one side, the immense geographical variety of South America, with its high mountain ranges, the Amazon rainforest and the pampas in Southern Cone, to name only a few examples, each one of them rich in biomes, fauna, and flora. On the other side, the sunny islands of the South Pacific. What do the folk traditions of wisdoms of these two different regions have in common? What can they teach to other parts of the Global South and the world as a whole? What are the main concerns and alerts that come out of this dialogue?

***Buen Vivir*: What is it All About?**

Buen Vivir (BV) is a social philosophy or an ethics that comes from the tradition of the wisdom of the Quechua people from Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia in South America.⁷ It is called *Sumak Kawsay* in Quechua, *Suma Quamaña* in Aymara and *nhandereko* in Guarani.⁸ BV is a critique, and it is an alternative way of resistance, to a hegemonic capitalist model of economic and social development. It is a worldview distinct from the one that is predominant worldwide, a worldview that equalises happiness to consumerism. One could call BV an ‘ecosophy’, wisdom of the οἶκος—*oikos* (Greek for ‘house’), *viz.*, the planet we live in. In other words: BV is a wisdom that teaches us how we should live in our great common house, Earth.

Now it is necessary to refer to the Ecuadorian author Alberto Acosta. He was a state minister in his country, but because of some quarrels with the president, he is no longer occupying such a position. However, we need to emphasise that Acosta succeeded in including in the Constitution of Ecuador some paragraphs about ‘the rights of nature’. Ecuador was the first country to expand the concept of (human) rights to include the

7 All the information concerning the wisdom tradition of BV comes from Ecuadorian economist Alberto Acosta’s book *O bem viver. Uma oportunidade para imaginar outros mundos* (Acosta 2016).

8 The quéchuas (or quichuas) are an Indigenous group of people from the Andean region, especially, Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. The Aymara are an Indigenous people from Bolivia, Peru, and parts of Argentina and Chile, and the Guarani are Indigenous people from Paraguay, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay.

rights of nature. This was a great step towards a better understanding of what human rights is meant to be. By and large, the notion of human rights is understood in a merely individualistic way. However, it would be better understood in a communal, societal way. In other words: human rights not only refers to the individual ‘I’, but to a community of persons.⁹ And not only a community of persons, but a community formed also by the non-human beings of creation. According to Acosta, ‘Good Living is essentially a process arising from the community matrix of people who live in harmony with Nature’ (2016, 32). He also said that ‘The center of attention should not just be the human being, but the human being living in community and in harmony with Nature’ (Acosta 2016, 35) and ‘It is necessary to overcome the divorce between Nature and human beings. This historical and civilizational change is humanity’s greatest challenge, if we do not want to put our own existence at risk. This is what the Rights of Nature, included in the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution, are about. The relationship with Nature is essential in the construction of *Good Living*’ (36, emphasis added). Acosta adds: ‘The discussion about BV should not be limited to Andean and Amazonian realities There are many options to start practicing it in other places on the planet, including industrialized countries’ (Acosta 2016, 47).

This idea of BV is useful and necessary in the contexts of both Pasifika and Latin America, lands of countries considered underdeveloped according to a capitalist Western standard. To quote Acosta once more, ‘Development (social and economic), as a global and unifying proposal, ignores the dreams and struggles of “underdeveloped” peoples’ (2016, 58). This is because the Western standard for measuring and evaluating progress is based on a capitalist ideology, which leads people to endlessly consume, more and more. Capitalism, using what French philosopher René Girard (1979) calls *mimetic desire*, leads people to think that to live well, we need to acquire goods, to buy things. The logic of capitalism makes one desire what the other has: if he/she has this or that, I want to have it.

At this point, it would be good to remember that, as early as in the first half of the last century, the German Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin called *Kapitalismus als Religion* (in good English, *Capitalism as Religion*).¹⁰ Long story short, for Benjamin, capitalism took the place that in traditional societies belonged to religion.¹¹ One of the commandments of this ‘new religion’ is: buy things, if you want to be happy. But the goods we buy come from nature, and to get them made, it is necessary to deforest, to

9 Perhaps the African idea of *Ubuntu* can help us to get a more balanced understanding of human rights. According to *Ubuntu*, ‘I am because we are’.

10 The idea of capitalism as religion appears briefly in a short manuscript published posthumously in 1985 by Ralph Tiedemann and Hermann Scheppenhäuser in Volume 6 of Benjamin’s *Gesammelte Schriften* [Collected Writings].

11 There comes a wordplay that makes sense in Portuguese: the name of this economic model is *Capitalism*, which makes Brazilian Portuguese-speaking people remember the word *capeta*—one of the many popular words that stands for ‘devil’ in English. Therefore, one could speak about Capitalism as ‘Capetatism’.

pollute water and air. Therefore, we humans are committing an *ecocide*, an assassination of the *oikos*, our planet, Earth itself. But by doing so, what we are really doing is ‘killing the goose that lays the golden eggs’. The ‘goose’ in this case is nature. It seems that we have forgotten the obvious; if the environment is destroyed, we will be destroyed altogether. Considering all these things Acosta stated: ‘For the majority of the planet’s inhabitants, capitalism does not represent a promise or dream: it is a nightmare come true’ (2016, 62). BV is an alternative to such a delicate, difficult, and complex context, ‘Its starting point is the different ways of seeing life and its relationship with Pachamama’¹² (Acosta 2016, 82). It is curious to observe that Pachamama—Mother Earth—makes one remember the Hebrew word אָדָמָה—*adamah*, whence comes the word *adam*—the human. *Adam*¹³—the human—comes from *adamah*—the cultivable land, from which we derive our sustenance, the very ground in which we plant seeds and cultivate our crops that are of vital need for our survival. Therefore, the human being is *adamah*’s child. These ideas of BV, Pachamama and *adamah* challenge us to think about alternatives to a way of living that is destructive to the land we came from. Rev 11:18 presents a serious warning to which we are supposed to pay attention:

The nations raged, but thy wrath came,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints,
and those who fear thy name, both small and great,
and for *destroying the destroyers of the earth*. (RSV, emphasis added)

BV Put into Practice: Some Suggestions

After this brief presentation of the idea of BV—what is it all about?—it would be good to present some suggestions relating to its practicality. After all, the reflection of this article, as it was already mentioned, has to do with public theology, and public theology cannot be just a theoretical elaboration. Public theology must be incarnated, it must become ‘flesh and blood’. Otherwise, it would only be a sequence of interesting thoughts with no implication for real life.

12 According to Bolivian historian Manuel Rigoberto Paredes Iturri in his book *Mitos, supersticiones y supervivencias populares de Bolivia* (first published in 1920) in the mythology of current-day Quechua people *Pachamama* is Mother Earth, a sort of feminine spiritual entity representing time, that distributes the seasons, fertilises the earth, its companion, gives and absorbs the life of beings. Such belief comes from the ancient cosmology of the Inca people.

13 Hebrew language establishes a distinction between אָדָם—*adam*—human being, broadly speaking, men and women alike, אִישׁ—*ish*—meaning ‘man’, the masculine human, and אִשָּׁה—*ishah*—meaning ‘woman’, the feminine human.

A good start could be the recovery of the tradition of a simple lifestyle. This tradition comes from the Anabaptist branch of the Reformation, the one that historian Roland H. Bainton, as early as in 1941, called ‘The Left Wing of the Reformation’.¹⁴ The Anabaptists shared very important points with the other three branches of the Reformation, viz., the Lutheran Reformation, the Reformed (or Calvinist) Reformation and the English (or Anglican) Reformation. All these four branches take hold of the *Solae* of the Reformation: *Sola Fide*, *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Gratia*, *Solus Christus* (or Solo Christo) and *Soli Deo gloria* (respectively, ‘by faith alone’, ‘by Scripture alone’, ‘by grace alone’, ‘by Christ alone’, and ‘glory to God alone’).

However, the Anabaptist tradition has some characteristics that are exclusively their own, and one of these specific traits that belongs only to their fold is the tradition of a simple lifestyle. Anabaptism pioneered teaching their members a philosophy of life that emphasises that ‘less is more’, encouraging them to dress modestly, avoid unnecessary expenses and have no ostentation at all. It is clearly a rejection of consumerism that dominates entirely capitalist societies, consciously or not, which idolises *Mamon*—money. In the Anabaptist mindset, a simple lifestyle is a spiritual practice, a visible and tangible way to live holiness in the world.

This proposal for a simple life remained for centuries as something exclusive to the Anabaptists (Mennonites, Hutterites, Amish, and some others). However, at the beginning of the 80s, there was a shy cry to other Evangelicals to take this issue seriously. Such a call came from the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, or, more simply, the Lausanne Movement.¹⁵ The Theology and Education Working Group of the Lausanne Movement (LM) summoned small meetings assembling theologians and church leaders from all over the world to work as a sort of ‘think tank’, reflecting critically on those issues and proposing practical evangelistic actions. One of these meetings was held at Hoddesdon, England, from 17 to 21 March 1980: *An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle*.¹⁶ The conference had John Stott as its chairman and Ronald Sider (author of the bestseller *Rich Christians in a Time of Hunger*) as its convenor. This convocation

14 An extensive-length approach to the history of the Anabaptist tradition and to Anabaptist theology would go beyond the aims of this article. For details about their history and theology, see, *inter alia* Estep (1995); Friedmann (1999); Snyder (2004, 2022).

15 In 1974, American evangelist Billy Graham, via his organisation, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, summoned Evangelical leaders from many countries to gather in Lausanne, Switzerland, to join forces for a global effort of world evangelisation. As an outcome of that meeting came the Lausanne Movement, intended to be a conservative Evangelical alternative to the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, which Evangelicals considered as theologically liberal.

16 For the full text of the document that presents the conclusions of the consultation and a list of participants see Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (1980).

for a simple lifestyle aimed to reach a broader Evangelical audience, and one cannot help observing that there is a resonance between it and the Andean philosophy of BV and the Anabaptist tradition of a simple lifestyle. Taking a simple lifestyle is a simple, but important step on the path of caring for creation.

This is so because capitalism has such an unquenchable thirst for profit, sometimes (always?), profit at any cost, no matter what. As already stated,

the wheel of economy cannot stop; industries and factories must work incessantly. After all, commerce needs to sell its products. In order to achieve this, having enough raw materials becomes a necessity. These raw materials come from nature; they are extracted from the soil, from the seas, and from the forests. In many cases, the process is destructive, which is illogical, insane even, because in doing so, we are destroying what we need to live. It is like killing the golden goose to get more eggs made of pure gold. (Caldas 2024, 89)

Another suggestion for a practical way to do a public theology oriented by this philosophy of BV is to include some content related to the care of creation and reject the culture of consumerism in the curriculum of theological seminaries. As these institutions are houses of pastoral formation, and pastors are church leaders, it will be a great job if matters such as those already mentioned are included in their pedagogical matrix. Future pastors and laypeople as well must learn not only systematic theology or church history, but they also need to learn about how to be responsible stewards of creation.

One cannot forget also that some Christian NGOs and movements have been working on such matters as social justice and environmental care. In the following some specific examples will be given: one of these is the Brazilian Evangelical agency *Nós na Criação* [We in Creation]. It started its activities in 2016 as a movement organised at the Baptist Church in Coqueiral, in the periphery of Recife, Northeast Brazil, for dealing with the cleaning of a river in the city. In 2020 it was organised as an institute, and since then they are working in nine cities in both Northeast and Southeast Brazil. With similar goals is the *Renew Our World* movement. According to their official website,

We are a global movement of Christians campaigning to make the world more fair and sustainable. We have national expressions in Australia, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Chile, Ghana, India, Ireland, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Peru, Slovakia, Tanzania, Uganda, UK, USA, and Zambia. (Renew Our World Campaign n.d.)

On the Catholic side, there is the *Laudato Si'* Movement, a movement with the same goals as *Nós na Criação*, with the difference they are global in their reach.¹⁷ All these movements, and, certainly others similar in their aims, are practical, down-to-earth possibilities to take seriously the inputs coming from BV and Pasifika theology. In sum, these are only a few suggestions. This brief list does not intend to be exhaustive. Rather, it aims only to be a starter, hoping that the readers of this article will think about other possibilities that are suited to their existential life contexts.

Contributions from Pasifika Theology

After presenting, even only in brief, the South American Andean idea of BV, it is necessary to bring to this table of conversation some contributions from the theological reflection on the creation and the care of it that comes from the Pasifika itself.¹⁸ Needless to say, what is to be presented here will be no more than a brief introduction to this issue of Pasifika theology.

As was already mentioned, this article intends to establish a *talanoa* (dialogue) between these two South Global perspectives, Andean South America and Pasifika. At this point, it would be good to remember also that theology, be it systematic, public, or whatever, is always contextual. The *Sitz im Leben*, viz., the place in life, of the community where any theological reflection is made, is influential in the making of any theological reflection.

This basic presupposition is especially true in the life context of the Pasifika, the 'liquid continent'. In one vast area of thousands of square kilometres there are two great and affluent nations—Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand—and many insular countries, some of them very tiny. This area is the most vulnerable in the world to the dramatic climate changes that have been taking place in the world today. Due to global warming, which provokes the melting of the polar cap and, consequently, the rising of the level of ocean waters, some of those islands can be submerged. It sounds like a dystopian science fiction novel, but sometimes, life is stranger and more unexpected than the art. What does it mean to do theology in such a context? Considering these threatening circumstances, theology made in the Pasifika is, and should be, public because it has to deal with issues of general interest to the whole population of their islands.

This dialogue between two Southern theologies does not mean a denial of traditional theologies made in the North Atlantic (the USA, Canada, United Kingdom

17 For details, see *Laudato Si'* Movement (n.d.)

18 In the words of Jione Havea (2021, v.), 'Moana nui a kiwa and 'Otu motu referred to the waters, reefs and islands that spread in the moana (sea, ocean) between Hawai'i (northeast), Palau and Papua (northwest), Aotearoa (southwest) and Rapa Nui (southeast)'.

and Western Europe). It is an attempt to establish convergences between two vast regions. Perhaps this conversation between Pasifika theology and the Andean South American traditional wisdom of BV can reveal some similarities. In what follows, the article will try to articulate a little of these possibilities. This article works with the presupposition that theology, by its very definition, should be done dialogically, North and South, South and South, West and East. Such dialogue will enrich everybody involved in it.

Pasifika theology is influenced by some concepts of Pasifika cultures. The article will not delve in-depth into any anthropological analysis of this vast array of cultures, as it would be a detour from this main theme. However, some examples of these cultural concepts and how they influence Pasifika theology will be given. One could say that Pasifika theology is a reading of the Scriptures through the lens of Pasifika culture(s). Therefore, it is a bold and innovative way of thinking about theology. One example of that boldness is what Samoan theologian Marie Ropeti-Apisaloma (2022) calls ‘Nafanua Theology’. Nafanua is a goddess of Samoan mythology. For Western Christians, it could be reason for scandal to label any theology after the name of that goddess. But in such a courageous way, Ropeti-Apisaloma, a theologian as bold as Nafanua herself (according to the Samoan *fagogo*,¹⁹ Nafanua is as brave as any man), had no fear to name her case for women in ordained ministry as Nafanua Theology.

Professor Upolu Lumā Vaai, a Samoan himself, has been an advocate of thinking about theology influenced by Pasifika cultures and context. He defends what he calls a ‘redirtfying creation theology’ (2023). According to Vaai, ‘creation theology must reclaim its Earth-based affinity from the control of the “egological” rivet’ (2023, 63). Vaai criticises ‘theology’s captivity to a human-centric market led to the splitting of the redemption narrative (salvation of the human) from the creation narrative (salvation of the whole)’ (2023, 69). This is a sound contribution to a theology of creation, because it takes seriously the understanding of sacredness of nature. Vaai’s (2023) thinking echoes Rom 8:18–23:

¹⁸I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; ²⁰for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; ²¹because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (RSV)

19 In Samoan culture a *fagogo* is a sort of storytelling, therefore, it has to do with oral traditions of Samoan peoples.

Paul is crystal clear in his exposition: the redemption carried out by and through Christ is for humans and non-humans alike. Therefore, ethics, which must follow faith—*credenda et agenda*—must be for human relations, but it has to do with nature too. This is a possible contact point between Pasifika theology and BV life philosophy.

Vaai (2023) works with the Samoan concept of *aiga*, a word that means approximately family, but has a much broader reach than ‘family’ has in European languages, like English or Portuguese (in these two languages, and in others as well, ‘family’ has to do with a micro-familiar unity composed of father, mother, and children, but in Samoan language and culture *aiga* is much more than that. In the Samoan way of thinking, *aiga* is understood in a much more extended way, including the ancestors and the land itself. In the words of Vaai,

creation is not so much about ‘being created’ as about ‘being related’. The latter has always been sidelined by conventional theology because of the focus on the former in order to be in line with rational and scientific research. The former is only part of the latter. There is always a relationship first, before there is a creation. Creation was birthed into being from within the womb of relationships. This changes everything, because we are invited into an inclusive ‘holistic gaze’ to treat everything as part of us. The iTaukei Fijians already taught us this through their totemic culture, where each person has a bird (representing the skies), a fish (representing the ocean), and a tree (representing the land) – a dirtified ‘whole of life’ approach often sidelined by creation theology. Earth, therefore, is first and foremost a relationship. (2023, 73)

Pasifika theology, according to Vaai (2023), takes seriously the concept of *aiga*—family, in a broader sense. It makes one remember the words of 1 Timothy 5:8, ‘If any one does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever’ (RSV). Applying this biblical Pauline word to Vaai’s understanding, one could say that our *aiga*—our great *oikos*, this planet—is to be cared for by Christians, as they care for their families.

A last example of Pasifika theology will be given: Tafua Molu Lusama in his book *Vaa Fesokotaki* uses the tradition of wisdom of Tuvaluan people known as Vaa Fesokotaki, which means ‘relational sacred space’ as a theoretical key for developing a theology of *te Atua*, God. In his words,

I employ the Tuvaluan concept of *vaa fesokotaki* as an interpretive lens to demonstrate the importance of relational space in the Tuvaluan worldview and how it can be used for a reconstruction of the theology of *te Atua*. *Vaa* refers to the sacred relational space

that determines how we relate to each other and to creation *Fesokotaki* comes from three words that collectively can deep mutuality. Thus *vaa fesokotaki* is a space that connects what has been presented to us by foreign worldviews as binary opposites, such as God and world, being and relation, closeness and distance. It is a space that embraces diversity and is about mutual encounter and engagement. (2022, xxvii).

These examples are sufficient to demonstrate the richness, creativity, and depth of the theologies thought in the Pasifika context of life. They can be resourceful partners in conversation to the BV philosophy, seeking together ways to resist a destructive and disruptive way of life that puts profit as the supreme goal of life.

Conclusion

This article ends expressing *amanaki* (hope) that another world is possible. Christian faith is many times contrainuitive, totally contrary to the *Zeitgeist* that establishes financial matters as above everything else. So, the reflection vehicled in the article is only a step in such a long and difficult journey. Christians are ‘Pilgrims of Hope’ in this world.²⁰ As such, the followers of Jesus, no matter whether they are in South America or the South Pacific, must go on with perseverance in their path, full of faith, hope and love, like those who see the invisible (cf. Heb 11:27). These cardinal virtues are necessary, because when one looks to the contemporary scenario it is very easy to give up, because it seems that the god Mamon will win, and their worshipers will succeed in destroying nature for their profit’s sake.

In order to incarnate the theological and ethical proposal presented in this article it will be necessary to have faith to believe in the very first message of the Bible, that is, this world and everything in it is a creation of God. And as the poetry of Genesis 1 teaches us, ‘and God saw that it was good’ (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, RSV).²¹ This is also the first statement of the Apostle’s Creed, the oldest and most ecumenical declaration of faith in Christian history: ‘I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth’. Faith to believe that the world is God’s creation leads us to responsibility to the environment.

It will also be necessary to have hope that God will not turn his back on us nor leave this world alone. Christian hope is that the future of the world is ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ (Rev 21.1, RSV); it not such a thing as a naive optimism that things will be put

20 *Pilgrims of Hope* is the theme of 2025 Jubilee Year of the Roman Catholic Church. This poetically beautiful idea was drawn from Rom 5:5: ‘hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us’ (RSV).

21 בָּרָא is the Hebrew word translated into English as ‘good’. It could be translated also as ‘beautiful’: ‘And God saw (viz., the creation) that it was beautiful’.

together on their own. Rather, it hopes that ‘the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this’ (Isa 9:7, RSV). A hope such as this will fuel Christian action in this world, for the sake of this very world created by God. This is because Christian hope is not a passive, static quality. Rather, it is strongly active, as it pushes those who have it to action.

Last, but not least, it will be necessary to have love. Only those who love the work that came out from the very hands of God will be able to take care of it. So, the cardinal virtues of Christian tradition are necessary to incarnate the sage tradition of BV and the theological input that comes from the Pasifika. This dialogue must continue. After all, many of the challenges that the peoples of the Pasifika and the peoples of Latin American (the Andean peoples included) are the same. Poverty and inequality, economical injustice, poor quality of education, psychological and emotional problems that lead many to mental disorders and to acts of violence, including violence against themselves—suicide, the threats coming from global warming, and many others. Any theological reflection that wants to be labeled as ‘public’ in these life contexts must take these challenges seriously. And in such a complex situation, the dialogue between Pachamama and Moana can be helpful to everybody, and to the peoples from the North too.

Pachamama will meet Moana, and when that happens, there is no doubt this encounter will be healthy for everybody on our planet. This article marks just the beginning of this dialogue.

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