Thinking faith
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Faiths in Creation II:

The Place of Humanity in Creation

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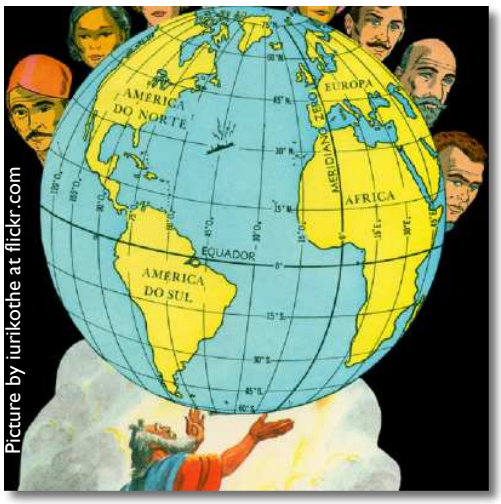
The way in which we think about ecological issues depends to a large extent on whether we consider humanity to be entirely different from, or fundamentally the same as the rest of the natural world, argues Martin Poulsom. How can we navigate a path between these two positions to gain a better understanding of our place in creation, with respect to God and to other creatures?

In order to investigate the role that Christianity might play in current debates about environmental and ecological concerns, it is vital first to substantiate the claim that Christianity has something useful to say. After all, in the minds and stated opinions of some interlocutors, it is Christianity that is the problem. Its way of thinking has led humanity inevitably to the disaster on whose brink the globe is now teetering. At the outset of this paper, what is often called the Dominion thesis will be briefly examined and compared with the position taken by Deep Ecologists. It will be seen that, despite first appearances, these two diametrically opposed positions are actually somewhat similar to each other. The possibility of finding a path between these extremes will be raised, a possibility which will be shown to fit remarkably well with one mainstream way of articulating theologically what it means to be a created human being. On the basis of this understanding of creation, humanity will be able to be placed in creation, both with respect to God and with respect to other creatures, in a way that can both respect the unique value of humankind and, at the same time, avoid denigrating the value of everything else. On the basis of this account, some possible contributions to current debates will be mooted as a way of opening up an exciting possibility – that Christianity might well have something of value to say.



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Do Christians have a right to speak?

The problematic character of Christianity with regard to ecology has been highlighted at least since the historian Lynn White, himself a Christian, published 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis' in 1967.[1] White submitted that the Christian understanding of the place of humanity in the natural world, along with the way that humanity was seen as related to God, were key factors in the development of the ecological crisis:

> Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. [...] Man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature. Christianity [...] not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.[2]

At the end of his paper, White states that 'we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man'.[3] White himself thought that it might well be possible to do this within Christianity itself, but the debate quickly moved on, rendering his optimistic proposal somewhat peripheral.

In 1972, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess introduced the idea of a 'Deep Ecology movement', proposing it as a better alternative to the 'Shallow Ecology movement' that he identified as being powerful at the time.[4] The first of his principles, which have subsequently been developed to form the Deep Ecology Platform principles,[5] replaces the problematic structure that White recognised in Christianity with a different one, recommending: 'Rejection of the human-in-environment image in favour of the relational, total-field image'.[6] As a result, the 'well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves', values that are 'independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes'.[7] Furthermore, because 'Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values', they 'are also values in themselves'.[8] As a result, 'Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs'.[9]

No doubt, much subsequent debate has been entered into about the difference between the 'proper ends' of humanity that entitle humans to 'exploit nature', in the Christian thesis that White rejects, and the 'vital needs' that allow humans to 'reduce richness and diversity' in Naess's proposal. However, this matter is not the intended focus here. Rather, this paper seeks to draw attention to the importance of the language of rejection in the first Platform principle above. Putting it somewhat simply for the sake of clarity, the Dominion thesis states that human beings are completely different from Nature. On the basis of this core idea, this approach can go on to speak of Nature as a neutral backdrop, a stage setting if you will, for the drama of human interaction and flourishing. Deep Ecology, on the other hand, rejects both the core idea and the resulting image, stating that human beings are no different from the nonhuman world.

Therefore, the value of humanity as a species is no greater and no less than the value of any other species. These core ideas are worth stressing, because if attention is paid to them, it can be seen that they are symmetrical. The positions are opposed on the same scale – the scale of sameness and difference. Dominion holds that humans are not the same as other inhabitants of the planet, but are completely different from them; Deep Ecology avers that humans are just the same as other inhabitants of the planet and are no different from them.

If a position is to be found between these two extremes, one way of doing it might be to try to get off the scale of their disagreement. If it were possible to change the logic of the discussion, the tendency of any argument to gravitate towards the two extremes might well be mitigated. This would involve exchanging the logic of sameness and difference for another one. At first sight, this sounds like an impossible task, since the logic of sameness and difference seems to pervade human thinking and language.[10] This paper proposes that a consideration of what it means to be a human creature can help in this regard, because it can show that one important – and possibly central – way of thinking theologically is not ordered this way.

What does creation mean?

A Christian understanding of creation – though, as it will be seen, by no means all of the elements of this understanding are limited to Christianity alone – can help because it articulates the place of humanity in creation using another logic. In this section, what creation means will be outlined for human beings with respect to God first, since this is the fundamental sense of creation. On the basis of this articulation, the place of humanity with respect to the rest of creation will then be sketched, along lines suggested by these primary strands of thought.

Creatures and God

The impression is often given that creation is about beginnings. Debates between cosmologists and theologians about how the cosmos began and those between Darwinian Evolutionists and 'Intelligent Design' theorists about the origins of species lend support to this view.[11] However, it is widely agreed by Christian theologians that this is a misunderstanding of what creation is about. Rather, creation is primarily a way of articulating the complete and absolute dependence of everything that is created on the Creator for its very being at every moment of its existence.[12] If, at any point in the life of a creature, God were to stop creating it, that creature would instantaneously cease to exist. Thus, the relation of creation is asymmetrical:

creatures would not be creatures – indeed, they would not be at all – if God did not cause their existence; however, God would still be God even if God did not create.[13] This emphasis on the relation of dependence between creatures and God is further strengthened by the radical sense of God's presence that immediately follows from it. Edward Schillebeeckx notes that Thomas Aquinas's understanding of creation guarantees the absolute presence of God in the created order: as the source of their creaturely existence, God is closer to creatures than they are to themselves[14] or, as the Qur'an puts it, God is closer to human beings than their own jugular vein (50:16). This absolute presence of God makes it possible for Christians to speak about creatures as a blend 'of solitude and presence'.[15] According to Schillebeeckx, it is 'the believer's insight that finitude is not left in its solitude but is supported by the absolute presence of the creator God'.[16]

This way of thinking about creation stresses two things. Firstly, existence is a gift from God and not something that the creature has by right. Without God, the creature is nothing. Of the three traditions in conversation at this Faiths in Creation conference, this aspect is perhaps most strongly expressed in Islam in its emphasis that the creature is, metaphysically speaking, more properly said to be nothing than something.[17] Secondly, and in a way that complements this first theme, the relation between God and creatures is an extremely close and intimate one. God is not only present to creatures, but could appropriately be said to be present with and in them, in and through their lives.[18]

On the other hand – or, perhaps, the other side of the coin – creatures really do exist and their existence is not ephemeral. The gift of being, which God alone is able to give[19] is, nevertheless, truly given to creatures. Again, for Aquinas it is not the case that the creature is 'an insubstantial, quasi-nothing [...]. God gives being in such a way that the tendency of the given being is not to lapse into non-being but precisely to remain in being. God so constitutes the being of creatures that they tend to exist and not to fall into nothingness'.[20] This tendency to abide, thanks to the absolute presence of the Creator, makes it possible for Christians, at any rate, to speak of a sense in which the creature has a proper autonomy.[21] Not all Christian theologians are comfortable with this, it must be said. David Burrell, perhaps influenced in part by his sustained and insightful dialogue with Islam, is wary of speaking of the freedom of the creature as autonomy. The term, he says, has overtones of indeterminacy and independence that he would rather avoid.[22]

The sense of autonomy as independence is not the only possible one, however, and is perhaps significantly indebted to the tendency to 'separately reify and serially order conceptual distinctions' that Kathryn Tanner recognises as a problem in much of the theological discourse of the modern era.[23] As Burrell himself recognises elsewhere, the attempt to 'fracture anew the language of the ordinary'[24] in order to fruitfully do theology in an era that is increasingly called postmodern can, it would seem reasonable to argue, find helpful resources in those eras that preceded the modern.[25] Autonomy need not necessarily imply independence. Such an understanding would not make sense in the context of creation, as it would contradict the absolute dependence of the creature on God. Thus, the autonomy of the creature is not an autonomy over-against God, but one that is able to be placed in direct proportion with the dependence of the creature upon God, rather than the inverse proportion that the modern use of the term implies.[26] A creative retrieval of these earlier understandings of autonomy might also be assisted by the idea of 'relational autonomy' currently being raised by some feminist authors.[27] This setting of autonomy in a relational context seems promising, as it would then be easier to say that the more a creature is dependent on God, the more it is itself. Or, to put it as Schillebeeckx does, 'I am myself in dependence on God: the more I am God's, the more I become myself'.[28]

This 'non-contrastive' sense of autonomy can offer a helpful way of giving due emphasis to the distinction of creation that is the correlative term to the relation of dependence noted earlier.[29] God and creatures are distinct, but not different. Creatures are autonomous with regard to God, but not separate from God – if they were to be separated from God, they could no longer be. This pattern of language works according to another logic and, as such, can steer a middle course between Dominion and Deep Ecology. Indeed, the logic of distinction and relation that can be shown to be the logic of creation unmasks the paucity of both extremes, disclosing the false dichotomy and

thereby the false choice that they set up. The logic of creation, as a result, can also help articulate the place of humanity in creation.

Humanity in the midst of creation

The understanding of the distinction and relation involved in creation outlined here offers an exciting possibility for the kind of 'first order theological construction' that Tanner invites her fellow theologians to engage in at the end of *God and Creation*.[30] In particular, it can serve as the basis for crafting an articulation of the place of humanity in the midst of creation that avoids the pitfalls of both Dominion and Deep Ecology. In place of the absolute difference between humans and Nature that the Dominion thesis proposes, placing humanity in the midst of creation recommends speaking of humans as distinct from the rest of the created order. Similarly, in place of the submission of Deep Ecology that, considered as a species, humans are the same as the nonhuman world, at least in terms of value, locating humanity in the midst of creation understands humanity to be related to the rest of the created order. One way of articulating this distinction and relation might be to speak in terms of responsibility and respect.

Turning first of all to the relational language, it becomes clear that Christianity, along with Judaism and Islam, can offer a reason as to why humans should treat the rest of the created order with respect. It is not because it is of equal value, but neither is it simply on the grounds of enlightened self-interest. Faith in creation, in fact, places respect for the world that God has made into the context of respect for God. Christians, Jews and Muslims are called to respect the world because it is God's creation. Adopting a dismissive attitude towards it is dismissing what is gifted by God – and not solely to humanity, it must be stressed. The attitude being advocated here is not anthropocentric, but is centred on God, the giver of all good gifts.

The distinction of creation, and the autonomy that can articulate it, can serve as the starting point for an understanding of the particular role that humanity has to play in the midst of creation. In a sense, this has already been touched on in the notion of respect, but the idea of responsibility carries with it a task that is specifically human, in two ways: firstly, it is not a task that is incumbent on any other earthly creature, but is specific to human beings – that of caring for the earth.[31] Secondly, as Schillebeeckx puts it: 'On the basis of a proper belief in creation we cannot foist off onto God what is our task in the world'. If, or perhaps, given the current state of affairs, when men and women neglect their responsibilities, bringing the ecosystem close to the point of disastrous collapse, they cannot expect God to solve all their problems for them.[32]

Taken together, these complementary values of respect and responsibility can help craft a contribution to current environmental debates that is both relevant to their legitimate concerns and faithful to the traditions of Christianity (and, with some adaptation, those of Judaism and Islam, too). They may even constitute a hermeneutic of a humanism that is, at one and the same time, conscious of the nobility of the human calling and humble in the sight of God. Such a humanism would be able to 'reconcile man's sense of God with his awareness of himself' in the non-contrastive ways suggested by this paper.[33] In the final section, three suggestions will be made as to ways in which a humble humanism of this sort might play a specific and valuable role in the wider debates.

What difference could faith in creation make?

Given the autonomy of humanity, an autonomy that God respects, it is up to human beings to decide about the kind of humanity for which they will strive, whether their actions will be dehumanizing or humanizing ones. Humble humanism is a humanism that is open to all genuinely human possibilities and it can therefore be defined as 'human experience orientated on full human life',[34] or 'the humanization of the world and of man'.[35] It is not naïvely optimistic, but recognises that men and women do, in fact, act both in humanizing and dehumanizing ways.[36] In proposing this critically optimistic approach, Schillebeeckx does not, by any means, adopt an unbridled confidence in technology, consumerism and economics,[37] which may well be said to be one way of responding to the ecological crisis, perhaps found most readily in the attitude of certain governments to the issues. He also distinguishes his critical optimism from other optimistic views, such as Marxism, which see change as inevitable.[38] The foundation for his 'optimistic faith in creation'[39] is, ultimately, his belief

in God as 'Pure Positivity'[40] the God whose absolute presence forms the basis of the Christian's hope for a better future.

God, who creates the world to grow and to flourish[41] 'creates human beings as the principle of their own human lives, so that human action has to develop and effectuate the world and its future in human solidarity, within contingent situations and given boundaries, and therefore with respect for both inanimate and animate nature'.[42]There is a link, here, between living in solidarity with other human beings and living sustainably, both of which are attitudes that God calls men and women to adopt, in order to make a better future for the world.[43]

It is perhaps clear already, but is worth stressing, that this task, this call, is not merely a secular one, but is a religious task, a call from God. The first thing that follows from this refusal to separate the secular and the religious, to see them rather as distinct and related, is to admit that Christianity has fallen well short of this call in the past, to admit that there is more than a grain of truth in the criticisms of White and the Deep Ecologists. This is because 'a religion which really has the effect of dehumanizing people – in whatever way – is either a false religion or a religion which understands itself wrongly'.[44] In the face of the criticism that Christianity is a false religion, the humble humanism being advocated here avers that what has happened is that Christianity has understood itself wrongly, in the way that legitimate autonomy has become not only Dominion, but domination and oppression, losing, in the process, both the respect and the responsibility that humanity is intended to have with respect to the rest of the created order.

Secondly, humble humanism must strive to rearticulate what it means to be genuinely human, so that the good of humanity is not defined in opposition to the good of the earth. In doing so, it is crucially important to recognise that men and women 'will become truly human in creative activity with the earth. Here they come into their own. [...] Being creatures among other non-human creatures and being human beings must go hand in hand'.[45] In the face of all the exploitation that goes on around the globe, both of human beings and of the environment more generally, 'the believer's concern for God's honour is also a struggle for more justice in the world, a commitment to a new earth and an environment in which human beings can live fuller lives'.[46]

Finally, this possibility of living fuller lives applies to human beings in a distinctive manner. One of the ways in which human beings can truly become what they are is to become like God.[47] It is important to note that this need not result in the Dominion thesis, which is based on a desire to be like God absolutely, to escape from finitude into a 'life above our creaturely status'.[48] This desire is what lies at the root of 'the so-called primal human sin'.[49] Aquinas, instead, picks up on themes of participation in God and deification that have a long history in Christian thinking.[50] A. Williams, in a 'simple and brilliant reading' of Aquinas, according to Fergus Kerr,[51] presents the whole of the *Summa Theologiæ* as 'shaped by Thomas's relentless portrayal of God as the God who is insistent on union with humanity'[52] in a way that 'clearly amounts to the traditional patristic doctrine of deification'.[53] Human beings are called to respect the legitimate autonomy of other creatures, not to use them simply to further humanity's own ends. At the same time, they are called to be present to the rest of the created order in a way that desires and fosters fullness of life for it, accepting their unique responsibility as the face of God in the world.[54] In all humility, men and women are called to realize their humanity, to work for a better future for the whole of creation – 'the healing, making whole, wholeness, of the whole person, the individual and society, in a natural world which is not abused'.[55]

The sense in which this realization takes place is twofold, as suggested by the word itself. The term 'realize' can be used in two distinct and related senses: when applied to humble humanism, it implies both making true and full humanity a reality in the world and, at the same time, coming to a deeper knowledge of what it is that true and full humanity consists in. This double-edged task reveals the difference that belief in creation could make to the current debates about ecology and the environment. It shows that creation-faith can help to articulate the practical task that faces men and women as they respond to the current situation of environmental crisis. It shows that creation-faith has much to offer to current debates about theology and how to do it, by suggesting that theology is best done in a mutually

critical correlation of theory and practice.[56] It also shows the contribution that can be made on the basis of creation-faith to current debates on the role of religion in secular societies. In sum, it could be said that faith in creation could make all the difference to the participation of Christians, Jews and Muslims in the current debates about the world and its future.

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[1] White, L. 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis', in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, (Second Edition), ed. Gottlieb, R.S. (New York and London, Routledge, 2003), pp. 192–201.
[2] White, p. 197.
[3] White, p. 201.
[4] Naess, A. 'The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary', in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, ed. by Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue (Berkeley, CA, North Atlantic Books, 1995), pp. 3–10 (p. 3).
[5] Naess, A. and Sessions, G. 'Deep Ecology Platform', from the website of The Foundation for Deep Ecology, www.deepecology.org/platform.htm [accessed 26 January 2008]
[6] Naess, p. 3.
[7] Naess and Sessions, Principle 1.
[8] Naess and Sessions, Principle 2.
[9] Naess and Sessions, Principle 3.
[10] See, for example, Turner, D. 'Tradition and Faith', *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 6 (2004), 21–36 (p. 27).
[11] In cosmology, Stephen Hawking says that if spacetime has a boundary or edge, there could be a place for a Creator, but if not, there is nothing left for a Creator to do. See Hawking, S. *A Brief History of Time*, 2nd edn., (London, Bantam Press, 1998) pp. 160–161. The Intelligent Design theorist Michael Behe also defines his notion of irreducible complexity in biology in terms of the conditions of its origin. See Behe, M. *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution.* (New York, The Free Press, 1996) p. 39.
[12] See, for example, Smulders, P. 'Creation' in *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Rahner, K. (London, Burns & Oates, 1975) pp. 313–328 (p. 317); Ward, K. *Religion and Creation* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996) pp. 289–291. Thomas Aquinas is perhaps the best known historical figure in Christianity to hold this view, see *Aquinas on Creation: Writings on the 'Sentences' of Peter Lombard 2.1.1.*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Baldner, S.E. and Carroll, W.E. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1997), p. 20; Davies, B. *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 36. This primacy is also found in Judaism, in the thought of Moses Maimonides, a thinker on whom Aquinas leans heavily. See Burrell, D.B. *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), pp. 7, 25; Baldner and Carroll, pp. 20, 42–43. It is found in Islam, too, which could well be said to be the source for this insight – though, of course, each of the three traditions expresses it in its own distinctive manner. See Burrell, *Freedom and Creation*, pp. 12–24; Burrell, D.B. 'Creation or Emanation: Two Paradigms of Reason', in *God and Creation: an Ecumenical Symposium*, ed. by Burrell, D.B. and McGinn, B. (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), pp. 27–37 [pp. 29–30]). This link can thus be said to bind the three faith traditions together historically as well as conceptually.
[13] Aquinas articulates this point by denying that God is 'really related' to creatures, whilst affirming that creatures are 'really related' to God. In other words, being created is essential to every creature – if the creature were not created, it would not exist. However, being Creator is not essential to God – God would still exist even if God were not Creator, otherwise God would be dependent on the world in order to be God. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ* I 13.7.4. See Burrell, D.B. *Aquinas: God and Action* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 85–86.
[14] Schillebeeckx, E. *Interim Report on the Books Jesus and Christ*, trans. by Bowden, J. (London, SCM Press, 1980), p. 114; Schillebeeckx, E. *God Among Us: The Gospel Proclaimed*, trans. by Bowden, J. (London, SCM Press, 1983), p. 93.
[15] Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, p. 114; *God Among Us*, p. 93.
[16] Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, pp. 121–122; cf. *God Among Us*, p. 101.
[17] For a comparison of the three traditions in this regard, see Burrell, *Freedom and Creation*, pp. 64–65.
[18] This pattern of language is one that is used a great deal by Schillebeeckx, especially in the accounts he offers of creation-faith in *Interim Report*, pp. 112–124 and *God Among Us*, pp. 91–102.
[19] To put this another way, creatures cannot create – this is something that only God can do. See, for example, Tanner, K.E. *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1988), pp. 91–93 and 99.
[20] Baldner and Carroll, p. 48.
[21] Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, p. 114–115; *God Among Us*, p. 93.
[22] See Burrell, *Freedom and Creation*, pp. 75–76; David Burrell, *Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2004), pp. vii and 144.

[23] Tanner, *God and Creation*, p. 143.
[24] Tanner, *God and Creation*, p. 169.
[25] Burrell, *Faith and Freedom*, p. 141.
[26] Tanner, K. Jesus, *Humanity and the Trinity: a Brief Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 2001), p. 3.
[27] See Mackenzie, C. and Stoljar, N. 'Introduction: Autonomy Refigured', in *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, ed. Mackenzie, C. and Stoljar, N. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 3–31 (p. 4). They, in turn, credit the first use of the term to Jennifer Nedelsky (pp. 26–27, n. 1).
[28] Schillebeeckx, E. 'Dialogue with God and Christian Secularity', in *God and Man (Theological Soundings II)*, trans. by Fitzgerald, E. and Tomlinson, P. (London, Sheed and Ward, 1969), pp. 210–233 (p. 215).
[29] For the term 'non-contrastive', see Tanner, *God and Creation*, p. 45. For the correlation of 'the distinction' and 'the relation', see Burrell, *Faith and Freedom*, pp. viii, 87–88 and 89; cf. Schillebeeckx's definition of creation, which has a similar structure, in *God Among Us*, p. 104 and *Interim Report*, p. 126.
[30] Tanner, *God and Creation*, p. 169.
[31] Cf. Genesis 2:15. Also see Helen Freeman's analysis of Genesis 1:28 from a Jewish perspective in this publication, p.43.
[32] Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, p. 118; cf. *God Among Us*, p. 96.
[33] Schillebeeckx, E. 'Humble Humanism', in *World and Church (Theological Soundings 3)*, trans. by Smith, N.D. (London, Sheed and Ward, 1971), pp. 19–31 (p. 23).
[34] Borgman, E. Edward Schillebeeckx*: A Theologian in his History. Volume I: A Catholic Theology of Culture* (1914–1965) trans. by Bowden, J. (London, Continuum, 2003), p. 88.
[35] Schillebeeckx, 'Dialogue with God and Christian Secularity', p. 225.
[36] In Schillebeeckx's work on creation, this is expressed in the interplay of critical negativity and critical positivity. See, for example, the way in which he speaks about 'the critical force of creation faith, which at the same time therefore represents salvation for man and the world and a judgment upon them.' Schillebeeckx, *God Among Us*, p. 94; cf. *Interim Report*, p. 115.
[37] See Schillebeeckx, E. *Church: The Human Story of God*, trans. by Bowden, B. (London, SCM Press; New York, Crossroad, 1990), pp. 239–240; also see Schillebeeckx, E. 'You Cannot Arbitrarily make Something of the Gospel!', trans. by Smith, D. *Concilium*, 170 (1983), 15–19 (p. 16).
[38] See Schillebeeckx, *God Among Us*, pp. 97–98.
[39] Schillebeeckx, 'God in Dry Dock', in *World and Church*, pp. 3–17 (p. 8).
[40] Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, p. 120*; God Among Us*, p. 99.
[41] See Genesis 1:22 and 28, as well as the frequently repeated affirmation of the goodness of God's creation in Genesis 1.
[42] Schillebeeckx, *Church*, pp. 230–231.
[43] Cf. the key message of Live Simply, a Christian project and network of organizations, which states that 'God calls us to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with people who are poor.' ('Our key message', ww.livesimply.org.uk [accessed 31 May 2008].)
[44] Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, p. 105.
[45] Schillebeeckx, *Church*, p. 237.
[46] Schillebeeckx, *God Among Us*, p. 100.
[47] Indeed, for at least Christians and Jews, humans are created in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1: 26–27).
[48] Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, p. 121; *God Among Us*, p. 99.
[49] Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, p. 112; *God Among Us*, p. 92.
[50] This theme is one that is particularly important in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, but may well not be entirely absent from Western patristic and medieval theologies. See Meconi, D.V. *Union with God: Living the Christ Life* (London, Catholic Truth Society, 2006). In his frequent use of Irenaeus of Lyons, Schillebeeckx seems to be drawing on these related notions of deification and participation in God in order to express the intended ultimate fullfilment of his humble humanism. See, for example, his comments on the realization of the humanum and the metahumanum in Schillebeeckx, *Church*, p. 97. For the link between creation and deification in Irenaeus, see Canlis, J. 'Being Made Human: The Significance of Creation for Irenaeus' Doctrine of Participation', Scottish Journal of *Theology*, 58 (2005), 434–454.
[51] Kerr, F. *Theology After Wittgenstein* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1986), p.160
[52] Kerr, p. 157.
[53] Kerr, p. 149.
[54] This is one possible way to translate the second half of the famous maxim of Irenaeus, '*Gloria Dei, vivens homo: vita autem hominis, visio Dei.*' (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, 20, § 7). Admittedly, it is not the way it is usually translated (cf. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1, p. 490, col. 1.), but translating *visio* as 'face' rather than 'sight' has the advantage of maintaining the complex reading that Irenaeus develops in Chapter 20 as a whole.
[55] Schillebeeckx, *God Among Us*, p. 100.
[56] For Schillebeeckx, theory and practice are mutually co-constitutive in theology. As he expresses it himself, 'religion is not an interpretation of the world which remains alien to practice, any more than it is a practice without any reference to a particular interpretation of man and the world.' Schillebeeckx, E. *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World*, trans. by Bowden, J. (London, SCM Press, 1980), p. 774.