

Facing Ruptures and Entanglements of a Global World: A Contextual Theological View from Germany

Michael Schüßler and Eva Maria Daganato

Abstract: The article reflects on the transformation of German Theology facing ruptures and entanglements of a global world. The first part deals with personal experiences in Manila and the global entanglement of human rights movements with European engagement and theology. This leads to a decolonial “provincialization” of German Theology. This change in the direction of doing theology and in ethical thinking is made clear by the example of the Tübingens Alfons-Auer-Ethic-Award given to the postcolonial scholar Leela Ghandi. Turning to the global Catholic Church, the last part discovers common concerns across the seemingly abyssal line between the North and the South. The theologically relevant lines of conflict apparently run across continents and geographic boundaries. To call the commitment to gender justice, diversity, and synodal power control in the church a Eurocentric luxury issue is thus proving obviously wrong.

Keywords: Decolonial Theology • Postcolonial Ethics • Tübingen • Human Rights Movements • Synodality

Introduction

Writing in Tübingen/Germany for a Journal hosted in Manila is a very honorable but special situation. It has hazards and chances as well. For the last two centuries, modern German-language Theology was famous as one of the most sophisticated and elaborate reflection about Christian tradition. Many scholars wanted or indeed did learn German to read Hegel or Heidegger, Rahner or Küng in their proper language. These times are definitely gone. We suggest, one can read this change with a catholic figure as a “sign of the times”. It is part of what Dipesh Chakrabarty famously called the process of

“Provincializing Europe”.¹ Europe no longer being the “pharmacy of the world”,² means to develop a more realistic view on the role of German Theology in the ruptures and entanglements of a globalized World.³ Graham Ward puts it well: “after two centuries, Germany is no longer the intellectual powerhouse for theological and philosophical thinking; nor is France the powerhouse for post Second World War radical thinking and critical theory. They cannot speak universally. In fact, the attempt to speak universally leads to fracture and further fracture until we are back with the local and the embodiment of the particular. We are back with why place matters (land, histories, languages) – in every sense of the word ‘matters’”.⁴ This is why it matters, to what kind of questions we theologically turn in our local context. If the local matters for Theology, then the crucial question is: What are the “loci theologici”, the places and sources of Theology, where the Gospel is at risk and obtains relevance at the same time?⁵

It is our concern in this paper to show, that in our local context, we cannot help but encounter global entanglement on a daily basis. One cannot watch Qatars Football World Cup 2022 in a German living room without thinking about the workers from the Philippines,

¹ Cf., Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

² Cf., Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 188.

³ Cf., Martin Holbraad, Bruce Kapferer, and Julia F. Sauma, eds., *Ruptures: Anthropologies of Discontinuity in Times of Turmoil* (London: UCL Press 2019).

⁴ Graham Ward, “Decolonizing Theology,” *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 3, no. 2 (2017): 561-584, 569.

⁵ See for our discipline, from a (not only) protestant perspective: Birgit Weyel, Wilhelm Gräb, Emmanuel Lartey, and Cas Wepener, (eds.), *International Handbook of Practical Theology* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2022).

among others, trying to earn money under hard conditions for the family back home or die trying to. And one cannot believe in the biblical God without getting worried, what God's love to every living being and the narrative of his:her greater justice has to do with it in a globalized and planetary world of Anthropocene.⁶

Personal Experiences in Manila

Where is the voice of the poor in our discourse of God? In my experience, they are the most articulate in terms of their experience. When they are asked to share about their lives, they readily speak of their God experience. If theology is not found there, where is it found?⁷

Daniel Franklin Pilario⁸ sees his life's work in inserting the voice of the poor into theological discourse. Therefore he "was looking for a theological method that gives a voice to the poor and their experience in the context of high academic discourse. It should not be abstract. It should listen to their voice."⁹

Pilario positions himself on the margins and tries to do theology out of this context. This core belief was also reflected in his role as Dean of St. Vincent School of

⁶ Cf., Jan Niklas Collet, Judith Gruber, Wietske De Jong-Kumru, Christian Kern, Sebastian Pittl, Stefan Silber, Christian Tauchner, (Eds.), *Doing Climate Justice: Theological Explorations* (Paderborn, Germany: Brill Schöningh, 2023).

⁷ "Vincentian Chair Holder is a Voice for Justice," <https://www.stjohns.edu/news-media/news/2021-10-05/vincentian-chair-holder-voice-justice>, (Oct 5, 2021) [accessed 31 May 2023].

⁸ Daniel Franklin Pilario is a member of the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) in the Philippines, a professor and former dean of St. Vincent School of Theology at Adamson University in the Philippines. In 2021 he held the Vincentian Chair of Social Justice at St. John's University in New York. He is the current President of Adamson University.

⁹ "Vincentian Chair Holder is a Voice for Justice."

Theology as he structured the curriculum. During his weekend ministry at Payatas dumpsite, he is accompanied by his students. In retrospect, the collected experiences are theologically processed and reflected.

*“Back to the rough grounds.”*¹⁰ – Pilario’s motto, which he borrowed from Ludwig Wittgenstein, can be helpful for theology: “The rough grounds – its language, its needs and concerns, its method – are the locus from which all theology should start. It is also the place where all theology ends. For God chose to locate Him/Herself on the rough grounds, among the margins of society! Needless to say, all theologians should have been there and continue to be there before they even say a word.”¹¹

Eva Maria Daganato¹² searched those rough grounds and found them (of course) outside of the University building. During her visits to the Philippines, she had the chance to get to know different organisations, which are working and fighting for children-, woman- and human rights.

In one of the poorest communities in Manila I [Daganato] joined activities for street kids. Once I observed a young girl. She got food in a take-away box. She opened it, started to smile, sat on the street and started to eat. But she only took a few bites, then she closed the box and ran away. At first, I was confused about this, because she seemed to enjoy the food, until I

¹⁰ Cf., Daniel Franklin Pilario, *Back to the Rough Grounds of Praxis: Exploring Theological Method with Pierre Bourdieu* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002).

¹¹ Kristien Justaert, “Interview with Daniel Franklin Pilario,” *Newsletter CLT* 3 (Nov. 2012): 1-4, https://theo.kuleuven.be/en/research/centres/centr_lib/pilario-interview.pdf.

¹² Eva Maria Daganato works as research assistant at the Department for Practical Theology, Catholic Theology Faculty, University of Tübingen. As part of her doctoral thesis she is researching ways to deal with Contemporary Slavery.

realized that she would also share the food with her family at home.

Hapag ng Pag-Asa – Table of Hope

This reminds me of the “Hapag ng Pag-Asa” (Table of Hope), the “Last Supper” by Joey A. Velasco. The painting shows poor children from Metro Manila, all between the ages of 4 and 14. The center of the painting is Jesus who is breaking bread.

The work rays out a field of energy; it exudes light, suggests transcendence. It was amazing how the audience took it and how it ignites a storm of emotions in people whose life was touched by it. Actually, the picture is pushing the people to act. Whenever someone looks at the faces of the painted, the often-repeated question is: ‘How can I help and take part?’¹³

This is, of course, an important and big question – *How can I help and take part?* – which I keep in mind. But looking at the *Table of Hope* it’s kind of superficial. The mission Velasco is giving us through his painting is to find our own place at the *Table of Hope*. And the artist also started his way of searching: “I realized, that it was me, who felt a certain feeling of hunger, and that I was eager to take my place at the *Table of Hope*.”¹⁴ Velasco found his place in spending time with the kids, he painted: “As I went from being an observer to a real friend, I slowly began to understand who the *Hapag*-kids were.”¹⁵

¹³ Joey A. Velasco, *Das Abendmahl der Straßenkinder: Bilder, Begegnungen, Botschaften*, Forum Religionspädagogik interkulturell, Band 23, (Münster, Lit Verlag 2013), 9.

¹⁴ Ibid., 10.

¹⁵ Ibid., 11.

After I spent some time with the street kids, played with them, visited their families and listened to their stories I understood that I could learn a lot from them and from other people in the Philippines.

The reality of the streets in Manila hit me. When the children played with me, they could forget the toughness of everyday life. But playtime for them was time denied for work since they also had to contribute something for their families. Moreover, they needed time for their school work. With my friends in Manila, we tried to handle this ambivalence by providing solar lights, so the children could still do something for school in the evening.

The street kids are victims of perennial poverty, of the struggle in the streets and they are deemed “losers” in the globalization narrative. Nevertheless, I encountered survivors among them and they do not accept this loser-label. There may be circumstances that they cannot change, but I always felt the spirit of Filipino resilience among them.

Shadows of Globalization

Travelling around the Philippines was an experience not only of Filipino hospitality but also of its abuse by some foreigners. Taking advantage of their critical situation and poverty, sex-tourists would victimize women and children. This negative connection between Germany and the Philippines is obvious when it comes to sex-tourism, but the global intertwining is broader, deeper, and more insidious than the observable.

One example is the Football World Cup 2022 in Qatar, where thousands of migrant workers died due to the inhuman working conditions at stadium

constructions.¹⁶ Men (mostly from Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Philippines) left their homes and families to earn money, believing that they could support their families best when they go to work in Qatar. Poverty and lack of opportunities at home pushed them to take this option. The reality in construction sites in Qatar were different from what they had imagined. They were forced to work under great heat without adequate protection. They stayed in unhygienic quarters and their salaries were either delayed or denied (in cases of forced labor). Due to the retention of their passports by their employers, they had no chance to leave their worksites. Ironically, the results of collective labor were golden stadiums and luxurious hotels. The argument that the luxury of the western world countries is built up on the exploitation of millions may be validated here.

Migrants' Rights are Human Rights

According to the Philippine Statistic Authority “the number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) or Filipino workers who worked abroad during the period of April to September 2021 was estimated at 1.83 million.”¹⁷ One of the NGOs that deal with migration issues is the Mindanao Migrants Center for Empowering Actions, Inc. (MMCEA). MMCEA is a rights-based, gender-responsive and culture-sensitive non-government service organization for migrant workers—for both active and

¹⁶ Armani Syed, “Why We May Never Know How Many Migrants Died Erecting the Qatar World Cup,” *Time Magazine* (02 Dec 2022), <https://time.com/6237677/qatar-migrant-deaths-world-cup/>

¹⁷ Philippine Statistic Authority, “2021 Overseas Filipino Workers (Final Results).” Release Date: December 2, 2022, <https://psa.gov.ph/content/2021-overseas-filipino-workers-final-results>.

returned Overseas Filipino Worker (OFWs) and their immediate families and communities. It is based in Davao City, working in 8 *barangays* and connected with a region-wide network of organizations dealing with OFWs. In 2021 it registered 4000 migrant workers in the 8 partner-*barangays*, mostly women, working as domestic workers in middle east. In the same year, it reported 105 cases of rights violations and socioeconomic issues faced by migrant workers and their left-behind families. In 2022, they had assisted a total of 146 cases.

The social workers of MMCEA also make community-visits where they meet the left-behind families of OFWs or returned migrant workers. Violation against OFWs and abuses are either reported directly to the NGO or to the migration desk at the Barangay Hall. A powerful instrument is social media, especially *Facebook* where OFWs can contact the NGO. When they post pictures and share their abuse-stories, the NGO can be aware of it and help the women to fly back home.

The OFW-domestic workers are not getting much help from their agencies when they experience abuses. Oftentimes, the women have the feeling of being sold out. Particularly at risk are “runaway workers”—women escaping from (sexual) abuse and violation. Since the employers keep their passports and personal documents, they face the risks of becoming illegal aliens. In 2014, the MMCEAI staff heard about “sex for flights” for the first time: runaway domestic workers are forced to have sex with employees in charge of repatriation to get a flight back home.

The directors of the NGO are not disregarding the mental health of their staff. The staff is being confronted with cruel stories daily. One of the social workers shared some of her experiences and strategies on how she is handling the mental load: “When you go back to why, then the how will follow.” Thinking about the people

whom she is working with and working for, is giving her strength and energy. When she sees the left-behind children of OFWs, it motivates her to do her best to help. Surely, she is also getting angry with the abusers and is at a loss for answers as to why abuses are committed.

The activism and the strength that emanates from the MMCEAI-staff are admirable. Teachers, social workers, and human right activists put the needs of the marginalized at the center of their work or even at the center of their lives. They take the message of Jesus as their mission—they work and fight for a life to be lived to the full, especially for the marginalized and oppressed. (John 10:10)

Experiences at the “roots” should influence theological theory building. It is important that we remind ourselves, how the reality of suffering worldwide looks like. Leaving the University building to meet people and face different realities can shine back to the University Studies. Reflection on history, especially the history of colonization, helps us to find a self-critical perspective and a greater impetus to commit ourselves to social amelioration.

Decolonizing Theology—Provincializing Tübingen?

This leads us to the hazards of global and intercultural theologies. The knowledge about a liberational approach to global justice and the entanglement of violence, racism, and discrimination cannot lead to only help and to show solidarity with the Global South as “the Other”. Avoiding a neocolonizing gesture cannot be accomplished by turning to cure the wounded world with a “White Savior Engagement”. This is a lesson we both learned, reflecting experiences in the Philippines (Eva Maria Daganato) and in Brazil (Michael Schüßler) with the turn from traditional Liberation

Theologies to postcolonial and decolonial thinking in Theology.

As Judith Gruber, coordinator of the “Centre for Liberation Theologies” in Leuven, Belgium, said: “The debate about decolonization in Europe [...] is often framed by soteriological imaginations. There is the temptation to couch these into regimes of cure, which however, perpetuates colonial arrangements of visibility and participation.”¹⁸ But refusing a heroic superior position even in “saving the poor” and facing the wounds of ongoing economic, social, and epistemological violence seems to be the beginning of our decolonization “at home”. “When / if Paradise Europe begins to lose the appearance of its innocence, the colonial legacies become an intimate part of its self-understanding. [...] Rupturing how Europe sees itself challenges us to reconsider the politics of participating through which we distribute access to representation and resources in racialized ways.”¹⁹

This means to change the direction of learning in theology, in ethical thinking and in imagining the Roman (!) catholic global church. In this process we are at the beginning of a beginning, like Karl Rahner said about Vatican II. This seems to be the case even with Pope Francis a bishop from “the end of the world” leading the church. And it is the case for the former influential theology in Germany. We will deepen this field in two directions. First by showing what Western Theology is about to learn from the (postcolonial) South and second by exploring joint common concerns with Women’s / Human Rights in Catholic Church and society.

¹⁸ Judith Gruber, “Doing Theology with Cultural Studies: Rewriting History - Reimagining Salvation - Decolonizing Theology,” *Louvain Studies* 42, no. 2 (2019): 103-123, 118.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 119.

Learning from Leela Gandhi, Receiving the Ethic-Award in Tübingen

Since 2015 the Catholic Theological Faculty in Tübingen has been giving the Alfons Auer Ethics Award. In 2022 the award went to the postcolonial scholar Leela Gandhi. Gandhi is related to Mahatma Gandhi and wrote a critical introduction in *Postcolonial Theory*²⁰ with a sensibility for the religious dimension of life, with a focus on ethics.

Gandhi made very clear, that postcoloniality refers not so much to the disappearance but to the continuing (after)effect of imperial structures of power and domination in the present: “postcolonial non-injuriousness responds to and calls out the constitutive injuriousness of modern imperialisms, in all their myriad formations: e.g., the industrial imperialisms of the nineteenth-century; the new imperialisms of the twentieth-century [...]. [...] No less, many postcolonial regimes stand charged with modes of internal colonialism against vulnerable domestic populations (gender, sexual, ethnic and religious minorities included).”²¹ The ambivalent injuriousness of late modernity and global capitalism is an inescapable reality. With Achille Mbembe she said pointedly, that the countries of the South are kept alive with people and landscapes until today to the extent that land and people can continue to be put into service for a Western imperial way of life and a global elite.

But one could say: Western ethics, after all, have reacted to this global injustice and formulated theories of modernity critique, development cooperation, and global

²⁰ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

²¹ Leela Gandhi, “Problems and Perspectives in Postcolonial Ethics,” *ThQ* 203, no. 2 (2023): 4-5 (forthcoming).

justice that oppose various forms of violence. Gandhi describes this as a modern-ascetical “ethic of renunciation”, as a “refusal to partake in any benefit that obtains from the colonial-injurious system.”²² The self-critical intention of great European thinkers from Weber and Jaspers to Benjamin and Arendt shows a right direction and can be helpful, according to Gandhi. But her critical-deconstructive interest is directed at how this well-intentioned ethics “works” discursively and epistemically in its practices. And there she expresses the suspicion that the modern ethics of renunciation, critical of colonialism, continues to reproduce destructive patterns of thought. “An ethics of renunciation, I’m suggesting, may well refuse to partake in colonial-injuriousness. Yet, precisely by so doing, by separating itself radically from the perceived contagion of colonialism, by seeking a much too pure and purified form of anticolonialism, it incorporates a constitutive violence within the nonviolence to which it is ultimately committed.”²³ It is an epistemic violence of categorical separations: Those who strive for ethical purity devalue life itself.

From this essential insight, Gandhi proposes to place a unifying ethics of surplus alongside the violence-inhibiting ethics of renunciation. This is not so much about the purity of separations, but about the surpluses of multiple affiliations or interconnections in complex structures of oppression. This includes the surplus of often being able to give more than one had thought. It includes the surplus that occurs in the in-between, which Gandhi illustrates in the “ambivalence of double consciousness” by W.E.B du Bois as a U.S. American and as a member of the Black community. “An ethics of surplus, simply put, does not seek to surpass the

²² Gandhi, “Problems and Perspectives in Postcolonial Ethics,” 7.

²³ Ibid., 8.

contradictions of uneven historical life—indeed, of uneven life as such. So doing, it rejects any final perfective settlement of values and scores.”²⁴ In the double negative, this is a beautiful formulation. For it shows that openness to the uncertain and undetermined does not communicate arbitrariness on a meta-level, but rather a thoroughly normative orientation toward the vulnerable dynamics of the living.

Now here is the point: Those who are influenced by the strictness of Kantian thinking or Analytical Philosophy (large parts of Western Theology) will probably find it difficult to discover anything positive in this proposal. If I perceive it correctly, Gandhi's lecture can be read as a postcolonial critique of the global (ethical) thinking in order of western provenance. That was always the attempt to transform a chaotic world of ruptures into an ordered and civilized world of reasons. Leela Gandhi's postcolonial ethics points out that the line between violence and non-violence does not run along the distinction between disorder and order. For it is always a question of who can establish and enforce which kind of order at what cost and with what kind of exclusions. To divide the world into strict and often binary distinctions of race, gender, and (world) religions and thus to open or close chances to live, belongs in any case to the heritage of European thinking. And probably even if this refers to the best traditions of individual human dignity and human rights due to all persons. Leela Gandhi thus enables a kind of enlightenment from the Global South. Nikita Dhawan, postcolonial scholar from India in Germany, once called this “Rescuing the Enlightenment from the Europeans”.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid., 11.

²⁵ Cf., Nikita Dhawan, “Rescuing the Enlightenment from the Europeans,” April 2015, <https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/rescuing-the-enlightenment-from-the-europeans/> [accessed 31 May 2023].

The Global South will never go along with that?

Another kind of postcolonial entanglement is visible in recent discussions and discourses inside the Global Catholic Church. In the western parts there is a quite familiar “argument of the global Church”, that sounds as follows: Demands for gender justice and normalization of sexual diversity, for genuine participation and synodal control of power in the church, are luxury problems of the secular Western North. The church, however, is growing primarily in the Global South, which is “traditionally deeply religious and conservative”: *The Global South will never go along with that!*

But what kind of “Global South” would that be? From a postcolonial point of view would be called the Othering of an imagined reality in the South, in order to refuse necessary developments in catholic order and doctrine (“aggiornamento”).

Birgit Meyer, scholar in African Religious Studies, analyzes how processes of Othering use an essentialized North/South dichotomy to stabilize one’s own identity – which is still eurocentric, clerical and discriminating parts of catholic doctrine hosted in the Vatican. “Such a stance continues to produce Africa as Europe’s eternal Other, with the religious-secular-binary serving as the ground for their separation. An idea of Africa as deeply religious [...] or as never secular is wrong not only because it lacks of empirical evidence, but also because it denies Africa coevalness with secular Europe, thereby affirming longstanding exoticizing stereotypes [...]”²⁶

²⁶ Birgit Meyer, “What is Religion in Africa? Relational Dynamics in an Entangled World,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 50, no. 1-2 (2020): 156-181, 165.

Nontando Hadebe clarifies,²⁷ “African theologies emerged from the resistance to the identity crises of being both African and Christian.”²⁸ This is what Leela Gandhi called the In-Between as “ambivalence of double consciousness”. Western missional heritage and current catholic doctrine both seem to reinforce a logic of distinct identities, which leads to violence and discrimination. “The genocide in Rwanda is a tragic example of the destructive power of fixed identities. [...] Hence, the call of queer theory for fluid, non-binary and diverse identities has the potential to break down the walls that divide groups and confine individuals to a particular collective identity. [...] Similarly, the disruption of rigid binary identity categories in the Catholic Church could lead to an inclusive community form which nobody is excluded on basic of their identity.”²⁹

“The disruption of rigid binary identity categories in the Catholic Church” seems to be a common goal across the discursive West/Rest and North/South-Borders. But who speaks as the universal Catholic Church? Who has which power of definition? What is said but not heard? What can be said, what cannot be said?

One example: Eva Wimmer, a young catholic woman from Austria, was participant in the Vatican Youth Synodal Process 2017-2019. She gave a courageous little

²⁷ Just to mention an interesting and somehow meaningful occasion: In 2024 the German-speaking “Association of Pastoral Theology” is celebrating the 250 years anniversary of our academic discipline. We are more than pleased that Nontando Hadebe, who is part of the international advisory board of MST Review journal, agreed to give the keynote lecture for this anniversary: about learning and sharing Practical Theology in global and planetary ruptures together.

²⁸ Nontando Hadebe, “Can Anything Good Come from Nazareth? Come and see!': An Invitation to Dialogue Between Queer Theories and African Theologies,” *Concilium* issue 5 (2019): 81-90, 87.

²⁹ Ibid., 88.

speech on the topics of gender justice, women's ordination and sustainability. As she reports on feinschwarz.net, "over 30 women from all over the world came up to me and thanked [...]. Some of these women said that they could not applaud because this could have been seen by the second person of their country of origin, and if this became known at home, it would have far-reaching consequences. [...] The women would be afraid that they themselves would be pressured or abused if they openly brought up something like this. [...] Somewhat pointedly formulated, one could claim that these women not only don't find a place in the church where they can develop and help shape something, but rather that the church structure deprives women of their language."³⁰

In 2021 Ute Leimgruber, a colleague and scholar in Practical Theology, published the book *Catholic Women: People from Around the World for a Just Church*. The texts and testimonies make clear that the "world church argument" "does not hold water when it comes to women and human rights in the Catholic Church."³¹ Nontando Hadebe writes plainly in her article for the volume: "Oppressive theologies are also partly responsible for the high levels of violence against women around the world. The World Health Organization identifies violence against women as a global health crisis affecting approximately one-third of women."³² The theological struggle for equal rights for women, she says, is a matter of life and death: "To reiterate: It's about concrete issues, some of them life-threatening, and it's about sustainable

³⁰ Eva Wimmer, „Im Herzen habe ich gejubelt, in echt konnte ich es leider nicht,“ 10 Dec 2021, <https://www.feinschwarz.net/jugendsynode/>.

³¹ Ute Leimgruber, ed., *Catholic Women: Menschen aus aller Welt für eine gerechtere Kirche* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2021), 11.

³² Nontando Hadebe, "Wie wir uns selbst befreien. The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians und Catholic Women Speak Network," in Leimgruber, ed., *Catholic Women*, 133-148, 135.

development goals that improve people's social, economic and political status; it's about national and continental agendas that include women as equal citizens and holders of all rights, even when religion and culture hinder it.”³³

The theologically relevant lines of conflict apparently run across continents and geographic boundaries. To call the commitment to gender justice, diversity, and synodal power control in the church a Eurocentric luxury issue thus proves not only wrong, but downright cynical. Here, with the Othering of the Global South, not only conservative, but in the effects for affected people worldwide also destructive church policy is made. Theologies should give space to the diversity of life instead of adding a few more bars to the cages of stereotypical behavioural expectations with reference to God.

It would be even more important for the emancipatory forces in the global church to continue to network globally. In our German and European context, we assume that this would really mean to change the direction of learning in Theology, in ethical thinking and in imagining the roman catholic global church.

Conclusion

In this article we describe and reflect, how (Practical) Theology in Germany is about to discover a next step of global awareness, that learns from postcolonial and decolonial theory and theology. This means taking a step back behind the problematic idea of universalizing European patterns of ethic and theology. So even western theology is no longer able (or should be at least unable) to start with a universal truth, be it founded by seemingly

³³ Hadebe, “Wie wir uns selbst befreien,” 146.

objective academic discourses or by seemingly objective revelation. It means to start with contextuality, with global entanglements and with the various and often brutal ruptures of our times. Trying to do (Practical) Theology in that kind of performativity, the first part reported about the intercultural experience between Germany and the Philippines and the difficulties between a Christian-based motivation to justice and solidarity and the discovery of one's own entanglement in the "shadows of globalization". It seems to be a somehow hard lesson to learn, that in fact giving and helping the so called (and as poor and needy imagined) Global South continues a neocolonial "white saviorism" in many cases. This means the current challenge needs to reach an epistemological level, and that was the point Leela Gandhi made clear in her Tübinger Auer-Award-Lecture. The western attempt to transform a chaotic world of ruptures into an ordered and civilized world of reasons is part of the problem. But you also have to admit, the idea of Decolonizing Western Theology is (with Karl Rahner's dictum) in a state of a beginning.

The last part turned to the role of the global catholic church in entanglements and ruptures. Even if just Pope Francis calls for global and environmental justice, the internal religious and theological structure of the catholic church counters and contradicts in many ways the engagement for fundamental human rights. Perhaps not every topic of the German synodal path has the same urgency in the different local churches. But like the work of Nontando Hadebe and the "Catholic Woman Speak Network" exemplarily shows, some crucial and theologically relevant lines of conflict really run across continents and geographic boundaries. The deconstruction of oppressive theologies and overcoming the silencing of suppressed voices in church and society because of gender, sexuality, race, class, religion or even

“imperfect” bodies seem not to be universalized but in different and hybrid ways a global concern. Facing ruptures and entanglements in a global world is not only an object of theological or ecclesiastical treatment, it changes the Doing Theology: World church solidarity demands a decolonial political theology of the world church that is sensitive to suffering, gender, and at the same time, critical of religion on various local levels.

About the Authors

Michael Schüßler is Full Professor of Practical Theology at the Catholic-Theological Faculty in Tübingen/Germany. He is interested in the transformation of church and society like cultural liquidation, digitalization, and facing the Anthropocene as well as in theological gender studies and decolonial thinking. From 2018-2020 he was dean of the faculty. Since 2021 he is a member of the advisory board platform “Global Encounters” at the University of Tübingen.

Eva Maria Daganato works as a research assistant at the department of Practical Theology at the Catholic-Theological Faculty in Tübingen/Germany. She paused her Theology Studies for one year to volunteer for different NGOs in the Philippines. Afterwards she finished her studies and wrote her master thesis about a postcolonial perspective of religious education. For her doctoral project she is looking for methods to deal with Modern Slavery.

Bibliography

- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Collet, Jan Niklas, Judith Gruber, Wietske De Jong-Kumru, Christian Kern, Sebastian Pittl, Stefan Silber, Christian Tauchner, eds. *Doing Climate Justice: Theological Explorations*. Paderborn, Germany: Brill Schöningh, 2023.
- Dhawan, Nikita. "Rescuing the Enlightenment from the Europeans," April 2015, <https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/rescuing-the-enlightenment-from-the-europeans/> [accessed 31 May 2023]
- Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd Edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.
- Gandhi, Leela. "Problems and Perspectives in Postcolonial Ethics." *ThQ* 203, no. 2 (2023): 4-5 (forthcoming).
- Gruber, Judith. "Doing Theology with Cultural Studies: Rewriting History - Reimagining Salvation - Decolonizing Theology." *Louvain Studies* 42, no. 2 (2019): 103-123.
- Hadebe, Nontando. "Can Anything Good Come from Nazareth? Come and see!": An Invitation to Dialogue Between Queer Theories and African Theologies." *Concilium* issue 5 (2019): 81-90.
- Holbraad, Martin, Bruce Kapferer, and Julia F. Sauma, eds. *Ruptures: Anthropologies of Discontinuity in Times of Turmoil*. London: UCL Press 2019.
- Justaert, Kristien. "Interview with Daniel Franklin Pilario, Newsletter CLT 3 (Nov 2012): 1-4, https://theo.kuleuven.be/en/research/centres/centr_lib/pilario-interview.pdf
- Leimgruber, Ute, ed., *Catholic Women: Menschen aus aller Welt für eine gerechtere Kirche*. Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2021.
- Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.
- Meyer, Birgit. "What is Religion in Africa? Relational Dynamics in an Entangled World." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 50, no. 1-2 (2020): 156-181.
- Philippine Statistic Authority. "2021 Overseas Filipino Workers," (Final Results). Release Date: December 2. 2022. <https://psa.gov.ph/content/2021-overseas-filipino-workers-final-results>.
- Pilario, Daniel Franklin. *Back to the Rough Grounds of Praxis. Exploring Theological Method with Pierre Bourdieu*. Leuven: Peeters, 2002.

- Velasco, Joey A. *Das Abendmahl der Straßenkinder: Bilder, Begegnungen, Botschaften*, Forum Religionspädagogik interkulturell, Band 23. Münster, Lit Verlag, 2013.
- “Vincentian Chair Holder is a Voice for Justice,” <https://www.stjohns.edu/news-media/news/2021-10-05/vincentian-chair-holder-voice-justice>, Oct 5, 2021.
- Ward, Graham. “Decolonizing Theology.” *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 3, no. 2 (2017): 561-584.
- Weyel, Birgit, Wilhelm Gräb, Emmanuel Lartey, and Cas Wepener, eds. *International Handbook of Practical Theology*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2022.
- Wimmer, Eva. „Im Herzen habe ich gejubelt, in echt konnte ich es leider nicht.“ 10 Dec 2021, <https://www.feinschwarz.net/jugendsynode/>