

Article

Christian Planetary Humanism in the Age of Climate Crisis

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Abstract: This paper attempts to reconstruct the ethics of human response-ability as a theological reflection on the current climate catastrophe, seeing humans as moral actors or a moral actor network. In the meantime, I will argue the relationality and interdependence of matter and discourse, nature and society, and humans and non-humans through crosstalk between ecofeminist theologies and new materialism. In doing so, I reinterpret the human subject as a potential for liberation from modern human exceptionalism, acknowledging the subversive power of the concept of the subject.

Keywords: planetary humanism; climate crisis; deep incarnation; matter and mattering; ethics of responsibility

1. Introduction

Mark Jerome Walters suggested that infectious diseases closely linked to ecological changes should be called an “Ecodemic” (Walters 2003). This pandemic urgently requires traditional Western theology to reconsider not only our understanding of nature but also the ways we have dealt with “matter” and to see our material entanglement. However spiritual humans may be, they cannot live without the material environment. They exist in the entanglement of beings, of which there is no outside, despite the fact that human beings are commonly considered to be discrete and independent. Humans have misused this material entanglement in selfish and anthropocentric ways, and this pandemic comes with the dark clouds of climate change, ecological destruction, and the sixth extinction.

It is widely acknowledged that humans are the main cause of today’s climate catastrophe. Nevertheless, I believe that humans still have the ability to change the course of the lives of all things on this planet toward “sympoiesis” as well as symbiosis (Haraway 2016, p. 58). This seeming contradiction urges human beings to take responsibility as response-ability (ability to respond) to all forms of beings on this planet. Although humanism is at the center of criticism as far as the cause of these crises is concerned, the uniqueness of being human is still required, if there would be any hope left. To be precise, what needs to be criticized are none other than anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism that have made us ignore human entanglement with nonhuman beings. The idea that humans can take responsibility for what they have done for these crises still seems to be modern and theologically very arrogant.

Therefore, the task of theology today is to construct a new humanism beyond anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism. It is to see humanism through the eyes of deep incarnation, which acknowledges the deep interwovenness of humans, nonhumans, and nonliving beings. This requires a theologically critical dialogue with new materialism. In other words, the theological response to the present crises will not be the abolition of humanism, but it will alternatively re-delineate planetary humanism for the sake of “reworlding”. It is to see in humanism “transformative subjects, driven by potential, and subversive face of power” (Braidotti 2022, p. 43). In this context, this paper attempts to reconstruct the ethics of human response-ability by proposing planetary humanism as a theological response to the current climate catastrophe, seeing humans as moral actors or as part of a moral actor network. I argue for the relationality and interdependence of matter and discourse, nature and society, and humans and non-humans through crosstalk



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between ecofeminist theologies and new materialism. In doing so, I reinterpret the human subject as a potential for liberation from modern human exceptionalism, acknowledging the subversive power of the concept of the subject. Thus, planetary humanism identifies human responsibility in the material environment surrounding humans, non-humans, and objects by pursuing expanded human responsibility through the interpretation of deep incarnation.

2. Criticism of the Modern Humanism: From Reason to Matter

With COVID-19, humanity is facing a new era, in which invisible viruses that exist at the border between abiotic and biotic have broken through the safe zone of human civilization and created threats to the very fabric of its existence. Although countries around the world have done their best to protect civilians from the virus, human societies have been already exposed to the real face of chronic problems such as hidden greed, hatred, inequality, and exclusion over the long period of quarantine policies. As the term, Anthropocene,¹ as a new geological era wherein humans have been the primary determinants of change, already implicates, the exclusive and destructive relationship between humans and the natural environment has led us to this climate catastrophe.

The core spirit of modernity is the expansion of human reason with the myth of progress. Ironically, human supremacy based on rational power has led modernity to this destructive end of humanity. The pandemic challenges us to draw attention to human exceptionalism of modernity and the ecological destruction of the so-called Anthropocene era. The fatal flaw of modern anthropocentrism lies in its lack of attention to the agential power of nonhuman beings and matter. As a matter of fact, these nonhuman beings, including matter, have been very important for modern industrialization, only as instrumental for the progress of human civilization. For this reason, Bruno Latour makes the claim that we have to choose now between modernizing and ecologizing. He uses the modernity as a touchstone, where the relationship between society and nature, that between the world of nonhumans and the world of humans, was beginning (Latour 1998).

By modernization, Latour refers to the ways in which nature has been dominated and controlled through human reason, thereby strictly enforcing the separation of subject and object, politics and science, and humans and non-human beings. On the other hand, ecologization seeks to affirm that human government and ‘parliament of things’ are intertwined and that human political actor-network as the spokesperson can politically represent for nature and nonhuman beings with the help of democratized science and institution. In fact, ecologization for him means the democratization of science and political power. Along with Latour’s eco-friendly democracy, recent theories such as new materialism and ecocriticism also have criticized the modern “assumptions that confine ethical and political considerations to the domain of the Human, while feminism has offered decades of scholarly contestations against the very ethics, epistemologies, and ontologies that have underwritten Human exceptionalism.” (Alaimo 2011, p. 282).

Modern humanism has played a central role in this deterioration. In other words, the modern humanist ideology has resulted “in an anthropocentrism that overemphasizes rationality, human autonomy, sovereignty and separateness from the rest of the world. Such a disconnectedness has allowed for the exploitation and abuse of the nonhuman world, which has been denied subjectivity as well as agency in its own right, as only humans are seen as proper subjects” (Signas 2020, p. 111) Humanist ideas such as anthropocentrism, rationality, human autonomy, sovereignty, and so on have contributed to the rendering of what we call nonhuman and matter as passive, mute, and objectified, and thus made them consumable (Signas 2020). Rosi Braidotti argues that the human was never a neutral category, but that it is always linked to power and privilege. Hence, our posthuman task today is to move beyond the old dualities in which Man defined himself beyond the sexualized and racialized others that were excluded from humanity (Braidotti 2022, p. 236). In *Politics of Nature*, Latour proposed a nonmodern constitution because the ideal modern constitution—the absolute separation of nature and culture, human and nonhuman, science

and the humanities—never actually reflected the reality in which we live (Latour 1993, pp. 46–48).

The pandemic together with the climate change and ecological disaster discloses the faces of the nonhuman beings to us humans in a very critical way. In this context, it is easy to blame humanism for its implicated anthropocentrism, but what we need today is to construct a new model of human subjectivity that is symbiont with nonhuman others, for we are still humans. Thus, instead of a way towards dehumanization, what we need to seek is a new humanism that refers to a new way of life that should not make humans inhuman, acknowledging our interrelatedness with all beings. After all, the deconstruction of modern liberal humanism would give us a chance for a critical ‘reworlding’ of all intertwined differences of human and nonhumans as well as reason and matter. It is to overcome anthropocentric humanism in a way that is morally and politically responsible, that is, response-able for human entanglement with other forms of beings, and on the other hand, to find the very meaning of being human under posthuman catastrophes.

The basic orientation of various criticisms of the modern anthropocentric humanisms does not call for a return to old humanism but to planetary humanism that affirms the traversal process of cutting-edge technologies (matter) and various mattering and that shares the “flat ontology” (Morton 2013, p. 14), which argues for the ontological parity of all beings in whatever forms of being would be, including human, nonhuman, matter, nature and society. It is to find a new ethical subject by recognizing in its subjective formation the entangled intra-actions of various agencies of other forms of beings such as bacteria, minerals, ecosystem, climate system, cultural and political environments.

In this context, Latour’s suggestions of the politics of nature and the parliament of things provide two critical actions we need today: A rejection of the modern distinction between the subject and object on the one hand, and a rejection of the modern epistemology based upon dualistic understandings of reality by turning to ontology on the other hand. The modern political system has never considered any political agency of nonhumans, even excluding them from any ontological domain. If there was a necessity for the being of nonhumans, it was only as instruments for human beings and societies. The current pandemic, which must be considered alongside the global climate crisis and the failure of ecosystems, provides a witness to how nonhuman beings indeed have their own agencies in the society and nature. Thus, the politics we need during and after the pandemic is a political system that makes the political representation of nonhumans in human institutionalized politics possible. Latour argues that humans in this ecological crisis need to be a “spokesperson” (Latour 2004, p. 64) for the nonhumans in the parliament of things, that is, his politics of nature. Although his idea of human political representation of nonhuman beings still seems to cling to the idea of anthropocentrism, it evidently shows us the urgencies of the political representation of nonhuman beings and things. Given the fact that human impact upon the world and its inhabitants are still immense, there is a great need for ‘new forms of ethical thought and practice’ (Alaimo 2011, p. 283). This urges a planetary perspective that moves beyond human exceptionalism toward an evolving multi-perspectival and multi-agential reality; hence, Latour’s concept of the parliament of things becomes quite relevant. His aim is to acknowledge nonhuman agencies in nature and the environment and the role of human political agency in a way that includes the political powers of objects and hyperobjects beyond human cognition.

I agree in this paper that humanity still has a capability to make important changes in this worlding, that is, reworlding, although it cannot be denied that humans are the biggest cause of the crises we are facing today, including this pandemic. The planetary humanism I suggest here goes even further to see that human beings are the media of the divine calling for the sympoiesis of all beings on the earth. It is to acknowledge “the sense of God-with-all-living-things” (Edwards 2006, p. 60). The divine seeks for meaning with us in Its mattering, and this is what I call deep incarnation.

3. A Planetary Humanism and Materiality: From Epistemology to Ontology

In Christian Tradition, there has long been a separation between humans and the rest of the world. Human salvation has often meant saving human souls from the world and the natural environment. In his writing about ecotheology, Latour criticized both Catholics and Protestants in that they were “abandoning the huge masses of non-humans” (Latour 2009, p. 463). Traditional soteriology has its theological grounds in an anthropocentric understanding with a focus on the soul, not the flesh. The soulful salvation has tended to emphasize the superior or exclusive human uniqueness, having seen nature, the environment, and the material world as instruments for human salvation. In this theological tradition, nonhuman beings, let alone matter, have been silenced. The protestant tradition needs theology to include nonhuman beings, animate and inanimate, in its interpretation of salvation. In this context, I emphasize a planetary humanism that acknowledges the following: (1) humans are part of the entanglement of mattering and meaning, (2) nonhuman beings, including inorganic beings, have their own agencies over their worlds, (3) human responsibility lies in their response-ability to the nonhuman agencies which derives from the divine incarnation. Indeed, unlike doctrinal traditions in Christian theology, the Bible, especially Romans 8, says that it is not just humans but all creatures living with humans that wait anxiously for salvation. Therefore, we should consider the relation of humans with all things gathered, collected, or composed in it.

Proponents of new materialism and ecocriticism as well as those in ecofeminist theology have tried to reconsider the issue of mattering and to envision ourselves “as planetary creature in relation to a multitude of specific others rather than as colonizing agents who can encompass the global from a position outside the planet” (Alaimo 2019, p. 405). A new materialist position in particular supports “a middle ground composed by alliances between human and nonhuman agents” (Braidotti 2022, p. 137). Posthuman Feminist theorist Braidotti, who has described these alliances as heterogeneous assemblages, said that “I am posthuman—all-too-human” since she is “materially embodied and embedded living in fast-changing posthuman times” (Braidotti 2019, p. 12). Feminist theologians are among those who struggle with the difficulty of coming to terms with the weight of material entanglement.

The planetary humanism that I propose stems from a dialogue with the new materialist discourses and their insights and embraces a new materialist account of agency (or subjectivity) that challenges any understanding of materiality to being what is simply given to us or mere effects of human agency. This planetary thinking is expressed as a desire to recognize and reclaim matter and uses ‘mattering’ to denote this process. This planetary thinking is an expressed desire to recognize and reclaim matter, that is, mattering. According to Barad, matter and meaning are emergent phenomena from the entanglement of reality by our agential cut. In this sense, meaning is our response-ability to matter. In this train of thought, responsibility in this sense is none other than the ability to respond to other forms of being or materialization (Barad 2007). While critically reviewing the destruction of nature and the environment brought about by the modern as well as theological perspectives of the human subject and moral actor, the planetary humanism I theologically propose still seeks to clarify the unique role of human beings as morally responsible (response-ability) actors. Human uniqueness as a moral agent is based upon the idea of human being as a responsive subject to others on Earth. Indeed, the *earth-bound body* of humans is constantly intertwined with numerous elements of matter, and is at the same time a complex collectivity that uses tools and instruments that are part of materiality. What concerns us in this ecosystem and ‘nature society’ environment is not the end of the world, but a reworlding of human–nonhuman sympoiesis with powers of material nature and against reductionist analysis of the climate crisis.

Recently new materialists have proposed that we acknowledge the fact that non-humans make up a large part of our bodies and affect our sympoietic worlding. In this sense, Latour, for example, reads new materialism as a programmatic rejection of epistemology in favor of ontology (Herndl and Graham 2021). It aims to acknowledge the reality of object

hidden from human instrumentalist perspective and to move toward an object-oriented ontology. In this pandemic, we are witnessing nonhuman things waiting for us to act upon our response-ability. Here we are reminded of the way in which Barad uses the notion of intra-activity to criticize the traditional human autonomous subject, whether it is in the form of linguistic monism, biological determinism, or classical determinism of Newtonian physics. The separation of epistemology from ontology, caused by the modern dualism of language and matter is a reverberation of metaphysics that assumes a dualism of human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, and matter and discourse. According to Bennett, although human consciousness is the effect of language, this language is “a highly complex material system” (Bennett 2010). Onto-epistem-ology—the study of practices of knowing in being—is probably a better way to think about the kind of understandings that are needed to come to terms with how specific intra-actions matter.

The ethics of planetary humanism and its moral responsibility reformulate the relationship of the human and nonhuman agencies at the center. It is an attempt to reformulate the new materialism with an openness to the possibility of responsible human intervention. A materialist elaboration allows matter its due as an active participant in the world becoming and its “reworlding”. Barad has argued that agential realism is morally significant because it is our “responsibility to intervene in the world’s becoming, to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering” (Barad 2003, p. 827). For her, it is our responsibility or our moral-ethical duty of obligation, to intervene, contest, and rework the world’s becoming, what she calls the politics of possibility implying the innumerable phenomena made by material-discursive intra-activity. However, these activities are not something we humans can control, simply by taking matters into our own hands and reconfiguring the world to our liking. Rather, on an agential realist account, materiality is an active factor in the materialization process. Nature is neither a passive surface awaiting the mark of culture nor the end product of cultural performances. Indeed, agency² entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses is quite material, and human subjective moral intervention and ethical action are delegated as insignificant, although not impossible. If any moral intervention would be possible, humans need to form an assemblage with other entangled agencies. Any agential cut, that is, any subjective intervention, discloses an aspect of the entanglement, not all but a part of it. In other words, Barad does not allow human subjects an ability to choose otherwise, acting independently of our material entanglement. Thus, material ecocriticism, including Barad’s views included, seems to underestimate human moral intervention, stating that agency is not voluntary decision making, thereby making the achievement of human ethical subject an impossibility (Norris 2016).

In order to take our human responsibility, we need a theory in which human ethical intervention is considered to be significant and possible. In a similar vein, Braidotti insists that humanism should not be easily discarded because of, given the relative success of the historical legacy of humanism in its support of equal rights for all. It needs, instead, to be reviewed, historicized, and assessed critically (Braidotti 2022). It is to talk of humanism “in terms of our planetary others and in terms of biology; conversely, we can talk about the biology of history” (Bauman 2014, p. 152). Thus, understanding human behavior as a complex and sometimes unknown relational behavior, interconnected with the material power of things, expands the scope of human ethical and political responsibility. One way of moving beyond the human exceptionalism is through the recognition that our subjectivities, identities, and agencies are not our own. It is to recognize that we are living with other beings and making a life together with them. No matter how much Jesus wanted to convey his love, for example, it was not possible without water and buckets to wash his disciples’ feet and towels to wipe their feet. Furthermore, it would have been impossible to have a precious dinner without desks, chairs, bread, wine, and bowls at a dinner with the twelve disciples. Human subjective actions are always—already—accompanied by the agencies of things that are material, natural, and artificial. This can be said a deep incarnation, deep into the matter beyond flesh.

In the idea of “deep incarnation”—the view that the divine incarnation in Jesus presupposes a radical embodiment that reaches into the roots of material and biological existence, as well as into the darker sides of creation—one can see the importance of human agency, as Latour speaks of human political agency as the “spokesperson” for nonhumans (Latour 2004, p. 64). Such a wide-scope view of incarnation allows Christology to be meaningful when responding to the challenges of scientific cosmology (Greg 2015). Nature can live without humans, but humans cannot live without nature. Therefore, planetary humanism does not renounce hope for human possibility as the only species that aims to be, and values being, an ethical being resembling the image of God. In this sense, humanism connected to its tradition is still important in the eco-theological discourses, although it needs to move ahead and beyond it. Only humans can dream and imagine another world, the not-yet not based upon the genetic algorithm. The possibilities and imagination of another world can only be done by humans. Despite its many problems, humanism is indeed very difficult to discard.

4. Encounter with Deep Incarnation and Matter—Moving toward a Planetary Humanism

The essential elements of Incarnation are body and matter. The body is a form of matter with which all environmental elements are entangled. In order to overcome the epistemological limitations of the modern theology constructed upon the ideas of reason and spirit, ecofeminist theology has persistently highlighted the importance of body and flesh. Traditional ethical theories were based upon an anthropocentric thinking which believed only humans were moral beings with intrinsic values and that animals, creatures, and matter had only instrumental values for human survival and well-being. In this theology, humans enjoyed absolute privilege over all other nonhuman beings. However, given that humanity is, without a doubt, the biggest cause of the climate crisis, violence against animals, and environmental destructions, this anthropocentric theology has reached its end.

In this context, one needs to be reminded that incarnation is “a question of Christ being here and being there at the deepest levels of the material world of flesh as the Incarnate One who both shares and transcends the conditions of materiality” (Greg 2015, p. 251). Thus, to be incarnate is to be immersed within this web of relationships, and the core of incarnation is to give the so-called physical world its orientation and sense. In other words, the incarnate human can think of the not-yet, introducing the in-existent time to the world we live in. In this way, humans live “at the depths” of the whole through the flows of energy and meaning (Mazi 2002). Instead of “passing time”, humans become *capable of being time* in their response-ability to the not-yet. The human experience of things “com[ing] together” and “fall[ing] into place” is none other than the experience of having “timed” ourselves with others and with things. Maybe the not-yet is the voice of “the insistence of God” (Caputo 2013, p. 1). As J.D. Caputo argues, the presence of God is experienced with the divine insistence of our being here rather than the existence of God.

The destructive relations between human and nonhuman beings are currently the most serious challenge for humanity. Therefore, the significant aim of theological reflection on the climate crisis is to seek a symbiotic way in which all living beings and things live and make a life together on earth. As we seek an alternative humanism, I propose planetary humanism, seeking humans as that understand human to be moral actors and ethical subjects with response-ability. Theologically, planetary humanism is grounded in the idea of deep incarnation which is made evident in the compassion and radical self-deprecation (kenosis) in Jesus’ life and death, whereby incarnation does not represent any deficiency in the divine but rather the full realization of divinity in the material entanglement. Thus, divine transcendence is none other than the ascendance of God into this world. For the planetary humanism, incarnation first means God’s eternal commitment to the natural world, and secondly, it is understood as a promise of God’s specificity (Edwards 2014). From this point of view, the depth of incarnation is understood as the amazing implications

of God himself being with the body and matter forever. Moreover, through the deep incarnation, God is understood as the personal dimension of the not-yet, who desires matter and body. Such a depth of the divine incarnation may help us understand the very meaning of the scripture that says, “the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”³ Thus, deep incarnation is a theology of flesh and matter as well as a symbolic interpretation of all creatures, the planet earth and cosmos which is where I position the planetary humanism.

This new interpretation of the deep incarnation supports the Christian ethics of becoming, which does not refer to a qualitative difference between God and humans but rather to a process of self-transcendence of human existence toward others that is possible because of the relationship of deep entanglement between God and all things. The discovery of the divine possibility inherent in humanity is the most radical experience of transcendence and the most specific instantiation of material entanglement. Nevertheless, the planetary humanism proposed in this paper recognizes a qualitative difference between the becoming of relational subjectivity as a process and the completed apocalyptic existence. This planetary humanism differs from the Western individualism, which assumes the atomic and separate individuality of human being from others. Instead, it believes in human flourishing that is possible in a planetary community created with other beings, both animate and inanimate. Catherine Keller suggests “intercarnation” for such a possibility (Keller 2017a). Jurgen Moltmann in a similar gesture has emphasized that faith in a cosmic Christ can help us recover the reconciliation between heaven and all things on earth and accepts all creatures as precious beings that Christ has paid for through his death (Moltmann 2012, p. 252).

Human life is not just social and political but also biological and material. Through the deep incarnation, we are living in ‘mattering’, through the intra-acting in the entanglement of beings and things. Indeed, life is materialistic in the sense that our living is based upon collaboration with material beings. In the course of salvation, there is nothing a human can do alone. Therefore, the planetary humanism recognizes that the Bible understands salvation to be cosmic in nature to be achieved in the interdependence between humans and nonhuman animals within the planetary community of the kingdom of God. The concept of the new heaven and earth declared by Jesus includes and embraces the whole world, encompassing all things including nonhuman beings and humans. One of the important theological themes of incarnation in the planetary humanism is that God the Holy Spirit came to the place where humanity lived and became a member of the bio-historical community. In Christ, the world as a material reality, that is, the earth, can be a place for the ministry of the Holy Spirit to bless the whole planetary community. For example, the church uses wine, fire, and bread at that moment when expressing the most transcendental experience. Indeed, Catherine Keller explained that everything in the world has been entangled in the universe, “No Christianity could quite throw off the narrative weight of fleshly incarnation, material justice, and bodily resurrection” (Keller 2017b, pp. 111–12). Jane Bennett said that human consciousness is the effect of language, and language is ‘a highly complex material system’ (Bennett 2010, p. 11). Nevertheless, we easily subject nonhuman beings and matter to the below of humans. The history of salvation does not consist only of words. It should not be forgotten that the Word was proclaimed in the created world and physical environment to which the language refers.

The human condition is always already earthbound as we live together and thus stand in relation to others in our common home-planet Earth (Mazi 2002, pp. 220–21). In this created Earth containing nonhuman beings, our ethics of responsibility should not be an ethics that only speaks about responsibility, but Christian ethics that brings about practical change by actively participating in all material processes, realizing values oriented towards relational entanglement. This planetary humanism seeks responsibility that serves the multiplicity of species.

Therefore, our deep incarnation is not about transcending, but rather about the radical immanence of divinity into our planetary community of becoming, and it is none other

than our worlding or reworlding in the divine creation. This incarnational humanism extends its relationality over the nonhuman and all matter, and, in this way, it is a planetary humanism. To a great extent, our species, like our subjective experiences, does not live only on our own terms. Our present experience indeed contains the evolutionary history, which refers to the millions of other species, plants, animals, minerals, and other organisms that have contributed to produce this very moment (Bauman 2014, p. 147). Jesus asks us, ‘who is your neighbor?’ As we can widen our relational imagination over nonhumans, animals, plants, vegetables, and minerals, they are none other than our ‘kins,’ as Haraway argues. As a matter of fact, “[m]any religions have jolted us out of the habits of love based upon ego, family, kin, and even nation” (Bauman 2014, p. 166). When Jesus asks us who is our neighbor is, he was issuing an ethical commandment to make a new family based upon love. This commandment to leave one’s family and create a new family is not based on kinship, race, or even sex. Family is none other than the one who participates in the saving of one another, instead of seeking one’s own interests. It is none other than a compassionate yearning for humans, animals, and the earth that are under the yoke of oppression. By feeling another’s pain as one’s own, we can become a divine family, and the current pandemic asks us to think of the pain and oppression of nonhumans on the earth. In other words, it is time for us to think about a planetary family.

Imagining a possibility of another world is possible only for humans. Thus, human beings still retain their unique presence in the world despite many problems derived from anthropocentric ways of thinking. Therefore, our planetary assemblage that this planetary humanism seeks, especially during the pandemic, must find a sym-poietic way to live with nonhuman forms of beings, animate and inanimate, and it will have to find a way to orient all kinds of living on the earth to the divine will. God created humans and other beings as fellow. At the same time, they are all companions for salvation. In Psalm 119, God says, “All things have been built by words”, and declares, “All things have become servants of God” (Psalm 119: 89–91). Not just humans but all things are called to be God’s servants. It means that human beings are companions of God and other nonhuman beings to fulfill God’s will. Why does humanism still matter? It is simply because I am still a human. It is to acknowledge the limitation of the human position and, at the same time, human responsibility as an ethical subject. In this sense, humanism still has to be discussed in our eco-theological discourses of the creative tension between ontological collectivity and ethical responsibility, if we see the whole world as a collective as argued by Latour. This theological reflection will remind us that humanism is still significant for human responsibility, especially in human entanglement with other (human and nonhuman) beings on “Earth Planet”. Thus, symbiotic humanism calls for rethinking this issue of responsibility as “response-ability”.

5. Conclusions

Humans are the only species that can think of a living ecosystem. However, as the soteriological perspective in the Christian tradition is anthropocentric and other-worldly in orientation and emphasizes only individual repentance, therein lies a theological limitation that prevents Christians from actively contemplating human responsibility for nature and matter. The theological perspective of deep incarnation standing from the dialogue with new materialists emphasizes that we must have a firm response-ability for the entire planet because of our unique response-ability to this world. We must begin to think of the ethics of the planet, recognizing that its agents are members of a collective solidarity for the sake of a planetary community, which is constantly in flux. It requires that we form solidarity with nonhuman beings in order to embody the possibility of the “reworlding” of planetary humanism. This will lead to a symbiotic response-ability more deeply rooted in the biblical-theological ground. In this sense, Christians must immediately stop reckless anthropocentric practices such as development for development, factory-style livestock, and the way of life of mass production and consumption. In addition, human-centered ways of living that treat nonhuman beings simply as means for the progress of human

civilization should be changed. The pollution of the air, water, and soil that kills other living beings is in fact driving us to death, as well as this Anthropocene civilization. It means that our world must immediately undergo ‘re-worlding’ from our earthen foundations. Such a ‘re-worlding’ could mean ecological salvation.

Therefore, if earth bodies are affirmed in their myriad forms of entanglement in the planet, sensitively utilizing their capacity for mutual interdependence, our homeostatic balance of well-being can resonate with other forms of beings on the earth. This asks us to change the meaning of responsibility a human individual subject must take into response-ability, which allows us to empathize with each other. As many thinkers have expressed recently, there would be no final solutions but only the ongoing practice of being open to each other, and taking the risk of being vulnerable, so that we might use our ability to respond, our responsibility, to help awaken and breathe life into our new possibilities for living justly. We only remember that God created human beings with the divine image but forget that the earth is co-creating plants and vegetables. That is, God has the earth as a co-creator of living beings on the earth. The co-creativity that is also endowed to humans with the divine image is not only for humans but for the sake of all beings. This is the reason we need to consider the way we live with animals, plants, vegetables, and things, natural and artificial. Humanism is still significant for human responsibility, given that human beings are always already intertwined with everything on “Earth Planet”. I still wish to emphasize human responsibility as an ability to respond to all beings, for only humans can imagine the not-yet in order to change the world.

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Notes

- ¹ The term ‘Anthropocene’, coined in 2002 by Nobel Prize winner Paul Crutzen, describes the current geological era as dominated by the measurable negative human impact on the Earth, through technological interventions and consumerism. It was discussed at the International Geological Congress in August 2016, but was rejected in July 2018 by the International Commission on Stratigraphy, in favour of the ‘Meghalayan’ era (Braioti 2019, pp. 12–13).
- ² Agency is not an attribute whatsoever—it is “doing”/“being” in its intra-activity. Agency is the enactment of iterative changes to practices through the dynamics of intra-activity. Agency is about the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices in the enactment of a causal structure” (Barad 2003, p. 827).
- ³ John 1: 14: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

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