

**‘The Glory of God is Humanity Fully Alive: Exploring Eastern Orthodoxy as a resource for human development in conversation with the capability approach’**

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**Abstract**

This dissertation argues that Eastern Orthodox theology is a framework for multidimensional social change or improvement and can inform, and be informed by the multi-disciplinary social science field of development studies. This claim will be examined by analyzing the Trinitarian theology of the Orthodox theologian Dumitru Staniloae in relation to the writings of Nobel Economist Amartya Sen and his ‘capability approach’.

The argument begins by justifying EO’s interaction with development studies based on her anthropological optimism. Critical is that supernatural revelation stands very close to and builds on natural revelation. A Trinitarian theological anthropology then provides a rationale for, and integration of, three key concepts in the social sciences: agency, solidarity, and structures. This analytical framework is then used to assess the challenges of post-Communist contexts, where most Orthodox live. The Communist downfall, it is argued, involved a failure to incorporate each of these dimensions in human development. This analysis then serves to test the adequacy of, and reveal weaknesses in, Amartya Sen’s freedom-focused social evaluation framework known as the capability approach.

The dissertation proceeds with examining Orthodox salvation as movement from Being, to Well-being, to Eternal-being where Well-being is, notably, the exercise of agency to develop the potentials given in Being. Agency is not individualistic, but is structured into the virtues of solidarity and incorporates the related notion of *phronesis* (practical reason). The virtue tradition is then postulated as a promising link between theology and development studies. The virtue tradition is analyzed in its classical background, modern human development, as well as both Protestantism and Catholicism to facilitate a comparison with Eastern Orthodoxy. This analysis shows that Orthodoxy offers a theological framework for human development in that she gives priority of practical reason to contemplation, makes virtually no separation between grace and nature, and provides a relevant method for synergizing salvation history with action on behalf of human development.