The alliance between transhumanism and global neoliberalism. The need for a new technoethics

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1. Aclaratio terminis

Transhumanism (abbreviated as H+ or h+) is an international philosophical movement that advocates for the transformation of the human condition by developing and making widely available sophisticated technologies to greatly enhance human intellect and physiology.

Transhumanist thinkers study the potential benefits and dangers of emerging technologies that could overcome fundamental human limitations as well as the ethical limitations of using such technologies. The most common transhumanist thesis is that human beings may eventually be able to transform themselves into different beings with abilities so greatly expanded from the current condition as to merit the label of posthuman beings.

Transhumanism is a way of thinking about the future that is based on the premise that the human species in its current form does not represent the end of our development but rather a comparatively early phase.

Transhumanism is a loosely defined movement that has developed gradually over the past two decades.

Transhumanism is a class of philosophies of life that seek the continuation and acceleration of the evolution of intelligent life beyond its currently human form and human limitations by means of science and technology, guided by life-promoting principles and values.

– Max More (1990)

The intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate aging and to enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities.

The study of the ramifications, promises, and potential dangers of technologies that will enable us to overcome fundamental human limitations, and the related study of the ethical matters involved in developing and using such technologies.

Generally, the biologist Julian Huxley (1887-1975) is considered as inspiring transhumanism. He uses that word in 1959 and gives it the meaning originally given by the current transhumanists. “The human species”, he writes, “can, if it so wishes, transcend itself, not only entirely as an individual or another, but also in its integrity, as humanity. We need a name for this new belief. Maybe transhumanism can serve: man is still a man, but transcending himself, realizing new possibilities, of and for human nature”.

The idea of improving the human species through the implementation of biotechnologies to form a new evolved species, far from primitive nature, is echoed in literature and philosophy.

Although this perspective may seem outdated, it is not far from a reality that is emerging and is not only the result of isolated, misanthropic, and irrational individuals. This opinion, with or without scientific basis, is impregnated with ideas of social Darwinism and sociobiology.

The philosopher Max More (1964) is the first to articulate the principles of transhumanism as a futuristic philosophy in 1990 and to organize the embryo of the transhumanist international movement, or the extrophic movement. Max More defines transhumanism as a cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desire to improve the human condition through science and technology. In their view, transhumanists seek the continuation and acceleration of the evolution of intelligent life beyond their present form and their limitations through science and technology.

This movement maintains that human beings have the possibility to realize an evolutionary leap because of the vertiginous development of biotechnologies. The ultimate goal, then, is for human beings to get rid of their
organic prostration and their endemic precariousness in order to achieve a fuller, longer and more quality life in all senses.

This hope has been fueled since the eighties of the last century by a series of technological innovations that dreamed of a new and better world: the development of nanotechnologies to radically rebuild our bodies with the help of nanorobots which would swim in our blood to repair DNA errors or fight pathogens during bodily growth, or research on cryogenics as a means of curbing biological degradation. Overall these nanotechnologies infused great hope in the immediate future.

Progress in psycho-drugs and medications to improve muscle tone or selectively erase some memories, together with prenatal or pre-implant genetic analysis and other types of therapies that could be used to improve quality of life or to cure diseases, represent for transhumanists a set of arguments that nourish their utopia.

It is not a matter of using technology solely to alleviate deficits, deficiencies or dysfunctions of human nature. The goal is to implement it in the body, in the most intimate structure of the nervous system, to improve their abilities, their abilities and their abilities, in short, the powers inherent in the human condition and, furthermore, to create new ones that, until this moment, are alien to the human species.

2. The performance society

It is foolish to analyze transhumanism outside of its cultural, economic and social context, as if it were a pure intellectual object, alien to the circumstance in which it was born. It developed within the framework of a globalized neoliberal system. The main points of neoliberalism include:

**The Rule of the Market:** Liberating “free” enterprise or private enterprise from any bonds imposed by the government (the state) no matter how much social damage this causes; Greater openness to international trade and investment, as in NAFTA; Reducing wages by de-unionizing workers and eliminating workers’ rights that had been won over many years of struggle; No more price controls; Overall, total freedom of movement for capital, goods and services. (To convince us this is good for us, they say, “An unregulated market is the best way to increase economic growth, which will ultimately benefit everyone”). Cutting public expenditure for social services like education and health care; Reducing the safety-net for the poor, and even maintenance of roads, bridges, water supply – again in the name of reducing government’s role. Of course, they do not oppose government subsidies and tax benefits for business.

**Deregulation.** Reducing government regulation of everything that could diminish profits, including protecting the environment and safety on the job.

**Privatization.** Selling state-owned enterprises, goods and services to private investors. This includes banks, key industries, railroads, toll highways, electricity, schools, hospitals and even freshwater. Although usually done in the name of greater efficiency, which is often needed, privatization has mainly had the effect of concentrating wealth even more in a few hands and making the public pay even more for its needs. Eliminating the concept of “The Public Good” or “Community” and replacing it with “individual responsibility.”

The isms are never a coincidence of history. There is a set of social, economic, cultural and religious factors that make them emerge and float. In Marxian language, one could say that the superstructure is born, ultimately, of an infrastructure that makes it possible. Ideologies are not a coincidence of history, nor are they the fruits of chance. Neoludism, for example, is born as a reaction to the industrial revolution and the consequences it has for many workers. Marxism was born as a reaction to the liberalism of the nineteenth century and the struggle between the bourgeois and the proletarians. Transhumanism is no exception. It emerges from an opulent, neoliberal, hyper-accelerated and complex society, especially concerned about the economic and disenchanted growth of the latest social and political utopias.

The Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han (1959), one of the most innovative philosophical voices that have emerged in Germany in the last decade, has made a very careful diagnosis of the circumstance that we have experienced. According to him, we live in what he calls the Burnout Society (Die Müdigkeitsgesellschaft) (2010), an environment that depletes people as a result of the hyperacceleration of daily life and the culture of performance in which we are immersed.

Fatigue is the result of the obsession with performance. The search for performance is, at the same time, the consequence of a neoliberal system of planetary reach that has as its main motto to achieve maximum productivity with the least possible cost. The citizen exploits himself to achieve the maximum result, to obtain the maximum performance of his talent in the least possible time. If he achieves results, he gains success and social notoriety. Otherwise, frustration is advocated. To achieve these coveted goods, he is capable of subjecting himself and his subordinates to a hypertrophied work-rate that has fatigue as a consequence.
We are part of a society of excess and excess (as the Greeks philosophers would say) the consequences of which are burnout, tiredness and mental and physical exhaustion. It is based on the assumption that everything is possible and that, if one is able to domesticate his mind and body, to master them perfectly and to extract all their potential, he can achieve the purposes that he imagines.

In the collective imagination, every human being is expected to be as productive and profitable as possible. The imperative of performance, leading to the latest consequences, results in the breakage of the person, the affective communities and the natural rhythms of life. This is a self-exploitation of a self-inflicted overload on yourself. Byung-Chul Han writes: “The depressive man is that labored animal that exploits himself, that is; voluntarily, without external coercion. He is, at the same time, an executioner and a victim”.

The struggle to excel in the market and to survive in the intense and extensive hypercompetitivity has, therefore, an increase in burden and working rhythms. The result of this infernal logic is a world that moves quickly and that it is incapable of listening. Byung-Chul Han writes: “As tranquility vanishes, the ‘gift of listening’ goes missing, as does the ‘community of listeners’”.

3. Hyperacceleration, hypercompetitivity and transhumanism

Non-productive time is time lost and lost time is socially censored. It is forbidden to waste time! “The acceleration”, writes the Korean philosopher, suppresses any mood. “Any interstice that opens the mind to meditation, reflection, or questioning, which Martin Heidegger calls meditative thinking, is systematically castrated.

Disconnection time is accepted, but only as a mechanism to recharge the batteries and return to activity. Of the three human activities described by Aristotle, contemplation, action and production, the first has been atrophied and, on the other hand, action and production are hypertrophied. Instrumental thinking invades it, though the consequence of this is a mental and physical exhaustion that can only be resisted by the intake of all kinds of substances that can activate the machinery again.

Because of this system of life, some human activities, such as contemplation or listening, lose their reason of being and subsist in marginality. “The gift of listening”, says the author of *The Burnout Society*, “is based on the ability to grant deep, contemplative attention – which remains inaccessible to the hyperactive ego”.

Dance is a luxury in the society of performance, but so is relaxed conversation, reading, contemplation, divagation, musical enjoyment, the exercise of philosophy. There is a loss of contemplative ability and this has produced “the hysteria and nervousness of modern active society”.

Faced with this tendency imposed on the collective imagination, the Korean philosopher encourages us to learn to see again, to listen again, and to hear again. Byung-Chul Han writes: “Learning to see means … getting the eye to observe calmly and patiently, letting things get close to our eyes, that is, educating the eye to deep and contemplative attention, for a broad and leisurely look. This learning to look is the first preliminary teaching for spirituality”.

The human being, in the globalized neoliberal culture, has become an autistic performance machine. Byung Chul Han writes: “The performance society, as the active society, is progressively becoming a doping society”. Doping not only circulates in the world of professional and amateur sports, as we will see below, but also in the university field and in certain jobs subject to a high level of pressure and stress.

This tendency to drug abuse is a revealing symptom. To support hyperacceleration, information overdose and the pressure of hypercompetitivity, doping ends up being the daily bread for many professionals who fight in our world.

“The excess of the increase in performance”, writes the author of *The Burnout Society*, causes the heart’s infarction. “The infarction of the soul is a beautiful formula to connote the agony of inner life, the disappearance of practices so genuinely human such as meditation, thought, contemplation, even prayer”.

4. A new global technoetics

In a context of this nature, transhumanism is posed as redemption, as the perfect antidote. A biotechnologically-improved man will be able to work more hours, because he will have been modified and this will allow him to be more competitive and, in turn, to increase profits. Companies will be especially interested in hiring biotech-enhanced subjects, because they will have more benefits and will be more capable of solving complex problems.

If this is the case, discrimination against those who refuse biotechnological improvement might easily be generated. They would simply be out of the market. Therefore, the supposed freedom (free choice) in choosing
the improvement that wants to legitimize transhumanism is difficult to guarantee in the framework of a globalized neoliberal system in which what counts is the maximum performance with the least possible cost.

“The machine”, wrote Byung Chul Han, “is not able to stop”. The man-machine will be made in such a way that it will only stop the minimum, because it will not be necessary to sleep, or rest or disconnect, and it will thus be much more competitive in terms of market. The thesis that technology will liberate the human being from work is, simply, a deceit. Technology will free us from some crap jobs, but not from work.

The technological colonization of the world of life (Lebenswelt), to use the expression of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), has not resulted in a more relaxed and peaceful life. Physical and mental fatigue, stress, depression, existential emptiness and the feeling of loneliness are the very sensations of hyper-technological societies.

Transhumanism frees us, perhaps, from fatigue, but not from a system that bases its success on growth, overproduction and hyperconsumism. We need a new global technoetics, based on respect for the sublime dignity of all human beings, in equity and social justice, along the lines of the idea of self-limitation set forth by Jacques Ellul or of responsibility in the words of Hans Jonas. This new ethic must have a planetary dimension, not just European or American, and it must be the result of a great global social pact. The challenge is huge, but it is the only option.

In this context, ethics inspired by the Christian tradition must be recognized as a public interlocutor. The digital world allows for possibilities of communication and interaction previously unknown in history. Against the new technocratic feudalism, the empowerment of civil society and the creation of a new global consciousness are decisive.

5. A new global technoethics according Benedict XVI and Pope Francis

5.1. We need an interdisciplinary collaboration between ethics and economy. This dialogue is only possible if we accept the philosophical conditions of the interdisciplinary work. Which are these conditions?

   a. We must move from the monodisciplinary to the transdisciplinary across the interaction between the different sciences.

   a. We need clarity of language. We have to identify a common language between the different sciences. Closed languages make dialogue impossible.

   b. It is necessary also recognize the same dignity of the disciplines or the same epistemological status. The scientism makes impossible the symmetry between the experimental sciences and the humanities. According the scientism, the philosophical and the theological approach has not epistemological value.

5.2. We need an economy centered on respect for each human being. If we lose this ethical principle, anything is possible. We cannot forget that the economy is not self-sufficient; it is not an independent area. We must think of the consequences of economic decisions for human beings and specifically for vulnerable groups (children, young people, handicapped persons and aged persons).

Pope Benedict XVI writes in Caritas in veritate (2009): “Striving to meet the deepest moral needs of the person also has important and beneficial repercussions at the level of economics. The economy needs ethics in order to function correctly – not any ethics whatsoever, but an ethics which is people-centered. Today we hear much talk of ethics in the world of economy, finance and business. Research centres and seminars in business ethics are on the rise; the system of ethical certification is spreading throughout the developed world as part of the movement of ideas associated with the responsibilities of business towards society. Banks are proposing ‘ethical’ accounts and investment funds. ‘Ethical financing’ is being developed, especially through micro-credit and, more generally, micro-finance. These processes are praiseworthy and deserve much support. Their positive effects are also being felt in the less developed areas of the world. It would be advisable, however, to develop a sound criterion of discernment, since the adjective ‘ethical’ can be abused. When the word is used generically, it can lend itself to any number of interpretations, even to the point where it includes decisions and choices contrary to justice and authentic human welfare” (Caritas in veritate, 45).

5.3. We need a global ethical committee of deliberation in order to assure global progress and not a unidimensional progress of society. The integral progress of society necessarily includes the economical dimension, but also the social, the moral and the spiritual dimensions of the human being. It is necessary to think of the dynamic of economic progress and reflect about its consequences.

“The development of peoples is intimately linked to the development of individuals. The human person by nature is actively involved in his own development. The development in question is not simply the result of natural mechanisms, since, as everybody knows, we are all capable of making free and responsible choices. Nor is it merely at the mercy of our caprice, since we all know that we are a gift, not something self-generated.
Our freedom is profoundly shaped by our being, and by its limits. No one shapes his own conscience arbitrarily, but we all build our own ‘I’ based on a ‘self’ which is given to us. Not only are other persons outside our control, but each one of us is outside his or her own control. A person’s development is compromised, if he claims to be solely responsible for producing what he becomes. By analogy, the development of peoples goes awry if humanity thinks it can re-create itself through the ‘wonders’ of technology, just as economic development is exposed as a destructive sham if it relies on the ‘wonders’ of finance in order to sustain unnatural and consumerist growth. In the face of such Promethean presumption, we must fortify our love for a freedom that is not merely arbitrary, but is rendered truly human by acknowledgment of the good that underlies it. To this end, man needs to look inside himself in order to recognize the fundamental norms of the natural moral law which God has written on our hearts” (Caritas in veritate, 68).

5.4. We need a moral philosophy for the new technology. We must think of the consequences of this development in different fields: social, ecological, political, educational, economical and spiritual. Technology is not only an instrument; it is a system of life, an artificial world in which we live, work and die. We all are becoming techno-dependents of this sphere.

“The challenge of development today is closely linked to technological progress, with its astounding applications in the field of biology. Technology – it is worth emphasizing – is a profoundly human reality, linked to the autonomy and freedom of man. In technology, we express and confirm the hegemony of the spirit over matter. ‘The human spirit, ‘increasingly free of its bondage to creatures, can be more easily drawn to the worship and contemplation of the Creator’. Technology enables us to exercise dominion over matter, to reduce risks, to save labor, to improve our conditions of life. It touches the heart of the vocation of human labor: in technology, seen as the product of his genius, man recognizes himself and forges his own humanity. Technology is the objective side of human action whose origin and raison d’etre is found in the subjective element: the worker himself. For this reason, technology is never merely technology. It reveals man and his aspirations towards development; it expresses the inner tension that impels him gradually to overcome material limitations. Technology, in this sense, is a response to God’s command to till and to keep the land (cf. Gen 2:15) that he has entrusted to humanity, and it must serve to reinforce the covenant between human beings and the environment, a covenant that should mirror God’s creative love” (Caritas in veritate, 69).

5.5. There is a new religion in the western world. The name of the new religion is technocentrism. It is a new hope for humanity. It does not seems to be a religion, but it is a new form of secular religion. According to this new faith, all dreams are possible: to have more memory, to have a perfect body, to achieve immortality. We must separate respect for technology as an instrument from technocentrism. In technocentrism, the technical system is a new idol. Against this new religion, we must underline that human freedom is authentic when it responds to the fascination of technology with decisions that are the consequences of ethical responsibility.

“Technological development can give rise to the idea that technology is self-sufficient when too much attention is given to the ‘how’ questions, and not enough to the many ‘why’ questions underlying human activity. For this reason, technology can appear ambivalent. Produced through human creativity as a tool of personal freedom, technology can be understood as a manifestation of absolute freedom, the freedom that seeks to prescind from the limits inherent in things. The process of globalization could replace ideologies with technology, allowing the latter to become an ideological power that threatens to confine us within an a priori that holds us back from encountering being and truth. Were that to happen, we would all know, evaluate and make decisions about our life situations from within a technocratic cultural perspective to which we would belong structurally, without ever being able to discover a meaning that is not of our own making. The ‘technical’ worldview that follows from this vision is now so dominant that truth has come to be seen as coinciding with the possible. However, when the sole criterion of truth is efficiency and utility, development is automatically denied. True development does not consist primarily in ‘doing’. The key to development is a mind capable of thinking in technological terms and grasping the fully human meaning of human activities, within the context of the holistic meaning of the individual’s being. Even when we work through satellites or through remote electronic impulses, our actions always remain human, an expression of our responsible freedom. Technology is highly attractive because it draws us out of our physical limitations and broadens our horizon. However, human freedom is authentic only when it responds to the fascination of technology with decisions that are the fruit of moral responsibility. Hence, the pressing need for formation in an ethically responsible use of technology. Moving beyond the fascination that technology exerts, we must reappropriate the true meaning of freedom, which is not an intoxication with total autonomy, but a response to the call of being, beginning with our own personal being” (Caritas in veritate, 70).

“This deviation from solid humanistic principles that a technical mindset can produce is seen today in certain technological applications in the fields of development and peace. Often the development of peoples is
considered a matter of financial engineering, the freeing up of markets, the removal of tariffs, investment in production, and institutional reforms – in other words, a purely technical matter. All these factors are of great importance, but we have to ask why technical choices made thus far have yielded rather mixed results. We need to think hard about the cause. Development will never be fully guaranteed through automatic or impersonal forces, whether they derive from the market or from international politics. Development is impossible without upright men and women, without financiers and politicians whose consciences are finely attuned to the requirements of the common good. Both professional competence and moral consistency are necessary. When technology is allowed to take over, the result is confusion between ends and means, such that the sole criterion for action in business is thought to be the maximization of profit, in politics the consolidation of power, and in science the findings of research. Often, underneath the intricacies of economic, financial and political interconnections, there remain misunderstandings, hardships and injustice. The flow of technological know-how increases, but it is those in possession of it who benefit, while the situation on the ground for the peoples who live in its shadow remains unchanged: for them there is little chance of emancipation” (Caritas in veritate, 71).

“The technocratic paradigm also tends to dominate economic and political life. The economy accepts every advance in technology with a view to profit, without concern for its potentially negative impact on human beings. Finance overwhelms the real economy. The lessons of the global financial crisis have not been assimilated, and we are learning all too slowly the lessons of environmental deterioration. Some circles maintain that current economics and technology will solve all environmental problems, and argue, in popular and non-technical terms, that the problems of global hunger and poverty will be resolved simply by market growth. They are less concerned with certain economic theories, which today scarcely anybody dares defend, than with their actual operation in the functioning of the economy. They may not affirm such theories with words, but nonetheless support them with their deeds by showing no interest in more balanced levels of production, a better distribution of wealth, concern for the environment and the rights of future generations. Their behavior shows that for them maximizing profits is enough. Yet by itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion” (Laudato Si’, 109).

5.6. In our world mass media have an important role. Respect for the truth is the most relevant principle, the primus inter pares. The media can be a source of criticism, an instrument of humanization. Trust is based on respecting the truth.

Benedict XVI writes: “The media can make an important contribution towards the growth in communion of the human family and the ethos of society when they are used to promote universal participation in the common search for what is just” (Caritas in veritate, 73).

5.7. We must think of the moral limits in the application of new biotechnologies. Respect for the inherent dignity of each human being is the first principle in this new global technoethics. This ethical principle is at the core of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

Today this principle is not evident for many philosophers and scientists. Our goal is not easy, because we need a foundation of this principle not only theologically, but in a secular way. We must answer two challenges: animalism and transhumanism.

“A particularly crucial battleground in today’s cultural struggle between the supremacy of technology and human moral responsibility is the field of bioethics, where the very possibility of integral human development is radically called into question. In this most delicate and critical area, the fundamental question asserts itself force-fully: Is man the product of his own labors or does he depend on God? Scientific discoveries in this field and the possibilities of technological intervention seem so advanced as to force a choice between two types of reasoning: reason open to transcendence or reason closed within immanence. We are presented with a clear either/or. Yet the rationality of a self-centered use of technology proves to be irrational because it implies a decisive rejection of meaning and value. It is no coincidence that closing the door to transcendence brings one up short against a difficulty: how could being emerge from nothing, how could intelligence be born from chance? Faced with these dramatic questions, reason and faith can come to each other’s assistance. Only together will they save man. Entranced by an exclusive reliance on technology, reason without faith is doomed to flounder in an illusion of its own omnipotence. Faith without reason risks being cut off from everyday life” (Caritas in veritate, 74).

“Paul VI had already recognized and drawn attention to the global dimension of the social question. Following his lead, we need to affirm today that the social question has become a radically anthropological question, in the sense that it concerns not just how life is conceived but also how it is manipulated, as biotechnology places it increasingly under man’s control. In vitro fertilization, embryo research, the possibility of manufacturing clones and human hybrids: all this is now emerging and being promoted in today’s highly disillusioned culture, which believes it has mastered every mystery, because the origin of life is now within our grasp. Here we see...
the clearest expression of technology’s supremacy. In this type of culture, the conscience is simply invited to take note of technological possibilities. Yet we must not underestimate the disturbing scenarios that threaten our future, or the powerful new instruments that the ‘culture of death’ has at its disposal. To the tragic and widespread scourge of abortion we may well have to add in the future – indeed it is already surreptitiously present – the systematic eugenic programming of births. At the other end of the spectrum, a pro-euthanasia mindset is making inroads as an equally damaging assertion of control over life that under certain circumstances is deemed no longer worth living. Underlying these scenarios are cultural viewpoints that deny human dignity. These practices in turn foster a materialistic and mechanistic understanding of human life. Who could measure the negative effects of this kind of mentality for development? How can we be surprised by the indifference shown towards situations of human degradation, when such indifference extends even to our attitude towards what is and is not human? What is astonishing is the arbitrary and selective determination of what to put forward today as worthy of respect. Insignificant matters are considered shocking, yet unprecedented injustices seem to be widely tolerated. While the poor of the world continue knocking on the doors of the rich, the world of affluence runs the risk of no longer hearing those knocks, on account of a conscience that can no longer distinguish what is human. God reveals man to himself; reason and faith work hand in hand to demonstrate to us what is good, provided we want to see it; the natural law, in which creative Reason shines forth, reveals our greatness, but also our wretchedness insofar as we fail to recognize the call to moral truth” (Caritas in veritate, 75).

5.8. Transhumanism is a materialist ideology. That is, a new form of anthropological reductionism. According to this conception of human being, there is no soul or spiritual dimension in the constitution of a person.

The new global technoethics needs a different anthropological foundation. According to Christian anthropology, the human being is the unity of body and soul. It is one being, but has two interconnected dimensions: the material and the spiritual dimension. We cannot forget that the development of individuals and peoples depends partly on the resolution of problems of a spiritual nature.

“One aspect of the contemporary technological mindset is the tendency to consider the problems and emotions of the interior life from a purely psychological point of view, even to the point of neurological reductionism. In this way man’s interiority is emptied of its meaning and gradually our awareness of the human soul’s ontological depths, as probed by the saints, is lost. The question of development is closely bound up with our understanding of the human soul, insofar as we often reduce the self to the psyche and confuse the soul’s health with emotional well-being. These over-simplifications stem from a profound failure to understand the spiritual life, and they obscure the fact that the development of individuals and peoples depends partly on the resolution of problems of a spiritual nature. Development must include not just material growth but also spiritual growth, since the human person is a ‘unity of body and soul’, born of God’s creative love and destined for eternal life. The human being develops when he grows in the spirit, when his soul comes to know itself and the truths that God has implanted deep within, when he enters into dialogue with himself and his Creator. When he is far away from God, man is unsettled and ill at ease. Social and psychological alienation and the many neuroses that afflict affluent societies are attributable in part to spiritual factors. A prosperous society, highly developed in material terms but weighing heavily on the soul, is not of itself conducive to authentic development. The new forms of slavery to drugs and the lack of hope into which so many people fall can be explained not only in sociological and psychological terms but also in essentially spiritual terms. The emptiness, in which the soul feels abandoned, despite the availability of countless therapies for body and psyche, leads to suffering. There cannot be holistic development and universal common good unless people’s spiritual and moral welfare is taken into account, considered in their totality as body and soul” (Caritas in veritate, 76).

“The supremacy of technology tends to prevent people from recognizing anything that cannot be explained in terms of matter alone. Yet everyone experiences the many immaterial and spiritual dimensions of life. Knowing is not simply a material act, since the object that is known always conceals something beyond the empirical datum. All our knowledge, even the most simple, is always a minor miracle, since it can never be fully explained by the material instruments that we apply to it. In every truth there is something more than we would have expected, in the love that we receive there is always an element that surprises us. We should never cease to marvel at these things. In all knowledge and in every act of love the human soul experiences something “over and above”, which seems very much like a gift that we receive, or a height to which we are raised. The development of individuals and peoples is likewise located on a height, if we consider the spiritual dimension that must be present if such development is to be authentic. It requires new eyes and a new heart, capable of rising above a materialistic vision of human events, capable of glimpsing in development the “beyond” that technology cannot give. By following this path, it is possible to pursue the integral human development that takes its direction from the driving force of charity in truth” (Caritas in veritate, 77).

5.9. Global neoliberalism is a new idolatry of money. The goal of this ideology is clear: maximization of profits. The consequences of this ideology in the global world are the destruction of human beings, of families,
specifically the corruption of vulnerable groups and the destruction of ecosystems. No to the new idolatry of money

Pope Francis has written: “One cause of this situation is found in our relationship with money, since we calmly accept its dominion over ourselves and our societies. The current financial crisis can make us overlook the fact that it originated in a profound human crisis: the denial of the primacy of the human person! We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. Ex 32:1-35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalances and, above all, their lack of real concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption” (Evangelii Gaudium, 55).

“While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few. This imbalance is the result of ideologies, which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation. Consequently, they reject the right of states, charged with vigilance for the common good, to exercise any form of control. A new tyranny is thus born, invisible and often virtual, which unilaterally and relentlessly imposes its own laws and rules. Debt and the accumulation of interest also make it difficult for countries to realize the potential of their own economies and keep citizens from enjoying their real purchasing power. To all this we can add widespread corruption and self-serving tax evasion, which have taken on worldwide dimensions. The thirst for power and possessions knows no limits. In this system, which tends to devour everything which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule” (Evangelii Gaudium, 56).

5.10. Ethics would make it possible to bring a more moral social order. No to a financial system, which rules rather than serves

“Behind this attitude lurks a rejection of ethics and a rejection of God. Ethics has come to be viewed with a certain scornful derision. It is seen as counterproductive, too human, because it makes money and power relative. It is felt to be a threat, since it condemns the manipulation and debasement of the person. In effect, ethics leads to a God who calls for a committed response, which is outside the categories of the marketplace. When these latter are absolutized, God can only be seen as uncontrollable, unmanageable, even dangerous, since he calls human beings to their full realization and to freedom from all forms of enslavement. Ethics – a non-ideological ethics – would make it possible to bring about balance and a more humane social order. With this in mind, I encourage financial experts and political leaders to ponder the words of one of the sages of antiquity: “Not to share one’s wealth with the poor is to steal from them and to take away their livelihood. It is not our own goods which we hold, but theirs” (Evangelii Gaudium, 57).

“A financial reform open to such ethical considerations would require a vigorous change of approach on the part of political leaders. I urge them to face this challenge with determination and an eye to the future, while not ignoring, of course, the specifics of each case. Money must serve, not rule! The Pope loves everyone, rich and poor alike, but he is obliged in the name of Christ to remind all that the rich must help, respect and promote the poor. I exhort you to generous solidarity and to the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favors human beings” (Evangelii Gaudium, 58).

Pope Francis has written: “For new models of progress to arise, there is a need to change ‘models of global development’; this will entail a responsible reflection on ‘the meaning of the economy and its goals with an eye to correcting its malfunctions and misapplications’. It is not enough to balance, in the medium term, the protection of nature with financial gain, or the preservation of the environment with progress. Halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster. Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress. A technological and economic development, which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life, cannot be considered progress. Frequently, in fact, people’s quality of life actually diminishes — by the deterioration of the environment, the low quality of food or the depletion of resources — in the midst of economic growth. In this context, talk of sustainable growth usually becomes a way of distracting attention and offering excuses. It absorbs the language and values of ecology into the categories of finance and technocracy, and the social and environmental responsibility of businesses often gets reduced to a series of marketing and image-enhancing measures” (Laudato Si’, 194).

5.11. Pope Francis has written: “The principle of the maximization of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations, reflects a misunderstanding of the very concept of the economy. As long as production is increased, little concern is given to whether it is at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment; as long as the clearing of a forest increases production, no one calculates the losses entailed in the desertification of the land, the harm done to biodiversity or the increased pollution. In a word, businesses profit by calculating and paying only a fraction of the costs involved. Yet only when ‘the economic and social costs of using up shared environmental resources are recognized with transparency and fully borne by those
who incur them, not by other peoples or future generations', can those actions be considered ethical. An instrumental way of reasoning, which provides a purely static analysis of realities in the service of present needs, is at work whether resources are allocated by the market or by state central planning” (Laudato Si’, 195).

5.12. The alliance between global neoliberalism and transhumanism is one of the most important challenges of our time. We must defend the ethical principle of equality, the inherent dignity and the integrity of each human being.

A global regulation of human enhancement is important and is only possible if we construct a global technoethics. The instrumental logic of the market cannot be the sole answer.

We must actively participate in this construction and introduce Christian categories in dialogue with other spiritual and philosophical perspectives. We cannot be indifferent related to this process. It is our responsibility.