

A Critique of Pope Francis’s *Laudato si’*

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1261
I. IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM	1262
II. CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM	1262
III. POPE FRANCIS’ SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM	1267
<i>A. Theological Vision: Bible Interpreted from the Point of View of Aristotle (Non-Evolutionary Organic Metaphysics) via Aquinas.</i>	1267
<i>B. Corporatist Political Economy</i>	1268
IV. REBUTTAL: MISDIAGNOSES OF THE PROBLEM, CAUSES, AND SOLUTIONS.....	1270
<i>A. Environment</i>	1271
<i>B. Poverty</i>	1277
V. THE TECHNOLOGICAL PROJECT AND MARKET ECONOMIES.....	1279
VI. LIMITED GOVERNMENT	1280
VII. CULTURES OF AUTONOMOUS INDIVIDUALISM.....	1281
CONCLUSION.....	1282

INTRODUCTION

What follows is a critique of Pope Francis’s encyclical. In order to engage in this critique, it is important to summarize accurately and fairly what he says are his intentions. He outlines these points in paragraph 15¹:

1. “[B]riefly reviewing several aspects of the present ecological crisis . . . drawing on the results of the best scientific research available”;

1. Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter, Laudato si’: On Care for Our Common Home* (2015) [hereinafter Pope Francis, *Laudato si’*], http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_ enciclica-laudato-si.html.

2. Showing how the “Judeo-Christian tradition” has a “coherent” “commitment to the environment”;
3. Proposing to “get to the roots of the present situation . . . not only its symptoms but also its deepest causes”;
4. Offering “broader proposals for dialogue and action” intended to “affect international policy”; and
5. Offering “inspired guidelines.” What follows is an examination of the Pope’s (a) description of the problem as an “ecological crisis,” (b) his analysis of the “roots” of the problem, and (c) his proposed solution of the problem within the context of the Roman Catholic tradition.

I. IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

Pope Francis characterizes the problem not simply as an environmental crisis but as an ecological crisis. It is ecological in the sense that he links the environment with poverty, specifically by claiming that there is an “intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet.”²

The environmental symptoms are pollution, climate change, lack of water, depletion of natural resources, and loss of biodiversity; the impoverishment symptoms include declining quality of life, breakdown of society, global inequality, and the lack of an overall coherent response.

II. CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM

In Pope Francis’s view, the problem arises from four main causes. Each cause shares a common foundation—the Lockean Liberty narrative:

1. The Technological Project³: “We have come to see ourselves as her [Mother Earth’s] lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will.”⁴ Elsewhere he says, “our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their

2. *Id.* para. 16. The Pope previously published *Lumen Fidei* (“Light of Faith”), which had been initiated by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in 2013. *Laudato si’* is considered Francis’s first encyclical.

3. The expression “Technological Project” is not used by Pope Francis. The expression is used by Nicholas Capaldi and Gordon Lloyd in *Liberty and Equality in Political Economy: From Locke versus Rousseau to the Present* to cover views originally and variously expressed by Francis Bacon in the *Novum Organum*, John Locke in the *The Second Treatise of Civil Government*, and Rene Descartes in the *Discourse on the Method*, where Descartes specifically advocates that mankind make itself the “lords and possessors of Nature.” NICHOLAS CAPALDI & GORDON LLOYD, *LIBERTY AND EQUALITY IN POLITICAL ECONOMY: FROM LOCKE VERSUS ROUSSEAU TO THE PRESENT* 3–9 (2016) (citing RENE DESCARTES, *Discourse on the Method*, in *THE PHILOSOPHICAL WRITINGS OF DESCARTES*, VOL. I, at 123–24 (Cottingham, Stoothoff & Murdoch trans., Cambridge Univ. Press 1985)). Instead of conforming to nature, advocates of this project propose controlling nature for human purposes.

4. Pope Francis, *Laudato si’*, *supra note 1*, para. 2.

immediate needs.”⁵ He also identifies a “techno-economic paradigm,”⁶ the “dominant technocratic paradigm.”⁷ In referencing Romano Guardini’s *The End of the Modern World*, Pope Francis says, “Modern anthropocentrism has paradoxically ended up prizing technical thought over reality, since ‘the technological mind sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts, as a mere ‘given,’ as an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into useful shape; it views the cosmos similarly as a mere ‘space’ into which objects can be thrown with complete indifference.’”⁸

2. Market economies (capitalism): Pope Francis does not use the term “capitalism” but he speaks disparagingly of allowing “the invisible forces of the market to regulate the economy.”⁹ “Here too, it should always be kept in mind that ‘environmental protection cannot be assured solely on the basis of financial calculations of costs and benefits. The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces.’”¹⁰ “Once more, we need to reject a magical conception of the market, which would suggest that problems can be solved simply by an increase in the profits of companies or individuals.”¹¹ He advocates a “critique of the ‘myths’ of a modernity grounded in a utilitarian mindset (individualism, unlimited progress,¹² competition, consumerism, the unregulated market)”¹³ or “our unrestrained delusions of grandeur.”¹⁴ He also links the Technological Project with a market economy: “Technology, which, is linked to business interests”¹⁵ Elsewhere Pope Francis asserts that “the market tends to promote extreme consumerism.”¹⁶ He has a suspicion that markets undermine political institutions, as in the case of “huge global

5. *Id.* para. 11.

6. *Id.* para. 53.

7. *Id.* para. 101 and developed at paras. 101–14.

8. *Id.* para. 115.

9. *Id.* para. 123.

10. *Id.* para. 190.

11. *Id.*

12. *See id.* para. 78.

13. *Id.* para. 210.

14. *Id.* para. 11. Pope Francis’s arguments about the gap between the rich and the poor, the limits of growth, the need for redistribution, and the suggestion of a world government are similar to the views of the noted French socialist economist Thomas Piketty. For a summary and critique of Piketty, see CAPALDI & LLOYD, *supra* note 3, at 195–216.

15. Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, *supra* note 1, para. 20; *see also id.* para. 34.

16. *Id.* para. 203.

economic interests which, under the guise of protecting [individual nations], can undermine [their] sovereignty.”¹⁷

3. Limited government: Pope Francis also believes that the present world order of nation states is no longer functional, primarily because nation states exhibit crony capitalism and/or state capitalism instead of globalism. “[P]olitical authorities will always be reluctant to intervene, all the more when urgent needs must be met. To take up these responsibilities and the costs they entail, politicians will inevitably clash with the mindset of short-term gain and results which dominates present-day economics and politics.”¹⁸ “The twenty-first century, while maintaining systems of governance inherited from the past, is witnessing a weakening of the power of nation states, chiefly because the economic and financial sectors, being transnational, tends to prevail over the political.”¹⁹

A politics concerned with immediate results, supported by consumerist sectors of the population, is driven to produce short-term growth. In response to electoral interests, governments are reluctant to upset the public with measures which could affect the level of consumption or create risks for foreign investment. “The myopia of power politics delays the inclusion of a far-sighted environmental agenda within the overall agenda of governments.”²⁰

He is also careful to loop back this feature and connect it to the Technological Project and market economies: “[O]ur politics are subject to technology and finance. There are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected.”²¹ This is not an argument about specific defective nation-states but about the whole notion of nation-states. Although the Pope is generally supportive of traditional communities, this is one form of community of which he is not.

4. Cultures of autonomous individualism: “Men and women of our postmodern world run the risk of rampant individualism, and many problems of society are connected with today’s self-centered culture of instant gratification. We see this in the

17. *Id.* para. 38.

18. *Id.* para. 181.

19. *Id.* para. 175.

20. *Id.* para. 178.

21. *Id.* para. 54.

crisis of family and social ties and the difficulties of recognizing the other.”²²

Disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption, are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment. These attitudes also attune us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us. If we can overcome individualism, we will truly be able to develop a different lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society.²³

These four causes that Pope Francis views negatively are the four positive features of the so-called Lockean Liberty narrative.²⁴ Locke was a Protestant, specifically a Puritan: God intended us to work; it is part of God's design that human beings become self-sufficient. Luther insisted that worldly work is a duty. The Catholic notion of good works was transformed by Calvin into an obligation to work diligently as a sign of grace. If human beings work and acquire things, they will become self-reliant, and they will learn how to govern themselves economically and politically. God commanded us to develop the world, and through our labor to create property that was not already present. For Locke, the “*chief end*” therefore, of men's uniting into commonwealths and putting themselves under government is *the preservation of their property*.²⁵ The Technological Project demands a free market (capitalism), limited government, the rule of law, and the cultivation of individual freedom and responsibility.

God, who has given the world to men in common, has also given them reason to make use of it to the best advantage of life and convenience [I]t cannot be supposed that he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational . . . not to the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious For it is labor indeed that puts the difference of value on everything . . . of the products of the earth useful to the life of man, nine-tenths are the effects of labor.²⁶

22. *Id.* para. 162.

23. *Id.* para. 208.

24. CAPALDI & LLOYD, *supra* note 14, at 1–14.

25. JOHN LOCKE, *SECOND TREATISE OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT* para. 124 (Lester DeKoster ed., Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ'g Co. 1978) (1689) (emphasis added).

26. *Id.* paras. 26, 34, 40. Without mentioning Locke, there is an implicit rebuttal of Locke offered by Pope Francis. See Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, *supra* note 1, para. 67.

Pope Francis's intellectual inspiration is the work of Taparelli, the Jesuit who introduced the concept of "social justice" and articulated a neo-Thomistic Catholic theory self-consciously designed to rebut the views of Locke and Adam Smith. Taparelli attributed their views to the Protestant Reformation for two reasons: it promoted private judgment over the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, and it substituted, in his view, individualism for communal loyalty. In a Catholic economy, instead of wages being determined by supply and demand in the market, employers must pay a living wage sufficient to support the workers and their families. There was a liberal version of social justice articulated by Rosmini in the nineteenth century, but since WWII, Taparelli's anti-Locke/Smith version has prevailed.²⁷

In his opposition to Locke, Taparelli reflects the Rousseau Equality narrative:²⁸

1. The Technological Project is bad because it replaced small scale agriculture (romanticization of nature).
2. The Market Economy is bad because private property is theft and divides society between owners and workers ('haves' and 'have nots').
3. Limited Government is bad. In place of private interests, we need a *General Will* (retrieval of the classical conception of community).
4. Law is an extension of politics (the Lockean rule of law is an instrument of oligarchic oppression).
5. Communal identity replaces the autonomous individual.

Since the nineteenth century, there have been several definitions or understandings of 'socialism.' Marx and Engels derided 'utopian socialism' for being another form of liberalism whereas they promoted 'communism' because the latter entails public ownership and control of property or the means of production. This latter view is what the Church has always opposed. However, in the twentieth century, 'socialism' has also come to mean not public ownership but public control of private property. Nazism (National Socialism) was such a form. Some would argue this is a distinction without a difference. In the sense of public control, Catholic Social Thought is sympathetic to, if not supportive of, 'socialism,' or more precisely 'democratic socialism.'

27. Thomas Patrick Burke, *The Origins of Social Justice: Taparelli d'Azeglio*, 52 MOD. AGE 97, 97-106 (2010).

28. Pope Francis also endorses egalitarianism. See Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, *supra* note 1, para. 46. See generally *id.* paras. 48-52.

III. POPE FRANCIS'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

The solution involves embracing both a theological vision and a Corporatist political economy.

A. Theological Vision: Bible Interpreted from the Point of View of Aristotle (Non-Evolutionary Organic Metaphysics) via Aquinas.

It is important to put Roman Catholic Theology in historical perspective. Christianity began as a reform movement in Judaism, hence the expression Judeo-Christian. In practice, this encompasses both the *Old Testament* and the *New Testament*. Neither text references Greek philosophy. In view of the expectation that the second coming was imminent, early Christians did not develop a philosophical framework for several centuries. Eventually, they presented an initial philosophical rationale of and for themselves in Platonic terms. This philosophy is especially evident in the works of St. Augustine. Following the reintroduction of Aristotle's works to the West in the eleventh century, Christians came to understand themselves in Aristotelian terms, as is evident in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is teleological. Guided by a non-evolutionary biology, Aristotle conceived of the universe as teleological: the world has a larger encompassing purpose and everything in it is arranged in a hierarchical system in which every entity, human and non-human, pursues its own goal but always in relation to, and subordinate to, the overarching goal. Needless to add, Aristotle did not put this in Christian terms.

When the Church adopted this philosophical perspective and sacralized it, we find a physical universe in which everything serves God's Will. Generally, all living things have a smaller and a larger purpose, and every human being has a narrower purpose (personal salvation and contribution to the social common good) and a broader purpose understood as stewardship of the whole of nature.

Translated into contemporary biological terms, but without subscription to the concept of evolution, the physical world is one whole vast ecosystem, where the ecosystem is to be understood as a teleological one. The social world (all human institutions) is part of the ecosystem. The consequences of this system are:

1. Every individual human being has a divinely inspired telos such that without focusing on it we shall not live fulfilling lives but empty or destructive ones.
2. Every individual is connected in a larger social web such that there is no personal fulfillment outside meeting our social

obligations. The social dimension is constitutive of who we are. We are members of a world society.

3. As members of a world society, we collectively have an obligation to fulfill God's will in the stewardship over nature.
4. The authoritative and definitive interpretation of the entire web of relationships is vested in one overarching institution, standing above all governments, the Church.

There is to be a World Moral Authority (Ecumenical Papacy). "We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide . . ." ²⁹ There is to be a Global Political Institution with enforceable policies ³⁰ (world government):

[I]t is essential to devise stronger and more efficiently organized international institutions, with functionaries who are appointed fairly by agreement among national governments, and empowered to impose sanctions. As Benedict XVI has affirmed in continuity with the social teaching of the Church: 'To manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration: for all this, there is urgent need of a true world political authority, as my predecessor Blessed John XXIII indicated some years ago.' ³¹

B. Corporatist Political Economy

Corporatism is based on ideas that can be traced back again to Aristotle and Medieval Christendom's notion that society is an enterprise association, specifically, that it has a collective goal or telos. Human nature can only be fulfilled within a political community. The emphasis is not on the individual but the political community whose perfection allows the individual members to fulfill themselves and find happiness. Human society is understood to be both a collective ³² distinct from the individual and constitutive of the individual. We are who we are because of our membership in the collectivity.

29. Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, *supra* note 1, para. 52.

30. *See id.* para. 173.

31. *Id.* para. 175.

32. *Collective*, WIKIPEDIA, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective>.

Alarmed during the latter half of the nineteenth century both by the perception that the capitalist division of labor destroyed human and social integrity, promoted moral and social chaos, led to chronic conflict between employers and employees, and provided no framework for the resolution of conflict, and the equal fear that the rise of socialism would lead to the abolition of private property, Pope Leo XIII organized a commission in 1881 to formulate a version of corporatism that focused on social justice.³³ The commission defined corporatism as a “system of social organization that has at its base the grouping of men according to the community of their natural interests and social functions, and as true and proper organs of the state they direct and coordinate labor and capital in matters of common interest.” In *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Pope Leo gave his blessing to trade unions and urged government to recognize their status. Although Pope Leo denied that the state should totally control the economy, and emphasized a social model of *subsidiarity* and interlocking institutions, the state still retained a vital role in promoting social justice. Corporatism is (a) a form of socialism that (b) acknowledges private property and (c) designates the Church as final arbiter. The Church understands itself as superior to the government, as the protector of individuals and other institutions from domination by political and economic institutions.

There is to be a managed global economy:

In different ways, developing countries, where the most important reserves of the biosphere are found, continue to fuel the development of richer countries at the cost of their own present and future. The land of the southern poor is rich and mostly unpolluted, yet access to ownership of goods and resources for meeting vital needs is inhibited by a system of commercial relations and ownership which is structurally perverse. The developed countries ought to help pay this debt by significantly limiting their consumption of non-renewable energy and by assisting poorer countries to support policies and programmes of *sustainable* development.³⁴

The word sustainable appears eighteen times in the encyclical.³⁵

As part of the managed economy there will be a transformation, nay correction, of obtainable products and services. The purpose behind this economy is to eliminate consumerism. Consumerism is not defined by Pope Francis, but the concept of consumerism appears in Catholic writings

33. For detailed studies of corporatism, see PETER J. WILLIAMSON, *CORPORATISM IN PERSPECTIVE: AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO CORPORATIST THEORY* (1989); PETER J. WILLIAMSON, *VARIETIES OF CORPORATISM: A CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION* (1985); Randall K. Morck & Bernard Yeung, *Corporatism and the Ghost of the Third Way*, *CAPITALISM & SOCIETY*, Nov. 2010, at 1.

34. Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, *supra* note 1, para. 52 (emphasis added).

35. *Id.* paras. 13, 18, 28, 50–52, 102, 114, 140, 159, 164, 167, 169, 180, 191–94.

on business ethics³⁶ and means a personal and social disorder in which consumers believe that happiness and fulfillment are achieved by compulsive “retail therapy” and endless acquisition of goods and services in ever-increasing amounts, a compulsive–obsessive disorder fueled by manipulative advertising. The Pope further advocates universal employment: “[I]t is essential that ‘we continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone,’ no matter the limited interests of business and dubious economic reasoning.”³⁷ He is also an advocate of the redistribution of wealth: “[A] better distribution of wealth, concern for the environment and the rights of future generations . . . by itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion.”³⁸ Rather than recognizing that we may have misconceived the problem of poverty and that sometimes poorer indebted countries have mismanaged foreign aid and external investment,³⁹ he sides with the Rousseau–Marx claim that the poor have been exploited by the rich: “The foreign debt of poor countries has become a way of controlling them,” and “developed countries ought to help pay this debt by significantly limiting their [own] consumption of non-renewable energy.”⁴⁰ This is a standard refrain in Latin America to explain (or perhaps, excuse) why Latin America has lagged in economic development. Curiously, up until 1932, Argentina had a higher standard of living than the U.S. before it descended into Peronist corporatism.

IV. REBUTTAL: MISDIAGNOSES OF THE PROBLEM, CAUSES, AND SOLUTIONS

Environmental degradation is not the product of technology but the result of not enough technology; poverty is not the product of market economies but the lack of a viable market economy; social dysfunction is not the product of individual autonomy but the failure of traditional communities to adapt to the challenges and promises of modern individualism; political short-sightedness is not a reflection of limited national governments but a product of political economy hubris as well as the absence of the rule of law as understood in the Anglo-American sense.

36. William T. Cavanaugh, *The Unfreedom of the Free Market*, in WEALTH, POVERTY, AND HUMAN DESTINY 103 (Doug Bandow & David L. Schindler eds., 2003).

37. Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, *supra* note 1, para. 127.

38. *Id.* para. 109.

39. See WILLIAM EASTERLY, *THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN* (2006).

40. Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, *supra* note 1, para. 52.

A. Environment

In his endeavor to sacralize the earth, the Pope presumes that the only relevant frame of reference is planet Earth. We do not just live on planet Earth; planet Earth is a part of a larger solar system which in turn is part of a larger, perhaps *infinite*, universe. To assume that what we think we know now is true of the entire universe is the fallacy of composition (i.e., what is true of the part is true of the whole). Are we destined to occupy only the earth? Are there habitable planets elsewhere in the universe? What happens to humanity when the sun, our star, begins to cool and finally burns out? Are we limited just to the resources on earth or can resources from elsewhere be obtained?

The Pope seems committed to the “Gaia theory:”⁴¹ the view that the earth is one giant, all-encompassing ecosystem in which both organisms and inorganic elements on Earth form a self-regulating system that supports life.⁴² In addition to the scientific objections to this theory, there are many significant things in the environment, including living things (e.g., the Ebola virus), that put humanity in a life-and-death struggle against nature. Some would argue that the Technological Project is our only hope of overcoming the threats of nature. The Pope's position is reminiscent of Aquinas' argument that the regularities in nature are a kind of proof of a benevolent God's existence. Opponents have responded by pointing out irregularities.⁴³ In the nineteenth century this so-called argument from design was revived and applied only to the organic world, again to be rebutted by Darwin. On what scientific basis can we conclude that biodiversity is human friendly as opposed to a potential threat to humanity? We are once again confronted with the theological conundrum of how an all-powerful and benevolent creator could have created an imperfect world.

This is not the place to argue the merits of various scientific hypotheses, but it is worthwhile pointing out that His Holiness is on thin ice, and if he turns out to be wrong, then the Church may be facing the embarrassment of a new and contemporary Galilean moment. The Pope's entire argument against the Technological Project hinges on this one feature. Pope Francis has accused supporters of the Technological Project of a dangerous optimism and an intellectual anthropocentrism. In

41. See generally J.E. LOVELOCK, *GAIA: A NEW LOOK AT LIFE ON EARTH* (1979). Various limited versions of “Gaia theory” have supporters but many serious critics.

42. See Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, *supra* note 1, paras. 23–25.

43. For a discussion of the teleological or physico-theological argument, also known as the argument from design or intelligent design argument, see St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Article 3, Question 2*. For the most famous critique of this argument, see generally DAVID HUME, *DIALOGUES CONCERNING NATURAL RELIGION* (1779).

response, supporters of the Technological Project would argue that, in the absence of total knowledge, we no longer have the luxury of optimism, and no choice except to pursue the Technological Project. We cannot guarantee that the Technological Project will not itself be a cause of human destruction; but then again, we cannot guarantee that without it we will be able to defend humanity against all potential mortal threats. The argument cuts both ways.

The Technological Project may not be a symptom of hubris but of human prudence. Besides, the assertion or presupposition that nature has a purpose, divine or otherwise, is itself a form of anthropomorphism. Is knowledge of the world a fact about an objective structure, or are we always projecting a human frame of reference? How would we decide? Is this not an act of faith and not really science? Should public policy be based on competing theological visions? Perhaps what we are witnessing is the politicization of science.

On the issue of science, it is worth reviewing what the Pope has said about climate change (global warming, etc.). Although conceding that there are alternative scientific accounts, and that some of these alternatives either exempt or minimize the alleged damage caused by human industrial activity, it is clear that he has concluded that human beings in the grip of the Technological Project and market economies are the main culprits.⁴⁴

The Pope has also dismissed the idea that future technology can rectify these issues. He eschews “blind confidence in technical solutions,”⁴⁵ as well as “irrational confidence in progress and human abilities”⁴⁶ or “the myth of progress.”⁴⁷ He asserts, without qualification or support, the claim that “it is not possible to sustain the present level of consumption in developed countries.”⁴⁸ He is opposed to “buying the organs of the poor for resale”⁴⁹ but does not explain how we can obtain enough of those organs to save lives without a market or without advances in medical technology.

There is no mention or consideration of Julian Simon’s⁵⁰ argument that natural resources are not finite: we are interested in the function not

44. Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, *supra* note 1, para. 23 (stating that “global warming in recent decades . . . [is] mainly [] a result of human activity”).

45. *Id.* para. 14.

46. *Id.* para. 19.

47. *Id.* para. 60.

48. *Id.* para. 27.

49. *Id.* para. 123.

50. See generally JULIAN SIMON, *THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE* (1981). Simon maintained that increasing technology makes more resources available; although supplies may be limited physically, supplies may be recycled, and new alternatives are developed by the market. Simon also argued that population is the solution to resource scarcities and environmental problems because people and markets innovate. *Id.*

the resource, there are substitutable resources, and the universe through space exploration offers potentially infinite resources. There is no consideration of the extent to which the Technological Project can actually save species from new threats that animals are unable to combat on their own, or through the reconstitution of their DNA, and thereby enhance biodiversity.

One would think that preserving the environment from human misuse and husbanding natural resources would entail population control. On the contrary, the Pope rejects the Malthusian implications and insists, in adherence to Catholic doctrine, that “demographic growth is fully compatible with an integral and shared development.”⁵¹ But, if the population continues to grow and resources need to be managed, then by what mathematical calculation would humanity be able to overcome a steadily declining lifestyle for everyone over time? Far from demanding that population be controlled, Simon pointed out that population growth increases the likelihood of entrepreneurial and technological creativity.

At this stage of the climate change debate, how can the Pope definitively argue that human beings are the primary culprit? Nowhere does he discuss allegations of fraud on the part of researchers committed to the hypothesis that human beings are the main culprits for climate change. The prudent course of action is to keep all options open, but it is clear that the Pope is committed to believing that climate change is primarily a product of human action,⁵² that it is an existential threat to the whole planet,⁵³ and that coordinated international political action is the only defensible policy.⁵⁴ In retrospect, it is clear that he needs to believe this or his entire argument collapses. Given the origins of the doctrine of social justice in Taparelli's anti-Locke, pro-Rousseau framework, we can at least identify part of the philosophical framework within which the Pope moves.

If we turn to the larger Aristotelian framework that seems to have been imposed on Roman Catholic thought both in the Middle Ages and revived by Leo XIII in the late nineteenth century, there is an additional danger. Both in the Middle Ages and in our own secular age, the Aristotelian framework has been secularized. Political rulers have invoked Aristotle to claim, more consistently with Aristotle's own texts, that secular rulers of the political state, with or without claims of divine right,

51. Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, *supra* note 1, para. 50.

52. *Id.* para. 23.

53. *Id.* para. 25.

54. *Id.* para. 175.

are preeminent.⁵⁵ By adhering to a Rouseauian line, the Pope is in danger of aiding and abetting the rise of an all-powerful international secular political authority. Both the Catholic left and the secular left are only too ready to advance a basically political agenda that will ultimately prove hostile to an independent Church.

If we use Aristotle as our framework, then there is no free will, indeed no notion of a will, but only a natural teleology that is either corrupted by the environment or restored by the environment. This leads to the Rouseauian belief that human beings are naturally good and only corrupted by their environment, which in turn encourages the belief that a government powerful enough to control all of the institutions in society could engage in social technology and restore people to their natural condition.

Roman Catholicism has never been able to deal adequately with the problem of human error or evil: Saint Augustine advocated some version of free will (emphasized by Protestantism) but this could never be squared with teleology, not even in Aquinas. Roman Catholicism has always been in danger of having to rebuff utopia movements among its followers.⁵⁶ Although the Pope rejects the idea of a technological utopia, he seems to suggest that humanity can achieve one politically. In what sense does Catholicism entail that we can have any kind of happy ending in this world? If Catholicism is to be a comfort and inspiration to us as we journey through life under the shadow of death and fraught with evil, then why should we believe this condition is a remediable one with or without technology?

The Pope offers many telling and important criticisms of the way human beings have behaved with regard to the environment, themselves, their cultural traditions, political entities, and institutions of all kinds.⁵⁷ Surely, we can assume that the Pope is not saying that prior to the era of the Technological Project that there was no evil. In order for his critique to remain plausible he must be saying that the features of the Lockean narrative have made matters worse. What would count as evidence for or against this presumption?

Contrary to what Pope Francis says, on every conceivable measurable scale the human race has improved. There are more people in the world, including more Catholics, and those people are living longer,

55. WALTER ULLMAN, *A HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT: THE MIDDLE AGES* 167–173 (1965).

56. For a critique of Gnosticism, see ERIC VOEGELIN, *THE NEW SCIENCE OF POLITICS: AN INTRODUCTION* (1951).

57. See Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, *supra* note 1, para. 118 (critiquing “biocentrism”), para. 123 (critiquing relativism), para. 143 (ignoring our “historic, artistic and cultural patrimony”), para. 169 (critiquing countries which “place their national interests above the global common good”).

healthier, and more prosperous and fulfilling lives. Moreover, the more features of the Lockean narrative that countries adopt, the more likely they are to have a better life.

A final note on the Technological Project: why assume that the only purpose of the Technological Project is to improve the material condition of humanity? Starting with Locke, and as highlighted by Hegel, the Technological Project can be viewed as a spiritual quest, one in which the transformation of the world becomes an expression of human freedom and creativity, not domination. Such a view can even be found in Catholic Social Thought. John Paul II expressed this view in *Centesimus annus*:

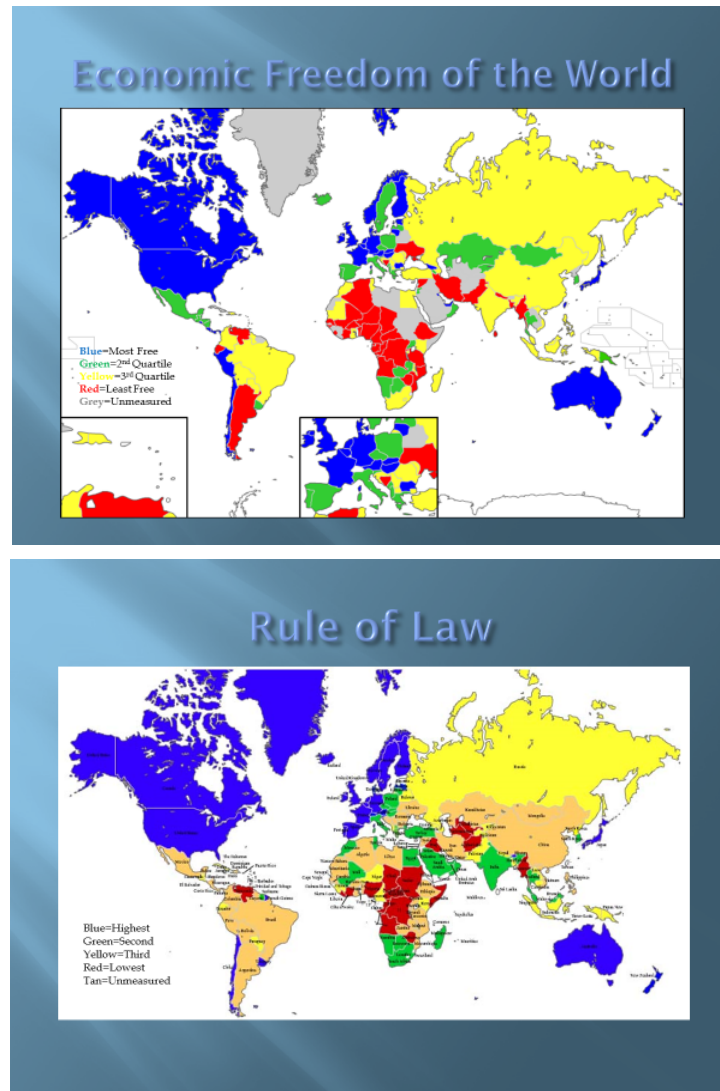
The original source of all that is good is the very act of God, who created both the earth and man, and who gave the earth to man so that he might have dominion over it by his work and enjoy its fruits (Gen 1:28). God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone. This is *the foundation of the universal destination of the earth's goods*. The earth, by reason of its fruitfulness and its capacity to satisfy human needs, is God's first gift for the sustenance of human life. But the earth does not yield its fruits without a particular human response to God's gift, that is to say, without work. It is through work that man, using his intelligence and exercising his freedom, succeeds in dominating the earth and making it a fitting home. In this way, he makes part of the earth his own, precisely the part which he has acquired through work; this is *the origin of individual property*. Obviously, he also has the responsibility not to hinder others from having their own part of God's gift; indeed, he must cooperate with others so that together all can dominate the earth. . . . In our time, *the role of human work* is becoming increasingly important as the productive factor both of non-material and of material wealth. Moreover, it is becoming clearer how a person's work is naturally interrelated with the work of others. . . . It is precisely the ability to foresee both the needs of others and the combinations of productive factors most adapted to satisfying those needs that constitutes another important source of wealth in modern society. Besides, many goods cannot be adequately produced through the work of an isolated individual; they require the cooperation of many people in working towards a common goal. Organizing such a productive effort, planning its duration in time, making sure that it corresponds in a positive way to the demands which it must satisfy, and taking the necessary risks—all this too is a source of wealth in today's society. In this way, *the role of disciplined and creative human work* and, as

an essential part of that work, *initiative and entrepreneurial ability* becomes increasingly evident and decisive.⁵⁸

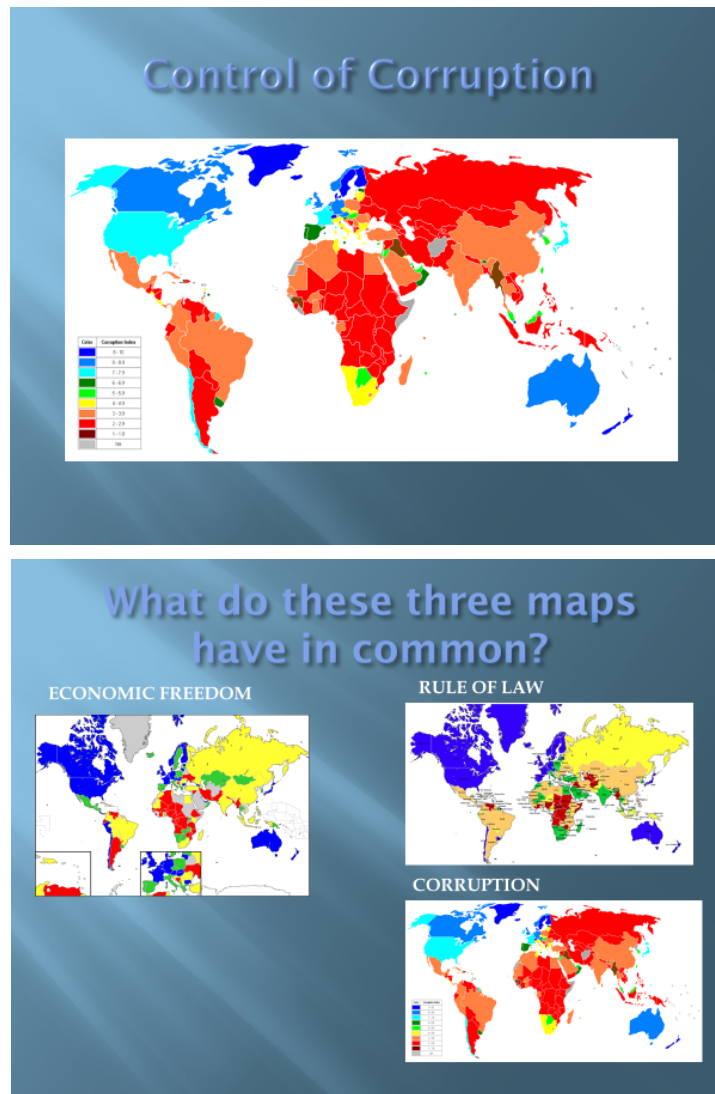
58. Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (May 1, 1991), at paras. 31–32, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html.

B. Poverty

How are we to understand 'poverty'? Let us begin by examining some larger comparative frameworks:⁵⁹



59. The first map is provided by the Fraser Institute. FRASER INSTITUTE, ECONOMIC FREEDOM OF THE WORLD: 2016 REPORT, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/economic-freedom-of-the-world-2016-map.pdf>. The second map comes from the World Bank. *Worldwide Governance Indicators*, WORLD BANK, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=worldwide-governance-indicators>. The third map comes from Amnesty International. *Corruption Perceptions Index 2016*, TRANSPARENCY INT'L (Jan. 25, 2017), https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016. Colors in the second and third maps have been adjusted to facilitate comparisons.



What these maps tell us is that (1) poverty exists precisely in those countries which fail to incorporate the Lockean narrative of the Technological Project, market economies, limited government, the rule of law, and the culture of personal autonomy. Further, (2) the non-Catholic countries of China and India, which used to be the poster children of poverty, have become prosperous to the extent that they have adopted the Technological Project and market economies. In addition, (3) the more countries adopt additional features of the Lockean narrative, the more they become increasingly politically free, increasingly responsible, and less corrupt. In terms of Latin America, is the continuing lack of economic

development the result of exploitation by capitalists in North America or is it the result of Latin America not being capitalist and Lockean enough?⁶⁰

V. THE TECHNOLOGICAL PROJECT AND MARKET ECONOMIES

Let us also raise some deeper questions about the meaning of the concept of “poverty.” If we just look at income numbers, the gap between the rich and poor has grown. However, if we look at the purchasing power (e.g., what a powerful computer costs now as opposed to twenty years ago, what medical procedures are available now compared to twenty years ago, etc.) the gap has shrunk, and it is precisely the work of the Technological Project that has raised everyone’s living standard.

When “poverty” is examined relative to the concept of “consumerism” a conundrum arises. If “consumerism” is bad, and if “poor” people are spared the problems of consumerism, are the poor not better off? If the response to this conundrum is that consumerism is only bad when people purchase unnecessary goods and services, then does this not lead to the specter of a culture in which wages, prices, profits, and consumption needs are to be rigidly controlled from the top down?

The Market economy does not of itself cause or promote greed:

The impulse to acquisition, pursuit of gain, of money, of the greatest possible amount of money, has in itself nothing to do with capitalism. . . . It should be taught in the kindergarten of cultural history that this naïve idea of capitalism must be given up once and for all. Unlimited greed for gain is not in the least identical with capitalism, and is still less its spirit. Capitalism *may* even be identical with the restraint, or at least a rational tempering, of this irrational impulse.⁶¹

The term “capitalism” (as opposed to “market economy”) stands for a false Euro-Marxist theory describing, in part, a permanent divide between owners and workers—something that market economies do away with; it is Marxists and liberation theologians who improperly describe

60. For a history and critique of Liberation Theology in Latin America, see Armando de la Torre, *The Worldly Failures of Liberation Theology*, in *BUSINESS AND RELIGION: A CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS* 409–17 (Nicholas Capaldi ed., 2005). See HERNANDO DE SOTO, *THE OTHER PATH: THE ECONOMIC ANSWER TO TERRORISM* (2002); HERNANDO DE SOTO, *THE MYSTERY OF CAPITAL: WHY CAPITALISM TRIUMPHS IN THE WEST AND FAILS EVERYWHERE ELSE* (2003); see also CARLOS RANGEL, *THE LATIN-AMERICANS: THEIR LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES* (1987); CLAUDIO VÉLIZ, *THE NEW WORLD OF THE GOTHIC FOX: CULTURE AND ECONOMY IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH AMERICA* (1994); PLINIO APULEYO MENDOZA ET AL., *GUIDE TO THE PERFECT LATIN AMERICAN IDIOT* (2001); PLINIO APULEYO MENDOZA ET AL., *FABRICANTES DE MISERIA: POLITICOS, CURAS, MILITARES, EMPRESARIOS, SINDICATOS* (1998); CARLOS ALBERTO MONTANER, *NO PERDAMOS TAMBIEN EL SIGLO XXI* (1997); MARIANO GRONDONA, *CONDICIONES CULTURALES DEL DESARROLLO ECONOMICO* (1999).

61. MAX WEBER, *THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM*, at xxxi (2001).

Latin American feudalism as “capitalism”; dividing the world into “haves” and “have-nots” is not only simplistic but reflects a Rousseau–Marx bias. This bias is reflected in Pope Francis’s claim that “resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all.”⁶²

VI. LIMITED GOVERNMENT

The greatest amount of political freedom, economic freedom, economic prosperity, rule of law, and diminished corruption are to be found in societies that (a) limit their government from the bottom up and not from the top down, and (b) have a Protestant culture, which emphasizes personal responsibility and freedom, not collective identity. It is, after all, Anglo-Protestant societies that liberated the Vatican in WWII and defeated post-war communism.

Given the wide-ranging nature of *Laudato si’* it is interesting to note that Pope Francis does not discuss the role of law or the legal system. The reason for this relates to the difference between the Anglo-American legal system, which reflects the Locke narrative, and the Continental legal system, which is part of the Euro-centric framework of the Pope’s thought. Although there is no space to discuss this issue at length here,⁶³ a few points are worth noting. The “rule of law” (as opposed to “rule through law”) exists only in Anglo-American legal systems (societies). As articulated by Dicey, Fuller, Hayek, and Oakeshott, the “rule of law” is the ideal of a legal system in which laws are universal and non-instrumental procedural norms in a civil association. The laws do not tell us what to do, but rather how to do what we do. The laws serve to maximize personal autonomy. What is crucial is not judicial review but the acceptance of a constitution designed to protect individual rights, not majoritarian or authoritarian conceptions of the universal good. On the face of it, this is clearly incompatible with Catholic Social Thought’s conception of a holistic community (enterprise association).

“Rule through law” (legalism) is the product of classical and medieval Continental culture that (a) promotes hierarchy (Justinian is above the law), (b) promotes a collective identity (natural law), and (c) like Canon law, encompasses the whole of one’s life. Central to this

62. Pope Francis, *Laudato si’*, *supra* note 1, para. 82. Compare to Jean Jacques Rousseau’s statement in DISCOURSE ON INEQUALITY 23 (1754): “The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself saying This is mine . . . ‘Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.’”

63. See Nadia E. Nedzel, *The Rule of Law v. the Legal State: Where Have We Come From, Where Are We Going To?*, in 38 IUS GENTIUM: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON LAW AND JUSTICE 289–314 (Sellers ed., 2014); Nadia E. Nedzel, *The Rule of Law: Its History and Meaning in Common Law, Civil Law, and Latin American Judicial Systems*, 10 RICHMOND J. GLOBAL L. & B. 57–109 (2010).

conception of law is its subservience to a collective identity. In the context of the Roman Catholic Church, the unelected bureaucracy and the infallible Pope are the ultimate arbiters of the meaning of Canon law. In the continental secular context, democratic majorities are the ultimate arbiters of the collective national interest. The Constitution protects a collective conception of what constitutes the individual good.

As an aside, it is worth noting that the Anglo-American conception of the rule of law allows the law to limit the government, which, in turn, maximizes individual freedom including freedom in the market economy. It prioritizes law above politics. Those who wish to use law to pursue a variety of political agendas (e.g., Rawls, Raz, Dworkin, Critical Legal Studies, and the majority of professors in law schools) and thereby prioritize politics over law, either reduce the rule of law to legalism, remain silent about it, or reject it outright.⁶⁴

VII. CULTURES OF AUTONOMOUS INDIVIDUALISM

Cultures of autonomous individualism are the great successes of the modern world; the greatest polluters (China and India) are not yet cultures of personal freedom and responsibility. Islam is also not yet a culture of personal freedom and responsibility; just as Marx misunderstood that the communist revolution would not prevail in advanced industrial societies but in feudal economies, so the Pope fails to see that his message is welcomed only in the most impoverished parts of the Southern Hemisphere. Catholics need to ask themselves: to what extent is Catholicism responsible for promoting poverty in Latin America and Africa by opposing autonomous individuality and promoting collectivism and group identity? Is the center of gravity of the Roman Catholic Church now in the southern hemisphere?

In the context of the U.S. it is worth asking the following questions:

1. Should we be surprised by the initial hostility that greeted Catholic immigrants to the U.S.?
2. Should we be surprised that it is the Catholic Left that is most enthusiastic about *Laudato si'*?
3. Which potential immigrants are more likely to embrace the Lockean narrative as opposed to the Rousseau narrative?
4. Is the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. headed for a new schism?

64. ROBERTO MANGABEIRA UNGER, *THE CRITICAL LEGAL STUDIES MOVEMENT* (1986).

5. When immigrants come to the U.S. seeking a better life, do they know why things are better in the U.S. and how they got to be better?

CONCLUSION

Laudato si' abandons rigorous argument. In embracing the Rousseau narrative, it has reduced itself to a laundry list of complaints without offering a serious, well-thought-out, and substantive alternative.⁶⁵ Its content is parasitic on what it is against. Worse still, it reflects a desperate attempt to become relevant to the contemporary conversation in an increasingly secular world. Something has been happening to religious consciousness in the wake of increasing skepticism, even in religious communities, about a transcendent God. As Christianity has increasingly become a religion of sensitivity toward “victims,” it has encouraged a more extensive social engineering and a therapeutic statism. In order to raise the self-esteem of designated victims, Christianity has been transformed into self-abasement in relation to the suffering just and encourages the expression of social and cultural guilt.⁶⁶

65. As Hittinger reminds us, however, failure to specify the content of the “third way” becomes a critique of liberal democracy that paves the way to totalitarianism and the destruction of the church. JOHN P. HITTINGER, *LIBERTY, WISDOM, AND GRACE: THOMISM AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL THEORY* 70 (2002).

66. PAUL GOTTFRIED, *MULTICULTURALISM AND THE POLITICS OF GUILT: TOWARD A SECULAR THEOCRACY* (2002). As *Chronicles Magazine*, one reviewer of this book, put it, “political correctness has become a substitute for Christianity.” *CHRONICLES MAG.*, Book Review, <https://www.amazon.com/Multiculturalism-Politics-Guilt-Secular-Theocracy/dp/0826215203>.