

A Reflection on the Future of Work in Companies in the Face of Technological Transformation

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Introduction

The technological revolution that we are currently experiencing, most certainly the fastest in history, is producing transformations that affect not only our own lives, but the future of humanity as well. This revolution produces changes in not only in the economy, politics, society and daily life, but even in those things once deemed to be fundamental constants of the human species: our physical and mental abilities, longevity, etc.² Artificial intelligence (AI), big data, automation, robotics, 5G, the Internet of things (IoT), blockchains, neuroscience, genetic engineering and increasing scientific and technological knowledge are all interrelated in this phenomenon. Advances and innovations come about quickly and all at the same time. These are, in short, changes consisting of successive or parallel waves of qualitative and quantitative leaps in knowledge and their practical application. The implications of what can rightly be referred to as a "whirlwind" of novelties and possibilities are huge for all areas of human activity. The opportunities it creates are so thoroughgoing that at times they seem unimaginable, while at the same time the concomitant risks do not seem to be in any way diminished. The world of work is only one area affected. However, without a doubt, it is one of enormous importance.

Taking the vision of human work as laid out by Pope Francis in *Laudato si*³ (*LS*) as a point of departure, in the following pages we seek to explore how the world of work might undergo modification due to the unparalleled technological transformation that we are currently experiencing, the opportunities for improvement that can reasonably be expected from the same, and the concomitant risks that must to be evaluated in order to deal with both creatively and in a timely manner. In his encyclical letter *LS*, primarily in chapter 2, Francis discusses the concept of work focusing on two fundamental ideas and draws our attention to three dangers currently looming over the world of work. On the one hand, he reminds us of the subjective dimension inherent to work, understanding it to be both a path leading to personal development and, ultimately, sanctification as well. On the other hand, he sees work as a productive activity capable of contributing to the common good and highlights the need for those engaged in business to view their work as a vocation that is noble, creative and productive that should be put to the service of all. The three dangers he sees in the world of work have to do with the loss of jobs as a result of automation, the loss of meaning in work, and the danger inherent to an economy focused on consumption.

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² González, F.: "Prólogo" in VV.AA.: *La era de la perplejidad: repensar el mundo que conocíamos*. Madrid, BBVA, OpenMind, Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial, 2018.

³ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html



Work in the Social Doctrine of the Church

In accordance with the teaching of the Social Doctrine of the Church (SDC), Francis points out that "man is the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and social life" (LS 127), and that, for this very reason, "We need to remember that men and women have 'the capacity to improve their lot, to further their moral growth and to develop their spiritual endowments.' Work should be the setting for this rich personal growth, where many aspects of life enter into play: creativity, planning for the future, developing our talents, living out our values, relating to others, giving glory to God. It follows that, in the reality of today's global society, it 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" (LS 127).

Relatedly, it seems relevant to note that throughout the encyclical one can find different meanings for the word "work." Among these, and arguably the most important in accordance with what Saint John Paul II taught, has to do with its role in personal development, the transformation of the created order and as a path of sanctification. This meaning is at the core of the SDC's teaching on work and finds its most elaborate expression in the encyclical letter *Laborem excersens*⁴ (LE) from 1981, promulgated by the Polish Pope. According to John Paul II, work has an objective dimension having to do with the product created or service delivered, which refers to the object resulting from the activity of work and is inherently connected to its technical nature. He expressly states, "If the biblical words 'subdue the earth' addressed to man from the very beginning are understood in the context of the whole modern age, industrial and post-industrial, then they undoubtedly include also a relationship with technology, with the world of machinery which is the fruit of the work of the human intellect and a historical confirmation of man's dominion over nature" (LE, 5). "This universality and, at the same time, this multiplicity of the process of 'subduing the earth' throw light upon human work, because man's dominion over the earth is achieved in and by means of work. There thus emerges the meaning of work in an objective sense, which finds expression in the various epochs of culture and civilization. Man dominates the earth by the very fact of domesticating animals, rearing them and obtaining from them the food and clothing he needs, and by the fact of being able to extract various natural resources from the earth and the seas. But man 'subdues the earth' much more when he begins to cultivate it and then to transform its products, adapting them to his own use. Thus agriculture constitutes through human work a primary field of economic activity and an indispensable factor of production. Industry in its turn will always consist in linking the earth's riches-whether nature's living resources, or the products of agriculture, or the mineral or chemical resources-with man's work, whether physical or intellectual. This is also in a sense true in the sphere of what are called service industries, and also in the sphere of research, pure or applied" (LE, 5). Francis, on his part, makes use of the very example of Jesus and Saint Joseph, in addition to several saints and devout individuals, especially the contributions of Saint Benedict, who integrated manual work into his spirituality: "Saint Benedict of Norcia proposed that his monks live in community, combining prayer and spiritual reading with manual labour (*ora et labora*).

⁴ http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html



Seeing manual labour as spiritually meaningful proved revolutionary. Personal growth and sanctification came to be sought in the interplay of recollection and work. This way of experiencing work makes us more protective and respectful of the environment; it imbues our relationship to the world with a healthy sobriety" (*LS* 126). Christianity has developed not only a positive vision of work — in contrast to the theory of divine punishment — but, what's more, a spirituality of work: "Together with the awe-filled contemplation of creation which we find in Saint Francis of Assisi, the Christian spiritual tradition has also developed a rich and balanced understanding of the meaning of work, as, for example, in the life of Blessed Charles de Foucauld and his followers" (*LS* 125). In points 127 and 128 of *LS*, he states that man is not only able to embark on a path of personal progress by means of work, but has been called to work since creation itself.

"While it may seem that in the industrial process it is the machine that 'works' and man merely supervises it, making it function and keeping it going in various ways, it is also true that for this very reason industrial development provides grounds for repropounding in new ways the question of human work. Both the original industrialization that gave rise to what is called the worker question and the subsequent industrial and post-industrial changes show in an eloquent manner that, even in the age of ever more mechanized 'work', the proper subject of work continues to be man" (*LE*, 5). This is so much the case that, "The development of industry and of the various sectors connected with it, even the most modern electronics technology, especially in the fields of miniaturization, communications and telecommunications and so forth, shows how vast is the role of technology, that ally of work that human thought has produced, in the interaction between the subject and object of work (in the widest sense of the word). Understood in this case not as a capacity or aptitude for work, but rather as a whole set of instruments which man uses in his work, technology is undoubtedly man's ally. It facilitates his work, perfects, accelerates and augments it. It leads to an increase in the quantity of things produced by work, and in many cases improves their quality" (*LE*, 5).

In addition to its objective dimension, work also has another dimension of a subjective nature. "Man has to subdue the earth and dominate it, because as the 'image of God' he is a person, that is to say, a subjective being capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself, and with a tendency to self-realization. As a person, man is therefore the subject of work. As a person he works, he performs various actions belonging to the work process; independently of their objective content, these actions must all serve to realize his humanity, to fulfil the calling to be a person that is his by reason of his very humanity" (*LE*, 6). This subjective dimension is closely connected with the ethical nature of work: "And so this 'dominion' spoken of in the biblical text being meditated upon here refers not only to the objective dimension of work but at the same time introduces us to an understanding of its subjective dimension. Understood as a process whereby man and the human race subdue the earth, work corresponds to this basic biblical concept only when throughout the process man manifests himself and confirms himself as the one who 'dominates.' This dominion, in a certain sense, refers to the subjective dimension even more than to the objective one: this dimension conditions the very ethical nature of work" (*LE*, 6).

Without a doubt human work has an ethical value, which is completely and directly linked to the fact that the person who carries it out is a person, a conscious and free subject, that is,

a subject that makes decisions that concern himself. This truth, which in a certain sense constitutes the fundamental and perennial core of the Christian doctrine on human work, has had, and continues to have a preeminent meaning in coming to terms with the important social problems that have been of interest to entire epochs of people (cf. *LE*, 6). Christian teaching on the subjective dimension of work was recovered and elaborated on especially by Saint. Josemaría Escrivá. The spirituality associated with Opus Dei came about expressly to make known, and this in the middle of the twentieth century, that work not only represented an opportunity for the development of various human qualities of the individual who carried it out, but was at the same time a fundamental way by which he contributes to the common good of society. And what is more, by sanctifying it, that is, offering his work to God, work came to be at the same time both a means of personal sanctification and an opportunity to collaborate in the sanctification of others, namely, those with whom one interacts in the context of work.⁵

Taking into consideration the distinction between objective and subjective work, *LS* also emphasizes a conception of work understood as a productive activity capable of contributing to the common good. Related to this emphasis is an understanding of work as employment (a job), which must then be complemented with the first emphasis, the objective and subjective dimensions of work. Francis specifically points out, "We were created with a vocation to work. The goal should not be that technological progress increasingly replace human work, for this would be detrimental to humanity. Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment. Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work. Yet the orientation of the economy has favoured a kind of technological progress in which the costs of production are reduced by laying off workers and replacing them with machines. This is yet another way in which we can end up working against ourselves. The loss of jobs also has a negative impact on the economy 'through the progressive erosion of social capital: the network of relationships of trust, dependability, and respect for rules, all of which are indispensable for any form of civil coexistence.' In other words, 'human costs always include economic costs, and economic dysfunctions always involve human costs.' To stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short-term financial gain, is bad business for society" (*LS*, 108). In the words of Saint John Paul II, "It is also a fact that, in some instances, technology can cease to be man's ally and become almost his enemy, as when the mechanization of work 'supplants' him, taking away all personal satisfaction and the incentive to creativity and responsibility, when it deprives many workers of their previous employment, or when, through exalting the machine, it reduces man to the status of its slave" (*LE*, 5).

Technological Transformation and Employment

Thus established in light of Christianity, the aforementioned extremely rich conception of work can be appreciated because the primary danger about which Francis warns us is the scourge of unemployment. Contrasting these ideas with reality, and by taking a close look at

⁵ For a better understanding of the spirituality of work as evidenced in Saint Josemaría Escrivá, the author recommends Illanes, J. L.: *La santificación del trabajo: el trabajo en la historia de la espiritualidad*. Palabra. Madrid, 2001; and in particular, chapter III, pp. 81-183.



the world today, we can see that the automation and robotics associated with AI and big-data allow us to see how the rapid replacement of tens of millions of people in the world by "machines" is taking place. In principle, all routine and standardized jobs face a "death threat."

Sophisticated technological devices will be able to do certain jobs faster and more efficiently and at a lower cost, therein avoiding the innumerable complexities that work performed by human beings inevitably entails. The reasons to think that there will be large sectors of unemployment in certain regions of the world and reduced global economic activity performed by humans are, therefore, numerous. This said, there are those who argue that, to the contrary, the creation of new heretofore unknown tasks will compensate for and even overcome the decrease of many other tasks existing today. There is a lack of consensus on the matter, however. As is true of questions characterized by uncertainty, expert analyses make a wide range of predictions ranging from the frankly pessimistic to the enthusiastically optimistic. On this point, it is relevant to determine what a realistic final scenario might be in terms of the outcome of the addition and subtraction of jobs, and thereby come up with a plausible approximation of how long the concomitant period of adjustment might be before a certain state of equilibrium is reached or at least a final state that is not worse than the initial one. An estimated duration of few years verses several decades, for example, are quite distinct matters. The corresponding individual, family, social and global impact will be radically different depending on the way in which two variables are worked out in practice, namely, the quantity and timing of changes in employment. What is more, it should be noted that once aggregate numbers are arrived at, it will nonetheless be necessary to complement these with specific geographical predictions based on regions and countries on the one hand, and by areas of economic activity on the other. Herein it is highly possible that different realities will evidence significant inequalities one from another. The underlying concerns, in any case, are, what will happen to people who lose their source of employment due to these changes, and how will their families as well as society at large be affected?

The situation described here will force countries to adopt measures to deal with the processes associated with changes in employment. Massive and focused training that will give citizens the ability to perform new types of tasks, as well as the implementation of public policies of solidarity to support those who remain unemployed for long periods of time would seem to be among the predictable number of upcoming challenges for political states and their governments. The business sector will at first face the difficult test of having to adapt to new economic-commercial scenarios that technological transformation will bring about. It is highly probable that there will be businesses that will eventually disappear and business models as well that will undergo radical changes, at the same time that many new businesses will be created, many of which it is impossible to imagine at present. In this scenario, companies will be responsible for taking on the responsibility of investing in the training of their human work teams so they can perform new or different tasks, while at the same developing plans that soften the impact for those employees who, in spite of the efforts that corporations make on their behalf, will finally have no choice but to be let go if the companies hope to remain competitive. It does not initially appear ethically plausible to think that business organizations can simply ignore the needs of their internal members as they make adjustments to the composition of their payrolls, even when this is economically possible and legal. In the social and market dynamics on the horizon, businesses will be called upon to act

with redoubled effort in the realm of social responsibility. For other business organizations, it will in be matters having to do with social responsibility that will confer or increase their social legitimacy. Human wellbeing, companies, and the social order will in this context all be at stake.

Following, and in turn, accepting the logic behind the papal letter *LS*, it would be appropriate to expect a special effort from the business world to try to keep all the jobs it can in place. In a situation wherein sources of employment are disappearing, a call such as this necessarily entails highlighting the importance of using business acumen and drive in order to create new concrete spaces for people to work productively. However, we should also think of complementary alternatives especially if, as is predicted to be the case, the use of emerging technology will be accompanied by significant increases in labor productivity. If this in fact takes place, it will be feasible to think about reducing working hours while at the same time maintaining workers' income levels. In this case, the challenge for businesses will be twofold. First, it will consist primarily of ensuring that the content of work-associated activity continues to be humanly enriching, while collaborating with civil society and the state in order to create or promote multiple activities related to personal development individuals can participate in such as volunteering, sports, culture, the care of others, etc., thereby making use of the increased free time they will have.

Although in what we write here we are, in effect, attempting to predict the challenges that employers and senior executives will have to face regarding the impact on the world of work that the developing technological revolution will entail, it is nonetheless essential to note here that in the same scenario(s) workers and trade union organizations will also be called upon to play a crucial role, namely to actively cooperate with the former in order to bring about the necessary conditions within companies to make the adjustments that will be required to maintain and increase the overall number of jobs. This collaborative spirit will become increasingly necessary in a labor market replete with changes and uncertainties. A disposition towards a mutual understanding between "capital" and "workforce," as internal company relations have primarily heretofore been understood, but which might possibly be overcome in the future, is in the present work posited to be an inevitable imperative in order to face both the current and upcoming reigning realities of the labor market .

Taking an additional step in his encyclical, Francis enters fully into the realm of the practical. He ventures to propose concrete lines of action, such as that "In order to continue to be able to provide employment, it is imperative to promote an economy that favors productive diversity and business creativity" (*LS*, 129). Concerned that all continue to have the possibility of access to decent employment, he states, "For example, there is a great variety of small-scale food production systems which feed the greater part of the world's peoples, using a modest amount of land and producing less waste, be it in small agricultural parcels, in orchards and gardens, hunting and wild harvesting" (*LS*, 129). However, he recognizes the objective difficulties present in world markets in order to create a space for these activities and associates them with the existence of economies of scale and large companies that take advantage of them: "Economies of scale, especially in the agricultural sector, end up forcing smallholders to sell their land or to abandon their traditional crops. Their attempts to move to other, more diversified, means of production prove fruitless because of the difficulty of linkage with regional and global markets, or because the infrastructure for sales and transport

is geared to larger businesses" (*LS*, 129). Not only this, he also claims that "Civil authorities have the right and duty to adopt clear and firm measures in support of small producers and differentiated production" (*LS*, 129). How might it possible to act in such a way that the activity of numerous small entrepreneurs will not be threatened and, with it, corresponding jobs not be destroyed? This is the incisive implicit question the Holy Father leaves for us to ponder. No one can remain indifferent to this question, nor in the face of his proposal in this regard: "To ensure economic freedom from which all can effectively benefit, restraints occasionally have to be imposed on those possessing greater resources and financial power. To claim economic freedom while real conditions bar many people from actual access to it, and while possibilities for employment continue to shrink, is to practise a doublespeak which brings politics into disrepute. Business is a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving our world. It can be a fruitful source of prosperity for the areas in which it operates, especially if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good" (*LS*, 129).

Continuing with the implications of our line of argumentation, it is truly not an easy matter to predict with any degree of certainty what the so-called "Fourth Industrial Revolution" will look like, which will unavoidably be characterized by automation and digitalization, in terms of its effect on the concentration or decentralization of economic activity. Of course, it would not be beyond the realm of possibility to think that an emphasis on technological innovation and the requirement for significant financial and intellectual capital will in consequence tend to strengthen the processes that lead to an increased concentration of economic power towards developed countries and large business corporations. However, it is also plausible to consider that human initiative will allow the use of the same technology to generate multiple applications of the same, thereby giving rise to an endless number of services that could be provided by medium and small entrepreneurs. Future socioeconomic realities, as always, seem to be open to the intervention of human freedom in history. Without seeking to slight negative views and even those doomsayers who manage to keep some grasp on reality who posit that the enormous technological development that humanity is currently experiencing could inevitably lead to leaving the world in the hands of a few powerful privileged holders of such technology and its concomitant use on a global scale, it is also possible to imagine a different scenario wherein these great advances are made increasingly within the reach, in terms of both access and price, of everyday citizens which will in turn make possible the realization of various smaller-scale works in shared community spaces in response to necessity and the fruit of inventiveness. In any case, it will be governments who must first engage in creating legal-economic frameworks that avoid excessive and pernicious concentration of economic activity while at the same time forestalling further damage to large companies as a result of such measures. Based in general terms on the dynamics of the prevailing free market economic model, it would seem virtually impossible to expect dominant economic agents themselves to freely opt to leave space for, much less encourage the activity of minor players. For something of this nature to come about, a substantial modification in the way in which the operations of the world economic order are understood or a radical change in the motivations underlying the decisions and actions of the majority of business owners and senior managers would have to be made. It is highly possible that both changes would have to take place in tandem.

Above all, it is necessary to make clear that the essential element to be safeguarded must be that technology be at the service of the person, so that the company by means of the use of technology helps create employment and collaborates to deliver solutions to the real problems of citizens.

Technological Transformation and the Human Significance of Work

The second concrete aspect in which Francis sees potential danger is the possible loss of the deep human significance of work. Assuming that in every work-related action a corresponding internal personal transformation is produced, he sees a clear risk that individuals are on a path towards a hollowing out of the intrinsic value of the act of working. This phenomenon has previously caught the attention of different thinkers and popes as well, in turn giving rise to the concept in sociology known as alienation, as understood by Max Weber and Saint John Paul II: "When the ability to contemplate and respect is damaged in the human being is damaged, the conditions are ripe for the meaning of the work to be disfigured as well" [101]. Herein the emphasis is not placed so much on the existence or availability of decent jobs as much as the way in which man appreciates the value of the work he carries out. Will his work be an activity that will allow for wholistic human fulfillment and be a source of deep life-giving meaning and a path of sanctification, or rather, will it become a task, at best focused only on the attempt to secure essential material goods and, at worst, one that will directly contribute to distancing the person from his inner growth and moving him even further away from a personal encounter with God? The question is not trivial when setting about to assess what the ongoing technological revolution might eventually mean for mankind. The dominant tenor that the response to this question takes will be crucial for the future destinies of both mankind and society.

The tacit question in these papal concerns leads to a profound questioning, that is, if foreseeable technological advances will tend to increase or decrease the primacy of the subjective dimension of work over the objective. That is to say, will these advances facilitate the process of interior development of mankind as the result of the action of working? Will these continue to be more important than their external result, or will they rather help the latter to prevail, thereby devaluing the hoped-for inner transformation of work that leads to human flourishing? A first attempt at answering this question would seem to offer a somewhat bleak picture.

In a world "dominated" by intelligent machines, with an enormous capacity to learn and process data, it would not be unheard of to think that many people could be displaced and subjugated to the same, performing jobs devoid of meaning and wherein they function as mere servants or slaves of cybernetic devices. It is a possibility that cannot be entirely ruled out, and this is even less the case when considering the situation from the perspective of (good) science fiction. However, at least in terms of a near future horizon, it is rather foreseeable to envision that men and women will gradually be freed from more routine and less "value-added" tasks in order to focus on performing more complex tasks that will require of them a greater contribution of knowledge and use of intelligence, decision-making capacity in the face of unexpected circumstances, and the application of the so-called "soft skills" (educational, artistic and cultural, interpersonal care and hospitality, the spirit of

service, and leadership, etc.). If this were to prove to be the case, far from getting worse, the possibilities of human growth by means of work could, in fact, improve. Carrying out more complex activities which require higher levels of human development is, in principle, also potentially an opportunity for increased human flourishing, at least in terms of purely earthly considerations. A much greater uncertainty is trying to predict if technological advances will open new doors for the spiritual-religious growth of mankind, or in effect, prove to be the opposite. The consideration of elements that far exceed the possibilities and purposes of this paper come into play here, although something will be said about the subject later in reference to the third danger that, in Francis' opinion, threatens work. It will be in the aforementioned context where companies will have to make their contribution by offering the maximum possible number of employment opportunities, maintaining those previously existing jobs while generating new ones replete with alternatives for human improvement. Leaving the most routine and those tasks easiest to operationalize to technological devices, business corporations will have the possibility, and the need, to deploy people in activities where they can contribute more decisively to their objectives, entrusting them with those functions where their capabilities exceed those of the latest machines. For this to take place, it will prove essential to invest in the training required to effectively and efficiently perform these tasks. In fact, it is entirely foreseeable that in coming years companies will be forced to increase their efforts related to training in order to adequately cope with new challenges. The most likely result that will accompany the process of technological change will be that companies will promote the increased availability of more complex tasks, which will in turn require a more holistic development on the part of those who perform them, especially in terms of requirements for knowledge and intellectual skills; although not necessarily those of a spiritual-religious nature.

While it is true that employers will have to be especially concerned with training, thereby giving their employees the opportunities and time necessary for these purposes, it is also true that workers will have to be attentive, proactive and committed in requesting and taking advantage of training, knowing that their future employability lies in training. In this sense, a great social challenge ahead will be that we will all have to adapt to a world characterized by even more change and in which, in all probability, companies and jobs will be created and destroyed at a dizzying speed. For this reason, it will almost certainly be the case that the search for labor flexibility and adaptability will become an unavoidable task for the societies of the future. Governments, trade associations, companies, unions and workers will have a shared task to undertake in this arena in order to cope with the vicissitudes of labor during the Fourth Industrial Revolution to any reasonable degree of success.

Technological Transformation and the Economy of Consumption

The third call for our attention that Francis makes in *LS* regarding work is related to the evil that he sees associated with an economy focused on consumption. This is probably the dimension in which there is the least degree of hope that the advances of technological transformation will result in restraining patterns of consumption, or virtuous improvement. It is rather the case that the opposite scenario is to be expected. In principle, technological transformation will most likely increase people's faith in themselves, in their own abilities, far from making their weaknesses more evident and, in this way, bringing them closer to God. From a material point of view, it should make it easier for people to access a greater

number of goods, more often than not at an economic cost potentially less than those currently in place, in such a way that the possibility of acquiring economic goods would be expected to become increasingly within reach for millions of individuals. In addition, as it is highly probable that the amount of free time people have will increase for a large percentage of the population, it is also reasonable to venture that, *ceteris paribus* the other variables that may come into play, the propensity to consume will also be increased by this factor as well. "Consumerism" as commonly referred to having to do with the chaotic tendency towards the consumption of material goods and entertainment, seems to be triggered by a certain spiritual emptiness, by a lack of transcendent vision of life, by forgetting God. The ever-widening access to consumption puts within reach and facilitates not only a process of deranged consumption, but it can also be presumed that this same process will help to deepen man's security in himself, thereby separating him from the experience of the transcendent. Thus considered, companies as organizations or institutions, will apparently have little to say in the task of promoting spirituality in the lives of their employees, that is, if we look at these realities strictly in light of their their technical-economic operations. As always, the difference in this matter can be brought about by business leaders (business owners and senior management) who will have their own deep spiritual and religious motivations. However, there is nothing to indicate that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is going to influence this dimension in any positive way. Reflections in this regard (including those have been made above) lead us to think that, in itself, said influence will be neutral or even negative.

The Vocation of the Business Leader and the New Evangelization

It is certainly the case that this assumption implicitly leads to highlighting the moral imperative that "the new evangelization" in fact reach those managers who today, as never before in history, have an extraordinarily significant impact on the entire global social order. This is the case given the crucial role that business organizations have come to play in terms of their centrality and influence in spheres of world power. As may be appreciated, consequences of enormous repercussion for the world of work and world society might, or might not, follow in the wake of this reality. This missionary task of both businessmen and women is of the greatest importance and, at the present time, could well be carried out by recognizing the imperative need to look after sources of employment and the content or nature of work itself. Raising awareness of this reality among these individuals based not only or primarily on economic grounds, but on theological-doctrinal, anthropological and sociological foundations, looms large as a great, yet essential, challenge. Were this not to prove to be the case, under the reigning absolutist economic rationality, focused on maximizing personal or corporate benefits to the detriment of everything else, it is virtually impossible to entertain the notion that the analyzes carried out in business corporations will be informed by the appropriate variables, that is, to include considerations of consequences and events holistically and, for this reason, that the results of these investigations will in turn help to head off falling into fatal reductionisms that lead to, due to short-sightedness or blindness, the making of erroneous decisions with grave repercussions for millions of people and numerous nations.

People who exercise business leadership "are called to engage with the contemporary economic and financial world in light of the principles of human dignity and the common



good."⁶ Francis, as previously mentioned, considers the company a noble vocation and "calls business people to discover the intrinsic value of all God's creatures... to see each person as a 'subject who can never be reduced to the status of object,' and to create jobs 'as an essential part of their service to the common good.'"

"By so doing, business leaders can carry on God's creation and serve it faithfully."⁷ The objective hierarchy of values must always be respected, without converting means into ends. And the economy is a means for the good of people. Profits should be sought, but with the ultimate desire to serve others and the common good, conscious of a world and of times that are full of needs."⁸ The expected effects of the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" and "Digital Transformation" constitute, perhaps, the most enormous and relevant of these requirements to be faced at the present time. There is work to do!

⁶ Turkson, Cardinal Peter K.A.: "Foreword to the 2018 English Edition" in *Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection*. Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (ed.); John A. Ryan Institute for Catholic Social Thought of The Center for Catholic Studies., University St. Thomas. Vatican City / Minnesota, USA, September 2018, p. 1.

⁷ *Cfr. Ibid.*, p. 1, where he cites *LS*, 81 and 129.

⁸ *Cfr. Echevarría, J.: Dirigir empresas con sentido cristiano*. EUNSA. Barañain, 2015, p. 50.