

MAGNIFICENT HUMANITY (MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS)

POPE LEO'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH. CHAPTER THREE. NUMBERS 112 – 130

Technology and Dominance.

The Grandeur of Humanity in Light of the Promises of AI.

Chapter Three continues by returning to the “central question: what does it mean to safeguard humanity”? The fundamental problem is not the “misuse of certain technologies...but AI threatens to normalise an anti-human vision. In that vision, the fullness of life is equated with having more, reducing weakness, eliminating uncertainty and exerting total control. When efficiency becomes the ultimate measure of value, human beings are tempted to see themselves as a project to be optimized rather than as persons called to relationship and communion.” (No. 112, ps.105/6) Civilisation is threatened if technologies (sometimes called transhuman or posthuman) treat human beings as “something to be perfected or surpassed, it becomes easier to accept that some lives are less useful, less desirable or less worthy”. (No.117, p.108/109)

“Everything that appears as a limit – incapacity, illness, old age, suffering, vulnerability – tend to be seen primarily as defects to be corrected, rather than as a reality through which our humanity matures and opens itself to relationship. And we must remember that humanity flourishes not *despite* limitations, but often *through* them....**While it is right to strive to alleviate the suffering that marks human life**, it is also wise to acknowledge our fundamental finitude....We see this at many moments when our limits become tangible: when we face rejection, when we suffer the illness or loss of a loved one, when we encounter our own weakness or failure. Mysteriously, it is precisely in such moments that we can discover a new wisdom, tangibly experience the closeness of others and encounter the presence of the Lord....To eliminate suffering entirely would mean, in the end, extinguishing love and desire as well. Those who love and desire cannot avoid passing through trial and suffering over the years, we carry within us lessons that leave their mark like scars, the memories of a journey shaped by freedom and failure, dreams and disappointments.” (No. 119/120, ps. 110/111) Over the centuries many individuals and institutions have shown courage and generosity in their desire to improve the lives of the poor, the sick and those treated as outcasts in their own countries. Culture – art; music; poetry; literature etc., also shows the “spark” of creativity in the human person and it helps us to recognise the face of God. We know that all we have has been given to us by a God who loves us and who wants us to love one another. “We can embrace the technological progress that alleviates suffering and unlocks new possibilities, provided that we do not abandon the very essence of our humanity, namely the capacity for relationship and love.” (No. 126, p.115)