

Business & Society

Facing up to the Anthropocene: how Catholic Social Teaching encourages a postgrowth perspective

Journal:	<i>Business & Society</i>
Manuscript ID	BAS-25-0742
Manuscript Type:	Original Manuscript - Full Length
Keywords:	religion, postgrowth, sustainable development, Catholic, ecology
Abstract:	<p>The Anthropocene requires us to reshape all the dominant social paradigms governing our economic and business organizations. In this context, postgrowth paradigm invites us to break with the ideology of growth in order to enable global ecological justice. Other researchers invite us to draw on relational ontology to reshape our relationships with natural entities. A third stream of research departs from the assumption that Catholic Social Teaching (CST) can contribute to a more effective pursuit of sustainable development. Our work lies at the intersection of these three fields. Based on a content analysis, we show how the recent discourse of the Church appropriates all forms of growth critique, with the exception of the ecofeminist critique. This work enriches the literature on the links between CST, business organizations and ontologies of relation to the world, and opens up new perspectives on the place of religions and spiritualities in the Anthropocene</p>

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INTRODUCTION

"Life on planet Earth is under siege. We are now in an uncharted territory" (Ripple et al., 2023, p.1). Richardson et al. (2023) established that six of the nine planetary boundaries have now been exceeded and that a seventh is on the verge of being exceeded. The year 2024 was the hottest ever recorded, leading to a multiplication of heatwaves, floods, droughts, and wildfires. This year also marked the surpassing of 1.5°C of warming compared to the pre-industrial period, a finding that undermines the goal of the Paris Agreement (2015) whose aim was to hold "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels" and pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. These breaches mark the entry into a new era, the Anthropocene, which designates a change in geological era in which it is no longer exogenous natural factors to humans, but rather humanity as a whole – the Anthropos – that directly affects the geological dynamics of the Earth system (Steffen et al., 2011). In this context, "there is a significant need for more balanced reflection on and integration of insights from different paradigms in order to better understand and respond to these critical issues" (Dahlmann, 2025). Indeed, the Anthropocene involves significant tipping points for management sciences: scarcity of natural resources; unstable, non-linear, and irreversible nature of risks; philosophical crisis of naturalism; identity of management sciences (Acquier et al., 2024). The dominant social paradigms that govern our Western societies are questioned: political (private property is fundamental and the role of government is to protect it); economic (which values opulence, growth as a source of progress, and the pursuit of self-interest); technological (the technological solution as a means to ensure the material resolution of any societal problem); anthropocentric (a conception of nature subordinated to humans and considered as a stock of exploitable and unlimited resources); competition (as the primary and superior mode of social interaction) (Kilbourne et al., 2009).

We can distinguish three fields of research that explore alternatives to these dominant social paradigms. The first is that of post-growth, which can be defined as "the democratic transition to a society that – in order to enable global ecological justice – is based on a much smaller throughput of energy and resources, that deepens democracy and guarantees a good life and social justice for all, and that does not depend on continuous expansion" (Schmelzer et al., 2022, p.4). Research into these streams questions the growth hegemony and specially the "the loop of unsustainability", i.e. the fact that profit maximization and perpetual economic growth are connected through a mutually reinforcing relationship which deepens the metabolic rift and keep business from contributing to Earth system justice (Schneider and Murray, 2025). In this vein, scholars explore how business models can implement degrowth perspectives (Nesterova, 2020; Niessen and Bocken 2021; Hankammer et al., 2021), how to implement a transformative Sustainability Marketing (Lloveras, 2022; Rémy et al., 2024) or how to establish lifestyles based on sufficiency (Gorge et al., 2015; Sandberg, 2021).

A second field of research explores how our worldviews can contribute to evolving dominant social paradigms. The concept of worldview is generally understood to consist of foundational assumptions and perceptions "regarding the underlying nature of reality, proper social relations or guidelines for living, or the existence or non-existence of important entities" (Koltko-Rivera, 2004, p.5). Worldviews are then understood as the inescapable, overarching systems of meaning and meaning-making that substantially inform how humans interpret, enact, and co-create reality and thus contain, for example, values and environmental attitudes (Hedlund-de Witt, 2012, p.74). Descola's comparative anthropology (2013) distinguishes four ontologies: animism, naturalism, totemism, and analogism. The Anthropocene implies thinking about the crisis of naturalism (Acquier, Meyer, and Valiorgue, 2024), which produces an anthropocentrism in which the world is understood as a set of resources subject to predation for productive purposes. Research into this stream explores how types of worldview shape our relationship to the self, others, nature, and transcendence (van Egmond and De Vries, 2011) and the implications of the market logic dominance in faculty mindsets (Kemper, Hall and Ballantine, 2019). Some authors suggest that neo-animism (Helkkula and Arnould, 2022) or conceptualizing sustainability as the "pursuit of life" (Dahlmann, 2025) can enable us to achieve our Sustainable Development Goals.

A third area of research explores the role of religions, considering the importance of religion as a social force that affects business and society (Van Burren, Syed and Mir, 2020). Given that Christian ethics applied to economics and business has a long tradition (Melé and Fontrodona, 2017), several authors depart from the assumption that Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is a source of wisdom helping organizations to become more virtuous by contributing to a more effective pursuit of sustainable development (Dann and Dann, 2016; Cremers, 2017). To this end, several authors have mobilized encyclical letters from the CST to enrich theoretical economic and business frameworks (De Peyrelongue et al., 2017; Sadowski, 2021; Klein and Lacznia, 2021; Zózimo, Pina e Cunha and Rego, 2023).

Our work lies at the intersection of these three fields of research and aims to better understand how the Magisterium's discourse on ecology can illuminate current reflections on the challenges of the Anthropocene. With 2.3 billion Christians, including 1.2 billion Catholics, a better understanding of the cosmology promoted by the Christian religion can be fruitful in the debates on the issues of the Anthropocene. To this end, we draw on two texts from the CST: (i) the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* (180 pages) published in 2015 by Pope Francis and considered as the text that popularizes Christian reflection on ecology; (ii) the apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum* (60 pages), published in 2023 and presented as a continuation of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

We mobilize the theoretical framework of critiques of growth: ecological critique, socio-economic critique, feminist critique, South-North critique, cultural critique, anti-capitalist critique, and anti-industrial critique (Schmelzer, 2022; Schmelzer et al., 2022). We reveal how the discourse of the

Magisterium – which must be distinguished from a much broader theological production – appropriates all the critiques made against growth, with the exception of the ecofeminist critique. While the term "degrowth" is not explicitly used in the studied corpus, our analysis points out that the Magisterium's discourse advocates for new forms of growth, and to contain growth by setting some reasonable limits in order to develop an authentic human growth through a refounding of naturalism.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following section outlines the research currents that are attempting to imagine alternative growth models and then clarifies the theoretical framework mobilized in this research.

Alternative forms of growth

Since the end of the 1990s, criticism of growth has been growing. Some argue for sustainable growth (or green growth), which involves balancing the preservation of the planet's habitability with sustained economic growth. Having emerged as a central theme of public policy since the Rio +20 conference in 2012 and supported by the major economic and political institutions (World Bank, OECD, European Green Deal), proponents of sustainable growth consider that growth is necessary to increase levels of income, education, and health and to fuel progress. Therefore, the aim is to decouple economic growth – measured by GDP – from resource consumption and environmental impact. The success of this decoupling essentially relies on technological innovation. However, literature shows that the decoupling rates remain insufficient to meet the targets for reducing gas emissions (Ripple et al., 2023; Vogel and Hickel, 2023) particularly due to rebound effect (Lange and Berner, 2022).

Another research stream is emerging around the idea of post-growth, or "prosperity without growth" (Jackson, 2010). A post-growth society is "a society which, in a democratic process of transformation, (i) enables global ecological justice, in other words it transforms and reduces its material metabolism, and thus also production and consumption, in such a way that its way of life is ecologically sustainable in the long term and globally just; (ii) strengthens social justice and self-determination and strives for a good life for all under the conditions of this changed metabolism; (iii) redesigns its institutions and infrastructures so that they are not dependent on growth and continuous expansion for their functioning" (Schmelzer et al., 2022, p.195). It deals with rethinking the economy to contain it between two limits: above a social threshold (the well-being of individuals) and below an ecological threshold (planetary boundaries) (Raworth, 2017).

Finally, other authors advocate degrowth, i.e. a decrease in the size of the economy, and consider that production must drastically decrease in an organized manner. Hickel (2021, p.1) defines degrowth as "a planned reduction of energy and resource use designed to bring the economy back into balance with the living world in a way that reduces inequality and improves human well-being". While post-growth proponents are cautious about the idea of talking about "degrowth", considering that the term has

negative connotations and hinders the ability to get the whole population on board, degrowth advocates, on the other hand, consider the ability of this "missile word" to stir consciences and provoke the necessary shock. To this end, Hickel (2021) identifies three common misunderstandings of degrowth. First, the purpose of degrowth is not to reduce GDP per se, but rather to reduce the economy's material throughput and energy demand, with the understanding that reducing throughput is likely to lead to a reduction in the rate of GDP growth, or even a decline in GDP itself, and we have to be prepared to manage that outcome in a safe and just way. Second, degrowth differs from recession: (i) degrowth is planned; (ii) it has a discriminating approach to reducing economic activity; (iii) it introduces policies to prevent unemployment and is explicitly focused on maintaining and improving people's livelihoods despite a reduction in aggregate economic activity; (iv) it seeks to reduce inequality and share national and global income more fairly, such as with progressive taxation and living wage policies; (v) it seeks to expand universal public goods and services in order to decommodify the foundational goods that people need in order to lead flourishing lives; (vi) it is part of a plan to achieve a rapid transition to reverse ecological breakdown. Third, the scope of degrowth is confined to affluent consumer societies in the Global North. Because degrowth is focused on reducing excess resource and energy use, it does not apply to economies that are not characterized by excess resource and energy use.

Beyond these differences, proponents of post-growth and degrowth agree on many points, including the reduction of material consumption, a break with the dynamics of capitalist accumulation, the need to adopt as an objective the satisfaction of the essential needs of all through sufficiency and a policy of drastically reducing inequalities.

Seven forms of growth critique

To better understand how the discourse of the Magisterium aligns with a degrowth perspective, the theoretical framework of Schmelzer (2022) and Schmelzer et al. (2022) proves to be particularly suitable. Their theoretical framework posits that degrowth can be understood as the convergence of seven forms of growth critique.¹ They distinguish on the one hand the critiques of growth that emerged in the 1950s originally targeting GDP and growth as a political objective (these critiques would later spread to a broader critique of the growth paradigm). Presented here are (i) the ecological critique, (ii)

¹ The theoretical framework of growth critiques distinguishes a eighth critique called "Reactionary critique of growth". Reactionary critiques of growth argue that economic growth destroys racially defined bioregions and communities, that it threatens traditional lifestyles through increased trade, global exchanges, and migration and that it leads to and is driven by population growth, which should be curbed (Schmelzer, 2022, p.12). The framework argues that Reactionary critique of growth is "outside of the degrowth debate" in so far as the core of degrowth, with its emphasis on ecological justice, a critique of all forms of exploitation and hierarchies, and a vision of solidarity, points to the very opposite of conservative, anti-modern or regressive growth critiques (Schmelzer, Vetter and Vansintjan, 2022, p.177)

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the socio-economic critique, (iii) the feminist critique, and (iv) the South-North critique. On the other hand, the authors point out that older critiques appeared as early as the eighteenth century, questioning the phenomenon of growth as such, regardless of the exact way it is defined or measured, or whether it is a political objective or not. Highlighted here are (i) the cultural critique, (ii) the critique of capitalism, and (iii) the critique of industrialism. Table 1 below presents a summary of these seven critiques addressed to growth, which we will detail below.

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Table 1. Ideal-typical systematization of seven forms of growth critique, adapted from Schmelzer (2022) and Schmelzer et al. (2022)

	Critique of GDP	Broader critique of growth	Key notions
Ecological critique	GDP excludes ecological externalities; it disregards diminishing stocks; economy as subsystem of environment	... it destroys the ecological foundations of human life and cannot be transformed to become sustainable	Planetary boundaries, limited resources, strong sustainability
Socio-economic critique	GDP is a bad measure of well-being or prosperity, mixes good and bads, disregards inequality	... does not contribute (anymore) to well-being, but rather stands in the way of prosperity and equality of all	Good life, life satisfaction, subjective well-being
Feminist critique	GDP excludes and devalues non-monetary labour, housework and subsistence work	... is based on gendered over-exploitation and devalues reproduction	Reproductive forces, gender, care
South-North critique	GDP excludes non-monetary labour and the informal sector and does not adequately measure qualitative development and human needs	... relies on and reproduces relations of domination, extraction and exploitation between capitalist centre and periphery	Social inequalities, postcolonialism, inclusion/exclusion
Cultural critique		... produces alienating ways of working, living, and relating to each other and nature.	Value capture, expansion, intensification, commodities
Critique of capitalism		... depends on and is driven by capitalist exploitation and accumulation	Alienation, conviviality, techno solutionism
Critique of industrialism		... gives rise to undemocratic productive forces and techniques	Anthropology, subject, resonance, reliance

Ecological critique lies in the fact that there is no infinite growth in a finite world. This critique takes a critical look at GDP in that it does not take into account the ecosystem services provided by nature. In addition to this critique of GDP, the ecological critique emphasizes the physical limits of growth by insisting that economic growth leads to crossing planetary boundaries, which compromises the habitability of the planet.

Socio-economic critique questions the assumption that growth necessarily improves quality of life and contributes to a 'good life'. This criticism adopts the 'Easterlin Paradox' (1974), which states that on a macroeconomic scale, it is observed that beyond a certain threshold of GDP per capita, growth ceases to increase happiness. The notions of ostentatious, symbolic, or positional consumption feed this criticism, which advocates for a redefinition of happiness and progress in order to disentangle them from a logic of material accumulation.

Feminist critique of growth argues that economic growth is based on the overexploitation of women and devalues "reproductive economy." In its narrowest form, this criticism targets GDP, which excludes non-monetary work, household chores, and subsistence activities, mostly performed by women. However, feminist criticism more broadly denounces an economic system dependent on growth, within which reproductive work is in a permanent crisis because it is structurally devalued and poorly or not compensated at all.

South-North critique focuses on forms of hierarchy, exclusion, and exploitation linked to capitalist growth. In its narrowest form, it criticizes the fact that GDP excludes the informal sector, subsistence activities, and non-monetary work, and therefore cannot adequately measure development and human needs. In its broader form, South-North criticism draws on anti-colonial movements since the nineteenth century and emphasizes the hierarchies, exclusions, and forms of exploitation associated with capitalist development, global growth, and the universalization of European civilization.

Cultural critique questions how societies based on the growth paradigm shape individuals as subjects. The growth paradigm is criticized for leading to the creation of a "consumer society", thereby obscuring other dimensions of the person (social, psychological, spiritual). The growth paradigm is therefore denounced for encouraging individuals to internalize this logic of growth, leading to widespread social acceleration that manifests itself in a predatory relationship with the world, which alters people's capacity for resonance (Rosa, 2019). Cultural criticism rejects the idea of the isolated individual, emphasizing the interdependence between human beings and ecosystems. It advocates for a convivial society (Illich, 1973), i.e., forms of social organization that allow for mutual dependencies and the negotiation of interpersonal relationships where the issue of *reliance* is central.

Critique of capitalism relies on the idea that capitalism is fundamentally organized around competition expansion, growth, and intensification. Capitalism can be understood here as a continuous movement to overcome barriers to accumulation (and thus to growth), where accumulation describes the continuous

process of adding value to capital. From this perspective, growth is analyzed as a necessary consequence, but also as a condition, of capitalist accumulation. Indeed, economic growth is the consequence of the compulsion to make profit, a process resulting from accumulation. But economic growth is also a condition of accumulation: without growth and the related biophysical and social processes there can be no accumulation. This logic is first applied at the corporate level through productivism: maximizing profits in order to reinvest the surplus value. The logic of accumulation is then deployed at the consumer level (consumerism): for an economy to grow, consumers must buy more and more. In a capitalist economy, economic growth is therefore determined by two mechanisms: the expansion of the economy's scope and the intensification of existing types of transactions.

Industrialism refers to the overall structure of a modern society based on mechanized labor and technological development. Critique of industrialism - often intertwined with cultural critique of growth - argues that regardless of the type of property or social organization, the development of productive forces and technology in modern societies has become authoritarian, alienating, and constitutes an amputation of personal self-determination. According to this critique, growth feeds on the increasing complexity of technical systems, whose functioning requires global supply chains, large infrastructures, and extensive expertise. This technological development is not neutral in that it atrophies personal freedom.

METHOD

Our research focuses on the Magisterium's discourse on ecological issues. This must be put into perspective with the thesis of the American historian Lynn White Jr. (1967), who establishes a link between the anthropocentrism inherited from Latin Christianity in the medieval West and the environmental crisis. Although White invites us to recognize Francis of Assisi as the patron saint of environmentalists, he suggests that Christianity induces a dualistic conception of man and nature, and that this Western construct has enabled a particular alliance between science and technology, which is the source of an anthropocentric view of the environment. Faced with growing environmental trends and the rise of political ecology, religious discourse drew on critiques such as White's to renew their dogmas and refine the CST. The concern for the environment, present in texts published by the World Council of Churches and various Christian theologians and movements (e.g., Moltmann 1985; Gesché 1994), entered the CST with Benedict XVI's encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate* (2009). It finds its culmination in the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* (2015), followed by the apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum* (2023), both published by Pope Francis. Francis introduces the concept of integral ecology, i.e. the relationships between humans, their environment, and transcendence, calling for the preservation and care of this relationship. Based on this recent corpus (*Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum*), we examine the links between CST and critiques of growth.

Our content analysis is based on manual coding. We initially carried out a first-level coding process, which involved identifying the various passages in the corpus that related to the critiques of growth identified in section 1. This first-level coding followed an "accounting" logic, in the sense that all the passages that related to one or other of the critiques of growth were listed. These different items were then organized to affiliate them with one of the seven critiques. A second-level coding was then carried out, which consisted of identifying properties within each of the seven criticisms. This second-level coding was more of a search for meaning, aimed at identifying how and in what way the passages identified corresponded to one of the seven critiques in the theoretical framework proposed.

RESULTS

The Magisterium's discourse argues for a shift in the dominant growth paradigm in order to rethink political orientations, business models, and lifestyles towards a postgrowth perspective based on sufficiency, that is, "right-sizing" consumption and production to live within ecological limits (Princen, 2005; Jungell-Michelsson and Heikkurinen, 2022). Indeed, Francis advocates for *"a decrease in the pace of production and consumption to give rise to another form of progress and development"* (LS, n°191) and clearly mentions that *"the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth"* (LS, n°193). Our work explains the foundations of these arguments and how the Magisterium's discourse articulates the different critiques of growth.²

No infinite growth in a finite world: the appropriation of ecological critique

The two texts that make up our corpus begin with an overview of the environmental crisis. The first chapter of *Laudato Si'* depicts *"what is happening to our common home"* (LS, n°17) by setting out the various challenges associated with exceeding planetary boundaries: pollution and climate change, water, biodiversity. The text of *Laudate Deum* reiterates this observation in its introduction, marking a shift in the style of argumentation. The language is more quantified and the tone more urgent: *"with the passage of time, I have realized that our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point"* (LD, n°2). Francis rails against those who seek to *"ridicule those who speak of global warming"* (LD, n°7), especially among *"certain dismissive and scarcely reasonable opinions that I encounter, even within the Catholic Church"* (LD, n°14).

As a result, the Magisterium's discourse converges with ecological critique, highlighting *"the need for an "economic ecology" capable of appealing to a broader vision of reality"* (LS, n°141). Francis denounces the idea of infinite growth in a finite world, the main axiom of ecological critique: *"the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in*

² For ease of reading, references to the text of *Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum* are annotated LS and LD, respectively, followed by the corresponding paragraph number.

technology. It is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit. It is the false notion that "an infinite quantity of energy and resources are available, that it is possible to renew them quickly, and that the negative effects of the exploitation of the natural order can be easily absorbed" (LS, n°106). Another marker of ecological critique lies in the critique of the notion of "sustainable growth" which is considered as a cover-up for manipulative purposes: "talk of sustainable growth usually becomes a way of distracting attention and offering excuses. It absorbs the language and values of ecology into the categories of finance and technocracy, and the social and environmental responsibility of businesses often gets reduced to a series of marketing and image-enhancing measures" (LS, n°194). Ecological critique also appears with the idea that the current understanding of economics does not allow for the impacts of human activities on nature to be taken into account. The text of *Laudato Si'* points out "a misunderstanding of the very concept of the economy" linked to "the principle of the maximization of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations (...) As long as production is increased, little concern is given to whether it is at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment; as long as the clearing of a forest increases production, no one calculates the losses entailed in the desertification of the land, the harm done to biodiversity or the increased pollution. In a word, businesses profit by calculating and paying only a fraction of the costs involved" (LS, n°195).

The anthropological basis of the environmental crisis: cultural critique as the cornerstone of the Magisterium's discourse

The core of the Magisterium's discourse lies in a cultural critique of growth, where the question of the subject and its relationship to the world is crucial: "This is a global social issue and one intimately related to the dignity of human life (...) which goes beyond a merely ecological approach, because our care for one another and our care for the earth are intimately bound together" (LD, n°3). To this end, the corpus aligns with cultural critique primarily through its denunciation of a relationship of domination over the world: "We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will" (LS, n°2). In this regard, the text of *Laudato Si'* provides an opportunity to respond to White's critique (1967), which "is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church" (LS, n°67). Francis urges to "forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures" (LS, n°67). Instead of a report of domination, Francis considers that an appropriate hermeneutic of the biblical texts is a call to action to keep the garden of the world: "'Tilling' refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while 'keeping' means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature" (LS, n°67).

In this perspective, the Magisterium's discourse joins cultural critique in an anthropological reading of the environmental crisis: "There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology" (LS, n°118).

The relationship between humans and nature is central to Francis's thinking. He condemns "*a distorted anthropocentrism*" leading to "*a disordered use of things*" (LS, n°69). Deviant anthropocentrism refers to a relationship of appropriation of living beings and environments rather than a relationship of stewardship: "*Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion*" (LS, n°76). Francis emphasizes the notion of interrelation and widespread mutual interdependence: "*Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another*" (LS, n°42). The idea of communion with nature emerges, nature being personified as "*sister*" or "*mother Earth*" (LS, n°1). The lexical field here is permeated with love and tenderness for each of God's blessed creatures: "*In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the word "creation" has a broader meaning than "nature", for it has to do with God's loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance*" (LS, n°76). This communion with nature is based on a mysticism of nature, marked by an Ignatian attitude that invites us to find God in everything: "*there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face*" (LS, n°233).

In place of this misguided anthropocentrism, a "situated anthropocentrism" is proposed, in other words, a middle way that allows one to move beyond "*a constant schizophrenia, wherein a technocracy which sees no intrinsic value in lesser beings coexists with the other extreme, which sees no special value in human beings*" (LS, 118). This "situated anthropocentrism" recognizes the special value of human beings in the cosmos: "*human life is incomprehensible and unsustainable without other creatures. For as part of the universe... all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect*" (LD, n°67). It is rooted in Christian anthropology, which is based on a threefold relationship - relationship with God, relationship with others, and relationship with the earth - whose harmony has been broken: "*This rupture is sin*" (LS, n°66). The deterioration of man's relationship with the cosmos is therefore understood as one aspect and consequence of a broader and deeper rupture linked to sin. What makes Francis say that "*the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity*" (LS, n°119).

Finally, the Magisterium's discourse sets out certain provisions to facilitate distancing oneself from an aggressive attitude toward the world. Among these is an attitude of "gratitude and gratuitousness" (LS, n°220); the development of an ecological culture understood as "*a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm*" (LS, n°111) and an environmental education (LS, n°210). These provisions must lead to a lifestyle based on sufficiency, i.e. "*one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption*" and to have "*the conviction that "less is more"*" (LS, n°222). Although both texts emphasize the political transformation of institutions, personal transformation remains a

driving force behind collective transformation: *"there are no lasting changes without cultural changes, without a maturing of lifestyles and convictions within societies, and there are no cultural changes without personal changes"* (LD, n°70).

Deification of the market and techno-solutionism, or the appropriation of the critique of capitalism and the critique of industrialism

The deified market, or the critique of unregulated capitalism

The two texts in our corpus do not mention the term "capitalism" but rather refer to the *"laws of the market"* (LS, n°30) or *"the unregulated market"* (LS, n°210). The Magisterium's discourse denounces a form of market idolatry, evoking *"a deified market"* (LS, n°56) and *"a magical conception of the market"* (LS, n°190). This gives rise to two challenges.

The first concerns the market's inability to resolve the environmental crisis: *"Some circles maintain that current economics and technology will solve all environmental problems"* (LS, n°109). It is the focus on profit that is being criticized as an obstacle to the fight against climate change: *"the climate crisis is not exactly a matter that interests the great economic powers, whose concern is with the greatest profit possible at minimal cost and in the shortest amount of time"* (LD, n°13). Market mechanisms are considered ineffective in resolving the environmental crisis because they always operate on a cost-benefit basis: *"The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces. 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"* (LS, n°190). The text thus denounces the laws of the market that make the constant pursuit of efficiency and productivity the drivers of growth.

The second concerns the market's inability to resolve the social crisis. *Laudato Si'* denounces the idea that *"the problems of global hunger and poverty will be resolved simply by market growth"* (LS, n°109) and argues that *"the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion"* (LS, n°109). The logic of maximum profit thus makes impossible *"any sincere concern for our common home and any real preoccupation about assisting the poor and the needy discarded by our society"* (LD, n°31). In particular, several mechanisms underlying the functioning of capitalism are denounced: economies of scale (LS, n°129); standardization with the aim of simplifying procedures and reducing costs (LS, n°141); the disconnect between exchange value and use value (LS, n°189). Francis proposes an alternative, that of the "gratuitous gift" anchored in the CST: *"the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit"* (LS, n°159).

Finally, the magisterium's discourse converges with anti-capitalist critique through its critique of excessive commodification and privatization. The text refers in particular to water resources and *"the growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market"* (LS, n°30). At the same time, the text reiterates that private property always remains subordinate to the universal destination of goods - one of the fundamental principles of the CST: *"The Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute or inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property"* (LS, n°93).

The religion of techno-solutionism, or the critique of industrialism

The Magisterium's discourse echoes the critique of industrialism in its condemnation of techno-solutionism, or the *"blind confidence in technical solutions"* (LS, n°14). Francis suggests that *"to suppose that all problems in the future will be able to be solved by new technical interventions is a form of homicidal pragmatism, like pushing a snowball down a hill"* (LD, n°57). As such, it supports the paradigm of strong sustainability, where natural capital is considered irreplaceable: *"We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievable beauty with something which we have created ourselves"* (LS, n°34). Beyond the issue of the resources needed for technological development, the Magisterium's discourse points to the pitfalls of an ideology that seeks to constantly increase human power, leading to an endeavor to make the world available to us: *"to increase human power beyond anything imaginable, before which nonhuman reality is a mere resource at its disposal. Everything that exists ceases to be a gift for which we should be thankful, esteem and cherish, and instead becomes a slave, prey to any whim of the human mind and its capacities"* (LD, n°22).

Furthermore, our analysis highlights the use of a set of arguments that echo the notion of a counterproductive threshold (Illich, 1973), or the idea that, beyond a certain threshold, technological development becomes alienating: *"We need lucidity and honesty in order to recognize in time that our power and the progress we are producing are turning against us"* (LD, n°28). Francis highlights a gap between technological progress and progress for humanity: *"our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience... We stand naked and exposed in the face of our ever-increasing power, lacking the wherewithal to control it"* (LD, n°24). The increasing development of technological tools is becoming counterproductive and alienating. These tools are becoming *"mental pollution"* and sources of *"a deep and melancholic dissatisfaction with interpersonal relations, or a harmful sense of isolation"* (LS, n°47).

Finally, the Magisterium's discourse echoes the critique of industrialism in its condemnation of the apparent neutrality of technology: *"technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups"* (LS, n°107). The loss of autonomy and freedom is linked to the fact that technological innovations are concentrated in the hands of a small number of players, *"those*

with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them", which gives them "an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world" (LS, n°104). People see themselves as limited and mutilated in their autonomy because they are dependent on the technical systems that have been put in place, in line with the notion of radical monopoly (Illich, 1973). Francis thus highlights the difficulty of breaking free from the technological paradigm: *"The technological paradigm has become so dominant that it would be difficult to do without its resources and even more difficult to utilize them without being dominated by their internal logic. It has become countercultural to choose a lifestyle whose goals are even partly independent of technology, of its costs and its power to globalize and make us all the same (...) Our capacity to make decisions, a more genuine freedom and the space for each one's alternative creativity are diminished"* (LS, n°108).

Technocratic paradigm, connection point of the critique of capitalism and industrialism

"Technocratic paradigm" is the connection point between the critique of capitalism and the critique of industrialism. The technocratic paradigm is defined as *"a certain way of understanding human life and activity [which] has gone awry, to the serious detriment of the world around us"* (LS, n°101). Deep down, it consists in thinking *"as if reality, goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power as such"* (LS, n°105).

This paradigm exalts scientific and experimental method, logical and rational procedures, which are in themselves a technique of possession, mastery, and transformation: *"It is as if the subject were to find itself in the presence of something formless, completely open to manipulation"* (LS, n°106). It introduces a break in the relationship that the subject has with nature, shifting from a reciprocal relationship to an extractive one, which manifests itself in the desire to *"extract everything possible from them while frequently ignoring or forgetting the reality in front of us. Human beings and material objects no longer extend a friendly hand to one another; the relationship has become confrontational"* (LS, n°106). Here lie the roots of *"the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology"* (LS, n°106).

The prevalence of the technocratic paradigm therefore underpins the current process of environmental degradation, insofar as it maintains an unbalanced relationship with itself and with nature: *"Contrary to this technocratic paradigm, we say that the world that surrounds us is not an object of exploitation, unbridled use and unlimited ambition. Nor can we claim that nature is a mere "setting" in which we develop our lives and our projects. For "we are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it", and thus "we [do] not look at the world from without but from within" (LD, n°25).*

Obsessive consumerism and domination, or the socio-economic critique and the South-Nord critique

Extreme consumerism, or the socio-economic critique

Socio-economic critique is mainly found in the text of *Laudato Si'*. The Magisterium's discourse meets socio-economic critique first in its observation that economic growth is not necessarily synonymous with an improvement in quality of life. The text lists a whole series of symptoms – employment, social exclusion, inequitable distribution and consumption of energy and other services, social breakdown, increased violence, new forms of social aggression, drug trafficking, growing drug use by young people, loss of identity (LS, n°46) – which reveal the unfulfilled promises of growth. This is made clear when Francis says that *"a technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress. Frequently, in fact, people's quality of life actually diminishes – by the deterioration of the environment, the low quality of food or the depletion of resources – in the midst of economic growth"* (LS, n°194).

The text echoes one of the foundations of socio-economic critique, according to which "a good life" does not depend on economic growth. More fundamentally, Francis highlights a gap between economic and technological growth vs human growth: *"scientific and technological progress cannot be equated with the progress of humanity and history"* (LS, n°113). Economic growth often leads to an *"accumulation of constant novelties [which] exalts a superficiality which pulls us in one direction"* (LS, n°113). To this end, consumerism is understood as a form of spiritual pathology: *"When people become self-centred and self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume"* (LS, 204).

Laudato Si''s socio-economic critique also draws on the concept of social acceleration, defined as a quantitative growth per unit of time resulting from technical acceleration, acceleration of social change, and acceleration of the pace of life (Rosa, 2013). Francis thus emphasizes that *"the speed with which human activity has developed contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution"* (LS, n°18). As a consequence *"it becomes a source of anxiety when it causes harm to the world and to the quality of life of much of humanity"* (LS, n°18). This social acceleration feeds *"a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish"* (LS, n°22).

Socio-economic critique opens up two perspectives. The first lies in the voluntary modification of lifestyles: *"a change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power"* (LS, n°206). Francis underlines the consumer movements calling for boycotts of certain products, considering this as a way to change the way businesses operate. Social pressure is thus encouraged, following the tradition of the CST according to which *"purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act"* (*Caritas in Veritate*, n°66). In this regard, the Magisterium's discourse welcomes initiatives aimed at breaking free from the dominance of the technocratic paradigm, such as *"cooperatives of small producers adopt less polluting means of production, and opt for a non-consumerist model of life, recreation and community"* (LS, n°112). The second perspective lies in redefining progress, with a view to distinguishing between technical progress

and human progress. This involves *"leav[ing] behind the modern myth of unlimited material progress"* and *"devis[ing] intelligent ways of directing, developing and limiting our power"* (LS, n°78).

Exploitation and domination: the foundations of the South-North critique

The Magisterium's discourse echoes South-North critique by denouncing a system based on exploitation and domination, which is a source of inequality. To this end, Francis denounces "the imperial mode of living" (Brand and Wissen, 2021) in the global North and highlights the unfulfilled promises of economic growth in terms of poverty reduction: *"it is not possible to sustain the present level of consumption in developed countries and wealthier sectors of society, where the habit of wasting and discarding has reached unprecedented levels. The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty"* (LS, n°27). The idea of *"differentiated responsibilities"* (LS, n°170) is highlighted and Francis introduces the idea of "ecological debt" linked to *"commercial imbalances with effects on the environment, and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time"* (LS, n°51). This ecological debt is rooted in a perverse domination system: *"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"* (LS, n°52).

As a consequence, "reconfiguring multilateralism" is proposed, a theme to which Francis devotes an entire chapter of *Laudate Deum*. In line with the principle of subsidiarity (a core principle of CST), Francis encourages civil society initiatives that can compensate for the shortcomings of international institutions: *"many groups and organizations within civil society help to compensate for the shortcomings of the international community, its lack of coordination in complex situations, and its lack of attention to fundamental human rights"* (LD, n°37). He advocates for a *"a multilateralism 'from below' and not simply one determined by the elites of power"* (LD, n°38) and argues for *"spaces for conversation, consultation, arbitration, conflict resolution and supervision, and, in the end, a sort of increased 'democratization' in the global context, so that the various situations can be expressed and included"* (LD, n°43). Democratic planning, a core principle of degrowth (Hickel, 2021), is encouraged. Environmental activism is also valued, considering that it compensates for the inadequacy of political decision-makers: *"they are filling a space left empty by society as a whole, which ought to exercise a healthy 'pressure', since every family ought to realize that the future of their children is at stake"* (LD, n°58).

Social justice, the connection point between the socio-economic critique and the South-North critique

Social justice is the connection point between the socio-economic critique and the South-North critique. Indeed, the Magisterium's discourse considers that environmental crisis and social crisis are entangled: *"We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental"* (LS, n°139). It requires integrating questions of

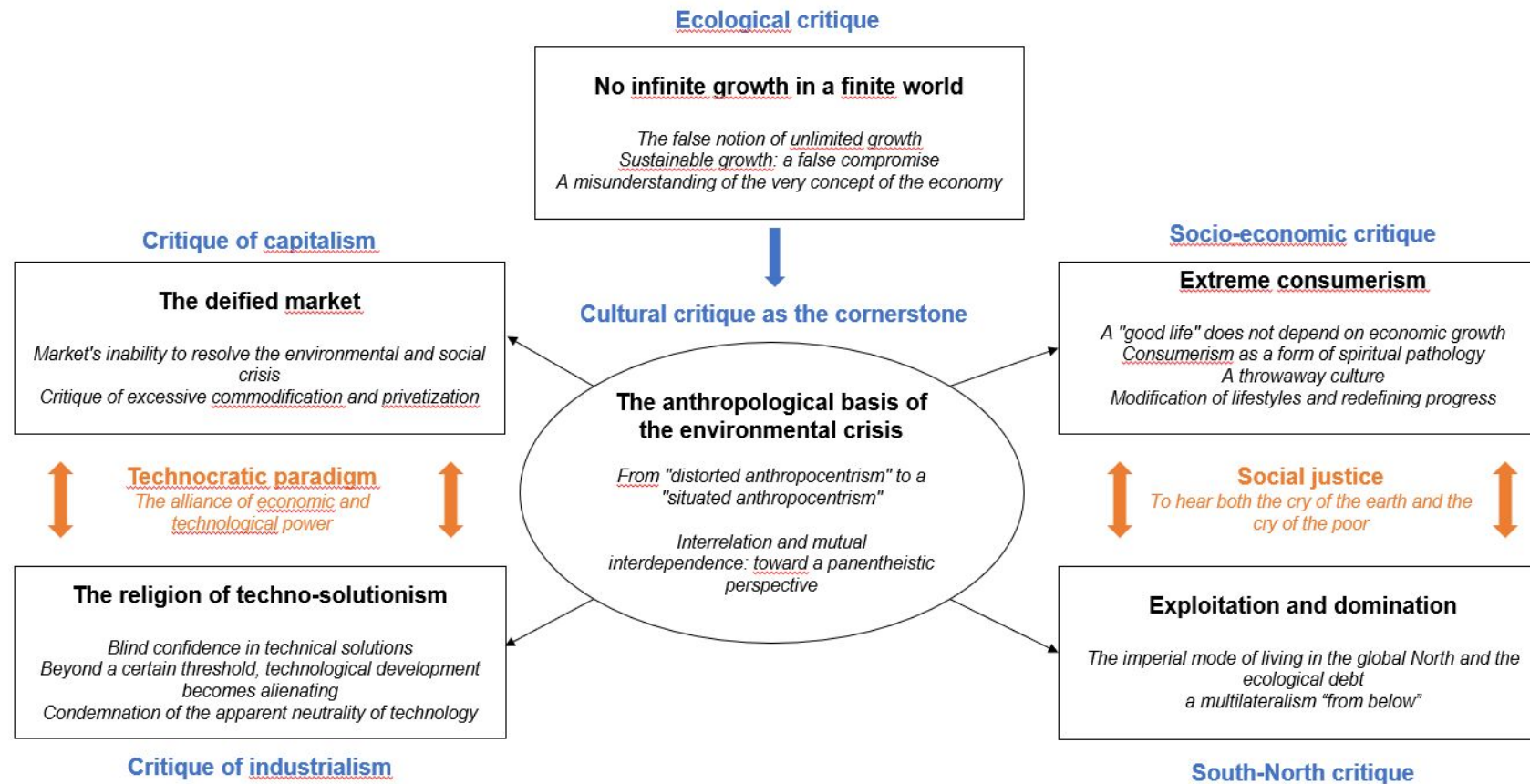
justice in debates on the environment *"so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor"* (LS, n°49). In line with this perspective, socio-economic critique is based on the fact that a minority of people consume excessively, which causes inequalities that lead to tension and violence: *"those really free are the minority who wield economic and financial power"* (LS, n°203) and *"obsession with a consumerist lifestyle, above all when few people are capable of maintaining it, can only lead to violence and mutual destruction"* (LS, n°204).

At the same time, the concept of social justice feeds the South-North critique. First, Francis highlights inequalities in terms of crossing planetary boundaries, emphasizing that it is mainly poor and vulnerable populations that are affected by the consequences of the environmental crisis: *"the effects of climate change are borne by the most vulnerable people, whether at home or around the world"* (LD, n°3). Second, the responsibility of *"those who possess more resources and economic or political power"* (LS, n°26) is highlighted. Francis underlines the unsustainable level of production and consumption in rich countries, where *"a minority believes that it has the right to consume in a way which can never be universalized, since the planet could not even contain the waste products of such consumption"* (LS, n°50). The South-North critique denounces a pitfall in that we do not have *"a clear awareness of problems which especially affect the excluded"*. The Magisterium's discourse also rejects a Malthusian interpretation of the environmental crisis: *"In an attempt to simplify reality, there are those who would place responsibility on the poor, since they have many children, and even attempt to resolve the problem by mutilating women in less developed countries. As usual, it would seem that everything is the fault of the poor. Yet the reality is that a low, richer percentage of the planet contaminates more than the poorest 50% of the total world population, and that per capita emissions of the richer countries are much greater than those of the poorer ones"* (LD, n°9). Francis thus takes a harsh look at the disparities in wealth and living standards between developed and developing countries: *"We fail to see that some are mired in desperate and degrading poverty, with no way out, while others have not the faintest idea of what to do with their possessions, vainly showing off their supposed superiority and leaving behind them so much waste which, if it were the case everywhere, would destroy the planet. In practice, we continue to tolerate that some consider themselves more human than others, as if they had been born with greater rights"* (LS, n°90).

DISCUSSION

Our work enables a better understanding of the foundations of the critiques of growth in the Magisterium's discourse. Through *Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum*, the CST is updated and offers new paths to reshape our worldviews and business organizations (cf figure 1).

Figure 1. How the Magisterium's discourse meets critiques of growth



How the Magisterium's discourse meets critiques of growth

We contribute to the literature on postgrowth and degrowth (Jackson, 2010; Raworth, 2017; Hickel, 2021; Schmelzer, 2022; Schmelzer et al., 2022) highlighting how the Magisterium’s discourse meets the critiques of growth and contributes to the reshaping of dominant paradigms and the overcoming of dualisms. Taking up the arguments of ecological economics, the Magisterium's discourse denounces the idea of infinite growth in a finite world. The critique spreads to the idea of sustainable growth, thus joining the literature on the limits of such a paradigm in addressing the challenges of the environmental crisis (Ripple et al., 2023; Vogel and Hickel, 2023). From this perspective, the traditional tools associated with sustainable growth - corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainable development, sustainable marketing - are considered insufficient to address the risks of the Anthropocene, in line with the theses defended by several authors (Renouard, 2021; Lloveras, 2022; Rémy et al., 2024). Cultural critique is the core of the argument of CST. Facing up to the challenges of the Anthropocene implies rethinking man's relationship with nature, that is breaking with a "deviant anthropocentrism" to move to a stewardship attitude.

Two other critiques are linked to this cultural critique: the critique of unregulated capitalism and the critique of industrialism. Although the two texts in our corpus do not mention the term “capitalism”, the Magisterium's discourse denounces the market's inability to resolve the social and environmental crisis evoking a form of "idolatry" of the market. Second, the Magisterium's discourse underlines that the development of increasingly complex socio-technical systems is driving a hyper-technological society marked by an impoverishment of the sensory experience. This is intertwined with the "technocratic paradigm" in which the prevalence of technological and economic power constitutes the dominant social paradigm. This echoes the conclusions of Kilbourne et al. (2009), who show how the economic paradigm and the technological paradigm structure the cosmologies of Western societies and constitute institutional drivers of materialism.

Finally, the Magisterium's discourse appropriates the socio-economic critique and the South-North critique as manifestations of a relationship with the world that is out of balance. Consumerism is seen as "the illness of an empty soul" (Azevedo, 2020), contrary to a culture of moderation rooted in the Catholic tradition (Sadowski, 2021). Furthermore, the Magisterium's discourse appropriates South-North critique by denouncing a system of exploitation and domination of poor countries. The responsibility of rich countries in a situation of "ecological debt" is emphasized, as are the consequences of the environmental crisis on the most vulnerable populations. These two critiques are intertwined with the notion of social justice. *Laudato Si'* is about proposing a new figure articulated around the idea that "everything is connected", the text links the environmental crisis to the social crisis, inviting us to listen to "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (LS n°49). In this sense, the Magisterium's discourse

demonstrates a desire to "plunge into the realities below" (Latour, 2019, p. 615) and reconnects with concern for the most vulnerable, an ancient apostolic concern in the Catholic tradition.

In summary, the Magisterium's discourse appropriates all of the critiques of growth, with the exception of feminist critique, of which we found no trace in the corpus studied. However, while Pope Francis has remained very silent, ecofeminist approaches to theology are rich and varied, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world (e.g. Carol Christ, Heather Eaton, Mary Grey, Sallie McFague, R. Radford Ruether; for a good summary, see Deane-Drummond, 2024) but also by Latin American theologians such as Yvonne Gebara. The Magisterium's discourse thus remains in the background in the field of feminist ecology.

Ontologies and worldviews: reshaping naturalism

Our work enriches the literature on ontologies (Descola, 2013; Koltko-Rivera, 2004; van Egmond and De Vries, 2011; Hedlund-de Witt, 2012) and the implications of new ontologies in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (Dahlmann, 2025; Helkkula and Arnould, 2022). The crisis of naturalism may constitute "an opportunity to think about new forms of collective action that would renew their relationship with natural entities" around a post-naturalism (Acquier, Meyer, and Valiorgue, 2024, p.25). Some studies document the contributions of this post-naturalism. Marchais, Roux, and Arnould (2024) propose the concept of "ontological hybridity" by showing how non-naturalistic ontologies - animism and analogism - infiltrate naturalism in individuals' beliefs and behaviors. Helkkula and Arnould (2022) consider that the main foundational constraint in the dominant market ontology is human-centricity, ignoring relationships between humans, animals, and other members of the natural biotic community. Instead, authors suggest adopting a neo-animist ontology which can contribute to pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals. In contrast to economics generally and marketing specifically, neo-animism proposes to bring the interests of animals and other members of the biotic into consideration within relational ecosystems" (Helkkula and Arnould, 2022, p.863). In the same vein, drawing on relational ontology and values of nature that recognize humanity's tight embeddedness within the planetary ecosystem, Dahlmann (2025, p.510) suggests that conceptualizing sustainability as the "pursuit of life" might enable us to support the wider transformation needed to sustain and restore socioecological systems: "Decisions, actions, and behaviors should thus be motivated and guided by a desire to strengthen and enhance the planetary web-of-life, specifically through the creation and maintenance of conditions that are conducive to life by safeguarding biodiversity and justice."

Our research contributes to this literature by showing how the Magisterium's discourse argues for a cosmological shift aimed at transcending naturalism, while remaining reluctant to embrace "biocentrism" preferring instead the middle ground of "situated anthropocentrism" - or the balance between technical materialism and exaggerated naturalism. It is worth noting how Pope Francis' stance against deviant anthropocentrism fits into the debates between philosophers and between Christians

(particularly Catholics vs. Protestants) on the different ethics of nature: anthropo-, patho-, bio- and eco-centered (Hess, 2013). We are witnessing a shift in Pope Francis' position in relation to the previous CST, opening the door to consideration of the dignity of all living beings, and therefore to a bio- or eco-centric approach, even if the discourse defends a weakly anthropocentric approach. *Laudato Si'* emphasizes the "intrinsic value" of creatures (distinct from their utilitarian or aesthetic value) and recognizes the active capacities of all beings beyond the dualism of modern times. This value is not antithetical to the recognition of a certain human specificity, considered not as a privilege but as a responsibility towards other components of the world. Furthermore, the emphasis on the notion of interrelation and mutual interdependence gives rise to the idea of a spirituality of nature, where creation is seen as a "theophany" - literally, a "manifestation of God" - from a panentheistic perspective. Nature, which is created, is not divine in essence, but participates in the life of God.

Collective action in the Anthropocene implies a "metamorphosis" – from the Greek *metanoia* – meaning a change (*meta*) of mind (*noûs*). In this context, spiritualities – which are not limited to their religious expression – can prove to be fertile resources. In this vein, spirituality can lead to institutional transformations. Our work shows how the Magisterium's discourse encourages lifestyle changes at the individual level, but this cultural shift appears to be contingent upon breaking with the technocratic paradigm and the political and economic structures that support it. To this end, the use of the term "structural sin" (LD, n°3) to characterize climate change shows how the Magisterium's discourse denounces, beyond individual responsibilities, the economic and political structures that govern the organization of society. This is made clear when Francis says "*Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political*" (LS, n°31). For example, Christian collectives such as the *Laudato Si' Movement*, present in 140 countries, and in France *Lutte et contemplation*, *Anastasis* and *Greenfaith*, advocate for political action supported by Christian spirituality, notably through campaigns to mobilize Christian institutions to divest from fossil fuels.

Spirituality and business organizations

This study enhances the literature which studies how Christian spirituality can be inspirational in economics and business. For example, Dann and Dann (2016) argue that CST with its focus on human dignity, subsidiary and the common good provides an increasingly relevant and compatible framework with which to evaluate ethical issues emerging in the social marketing domain. In the same vein, Sadowski (2021) suggests that Christianity has the potential to make a significant contribution to promoting a culture of moderation through a new model of progress, a mentality of communion, and a new lifestyle. De Peyrelongue et al. (2017) mobilize the idea of "gratuitous gift" from the CST to introduce the concept of the "need to give" which appears as a relevant concept to understand most gifts made by consumers. Klein and Lacznia (2021) posit that *Laudato Si'* provides a compelling and multi-faceted framework for macromarketing, offering a path that blends ethical precepts with a market-

oriented economic analysis. It represents a "call to action" to consider consumer culture, quality of life, distribution justice (vulnerable consumers), externalities and largely the market system's relationships and dynamics to fortify the macromarketing school of thought. Others discuss the concept of "fraternal organization" drawing inspiration from the papal encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (Zózimo, Pina e Cunha and Rego, 2023).

This research enriches this literature pointing out how the publication of *Laudato Si'* highlights the need to review the anthropological and ethical foundations on which today's dominant economic models are based and calls on businesses to place relational capacities as an end and profit as a necessary means (Renouard, 2017). In this regard, the French movement of Christian entrepreneurs and business leaders (EDC), linked to the global network UNIAPAC (oldest national federation of Catholic employers), has created an ecological conversion commission in which entrepreneurs explore new business models such as regenerative businesses. The reception of *Laudato Si'* is helping to fuel debate among business leaders and employees, particularly Christians, about how to link CSR commitments to the development of business models that are compatible with listening deeply to the "cry of the earth and the cry of the poor". The Pope's critical remarks about CSR, which risks being reduced to a matter of communication and image, are an invitation to redefine progress and quality of life. Some authors therefore call for the ethical principles proposed by CST, and *Laudato Si'* in particular, to be used as a basis for proactively and determinedly integrating sustainability into corporate strategy: "Moral competences influence the organizational selection of environmental strategies, giving leaders the intrinsic motivation to promote both a longer-term stance on corporate sustainability efforts and a relentless search for greener business models. Such strategies move the firm closer towards achieving environmental sustainability" (Rousseau, 2017). Barrett and Duns (2019) also emphasize the role that *Laudato Si'* can play in strengthening the contribution of virtue ethics to post-growth-oriented management practices.

The paradigm shift proposed by *Francis* is all the more interesting in that it resonates with numerous works that pave the way for a radical approach which goes beyond efficiency and techno-solutionism. For example, strengthening social justice and pursuing well-being beyond materialism are key components of sufficiency (Persson and Klintman, 2022). Indeed, Jungell-Michelsson and Heikkurinen (2022) identify three main disciplinary roots to the concept of sufficiency, namely ecological economics, political ecology, and ecological philosophy. The first argues that natural capital cannot always be substituted by human-made or economic capital, but that different forms of capital are merely complementary. The second advocates for a more social and political undertone, raising questions related to social justice, provisioning, and labor. The third brings ethical considerations of sufficiency and entails a shift to non-material values in order to achieve "a good life". Moreover, regenerative business models focus on social-ecological systems, based on an understanding of the planet as a living system. "Regenerative business models also add a focus on individual purpose and meaning, questions

of leadership and spirituality, as well as nature and animal rights and the role of indigenous communities in helping to reconnect humans and nature" (Konietzko, Das and Bocken, 2023). At a micro level, consumers who try to escape consumer culture and to reduce their consumption are well documented in the literature which studies voluntary simplifiers (Osikominu and Bocken, 2020; Rebouças and Soares, 2020) or frugal consumers (Lastovicka, et al., 1999). We know that religion is a driver of these different lifestyles (Rebouças and Soares, 2020; Makri et al., 2020; Vaal, Michel and Rieunier, 2022). For example, Kozinets and Handelman (2004, p.703) notice that "combining environmental and social concerns with injunctions to moral restraint, our consumer activists are actually rejecting many conventional Western notions of individualism and progress and encouraging the embrace of a more spiritual, communal, and holistic ethos" (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004, p.703). Literature on ecovillages also points the wish to escape a market-driven way of life and the desire for a simpler life. The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) defines an ecovillage as "an intentional or traditional community using local participatory processes to holistically integrate ecological, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of sustainability in order to regenerate social and natural environments". These communities rely on convivial innovation, which refers to adaptable, accessible, and locally available innovation. Convivial innovation is intended to replace the market with self-reliance and autonomy (Bobulescu and Fritscheova, 2021). Participants organize activities that include meditations, music and dance events and spiritual quests (Hong and Vicdan, 2016, p.131). Considered as alternative organizational form relevant in the context of the Anthropocene (Ezvan et al., 2025), these organizations make it possible to re-imagine the relationships between humans, non-human living species, and the natural environment, as illustrated, for example, by the various imaginaries associated with permaculture (Roux-Rosier, Azambuja and Islam, 2018). A study of six ecovillages in France points out that ecological awareness, the ability to care for the environment, the ability to help, share and cooperate in a spirit of conviviality and the ability to engage in dialogue, anticipate and deal with conflict are key relational capabilities which foster a more sustainable mode of production and living (Ezvan et al., 2025). These approaches resonate strongly with the paradigm shift promoted by Francis.

CONCLUSION

This work shows how the Magisterium's discourse on ecology argues for a paradigm shift towards a post-growth society. The ecological crisis is considered as a sign of the ethical, cultural, and spiritual crisis of modernity. The emphasis on the harmful effects of the technocratic paradigm and consumerist culture is an invitation to rethink business models from a perspective of integral ecology and social justice. Instead of focusing on the myth of economic growth, pope Francis emphasizes personal growth, encourages a human development and a personal fulfilment. This form of growth is marked by moderation and "the capacity to be happy with little" (LS, n°222). This requires an integral ecology able to embrace the economic, social, ecological, and spiritual dimensions of the crisis. In conclusion, the Magisterium's discourse calls for a form of degrowth that could give rise to other forms of progress and

development. Nevertheless, these conclusions stem from our analysis of *Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum*, written by Pope Francis, and we do not claim to account for the entirety of CST, which consists of 26 texts. In terms of avenues for research, we suggest continuing to explore / it would be fruitful to continue exploring the different cosmologies promoted by religions and spiritualities in order to foster a cross-fertilization of insights about sustainable economic development. With this in mind, we call for further theoretical and empirical research on the relationship between the other two monotheistic religions and ecological issues.

For Peer Review

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