The Technocratic Paradigm as Promethean Vice: Pope Francis and Pierre Hadot on Nature and Humanity

by

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Abstract

In this thesis I argue that both Pope Francis and Pierre Hadot identify a distorted human perception of nature as one of the root causes of the current environmental crisis. What Pope Francis calls the “technocratic paradigm” in *Laudato Si’* is comparable to the vice of the "Promethean attitude" in Pierre Hadot’s work *The Veil of Isis*. Both thinkers also agree that there are other, better ways for humanity to perceive nature, and offer different—though harmonious—examples of how the “technocratic” can be abandoned. By bringing Hadot and Francis into conversation, this thesis will help to lay the groundwork for answering Francis’ own call to develop “a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm.”
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Introduction

And so it is that the dangers facing human freedom mount ominously day by day. Science and technology have so mastered the forces of nature that destruction, either chronic or acute and incalculable in extent, is now a possibility. Without exaggeration one can say that a new era of history has been born. Now and forever man will live at the brink of an ever-growing danger which shall leave its mark upon his entire existence.¹

Urban sprawls, webs of infrastructure, and patchwork farms can be seen peppering the Earth’s surface from space. But as marvelous as these artifacts of civilization might be, humanity has made a more profound mark on this planet. Since the Industrial Revolution at the turn of the 19th century, the reciprocal drive of fossil fuel engines and the engine of capitalism have precipitously transformed Earth’s landscapes, atmosphere, and climate.² These anthropogenic (human-caused) changes have also produced a distinctive layer of sediment which geologists and archaeologists have confirmed marks a clear shift into a new geological epoch; we have left the Holocene and entered the Anthropocene.³ From a university in an affluent urban center like Toronto, a shift from one geological age to another can seem like a mere geological or climatological curiosity, no more significant than the change from September to October. But for billions of humans on this planet—and for billions upon billions of plants, animals, microbes, and fungi—the global changes which the term Anthropocene signifies have amounted almost exclusively to chaos and devastation. The “destruction” mentioned by Romano Guardini in the prescient passage above (written in 1956) is no longer merely a “possibility”: the current

² “Temperatures have risen steadily since [the end of the Little Ice Age 200 years ago], leaving us now with a global temperature higher than those during 90% of the entire Holocene.” From Shaun A. Marcott et al., “A Reconstruction of Regional and Global Temperature for the Past 11,300 Years,” Science 339 (2013): 1198-1201.
environmental crisis is driving one of the largest extinction events in Earth’s history,⁴ and disproportionately harms billions of the world’s poor.⁵ Victims of this destructive change in climate brought about by human action, their blood cries out to God from the earth (Gn 4:10).⁶

In his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si’: On Care For Our Common Home*, Pope Francis addresses the *anthropos*, the human element, at the source of this ongoing crisis. His goal is to go to the heart of the issue, “so as to consider not only its symptoms but also its deepest causes.”⁷ Following the example of “the physician of our souls, Jesus Christ,” who—while healing, liberating, and inspiring those who encountered him in his earthly life—focused on healing the more fundamental division between God and humanity by defeating sin itself, Francis analogously looks into the heart of the contemporary human person to assess how we might treat the disease which has produced such deadly global symptoms.⁸

*Laudato Si’* is the first papal encyclical devoted to the theme of humanity’s responsibility towards creation, and as such deserves the attention it has garnered since its promulgation. Media outlets have tended to focus on Francis’ straightforward acknowledgement of anthropogenic

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⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 279 (Ch 72, §§6-7).
climate change, incorporating the Pope into the media’s ongoing “climate-change debate.”

While Francis’ “imprimatur” on the consensus of climate scientists has already had measurable effects on current public opinion regarding climate change, Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si’* will likely make a deeper, longer lasting impact on Catholic Social Teaching. *Laudato Si’* builds on a foundation of Catholic magisterial teaching on care for the environment that has been laid down since the 1960s, but constitutes a significant development of said teaching by creatively engaging with contemporary scientific findings, legitimizing the work of ecotheology, and boldly revising key elements of Catholic Social Teaching such as its assumed anthropology and cosmology.

As much as *Laudato Si’* has been praised for having brought environmental themes to the fore, it is not, fundamentally, an encyclical about the environment. That is, climate change itself is not Pope Francis’ main concern in *Laudato Si’*, as he himself has stated. Global issues such as poverty, isolation, despair, ghettoization, wastefulness, relativism, and environmental destruction are all identified as symptoms of humanity’s participation in what Francis calls the technocratic paradigm. It is only by focusing on the dominance of the technocratic paradigm, its features, and its alternatives, that Pope Francis believes a radical solution to the pressing issue of

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anthropogenic climate change (among others) can be found.\textsuperscript{12} Since we often “fail to see the deepest roots of our present failures, which have to do with the direction, goals, meaning and social implications of technological and economic growth,”\textsuperscript{13} especially when we obsess over finding technical solutions to immediate problems, Francis asks us to pause and think critically about the dominant technocratic paradigm which casts technology as “the principal key to the meaning of existence.”\textsuperscript{14} It is only by wresting the human heart from the grip of the technocratic paradigm, Francis argues, that humanity will regain a broader vision, and find genuine solutions to the ecological crisis as it works towards an ethical, integrated ecology.

The task of healing and rehabilitating humanity’s vision, to extend the medical analogy, requires a sort of therapy. Historian of philosophy Pierre Hadot has argued that philosophy, as it was originally conceived of in ancient Greece, was dedicated to this kind of therapeutic endeavour: philosophy consisted in discovering what constitutes “the good life,” taking a corresponding stance towards reality, and adopting practices which helped to mould one’s way of life to conform with it.\textsuperscript{15} Like Pope Francis, Pierre Hadot recognizes that contemporary culture has been driven by an unbalanced vision of nature, which principally sees nature as a resource to be used or manipulated to human ends—a philosophical attitude which he calls Promethean. He contends that, in order to escape the Promethean attitude’s negative symptoms, the therapeutic practice of philosophy must be undertaken to re-assert a complementary philosophical attitude, which he calls the Orphic—an attitude capable of recognizing nature’s value and beauty apart

\textsuperscript{12} The word “radical” comes from the Latin word “radix” meaning “root.”

\textsuperscript{13} Francis, \textit{Laudato Si’}, §109, n.47. Emphasis mine.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., §110.

from human utility. Both Francis and Hadot, then, agree that a sort of conversion is necessary, and that philosophy has a central role to play in humanity’s rehabilitation.

In this thesis, therefore, I will support this claim that both Pope Francis and Pierre Hadot identify a distorted human perception of nature as one of the root causes of the current environmental crisis. What Pope Francis calls the “technocratic paradigm” in *Laudato Si’* is comparable to the vice of the "Promethean attitude" in Pierre Hadot’s work *The Veil of Isis*. Both thinkers also agree that there are other, better ways for humanity to perceive nature, and offer different—though harmonious—examples of how the “technocratic” can be abandoned. By bringing Hadot and Francis into conversation, this thesis will help to lay the groundwork for answering Francis’ own call to develop “a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm.”

In the first chapter, I will give a brief overview of Catholic Social Teaching with regards to environmental concerns, and demonstrate how *Laudato Si’* emerges from this tradition. I will then argue that Pope Francis creatively distills the wisdom of this tradition into the concept of the technocratic paradigm, which he argues drives humans’ misuse of the gifts of creation. The technocratic paradigm, I will show, simultaneously offers both a unique interpretation of Catholic Social Teaching and a new framework for action in the modern world.

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16 Many of the authors with whom this thesis engages comfortably refer to “nature” as distinct from “humanity,” even while challenging the reality of this division. While one of the fundamental arguments of this thesis is, also, that humanity is a part of and intimately bound up with nature on every conceivable level, I will retain the nature/humanity distinction since it runs through much of my source material.

17 Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §215.
In the second chapter I will introduce Pierre Hadot’s work *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature*, unpacking his notions of the Promethean and Orphic attitudes. I will draw attention especially to Hadot’s argument that the Promethean attitude has eclipsed the Orphic attitude in the history of Western thought and has led to a habitual violence against nature. I will then locate *The Veil of Isis* within the wider context of Hadot’s corpus in order to flesh out his understanding of philosophy (as a way of life) and of an attitude (a fundamental, given way of seeing the world). By doing so, I will be able to substantiate my claims that the Orphic and Promethean attitudes, while opposed, are morally neutral in and of themselves, and that the historical datum of the West’s overreliance on the Promethean attitude—and the violence it has produced—can be corrected by spiritual exercises reintroducing an Orphic appreciation for nature.

In the third chapter I will explicitly compare and contrast *Laudato Si’* and *The Veil of Isis*, carefully parsing the points over which their authors diverge and developing the points upon which they agree. I hope, first, to show how Francis’ technocratic paradigm can be understood as a manifestation of Hadot’s Promethean attitude, and how “integral ecology” can be seen as a manifestation of the Orphic attitude. Then, I will explicitly show how both authors share the conviction that the Promethean attitude’s dominance (and the general eclipsing of the Orphic attitude) has driven crises like anthropogenic climate change, and how they each suggest a reintroduction of the Orphic attitude to complement and correct the excesses of the Promethean. This shared language of excess and balance will allow me to discuss these attitudes towards nature in terms of Aristotelian virtue and vice, which provided a common framework within which Hadot’s spiritual exercises and Francis’ work of ecological conversion can both find adequate expression.
In the conclusion, I will sketch a number of topics wherein the research done in this thesis promises to bear fruit, including: social and scientific movements that give the Orphic attitude pride of place; developing a non-possessive metaphysics of knowledge; and how my thesis might shed light on, or be integrated into, the perennial tension between action and contemplation in the Catholic tradition.
Chapter 1:
The Technocratic Paradigm in Catholic Social Teaching

In this chapter I argue that Pope Francis’ notion of the technocratic paradigm in *Laudato Si’* showcases his simultaneous reliance upon and development of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) on the environment. Francis highlights the technocratic paradigm—a worldview that reduces nature, human beings, and God to disposable means of achieving power—as both cause and symptom of humanity’s unhealthy relationship with creation and its Creator. Francis’ revision of CST’s anthropology and cosmology seems to be one attempt to break the “ironclad logic” imposed by the technocratic paradigm, a logic which previous cosmologies and anthropologies may have unwittingly strengthened.18

After locating *Laudato Si’* within the history of CST on the environment, I will proceed to identify main areas where *Laudato Si’* develops or deepens CST in general, namely with respect to anthropology and cosmology. I will then focus directly on the notion of “the technocratic” in CST, carefully articulating Francis’ own notion of the technocratic paradigm. I will conclude the chapter by considering the ways Francis envisions breaking free of the technocratic paradigm.

1.1. Before *Laudato Si’*: Environmental Themes in Modern Catholic Social Teaching

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While *Laudato Si’* is the first papal encyclical which takes humanity’s responsibility towards creation as its main topic, environmental themes have arisen in magisterial CST since at least the 1960s. The progenitor of contemporary CST, and its ‘Magna Carta,’ is typically identified as Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* (1891), an encyclical which highlighted the dignity and responsibilities of human persons in the workplace and civic sphere. While *Rerum Novarum* itself never explicitly mentions humans’ responsibility for creation, subsequent encyclicals that have incorporated environmental concerns have done so as an organic blossoming of the social responsibilities laid forth in this foundational text, with *Laudato Si’* being the most recent fruit of this development.

*Mater et Magistra* (1961), written by Pope John XXIII on the seventieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, clarifies the notion of the common good identified in CST (§§65-67) and highlights the value and dignity of agriculture in the face of what, at the time, was an unprecedented abandonment of farming for industrialized labour (§§123-155). John XXIII dismisses contemporaries’ worries that the human population would outpace the food supply by pointing to the “well-nigh inexhaustible” resources which God had providentially implanted in nature, and encouraged humanity to use its technical genius to “deepen and extend its dominion over nature.” A few passages later, however, the Pope fleetingly cautions that in the Divine command to “fill the earth and subdue it” given to our first parents (Gen 1:28), “nothing is said...about destroying nature. On the contrary, it must be brought into the service of human

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19 CST can also be understood as the combination of both magisterial teaching and lay theological reflection. For the purposes of this chapter, and in order to limit the scope of this project, CST will simply refer to official Magisterial teaching.


21 Ibid., §189.
While certainly neither revolutionary nor programmatic, this is one of the first mentions in modern CST of caring for our common home.

A notable difference in tone is discernable one decade later in Pope Paul VI’s apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) and the 1971 Synod of Bishops document *Justicia in Mundo*. As Celia Deane-Drummond notes, the intervening decade saw the publishing of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) which documented the negative ecological impact of pesticides, as well as other works in ecology documenting the unintended environmental consequences of humanity’s technological ‘progress.’ In a short section of the letter, Paul VI writes of this new experience of “the dramatic and unexpected consequence of human activity.” He continues, “man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation.” Rather than warn humanity not to damage nature in an abstract future as John XXIII had, Paul VI calls humanity to “take responsibility” for concrete damage that had already begun to occur, adding that such damage constitutes “a wide-ranging social problem which concerns the entire human family.” *Justitia in Mundo* takes up similar concerns and a similar tone, laying the brunt of this responsibility at the feet of more industrially advanced nations, and encouraging them to accept “a less material

22 Ibid., §197
25 Ibid. I will not change the gender exclusive language used in Catholic magisterial texts when quoting directly from these sources. I will labour to use gender inclusive language outside of direct quotations in this thesis, however.
26 Ibid.
way of life in order to avoid the destruction of the heritage which they are obliged by absolute justice to share with all other members of the human race.”

In her survey of environmental themes in CST, Celia Deane-Drummond credits Pope John Paul II for having most consistently and intentionally developed the theological grounds for humanity’s responsibility for creation in CST. From his very first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), John Paul II links the incarnation of Christ, the “redeemer of humanity,” to the redemption and salvation of all creation, a creation that has been “groaning in travail” (Rom 8:22) and made “subject to futility” (Rom 8:20) due to the sinful activity of humankind. Deane-Drummond comments that this link shows that Christ’s mission is to restore a broken humanity (including its social dimensions) and a broken natural world, reflecting something of a cosmic Christology and what is now called ‘deep incarnation.’ It should come as no surprise, then, that John Paul II places ecological responsibility at the heart of the mission of the Christian, who participates in Christ’s own mission to heal a broken world. In *Laborem Exercens* (1981), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), and *Centesimus Annus* (1991), John Paul II continues to emphasize the need to care for the environment, tying it always to a broader nexus of social

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28 Ibid. §70.

29 Deane-Drummond, “Joining the Dance,” 196.


31 Dean-Drummond, “Joining the Dance,” 196.


responsibilities. *Evangelium Vitae* (1995) again takes up this message: “As one called to till and look after the garden of the world (cf Gen 2.15), man has a specific responsibility towards the environment in which he lives, towards the creation which God has put at the service of his personal dignity, of his life, not only for the present but also for future generations.”

More recently, the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI continues the theme of humans’ environmental responsibility, most notably in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), and in his World Day of Peace Messages from 2007 (“The Human Person, the Heart of Peace”) and 2010 (“If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation”). While Benedict XVI’s contributions to CST in this regard mainly build on the works of John Paul II, in *Caritas in Veritate* he specifically warns against the Scylla of a ‘new pantheism,’ which would value nature over humanity, and the Charybdis of an unrestrained technological domination of nature, stripping nature of any value beyond human utility.

As demonstrated above, the body of CST since *Rerum Novarum* has integrated and developed a concern for the welfare of the environment and humanity’s accompanying responsibility towards that end. Indeed, the tradition of magisterial CST seems to agree that, if creation is at risk, the principal problem to be resolved is not a technical one, but a moral one that lies in the heart of

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humanity itself. *Laudato Si*’ stands firmly in this tradition, explicitly citing many of the preceding documents, and gathering the environmental themes of CST center stage. However, Pope Francis also draws from the lives of the saints (most obviously Francis of Assisi), Christian spirituality, scripture scholarship, and documents produced by worldwide bishops’ conferences, all of which evince that the environmental concerns at the core of *Laudato Si*’ arise from the heart of Catholicism, beyond the narrower, ‘Roman’ canon of the CST featured above. Due to the scope of this chapter these other sources, lamentably, could not be integrated into this survey, but investigating their individual contributions to the CST is a fruitful avenue for further research.

### 1.2. From Static Cosmos & Kingship to Dynamic Cosmogenesis & Fraternity

While CST has increasingly acknowledged the science demonstrating humanity’s negative impact on the environment and its subsequent impact on Earth’s poor, CST has failed to adequately acknowledge or incorporate the findings of entire fields of science dedicated to understanding the place of contemporary humanity in the world’s ecology, the place of humanity in Earth’s evolutionary story, and the place of Earth in the story of the development of the universe. A large majority of CST prior to *Laudato Si*’ frames nature—and humanity’s place in it—in language, symbols, models, and analogies drawn principally from well-outdated Aristotelian and Newtonian science. Conversely, *Laudato Si*’ begins the work of reframing CST in a more recognizably contemporary cosmology and anthropology.

Despite developments in evolutionary theory, physics and cosmology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the image of creation painted by the CST before *Laudato Si*’ could be
described as static cosmos. Firstly, the created universe is depicted as a cosmos – i.e., a structured, intelligible, complex system obeying certain inherent laws. Importantly, this cosmos is often depicted as static, having always had the same logic, the same main structure, with humans and other beings ordered in particular, normative relations with one another. The movement and activity in the universe in this view seems to depend largely on the (divinely ordained) laws of nature, which animate and govern otherwise inert matter. Even living things would be similarly inert were physiological laws and the law of natural selection not divinely inscribed in the universe. The static cosmos is something like a clock, with each gear and spring given its own role by its creator. But what can we mean by “stasis” in this analogy, if we can wind up a clock and let it run? No matter how complex the changes that happen within the clock—the movements of gears, levers and springs—each individual part retains its given identity, and the clock—the mechanism as a whole—remains a clock (unless the clock is tinkered with by something that is not the clock). It does not evolve into something more complex. Creation is a complete, static cosmos.

In addition to this vision of a static cosmos, CST before Laudato Si’ tends to frame all of creation anthropocentrically. As John Paul II states in *Redemptor Hominis*, Jesus comes to save

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39 While not necessarily endorsing this inert view of nature, Pope Benedict XVI has opposed interpretations of evolution theory that speak of variation and mutation as strictly “random” processes. The “laws” of evolution are divine in their origin, and therefore not detached from reason or intention. See Pope Benedict XVI, Easter Vigil Homily (Vatican City, VA: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, April 23, 2011), accessed June 29, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2011/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20110423_veglia-pasquale.html

40 This is how creation seems to be presented from within a majority of the CST documents we are concerned with here, but it is definitively not an historically accurate reading of the scientific worldview of the medievals and the Church as a whole. Larry S. Chapp recently demonstrates that the language and “cosmos” that I speak about here is a modern distortion of what was otherwise a dynamic, communicative world in which every bit of matter had a metaphysical “interiority” that essentially gave an agency to every existing thing. This universe is not a dead one, but a living, communicating, one. See Larry S. Chapp, *The God of Covenant and Creation* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2011), Chapters 1, 3.
“the visible world which God created for man.”\textsuperscript{41} All of creation is created for humanity, which has a number of implications in the CST. First, human beings are partakers in God’s own freedom, and, as free agents—to return briefly to the clock analogy—are capable of repairing or damaging the mechanisms of creation.\textsuperscript{42} Caring for creation is depicted as a duty of humanity in CST, grounded in Genesis 2:15, and it is from this God-given responsibility for the visible world that humans are styled as co-creators of creation, and its masters, guardians, and kings. The style of humanity’s dominion is meant to be patterned on Christ’s own kingship and power, which is service in love. But this view still maintains that humanity is capable of, and responsible for, “managing” the planet.\textsuperscript{43} Second, humans are set apart from the rest of nature, ‘in nature but not of nature.’\textsuperscript{44} Humanity’s ability to reason and its greater freedom set it distinctly apart from the rest of the natural world. Admissions of humanity’s descent from earlier populations of primates are heavily qualified\textsuperscript{45} and/or supplemented by God’s special creation of each individual human soul, marked by the Divine Image (cf. Gen 1:27). This allows for tidier divisions, and makes the distinctions between humanity and nature (or between humanity and non-human animals) hermetic differences in kind rather than fluid differences of degree. This difference has opened the door to our abuse of these “others.”\textsuperscript{46} Third, creation’s value and capacity to glorify God is

\textsuperscript{41} John Paul II, \textit{Redemptor Hominis}, §8.

\textsuperscript{42} Cf. John Paul II, \textit{Laborem Exercens}, §§12, 25.

\textsuperscript{43} Deane-Drummond, “Joining the Dance,” 211.

\textsuperscript{44} A problematic, naturalized analogue of the Christian charge to be “in the World” but not “of the World,” with the World, here, being associated with the “worldliness” disparaged in John’s Gospel.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Humani Generis}, while not explicitly part of CST, certainly has implications for it. \textit{Humani Generis} argues explicitly against polygenism, the notion that the human race may have descended from a \textit{population} of early humans, and reiterates that the present human race must have descended from a singular couple, an historical Adam and an historical Eve. This encyclical is known to be denouncing the work of Teilhard de Chardin, though not by name. See John Cowburn, \textit{Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: A Selective Summary of His Life} (Eugene, OR: Mosaic Press, 2013), 99. \textit{Humani Generis}’ publication was also a significant factor which contributed to Pierre Hadot’s leaving the Catholic priesthood. See Michael Chase, “Remembering Pierre Hadot, Part I,” \textit{Harvard University Press Blog}, April 28, 2010, accessed June 28, 2016, http://harvardpress.typepad.com/hup_publicity/2010/04/pierre-hadot-part-1.html.

\textsuperscript{46} In his work \textit{The Specter of Speciesism: Buddhist and Christian Views of Animals} (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), Peter Waldau’s study of Christians’ justification for human superiority over animals is
depicted as dependent on humanity. Little emphasis is put on creation’s value, beauty, and relationship with God independent of human existence and salvation history since, in this view, it is through human participation in the mission of Christ that the whole of Earthly creation will find restoration in God.47

Humanity’s place at the pinnacle of creation in a relatively static cosmos was a notion that would have been more easily justifiable in an Aristotelian worldview, where the earth sat motionless at the literal center of creation, where the processes of earthly generation and decay were seen as imperfections, and where the perfect, crystalline spheres of the planets hummed around the earth in well-established harmony. Even the Copernican, Cartesian, and Newtonian worldviews, which relativized so much about humanity’s place in the universe, still preferred the machine analogy.48

But the world emerging from the sciences of the last century looks nothing like these anymore: from the discovered vastness of our universe, to the billions of years recorded in our earth’s crust, to the complex interconnectedness of life in evolution and present ecology, to the mysterious entanglements and uncertainties of the quantum world. Theologian and

grounded in humanity’s possession of an intellectual soul, what Augustine and Aquinas have identified as the mark of God’s “image and likeness” (cf. Gen 1:27) (p.203). Similar justifications continue to be used today. (See Pontifical Academy for Life, Prospects for Xenotransplantation: Scientific Aspects and Ethical Considerations (Vatican City, VA: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, September 26, 2001), §§7-8, accessed October 1, 2016, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/acdlife/documents/rc_pa_acdlife_doc_20010926_xenotransplantanti_en.html#PART TWO Anthropological and Ethical Aspects). For an account of why this is not (and has not been) the sole Christian interpretation of humanity’s relations to non-human animals, see Rod Preece, “Darwinism, Christianity, and the Great Vivisection Debate,” Journal of the History of Ideas, 64 no.3 (2003), 399-419.

47 John Paul II, Redemptor Hominis, §8.

48 But a static reading of this medieval universe is not necessary, as mentioned in note 39. Larry S. Chapp makes a convincing argument that the medieval worldview, pre-Scotus, was a dynamic, integrated world, with each existing thing sharing in God’s own act of being in its becoming (see Chapp, God of Covenant and Creation, pp.17, 24). It seems plausible that a static reading of the Aristotelian universe is actually more a product of the technocratic paradigm than the reverse, since seeking to thoroughly manipulate the world for human ends conduces to conceiving of the world as a thoroughly manipulable machine.
paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin writes that these and similar discoveries provoke “the fundamental change of view which since the sixteenth century has been steadily exploding and rendering fluid what had seemed to be the ultimate stability — our concept of the world itself. To our clearer vision the universe is no longer an Order but a Process. The Cosmos has become a Cosmogenesis.”49 Indeed, the world is no longer understood as a static cosmos, but as a dynamic process of cosmogenesis. Moreover, in contemporary philosophy of science, “laws of nature” do not—in a top-down fashion—determine the shape and order of the universe; rather, law-like regularities emerge as active entities (not inert ones!) negotiate pockets of predictable behaviour.50 Pope Francis prefers drawing from this dynamic, cosmogenetic vision of the universe in Laudato Si’, describing the universe as one “shaped by open and intercommunicating systems,”51 with a living world unproblematically at home in the epochal timescales of “biological evolution.”52 The universe is also interconnected: “Time and space are not independent of one another, and not even atoms or subatomic particles can be considered in isolation. Just as the different aspects of the planet – physical, chemical and biological – are interrelated, so too living species are part of a network.”53 These species and networks, Pope Francis writes, “have an intrinsic value independent of their usefulness.”54 This contemporary worldview, then, views reality as being more akin to an organism than to a machine.

50 As one example of this view, see Nancy Cartwright, How the Laws of Physics Lie (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1983).
51 Francis, Laudato Si’, §79.
52 Ibid., §18.
53 Ibid., §138.
54 Ibid., §140.
It is a focus on interconnection, manifest in this dynamic vision of the universe, which helps to correct what Francis calls “a misguided anthropocentrism,”\textsuperscript{55} which has sometimes been grounded in “an inadequate presentation of Christian anthropology” with humanity separate from and having absolute dominion over nature.\textsuperscript{56} As Francis corrects, “nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it.”\textsuperscript{57} Nature’s independent value, its own activity and dynamism, and humanity’s place within it, all lead Pope Francis to shift the focus from an anthropocentric worldview to a Christocentric or Theocentric one.

The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things. Here we can add yet another argument for rejecting every tyrannical and irresponsible domination of human beings over other creatures. The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator.\textsuperscript{58}

Our responsibility to creation, therefore, is reframed: not as kingship or dominion, but loving service and fraternity.\textsuperscript{59} By our being utterly bound up with creation we are a family, sharing a common home on this earth (in this solar system, in this galaxy) and a common destiny in God.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., §122.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., §116.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., §139.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., §83. This section, and its corresponding footnote (n.53), references the works of Teilhard, and is an explicit step towards vindicating and rehabilitating his works.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., §228.
Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.60

Pope Francis notes that a renewed attention to reality—including our best knowledge of the structure and function of the universe through our scientific investigations—is “the condition for a more sound and fruitful development of individuals and society.”61 The shift from a static to a dynamic cosmology, in addition to a corresponding shift in understanding the “place” of humanity within nature, strengthen Francis’ case that our ethical stance towards our common home should be grounded in an awareness of our profound integration with and dependence upon all creatures, including one another. But despite the growing scientific consensus that the universe is a dynamic, interconnected process, human beings continue to act as though the riches of nature are ours to consume and throw away. Despite agreeing that we are profoundly interwoven into the story of the planet and its future, we do not allow this knowledge to affect the way we live, move, and have our being. So, while Francis’ assimilation of the contemporary scientific consensus (particularly within CST) is incredibly important for cultivating a genuinely ‘catholic’ vision of reality, it is not merely a change in scientific perspective that will change how we, as humans live. The change in perspective must be more radical, affecting all of our humanity in its theological, anthropological, moral, and social dimensions: it must be a conversion. In the context of Laudato Si’, Francis refers to this conversion as an ecological conversion, and it is a conversion from the prevailing alternative worldview, which Francis calls the technocratic paradigm.

60 Ibid., §92.
61 Ibid., §116.
1.3. The Technocratic Paradigm

For Francis, the root cause of the environmental crisis which humanity currently faces does not fundamentally derive from outdated scientific theories. Rather, the cause for our mistreatment of creation is only one outcome of a unified, totalizing worldview which, Francis argues, shapes every aspect of our contemporary human lives. Not only does this worldview condition how we relate to nature and other living things, but it also affects everything from our relationships with other humans, to how we understand our work, to the values which undergird our economies and nations, to how we understand God and God’s action in the world. Pope Francis calls this specific, unified, totalizing worldview the technocratic paradigm. From within the technocratic paradigm, every aspect of the world is understood, valued, and approached from the perspective of technoscientific progress – i.e., the more efficient things are, and the more control we have over the things we know, the better. Before looking at Pope Francis’ own definition of the technocratic paradigm, I will first briefly consider the term’s etymology, seeing how “technocracy” and “paradigm” are used in CST and elsewhere. Then, after outlining the most prominent features of the technocratic paradigm, I will argue why Francis’ use of the terms “conversion” and “revolution” are the most apt as means of resisting the technocratic paradigm, and how Francis’ focus on the technocratic paradigm and its solutions constitute a development of CST.
1.4. The Technocratic Paradigm: An Etymology

1.4.1. Technocratic

The word “technocracy” has been used before Pope Francis in the Church’s magisterial teaching, and seems to exclusively arise in the context of CST, and in Pope Paul VI’s work in particular. Paul VI, from whom Francis explicitly draws in *Laudato Si’*, uses the term “technocracy” and its derivatives in its most straightforwardly political meaning – i.e. the rule or governance (G. *kratia*) of the technical elite or those who control technology. In *Octogenesima Adveniens* (1971), Paul VI warns that the political approach taken by technocrats is, necessarily, limited by their own expertise and goals and, as such, dangerously restricts the broader vision of human social responsibility that Christ inspires in the Christian. In this case, he specifically links technocracy to capitalism, denouncing technocratic capitalism alongside “bureaucratic socialism” and “authoritarian democracy” as systems trying and failing to promote justice and equality. He suggests that a more robust form of democracy—grounded in an informed, active, responsible populace—could help to counteract and broaden the limits of technocracy.

Interestingly in his earlier encyclical, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), Paul VI uses the term “technocracy” only once, but defines it in a way that resonates more strongly with the tradition of CST. Therein, Paul VI calls technocracy “the reign of technology,” *not* the technical elite, and notes that technology can be a negative, society-shaping force unto itself, especially when married to economic interests and divorced from a deeper humanism. Pope John Paul II, while

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63 Ibid. § 47.

not using the word “technocracy,” speaks of how the march of technological progress and power often outpaces humanity’s ethical progress and control, and can become a source of fear for modern humanity. More recently, Pope Benedict XVI has developed this theme from Paul VI in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), calling the rule of technology the technocratic ideology or the “technocratic cultural perspective.” Each of these popes laud technology as being a manifestation of human ingenuity and ultimately a good, but they warn that the efficiency, power, and mechanism of technological systems can, when unthinkingly adopted, become dangerous in a way more far-reaching and pervasive than mere political “technocracy.” Pope Francis will use the term in this broader sense.

### 1.4.2. Paradigm

While the word “paradigm” traditionally means “exemplar” (as in “paradigmatic”) and is used as such in earlier CST, Pope Francis draws the word’s meaning from its now common, Kuhnian heritage. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Thomas Kuhn challenged the simplistic notion that science, as a human activity, is simply the gradual accumulation of newer, better knowledge about reality. He argued that while science does seem to follow this “accumulation” model in periods of experimentation and fine-tuning (which he calls “normal science”), at key moments in history, scientific worldviews enter periods of crisis that provoke scientific communities to creatively re-think, re-model, re-value, and re-view reality. The result of these crises and the creative re-imagining they inspire is the emergence of a new “Gestalt,” a

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67 Ibid., §70.
new way of seeing the world, a new worldview, a revolutionary, new scientific paradigm. As Alan R. Drengson helpfully puts it, a paradigm, in this sense, is “a constellation of models which defines, exemplifies and illustrates the ideals and procedures of normal science during nonrevolutionary times.” While there are ways of understanding a scientific paradigm in a more restrictive way, akin to the original notion of the “exemplar” (as exemplary scientific practice; a reading which Kuhn inconsistently professed to prefer), it is a broader understanding of a paradigm as a tradition, worldview, or “disciplinary matrix,” which produced the most fruitful research programs within and outside of the field of the history and philosophy of science. Significantly, Pope Francis deploys this broader, fecund paradigm concept throughout *Laudato Si’* – a first in CST.

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72 This is Kuhn’s own term, meant to help disambiguate the many ways that the word paradigm is used in his own work and beyond. For a classic identification of 21 different uses of the term in Kuhn’s own work, see M. Masterman, “The Nature of a Paradigm,” in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, eds. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 59-89.

Most important for understanding how Pope Francis uses the word paradigm, I argue, is how paradigms shape perception. For Kuhn, those who experience the change from one paradigm to another—a so-called “paradigm shift”— experience, fundamentally, a radical change in their perception of the world. Two individuals participating in two different scientific paradigms could witness the same event and experience it in two distinct, often mutually incompatible ways (Figure 1). That is, their experiences are so informed by their own paradigms, so structured by the disciplinary matrix in which they participate, that Kuhn argues they inhabit different phenomenal worlds. Kuhn does not mean to argue for a radical constructivism here— using Kantian language he still believes there is an objective, noumenal world that grounds both of these experiences—but seeing the world in radically different ways leads participants in differing paradigms to approach the world differently, value it differently, structure it differently in their ontologies, even to have different notions of objectivity, to the point that Kuhn claims that

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74 The most common, if simplistic, example of this is the famous duck-rabbit drawing pictured in Figure 1.
terminology in differing paradigms is almost inevitably incommensurable.\textsuperscript{75} Again, extending the notion of a paradigm beyond its use in the history of science, it is this fundamental capacity of paradigms to shape and structure perception (and concomitantly values and actions) that makes this term apt for Pope Francis’ purposes in \textit{Laudato Si’}. This becomes clear in the following lucid passage:

> It can be said that many problems of today’s world stem from the tendency, at times unconscious, to make the method and aims of science and technology an epistemological paradigm which shapes the lives of individuals and the workings of society. The effects of imposing this model on reality as a whole, human and social, are seen in the deterioration of the environment, but this is just one sign of a reductionism which affects every aspect of human and social life. We have to accept that 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. Decisions which may seem purely instrumental are in reality decisions about the kind of society we want to build.\textsuperscript{76}

Bringing together the results of the brief etymology above in the context of \textit{Laudato Si’}, we can define the technocratic paradigm as \textit{a constellation of models which defines, exemplifies and illustrates the ideals and procedures of human life based on the efficiency and power of human technology}. Pope Francis sees the technocratic paradigm as “undifferentiated and one-dimensional,” and humanity’s global adoption of it as the fundamental problem he seeks to address in \textit{Laudato Si’}.\textsuperscript{77}


\textsuperscript{76} Francis, \textit{Laudato Si’}, §107.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., §106. It should be noted that the English translation, here, seems to undercut the gravity of the claim being made by Pope Francis. The English reads: “The basic problem goes even deeper: it is the way that humanity has taken up [the technocratic paradigm],...” The Italian reads: “Il problema fondamentale è un altro, ancora più profondo: il modo in cui di fatto l’umanità ha assunto [il paradigma tecnocratico]...” I more literally translate this as: “The fundamental problem is another, which is even deeper/more profound...”—a sense which is retained from the original Spanish: “El problema fundamental es otro más profundo todavía...”
1.5. Seeing Less of Reality

At the heart of the technocratic paradigm is a vision of the human—an anthropology—that “exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object.”\(^{78}\) That is, it is a mechanical, procedural, computational model of the ideal human being. The technocratic paradigm makes the methods and aims of technoscience the ideal methods and aims of the human person: we are encouraged to mimic the possession, mastery, and transformation of the natural world exemplified by science and technology. The ultimate expression of human freedom, then, is our capacity to control and not be controlled.

Complementing this vision of the human person is the technocratic paradigm’s vision of nature. Perhaps inspired by the successes of our technological interventions in nature, the technocratic paradigm casts the world outside the subject as always-already a resource to be possessed, mastered, and transformed. As such, the technocratic paradigm is an example of Abraham Maslow’s law of the hammer \(^{79}\) Rather than seeing nature as freely offering its potentialities and truths to humankind (which humanity could gratefully receive), “by contrast, we are the ones to lay our hands on things, attempting to extract everything possible from them.”\(^{80}\) The technocratic paradigm replaces the image of a friendly encounter between humanity and nature with an image of confrontation and exploitation. Our technologies are capable of extracting resources from nature’s fruits that nature, itself, might never have freely

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\(^{78}\) Ibid.

\(^{79}\) “I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail.” Abraham Maslow, *The Psychology of Science: A Reconnaissance* (Chapel Hill, NC: Maurice Bassett Publishing, 2002), 15.

\(^{80}\) Francis, *Laudato Si’,* §106.
given up. The technoscientific successes of finding and extracting resources have helped justify the (unfounded) belief that nature’s resources are themselves infinite, which Pope Francis dismisses by pointing to the deterioration of environment and society which have resulted from this lie.  

Perhaps one of the most salient features of the technocratic paradigm for Pope Francis, showcased in its framing of both humanity and nature, is a narrowing of vision. We can imagine the technocratic paradigm as one way of seeing the world, comparable to looking through a telescope. Looking through a telescope offers a genuine benefit: things that are far away can be seen with increased clarity. But when looking through a telescope, one becomes incapable of clearly seeing anything outside of the telescope’s view. Also, using the telescope to look at something closer to the viewer, like one’s hand, leads to a rather distorted view of that object. The benefit of a telescope, of course, is that one can simply put it aside when it’s no longer useful. What Pope Francis seems to be drawing our attention to is the fact that there’s nothing wrong, per se, with seeing the world in a way “coloured” by technology and science. What is problematic is that humanity has largely forgotten that it can look at the world another way. To return to our analogy, it is as if human beings had begun living their entire lives looking through telescopes, unaware that they need not do so. Under the technocratic paradigm, the focus on nature’s usefulness blocks out its own values and beauty independent of human need. This is similar to Heidegger’s idea that the very essence of technology “enframes” the world in such a way that all of nature reveals itself to humanity as a “standing-reserve,” solely as a set of

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81 Ibid., §107.

82 Annelise Riles has argued that the technocratic is one, limited knowledge practice among many, citing Michel Foucault and F. A. Hayek as thinkers who have argued much the same. In agreement with Pope Francis, however, she emphasizes how pervasive and inescapable it is to think and ‘know’ in this way in the present day and age. Annelise Riles, “Real Time: Unwinding Technocratic and Anthropological Knowledge,” Cornell Law Faculty Publications, Paper 996 (2004): 400, accessed June 1, 2016, http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/facpub/996.
resources to be used or a set of ordered problems to be solved. Pope Francis adds that the focus on discrete problems which the technocratic paradigm imposes as a means of quick problem solving, simultaneously leaves the broader horizon in darkness, veiling how those discrete problems are connected to the bigger picture.

For Pope Francis, faith is central to helping us see in that darkness once again. Francis’ first encyclical, *Lumen Fidei*, spoke of faith as a light that shines in darkness, one “capable of illuminating every aspect of human existence.” Importantly, it is by giving humanity a glimpse of a wider, more comprehensive vision of the human person, nature, and humanity-in-nature that Pope Francis attempts to liberate humanity from its surrender to the technocratic paradigm.

1.6. The Influence of Romano Guardini

Running implicitly and explicitly through Pope Francis’ treatment of the technocratic paradigm in *Laudato Si’* is the influence of twentieth century theologian Romano Guardini, specifically his work entitled *The End of the Modern World*. Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis were all influenced by the works of Guardini, with Pope Francis almost having written a doctoral

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84 Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §110.


86 “Life gradually becomes a surrender to situations conditioned by technology, itself viewed as the principal key to the meaning of existence. In the concrete situation confronting us, there are a number of symptoms which point to what is wrong, such as environmental degradation, anxiety, a loss of the purpose of life and of community living.” Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §110.
dissertation on Guardini’s work. In *The End of the Modern World*, Guardini posits that the two world wars are evidence that humankind has left “Modernity” behind, and sketches the features of post-modern humanity and its predecessors. At the end of Modernity, with its focus on human genius and potential, humanity saw its control and mastery epitomized in the machine. As they leave Modernity, humans no longer merely *use* machines to express their power, they have *become* machines. This post-modern humanity Guardini calls “Mass Man,” which has been “fashioned according to the law of standardization, a law dictated by the functional nature of the machine. Moreover, the most highly developed individuals of the mass, its elite, are not merely conscious of the influence of the machine; they deliberately imitate it, building its standards and rhythms into their own ethos.”

This is the human of the technocratic paradigm: “The gadgets and technics forced upon him by the patterns of machine production and of abstract planning mass man accepts quite simply; they are the forms of life itself.” Pope Francis cites Guardini’s work eight times over the course of *Laudato Si’*, mainly for offering keen insights into the nature of technocratic humanity, its view of nature, and the general contours of our current age and the age to come. Importantly, both Guardini and Francis also see conversion as being central to the cultivation of the virtues necessary to escape the dominion of the technocratic paradigm.

A more thorough comparison between Guardini’s vision and that of Francis is warranted, but cannot be pursued within the constraints of this project.

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89 Ibid., 78.

90 Ibid., 132.
1.7. Time, Technoscience, and Capital

Quoting Guardini, Pope Francis writes: “Technology tends to absorb everything into its ironclad logic, and those who are surrounded with technology ‘know full well that it moves forward in the final analysis neither for profit nor for the well-being of the human race’, that ‘in the most radical sense of the term power is its motive – a lordship over all’.”91

The technocratic paradigm’s machinelike goals of power and efficiency, when combined with the incredible rate of technological development in today’s world, have accelerated contemporary human life to a blistering pace. Pope Francis notes that this “rapidification” of human life is strikingly at odds with the “naturally slow pace of biological evolution” and seems to outpace a proportional development of ethics and culture.92 Arguably, this pace is another instance of the technocratic paradigm narrowing humanity’s vision or experience of the world.

Geoffrey Bowker, a science and technology studies scholar, has demonstrated how technologies can have this effect on human perception of space and time with his study of the dawn of passenger train travel in the 19th century. Bowker notes that people on trains were strikingly aware of what had changed from horse and carriage rides. In a carriage ride, the duration of the journey and the features and distances of a landscape were easy to experience (if sometimes unpleasant); passengers could feel every bump, smell the countryside, hear nearby cattle, survey the passing towns, and feel every hour creep by. But the voyage between the same two points in the technological system of the railway effectively “annihilated” the space and time between origin and destination as the passenger car—enclosed, muffled, furnished—raced through the

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91 Francis, Laudato Si, §108.
92 Francis, Laudato Si’, §18.
Bowker argues that technology and the bureaucratic structures that accompany it refashion our experience of nature, space, and time in a way similar to how Francis envisions the technocratic paradigm doing so. In the case of “rapidification,” it’s as though humanity is so focused on arriving at its destination quickly and efficiently that we are afraid to slow down, to look to the left or to the right, worried that if we do so we will crash or fail. This pace, Pope Francis argues, leads to a one-dimensional superficiality, and makes it difficult to “pause and recover depth in life.”

It is important to note that these blind spots caused by the pace and perspective of the technocratic paradigm are places where human freedom and agency are basically forfeited. In these situations humanity’s freedom is “handed over to the blind forces of the unconscious, of immediate needs, of self-interest, and of violence,” or to individuals in power. (“Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!”) A prime example of this is the alliance of the technocratic paradigm and capitalism. While capitalism itself simply structures an economy around principles of private ownership, enterprise, and profit, under the influence of a technological drive for efficiency and power the accumulation of profit and capital become ends in themselves. The goals of the technocratic paradigm become the “law which gives capital no rest,” and continually whispers “Go on! Go on!” This lust for profit, and the frenetic pace it inspires, has prevented humanity from being able to critically address the main issues at the heart

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94 Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §113.  
95 Ibid. §105.  
96 This command was exasperatedly barked at Dorothy and her friends when Toto reveals the true nature of the Wizard of Oz.  
of the recent financial crisis, and perpetuates a reduction of nature to a source of profit and gain with no interest in such a view’s ramifications.

1.8. Beyond the Technocratic Paradigm

Pope Francis assures us that there is hope in resisting the technocratic paradigm; we have the freedom to “broaden our vision” beyond the tunnel-vision imposed by a technocapitalistic worldview.

Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts.

Pope Francis grounds our capacity to break free from the confines of the technocratic paradigm in human reason itself, which is an openness to all of reality (including, as was mentioned before, the light of faith). Since the technocratic paradigm shapes the structures and values of humanity and nature, to adequately resist the technocratic paradigm requires a similarly “total” reframing of the world: a paradigm shift, to use Kuhn’s language. Francis calls this change of heart away from the technocratic paradigm, this utter shift in how we perceive and act in the world, ecological conversion.

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99 “When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society. This vision of “might is right” has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all. Completely at odds with this model are the ideals of harmony, justice, fraternity and peace as proposed by Jesus.” Ibid., §82.
100 Ibid., §112.
101 Ibid., §205.
While John Paul II also used the term “ecological conversion” in his magisterium, Francis’ use of the term is given new poignancy alongside his definition and use of the technocratic paradigm. For Francis, ecological conversion on the individual and community levels grounds a “bold cultural revolution” that brings about “a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality” which all have at their core our integration within God’s beloved gift of Creation. Francis’ use of words like paradigm and revolution evoke the dramatic shifts in scientific worldviews in Kuhn’s The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, worldviews which shape not only how we envisage the world but how we act within it. The bold cultural revolution that Pope Francis imagines is framed as a paradigm shift from the technocratic paradigm to a new ecological paradigm, akin to what Alan R. Drengson calls the “person-planetary paradigm.” This new paradigm, which I will explore more thoroughly in Chapter 3, envisions nature as organic and having intrinsic, God-given value, with humanity and its technology integrated into ecological relationships.

Framing the technocratic impetus of contemporary society as a paradigm also has two helpful effects over previous discussions of this phenomenon in CST. First, it identifies, names, and defines a set of phenomena that have only been loosely tied together in previous official documents. By doing so, Pope Francis has drawn a key theme of CST to the fore, and made

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104 Francis, Laudato Si’, §114.

105 Ibid. §215.

pastoral and theological reflection on this theme more accessible by defining it as the technocratic paradigm. Secondly, a rejection of the technocratic paradigm can be more easily differentiated from a rejection of technology. Pope Francis frequently differentiates between the dangers of allowing technoscience to produce a hegemonic worldview and the praiseworthy use of technology within a more human, more integral ecology.\textsuperscript{107}

1.9. Summary

Drawing from the wealth of Catholic Social Teaching, Pope Francis identifies the technocratic paradigm as the source of many of humanity’s current crises, including humanity’s disregard for the care of our common home and its present and future inhabitants. In dialogue with contemporary science, Pope Francis illustrates that humanity is profoundly woven into a developing, active world deserving of our love and care, and is not a separate master given a lifeless world to mould for power and profit. \textit{Laudato Si’} constitutes a development in CST for having identified the technocratic paradigm as the mechanistic “heart of stone” that humanity must replace with a God-given, organic “heart of flesh” if we genuinely want to care for and protect our common home.\textsuperscript{108} An ecological conversion, a “bold cultural revolution,” is central to recovering humanity’s place in this cosmos, and to Christians’ identities as daughters and sons of an Incarnate God.

\textsuperscript{107} Cf. Francis, \textit{Laudato Si’}, §§112, 114.

Chapter 2:
The Promethean and Orphic Attitudes

In the previous chapter we considered how the technocratic paradigm affects humanity’s experience of the world, including the self, society, God, and nature. We principally considered how these insights about the technocratic paradigm arose and were developed within Catholic Social Teaching, most recently within Laudato Si’. In this chapter we will take a step away from both Roman Catholic magisterial teaching and the technocratic paradigm to consider the broader history of how nature has been approached and understood in Western thought, with a view to eventually embedding the technocratic paradigm within this history. In his landmark study The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature, Pierre Hadot argues that two main attitudes towards nature can be discerned when surveying Western thought, from the Presocratics to the present. One attitude seeks to control nature and understand it through experimentation and manipulation, which Hadot calls the Promethean attitude. The other attitude seeks to contemplate nature and understand it through observation and art, which he calls the Orphic attitude. These attitudes and their interplay, Hadot argues, ground humanity’s approach to nature throughout history, and form a perennial dynamic with each attitude competing with and complementing the other.

The main goal of this chapter is to introduce the Promethean and Orphic attitudes, discussing their histories and interaction. Subsequently, I will argue that Pierre Hadot’s exposition of the Orphic and Promethean attitudes towards nature, and his critique of the Promethean attitude, are best understood in the context of his lifelong passion to reframe the study and practice of
philosophy as a “way of life” (not merely an intellectual discipline or academic faculty). As such, a majority of this chapter will be spent summarizing the main arguments in *The Veil of Isis* with an emphasis on Hadot’s discussions of the Promethean and Orphic attitudes. I will then briefly introduce Hadot’s broader project of understanding philosophy as a way of life, and explain how *The Veil of Isis* is a concrete example of “doing philosophy” in Hadot’s own sense, precisely by leading his readers to see the world—and live in it—in a way more open to the Orphic attitude. Finally, I will discuss some implications of this analysis for the goals of the present thesis.

2.1. The Master-Metaphor of “Nature’s Secrets”

Pierre Hadot (1922-2010) was a philosopher and historian of philosophy who specialized in Neoplatonism and held the Chair of “Theologies and Mysticisms of Hellenistic Greece and the End of Antiquity” at the École Pratique des Hautes Études from 1964-1982 and the Chair of “History in Hellenistic and Roman Thought” at the Collège de France from 1982-1991. In the Introduction, Hadot notes that *The Veil of Isis* is a book that he had been meaning to write for about 40 years, having always been interested in the notion of the “secrets of nature” and how ancient understandings of this phrase had shaped and been shaped by history. It is fitting, therefore, that he begins his monograph on the phrase that started it all: Heraclitus’ enigmatic “phûsîs kruptêthai phileî.” This aphorism has typically been translated “Nature loves to hide,” which has contributed to the notion of nature having “secrets” that it veils from humans’ gazes. Hadot challenges this translation and interpretation of the original Greek phrase, arguing instead that it likely meant either “What causes things to appear tends to make them disappear (i.e., what

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causes birth tends to cause death)” or “Form (or appearance) tends to disappear (i.e., what is born wants to die)”.

Both of these interpretations, Hadot argues, are much more typical of Heraclitus’ antithetical philosophical style than the aphorisms’ meaning “Nature loves to hide,” which he claims is how the phrase was (mis)understood in its first citation in Greek literature five centuries after its writing. And yet, this misinterpretation—the notion of a veiled or an actively veiling Nature (often personified)—became a powerful metaphor that would persist through much of Western thought in different guises. The misunderstanding of Heraclitus’ aphorism took on a life of its own in the Western mind: “to write the history of thought,” Hadot remarks, “is sometimes to write the history of a series of misinterpretations.”

In his decades of studying the Western intellectual tradition, Hadot has discerned two fundamental ways of approaching nature’s secrets: one controlling and manipulative, the other contemplative and appreciative. Hadot calls the first, controlling approach the Promethean attitude, after the mythological Prometheus who stole the secret of fire from the gods in order to improve the life of humankind. Hadot dubs the second, reverential attitude taken towards nature the Orphic attitude, named after the mythical Greek poet and musician Orpheus. “Whereas the Promethean attitude is inspired by audacity, boundless curiosity, the will to power, and the search for utility, the Orphic attitude, by contrast, is inspired by respect in the face of mystery and disinterestedness.”

Rather than subsequent historical developments, Hadot presents these attitudes in The Veil of Isis as perennially-present existential options for humanity. As Alan Kim

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110 Ibid., 10.
111 Ibid., 17.
112 Ibid. 14. (Note, here, that this is not a moral judgment. In fact, he claims that these misinterpretations and creative ways of understanding are what actually produce novelty in philosophy. They are thus, in the end, a good thing insofar as they encourage and are the product of creativity.)
113 Hadot, The Veil of Isis, 98.
astutely observes, “the Promethean and Orphic attitudes represent two opposed, yet simultaneous, historical developments, bound together like a double-helix around a single historical axis: the master-metaphor of Nature's secrets.”¹¹⁴ We will now unpack these attitudes in turn.

### 2.2. The Promethean Attitude: Historical Manifestations

Hadot places the first attitude towards nature under the patronage of the mythical figure Prometheus, the Titan who stole the power of fire from Zeus and the gods in order to give it to a suffering humanity. This portrayal of the secret power of fire is typical of all secrets of nature in the Promethean attitude: Nature jealously hides certain powers from humanity, guarding them and selfishly keeping them for herself. Since nature is seen as actively keeping knowledge from humanity, a corresponding attitude towards nature “consists of using technical procedures to tear Nature’s ‘secrets’ from her in order to dominate and exploit her.”¹¹⁵ That is, nature is recalcitrant and largely uncooperative, and its secrets must be extracted from it; the veil of nature must be pulled away through human ingenuity and power. Hadot catalogues three principal ways that the Promethean attitude has manifested itself through the history of the West: mechanics, magic, and experimentation.

The Promethean attitude is tightly bound up with mechanics since the word “mechanics” itself comes from the Greek word *mēkhanē* which means “trick.” Machines and instruments work precisely by relying upon the powers inherent within nature, but these powers are arranged in such a way that they produce results that would be impossible for nature itself without human

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intervention and tinkering. Framed within a fundamental struggle between humanity and nature, mechanics are therefore a means to gain an advantage over nature by fooling nature to serve human ends—whether they be mere human survival, human comfort, or human extravagance.\(^{116}\)

It was by successfully mobilizing both mechanics and mathematics to bend nature to human goals that nature itself seemed to be reducible to a mathematical/mechanical system—a worldview whose implications we have already begun to trace in Chapter 1 and will have an opportunity to revisit.

It might seem odd to include magic in the company of mechanics and experimentation, but, for Hadot’s purposes, it allies perfectly with the Promethean attitude and was a substantial stream in Western intellectual history. Like mechanics, magic was meant to uncover nature’s secrets and wield them in the service of human interests, but the secrets here are understood as occult powers, usually brought about by gods or demons. By controlling these entities, the practitioner hoped to thereby control nature. (St. Augustine, for instance, conceived of demons as being able to manipulate these hidden powers in nature.\(^{117}\)) As antiquity and the Middle Ages gave way to the Renaissance, the potentialities hidden in the bosom of nature were no longer seen as being controllable only by demons or spirits but also by humanity itself. Since the investigation and manipulation of nature’s hidden sympathies and antipathies no longer required the mediation of demons or spirits, magic became known as “natural magic” and would continue to flourish in numerous guises (astronomy, alchemy, etc.) until the seventeenth century with the rise of experimentation.

\(^{116}\) Ibid., 102.

\(^{117}\) Ibid., 108.
Only after the writings and works of Francis Bacon (1561-1626) would the word *experimentum* cease to mean general practical knowledge (as it had during Medieval times and in antiquity) and begin to denote the contrived setups analogous to contemporary scientific experiments.¹¹⁸ These mechanically aided experiments, for Bacon, were meant to “disturb” nature, in the hopes that by “catching it off guard” we could glimpse what it is truly like. Bacon writes that “the secrets of nature are better discovered under the torture of the [mechanical] arts than when it proceeds in its natural course,” thus linking experimentation on nature with the means of extorting a confession from a defendant or witch.¹¹⁹ As with mechanics and magic, the secrets revealed by putting nature on the rack in experimentation were—for Bacon and others—means of manipulating the environment and nature itself to serve human ends.¹²⁰

Some historians, like Robert Lenoble, have made the argument that what characterizes the scientific/experimental revolution was a shift to this treatment of nature as something manipulable, but Hadot’s historical survey suggests that this (Promethean) attitude is nothing new in the West.¹²¹ What is novel during this period, Hadot argues, is the shift in methodology: the study of nature’s quantifiable aspects, and their control via mechanical means. The growth in the success and prominence of engineering leading up to the seventeenth century is likely part of this shift, as advances in shipbuilding, printing, and glass-works led to new horizons for the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Indeed, the triumphs of mechanics, math, and

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¹¹⁸ Ibid., 119. Franciscan Roger Bacon was known for having used the word *experimentum* as well, though not in the same ways as the later Francis Bacon.


¹²⁰ In Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis*, he presciently sketches science as a communal practice, which sought to control/manipulate everything from the productivity of plants to the very effects of the weather. Ibid., 120.

experimentation would lead to a shift in the very idea of the secrets of nature. Thanks to these advances, the secrets of nature were no longer understood as occult or invisible in principle, but only invisible in the absence of an ingenious enough technique or technology. Antoni van Leeuwenhoek’s (1632-1723) first treatise on the use of the microscope for biology even had the title *The Secrets of Nature Unveiled*.\(^\text{122}\) There was also a contemporaneous shift away from nature’s personification within the intellectual community during this same time, a shift that would only fully take root in wider Western culture during the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century.\(^\text{123}\) From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, we see the development and maturation of a concept of nature that is mechanistic, mathematical, and manipulable by the technical genius of humanity. This is an organic blossoming of the Promethean attitude, where uncovering nature’s secrets results in humanity’s domination and control of it. This overall outlook is distilled in Francis Bacon’s famous phrase, “knowledge itself is power.”\(^\text{124}\)

### 2.2.1. The Promethean Attitude: Qualifications

It must be noted that, while Hadot himself generally casts the Promethean attitude in a negative light, the violent language of exploitation, mastery, domination and trickery which he employs are, to a large degree, quoted directly from the historical sources from which he has reconstructed the foundations of the Promethean attitude—quotes I regrettably could not include within this text. But the Promethean attitude need not be only understood in this disagreeably exploitative way. The Promethean attitude has as its moral motivating force the health, safety, 

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\(^{122}\) Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, *Arcana Naturae Detecta* (Krooneveld: Delphis Batavorum, Apud H., 1695).

\(^{123}\) Hadot, *Veil of Isis*, 137.

and flourishing of humanity which are generally seen as noble ends.\footnote{Hadot, Veil of Isis, 98.} (Certainly the Prometheus myth is framed this way.) Roger Bacon, the thirteenth century Franciscan (no relation to Francis Bacon), is a frequently cited example of a philosopher committed to the Promethean attitude in *The Veil of Isis*. However his hopes to control nature were always aimed not towards power and profit, but the ends of the glorification of God, the aid of humankind, and Christian apologetics.\footnote{Ibid., 155.}

Similarly, it is easy to forget—living in a technologically advanced city in a relatively stable climate—that the more-than-human world we inhabit can be exceptionally dangerous: animals, the elements, or large scale geo-meteorological events often threaten human lives. Keeping this in mind, the Promethean attitude is often a prudent expression of self-defense: the desire to live safely or comfortably in a dangerous world. Having “domesticated” nature as much as we have in the West, it is important to remember that nature does often encounter us as a force to be reckoned with, escaped, tamed, or defeated.

### 2.2.2. Criticism of the Promethean Attitude

While self-preservation and human welfare are praiseworthy goals at the heart of the Promethean attitude, the Promethean attitude has also given rise to what some consider an “inordinate audacity” regarding the domination of nature and its secrets.\footnote{Ibid., 138.} Warnings against this audacity are implicit within the Prometheus myth itself, since the Titan was subject to eternal punishment for the retrieval of fire. Stories such as Icarus’ plummet into the sea and the confusion of
languages at the Tower of Babel are examples of the fates awaiting those who too zealously seek to dominate nature by artificial means.\textsuperscript{128} The Promethean attitude has been criticized through the ages for forcing nature to reveal dangerous powers it had purposefully been keeping from us (to protect us),\textsuperscript{129} for distorting nature’s true reality through technical experimentation,\textsuperscript{130} and is criticized by Socrates and others as “vain curiosity” leading away from virtue.\textsuperscript{131} The overwhelming prevalence of the Promethean attitude in recent history has led to its being criticized even louder by authors of the last century, among them Rainer Maria Rilke, Aldous Huxley, and Martin Heidegger.\textsuperscript{132} But the criticisms are part of a larger story, a counter narrative of sorts, that frames the relationship between humanity and nature in another way.

2.3. The Orphic Attitude: An Overview

Hadot places this alternative attitude towards nature under the patronage of Orpheus, the mythical musician and lyricist of Greek lore. This is principally because knowledge of nature and its secrets are gained through aesthetic contemplation, discourse, and the production of art from within the Orphic attitude. Rather than the distinction between nature and humanity emphasized from within the Promethean attitude, the Orphic attitude emphasizes humanity’s membership and participation in nature’s processes. The “secrets” of nature in the Orphic attitude might be better understood as “mysteries,” in the sense that while the word “secret” generally denotes something that can be uncovered or, like a problem, solved, the word

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{129} Xenophon, Cicero, Ovid, Seneca are cited by Hadot as some examples. Ibid., 140-142. “Magicians and experimenters sought to tear the veil away from Nature. Yet if nature hides herself, does she not have her reasons? Does she not want to protect us in this way from the dangers that await us lest, once we have dominated and mastered her, we may be threatened by our own technical progress?” Ibid., 141.
\item \textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 145. Goethe and Rousseau are cited as the principal proponents of this argument.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 138.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 150.
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“mystery” often denotes something that retains a measure of its incomprehensibility, even after its discovery. The Orphic attitude therefore sees knowledge of nature as a sort of “being-with” nature, a concrete experience of harmony with the creative processes of nature itself. This “being with” nature in the Orphic attitude can be juxtaposed against nature’s “being for” human ends in the Promethean attitude. As such the Orphic attitude seeks knowledge of nature for its own sake, for the sheer joy or goodness of knowing it, as opposed to a knowledge of nature for the purposes of controlling or dominating it.

Rather than a mechanistic universe whose secret workings are hidden away, the Orphic attitude tends to cast the universe as a living organic whole whose workings are openly manifest to the observer who “has eyes to see.” That is, for those who take the Orphic attitude, a human failure to understand nature (the reason nature seems to have “secrets”) is not due to our failure to mechanically coax nature to reveal itself; rather, it is due to our limited perspectives, and our inability to set aside our own agendas and desires in order to allow nature to reveal itself to us on its own terms. Hadot calls this kind of perception “aesthetic” perception, as it allows for the vision of an integrated, synthetic whole needed to appreciate any art form. Indeed, many of the historical figures who exemplify the Orphic attitude in Hadot’s study depict nature as art (or an artist, or both) and human art as a cooperation in nature’s own creativity.

Hadot’s favourite example of the Orphic attitude is its expression in the life of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), the poet, playwright, and naturalist. Goethe claimed to have been more proud of his (largely forgotten) scientific works than his many (successful) artistic endeavours,

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133 “Concrete” comes from the Latin word *concrescere* meaning “to grow together.”
134 Hadot, *Veil of Isis*, 212.
and credited his artistic success to his devotion to nature. Typical of the Orphic attitude, Goethe claimed that patient, careful observation of nature—unaided by technology—could allow the naturalist to intuit nature’s own creative processes in the interplay between darkness and light, materiality and spirit, death and life. Seeing in this way often requires training, practice, and a sort of ascesis for the naturalist—what Goethe calls his “delicate empiricism”—in order to allow the object (nature) to mould and teach the observer. Ultimately, the transformation of the observer in contemplating nature allows the observer to not only intuit the very principles which drive nature, but also allow the observer to participate in nature’s own creative process. It is for this reason that art and nature are so tightly bound for both Goethe and Hadot: human art and creativity, at their best, flow from and depend upon the creativity of nature itself. An artist painting flowers “will be even more accomplished and self-assured in his work if he is also something of a botanist,” Goethe says, because his careful contemplation of plants will allow him to mimic how nature itself produces the forms of flowers. On this reading, good artwork reveals something about nature, because good artwork is a participation in nature’s own process, a harmony with nature’s own creativity. This is the intuition that sits at the heart of the Orphic attitude. In antiquity, Plato’s Timaeus, the Homeric Hymns to Hermes, Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Lucretius’ On Nature, and Virgil’s Iliad all depicted themselves as microcosms of the universe itself, replicating poetically and prosaically the structure and processes of nature. Jumping ahead historically, the German Romantics (Goethe included) also used poetry and drama not only as means of praising or glorying in nature, but also as means of manifesting nature’s beauty

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136 Ibid., 63
137 Ibid., 73. Hadot quotes Picasso on a similar point: “the point is not to imitate nature but to work like her.” Hadot, Veil of Isis, 219.
138 Hadot, Veil of Isis, 205.
and grandeur to their audiences through the art form itself. In the Orphic attitude, poetry, prose, drama, music, painting, sculpture, and discourse are best when they are the result of a contemplation of nature and humanity’s deep connection to it, and—for that reason—can help us to know and experience those very realities.\(^{139}\) The product of the Orphic attitude is often a transformative awe (or even terror) in the encounter with nature’s sublime mysteries.\(^{140}\)

In summary: when assuming the Orphic attitude, nature is encountered with respect and reverence. Rather than the confrontation and control characteristic of the Promethean attitude, the Orphic attitude often galvanizes the desire to experience a union with nature, participating in nature’s own creativity through emulation and artistry.

### 2.3.1. The Orphic Attitude: Criticisms and Qualifications

It is clear from Hadot’s presentation in *The Veil of Isis* that he himself prefers the Orphic attitude over the Promethean. (We will explore this claim in more detail in the following section.) But this does not prevent him from identifying problematic temptations for the Orphic attitude. I would categorize them into two fundamental categories: Non-interventionism and Primitivism. Non-interventionism: If nature is understood as an integrated whole, and knowledge of nature is intuiting the creativity of nature itself, then human activity and technology can be seen as jarring interruptions of an otherwise perfect harmony. On this account, experimental interventions, aided as they often are by technology, can be seen as disturbing nature’s normal course and providing

\(^{139}\) Ibid., 209.

\(^{140}\) Ibid., 283.
skewed data, since mechanically “tricking” nature yields unreliable testimony of a nature “under duress.”

Primitivism: This temptation is closely connected to non-interventionism, but is principally grounded in a myth of an ancient, harmonious, perfect relationship between humanity and nature, before the dawn of technology (and sometimes society). Technology, in these stories, is often linked to decadence and violence. Primitivism can therefore lead to a dangerous nostalgia for a never-existing “past,” which might manifest itself in rejections of technology (varieties of Luddism), in a fatalistic desire to allow the human race to destroy itself/be destroyed; or in the non-interventionism described above, in order to return to or approach this almost prelapsarian (read pre-technological) innocence of nature.

2.4. The Promethean and Orphic in Hadot’s Thought

As has hopefully become apparent thus far, the Promethean and Orphic attitudes represent antipodal stances regarding nature and nature’s secrets. But despite the opposition, Hadot intentionally refrains from calling either attitude inherently good or evil. By opposing the Promethean to the Orphic attitude, I do not mean to oppose a good and a bad attitude. I simply want…to attract attention to these two orientations that can be manifested in the relationship between man and nature—two orientations that are equally essential, do not necessarily exclude each other, and are often found united in the same person.

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141 Ibid., 149.
142 Referring to ancient society’s turn to mining, Ovid lucidly links violence towards the earth to human violence: “Soon pernicious iron and gold, more pernicious than iron, came forth to the light of day. Following them, came war.” Seneca considered technical progress “a danger to moral life, since its motive force is the love of luxury and pleasure.” Ibid., 142-144.
143 Ibid., 97.
Hadot argues that, while opposed, the attitudes are “equally essential,” and seem to have their origins deep within the human person. As demonstrated earlier, each attitude can exhibit dangerous excesses, but each also has well-founded moral concerns animating it at its core. This suggests that Hadot sees the Orphic and Promethean attitudes as, if not good in themselves, then at least morally neutral.

However, it is clear from the structure and content of *The Veil of Isis* that Hadot notices an imbalance in our current attitude towards nature, with the Promethean overshadowing the Orphic. Hadot thinks this imbalance is problematic. He points to the dominance of the Promethean attitude as the principal driver of the present (and historical) hyper-industrialization, corporatization, and reckless exploitation of nature.\(^{144}\) He therefore offers the Orphic attitude as a remedy, to temper and balance this age’s Promethean impulse.

Therefore, as much as *The Veil of Isis* is a descriptive work of historical scholarship, it is also inescapably a prescriptive work of philosophy; and here I mean “philosophy” in the way that Hadot, himself, uses the term.

### 2.5. Philosophy as a Way of Life

The focused exploration of attitudes towards nature in *The Veil of Isis* is an organic development of Hadot’s earlier works. He is perhaps best known for arguing that ancient philosophy (and many streams of philosophy since) was fundamentally a way of life, and not simply a type of rigorous, systematic theoretical reasoning. From his study of the Presocratics, to Socrates and

\(^{144}\) Ibid., 188.
Plato, to the Epicurean and Stoic schools, to the Neoplatonists and beyond, Hadot demonstrates that each philosophy—from its metaphysical systematics to its ethics—was at the service of cultivating and maintaining a certain way of being in the world, of embodying a particular attitude towards life.\textsuperscript{145}

What grounds Hadot’s understanding of philosophy is the prevalence of “universal” existential attitudes that he claims span human experience, geographically and temporally. Associating them with the ancient philosophies he knew best, he dubs them universal Stoicism, Epicureanism, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Cynicism, and Pyrrhonism. For example, the universal Stoic attitude is linked to “cosmic consciousness, the purity of moral consciousness, the recognition of the equality and absolute value of human beings, and the concentration on the present instant”—which he sees manifest also in Chinese culture\textsuperscript{146}—whereas the universal Epicurean attitude encourages a reduction and return from various desires in order to enjoy the most fundamental desire of existence.\textsuperscript{147} The choice of one (or more) of these fundamental attitudes, these ideals of wisdom, is key to Hadot’s understanding of philosophy.

The discourses these ancient philosophies created, the communities they founded, and the ethical precepts they established, were all at the service of helping individuals to live lives fully shaped by the attitude which initiated and animated their decision to embark on the path of philosophy. Whereas the systematicity and clarity of philosophical discourses are often seen as ends in themselves in contemporary academic philosophy, Hadot argues that discourses (and their


\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 278.

coherence) were created in order to help justify the attitudes which practitioners of philosophy had adopted, so that they might be further transformed by them.\textsuperscript{148} Seeking wisdom, for ancient philosophers, was a laborious process of transforming one’s way of seeing and living in the world, and the conversion necessary was affected by disciplines which Hadot calls spiritual exercises.\textsuperscript{149}

Like exercises that train the body for sport or combat, spiritual exercises were meant to transform the person in their entirety, allowing them to pursue the ideal of wisdom envisioned in their fundamental philosophical attitude. Whether physical practices such as dietary regimes or asceticism, discursive practices such as dialogue or meditation, or intuitive practices like contemplation, a philosophy’s spiritual exercises had as their goal the transformation of the practitioner. Indeed, each philosophy—its constellation of discourse, community, and spiritual exercises—structured and fostered a particular way of life.

\textbf{2.5.1. The Veil of Isis as Philosophy}

Echoing Nietzsche, Hadot argues that denizens of the twenty-first century stand at a privileged place in history since we can become familiar with these myriad universal attitudes.\textsuperscript{150} Not only that, we are able to choose which we would like to adopt, even mixing them if we so desire. What this historical perspective also offers us are the triumphs and failings of the philosophical communities inspired by these attitudes. The Orphic and Promethean attitudes towards nature, as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{148} “Discourse is a privileged means by which the philosopher can act upon himself and others; for it is the expression of the existential option of the person who utters it, discourse always has, directly or indirectly, a function which is formative, educative, psychagogic, and therapeutic. It is always intended to produce an effect, to create a \textit{habitus} within the soul, or to provoke a transformation of the self.” Hadot, \textit{What is Ancient Philosophy}, 176.
\item \textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 3, 93.
\item \textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 277.
\end{itemize}
we have seen, inspired concrete ways of living in the world, some of which became philosophies
in Hadot’s sense. Throughout The Veil of Isis, Hadot critically appraises the track record of the
Promethean attitude, and its subsequent grip on the contemporary mind. Like other philosophers
before him, Hadot crafts a discourse that functions as something of a spiritual exercise, leading
his readers to enact an alien “way of seeing” in this techno-industrial age – i.e., the Orphic
attitude.

Hadot does not hesitate to mention how the Promethean attitude has helped propel humanity
down a dangerous path. “The blind development of technology and industrialization… spurred
on by an appetite for profit,” Hadot avers, “places our relation to nature, and nature itself, in
danger.” The Promethean attitude’s view of nature as manipulable, linked with the technical
prowess of humanity in the industrial age, crowned with the desire for capital, has created a basic
orientation towards nature as a resource at the service of short-term profit, with no value beyond
its market value. The damages which this view has wrought need not be rehearsed here. Suffice
it to say that Hadot is profoundly aware of the Promethean attitude’s implication in the “blind”
development of a techno-industrial-capitalist “machine” that risks destroying, not only our
relationship with nature, but nature itself. What the Orphic attitude offers is a way of seeing
and valuing nature beyond its mere usefulness.

\[151\] Hadot, Veil of Isis, 98.

\[152\] In fact we must admit that in all periods, and since antiquity, the ‘service of mankind’ has been in
danger of meaning the service of individual or collective egoisms. Modern science is more and more in danger of
being closely linked to industrial technology, the demands of corporations, and the will to power and profit. By the
will of states themselves, scientific research must orient itself as a function of the usefulness it can have for technical
and commercial progress. Basic and disinterested interest becomes more and more precarious. This is why we must
be grateful to scientists like Jacques Monod for bearing witness, despite these pressures from the state and from
society, in favor of the absolute value of the ethics of objectivity, and of an ideal of disinterested knowledge that has
no other goal than itself.” Ibid., 188.
Like the ancient philosophers before him, Hadot constructs *The Veil of Isis* as a lesson, using its structure and rhetoric to lead his readers to a new, Orphic, way of seeing nature. The first part of the book makes appeals to *ethos* and *logos* by demonstrating that Heraclitus’ aphorism has, technically, been misinterpreted, and establishes Hadot’s credibility as an authority on the notion of the secrets of nature and its provenance. The second part of the book frames the Promethean and Orphic attitudes in juxtaposition, emphasizing the two attitudes’ long, intertwining history through frequent appeals to *pathos*, but also the “recent” triumph of the Promethean attitude. This breaks the relative hegemony of the Promethean attitude by offering a coherent alternative attitude while not dissolving or discarding the Promethean attitude altogether. Finally, the third section (which has been largely neglected in this thesis), develops the Orphic attitude and the contemporary resources readers can familiarize themselves with should they feel impelled to adopt this stance towards nature. This (too) brief analysis of the book’s structure is deserving of deeper, more thorough study, but I believe it suffices to suggest that *The Veil of Isis* is, itself, something of a spiritual exercise, leading readers to adopt and explore the often discarded Orphic perspective.

Finally, Hadot’s frequent references to philosophers are not simply historical examples of the Orphic and Promethean attitude through history, but exemplars that demonstrate specific ways of living these attitudes (their philosophies). For instance, Hadot cites the life of Roger Bacon as a life shaped by the Promethean attitude, but driven by a desire to spread God’s Word and not a

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153 To portray nature through the Orphic attitude is, to use the language of classic rhetoric, the *Veil of Isis’ scopos*, or main goal. The structure of the work is a pedagogical journey (the work’s *ductus*), leading readers to re-appraise their own vision of the world, question the perspective they currently occupy, and invites them to see the world in a different way using the resources and examples Hadot provides. A helpful guide to these concepts in ancient rhetoric is Mary Carruthers, editor, *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), specifically her chapter “The concept of *ductus*, or journeying through a work of art,” 190-200.
desire for personal power or profit. Hadot’s reflection on the philosophies of Francis Bacon and Descartes are similarly nuanced. Importantly, Hadot’s references to the scientific methods of Goethe and Jacques Monod take pride of place in The Veil of Isis, since these men offer concrete, rigorous modes of science that are profoundly shaped by the Orphic attitude and thus stand as legitimate alternatives to the corporately-driven technoscience so prevalent today. Hadot also elevates a relatively recent stream of philosophical thought—including the works of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Merleau-Ponty—as inheritors of the “ancient” sense of philosophy, since they engage in discourses that recover the Orphic attitude, and structure experience in modes resonant with ancient spiritual exercises.

While clearly avoiding demonizing the Promethean attitude per se, Hadot crafts a discourse that allows his readers to see the dangers of the Promethean attitude without the equally important—though opposing—perspective offered by the Orphic attitude. Not only does the structure of The Veil of Isis train readers to see nature with the wonder and awe characteristic of the Orphic attitude (as a kind of spiritual exercise in itself), it provides readers with exemplary philosophies which can act as further sources of the spiritual exercises necessary to convert them to this alternative contemplative attitude.

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154 Hadot, Veil of Isis, 115.
155 See note 43.
156 “Fifty years [after Heidegger] we must indeed admit that mankind, far from having mastered this situation, finds itself, on the contrary, faced with still more serious dangers. Technology is engendering a way of life and ways of thinking that have as their consequence the ever-increasing mechanization of human beings themselves. It is impossible, however, to stop the implacable progress of this kind of civilization. In the process, mankind risks losing its soul as well as its body.” Hadot, Veil of Isis, 151.
2.6. Summary

Over the course of this chapter I have introduced and contextualized Pierre Hadot’s conception of the Promethean and Orphic attitudes. I have also briefly demonstrated how *The Veil of Isis* fits in Hadot’s wider project of understanding philosophy as a way of life, and how the book itself serves as an example of a spiritual exercise. There are a number of additional key points that are worth keeping in mind as we move to the next chapter: First, the Promethean and Orphic attitudes are perennial, as are the promises and dangers of both. Second, Hadot casts neither attitude as intrinsically good or bad. Last, since many current environmental dangers stem from the expression of human attitudes, their root causes are within the human person and are therefore capable of being remedied (by and large) by the soulcraft of philosophy.
Thus far I have argued that at the heart of Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, is his conviction that the technocratic paradigm distorts humans’ understanding of their relationship with God, with other humans, and with the rest of creation, and that we must begin the work of reimagining these relationships if we are to escape the grip of the technocratic. I have also argued that, in the *Veil of Isis*, Pierre Hadot leads his readers to undertake the work of cultivating an Orphic attitude towards nature in order to dissolve the dangerous hegemony of the pronounced Promethean attitude characteristic of contemporary society. In this chapter, I will explicitly bring these two works together, exploring their similarities and differences. This will culminate in my own claim that understanding the technocratic paradigm as a culturally-entrenched vice of the Promethean attitude is a concrete step towards answering Francis’ call to produce “a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm.”\(^\text{157}\)

In the first section I will explore the similarities and differences of the following sets of topics in Hadot and Francis: attitude & paradigm; Promethean & technocratic; Orphic & integral ecology; spiritual exercises & ecological conversion. In the second section I will briefly explore what I call the “disciplinary” differences between Hadot and Francis—i.e., between philosophy and theology, broadly construed—specifically with reference to the place of God in their works. Building on these two sections and the two chapters that preceded them, I will finally make an

\(^{157}\) Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §215
argument that the technocratic paradigm should be understood as a vice of the Promethean attitude, and expound the benefits of this understanding.

3.1. Similarities and Differences

3.1.1. Attitude & Paradigm

Before exploring some of the more particular points of comparison between *Laudato Si’* and *The Veil of Isis*, it is worth considering two words that do a lot of work for our authors, namely “attitude” and “paradigm.” Some similarities I hope have already become apparent. But there are significant differences that are essential to my thesis’ broader argument and are important to note.

Recall that, for Hadot, an attitude is a foundational way of facing reality, an existential option that values and structures an individual’s world in a particular way. Hadot identified a number of archetypal attitudes that manifested themselves again and again through history and in remarkably diverse geographic and cultural settings, prompting him to suggest that these attitudes are common to humanity, and thus universal. Importantly, the Orphic and Promethean approaches to nature are also called attitudes, and are presented as the two principle ways of structuring humans’ valuation of, and relationship to, nature. Attitudes can therefore be understood as organically present in human beings, forming an innate repertoire of stances towards reality.

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158 Chase, “Remembering Pierre Hadot, Part 1.”

159 Hadot identifies these archetypal attitudes based on the ancient philosophies wherein they had their earliest expressions, namely archetypal Stoicism, Epicureanism, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Cynicism, and Pyrrhonism. Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*, pp. 278-279...
A paradigm, as the term is used in *Laudato Si’*, is notably similar to an attitude in its capacity to structure and value the worlds of those who inhabit it. We have seen that a scientific paradigm, specifically, is “a constellation of models which defines, exemplifies and illustrates the ideals and procedures of normal science during nonrevolutionary times.”\(^\text{160}\) While for scientists these constellations constitute standardized disciplinary matrices that structure scientific thought and practice in a particular way, we can describe the technocratic paradigm similarly: as a set of Promethean beliefs, practices, and institutions which shapes the lives of those who participate in it. For Pope Francis, the technocratic paradigm is something global and pervasive, and has an incredible influence over our collective global worldview.

One might be tempted to say that the attitude and paradigm concepts amount to the same thing, but they are different in important respects. It is wise to revisit Hadot’s distinction between attitudes and philosophies, here. Philosophies and philosophical structures—including ethics, theologies, ontologies, mythologies, and spiritual exercises—are (historically-conditioned) human creations meant to facilitate a community’s desire to adopt and live innate, universal attitudes. In other words, while attitudes are innate and universal, philosophies are created to facilitate particular attitudes in particular ways. Since philosophies are human creations, it follows that one attitude can inspire remarkably distinct philosophies (the clashing philosophies of Roger and Francis Bacon, both grounded in the Promethean attitude, is a helpful example).\(^\text{161}\)

For these reasons I argue that paradigms in general, and the technocratic paradigm in particular, are more akin to philosophies than attitudes. Paradigms—like philosophies—are ultimately

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\(^{161}\) See Chapter 2, “Promethean Attitude: Qualifications.”
crafted by humans. Even paradigms that might span generations (like the paradigm of Newtonian physics) and are, in effect, inherited by later generations of scientists are nevertheless the product of human theorizing and organization. I therefore propose the following schema to help organize these terms and their relationships:

**Attitudes:** The repertoire of innate, existential options for facing reality common to human beings.

**Philosophies:** Human creations intended to structure, justify, encourage, or facilitate a particular attitude or set of attitudes through spiritual exercises (discourses, social structures, meditations).

**Paradigms:** Societally entrenched philosophies, generally characterized by their stability, longevity, and reach due to their deep penetration into institutions, mythologies, economics, and culture broadly.  

Structuring these terms in this way highlights some points that will help develop the remainder of the chapter. First, paradigms can be understood as a class of philosophies, those philosophies that have ossified and become part of social institutions and culture. Second, philosophies—including paradigms—are the result of intentional human action: they result from choices to instantiate certain existential attitudes. Third, the technocratic paradigm can be brought comfortably into Hadot’s framework by considering it as a philosophy, structured to encourage a specific attitude. As such, it is worth considering how the Promethean attitude and Francis’ technocratic paradigm compare with one another.

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162 While not using the word ‘paradigm,’ Hadot marks a substantive shift between the individually-held beliefs of mechanistic philosophers and the deep entrenchment of these ideas into societal consciousness affected by the radical social, economic, and cultural changes of the industrial revolution. Hadot, *Veil of Isis*, 136-137.
3.1.2. Promethean & Technocratic

In the *Veil of Isis*, Hadot gives examples of the Promethean attitude’s myriad manifestations through history—via philosophies, mechanics, magic, and experimentation—all of which style nature as hiding its secrets from humanity, and humanity as needing to use its ingenuity and power to strip away nature’s veil to access those secrets.\(^{163}\) This resonates with Pope Francis’ characterization of the technocratic paradigm in *Laudato Si’*, which casts the relationship between humanity and nature as fundamentally confrontational: “[Once] it was a matter of receiving what nature itself allowed, as if from its own hand. Now, by contrast, we are the ones to lay our hands on things, attempting to extract everything possible from them while frequently ignoring or forgetting the reality in front of us.”\(^{164}\) Both authors identify a human tendency to set humanity apart from (and often above) nature, to objectify nature, and to value nature only insofar as it is beneficial to human ends.\(^{165}\) Both authors also note how closely this tendency is linked to humanity’s technological prowess.\(^{166}\) Arguably the writings of Hadot and Francis that we have considered are variations on the same theme.

Moreover, both authors share a concern over the negative consequences of this confrontational stance towards nature. Francis itemizes these negative consequences in Chapter 1 if *Laudato Si*’: pollution and (anthropogenic) climate change, the quality and scarcity of clean water, the loss of biodiversity, the decline in the quality of human life, the breakdown of society, and global inequality. Hadot, citing Carolyn Merchant’s *The Death of Nature*, similarly identifies an

\(^{163}\) Ibid., 101.

\(^{164}\) Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §106

\(^{165}\) For example, see Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §85, and Hadot, *The Veil of Isis*, 92.

\(^{166}\) For example, see Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §§102-105 and Hadot, *The Veil of Isis*, 102, 151.
overzealous embrace of the Promethean attitude as the cause of our current ecological crises.\textsuperscript{167} Succinctly, for Francis and Hadot these ecological and societal dangers are ‘symptoms’ of a deeper human malady—a dominant and dominating stance towards nature—and the most effective treatment will address this root cause, not merely its symptoms.\textsuperscript{168}

To see how strongly Hadot and Francis agree on this point, it is important to note that the Promethean attitude and the technocratic paradigm are not the same thing. What Hadot emphasizes time and again is that while certain manifestations of the Promethean attitude might be dangerous, the attitude itself is morally neutral; it is simply an inherited fact of being human. Francis, too, emphasizes that humans’ desire and capacity to manipulate nature is not, in itself, problematic when properly situated in a broader, ethically-informed stance.\textsuperscript{169} The danger arises, for both authors, when specific manifestations of the Promethean attitude monopolize the human stance towards nature.\textsuperscript{170} The technocratic paradigm, as Francis characterizes it, is just such a manifestation of the Promethean attitude. Using the schema developed in the previous section, the technocratic paradigm is a particular, societally entrenched philosophy (a paradigm), that facilitates humans’ living within the Promethean attitude while obfuscating and excluding alternatives like the Orphic attitude.\textsuperscript{171}

In summary, both Francis and Hadot are concerned with a specific, monopolizing manifestation of the Promethean attitude (which, for Francis, is the technocratic paradigm), and not with the

\textsuperscript{167} Hadot, \textit{Veil of Isis}, 122.
\textsuperscript{168} Francis, \textit{Laudato Si’}, §§15, 101.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., §§103, 131, 187
\textsuperscript{170} Francis, \textit{Laudato Si’}, §108; Hadot, \textit{Veil of Isis}, 150-151.
\textsuperscript{171} Francis, \textit{Laudato Si’}, §§106-111
Promethean attitude *per se*. For both authors, simply addressing symptoms of the technocratic paradigm is a half-measure; to heal the planet and humanity from the constellation of symptoms Francis describes requires breaking the “ironclad logic” of the technocratic paradigm itself.172

### 3.1.3. Orphic & Integral Ecology

Pope Francis begins his encyclical with St. Francis of Assisi’s “Canticle of the Sun”: “*Laudato si’, mi signore*...” “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.” By invoking this song of praise from his namesake, Pope Francis exemplifies what he himself comes to argue over the course of *Laudato Si’:* he demonstrates that there is a way of viewing nature that resists reducing it to a resource for consumption. For the saint from Assisi, “rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise.”173 Instead of viewing nature through the dangerously limited horizon of the technocratic paradigm, Pope Francis repeatedly offers song, poetry, visual art, narrative, architecture, contemplation, prayer, and the witness of Scripture as means of encountering nature, not as a master meets a servant, but as a brother meets a beloved sister.174 Recall that many of these same activities characterized the aesthetic attitude toward nature which Pierre Hadot placed under the patronage of the mythical lyricist Orpheus. Hadot says “Orpheus penetrates the secrets of nature not through violence but through melody, rhythm and harmony. …The Orphic attitude...is inspired by respect in the face of mystery.”175 Both Pope Francis and Hadot agree that there is an alternative to the Promethean attitude, and to the technocratic paradigm in particular, and that this alternative is

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172 Ibid., §108.  
173 Ibid., §12.  
174 For examples, see *Laudato Si’,* §§103, 112, 199, 215, 235.  
175 Hadot, *Veil of Isis*, 96.
grounded in a sense of interdependence, encounter, and appreciation best exemplified in our experiences of nature’s beauty.

In giving examples of the Orphic attitude, Hadot only identifies individuals like Goethe, Jacques Monod, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, or relatively small philosophical schools like those of the Stoics or phenomenologists. He can find no comparable counterpoint to the hyper-industrialized paradigm—the Promethean attitude writ large—which we still inhabit today. Fleshing out the aesthetic alternative to the technocratic paradigm in *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis does much of the same, pointing mainly to the examples of individual saints or of small communities who have resisted the technocratic. But Francis, unlike Hadot, sketches an alternative paradigm, a specific way of looking at nature and at one another that grows from an individual choice, to a community with a common vision, to a culture. He outlines the framework of this new paradigm in the fourth chapter of *Laudato Si’* entitled “Integral Ecology,” which I suggest is his counterpoint to the *technocratic paradigm*. A culture permeated with an integral ecology will have a broad vision capable of seeing how human realities like economies, technology, and governments are fundamentally united to and dependent upon the more-than-human realities of this planet. Francis believes that a careful, appreciative look at the world will reveal that “everything is related,” and can help inspire a “universal fraternity” between humanity and the nature of which it is a part. It would in turn affect policies, laws, infrastructures, and morals, ideally becoming something societally entrenched. Again invoking our schema given above, this

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176 Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §112.
177 Ibid., §§ 53, 105, 111, 112.
178 Ibid., §§137, 138, 142.
179 Ibid., §139, Cf. §§228-229.
paradigm of an integral ecology (which maps stunningly well onto Alan R. Drengson’s “person-planetary paradigm”\textsuperscript{180}) can be understood as paradigm expressing the Orphic attitude.

For both authors, assuming an Orphic stance towards nature—seeing nature as a beautiful, interdependent web of relationships—illuminates the value of all human persons, of all creatures, of their respective ecosystems, the biosphere, and beyond. Seeing the rich, multifaceted value of the world independent of the technocratic paradigm relativizes the technocratic paradigm’s capacity to “flatten” the world into commodities to be purchased and discarded. While Hadot has no explicit counterpoint to the technocratic, Francis begins to outline a philosophy grounded in an integral ecology. But both thinkers agree that a profound shift towards the Orphic attitude is not as simple as assenting to a proposition.

3.1.4. Spiritual Exercises & Ecological Conversion

Recall that for Hadot philosophies are fundamentally ways of life, not just systems of thought. In order to become a Stoic, for instance, one would not simply assent to the beliefs and morals of Stoicism, but would be expected to change one’s entire life, to form one’s life in accordance with the attitudes particular to Stoicism. The suite of texts, disciplines, narratives, social structures, and ethics that enable individuals to live within a particular attitude Hadot calls spiritual exercises. To truly change one’s attitude towards the world, to live consistently within that attitude, one must practice these spiritual exercises. It follows that affecting a change away from

\textsuperscript{180} “The person-planetary paradigm stresses: internal principles of order and the importance of homeostasis and balanced development; symbiosis and mutual interrelationships, decentralization, diversity and unity, spontaneity and order, freedom in community; intrinsic value in being itself, biospheric egalitarianism; human experience as value-laden; creative, ecologically compatible design of human activities; collective responsibility and the unique value of individuals; personal knowing, intersubjective experience and diverse consciousness; organisms as wholes which interact with other organisms in spheres of interpenetration; the planet as a whole as a living organism; persons as creative, open, dynamic, developmental, and as coevolving within larger communities.” Drengson, “Shifting Paradigms,” 239.
the Promethean attitude and towards the Orphic attitude requires a change of heart, a change of life, that would require the formative work of spiritual exercises.

In the Christian tradition, a change in one’s fundamental attitude towards life is called a conversion. Francis marshals this language in *Laudato Si’*, calling for an ecological conversion from the technocratic paradigm – i.e., a change of the “attitude of the heart” that approaches life in a way consonant with an integral ecology.¹⁸¹ Since Gospel values “have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living,” this conversion requires spiritual exercises to take root.¹⁸² “An integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence ‘must not be contrived but found, uncovered’.”¹⁸³ Additionally, Francis calls for sobriety in the face of modern life’s frenetic pace and consumption,¹⁸⁴ aesthetic education to appreciate art and beauty,¹⁸⁵ and small gestures of care for and appreciation of the environment¹⁸⁶—including saying grace before meals¹⁸⁷—among other suggestions. This constellation effectively amounts to some spiritual exercises necessary to help cement an alternative Orphic attitude. But does the word “spiritual” mean the same thing for Francis and Hadot?

¹⁸¹ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §226.
¹⁸² Ibid., §216.
¹⁸³ Ibid., §225.
¹⁸⁴ Ibid., §222-224.
¹⁸⁵ Ibid., §215.
¹⁸⁶ Ibid., §230-231.
¹⁸⁷ Ibi., §227.
3.2. God

Our authors differ importantly in their treatment of God and faith claims. My intent is not to insinuate that Hadot’s claims in the *Veil of Isis* are, in reality, theological ones; they are not. Rather, I will briefly argue that his scholarship—like everything “genuinely human”\(^\text{188}\)—can be appreciated and embraced by any who follow the God who “became flesh” (John 1:14).

3.2.1. Methodological Differences

Hadot’s project in *The Veil of Isis* and his other works is secular, and formed by the methods of both academic history and philosophy. He therefore takes no explicit faith position, brackets faith claims, and does not invoke any revelatory tradition as uniquely important. His theory of universal existential attitudes is grounded in his historical study of myriad philosophies, worldviews, and faiths. While clearly advancing an argument for the importance of the Orphic attitude in the midst of a society shaped by the Promethean, this argument is grounded ultimately in historical data and appeals to an often-forgotten, broadened understanding of human experience.

Francis, however, writes *Laudato Si’* not only as a Catholic, but as a teacher in this tradition. For Francis, Jesus Christ is the key to understanding humanity and its history. As such, Francis has as his mission within the Catholic Church to proclaim the importance of Christ to the Church and to the world.\(^\text{189}\) While Francis grounds many of his arguments in *Laudato Si’* in human experience, these realities are explicitly located within a theological frame, and his anthropology

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\(^{189}\) Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, §35.
is ultimately, also, a theological anthropology: God, and God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, are the wider story in which and through which all human history is most clearly interpreted.\textsuperscript{190} This said, grounded in its longstanding belief in the complementarity between faith and reason, the Roman Catholic Church explicitly respects the autonomy and relative independence of academic endeavors like history and philosophy.\textsuperscript{191} It is understood that faith does not so much add to the truths these disciplines uncover, as guarantee that these truths exist within a wider horizon of human experience, and sees them within a broader vision of reality open to a transcendent and loving God.\textsuperscript{192}

### 3.2.2. “Spiritual” Exercises

Having bracketed faith claims as he has, then, what does Hadot mean when he uses the word “spiritual”? Overall Hadot’s main claim is that other adjectives he could have used (e.g., psychic, ethical, intellectual) do not adequately capture the totality of human engagement and of human change, which ideally result from these exercises.\textsuperscript{193} It is only by engaging the entire human person, Hadot says, that we are able to transcend banal “everyday perception”\textsuperscript{194} and view ourselves from “within the perspective of the Whole.”\textsuperscript{195} “Spiritual,” then, is meant to capture the totality of the person in relationship with Reality itself.

\textsuperscript{190} \textit{Gaudium et Spes} §22; Francis, \textit{Lumen Fidei}, §35


\textsuperscript{192} Francis, \textit{Lumen Fidei}, §34.

\textsuperscript{193} Hadot, \textit{Philosophy as a Way of Life}, 81.

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 253.

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 81.
While clearly not in explicit alignment with Catholic teaching, Hadot’s position resonates with Catholic philosophy of education which understands the goal of the Church in general, and of the Catholic educator in particular, to be the education of the whole person. This holistic view includes individuals’ psychic, ethical, and intellectual dimensions, culminating with their relationship with the world and its ground, God. An introduction of the whole person to “total reality,” and the training (ascesis) that this requires, is arguably compatible with Hadot’s understanding of the “spiritual” goals of philosophy.

3.2.3. Suffering and Salvation

Hadot claims that all ancient philosophical schools saw the dominion of the passions—in unregulated desires and exaggerated fears—as the principal cause of human suffering. The desires for immediate satisfaction or the avoidance of pain mark the contours of unreflective “everyday perception,” for Hadot, and have also played into the relatively uncritical embrace of the safety, wealth, and power promised by Promethean techno-industrial ‘progress.’ The practice of philosophy, including spiritual exercises, was seen as a therapy for the passions: an arduous reversal of our selfish merely-human perspective of reality (where our values depend on the passions) to a “Natural” perspective, which replaces our experience of events with the perspective of universal nature. Humans’ salvation from the domination of the passions, in Hadot’s view, therefore depends entirely on undertaking spiritual exercises in order to become

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198 Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 83.

199 Hadot, *Veil of Isis*, 211.

open to this transcendent, universal perspective, and to change one’s way of life to be in harmony with it. Importantly, Hadot personally endorsed this approach to life, and strove to live by it himself.201

Francis, and much of the Catholic tradition, will agree with Hadot on many of these points. The dominance of the passions, and the individual, social, and systemic sufferings which this produces, is seen as a fundamental anthropological datum. In the Christian tradition, these inordinate desires and a weakness of the will (concupiscence) are interpreted as the principal effects of Original Sin, a “wound” which humans have inherited from their First Parents.202 Concomitant with this experienced enslavement to selfish, sometimes violent passions is the desire to be genuinely free of them.203 The Christian tradition has seen this desired salvation as originating from what transcends humanity, and recognizes in other religions and ancient philosophies (like those spoken of by Hadot) a similar intuition.204

The Catholic Church holds that those who allow their lives to be shaped by this intuition—what Nostra Aetate calls the “religious sense”—are to be praised, and that “the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy” in the myriad ways salvation is sought, since each often reflects “a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men.”205 But while salvation, for Hadot and the ancient philosophers, is fundamentally an achievement (to attain a universal, transcendent

203 Cf. Romans 7:14-24
205 Ibid.
perspective via the discipline of spiritual exercises) it is, for Francis and other Catholics, fundamentally a gift. Due to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the continuing activity of the Holy Spirit in the assembly of believers (ecclesia), Christians understand wisdom, not only as an elusive goal to be reached, but as a Divine Person offered freely to a suffering humanity. Salvation is a grace which can be accepted—the result of God’s own free, loving initiative—and is thereby the source of the “joy of the Gospel” (“Evangelii gaudium”).

This consideration of the place of God in the works of Hadot and Francis has highlighted some significant differences between their works, and between the larger goals which those works serve. But it should also have established that these differences do not preclude Roman Catholics from taking seriously the scholarly claims which Hadot makes regarding ancient philosophies, attitudes, nature, and the human quest for wisdom. Indeed, employing Hadot’s own categories can help us better understand—and remedy—the technocratic paradigm.

3.3. The Technocratic Paradigm as Vice of the Promethean Attitude

Having taken stock of the similarities and differences among The Veil of Isis, Laudato Si’, and their respective authors’ methods, I will now argue that understanding the technocratic paradigm as a culturally entrenched vice of the Promethean attitude can help answer Pope Francis’ call to develop a “a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm.”

206 Francis, Laudato Si’, §215.
3.3.1. Vice and Virtue

In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle develops a theory of virtue grounded in an individual choosing the path between pairs of extreme passions or actions, finding the correct balance between excess and defect. Aristotle notes that a person’s own faculties, their capacity to do something like feel anger or speak, are natural to human beings and, thus, morally neutral. What is praised as morally virtuous is to habitually or characteristically act in such a way as to find the proper balance between “too much” and “too little” in a given situation. Common examples include the virtue of courage, which sits between showing no courage at all (cowardliness, a defect) and showing too much courage (rashness, an excess), or the virtue of proper pride, which sits between having too little pride (undue humility, a defect) and too much pride (empty vanity, an excess). These extremes to be avoided—especially when they become habitual—Aristotle calls vices: “vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate.”

As I had noted in the schema in Section 1.1 of this chapter, attitudes are natural to human beings. And as inherited natural qualities of being human, they are arguably analogous to the faculties spoken of by Aristotle, and, thus, can be considered morally neutral in themselves. But philosophies (which, recall, include paradigms) are concrete instantiations of these attitudes,

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208 “Again, we feel anger and fear without choice, but the virtues are modes of choice or involve choice.... [Virtues] are not faculties; for we are neither called good or bad, nor praised or blamed, for the simple capacity of feeling the passions....” Ibid., 36.
209 Ibid., 40-41.
210 Ibid., 39.
and—as human creations—involve choice and moral decision-making. Applying Aristotle’s theory of virtue to our schema allows us to morally assess philosophies using the language of mean, defect, and excess, and to therefore classify philosophies as embodying virtue or vice.

3.3.2. The Vice of the Promethean Attitude

As demonstrated earlier, both Hadot and Francis agree that the predominant view towards nature today (and for at least the last century) has been dominated by the Promethean attitude. This fixation on viewing nature with only a Promethean lens has made seeing nature in any other way exceptionally difficult (even if we do see examples of the Orphic attitude expressed in individuals or small communities). As such, both authors agree that “a certain way of understanding humanity [in relationship to nature] has gone awry,” and I believe that one of the most fruitful ways to understand this “awry” is from within the framework of virtue and vice that I have just introduced. To briefly recapitulate a number of themes from chapters 1 and 2, and the discussion in section 1 of this chapter, both authors speak of an extreme tipping of the scales in favour of the Promethean attitude. Both authors see this as ultimately resulting in many negative effects on individuals, on the environment, and on society. The entrenchment of this attitude, into what Francis calls the technocratic paradigm, establishes something of a “habit of being” for industrialized society (with ramifications for the whole globe), ultimately grounded in the choices of individuals to live almost exclusively within this Promethean understanding of nature.

This habitual preference for the Promethean attitude, leaving little to no room for the Orphic, nicely tracks on to the definition of ‘vice’ given by Aristotle. Indeed, as with the examples of

Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §101.
courage and pride, the Promethean attitude is not—in and of itself—bad or good. But when allowed or encouraged to swing to excess, the Promethean attitude becomes vicious. And when allowed to ossify in cultures and societal structures or institutions, this vicious philosophy can become a vicious paradigm. It is precisely in this way that I have proposed the works of Hadot and Francis clearly overlap and inform one another. The technocratic paradigm, identified by Francis as occupying the heart of contemporary culture, can be understood as an immoral excess, a vice, of Hadot’s Promethean attitude.

Some of the greatest benefits of conceiving of the technocratic paradigm as a culturally-entrenched vice of the Promethean attitude are how such a conception clarifies both what the technocratic paradigm is not, and relatedly, how not to resist its omnipresence and assaults. These clarifications, alongside Francis and Hadot’s suggestions, help outline productive, concrete paths beyond the technocratic paradigm.

### 3.3.2.1. The technocratic paradigm is not technology

Cultures in the industrialized global North are saturated by technologies which permeate everything from our intentional daily social interactions to the often unnoticed intricacies of our infrastructure. Many of these technologies have been blamed for humanity’s dependence on fossil fuels, for environmental degradation, and a general disconnect from the natural world. That is, implicit in much of this discourse is an assumption of technological determinism: the notion that technologies themselves are capable of defining and shaping human cultures (including their

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213 One can easily argue that a corresponding vice has taken root with respect to the Orphic attitude. The current cultural atmosphere sees no value in an Orphic attitude unless it’s subsumed under a Promethean valuation of reality. So, much like cowardliness is a deficiency of courage, one could say that the technocratic paradigm also embodies a habitual deficiency of the Orphic attitude.

epistemic paradigms), and are thus in a sense responsible for the negative consequences of the technocratic paradigm we have discussed at length. The tempting equivocation between the technocratic paradigm and technology can lead to the assumption that simply changing these technologies will change the culture. This is exemplified by the danger of primitivism associated with extremes of the Orphic attitude, or in the historical example of the Luddites who simply rejected industrial technologies wholesale to protect cottage industries.

Understanding the technocratic paradigm as a vice, however, reframes technologies themselves as symptoms of a deeper, human, ethical problem. As such, a turn towards more sustainable energy sources—unaccompanied by a thorough criticism of human culture and practices (consumption, waste production, and the reduction of nature to a collection of “natural resources”)—will not guarantee a change in human culture. Casting the technocratic paradigm as a vice locates the source of the problem squarely within the realm of human freedom, and prioritizes the ethical work of pursuing virtue as the key to curing the “disease.” This does not mean that the symptoms (technologies) should be ignored, or that they are not in themselves problematic; it simply points to their dependence on the fundamental disease/dysfunction: the pain of a tooth’s cavity can (and should!) be treated on its own, but filling the cavity will cut off the pain at its source.

3.3.2.2. The technocratic paradigm is not the Promethean attitude

Understanding the technocratic paradigm as a vice ensures that the main locus of responsibility is focused inward, on individuals and cultures, and not towards external technologies or structures. The principal strategy for combatting the technocratic paradigm is therefore the difficult work of discerning the good, and fashioning a balance of one’s natural faculties into a life that reflects
this good. Both Francis and Hadot have demonstrated that individuals and cultures today have shifted away from this virtuous mean, with the Promethean attitude dominating and silencing the Orphic. There is a temptation, therefore, to identify the technocratic paradigm with the Promethean attitude itself. After all, if our culture of domination, technological manipulation and efficiency are grounded in the Promethean attitude, perhaps all of our blame should be placed on this specific stance towards nature, and we should do what we can to stifle its expression.

This is a mistake. I have argued that the Orphic and Promethean attitudes should be understood like the faculties spoken of by Aristotle. Since they are inherited capacities of human beings, they should be considered morally neutral in themselves. Anger, for instance, is one such similar faculty for human beings. If someone is habitually angry for no good reason, we might say they exhibit the vice of wrath. But we know that being angry, moral outrage in the face of an injustice for instance, can lead to the injustice’s rectification, and anger can therefore be a great good. For the wrathful person, it might be tempting to say that anger itself is the problem, but it is not; the habitual overuse or misuse of anger is the problem. In the same way, the Promethean attitude is not the fundamental cause of the technocratic paradigm; the habitual overuse and misuse of the Promethean attitude is. Indeed, the proper expression of the Promethean attitude is a great good. Recall that for Hadot it is precisely the Promethean attitude that undergirds humanity’s technological prowess, and that the advances in contemporary medicine, agriculture, communication and transportation require some degree of objectification and manipulation of the natural world. Francis, too, lauds human beings’ capacity to bend nature to suit human ends, provided this desire for control and power is matched by a concomitant desire for the common good, which includes an integral ecology of “our common home.”

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3.3.2.3. The technocratic paradigm is a spiritual problem

To begin explicitly weaving together the threads I have spun, if the technocratic paradigm is grounded principally in a vice, then what is required of human beings is, first and foremost, a change of philosophy, a conversion to a way of life that returns the Promethean and Orphic attitudes to their proper balance. Simply altering our technologies cannot affect this personal and cultural change. Neither can ignoring or excising legitimate human faculties. What is required is a holistic response, an engagement of human freedom that embraces every human dimension, what I have called a spiritual response. It is precisely spiritual exercises which can help individuals to refashion their ways of life, to mould worldviews and desires into habits of being that redound to the common good. Like the philosophical schools of old, or the various religious orders through the Church’s history, this work is most productively undertaken in community. As individuals strive to conform their lives to a new way of life (a philosophy or “rule”), the structures and society of the community will change to facilitate this new way of life. It is in this way that even entrenched philosophies like paradigms can begin to shift.

3.3.3. Combatting Promethean Vice

Again, spiritual exercises are meant to be therapeutic, helping to correct disordered passions and allow human beings to relate well with reality. While much of the following has been mentioned in previous chapters, it is worth recounting some of the concrete spiritual exercises which Francis and Hadot suggest for combatting the vice of the Promethean attitude.
3.3.3.1. Discourses

Written discourses (both argumentative or narrative) have been used through the history of philosophy to help justify and structure the adoption of specific philosophical attitudes.\(^{216}\) Both *Laudato Si’* and *The Veil of Isis* arguably serve this role in their insistence on a return to the Orphic attitude, and the very structures of the works help to lead readers to this end. Their mutual call for creative solutions, and their own use of the medium of written discourse, invites poets, authors, playwrights, philosophers, and theologians to pick up the pen to encourage a virtuous balance between the Promethean and Orphic through essays, texts, narratives and mythologies.

3.3.3.2. Ascesis

While discourses can help to re-imagine the world, and lead readers through the proper intellectual steps to begin to appropriate a “new way of seeing,” both Francis and Hadot repeatedly emphasize that appropriating an attitude is not quite as easy as putting on a different colour of sunglasses. To see the world clearly through an Orphic lens requires inhabiting the Orphic attitude—literally living within it (*in-habitans*). In *Laudato Si’*, Francis offers a number of concrete disciplines and practices necessary to make the Orphic attitude a habitual way of life, to adopt it as a philosophy (as Hadot would put it). The acts of “avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights,”\(^{217}\) along with gestures like saying grace before meals,\(^{218}\)


\(^{217}\) Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §211.

\(^{218}\) Ibid., §227
might seem trivial in the face of the mounting crisis of global climate change, but these small exercises craft a virtuous respect for humanity’s integration with and dependence upon nature when practiced diligently. A true “ecological education,” according to Francis, includes the necessity of training ourselves (ascesis) to live with habitual fraternal love in the more-than-human world.219

Pope Francis points to Saints Thérèse of Lisieux220 and Francis of Assisi221 as examples of how frequent, small gestures can transform a life into a model of ecological virtue.222 It is important, too, to consider communities whose cultures have translated an Orphic attitude closer to their center, such as many communities of Franciscans and Benedictines,223 or groups like the Amish, Mennonites, and Hutterites. In these communities, their regimented practices of prayer and gratitude both flow from and refresh their relationships with God, nature, and one another. While consumerism and control remain temptations in these communities, the cultures which they have constructed intentionally cultivate a more Orphic attitude than the dominant global technocratic/capitalist paradigm, and have found greater value in simplicity, sobriety, and humility. The beautiful lives constructed by these individuals and communities serve as proof that resisting the dominance of the Promethean attitude is not only possible but desirable.

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219 Ibid., §§208-209
220 Ibid., §230
221 Ibid., §218
222 Gesturing more specifically to the sciences, Hadot lifts up Jacques Monod and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as two exemplars of scientific practice that integrate the aesthetic and disinterested dimensions of an Orphic attitude into their work. See Hadot, The Veil of Isis, Chapter 2: “The Veil of Isis as Philosophy.”
223 I would be remiss if I did not explicitly mention the Benedictine monks of Mt. Saviour Monastery in Pine City, New York. I have been blessed to have spent many weeks of my life with the brothers, and have experienced the simple rhythm of their own lives firsthand. Stepping into the Liturgy of the Hours, into the Benedictine fusion of work, prayer, and study, is a jarring transition from the frenetic pace of a world dominated by the Promethean attitude. But it is refreshing to experience the harmony which Christ can restore to the oft-conflicting desires of Orpheus and Prometheus, if only for a time.
3.3.3.3. Sacraments

As mentioned earlier, Pierre Hadot eschews any particular religious position in *The Veil of Isis*, but following many of the historical characters in the book, he often personifies nature (Nature) and attributes a revelatory character to “her.”224 Nature (or Being, later in the work) is mysterious, but freely reveals her mysteries to those who approach her with respect. That is, Nature, who unfolds her “mystery in broad daylight,” can be said to have a desire to help human beings to understand, relate to, and live in harmony with her.225 Our knowledge of nature can be a gift from nature itself, a grace, not torn from Nature’s hands, but received gratefully. The entirety of *Laudato Si’* echoes this intuition, though for Francis, nature not only reveals its own beauty, dynamism, and our place within it, but God’s providential love as well.226

In the person of Jesus Christ, creation and divinity are revealed as uniquely united. Through Jesus’ words and example we are shown that God’s loving concern is made manifest in even the smallest of God’s creatures, from the birds of the air to the lilies of the field, and that we have only to cease worrying (Matt 6:25-34) in order to glimpse what nature itself reveals of our place in its “splendid universal communion.”227 Francis notes that the symbolic richness of nature is taken up in the Church’s sacramental life, with “water, oil, fire and colours” all given the explicit significance of communicating God’s presence and action to the material, interconnected beings we essentially are.228 In the liturgy of the Eucharist, for example, God’s continued incarnate accompaniment with us becomes tangible as Jesus Christ becomes really present in the bread and

227 Ibid., §220.
228 Ibid., §235.
wine. The simple human activities of storytelling, meal-making, gratitude, and eating are all offered to God and elevated by the Holy Spirit in the liturgy of the Eucharist, revealing our communion with one another, with nature, and with God. Our participation in the sacraments broadens our vision and trains us to be receptive and thankful for the very gift of our existence.

For human beings, changing habits and ways of life requires practice. Sacraments clearly communicate the goodness and desirability of the work of virtue, and act as freely-offered remedies to aid human beings in the difficult work of conversion. Together with discourses and small gestures of fraternal love, the sacraments allow the Orphic attitude to complement and relativize the Promethean attitude, and thus break down its vicious excesses.

3.4. Criticisms and Conclusions

Over the course of this chapter I have made the argument that, despite differences in terminology and methodology, the work of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si’* and the work of Pierre Hadot in *The Veil of Isis* can be fruitfully combined by understanding the technocratic paradigm as a vice of the Promethean attitude, culturally entrenched. It is for this reason that both Francis and Hadot suggest that the most radical remedy for this vicious excess lies in a cultivation of a lifestyle suffused by the Orphic attitude, to seek the temperance and balance between the Orphic and Promethean which is characteristic of virtue.

I can anticipate two criticisms which ought to be briefly addressed. First, both Francis and Hadot seem to put so much emphasis on a cultivation of the Orphic attitude, and a diminution of the Promethean, that they seem to flirt dangerously with elevating an excess of the Orphic attitude as

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a worthy goal. Are we to replace one vice with another? Abstracted from our historical situation, this might seem to be the case. But recall that our historical starting point is from within the technocratic paradigm, which we have already characterized as grounded in a vice. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle encourages those seeking virtue to escape vice by aiming for the opposite extreme. Using this strategy, by “over-correcting” and aiming to act in a way typical of the opposing vice, it can help the seeker of moral perfection to get a feel for the virtuous balance one is meant to attain. To use a simple example, the cowardly person might be encouraged to act rashly in order to land closer to the virtuous mean in his actions.

Understanding the technocratic paradigm as grounded in vice helps to justify the seeming over-emphasis on the Orphic attitude in these works of Hadot and Francis.

The second criticism I can anticipate is the following: The negative effects of the technocratic paradigm—from anthropogenic climate change to wealth disparities—are so pressing that they require immediate action, not the gradual ecological conversion of the world’s population. With the Earth’s biosphere already tumbling off a precipice, human beings simply do not have the luxury of time; we must act. But Pope Francis (and arguably Hadot) agree: immediate action is required, through everything from technological interventions, to policy changes, to international action and cooperation. In the same way that the intense pain of a tooth cavity should be managed for the good of the patient, human beings have the responsibility to manage and stave off the ecological and social consequences of the technocratic paradigm. Indeed “the poor and

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230 When attempting to escape a vice, which is an extreme, Aristotle suggests: “We must drag ourselves away to the contrary extreme; for we shall get into the intermediate state by drawing well away from error, as people do in straightening sticks that are bent.” Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 46.

the earth are crying out,” and we are obliged to use our creativity to ease their sufferings. Understanding the technocratic paradigm as grounded in vice, however, ensures that we do not confuse the symptoms for the disease itself. If we do not radically treat the vice present in our human hearts, we can expect to see new problems emerge as a result. (If we do not treat the tooth cavity—or perhaps correct the patient’s dental hygiene habits—the pain will persist and the issues will become more serious.) A focus on addressing the technocratic paradigm at its source does not necessarily entail ignoring the problems arising further “downstream.” But the sooner humanity takes up the call to ecological conversion, the sooner these issues will dry up on their own accord. Indeed, while the process of conversion may take time, the Gospels are saturated with a joyful urgency that hinges on the instantaneous decision to begin to change: “See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

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232 Francis, *Laudato Si’, “A Christian prayer in union with creation.”*
Chapter 4:

Conclusions

Both Pope Francis and Pierre Hadot agree that, at its core, the contemporary environmental crisis is the result of a culturally-entrenched Promethean attitude towards nature, one which Francis has termed the technocratic paradigm. Consequently, while unjust and unsustainable systems of production and governance must continue to be addressed and corrected head-on, greater efforts must be directed at correcting the culturally-entrenched vice of the technocratic paradigm which produces and fuels these systems. Correcting a vice is an ethical project, a project of directing individuals’ ways of life towards the balance characteristic of virtue. I have argued that our authors agree that this new way of life involves the cultivation of an attitude towards nature suffused with reverence, wonder, and synergistic cooperation in its processes. Adopting this Orphic attitude, or changing attitudes in general, is not as easy as simply assenting to a new proposition; spiritual exercises—an intentional, often rigorous training of one’s mind, body, and actions—are necessary to affect so striking a conversion. Conforming one’s way of life to an ideal of wisdom or virtue, Hadot reminds us, was the animating principle of philosophy at its inception. Central to overturning the technocratic paradigm, therefore, is the practice of philosophy, in this ancient sense: the adoption and consistent practice of a way of life that encourages both the Orphic and Promethean attitudes. In this thesis, I have demonstrated that—despite differences in emphasis and approach—both Pope Francis and Pierre Hadot fundamentally agree on this point.

In concluding the thesis, it is therefore worth taking stock of how we arrived here.
I began the first chapter by tracing a brief history of Catholic Social Teaching with regards to environmental concerns, and showed how *Laudato Si’* organically follows from this history. I then argued that Pope Francis creatively distills the wisdom of this tradition into the concept of the technocratic paradigm, which he sees as being at the core of humans’ misuse of the gifts of creation. The technocratic paradigm is a concept which simultaneously offers both a unique interpretation of Catholic Social Teaching and a new framework for action in the modern world. For instance, the task of ecological conversion—referenced in previous Catholic Social Teaching—is cast in a new light when understood as a shift to a new *paradigm* that allows humanity to see and inhabit the world in fraternal love and appreciation.

In the second chapter I first turned my attention to Pierre Hadot’s work *The Veil of Isis*, unpacking his concepts of the Promethean and Orphic attitudes towards nature. Of principle importance was Hadot’s argument that the Promethean attitude’s eclipsing of the Orphic attitude in the history of the West has led to habitual violence against nature. I then placed *The Veil of Isis* in the wider context of Hadot’s corpus in order to flesh out his understanding of philosophy (as a way of life) and of an attitude (a fundamental, given way of seeing the world). With this groundwork laid, I could reiterate Hadot’s conclusions: First, that the Orphic and Promethean attitudes, while opposed, are morally neutral in and of themselves. Second, that the historical datum of the West’s overreliance on the Promethean attitude—and the violence it has produced—can be corrected by spiritual exercises reintroducing an Orphic appreciation for nature.
In the third chapter I explicitly brought these two authors’ works into conversation, carefully parsing the points over which they diverge and developing the points upon which they agree. I first demonstrated how Francis’ technocratic paradigm could be understood as a manifestation of Hadot’s Promethean attitude, and how “integral ecology” seemed to manifest features of the Orphic attitude. Both authors share the conviction that the Promethean attitude’s dominance (and the general eclipsing of the Orphic attitude) drives crises like anthropogenic climate change, and they each suggest a reintroduction of the Orphic attitude to complement and correct the excesses of the Promethean. The shared language of excess and balance allowed me to discuss these attitudes towards nature in terms of Aristotelian virtue and vice, which provided a helpful framework within which Hadot’s spiritual exercises and Francis’ work of ecological conversion could both find adequate expression.

To make a drastic turn towards the Orphic attitude, towards seeing ourselves as marvelously bound-up in nature’s own mysterious processes, is therefore presented in this thesis as a spiritual task, one which implicates and demands something of every dimension of our humanity. For both Francis and Hadot, the only adequate response to the cries of the planet and her poor necessitates this philosophical project of committing to a balance of Orphic and Promethean attitudes. Only by integrating the Orphic attitude into our ways of being will be open to witnessing our profound interrelatedness to the beings in our unfolding, dynamic world, and to hear these cries as those of our own family, of our own selves. To make this change in attitude habitual involves training and ascesis, and results ultimately in a new way of life, a new way of being in the world. By following the paths sketched by Francis and Hadot, this philosophical project will result in “a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an
educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm.”

4.1. Implications and Further Research

In this final section I will briefly highlight a number of areas where the research done in this thesis promises to bear fruit. First, I will consider social and scientific movements that give the Orphic attitude pride of place. I will then discuss how my thesis might help contribute to a non-possessive metaphysics of knowledge. Lastly, I will explicitly connect the tension of Promethean and Orphic to the perennial tension between action and contemplation in the Catholic tradition, and spin out some implications of this connection.

4.1.1. Shifting Virtues in Society and Science

The ecological revelations of the twentieth century, and the impact of human consumption on that ecology, have been a driving force in the environmentalist movement from its beginning and continue to inspire new ways of life which respect humanity’s dependence upon—and responsibility towards—nature. The Degrowth Movement is a contemporary, communal attempt to reimagine human life on a living planet with limited resources, and fundamentally challenges the notion that human cultures must grow to succeed. While using the (Promethean) analogy of humanity mismanaging finite resources, representatives of the Degrowth Movement like Jim Merkel insist that the only satisfactory solution to the ecological crisis involves a profound change how we see our planet, and to adopt a lifestyle which corresponds to that new (Orphic)

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233 Francis, *Laudato Si’*, § 215

vision which he calls Global Living: “Global living is a modern-day journey to reclaim our connections to the Earth, however ancient, and to fall in love with the land again...” The challenge of the Degrowth Movement has been taken up by communities like Can Decreix in Cerbère, France, and the Catalan Integral Cooperative (CIC) in Catalonia, Spain, wherein they practice low-impact lifestyles and enact alternative economies, actively resisting the growth and consumption driven (technocratic) paradigm. This thesis seems to invite a consideration of these small groups as philosophical movements, in Hadot’s sense; they have committed not only to an Orphic attitude, but to the formative structures and spiritual exercises necessary to cement that very stance towards reality. Indeed, the restraint and de-growth endorsed and exhibited by the movement showcase the ethical dimension of such philosophical work, and effectively instantiate the “green” virtues characteristic of a balance between Orphic and Promethean attitudes.

Within the last 20 years a similar appreciation of the Orphic attitude has also inspired some scientists to change their approach to studying the natural world. One prominent example flows from the re-examination of the scientific works of Goethe, one of Hadot’s exemplars of the Orphic attitude. Amrine, Zucker, and Wheeler’s *Goethe and the Sciences: A Re-Appraisal* (1987) is arguably responsible for bringing Goethe’s scientific writings (and the history of their obfuscation) to the attention of the English-speaking world. For some in the volume, Goethe’s scientific methodology can still be dismissed as non-scientific. For others, Goethe’s disciplined approach to studying the natural world offers a viable complement to dominant reductionistic

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scientific practices. In *Goethe’s Way of Science: A Phenomenology of Nature* (1998), editors David Seamon and Arthur Zajonc take up this latter position and explore how science (especially the life sciences) might apply Goethe’s own approach to nature. Briefly, this approach to science is Orphic precisely because its emphasis is not on the transformation of nature by the scientist but rather the transformation of the scientist by nature. That is, for Goethe, through patient, methodological interaction with and observation of one’s object (be it a plant, a rock formation, light, etc.) the scientist’s own mind would gradually be conformed to the essential dynamics and features of that object (their archetypes). The recent crises in the Modern Evolutionary Synthesis have caused biologists to look for less reductive, “qualitative” approaches like Goethe’s, and recent applications of Goethe’s methods to current conundra in evolution theory seem promising. Our general understanding of reality itself, it seems, requires this willingness to allow reality to correct and shape us.

4.1.2. Towards A Model of Non-Possessive Knowledge

This thesis has considered many historical examples of how philosophical attitudes shape not only our vision of nature, but how that vision affects our broader relation with and valuation of nature. It follows that our very understanding of what constitutes knowledge and reason themselves could also be shaped by—and relative to—the dominant attitude of a culture. Perhaps the very notions of knowledge, truth, and reason that we use in the Industrialized North


are merely products of our technocratic paradigm and will change with an intentional re-introduction of a more Orphic attitude.

While not couched explicitly in this thesis’ terminology, David C. Schindler argues that today’s prevailing philosophical understanding of knowledge evinces a Promethean influence inherited from medieval scholastic philosophy. In the context of the wider historical debate over the primacy of the intellect or the will (which he notes is “a distinctively Christian problem”), Schindler advances an argument claiming that Thomas Aquinas’ metaphysical account of the process of knowing (derived from Aristotle, and which privileged the intellect over the will) invited an interpretation of knowledge itself as an activity of a subject containing, possessing, or otherwise dominating the known object. Aquinas states that while the operation of the will is an outward movement, terminating in the enjoyment of the concrete goodness of an individual object, the operation of the intellect is an inward movement which draws the abstracted, intelligible form of an object into the soul itself. Thus, the operation of the intellect terminates within the soul, with the identity of the soul and the intelligible form constituting a subject’s understanding of its object, or its truth. Because the thing known is, in a sense “consumed” and contained completely within the knower, it can be said to be comprehended and grasped—possessed—all at once.

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241 Ibid., 577.

242 Schindler quotes Jacques Maritain: “the will seeks its object as it is in itself, in its existence and its own mode of being, whereas the intelligence seeks its object as it is in the intelligence, under the mode of being which it has from the intelligence, drawing it in and consuming it so as immaterially to become it.” Ibid., 586.

243 Schindler quotes this lucid passage from Aquinas (Sent. IV, 49, 2, 3): “‘To comprehend’ means, as it were, ‘to grasp all at once,’ i.e., to lay hold of; and therefore something is properly comprehended when it is laid hold of all at once, i.e., with everything that belongs to it. Hence, it is necessary that every comprehended thing must be enclosed within the one comprehending...Now, just as something bodily is said to be contained in another because it does not exceed any of the container’s bounds according to dimensive quantity, as wine in a cask, so
Schindler enumerates many ways this understanding of knowledge is problematic for Aquinas’ philosophical and theological project, specifically with respect to knowing (and loving) God both \textit{in via} and \textit{in fine}. Most notable for our purposes, however, is how this possessive view of knowledge evacuates any genuine \textit{mystery} from nature and created reality: on this view there is no part of the universe that a human subject cannot comprehend, which means that, in principle, nature’s “secrets” could be completely laid bare for human intelligence. Created reality, on this account, has no positive mystery, since “what is known is not mysterious, and what is mysterious is not (yet) known. To make progress in knowledge, then, is just so far to conquer mystery, except insofar as one uncovers more to be taken into intellectual possession.”\textsuperscript{244}

Schindler avers that the theological and philosophical works of Hans Urs von Balthasar reframe knowledge in a way that is non-possessive, rescues mystery, and harmonizes with the revealed truths of the Christian faith. To very briefly recapitulate Balthasar’s argument, it begins by reaffirming the circumincension of the transcendental properties of being itself: being is true, good, and beautiful, and no one of those properties can be understood without reference to the others (nor can being be properly understood without all three).\textsuperscript{245} This fundamental point is what drives Balthasar to resist a simple location of truth “within” the soul/subject, and the location of goodness “outside” the subject in a concrete object: if these properties are truly transcendentials, then there must be a sense in which goodness and truth cohere. Balthasar finds

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  \item something is said to be contained by another spiritually when it stands under its power and in no way exceeds that [container]. And therefore something is said to be comprehended by knowledge when the thing known stands under the act of the knowing power and does not exceed it.” Ibid., 587.
  \item Ibid., 589.
\end{itemize}
the key to explaining how this might be so in the transcendental property of beauty. When we experience something beautiful, what we experience—says Balthasar—is a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, what he terms a *Gestalt*. In the *Gestalt*, we encounter something at once intelligible and desirable, the concrete union of truth and goodness. The *Gestalt*, Balthasar and Schindler emphasize, is not the result of the active, intentional intellect alone, simply absorbing an inert reality. Rather, Balthasar ascribes a kind of agency to being itself, as it actively reveals and unveils (ἄ-λήθεια) itself. The “place” where the event of truth occurs is therefore, on Balthasar’s account, in the concrete *Gestalt* and not in the soul; the *Gestalt* is where the intellect encounters, and is united with, its object. As Schindler summarizes:

> the mind, one might say, leaves its own home, its mother and father, in order to cleave to its object and become one with it. The identity that the mind thus achieves with the thing that it knows is therefore not the elimination of its difference from it, but instead an *appropriation of that difference as difference*. It is just this that allows us to say that a knowledge of truth is the real-ization of mystery. In a word, it is not only the will that represents the soul’s movement beyond itself, but reason, too, is *essentially ecstatic*.

Whereas for Aquinas only God and the angels would exceed the human intellect’s capacity to “contain” their intelligible forms, on Balthasar and Schindler’s model, the intellect is no longer the “container.” Because the event of truth happens *between* the subject and the object, it is the concrete *Gestalt* which, as a whole greater than the sum of its parts, contains and transcends both of them. Schindler states that for Balthasar it is “precisely the givenness of being that is mysterious, insofar as the generosity at the heart of the act of manifestation is the reason for the

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247 “We ‘behold’ the form; but, if we really behold it, it is not as a detached form, rather in its unity with the depths that make their appearance in it. We see form as the splendour, as the glory of Being. We are ‘enraptured’ by our contemplation of these depths and are ‘transported’ to them.” Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Volume I: Seeing the Form*, translated by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1982), 119.

248 Schindler, “Towards a Non-Possessive Concept of Knowledge,” 596.

mystery,” and this generosity is woven into the knowledge which the intellect receives from the
Gestalt.\textsuperscript{250} Most interesting for our purposes, then, is the fact that Balthasar and Schindler’s
framework for non-possessive truth gives expression to the positive mystery of nature spoken of
by both Francis and Hadot. The framework also gives a compelling account of human reason that
does not oppose the “light” of Christian faith, seeing truth as fundamentally open to mystery (as
both Francis and Hadot argue). Indeed, Balthasar and Schindler’s non-possessive knowledge
illuminates this passage from \textit{Lumen Fidei} wherein Francis writes:

> The gaze of science thus benefits from faith: faith encourages the scientist to remain
constantly open to reality in all its inexhaustible richness. Faith awakens the critical
sense by preventing research from being satisfied with its own formulae and helps it to
realize that \textit{nature is always greater}. By stimulating wonder before the profound
mystery of creation, faith broadens the horizons of reason to shed greater light on the
world which discloses itself to scientific investigation.\textsuperscript{251}

Further development of this model of non-possessive knowledge may also help to demonstrate
precisely how the Promethean and Orphic attitudes can be integrated into one coherent account
of human reason. While there is no doubt that other philosophical frameworks are capable of also
accounting for and integrating the Orphic attitude, this approach seems especially fecund.

\subsection*{4.1.3. Action and Contemplation}

Now as they went on their way, [Jesus] entered a certain village, where a woman named
Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the
Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many
tasks; so she came to him and asked, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to
do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.’ But the Lord answered her,
‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only
one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.
(Luke 10:38-42)

\textsuperscript{250} Schindler, “Towards a Non-Possessive Concept of Knowledge,” 596.

\textsuperscript{251} Francis, \textit{Lumen Fidei}, §34.
In the Catholic theological tradition, Martha has been the icon of the active life, while Mary has been the icon of the contemplative life. Since Jesus’ words clearly favour Mary’s stance, but do not condemn Martha’s toil outright, the tradition has seen both action and contemplation as necessary while giving contemplation pride of place.\textsuperscript{252} Despite this preference, however, Aquinas insists that a kind of virtuous balance must be struck between them, even if either action or contemplation might slightly predominate in individual cases.\textsuperscript{253}

But in their consideration of the modern age, philosophers and theologians have noticed an imbalance. Etienne Gilson goes so far as to say that our contemporary, Descartes-inspired obsession with usefulness and practicality (in our approach to nature and reality in general) marks the “revenge of Martha upon Mary,” a (violent) imbalance away from the truths garnered through a more contemplative approach.\textsuperscript{254} This trenchant cultural prevalence of Martha over Mary bears a striking—and I think non-accidental—resemblance to the technocratic paradigm.

A straightforward connection can be drawn, here, between action (Martha) and contemplation (Mary), on the one hand, and the Promethean and Orphic attitudes on the other. While I am unwilling, at this point, to say that these polarities are equivocal, it seems plausible that their attitudinal character (and capacity for virtue/vice) evinces at least a shared origin in human nature. Additionally, I am confident that further study comparing Hadot’s Promethean and Orphic attitudes to the relation between action and contemplation in the Catholic tradition would

\textsuperscript{252} Cf. Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae}, II-II Q.182, A.1

\textsuperscript{253} “A mean is a combination of extremes, wherefore it is virtually contained in them, as tepid in hot and cold, and pale in white and black. On like manner active and contemplative comprise that which is composed of both. Nevertheless as in every mixture one of the simples predominates, so too in the mean state of life sometimes the contemplative, sometimes the active element, abounds.” Ibid., II-II Q.179, A.2, ad. 2.

\textsuperscript{254} Etienne Gilson, \textit{From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again: A Journey in Final Causality, Species, and Evolution} (Notre Dame Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 23.
be beneficial to the ongoing project of imagining and cultivating a virtuous *modus vivendi* on our planet. Citing St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Merton reminds us that “after all Martha and Mary are sisters and they should dwell together in the same household in peace. They supplement one another.”

Cultivating this interior harmony between Martha & Mary, between the Promethean & Orphic, is the foundation upon which humanity and its own Sister Water, Brother Wind, and all its more-than-human family will learn to live together in peace in their common home.

### 4.2. A Way Forward

Taken together, *Laudato Si’* and *The Veil of Isis* show that the global disaster of climate change has an ethical, human crisis at its heart in the technocratic paradigm. The call to shift radically towards an Orphic attitude has further implications in many areas. It is a call to philosophy to descend from the ivory tower of the academy and to reconnect to its ancient roots, incarnating wisdom in the quest for the good life. It is a call for educators to introduce students to the beauty and value of our world, and to model and encourage lives of virtue and fraternal love within it. It is a call for theologians to labour to include more voices and perspectives that have been silenced or otherwise muted by our uncritical assumption of the Promethean attitude, including the experiences of the poor, women, racialized groups, indigenous communities, LGBT+ people, and non-European Christianities. For Christians the world over, it is a call to look to the person of

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257 Grounding this thesis in white, cis-gendered, male, Eurocentric thought is, admittedly, not exemplary of this approach. Indeed, coming to this realization has been one of the most productive results of the exercise of writing this thesis. Both Hadot and Francis do arguably represent critical perspectives from within the dominant “Western” tradition: Hadot’s historical perspective on philosophy drives him to be largely critical of the divorce between academic philosophy and the quest for the good life, exhuming buried philosophies that continued to conceive of philosophy as a “way of life.” Indeed, his is a call to make the practice of philosophy political, precisely by engaging seriously with the concrete problems of seeking the good in one’s life. Pope Francis was elected to the
Jesus the Christ, to fall in love with him anew, and to transform ourselves and our ways of life to reflect his mercy.  

After warning his disciples about the futility of greed, the Lukan Jesus turns his attention to the majesty of nature (Lk 12: 13-34). Life, he says, is not just food and clothing, nor an abundance of possessions. One can then imagine him catching sight of a small blooming flower and kneeling beside it, smiling. Enraptured, he says “Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these” (Lk 12:27). Through this invitation to consider the ravens and the wild flowers, Jesus calls his followers to be attentive to the beauty of the world, and to allow this new perspective to transform their lives. It is precisely by emulating the wonder-filled gaze of Jesus that Christians and people of good will can break free from the technocratic paradigm, and—transformed by the mystery of creation—build lives dedicated to the loving service of our common home, and every sister and brother that dwells therein.

See of Peter as Mario Bergoglio, a Jesuit Bishop from Argentina and the Global South. As such, he represents and brings to the table the perspective of one who has faced the realities of poverty and climate change. As such, both authors represent a resistance from within the dominant intellectual tradition. This all being said, my future developments of this thesis work will intentionally bring to bear some of the neglected perspectives I have mentioned, as a commitment to the Orphic attitude compels me to do.

258 “As a spiritual work of mercy, care for our common home calls for a ‘grateful contemplation of God’s world’ (Laudato Si, 214) which ‘allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us’ (ibid., 85). As a corporal work of mercy, care for our common home requires ‘simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness’ and ‘makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world’ (ibid., 230-31)”. Francis, “Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Celebration of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation,” Libreria Editice Vaticana, September 1, 2016, accessed September 5, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20160901_messaggio-giornata-curato.html


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