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Organizational Implications of Pope Francis' Integral Ecology

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Abstract

We explore Pope Francis's "integral ecology" in the encyclical [Laudato Si](#) (Francis, 2015) as it provides us with an agenda for a planetary virtue ethic that should inspire the field of Organizational Development to reconsider the moral implications of our work. We begin by offering the framework of virtue ethics as a way of understanding [Laudato Si](#) (LS). We then summarize the argument in LS as it focuses on four ecological issues—climate change, pollution, water, and the plight of the poor as we tease out the document's implicit virtue ethic. Finally, we propose how OD practitioners can become more aware of the lens through which they approach their task, thereby coming to regard organizational change initiatives and moral-identity development as a single, undifferentiated, act.

Keywords

sustainability, organizational ecology, organizational development, OD practice, environmental responsibility

Introduction

Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.

—Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

Unprecedented global challenges have demanded that we pay attention to sustainability issues, including challenges of poverty, inequality, climate change, and clean drinking water. Organizational scholars have begun to address these issues by exploring organizational implications of renewable energy (Georgallis et al., 2019); fair trade products (Reinecke et al., 2012); green buildings (York and Lenox, 2014); microfinancing (Battilana and Dorado, 2010). Organizational theorists have also begun to study the impact of “sustainable development,” a term that became popular in 1987 when the World Commission on Economic Development issued its report on *Our Common Future*. They defined sustainable development as “the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The report claimed that in order to achieve these goals we must adapt environmental, economic, and equity principles to enable organization responses to the pressing challenges of our age. What has been less explored and more taken for granted is the moral logic that articulates why these actions are necessary. The movement has become a broad cultural force that helps organizations shape regulations and rules and shifts our understanding of rights and obligations to include attending to natural resources including coal, oil, uranium and copper that go into making technical products and the importance of renewable resources. The moral rationale behind these programs and the implications for organizations needs to be further explored.

Given the increasing attention to these issues, the question arises, how is the field of Organizational Development facing sustainability issues and what values need to be articulated to address them? The field of Organizational Development began as a corrective to the dehumanizing effects of bureaucracy. The focus of OD was on the positive effects of collaboration, human growth values, action research. Since the founding of the field of OD there has been a rich conversation around OD values. Bennis (1969) highlighted the humanistic and democratic values in the practice of OD. He included such values as collaboration, trust, and empowerment. Given the prominence of the issues around sustainability, one would expect that the field of OD would be actively shaping the discourse around these matters. However, in studies of the field's core values, care for the environment does not score high. In the Church et al. study (1994), “protecting the natural environment” received the lowest importance scores. And in a follow up study in 2018 Church et al. reflect “Protecting the environment... was not a hot topic at that time. This time around we fully expected that rating to jump to the top of the list. It did not”. (Church et al., 2018, p. 27). In Yoon et al. did not find “protecting the natural environment” as a value that had consensus for OD researchers and practitioners. These studies have demonstrated that OD researchers and practitioners remain committed to traditional humanistic values that have been prominent since the founding of the field, yet have not adequately attended to the sustainability agenda with the same passion.

We frame this paper by contending that the field of OD needs to move beyond its traditional humanistic values and widen its scope to look outside the enterprise, to come to terms with nature as an intrinsic value and what it means to shape organizations in which business can excel, nature can flourish and people can thrive. It is in this spirit that Yaganeh and Glavas (2008) called for “green organizational development,” a clarion call for the field to catch up with organizations engaging in green practices. They remind us that we cannot create a healthy planet without involving businesses, governments, and nonprofit organizations. If researchers and practitioners today lack the vocabulary, action logic, and process skills to respond to the current issues, perhaps OD can provide a framework and moral argument for executives to commit to sustainability, the flourishing of the natural world, and a shared resolve to “go green” as we care more holistically for the environment.

In this paper, we pick up this argument and explore Pope Francis's "integral ecology" (Francis, 2015) as it provides us with an agenda for a planetary virtue ethic that should inspire the field of Organizational Development to reconsider the moral implications of our work. We begin by offering the framework of virtue ethics as a way of understanding LS. We then summarize the argument in *Laudato Si'* as it focuses on four ecological issues—climate change, pollution, water, and the plight of the poor as we tease out the document's implicit virtue ethic. Next, we explore a few global initiatives as corporate "moral exemplars" that show ways to address this crisis systemically. While arguing that Francis is proposing the need for collective action to take care of the earth, we also show that he is proposing a fundamental shift in how humans construe their identity. Finally, we propose how OD practitioners can become more aware of the lens through which they approach their task, thereby coming to regard organizational change initiatives and identity development as a single, undifferentiated, act.

Before we get into the meat of our argument we flag a footnote of sorts. One of the ongoing dilemmas in the field of organizational development has been the tension and tradeoff between individual development and organizational development. When we consider the lens of *LS* we contend that it is time to put this dilemma to rest. Our contention is that when organizations commit to the intrinsic value of the natural world, individual development is also advanced. We are at our best when we appreciate the integral nature of the world. Personal fulfillment, well-being, a sense of purpose, and personal growth are advanced when commitment to the natural world is enhanced. Indeed, we contend that a virtue ethical approach to organizational development can help to transform the way we relate to, and interact with, the world. Instead of regarding the organization–world relationship as a tradeoff where one party gains at the expense of the other, we suggest that organizational, personal, and ecological flourishing can be achieved through the single unifying act of coming to regard ourselves as citizens within the common home of creation.

Ethical Argument for Sustainability

Most ethical arguments for sustainability flow from two traditions. The first is the Kantian deontological tradition that emerged from the Enlightenment's search for eternal truths accessible to reason. Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative insists that ethical actions should be founded upon rational, universalizable imperatives such as *do not lie*, *be compassionate*, and *do your duty*. Though one may treat these duties *as if* they were decreed by God, deontological ethics need not appeal to God or the Transcendent because it sees itself as based upon rational, consistent, and universally accessible principles. The sustainability movement has drawn upon Kant's theories when making claims for rights, particularly arguing for human rights and even rights for non-human animals. When people in the ecology movement argue that a person has *a duty* to abstain from pollution, they often argue using language drawn from deontological ethics.

The second tradition from which most ethical arguments flow is consequentialism or utilitarianism. A consequentialist or utilitarian view of ethics, stemming from Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, adheres to the "greatest happiness principle." According to these thinkers, the "good" action is one that does more benefit than harm. This school of thought is consistent with a cost-benefit analysis approach or a "calculus" to evaluate outcomes. When the environmental movement argues that sustainability is important because it maximizes social, economic, or environmental goods for the largest number of people, they are arguing from a utilitarian perspective.

Since the mid-twentieth century, virtue ethics has reemerged to rival the latter theories. Advanced by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and recovered by Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, and Alisdair MacIntyre, virtue ethics is concerned with the agent's moral character and the way this character is expressed through action. Where other approaches to normative ethics invoke a universal rule, virtue ethics turns its gaze toward the formation of moral character with a special emphasis on moral exemplars: In place of an abstract rule, a virtue approach

tries to ascertain how a virtuous person would act in a given situation. This is because a virtue makes the one who possesses it good or excellent. For Aristotle, the virtue of courage balances cowardice and brashness; the virtue of temperance is a mean between self-indulgence and insensibility. Interestingly, a virtue-perspective seems to have been largely absent in the environmental movement, at least until the publication of Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment *Laudato Si'*.

Virtue Ethics

How do we think about the moral life? As mentioned, one predominant model—Kant's deontology—conceives adherence to the moral law as necessary and sufficient. His “categorical imperative” amplifies universal principles such that an agent should act in a way that could be universalized and accepted by all reasonable agents. The deontological model relegates questions of growth and development to the private sphere with an emphasis on obedience to moral rules.

Virtue ethics, by contrast, focuses on moral character development through lived practices. This approach focuses less on the agent's particular action or adherence to a particular rule than on the agent herself or himself. This agent-centered focus has a tripartite structure: who we are as humans; who we would be if we were to realize our higher purpose (our end or *telos*); and the activities, dispositions, habits that support our growth toward becoming the virtuous characters we could become. Zagzebski (1996) defines virtue as “a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end.” Her definition echoes the tripartite structure of virtue ethics, first developed by Kotva (1996), that suggests a virtue approach can be thought of as answering three distinct yet related questions: *Who am I?*, *Who ought I become?*, and *How do I achieve this end?* Virtue ethics recognizes the agent-in-context, takes into account the agent's motivations, and identifies and cultivates those dispositions (often through emulating moral exemplars), supporting the agent's movement toward her or his end (*telos*). Whereas deontology seeks to clarify rules and utilitarianism to calculate the greatest good, a virtue ethic aims to articulate what it means to cultivate those practices, activities, and relationships that support the flourishing of the human person such that she or he develops a habitual disposition to embody the virtues.

In *Laudato Si'*, Francis seems to work with the framework of a virtue ethics concerned with the character development of individuals within a larger ecological framework. Rather than abstracting the human agent from this context, Francis insists upon having us reflect upon our emplacement within our “common home.” The goal of the text, in a sense, is not merely to inform readers about our present ecological crises but to provide an impetus to be formed in order to respond to it. “There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things,” the pope writes, “a way of thinking, policies, an educational program, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm” (Francis, 2015, section 111). To appreciate the implicit virtue ethic contained within *Laudato Si'*, we will summarize the document along the lines of the tripartite structure of virtue ethics, which (1) diagnoses the present state, (2) imagines our ideal teleological end, and (3) suggests a few collective practices and systemic initiatives as corporate “exemplars” who embody the actions, habits, and dispositions we need to develop individually and collectively so that the whole planet might flourish. We will then explore the implications for the field of OD.

Laudato Si' Through the Lens of Virtue Ethics

Laudato Si' is the first papal document dealing exclusively with ecology. It calls readers to care for our common home by tending both to the needs of the environment and dedicating ourselves to addressing the needs of the poor. Key to Francis's vision is what he calls an “integral ecology” (Francis, 2015). This approach refuses to consider the human apart from the environment and insists we reflect upon ourselves as a part of it. Anthropology is inseparable from ecology, as *who* we are and *where* we are interpenetrate and condition one

another. To a virtue ethical approach's first question, *Who am I?*, the document insists that we are beings-in-and-of the environment. This leads the pope to contrast his integral ecology, one attentive to the interrelatedness between various sub-systems, with a capitalist technocratic mindset that focuses on short-term economic profits and exploitative technological solutions that harm the environment. The document calls for a radically new moral orientation, one attentive both to the planet and to humanity. This approach integrates several themes connected to the Catholic social teaching tradition, including the dignity of all human beings, the notion of the common good, and the importance of solidarity. What results is not an aloof description of our present situation but a vivid indictment showing how we contribute to the fragility of ecosystems, the deterioration of the natural environment, and the acceleration of climate change. In binding anthropology and ecology together, integral ecology insists that the fate of humanity is ineluctably bound to the fate of our planet. Herein the document offers readers a glimpse of its end or *telos* by insisting that our flourishing is inseparable from the flourishing of the whole of creation.

The Current Situation: An “Immense Pile of Filth”

Laudato Si' insists we look at our concrete situation both to begin to recognize our impact on the environment and to begin to envision practices of ameliorating our impact upon it. He pulls no punches in describing the dire state of our environment: “The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth” (Francis, 2015, section 20). He draws upon biblical references, especially Genesis, religious traditions including Sufism and Buddhism, and scientific studies to describe the planet's deterioration. He urges us to attend to the cry of creation, “to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening in the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it” (Francis, 2015, section 19). We are a long way from the Edenic state describes in Genesis as pollution mars the face of the earth and has become a “part of people's daily experience” (Francis, 2015, section 20). Tragically, the ways we have polluted the environment now poison us as industrial refuse, fertilizers, herbicides, toxic soil and water, and non-biodegradable waste render our planet increasingly inhospitable to life.

True to the interconnectedness of an integral ecology, Francis discerns links between pollution and climate change. He admits the climate is a complex system in which consequences of actions are distant in time and place; it is, he admits, difficult to see how our actions cause harm. We need to be recalled—before it is too late—to the realization that climate change cannot be measured merely by days or weeks but must be looked at in the “grand scheme” of decades and centuries. We need to address our present practices and behaviors before it is too late. This is especially urgent, Francis notes, because the climate is a common good essential for all living beings. We need to be spurred into action as persons acutely aware of the impact greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide, and methane have on the planet. Throughout, *Laudato Si'* accents how ecological (climate, water) and anthropological (economic, power) concerns influence one another, resulting in the dilemma that “those who possess more resources and economic or political power seem mostly to be concerned with masking the problems or concealing their symptoms” (Francis, 2015, section 26).

An integral ecology stresses the interconnection of several subsystems, and Francis consistently notes how the degradation of any one subsystem has an impact on other systems. In every case, the poor are hit hardest:

Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing, and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited (Francis, 2015, section 25).

Because of climate change, the poor are often displaced and forced to migrate. Yet much of the world is blithely unaware or cruelly indifferent to their plight or how this devastation is linked to our actions. Throughout the text, Francis returns to his diagnosis of our pathology as one of corruptive blindness, an incessant egoism that places *my* needs or *our* needs above those of our neighbors. His antidote, which we discuss below, is to call readers to a conversion resulting in a transformed way of seeing the world: “Sadly, there is wide-spread indifference to such suffering, which is even now taking place throughout our world. Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded” (Francis, 2015, section 25).

Of particular concern is the issue of water access. Industry, mining, and agriculture have created waste and polluted rivers, lakes, and seas. Further, some actors have tried to treat water as a commodity to be sold on the market. Again, the poor are the primary victims as they are exposed to dysentery and cholera and confront infant mortality due to inadequate hygiene and medical supplies. Francis importantly claims that water is a basic human right, not a commodity.

Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt toward the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to life consistent with their inalienable dignity (Francis, 2015, section 30).

We cannot turn a blind eye to the inequities of water distribution or to the impact polluted water has on animals and biodiversity. “Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see because they have been lost forever” (Francis, 2015, section 33). Our insatiable drive to consume without replacing or reckoning the cost “is actually making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more limited and grey” (Francis, 2015, section 34).

Because everything is interconnected, it is important to see how these crises are ineluctably bound to one another. Any effective solution to the present crisis must, then, address this interconnectedness, which is why Francis advocates an integral ecology:

We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature (Francis, 2015, section 139).

Any response to our ecological crisis must address environmental and social concerns: neither is separable from the other. But the challenge to this totalizing solution is made problematic because we have been seduced into a “tyrannical anthropocentrism” supported by a technocratic paradigm, one that treats the earth merely as a resource, as “raw material,” for our use (Francis, 2015, sections 51, 68, and 115). Echoing Martin Heidegger's notion of technology as the West's predominant way of being, Francis inveighs against an instrumental approach to nature that assumes the earth's resources are raw materials or Heidegger's “standing reserve” open to our exploitative use. The consequences of living in this paradigm are dire, for our use of the environment has amassed a debt later generations will be forced to pay off.

Francis acknowledges how some Judeo-Christian teaching is complicit because its tradition has at times misled adherents into thinking that we have “dominion” over the earth and has thereby “encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by painting him as domineering and destructive by nature” (Francis, 2015, section 67; White, 1967). This incorrect interpretation of Genesis must be rejected. A more appropriate interpretation would insist upon our role as being to “‘till and keep’ the garden of the world,” which means “cultivating, plowing, working, caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving” the earth (Francis, 2015, section 67). Scripture

calls us to care for all living beings: “Clearly the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures” (Francis, 2015, section 68). All living creatures must be treated with dignity not because it is politically expedient to do so but because all of creation *is* a reflection of God's creative will.

In describing our present situation, *Laudato Si'* foregrounds our taken-for-granted technocratic paradigm. We are challenged to look *at* and reflect upon the lens we gaze *through* to perceive how technology “tends to absorb everything into this ironclad logic” and diminishes our freedom and creativity (Francis, 2015, section 108). Beguiled by the false promises of technology, we suffer existentially as much as the environment:

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 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 (Francis, 2015, section 107).

We can so easily be seduced by technology's promise to solve all problems that we become inured to the way the technocratic paradigm warps our vision. As the metaphors of blindness and seeing become central to *Laudato Si'*, Francis offers an antidote by inviting us to behold nature in a radically different way, a point we explore more fully below. What is important here is the diagnosis: We make bad decisions because of a failure to see our interconnectedness with and dependence upon the planet's sub-systems. The cataracts of egoism need to be removed from our eyes so that we might behold again anew our place within, and our responsibilities toward, the created order.

One instance of this blindness may be found in an economic and political milieu oriented solely by profit maximization. Francis captures this profit-idolatry in *Evangelii Gaudium* when he asks, “How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points” (Francis, 2013, section 53)? This callous disregard for other humans finds an echo in his resistance to our “throwaway culture” that “reduces things to rubbish,” such as the way paper is rarely recycled (Francis, 2015, section 22). Ironically, the very technology that has made the world so small and binds us into a global community seems to blind us to what is unfolding before our eyes. Drawing once more upon the ocular metaphor, Francis is sensitive to the visual effects of technological paradigm that has affected even architecture:

Humanity has changed profoundly, and the accumulation of constant novelties exalts a superficiality which pulls us in one direction. It becomes difficult to pause and recover in life. If architecture reflects the spirit of an age, our megastructures and drab apartment blocks express the spirit of globalized technology, where a constant flood of new products coexists with a tedious monotony. Let us refuse to resign ourselves to this, and continue to wonder about the purpose and meaning of everything. Otherwise we would simply legitimate the present situation and need new forms of escapism to help us endure the emptiness (Francis, 2015, section 113).

Francis emphasizes repeatedly the inter-related nature of this crisis. “It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected” (Francis, 2015, section 138). As we are enamored by the “accumulation of constant novelties,” the technocratic paradigm and the market mentality block our awareness of how costs of products are shifted in dysfunctional ways. Manufacturing plant owners create pollution but do not pay for this pollution while those who suffer illnesses pay a terrible toll. Our ignorance (blindness) prevents us from seeing how pollution affects the many and various ecological and anthropological sub-systems.

What other manifestations of our fundamental interconnectedness have been concealed from view? Francis notes how the quality of life in cities is harmed by ecological degradation. Cities are marred by pollution and traffic

congestion. Building more roads and highways further spoils the beauty of the landscape and “the chaos of daily life in cities harms the dignity of daily life” (Francis, 2015, section 153). Living spaces are central to a meaningful life, and the lack of good living conditions can lead to violence:

The extreme poverty experienced in areas lacking harmony, open spaces or potential for integration, can lead to incidents of brutality and to exploitation by criminal organizations. In the unstable neighborhoods of mega-cities, the daily experience of overcrowding and social anonymity can create a sense of uprootedness which spawns antisocial behavior and violence (Francis, 2015, section 149).

So many of these issues affect our daily lives, especially the lack of housing that affects the poor and the middle class, which are not addressed by state institutions (Francis, 2015, section 152). Housing is necessary for living a fulfilling life, and the theme of human dignity is a core part of the tradition of Catholic social teaching: “Having a home has much to do with a sense of personal dignity and the growth of families. This is a major issue for human ecology. In some places, where makeshift shantytowns have sprung up, this will mean developing those neighborhoods rather than razing or displacing them” (Francis, 2015, section 152).

Francis is sensitive to the process by which these crises are addressed. Solutions such as urban planning cannot be imposed from outsiders but must involve the people impacted by each decision. It is essential that “urban planning always take into considerations the views of those who will live in these areas” (Francis, 2015, section 150). Local communities must work toward social solidarity in addressing these crises and forming solutions: “Local communities and social institutions have been undone by economic exploitation. They must be engaged in solutions and interventions cannot be imposed by outside forces, with special care toward indigenous communities” (Francis, 2015, section 146). No piecemeal solution will be sufficient because this is a systemic crisis requiring dialog and a global cooperation to address sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, marine and forest life, drinking water, and so forth. While there are movements and organizations working toward civil society, the wider international community must come together in dialog to forge alliances to make progress in addressing the state of the oceans, marine waste, and the protection of sea life. The ocean is a common good and requires global participation. The process of addressing these issues is itself a concern as the political process has failed. Francis warns that in the current climate “it is the case that some economic sectors exercise more power than states themselves” and calls for rethinking the process of statecraft to create the political will to solve these crises (Francis, 2015, sections 196–197).

The pope insists that we also must consider the way our decisions will impact future generations. Our descendants have rights, and sustainable development should be our first installment in making intergenerational solidarity a reality:

Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us (Francis, 2015, section 159).

A new way of seeing must be nourished in families, in churches, in organizations, and in schools. Education is important, especially for younger people who may be blinded by compulsive consumerism and have come to believe that freedom in the marketplace is the most essential form of freedom. We all must become more aware of the notion of the common good, “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment” (Francis, 2015, section 156).

Let us return to the first question of virtue ethics: *Who am I?* Francis offers a startlingly broad answer. *I* am not a single contextless agent but a member of a broad ecological community that encompassing all forms of sentient and non-sentient beings. Ours is an identity-in-relation not only to other humans but to the whole environment. In a sense, Francis shifts the question because, within an integral ecology, the question is broadened and becomes *Who are we?* The *We* includes all members of the ecological community. By expanding our sense of who we are by weaving ecology and anthropology together, *Laudato Si'* inclines us toward re-thinking the second question of *Who are we called to become?* How, in other words, does the expanded horizon offered by *Laudato Si'* challenge us to reassess what we regard as the *telos* or end of human life?

The Global *Telos*: Striving Toward Flourishing

Crucial to virtue ethics is the belief that the virtues contribute to achieving the end or *telos* of human life, what Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* calls *eudaimonia* or “flourishing.” The second question, *Who ought I become?*, tries to envision the goal of human life. Rather than focusing on discrete acts, this question explores the character and identity of the agent and how well, or poorly, the agent is oriented toward her or his flourishing. Given the way *Laudato Si'* extends our horizon, insisting that we cannot consider ourselves apart from our ecological milieu, it comes as little surprise that at the end of the encyclical Francis shows how his integral ecology sets before us a vision of *who* we might strive to become. He writes,

An adequate understanding of spirituality consists in filling out what we mean by peace, which is much more than the absence of war. Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life. Nature is filled with words of love, but how can we listen to them amid constant noise, interminable and nerve-wracking distractions, or the cult of appearances? (Francis, 2015, section 225)

Francis invites us not simply to change our minds but, far more radically, to re-awaken our “capacity for wonder,” to allow our whole lives to be converted by adopting a set of values consonant with care for the environment. He challenges us to turn away from our throwaway culture marked by a “lighthearted superficiality,” a “mockery of goodness,” a “complacency and a cheerful recklessness” as we recover a sense of harmony with the whole of creation (Francis, 2015, sections 59, 229).

Our self-centered culture, with rampant individualism and demands for instant gratification, must be overcome. We must nurture a deeper relationship with creation and commit ourselves to caring for the earth because we acknowledge ourselves as responsible to future generations. This is why a virtue approach is called for. When we commit to a deeper, caring relationship, we ourselves become transformed. Our definition of “progress” must be revised in light of this call to conversion, for progress records not only technological and economic development but must also include our efforts to make “a better world and an integrally higher quality of life” (Francis, 2015, section 194). *Who* we are called to be cannot be separated from this expansive ecological vision. Contemplation of our *telos* must, consequently, consider our needs as well as the needs of future generations who share a common home:

When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values. Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results. But if these issues are courageously faced, we are led inexorably to ask other pointed questions: What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us? It is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations. We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity.... The issue is one which

dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn (Francis, 2015, section 160).

Francis never loses sight of the unfathomable potential of the human spirit, a remarkable claim given how thoroughly he documents the self-centered blindness of a profit orientation that has turned the planet into an “immense pile of filth.” He reminds us that humans are capable of wonderful things, that we can recognize the destructive cycles blinding and alienating us from our planet (Francis, 2015, sections 225–226). Like his Jesuit confrere Gerard Manley Hopkins, he resolutely holds that “nature is never spent,” that we have not lost our capacity for astonishment, and that we can still be roused into contemplating “the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us” (Francis, 2015, section 225).

Given this vision of cosmic flourishing, Francis cannot but regard a life dedicated to accumulation and consumption as being incomplete. In keeping with virtue ethics’ goal to identify and cultivate those virtues that assist the agent in flourishing, Francis insists we must nurture new habits, lifestyles, practices and traditions attuned to integral ecology. A thoroughgoing ecological conversion begins with the transformation of attitudes, entailing “gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God’s loving gift, and that we are called quietly to imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works” (Francis, 2015, section 220). This changed attitude finds expression in “little daily actions” like wearing warmer clothes in the winter, recycling paper, and generally reducing waste (Francis, 2015, section 211). Francis believes these actions can contribute to a *habitus* or settled disposition of ecological sensitivity. Ecological conversion becomes a part of one’s very character, it *is* who we are and is reflected in what we do: “Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity” (Francis, 2015, section 211).

Central to this new orientation is a deep appreciation of esthetic imagination, the capacity to see and appreciate creation’s beauty, and to behold and admire something rather than simply to treat things as objects for use. Ecological conversion does not require us to live in a different world but to live in the world differently:

More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone, without a spirituality capable of inspiring us, without an “interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes, and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity” (Francis, 2015, section 216).

Read through the lens of virtue ethics, Francis can be heard issuing a call for readers to cultivate practices that reflect and put into practice our spiritual concern for the planet. In this way, he intends ecology to be a concrete way of life.

Consistent with a virtue approach, *Laudato Si’* suggests the sorts of dispositions an ecologically converted subject should possess in order to live in “splendid universal communion” with the rest of creation (Francis, 2015, section 220). In particular, he highlights the virtues of *sobriety* and *humility*, neither of which are held in high esteem in a consumerist market culture. Sobriety is a virtue connoting moderation, similar to the cardinal virtue of temperance. Humility is a virtue associated with the lack of pride and a guard against narcissism. These virtues enable us to live with less and to appreciate small things more conscientiously. “Happiness means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us, and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer” (Francis, 2015, section 223). When we are too attached to accumulation and unable to live with less, we impede our ability to flourish because our insistence on *having* eclipses our call to enriched *being*:

Once we lose our humility, and become enthralled with the possibility of limitless mastery over everything, we inevitably end up harming society and the environment. It is not easy to promote this

kind of healthy humility or happy sobriety when we consider ourselves autonomous, when we exclude God from our lives or replace him with our own ego, and think that our subjective feelings can define what is right and what is wrong (Francis, 2015, section 224).

Here he calls us to slow down, to disengage from our culture of “frenetic activity,” and to “recover a serene harmony with creation” (Francis, 2015, section 225). Practicing this disengagement can, moreover, affect the way we live and interact with others by helping us to be “fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full” (Francis, 2015, section 226).

Rather than focusing on the individual, *Laudato Si'* situates us within a broad web of relationships. *Who* we are to become and *what* flourishing looks like cannot be divorced from our environmental matrix. Francis brings this out when he exhorts us to

marvel at the manifold connections existing among creatures, but also to discover a key to our own fulfilment. The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. ... Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity (Francis, 2015, section 240).

In this culminating vision, we find a vision of the human being quite a distance from the lone agent who stands over-and-against other humans and nature. On the contrary, this depicts the being-in-and-of the world who cannot flourish at the expense of the rest of creation. At the end of *Laudato Si'*, Francis ends not by telling readers *what* to do but by suggesting *who* they may become as ecologically converted agents who understand that their flourishing as individuals is possible insofar as the world is allowed to flourish: “Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope” (Francis, 2015, section 244).

A Thought Experiment: A Trip to the Supermarket

As discussed, virtue ethics is concerned with doing the right deed not as an instance of rule-following but as a result of a virtuous disposition. The virtuous person's action is “right” or “correct” not because she or he adheres to an axiom but because her or his actions reflect the sort of deed done by other virtuous persons. We may appreciate better the vision of virtue implicitly contained in *Laudato Si'* by means of a thought experiment. In what follows, we imagine a trip to the supermarket in order to see how deeply we have become inured to the technocratic paradigm in which we live. For many Westerners, the quotidian activity of going grocery shopping can be used to illuminate the extent to which technology has invaded our lives and, as Francis notes, that it “tends to absorb everything into its ironclad logic” (Francis, 2015, section 108). The goal of this exercise is to provide a negative contrast with what we take to be the positive vision of the pope's ecologically virtuous agent.

Most Westerners purchase food in supermarkets. This has not always been the practice. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the way that people shop has changed drastically. Stores in the past were smaller, and shoppers had to visit separate shops to purchase baked goods, meat, fish, and dairy products; customers developed relationships with their baker, butcher, and grocer. Salespersons assisted customers one at a time and engaged in small-talk; before they were pre-weighed and prepackaged, the clerk would physically prepare and weigh what the customer had selected. Credit was not mediated by banks but by “putting it on my tab,” as close inter-personal relationships between customer and purveyor allowed for such informal transactions. How different the threat of shoplifting: whereas a child pilfering from a multi-national corporation might result in the store manager calling the police, in another era the young shoplifter was under the threat of having the owner call her or his parents.

As stores became larger and packaging became more efficient, shopping became self-service and more impersonal. Advertising signs became more rampant. According to Marc Augé, these are “non-places” and a sign of “supermodernity.” “Places” are spaces that have identities and invite relational exchange, but “non-places” are “spaces without histories or repertoires,” a “fleeting, temporary space of solitary individuality” (Augé, 1995). One of the allures of a Wal-Mart is that whether one is in Phoenix or Philadelphia, the stores are designed in roughly the same way. The accent is on predictability and uniformity, and there are fewer affordances of distinctiveness as found in privately-owned shops.

Now imagine the following scenario in light of Francis's claim that we are embedded in a technological paradigm. A shopper grabs a cart and heads for the produce section. Facing a variety of apples, she or he considers flavor, profile, and cost without ever considering how the nine varieties of apples, six types of mushrooms, and the pineapples and star fruit made their way to the store in the first place. Exasperated at not having fresh watermelon—despite it being February in Cleveland—the shopper settles for strawberries grown in Mexico and imported via refrigerated train cars. Because she has a coupon, the shopper puts more strawberries than she can realistically eat (“It's a deal!”) into the cart and then makes her way to the cereal aisle where myriad boxes vie for attention. The shopper makes a selection, heedless of where the grains come from, and keeps shopping: meat from animals raised in pens, bottles of water that should be recycled but will, likely, end up in a landfill; a commemorative t-shirt at the check-out aisle made in a foreign country. All the while, our shopper assiduously avoids making contact with other shoppers, treating them as obstacles to checking-out and moving on to the next errand. The market's previous function as a social space has been supplanted by the a-social character of the non-place:

Supermarkets, as “non-places” that only exist for the purpose of selling products, feature distinct characteristics and conquer clients' preferences according to the spatial relations they offer. They thus become places with territories marked in shoppers' minds, allowing each shopper to appropriate and identify with the stores where she usually shops. Therefore, changes in the location of products in a store generate irritation and confusion among shoppers. The routes shoppers take inside supermarkets do not seem to be those planned by the stores and vary according to what the shoppers are looking for, and a desire to check prices and promotions, which does not necessarily mean that the products checked will be purchased. ... They pass by the aisle entrances, look down them and only enter if they: see something that previously planned to purchase; perceive a need that was not on the list and is on that aisle; or see products or other stimuli, such as a sale that interest them (Goidanich and Rial, 2012).

No longer an agora, the non-place supermarket offers us a vivid instance of what it is like to live within the technocratic paradigm decried by Francis. Instead of a “friend and family discount,” there are nation-wide coupons, piped-in music is purchased and played according to corporate policy, and the personal has been replaced with a cloak of anonymity. Consider that today's shoppers rarely engage in exchanges with salespersons or with other customers. Time is seen as a functional resource and stores are designed for expediency. Shoppers try to maximize this temporal resource and resent having to “spend” too much time in the shop and, as online ordering even of groceries becomes more popular, there is an increasingly diminished need to visit brick-and-mortar stores. The ease and convenience of tech-saturated commerce makes it more and more likely that we will interact with fewer and fewer persons.

In contrast to supermarkets, consider farmers' markets and how these experiences are character-forming in a more virtuous direction. Ion Bogdan Vasi claims that more people are shopping at farmers' markets and forming co-ops so that they can know more about the origin of their food. They are “locavores” who eat locally grown produces and meat that is raised in healthy environments. He claims that they are a growing group of Americans who are committed to a healthy lifestyle, sustaining the environment, civic participation, and building

relationships with growers and producers. They are motivated by a sense of community and sharing their passion for healthy food and sustainability (Vasi, et. al. 2015). Similarly, Bill McKibben writes,

Across the country communities have begun to transform themselves. ... Often farmers' market is the catalyst—not just because people find that they like local produce, but because they actually *meet each other* (italics in original). ... A team of sociologists recently followed shoppers around supermarkets and then farmers' markets. You know the drill at the Stop'n'Shop: you come in the automatic door, fall into a light fluorescent trance, visit the stations or cross around the perimeter of the store, exit after a discussion of credit or debt, paper or plastic. But that's not what happens at farmer's markets. On average, the sociologists found, people were having ten times as many conversations per visit. They were starting to rebuild the withered network that we call community (McKibben, 2011).

Furthermore, in a recent ethnography of farmers' markets, Benjamin Garner found that farmers make eye contact with customers, smile often, and had humorous exchanges with customers. In general, Garner observed that farmers were attentive and responsive to customers' questions, remembered customers' names, and left the barrier of the booth to come in closer contact. Customers in turn learn more about the growth of products and trust farmers' expertise and honesty (Garner, 2014).

The farmers' market offers a counter-example to the supermarket. Where the latter promotes commodification and consumption, the former creates conditions in which one learns to approach food with greater attention and deliberation. From a standpoint of virtue ethics, we can appreciate how these two ways of shopping can contribute to, or derogate from, character formation. Shopping at farmers' markets requires one to cultivate tact, trust, and relationship-building skills. One can develop an appreciation for *who* provides the food, *where* it comes from, and *how* it impacts those who dedicate themselves to producing it. Shopping in a supermarket, an increasingly anonymous and isolated affair, provides little to no opportunity for such practices. Thus framed, the ordinary act of shopping can be transformed into an opportunity to develop and deepen one's ecological consciousness as one fosters a virtuous *habitus* as an informed and conscientious shopper.

Moral Exemplars: Intimations of New Practices and New Traditions

The third question of virtue ethics, *How do I achieve this end?*, requires we look not for an abstract rule but for practitioners of virtue. In *Laudato Si'*, the pope adduces St. Francis of Assisi to help us “see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and takes us to the heart of what it is to be human” (Francis, 2015, section 11). We may, consequently, take St. Francis as an exemplar or moral model of the sort of person we might emulate as we cultivate an ecologically informed virtuous life. Recalling Zagzebski's definition of virtue, in St. Francis we discern a “deep and acquired excellence” that reflects a “characteristic motivation” to bring about a “desired end” with reasonable assurance of success.

We look to moral exemplars because we see in their lives credible and compelling models of who one might become. They become “living rules” or the standards against which we can measure our own lives and development. But given the expanded horizon offered by *Laudato Si'*, one that emphasizes the interrelationship between individuals and various ecological sub-systems, it is worth looking not at individual exemplars but at organizational initiatives that seem to reflect well the integrative framework Pope Francis envisions. We propose four organizational movements that represent various sectors of civil society to offer a sense of how institutions, too, can be called into a virtuous form of existence. These exemplar initiatives address the third part of the tripartite nature of virtue ethics, a sampling of nascent practices and movements that are seeking to alter our relationship to creation along the lines that the pope envisions. In fact, Francis claims that the important work will be done within and by organizations and social movements: “Society is...enriched by a countless array of organizations which work to promote the common good and to defend the environment, whether natural or

urban” (Francis, 2015, section 231). Therefore the next section focus on advances emerging in organizations and social movements.

The Role of Business in Addressing Global Problems: Business as an Agent of World Benefit

Business as an Agent of World Benefit (BAWB) is a center at Case Western Reserve University and emphasizes the radical interdependence around the world at the root of many global challenges and transnational issues that cross conventional borders. The movement claims that no global challenge can be addressed without working in and through organizations. BAWB is a world inquiry project and has involved a vast movement to conduct interviews with business leaders who have helped create innovative solutions for human betterment around the planet. Over 3,000 stories have been collected (AIM2Flourish, 2019). BAWB is committed to the collection of stories and experiences that generate the hope that business can be a positive force and change the way we live, stories and experiences about the potential to eliminate extreme poverty, the creation of dignified work, and the use of business as an agent for furthering eco-innovation and as a force for peace in extreme-conflict zones. BAWB has been devoted to collecting such stories of breakthroughs, entrepreneurial value-creation, progress in well-being, efforts to create bridges rather than walls, and efforts to connect strengths, resources, and talents through the force of the marketplace.

An example of an exemplar story from BAWB's collection involved an Israeli business leader, Stef Wertheimer, and his creation of Tefen, a “capitalist kibbutz,” which became an industrial park that has spawned 300 businesses, world-class schools, hospitals, museums, and community meetings spaces that bring Arab and Jewish people together, working and living in collaboration. Tefen became an island of peace and shared prosperity, a place of equality between different religious and ethnic groups, men and women in the midst of seemingly intractable conflict. As the businesses have thrived, peace and security have increased as well. BAWB's project includes stories of Unilever's Project Shakti, the microenterprise for women in Indian villages. Stories such as this celebrate the role of business enterprise in increasing life expectancy, reducing poverty, and providing resources for education, stories of shared value creation, empowerment and innovation, vision and entrepreneurship, dignified work, and human development.

“The Role of the Financial Industry and the Capitalist Mindset: The Regenerative Economy”

The Capital Institute, led by John Fullerton, a former Managing Director for Morgan Stanley, proposes radically reframing the financial system that drives capitalism (Capitalist Institute, 2019). The traditional capitalist paradigm extolls exponential growth but also takes for granted that this growth will require concomitant consumption of earth's natural resources. The goal in the current capitalist system has been to invest money in order to grow more money, optimizing growth of financial capital at the expense of natural capital and social capital. However, the growth of the financial system will not support the growth of humanity or the protection of the planet's eco-system. This is not a system that will be easy to change since the people in the financial industry are the most richly rewarded. Called the regenerative economy, this movement feels that the entire financial system must be refocused and that the reductionist mindset that drives it must be replaced with a systemic, holistic approach. It is founded on several principles, a few of which are summarized below.

Echoing Aldo Leopold, this movement claims humanity must be in *right relationship* with the biosphere in which it is embedded. This movement practices holistic management practices that enhance biodiversity. They advocate an approach to wealth that appreciates “wealth” encompasses more than monetary holdings. Their holistic understanding of wealth takes account of social, cultural, and experiential resources and examines how wealth's resources may be used to promote the well-being of the whole. Organizations such as Community

Sourced Capital have created a zero-interest lending mechanism that supports whole communities to finance businesses that support local agriculture. They support the Evergreen Cooperatives in the inner city of Cleveland that taps into the communities' internal assets. They advocate innovative and responsive organizations such as the Bendigo Community Bank Model in Australia, a grassroots group that created a cooperative franchise model of banking that is committed to empowering communities in which each branch is based. The regenerative business focuses on the whole rather than parts, attends to potentials of entities rather than their problems, and appreciates that every system is nested in larger ecosystems. With these principles in mind, economic systems can regenerate capital assets and goods and services while honoring community and place, a value that Francis explicitly espouses.

Rethinking the Meaning of "Sustainability": The Drawdown Movement

The Drawdown movement led by Paul Hawken urges us to think beyond sustainability and adopt a more generative vocabulary. This movement suggests that we move beyond the paradigm of "extract value" to challenge us to think about ways that efforts can be regenerative. "Drawdown" refers to the condition in which the concentration of atmospheric greenhouse gases declines on an annual basis. The movement's research program is developing models, assessments, and policy recommendations that project the impacts of these solutions over the next thirty years.

One core project attempts to reverse climate change through better refrigerant gas management, a priority in renewable energy generation. Hawken's group is devoted to documenting breakthroughs in the scientific community and linking them so that knowledge can spread and people become aware of experiments and advances in various fields. They document breakthroughs such as Vortext processing technology that uses whirlpools to process water so that water has a higher heat transfer capacity. Thus, cooling efficiency is improved and mineral rich water is cooled so that lime particles do not form, and cooling towers require less water and are more efficient. This requires, in turn, fewer chemicals in cooling towers and the reduction in pumped water frees water up for agriculture and other uses.

In an effort to bridge the climate communication gap, they are careful of the words they use and avoid jargon. They spell out carbon dioxide rather than using the abbreviation, and they write "methane" instead of "CH₄." Tactically, they are aware of the role words can play in attaining their goal. For instance, in 2016 the White House used the word "decarbonization," a term unlikely to register in the imagination of most hearers. But, when translated, the initiative to "decarbonize" captures an issue many are concerned with: replacing fossil fuel energy with clean, renewable resources (Hawken, 2017). Because much is lost in translation, this program strives for conceptual clarity and to communicate its efforts to a wide audience. As a case in point, consider the paradoxical phrase "negative emissions." One can get so tripped up on its lack of coherence: "This term has no meaning in any language. Imagine a negative house, or a negative tree. The absence of something is nothing. The phrase refers to sequestering or drawing down carbon from the atmosphere. We call that sequestration. It is carbon positive, not negative" (Hawken, 2017). Ultimately, their goal is to present climate science and solutions in language that is accessible and compelling to the broadest audience, from ninth graders to pipe fitters, from graduate students to farmers (Hawken, 2017). They also avoid military metaphors, implicit in terms such as "combating" or "battling" global warming as if climate change is an enemy. The term "drawdown" is deliberate because "the only goal that makes sense for humanity is to reverse global warming, and if parents, scientists, young people, leaders, and we citizens do not name the goal, there is little chance it will be achieved" (Hawken, 2017).

Project Drawdown proposes solutions that account for each's problem's history, the science and research addressing the problem, and current information regarding solutions. Each solution is documented with how many gigatons of greenhouse gases are avoided or removed, the incremental cost of implementing the solution,

and the net cost or savings. Peer reviewed science provides inputs. Solutions are ranked based on the total amount of greenhouse gases that are avoided or removed. For example, they demonstrate that wind and solar energy now is competitive with coal, gas, and oil. The cost of renewable sources continues to fall, and oil gas and coal are more difficult and expensive to extract, which means that carbon-based fuels rise in cost. Some countries (including Canada, Finland) ban coal. They conclude, “We are...squarely in the middle of the greatest energy transition in history. The era of fossil fuels is over, and the only question now is when the new era will be fully upon us. Economics makes its arrival inevitable: clean energy is less expensive” (Hawken, 2017).

Wind has been a source of energy for millennia and presents the next important breakthrough. They document a project in Liverpool, England in which 32 wind turbines were installed off the coast by Lego, the toy maker. The turbines generate 8 megawatts of electricity, and the rotation of a single blade generates one house's energy consumption for the day. When completed, the turbines will generate enough power to supply all 466,000 inhabitants of Liverpool. As of 2017, four percent of the world's energy is supplied by wind turbines, and the numbers are increasing. The US can tap into this energy resource as the wind energy of three states—Kansas, North Dakota, and Texas—would generate enough electricity to meet the entire nation's demands.

“Organizational Innovations: Embedded Sustainability”

The sustainability movement has already taken hold in many businesses. According to Chris Laszlo and Nahya Zhexembayeva, the business case for sustainability no longer needs to be made (Laszlo and Zhexembayeva, 2011). Organizations now need to integrate and embed sustainability into their core business with no tradeoffs for customers or investors. Sustainability itself can now create business value. In an effort to stop the reliance on fossil fuels, electric cars are becoming more available. Companies like Nissan, GM, Toyota, and BMW are investing billions in electrics, and these cars have won numerous awards. Laszlo claims that this is an era of disruptive innovations in sustainability that goes beyond incremental improvements. Moving from paper to recyclable paper was once celebrated. But they point out, we have gone far beyond that. India once had e-readers that sold for \$35. They are now available for \$15. Architects are creating buildings with better insulation to reduce energy loss. Where once the goal was to create “zero energy” buildings, we are now creating buildings that have a positive energy balance. 50% of water in most buildings was wasted. Now that it is possible to turn that waste water into potable water, more organizations are adapting this technology. Computers can be made with cardboard instead of plastic. Rather than selling computers, some firms are selling cloud computing so that there is less reliance on hardware or software. This is what it means to embed sustainability in the strategic intent of the firm.

Zhexembayeva (2014) argues that we have been living in a throwaway economy built on a linear model in which we extract resources, process them, use them, and then trash them. We are using up the planet's resources, and there are fewer places to throw away used materials such as paper plates and plastic utensils. As commodity prices fall, the cost of raw materials drops so that this trend will continue if unchecked. She proposes several mind-shifts that are needed, including thinking of the economy as circular rather than linear. She cites examples in the private sector moving in this direction. Microsoft is exploring ways to turn data servers into residential furnaces, thus saving on the cooling of data centers and providing utility to homes. Flow2 is profitable in selling their temporary overcapacity—underutilized machines, skills, and real estate. Puma is moving from shoe boxes to “clever little bags,” a form of packaging that reduces paper by 65% and carbon emissions by 10 tons per year. In Peru, a company has found a way to use their billboards to convert air into drinkable water. And a company in Netherlands collects wasteful party confetti and uses it as a fertilizer to support the growth of wildflowers.

As these and other innovations become part of the organizations' core strategy, Francis's agenda advances. Francis writes, “Society is...enriched by a countless array of organizations which work to promote the common good and to defend the environment, whether natural or urban” (Francis, 2015, section 231). In these

organizational exemplars, we find not only what each one of us can do but also, and perhaps more importantly, a vision of who each of us is being called to become as agents inspired and formed by planetary virtues.

Conclusion

In the first part of this paper, we summarized Francis's assessment of the current state. In the second part, we discussed his teleological vision for what humans are capable of creating. In the third part, we touched on a few practices, movements, activities, and interventions that have already begun to curb the crisis, thus supporting Francis's argument that humans are capable of wondrous deeds. We suggested how exemplary leaders, animated by a shared mission or charter, could operationalize these practices in an ecologically and corporately responsible way.

In order to address these global problems that have created a “pile of filth” and deprived the poor, we must go beyond piecemeal interventions and work systemically. This is not just a technological problem. This means coming to terms with our orientation to nature, slowing down and nurturing a serene gaze. If the above movements take hold, we will change our orientation to the planet in a way that recursively changes us as well. Francis's document raises questions about our deeper purpose in the world, what the earth needs, and what future generations need in order to flourish. Francis reminds us that decisions which may seem purely instrumental are in reality decisions about the kind of society we want to build, and these decisions belie a deeper spiritual orientation that we must reckon with.

The field of OD has been informed by a set of humanistic values and generative forms of practice. It is time that we acknowledge the task of OD as a profession needs a more expansive and radical new ethic appropriate to the age of sustainability. We have argued here that the language of virtue ethics and the integral ecological vision of Pope Francis goes beyond the traditional argument for sustainability and re-construes the entire moral life. This is a moment in which the field of OD must help organizations embrace environmental and social ethics as part of their core purpose, a way of thinking that goes beyond accounting and accountability.

Many have made the argument for furthering Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) because it is good business practice, that it is good for business and for society (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). From this perspective sustainability is good business. Terms like “shared value” and “triple bottom line” conceive of sustainability in this way (Bansal, 2005, Elkington, 1998, Hart and Milstein, 2003). Following the logic of virtue ethics, simply making the business case for programs such as CSR by citing market mechanisms does not go far enough in appreciating the dynamics of human flourishing. This paper, building on LS, goes beyond this argument to claim that attending to the flourishing of the natural world is an intrinsic good in its own right, one that enhances the sense of well-being and flourishing of all. We must move beyond a focus on companies that begrudgingly comply with regulations and highlight the need for an integral vision that highlights more intrinsic drivers and a more expansive view of moral action. We could begin by helping organizational leaders to go beyond a way of thinking that addresses algorithmic solutions to problems like landfills and incineration and uncovers deeper assumptions and mindsets. (Senge et al., 2006). What's needed is a wider moral vision, one grounded in virtue ethics, that frames how all of these elements are integrally related. Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* begins to articulate such a moral vision.

An OD practice informed by virtue ethics asks the questions “who are we to become?” and “what is our deeper purpose.” In many ways this is not foreign to the field, as OD has often been associated with appreciating human potential. Taking Francis seriously, OD would help individuals and organizations experience a conversion, would help people to slow down from frenetic activity and to adopt a radically new way of seeing. Francis' vision calls us to be more attuned to the pervasiveness of the technocratic paradigm, the corruptive blindness that is focused on short term results and hides the cost to future generations, the drive to consume without attending

to the repercussions, the many ways that technology conditions lifestyle and shapes social possibilities, the throwaway culture that is devoted to constant creation of new products, the ways that the velocity of organizational life is a kind of escapism from deeper meaning.

Church et al. (2018) found the top five values in OD practice: increasing effectiveness and efficiency, enhancing productivity, empowering employees to act; creating openness in communication, promoting organizational participation. In 2001 Yoon et al. (2021) conducted a study of practitioners and researchers and using a Delphi method surfaced these OD values: awareness of self and system; continuous learning and innovation; integrity; courageous leadership; trust and respect; diversity; collaborative engagement; strategic practicality; client growth and development. The current paper suggests that the field needs to rethink its orientation to core values and expand beyond traditional humanistic values. Approaching organizational change, including CSR, through the framework of virtue ethics and *Laudato Si* would suggest expanding values to include esthetic awareness, contemplative practice, sobriety and humility and a commitment to see the natural world as an intrinsic good.

Contemplative gaze upon the beauty of nature is related to what Iris Murdoch called “negative effort,” that is a willful, loving attention to what is “other” that renders one vulnerable and open to transformation. Murdoch calls this transformation “unselfing,” a process of becoming increasingly open to the light of the Good. She offers a vignette:

I am looking outside my window in an anxious and resentful frame of mind, oblivious of my surroundings, brooding perhaps on some damage done to my prestige. Then suddenly I observe a hovering kestrel. In a moment everything is altered. The brooding self with its hurt vanity has disappeared. There is nothing now but the kestrel. And when I return to thinking of the other matter it seems less important. (Murdoch, 1999, p. 369).

Being attuned to the fullness of the kestrel disrupts egoistic absorption, transforms the unselfed observer to become open to the inbreaking of the other and changes the observer's entire comportment. It breaks through everyday feelings of fear, resentment, envy; it “breaks the spell of this ego-driven oblivion.” Murdoch concludes, “this is something which we may also do deliberately: give attention to nature in order to clear our minds of selfish care” (Murdoch, 1999, p. 369).

On our reading, *Laudato Si* proposes, quite literally, a radically *visionary* ontology: by noticing the transcendent beauty of nature one can be transformed. As Iris Murdoch pithily states it, “Where virtue is concerned we often apprehend more than we clearly understand and grow by looking” (Murdoch, 1999, p. 369). As our awareness of the current ecological crisis deepens, individual and corporate practices of attending to the natural world in a deliberately contemplative mode may prove a means of organizational growth. Explicitly foregrounding *how* they view their relationship to the ecological order would enable organizations to more clearly articulate their vision of flourishing. Nature's beauty is not decorative or ornamental but is, instead essential and challenges us to participate more committedly within the created realm. By adopting the language of contemplation and encouraging practices of it, organizations can play a key role in shifting the way we comport ourselves within our “common home.” Pope Francis addresses *Laudato Si* to “every person living on this planet” (Francis, 2015, section 3), even though he admits that his Catholic, Christian, faith is not universally shared. Nevertheless, in recognizing the threats to our planet and its citizens, he calls readers to a conversion of heart that replaces the “I” of exploitative egoism with a more capacious understanding of *We* as global citizens sharing one home.

This implies designing OD interventions that help people open to wonderment and awe, to experience the unfolding beauty of the natural world. Perhaps this would involve contemplative practices such as meditation

and mindfulness. Certainly it would involve alternatives to rational, analytic ways of knowing. This would favor esthetic sensibilities and embodied ways of knowing that heighten sensory awareness, empathy and intuition that can awaken one to the immediacy of vivid experience. OD professionals can help organizational members disrupt speed and overactivity, to slow down, to ponder, to be receptive to beauty. This requires a contemplative gaze in order to be receptive to the unfolding beauty of the natural world. Francis' vision implies that this kind of deep immersion in the natural world enhances peoples' capacity for wonder and leads to an inner sense of peace. Given this approach, the traditional tradeoff between behavioral science and humanistic values seems irrelevant.

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