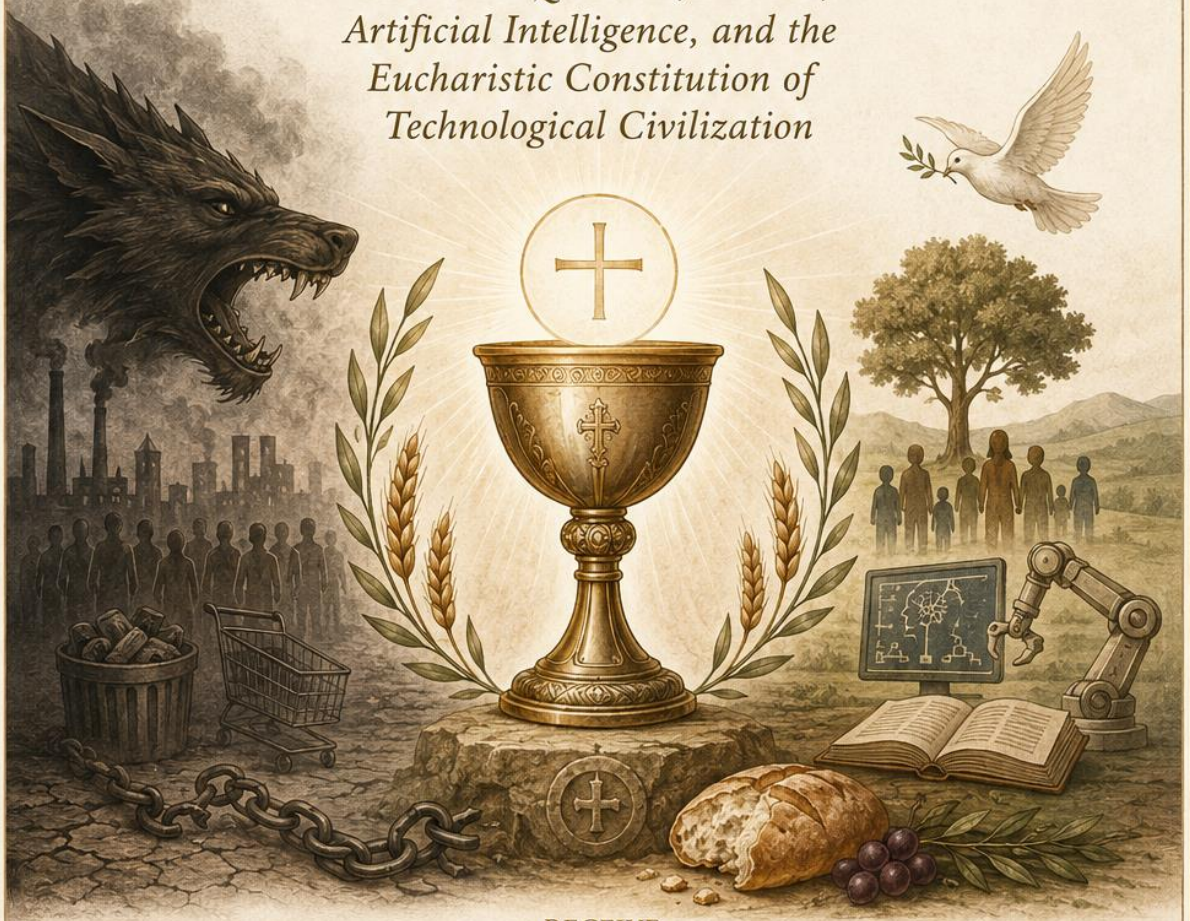
FROM CONSUMPTION TO COMMUNION

The Grail Question, Moloch, Artificial Intelligence, and the Eucharistic Constitution of Technological Civilization



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Dr. Bichara Sahely

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The Grail Question, Moloch, Artificial Intelligence, and the Eucharistic Constitution of Technological Civilization

Expanded Academic White Paper

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Life-Knowledge Commons

28 June 2026

"The future will not become humane through intelligence alone. It will become humane only where intelligence is governed by truth, power is converted into service, abundance becomes communion, and no life is sacrificed to preserve the machine."

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Artificial-Intelligence Transparency Statement

This academic white paper was developed through an extended human–AI research and writing process directed by Dr. Bichara Sahely. Generative artificial intelligence assisted with conceptual synthesis, structural organization, drafting, citation mapping, editorial revision, and the development of figures and diagnostic frameworks.

The initiating questions, life-coherent framework, theological orientation, interpretive judgments, selection of sources, substantive revisions, and final responsibility for the work remain with the author. AI-generated claims and references were subjected to human review and source verification. The use of artificial intelligence in this project is itself governed by the central criterion developed in the paper:

Does this use of technology protect, restore, or enlarge the capacities of living persons and the systems that sustain them?

Abstract

Artificial intelligence is commonly evaluated through capability, safety, alignment, productivity, and economic competitiveness. These approaches are necessary but incomplete because they do not adequately address the deeper question of technological service: what purposes artificial intelligence serves, what forms of life it reproduces, whose capacities it enlarges or diminishes, and which persons or ecosystems bear its hidden costs.

Beginning with Jonathan Pageau's symbolic interpretation of the Grail and lance as the two limit-images of technological power, this paper examines artificial intelligence as both gathered abundance and projected force. The Grail symbolizes technologies that receive, preserve, synthesize, and distribute material or cognitive provision. The lance symbolizes technologies that classify, penetrate, protect, compel, target, and destroy. Neither power is self-interpreting. Their ethical significance depends upon the institutional, economic, political, ecological, and spiritual order they serve.

The paper develops the figures of Moloch and Mammon as names for two connected civilizational pathologies. Moloch describes competitive systems in which actors sacrifice life-goods because unilateral restraint appears dangerous. Mammon describes accumulated value elevated from a means of life into a governing end. Together, these forces can convert artificial intelligence from assistance into enclosure by capturing socially produced knowledge, concentrating technological power, substituting external systems for human capacities, and returning those capacities to society as dependency.

In response, the paper proposes the Eucharist as the Christian anti-Moloch pattern. Moloch sacrifices life so that power may continue; in the Eucharist, divine power gives itself so that the world may live. This reversal is translated into a proposed Eucharistic constitution of technological civilization grounded in life-serving purpose, non-sacrifice of vulnerable persons, preservation of responsible agency, truthful mediation, just distribution, ecological reciprocity, accountable limits, subsidiarity, solidarity, responsibility proportional to power, repair, and protection of the civil and cognitive commons.

The civil commons is presented as the principal institutional form through which technological abundance can be returned to the body as shared capacity. The paper concludes that the fundamental problem of artificial intelligence is not intelligence alone but allegiance. The decisive question beneath the machine is therefore:

Whom do we serve?

Keywords

Artificial intelligence; Eucharist; Moloch; Mammon; Grail; technology; civil commons; life-coherence; technological enclosure; cognitive offloading; human agency; artificial-intelligence governance; Catholic social thought; Orthodox symbolism; Eucharistic civilization; technological constitution; public-interest AI; human formation; institutional autopoietization; common good.

Executive Summary

The Central Problem

Artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming part of the infrastructure through which societies remember, communicate, learn, work, govern, diagnose, classify, persuade, and exercise force. The central question is not only whether AI systems are intelligent, accurate, safe, or economically productive. It is what they serve.

A system can be technically aligned with its operator while serving an unjust institution. It can provide useful answers while weakening the capacities required to verify them. It can generate abundance while concentrating ownership. It can reduce labour while transferring the benefits upward and insecurity downward. It can widen access while making refusal increasingly impossible. The deepest alignment problem is therefore a problem of civilizational allegiance.

The Grail and the Lance

Drawing upon Jonathan Pageau's 2026 address, the paper uses the Grail and lance to represent two broad directions of technological power. The Grail gathers inward. It receives, contains, preserves, transforms, and provides. It represents technologies of knowledge, medicine, infrastructure, memory, communication, and abundance. The lance projects outward. It penetrates, protects, classifies, compels, targets, and destroys. It represents technologies of surveillance, administration, persuasion, military force, prediction, and social control.

Artificial intelligence combines both powers. It may serve as Grail for some persons and lance against others. The moral problem is not whether civilization possesses either power. It is whether provision and force remain governed by a life-serving centre.

The Wounded Centre and the Wasteland

In Pageau's symbolic synthesis, Balin seizes a sacred lance without understanding its proper service, wounds the Grail King, and produces a wasteland. The story reveals a civilizational pattern: when power becomes detached from sacred or life-serving purpose, it wounds the governing centre and spreads infertility through the surrounding field.

A technologically advanced civilization may become a wasteland through ecological depletion, cognitive dependency, institutional distrust, labour insecurity, symbolic confusion, weakened human judgment, and loss of common purpose. Technological success can coexist with civilizational failure.

The Two Metabolisms

The paper distinguishes two civilizational metabolisms.

Predatory metabolism: take, control, consume, discard, accumulate, defend. This metabolism converts persons, labour, attention, knowledge, ecosystems, and future possibilities into inputs for private or institutional expansion.

Eucharistic metabolism: receive, bless, break open, share, abide, become gift. This metabolism recognizes life as received through ecological, social, historical, and divine gifts. It orders abundance toward nourishment and power toward service.

Artificial intelligence can function within either metabolism.

Moloch and Mammon

Moloch names a competitive order in which actors sacrifice goods they value because each fears the consequences of restraint while others continue. The individual actor may not desire the collective result. Yet competition produces acceleration, externalized costs, and sacrifice.

Mammon names accumulated value elevated into a governing end. Together, Moloch and Mammon generate a self-reinforcing circuit:

accumulation → competitive advantage → acceleration → externalized harm → weakened life → insecurity → increased demand for accumulation and control

AI development can become Molochian where no actor believes it can safely slow down. It becomes Mammonian where collective human knowledge is enclosed within concentrated infrastructure and returned to society as dependency.

The Enclosure of Human Capacity

Human beings have always externalized capacity through writing, tools, institutions, libraries, and machines. Externalization is not itself harmful. Enclosure occurs when a human or social capacity is captured through its outward traces, concentrated within external infrastructure, controlled by actors distinct from its contributors, used to substitute for the practices that produced it, and returned as a service upon which users become dependent.

This risk applies to memory, writing, judgment, clinical reasoning, artistic production, professional skill, public knowledge, and interpersonal responsiveness. A tool extends agency when it returns the user more capable. It encloses agency when the user or institution becomes increasingly unable to proceed without it.

Human Formation

Pageau's practical response is to preserve practices through which human beings become fully human: prayer, worship, poetry, old stories, music, dance, sport, craft, gardening, family, community, virtue, truth, and love. These practices form the attention, memory, embodiment, restraint, symbolic depth, courage, and responsibility required for technological freedom.

The goal is not to outperform machines at machine-like functions. It is to form persons capable of receiving power without worshipping it.

Why Formation Is Not Enough

Personal formation remains structurally insufficient where institutions punish restraint, make technology compulsory, concentrate ownership, remove alternatives, transfer risk downward, and define success through accumulation or competitive advantage. The choice between changing persons and changing systems is false. Persons form institutions, and institutions form persons. A life-coherent response requires both personal conversion and structural conversion.

The Eucharist as the Anti-Moloch Pattern

The paper's central theological proposal is:

Moloch sacrifices life so that power may continue. In the Eucharist, divine power gives itself so that the world may live.

Moloch preserves the centre by consuming the margins. The Eucharistic centre gives itself for the body. Moloch imposes sacrifice downward. Christ freely gives himself. Moloch conceals the victim behind necessity. The Eucharist keeps the wounded and risen body present. This reversal does not sanctify the forced suffering of vulnerable persons. It places greater obligation upon those with greater power.

The Eucharistic Constitution of Technology

The paper proposes a constitutional framework based upon twelve principles:

1. Life-grounded purpose.
2. Non-sacrifice of vulnerable persons and ecosystems.
3. Preservation of responsible human agency.
4. Truthful mediation.
5. Just distribution of abundance.
6. Ecological reciprocity.
7. Accountable limits.
8. Subsidiarity and polycentric governance.
9. Solidarity.
10. Responsibility proportional to power.
11. Repair and restorative accountability.
12. Protection of the civil and cognitive commons.

The foundational constitutional affirmation is:

Technology exists to protect, restore, and enlarge the capacities of living persons, communities, and the ecological systems that sustain them. Living beings do not exist as disposable inputs into technological expansion.

The Civil Commons

The civil commons provides the institutional form through which these principles may become materially real. Civil commons secure shared access to life-goods such as education, healthcare, water, sanitation, public knowledge, libraries, environmental protection, and essential digital infrastructure.

Civil-commons AI may include public-interest models, regional computing systems, community-governed language resources, health and educational tools under public accountability, environmental-monitoring systems, data trusts, and interoperable digital infrastructure. The civil commons does not imply unregulated access or the abolition of private enterprise. It means that selected foundational goods are governed through stewardship, rights, participation, and common provision rather than complete enclosure.

The Church

The Church is the first sign of the proposed Eucharistic order because it celebrates the Eucharist. It is also the first institution that must submit to its judgment. The Church must ask whom its authority, wealth, institutions, records, schools, hospitals, media, technologies, and silence actually serve.

Its use of AI must preserve pastoral responsibility, truthful authorship, sacramental embodiment, human encounter, worker dignity, safeguarding, and protection of vulnerable persons. The Church cannot credibly call technological civilization from consumption to communion while organizing its own institutional life according to Moloch or Mammon.

Final Conclusion

The defining question of artificial intelligence is not whether the machine will become human. It is whether humanity will become more fully human or reorganize itself around the requirements of the machine.

The future will not become humane through intelligence alone. It will become humane only when intelligence is governed by truth, power is converted into service, abundance becomes communion, the commons is protected, and no living body is sacrificed to preserve technological expansion.

The question beneath the machine remains:

Whom do we serve?

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Attribution and Methodological Note

Source of the Initiating Argument

This white paper began in response to Jonathan Pageau's 2026 address to the Alliance for Responsible Citizenship concerning artificial intelligence, the Grail, the lance, Moloch, technological servitude, and the question of becoming fully human.

Pageau's address provides the manuscript's initiating symbolic architecture: the Grail as gathered provision; the lance as projected technological force; the Dolorous Stroke; the wounded king; the wasteland; the Moloch trap; the risk that human beings become servants of their tools; the importance of prayer, memory, culture, family, and community; and the questions "Whom does the Grail serve?" and "Whom do I serve?"

Interpretive Synthesis

The manuscript places Pageau's symbolic analysis into dialogue with Catholic Eucharistic theology, Orthodox symbolic thought, John McMurtry's life-value philosophy and civil commons, Humberto Maturana's accounts of autopoiesis, languaging, and the biology of love, René Girard's critique of sacrificial violence, Elinor Ostrom's work on commons governance, systems theory, cognitive science, labour analysis, artificial-intelligence governance, and Catholic social teaching.

This synthesis should not be attributed wholly to any one source.

Constructive Contributions of This Paper

The following formulations are original or substantially developed within the present manuscript: the Eucharist as the anti-Moloch pattern; the distinction between the predatory and Eucharistic technological metabolisms; the Moloch–Mammon circuit; institutional autopoietization; the capacity-substitution threshold; cognitive enclosure; the right to cognitive non-dependency; the right to meaningful human encounter; the Human Formation Covenant; capacity audits; the life-capacity balance sheet; the Eucharistic Technology Test; the Eucharistic constitution of technological civilization; civil-commons AI; the Civil-Commons Charter for AI; and the Eucharistic Technology Charter for Church institutions.

These proposals are offered as frameworks for scholarly evaluation, institutional experimentation, and public deliberation rather than as completed systems of regulation or settled doctrines of the Church.

Theological Status

The paper is an interdisciplinary academic and constructive theological white paper. It does not claim magisterial authority. Its Eucharistic interpretation is developed within a Catholic theological horizon while drawing respectfully upon Orthodox symbolic thought. Differences between the Catholic and Orthodox traditions are not presumed to have been resolved through this synthesis.

The public institutional implications are translated into arguments concerning dignity, agency, justice, truth, ecology, participation, rights, and common provision so that they may be examined within plural societies.

Literary Clarification

The manuscript distinguishes Pageau's symbolic synthesis from strict literary reconstruction. The Balin and Dolorous Stroke narrative is associated especially with Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. The wounded Fisher King and the knight's failure to ask the healing question appear in related but distinct Grail traditions, including Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval* and its continuations.

The precise question "Whom does the Grail serve?" functions in Pageau's address as a concentrated symbolic formulation. It should not be represented as a uniform verbatim question across all medieval Grail literature.

Use of "Moloch"

The historical identity and cultic meaning of Molech remain debated. The manuscript uses **Moloch** primarily as a symbolic and analytical name for an order of organized competitive sacrifice. It does not depend upon a definitive historical reconstruction of ancient worship.

1. Introduction: The Question Beneath the Machine

1.1 The Arrival of a Civilizational Power

Artificial intelligence is commonly discussed as a collection of tools: systems for generating text and images, interpreting data, identifying patterns, assisting decisions, automating work, and coordinating information. This description is correct but incomplete. AI is becoming a civilizational power because it increasingly mediates the activities through which societies perceive, remember, communicate, classify, imagine, decide, and act.

Its importance does not depend upon establishing that machines think, understand, or possess consciousness in the same manner as human persons. Current AI systems can reproduce or exceed particular outputs associated with human intelligence without thereby possessing the embodied, relational, moral, and spiritual unity characteristic of human intelligence (Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith & Dicastery for Culture and Education, 2025, paras. 10, 30–34).

The more immediate civilizational issue is relational. What happens when institutions begin to organize education, employment, healthcare, administration, communication, warfare, and public knowledge around systems capable of producing apparently intelligent outputs at extraordinary scale? What happens when individuals become dependent upon systems whose purposes, ownership, material requirements, and decision structures they do not govern? What happens when the accumulated language, art, science, memory, and practical intelligence of humanity are gathered into privately or politically controlled infrastructures and returned to the human community as services?

The significance of AI lies not only in what the machine may become. It lies in the world being reorganized around its capacities.

1.2 The Limits of Technical Alignment

Much of contemporary AI ethics is framed as a problem of alignment. How can an artificial system be made to act consistently with human intentions? How can designers reduce error, deception, discrimination, manipulation, or unsafe behaviour? How can automated systems remain under meaningful human control?

These are essential questions. Yet they presuppose a more fundamental issue: **with what are human intentions and institutions themselves aligned?**

A technically obedient system can serve a predatory business model. An accurate model can support an unjust administrative purpose. A safe technology can intensify ecological depletion. A useful educational assistant can weaken the capacities that education exists to form. A clinically effective system can be introduced primarily to reduce staffing rather than deepen care. A weapon may identify its intended target with precision while the purpose governing the strike remains morally disordered.

Alignment is therefore nested within allegiance. At least four levels of service must be distinguished:

1. **Proximate service:** What task does the system perform for the immediate user?
2. **Institutional service:** What organizational purpose does its deployment advance?
3. **Systemic service:** What economic, political, military, or technological order does repeated use reproduce?
4. **Ultimate service:** What conception of life, power, personhood, and the good governs the entire arrangement?

A system may serve the user at the first level while undermining the user's agency at the third. It may fulfil its institutional objective while damaging the social or ecological field upon which the institution depends.

The deepest alignment problem is consequently not only whether the machine does what humanity asks. It is whether humanity knows what its powers should serve.

1.3 The Grail Question

Jonathan Pageau's 2026 address to the Alliance for Responsible Citizenship places this problem within the symbolic world of the Grail legends. Pageau interprets the Grail and lance as two limit-images of technological power. The Grail gathers abundance inward; the lance projects force outward. One provides, preserves, and nourishes. The other penetrates, protects, compels, and destroys (Pageau, 2026).

Within Pageau's symbolic synthesis, Balin seizes the sacred lance without discerning its purpose, wounds the Grail King, and brings barrenness upon the kingdom. The restoration of the wasteland depends upon the recovery of a question more important than possession of the sacred object:

Whom does the Grail serve?

(Pageau, 2026)

The question shifts attention from capability to teleology. The Grail's abundance is not self-interpreting. The lance's power is not self-legitimating. Neither the ability to provide nor the ability to strike determines the good toward which the power should be directed.

Pageau's mythic formulation supplies the initiating question of this paper. The present work develops that question through life-value philosophy, systems theory, theological anthropology, Eucharistic theology, institutional analysis, and the civil commons.

1.4 From Function to Service

A functional analysis asks whether a system completes its assigned task. A service analysis asks what form of life the task and its recurrent performance sustain.

The distinction is crucial because a system can function correctly while serving a disordered end. An engagement platform can successfully retain attention while weakening users' ability to direct their own attention. A workplace system can increase measured productivity while diminishing autonomy, apprenticeship, and security. A predictive model can classify persons consistently while making institutional categories more authoritative than living context. A generative system can provide immediate answers while weakening the incentives and practices through which understanding develops.

Service must therefore be evaluated through effects upon living capacity. The governing criterion of this paper is:

Does this use of technology protect, restore, or enlarge the capacities of living persons and the systems that sustain them?

The criterion does not oppose technology. Technical creativity can participate in humanity's responsible stewardship of creation and contribute to genuine human development (Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith & Dicastery for Culture and Education, 2025, paras. 1–3). It establishes, however, that capability remains a means. Life is the governing end.

1.5 Moloch and the Compulsion to Sacrifice

Pageau connects the Grail question to the contemporary language of the **Moloch trap**. He uses Moloch symbolically to name a system in which competitive escalation causes actors to sacrifice goods they value because each fears the consequences of restraint while others continue (Pageau, 2026).

Companies may release systems earlier than they consider ideal because rivals may move first. States may acquire dangerous capabilities because unilateral restraint appears strategically unsafe. Institutions may automate work because non-adopters fear losing efficiency or status. Families and schools may introduce technologies they regard with concern because social and professional environments increasingly make non-use difficult.

No participant needs to desire the collective outcome. The structure can convert locally defensible decisions into systemic destruction. Moloch therefore names more than individual wickedness. It names a sacrificial order generated through interdependent action.

The decisive diagnostic becomes:

What living good is being offered so that the system may continue expanding?

1.6 Pageau's Personal Answer and the Institutional Remainder

Pageau acknowledges that he does not possess a complete system-level solution to the technological trap. His answer turns toward personal and communal formation: church, prayer, memory, poetry, old stories, music, sport, gardening, family, community, wisdom, virtue, truth, and love.

The person must become more fully human so that technological assistance does not become technological mastery (Pageau, 2026). This answer is indispensable. Institutions cannot remain accountable without persons capable of truth, judgment, restraint, courage, and love.

Yet personal formation alone cannot resolve problems produced through ownership, infrastructure, market incentives, labour relations, military competition, ecological externalization, and concentrated political power. A responsible user cannot individually change the business model of a platform. A conscientious employee cannot privately govern workplace automation. A parent cannot independently redesign the technological environment of childhood. A small state cannot negotiate as an equal with every global infrastructure provider. A formed person may resist a predatory system, but the system can punish restraint and replace the resisting person.

Pageau's personal answer therefore leaves an institutional remainder. The present paper seeks to develop that remainder without diminishing the importance of the personal and spiritual practices he recommends.

1.7 The Eucharistic Counter-Revelation

The paper's central constructive proposal arises at this point. Pageau names the Grail question and the Molochian sacrifice. The present synthesis proposes the Eucharist as the Christian **anti-Moloch pattern**.

The contrast may be stated in its most concentrated form:

Moloch sacrifices life so that power may continue.
In the Eucharist, divine power gives itself so that the world may live.

This formulation is not attributed directly to Pageau. It extends the Eucharistic argument developed in *From Consumption to Communion*, where destructive consumption is defined as the absorption of bodies, labour, attention, ecosystems, and futures into private or institutional self-maintenance, while Eucharistic communion receives life as gift and becomes life-giving in return (Sahely, 2026).

The Eucharist does not legitimate the sacrifice of vulnerable persons to powerful institutions. It reverses that direction. The centre does not consume the body. The centre gives itself for the body. Abundance is not enclosed. Bread is broken and distributed. The victim is not erased behind necessity. The wounded and risen body remains at the centre of memory.

The Eucharist is more than an ethical metaphor. Precisely as sacrament, real presence, memorial, communion, and formation of the Church, it discloses a structure of power, provision, embodiment, and relation with civilizational consequences (Benedict XVI, 2007; John Paul II, 2003; Sahely, 2026).

1.8 Thesis and Contributions

This paper argues that artificial intelligence's defining problem is not intelligence alone, but service. Every technology enters a hierarchy of purposes, an institutional arrangement, a political economy, and a sacrificial order. Its

meaning is disclosed through what it protects, what it enlarges, what it consumes, who governs it, who bears its burdens, and what form of person and community its use repeatedly brings forth.

The paper develops three connected contributions.

Interpretive contribution

It reads Pageau's Grail, lance, wounded king, wasteland, and Moloch imagery through a life-coherent systems framework.

Diagnostic contribution

It analyses technological disorder as a movement from assistance toward enclosure, from local rationality toward systemic sacrifice, and from institutional service toward institutional self-preservation.

Constructive contribution

It proposes the Eucharist as the anti-Moloch pattern; a Eucharistic constitution of technological civilization; human-capacity preservation as a criterion of design and governance; and the civil commons as the principal institutional form through which technological abundance may return to the body as shared life.

The question governing the investigation is consequently fuller than whether AI is safe, useful, intelligent, aligned, or profitable:

What does it serve, what does it sacrifice, and what form of life does its service bring forth?

2. From Consumption to Communion Revisited: The Two Civilizational Metabolisms

2.1 Consumption and the Conditions of Embodied Life

Consumption is not inherently predatory. Every living being depends upon exchanges of matter, energy, information, and care. Human beings breathe, eat, drink, receive language, learn from others, inhabit inherited institutions, and rely upon ecological systems they did not create.

The problem is not that life receives from beyond itself. The problem is the form of relation through which receiving occurs.

Destructive consumption treats the other as material for the self without gratitude, reciprocity, reverence, limit, or responsibility to the whole. Eucharistic communion receives life as gift in such a way that the receiver becomes more capable of giving life in return (Sahely, 2026).

These two relations can be described as distinct civilizational metabolisms.

2.2 The Predatory Metabolism

The predatory metabolism moves through a recurrent sequence:

take, control, consume, discard, accumulate, defend

The sequence may appear in personal appetite, but its civilizational significance emerges when institutions embody it.

Labour becomes a cost to be minimized. Land becomes an asset. Water becomes an industrial input. Attention becomes inventory. Knowledge becomes proprietary advantage. Patients become throughput. Students become performance indicators. Citizens become administrative categories.

The living person is not necessarily denied in official language. Yet operationally, the person becomes important primarily as an input into the institution's continuation.

McMurtry's life-value analysis identifies the decisive inversion: money and institutional systems intended to mediate life-goods can become detached from the life-ground and reorganize society around their own expansion (McMurtry, 2001, 2011, 2013).

The institution survives. The living field is weakened.

2.3 Institutional Self-Maintenance and Autopoietic Inversion

Maturana and Varela use *autopoiesis* to describe the self-producing organization of living systems (Maturana & Varela, 1980). The concept should not be transferred mechanically from biology to social institutions. It nevertheless helps illuminate why institutions require boundaries, memory, recurrent operations, and internal continuity.

Institutional persistence is not itself pathological. Hospitals, schools, governments, churches, and research institutions must maintain sufficient coherence to perform their purposes.

The inversion occurs when self-maintenance ceases to serve the institution's life-giving purpose and becomes its dominant end.

A hospital preserves revenue while care deteriorates. A university protects ranking while learning weakens. A public agency preserves procedure while citizens become inaccessible to it. A church protects reputation while injured members remain unheard. A platform expands engagement while public trust deteriorates.

The system consumes the host that justified its existence.

The present paper describes this process as **institutional autopoietization**: not autopoiesis in the strict biological sense, but the institutional drift through which the reproduction of operations eclipses the living good those operations were established to serve (Sahely, 2026).

2.4 Symbolic Substitution

Predatory systems commonly operate through symbolic substitution.

A representation initially created to guide attention toward a living good gradually replaces the good in institutional decision-making.

The test score replaces learning. The medical record replaces the patient. Gross domestic product replaces social flourishing. Engagement replaces communication. Citation counts replace inquiry. Compliance replaces justice.

The metric is easier to compare, administer, optimize, and reward than the living reality.

Institutional power consequently shifts toward what the system can represent. What cannot enter the model becomes less visible.

Symbolic substitution does not require that metrics be false. It occurs when a partial representation is granted authority beyond what the representation can bear.

Artificial intelligence can intensify this process because it operates through representations capable of classification, prediction, and generation at great scale. The model of the person may become institutionally more actionable than the person's own account.

2.5 The Sacrificial Conversion Chain

The predatory metabolism can be expressed as a sacrificial conversion chain:

living reality → abstract value → system input → accumulated power → protection of extraction

A forest becomes timber value. A person's attention becomes behavioural data. A worker's tacit knowledge becomes a model capability. A community's language becomes training material. A patient's life becomes a risk score.

Once translated, the living reality can circulate within systems that no longer remain accountable to its full meaning.

The abstraction produces power at the centre. That power is then used to defend the arrangement through which further abstraction occurs.

The sacrificial character becomes visible when injuries to the source are treated as acceptable costs of maintaining the conversion.

2.6 The Eucharistic Metabolism

The Eucharistic metabolism proceeds through another sequence:

receive, bless, break open, share, abide, become gift

This grammar arises from the sacramental action through which creation and human labour are received, offered in thanksgiving, transformed, distributed, and returned as communion.

Receiving recognizes dependence. Blessing identifies meaning, purpose, and limit. Breaking opens what could otherwise remain enclosed. Sharing directs abundance toward the life of the body. Abiding preserves relation beyond the transaction. Becoming gift completes the circulation: the one nourished becomes capable of nourishing others.

The Eucharistic metabolism does not deny production, ownership, stewardship, authority, or institutional structure. It subordinates them to the life of the body.

Its governing question is not how much the centre can accumulate, but whether the whole becomes more fully alive.

2.7 The One and the Many

Eucharistic communion provides an account of unity that avoids both isolated individualism and totalizing collectivism.

Paul writes that because there is one bread, the many become one body (1 Cor. 10:16–17).

The members do not disappear. Their distinctiveness remains necessary to the body.

Unity is produced neither by contractual separation nor by absorption into one undifferentiated whole. It arises through participation in one self-giving life (de Lubac, 2006; Zizioulas, 1985).

This relation is crucial for technological governance.

A platform can connect millions while leaving them isolated around one proprietary centre. A standardized system can coordinate a population while suppressing local knowledge and difference. Scale is not communion. Integration is not participation.

A life-coherent technology should strengthen differentiated members and the relations among them rather than make the members interchangeable endpoints of a centralized architecture.

2.8 Two Forms of Abundance

The predatory and Eucharistic metabolisms produce different forms of abundance.

Predatory abundance is measured by accumulation at the centre. Its governing signs include scale, ownership, market control, stored data, computational capacity, and strategic advantage.

Eucharistic abundance is measured by nourishment and participation. Its signs include widened access, restored capacity, secure livelihoods, shared knowledge, stronger communities, ecological regeneration, and the ability of recipients to contribute in return.

A system may create unprecedented abundance while leaving large parts of the body insecure.

The Grail may be full while the kingdom starves.

Abundance becomes life-serving only when the relation among source, vessel, guardian, and body is rightly ordered.

2.9 Two Forms of Power

The two metabolisms also disclose opposite forms of power.

Predatory power enlarges the centre by increasing others' dependency. It reduces uncertainty for the governing institution by making persons more visible, classifiable, replaceable, and controllable.

Eucharistic power enlarges others' capacity to participate. It teaches, heals, protects, equips, and distributes authority appropriately.

The first asks how the institution can secure itself against the body. The second asks how the institution can become a reliable means through which the body flourishes.

Benedict XVI's account of the Eucharist as the sacrament of Christ's self-giving love places service, communion, and social responsibility within the sacrament's intrinsic implications rather than treating them as optional applications (Benedict XVI, 2007, paras. 1, 88–92).

2.10 Metabolism as World-Bringing Practice

A metabolism does not merely distribute existing goods. It recurrently brings forth a social world.

Practices of extraction bring forth a world in which persons expect to be used and protect themselves through counter-possession. Practices of surveillance bring forth a world in which visibility flows asymmetrically toward the centre. Practices of gratitude, reciprocity, care, and truthful participation bring forth a different domain of coexistence.

Maturana's work emphasizes that human worlds arise through recurrent relational configurations rather than existing as fixed environments wholly independent of action (Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 2008).

The ethical meaning of technology therefore cannot be determined by the isolated artefact alone. It must be evaluated through the recurrent relationships its use stabilizes.

2.11 The Life-Coherence Criterion

A technological arrangement is life-coherent insofar as it aligns its purposes, structures, and effects with the continuing, recovering, and flourishing of living persons, communities, ecological systems, and future generations.

This does not imply that every short-term discomfort or loss is anti-life. Healing may require difficult intervention. Learning may require effort. Ecological protection may require limits. Justice may require the surrender of illegitimate advantage.

The criterion is whether burdens remain accountable to a good that genuinely protects or enlarges life rather than merely preserving system expansion.

The difference between predation and communion is not the absence of all cost. It is the relation among cost, consent, power, benefit, vulnerability, and repair.

2.12 Artificial Intelligence Within the Two Metabolisms

AI can operate inside either civilizational metabolism.

Within the predatory metabolism, it can extract knowledge and attention; intensify surveillance; centralize decision power; displace workers without shared transition; flood the symbolic environment with synthetic content; and make institutions more efficient at pursuing disordered purposes.

Within the Eucharistic metabolism, it can widen access to knowledge; support disability inclusion; assist clinical and scientific work; reduce avoidable administrative burden; translate across linguistic barriers; strengthen environmental monitoring; and help communities participate more effectively in their own governance.

The decisive difference is not located in the algorithm alone. It lies in ownership, purpose, institutional design, distribution, human formation, ecological metabolism, and the power to refuse or correct the system.

AI is both Grail-like and lance-like. Its moral form depends upon the metabolism into which these powers are received.

Figure 1 summarizes these opposing civilizational metabolisms and their divergent effects upon the living body.

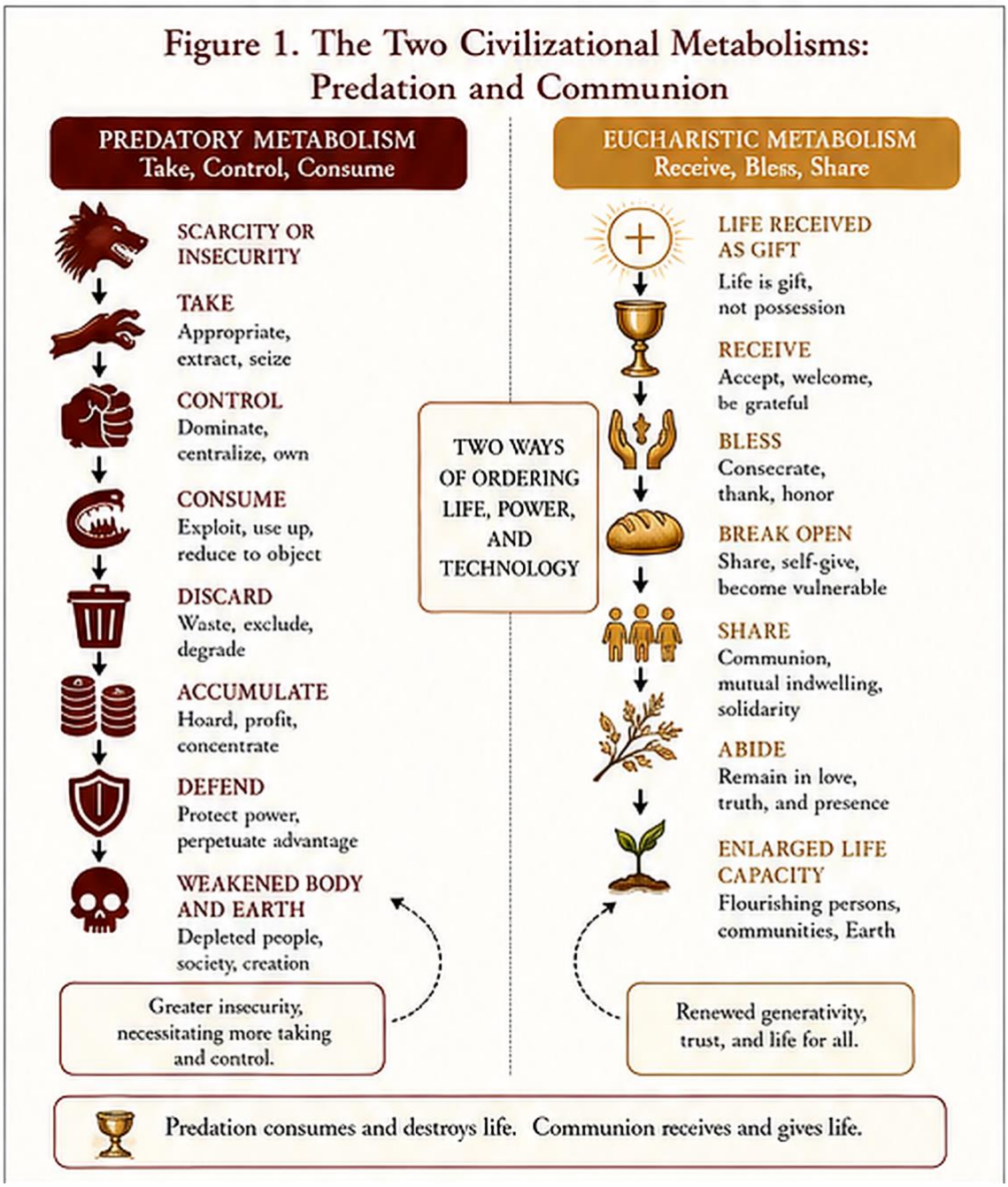

Figure 1. The Two Civilizational Metabolisms: Predation and Communion.

The predatory metabolism protects accumulated power by consuming the living field, while the Eucharistic metabolism receives life as gift and returns abundance through nourishment, participation, and renewed generativity.

3. Symbol, Participation, and the Recovery of the Centre

3.1 Symbols as Structures of Participation

Modern usage often treats a symbol as an external sign that points toward something absent or conceptually separate.

Pageau argues that this represents a diminished understanding of symbolism. In older Christian symbolic thought, the symbol does not merely stand in place of what it signifies. It participates in, joins, or makes present the reality it reveals (Pageau, 2012).

The distinction is essential for this paper.

The Grail, lance, wounded king, and wasteland are not being used as decorative comparisons added to an otherwise complete technical analysis. They gather relationships that recur across mythology, politics, economy, psychology, ecology, and technology.

The Grail reveals gathered provision. The lance reveals projected power. The wounded king reveals a damaged centre. The wasteland reveals the diffusion of the centre's disorder through the surrounding field.

The value of the symbol lies not in claiming that every technical system reproduces every detail of the story. It lies in allowing the story to disclose a form that abstract categories may conceal.

3.2 External Signification and Participatory Symbolism

External signification preserves distance between sign and reality. A red light signifies that vehicles should stop. The symbol functions by convention.

Participatory symbolism operates differently. A wedding ring does not merely communicate that a marriage exists. Within the relationship, it participates in covenantal memory and identity. A national flag does not merely denote a political territory. For participants, it can gather history, sacrifice, belonging, and authority.

Within sacramental theology, bread and wine are not arbitrary reminders attached to an absent reality. They become the means through which Christ gives himself and the Church participates in his life (Chauvet, 1995; Ratzinger, 1986).

Pageau's retrieval of participatory symbolism makes it possible to approach ancient stories as structures capable of illuminating contemporary reality without reducing them either to literal prediction or subjective projection (Pageau, 2012).

3.3 Participation Without Absorption

Participation does not require the destruction of difference. The participant does not become identical with the whole. The whole is not merely the sum of isolated parts.

Christian communion provides a relation in which distinct persons become more fully themselves through participation in a shared life (Zizioulas, 1985).

This principle resists two modern extremes. The first is atomism, in which individuals appear as self-contained units connected principally through transaction. The second is totalization, in which persons are absorbed into state, market, ideology, platform, or institution.

A participatory technological order must preserve distinct persons, local communities, professional judgment, cultural variation, and meaningful centres of initiative.

Coordination becomes life-serving when it enlarges these differentiated capacities rather than replacing them with uniform dependency.

3.4 Logos, Logoi, and an Intelligible Creation

Pageau's symbolic approach draws upon a Christian cosmology in which creation is intelligible because it participates in the divine Logos. Particular beings and patterns disclose meanings that find their unity and fulfilment in Christ.

In his work on the "cosmic mountain," Pageau interprets creation as ordered toward Eucharistic offering and communion with God (Pageau, 2021).

The symbolic world is therefore neither an arbitrary human projection nor a codebook in which every object possesses one fixed meaning. It is a relational world in which patterns recur at different levels because creation possesses intelligible order.

The centre-and-periphery pattern can consequently appear in the body, household, city, Church, economy, ecosystem, and technological network.

The recurrence does not erase differences among these domains. It permits analogical reasoning across them.

3.5 Centre and Periphery

Every organized system has centres. A body coordinates through differentiated organs and regulatory processes. A community gathers around shared purposes, memories, and institutions. A network contains nodes of greater connectivity. A tradition possesses orienting narratives, practices, and authorities.

The question is not whether centres exist. It is what relation the centre maintains with the periphery.

A life-giving centre gathers, coordinates, nourishes, protects, and sends forth. A predatory centre extracts, homogenizes, encloses, and makes the margins increasingly dependent upon itself.

The test of the centre is therefore relational:

- Does it nourish or consume?
- Does it coordinate or suppress?
- Does it form agency or dependency?
- Does it receive correction from the periphery?
- Does its strength increase the body's strength or only its own?

3.6 Hierarchy as an Order of Gift

Hierarchy is commonly understood as a vertical arrangement of domination. Such arrangements certainly exist. But hierarchy can also describe differentiated responsibility within an ordered whole.

The relevant distinction is between **extractive hierarchy** and **participatory hierarchy**.

Extractive hierarchy transfers benefit upward and burden downward. Participatory hierarchy places greater responsibility upon those with greater authority. The higher exists to support, coordinate, teach, protect, and serve the life of the whole.

Within this form:

To be higher is to bear more responsibility for the life of the body.

This is consistent with the Eucharistic reversal of power and with Christian accounts of authority ordered toward service rather than self-protection (Benedict XVI, 2007; John Paul II, 2003).

The distinction becomes critical as AI concentrates informational and decision-making power. Those controlling central infrastructure incur obligations proportionate to the dependence that infrastructure creates.

3.7 Memory as Making Present

Memory can be understood as storage and retrieval. Digital systems extend this function dramatically.

Yet sacred and communal memory is more than preservation of information about the past. It makes a formative past present within current identity and action.

Liturgical memorial does not merely recall that an event once occurred. It allows the community to participate in the reality remembered. The Eucharist is the Church's central anamnesis: the paschal mystery is remembered in sacramental presence, and the gathered community is formed through that participation (John Paul II, 2003; Schmemann, 1973).

This distinction matters technologically.

A civilization can preserve unprecedented quantities of data while losing the capacity to inhabit its inheritance. An archive may remain complete while cultural memory becomes thin. An individual may retrieve every text while possessing little interior knowledge through which the text can be understood.

Storage is necessary. It is not yet memory in its fullest participatory sense.

3.8 Eucharist as the Perfecting of Memory

Pageau's broader symbolic work associates the Eucharist with a form of memory in which the centre remains actively present rather than becoming an inert record.

The Eucharistic pattern joins past event, present body, material sign, communal action, and future transformation.

This provides a criterion for technological memory.

Does the system help a community encounter, interpret, and assume responsibility for its history? Or does it merely store representations while the living practices through which those representations become meaningful disappear?

The most advanced archive cannot substitute fully for the communities, traditions, professions, and relationships through which knowledge becomes wisdom.

3.9 Symbolic Collapse and the Digital Wasteland

Digital systems multiply signs at unprecedented speed. Images, statements, voices, identities, and explanations can be generated, recombined, and distributed continuously.

The danger is not simply that some individual representations will be false. It is that the relation among sign, origin, reality, intention, and responsibility may become increasingly unstable.

A voice may not belong to the apparent speaker. An image may not testify that the depicted event occurred. A text may have no author who understands or assumes responsibility for its argument. A social presence may have no corresponding embodied person.

The result can be a symbolic wasteland: an environment filled with signs but impoverished in trustworthy participation.

Artificial abundance may coexist with scarcity of meaning.

The technological task is therefore not merely to generate more symbols. It is to preserve the conditions under which symbols remain capable of mediating reality truthfully.

3.10 The Zombie as Anti-Communion

Pageau and Marceau use the zombie as an image of fragmented appetite and mindless consumption. The zombie desires the living but cannot enter communion with it. It absorbs bodies without receiving persons and multiplies its own condition through consumption (Marceau & Pageau, 2022).

The figure is useful because it distinguishes appetite from participation.

A system can consume language, images, behaviour, attention, and social interaction without entering the reciprocal relations through which these goods acquired meaning.

The danger is not that machines literally become mythological monsters. It is that human institutions may organize themselves around a zombie-like metabolism: continual ingestion without gratitude, reciprocity, limit, or responsibility to the sources of nourishment.

3.11 Synthetic Media and the Crisis of Symbolic Trust

Generative AI intensifies the need to distinguish a symbol that mediates reality from a representation that substitutes for it.

A synthetic image can be legitimate art. A simulation can support learning. A generated voice can increase accessibility.

The ethical problem arises when the mediation conceals its nature or exploits the trust appropriate to another kind of presence.

A documentary image, fictional image, icon, diagram, and generated visual do not make the same claim upon the viewer. Truthful mediation requires that the kind of representation remain intelligible.

The 2025 Vatican note on AI identifies the capacity to generate human-like artefacts as a significant challenge to truth in the public sphere and warns against reducing human intelligence to the production of functional outputs (Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith & Dicastery for Culture and Education, 2025, paras. 3, 10, 30–34).

3.12 Recovering the Centre Without Constructing an Idol

The recovery of centre must not become a defence of authoritarian centralization.

A centre can itself become idolatrous when it claims absolute authority, suppresses correction, or treats its own continuation as identical with the good.

A true centre points beyond itself. It receives rather than originates the good it mediates. It remains accountable to truth and to the life of the body.

In Christian terms, no institution, leader, market, state, platform, or technological system can become the final centre. Christ remains the centre precisely through self-giving rather than domination.

The institutional consequence is a paradoxical form of authority: strong enough to coordinate and protect; limited enough to be corrected; and ordered toward enlarging the differentiated life of the members.

3.13 Pageau and the Life-Coherent Framework

Pageau's symbolic work provides a vertical account of order: centre, hierarchy, participation, fragmentation, memory, and orientation toward the Logos.

The life-coherent framework provides a horizontal and empirical test: what happens to living persons, capacities, communities, and ecosystems through the actual operation of the order?

The two approaches can be joined without being conflated.

The synthesis may be stated as follows:

The symbolic centre identifies the good around which a world is ordered; the life-coherence criterion tests whether the actual relations surrounding that centre correspond to the good proclaimed.

A hospital may proclaim healing as its centre while operationally sacrificing patients and staff to throughput. A church may proclaim communion while silencing wounded members. A platform may proclaim connection while producing isolation and dependency.

The symbolic and life-coherent tests must therefore remain mutually corrective.

3.14 The Eucharistic Centre and Technological Discernment

The Eucharistic centre orders abundance, sacrifice, memory, body, and power through the self-gift of Christ.

It prevents the Grail from becoming mere possession because abundance is broken and shared. It prevents the lance from becoming absolute because power is placed beneath love and service. It prevents the centre from consuming the margins because the centre gives itself for the life of the body. It prevents unity from becoming absorption because the many remain differentiated members. It prevents symbolic substitution because the wounded body remains present.

The Eucharist therefore provides more than a religious image added to technological ethics. It offers a centre from which the relation among capability, service, victim, abundance, and participation can be discerned.

3.15 Transition to the Grail Castle

The recovery of symbolic participation prepares the way for a closer examination of Pageau's Grail narrative.

The Grail and lance should not be treated as uncomplicated symbols of good and evil. Abundance may nourish or enclose. Force may protect or dominate. The same capability can enter different relations of service.

The central question is not whether civilization will gather power. Every durable civilization gathers power. The question is whether gathered power will return to the body as gift.

Only a civilization that remembers what it serves can receive the Grail without enclosing it and wield the lance without repeating the Dolorous Stroke.

4. The Grail and the Lance: The Two Powers of Technology

4.1 A Symbolic Synthesis of the Grail Traditions

Pageau's keynote gathers several motifs from the diverse body of Arthurian Grail literature. These elements should not be presented as though they derive from one uniform medieval narrative.

In Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, Balin kills Garlon during a feast, is pursued by King Pellam, enters a richly appointed chamber, seizes a sacred spear when his own sword breaks, and strikes the Dolorous Stroke. The blow wounds Pellam and brings the castle down around them. Pellam remains wounded until the later Grail quest (Malory, 1485/1998).

In Chrétien de Troyes's unfinished *Perceval*, the young knight encounters the Grail procession and wounded Fisher King but fails to ask the questions that might have brought healing. The precise objects, wounded rulers, successful knights, questions, and healing sequences vary across the later continuations and Grail cycles (Chrétien de Troyes, ca. 1180/1991).

Pageau performs a **symbolic synthesis** of these related but distinct traditions. He joins Balin's violated hospitality, the seized lance, the wounded Grail King, the wasteland, the lost Grail, and the healing question of service into one concentrated civilizational pattern (Pageau, 2026).

The synthesis should be identified transparently as interpretation rather than strict literary reconstruction.

Its significance lies in the pattern it discloses: sacred power is seized without discernment; the centre is wounded; the surrounding field becomes barren; abundance is lost or enclosed; and healing depends upon recovering the question of purpose.

4.2 Technology as Gathered Human Power

Technology is not merely an object. It is organized human capacity embodied in tools, practices, institutions, infrastructures, skills, and systems of purpose.

A technology can exteriorize bodily force, preserve memory, coordinate activity, extend perception, transform matter, and stabilize forms of knowledge across generations.

The Grail and lance symbolize two broad directions of this gathered power.

The Grail gathers; the lance projects.

The Grail concentrates the power to receive, preserve, provide, and nourish. The lance concentrates the power to reach, discriminate, defend, compel, and wound.

These are not simple images of goodness and evil. Provision can become enclosure. Force can become legitimate protection. The moral issue is the relation in which each power participates.

4.3 The Grail as Receptive and Generative Power

A vessel receives. Its openness is the condition of its capacity to contain. It gathers what originates beyond itself and can make that gathered abundance available in transformed form.

Pageau consequently interprets the Grail as the limit-image of technological abundance (Pageau, 2026).

Modern Grail-like systems include agricultural storage and distribution, water and energy infrastructure, hospitals, libraries, archives, databases, communication networks, and systems that gather and synthesize collective knowledge.

The vessel does not create all that it contains.

A library depends upon authors, languages, publishers, workers, communities, and inherited knowledge. A hospital depends upon science, public infrastructure, clinicians, patients, care workers, laboratories, and social trust. An AI

system depends upon human language, images, code, scholarship, art, labour, data centres, minerals, energy, water, and public knowledge.

The appearance of autonomous provision can conceal the field that filled the vessel.

4.4 The Ambivalence of the Grail

The Grail's abundance does not establish whom it serves.

A common vessel can become an enclosed treasury. A knowledge system can become a monopoly over memory. A health infrastructure can distribute care or stratify access. A platform can widen communication while making participants dependent upon one governing centre.

The essential questions are:

- Who owns the vessel?
- Who contributed to its contents?
- Who receives nourishment?
- Who is excluded?
- What conditions govern access?
- Can the body correct the guardians?
- What ecological and human sources must be replenished?

A full Grail can preside over a starving kingdom.

Abundance without communion becomes enclosure.

4.5 The Grail as Symbolic and Cognitive Abundance

Human beings require more than material provision. They depend upon language, truth, memory, interpretation, education, meaning, beauty, recognition, and hope.

Civilizations therefore build symbolic vessels: schools, archives, libraries, traditions, legal systems, media, and universities.

Artificial intelligence appears as a new kind of cognitive vessel because it gathers large bodies of symbolic material and returns responsive outputs in the form of explanation, translation, synthesis, recommendation, image, and dialogue.

This capacity may widen access significantly. It may support learners, researchers, professionals, persons with disabilities, and communities separated by language or geography.

Yet cognitive abundance is not yet communion.

A system can supply language without accepting responsibility for its truth. It can generate an answer without possessing the lived judgment the answer may require. It can provide immediate interpretation while weakening the practices through which persons become capable interpreters.

The question is not only what the vessel produces. It is what kind of knower its recurrent use helps to form.

4.6 The Lance as Projective Power

Where the Grail gathers inward, the lance projects outward. It extends the reach of the body and concentrates force toward a target.

The lance therefore symbolizes technologies of defence, intervention, classification, surveillance, targeting, coercion, and destruction.

Pageau identifies the lance with the sacred weapon associated in Christian tradition with the piercing of Christ's side and interprets it as the limit-image of technological force (Pageau, 2026).

The symbolism reveals the inadequacy of equating technical precision with moral legitimacy.

A system can perform its immediate function perfectly while serving an unjust purpose. A precise lance can still enact a disordered end.

The fact that a system can identify a target does not determine that the target should be struck. The fact that an institution can predict behaviour does not establish its right to constrain a person pre-emptively. The fact that a platform can influence users does not create a right to manipulate them.

Technical reach must remain subordinate to moral and political authorization.

4.7 The Ambivalence of the Lance

Force is not inherently illegitimate. Communities must protect vulnerable persons, restrain predation, enforce just law, defend common goods, and respond to genuine threats.

The issue is whether force remains ordered toward protection or becomes an independent means of domination.

A rightly ordered lance is limited, proportionate, accountable, discriminating, and subordinated to a just peace.

A disordered lance expands surveillance because surveillance is possible. It classifies persons without meaningful contestation. It distances decision-makers from consequences. It treats populations as targets, risks, or variables rather than persons.

Protection without accountability becomes domination. Power without service produces wasteland.

4.8 Provision and Force as Twin Civilizational Architectures

Every durable political order must organize provision and protection.

It must secure food, water, shelter, health, education, energy, communication, and the transmission of knowledge. It must also restrain violence, enforce legitimate boundaries, resolve disputes, and protect the conditions of common life.

These functions may be described broadly as economy and security. Neither can be eliminated. But either can become detached from the common good.

Provision becomes predatory when those controlling abundance manufacture dependency or exclude members in order to preserve accumulation. Protection becomes predatory when security expands into permanent surveillance, pre-emptive control, or preservation of institutional privilege.

In practice, Grail and lance powers often reinforce one another. Accumulated wealth finances coercive capacity. Coercive capacity protects concentrated wealth. Information gathered for provision can become a means of control. Infrastructure developed for security can acquire commercial and administrative uses.

The central question is whether economy and security remain subordinate to life, or whether life becomes subordinate to the systems of economy and security.

4.9 The Common Root of Tool and Weapon

Pageau illustrates technological duality through sharpened flint: the same basic capacity may till soil or kill an enemy (Pageau, 2026).

The image demonstrates why technologies cannot be judged solely by one beneficial or harmful application.

Fire cooks and burns. Metallurgy produces ploughs and swords. Chemistry produces medicines and poisons. Digital identity can widen access and enable exclusion. A database can improve care and intensify surveillance. AI can educate, diagnose, translate, persuade, classify, target, and deceive.

Dual use is not merely an accidental complication added after invention. It arises because technology extends the capacity to act, while the purpose and institutional field governing that action remain morally variable.

The object alone does not decide. Neither does the isolated user. Ownership, law, culture, markets, political authority, conflict, and infrastructure shape which uses become profitable, expected, compulsory, or forbidden.

4.10 Balin and the Seizure of Sacred Power

In Pageau's interpretation, the catastrophe begins before Balin seizes the lance.

He enters under hospitality while intending violence. Rage narrows perception. The sacred object becomes an available instrument. Its history, place, and purpose disappear behind immediate appetite.

This sequence offers a symbolic diagnosis of technological reductionism.

The object is understood solely through what it can do for the present actor. Capability becomes availability. Availability becomes permission.

Competition intensifies the movement:

- If we do not seize the capability, another actor will.
- If we pause, we will fall behind.
- If the object exists, someone will use it.

The lance is taken because it is within reach.

The Dolorous Stroke is the moment when power detached from service wounds the centre that makes flourishing possible.

4.11 The Gradual Dolorous Stroke

Technological harm need not occur through one dramatic act.

The Dolorous Stroke can become a cumulative institutional process.

Thousands of individually defensible decisions may gradually weaken attention, trust, ecological resilience, professional knowledge, social solidarity, and human agency.

A school introduces automated completion to improve performance. A profession reduces apprenticeship because systems produce adequate outputs. A platform personalizes content to retain users. A workplace increases expected output after introducing assistance. A government integrates databases to improve coordination.

Each decision may appear limited. Together they can reorganize society around systems that persons can no longer understand or refuse.

The technological wound spreads through the kingdom because its effects alter the field within which all subsequent decisions occur.

4.12 The Wounded King and the Loss of Generativity

Pageau interprets the king's wound as impotence and links the wounded ruler to the barrenness of the land (Pageau, 2026).

The symbolism concerns generativity.

A civilization is generative when it can transmit viable ecological conditions, trustworthy institutions, meaningful traditions, practical competence, and the capacity of the next generation to act.

A society may remain highly productive while becoming non-generative. It may produce more goods while depleting the ecological sources of production. It may generate more information while weakening shared truth. It may produce educational outputs while undermining understanding. It may create expert systems while failing to form future experts.

The wounded centre retains power but loses the capacity to transmit life.

4.13 The Wasteland as Systemic Consequence

The wasteland represents the diffusion of the centre's wound through the surrounding field.

It may take ecological form: depleted water, exhausted energy systems, damaged soil, and sacrificed habitats.

It may take social form: precarity, isolation, loss of trust, and concentration of authority.

It may take cognitive form: weakened attention, dependence upon external systems, loss of professional judgment, and inability to distinguish testimony from fabrication.

It may take spiritual form: appetite without fulfilment, information without wisdom, connection without communion, and power without purpose.

A technologically sophisticated society can therefore become a wasteland without appearing materially primitive.

The wasteland is the distance between system success and life failure.

4.14 Artificial Intelligence as Grail

AI may function as Grail through translation, education, scientific assistance, clinical support, accessibility, research, creative exploration, and public-service coordination.

Its cognitive abundance may reduce barriers created by distance, specialization, language, disability, or cost.

But whether it becomes a commons or enclosure depends upon institutional questions.

Who controls the models and infrastructure? What human knowledge and labour filled them? How are benefits distributed? Which languages and communities remain marginal? Does assistance develop understanding or create dependency? Can users contest the system's terms? Can institutions preserve meaningful alternatives?

The AI Grail may widen human capacity. It may also absorb the body's accumulated intelligence and return it as a privately governed service.

4.15 Artificial Intelligence as Lance

AI may function as lance through surveillance, automated classification, predictive intervention, behavioural persuasion, border control, workplace monitoring, cybersecurity, military targeting, and administrative eligibility decisions.

Some uses may protect legitimate goods.

The danger arises through scale, opacity, distance, and asymmetric power.

One classification can act upon millions. The affected person may not understand why. The institution may see the person through extensive data while remaining opaque in return. Designers, deployers, managers, and operators may each claim only partial responsibility.

The apparent precision of the system can conceal the moral judgment embedded in its purpose, categories, thresholds, and deployment context.

The wound becomes easier to inflict because it appears only as data.

4.16 When Grail and Lance Become One Infrastructure

The most powerful technological systems combine provision and coercion.

The same platform may enable communication and regulate visibility. The same identity system may grant access and enable exclusion. The same healthcare database may support treatment and commercial profiling. The same educational system may provide assistance and monitor behaviour. The same model may teach one population and target another.

The same artificial intelligence may function as Grail for one group and lance against another.

When the provider of essential abundance also possesses the capacity to monitor, classify, or exclude, private or administrative governance acquires quasi-sovereign importance.

The greater the system's role in provision, the stronger its public obligations. The greater its coercive capacity, the stronger the requirements for law, explanation, appeal, accountability, and meaningful alternatives.

4.17 The Four Technological Configurations

Table 1 maps the Grail and lance across life-serving and Molochian or Mammonian configurations.

Table 1. Four Technological Configurations of Grail and Lance.

Technological power	Serving life and communion	Serving Moloch or Mammon
Grail: gathered abundance	Shared provision, restored capacity, public knowledge, civil commons	Enclosure, monopoly, manufactured dependency, extractive accumulation
Lance: projected power	Protection, accountable restraint, defence of vulnerable persons and common goods	Domination, escalation, surveillance, coercion, sacrificial targeting

Figure 2 renders the same distinction symbolically through the Grail and the lance, showing how either power may serve life or enclosure.

The matrix clarifies that neither provision nor force determines its own moral meaning.

A Grail serving life becomes a common vessel. A Grail serving Mammon becomes an enclosed treasury. A lance serving life protects the conditions of communion. A lance serving Moloch turns competition into sacrifice.

Figure 2. The Grail and the Lance: Two Technological Powers, Two Possible Masters.

Gathered abundance and projected force acquire their ethical meaning through the life-order they serve. The Grail may become civil commons or enclosure; the lance may become accountable protection or Molochian domination.

4.18 Preliminary Discernment

Before technological power is accepted, the Grail and lance images require a preliminary set of questions:

- Who controls the vessel?
- What capacities have been gathered into it?
- Whose labour and ecological resources sustain it?
- Who receives nourishment?
- Who becomes dependent?
- What does the projected power defend?

- Whom can it classify, constrain, or strike?
- Who may refuse its use?
- Who bears errors and burdens?
- What limits prevent seizure or repurposing?
- Can the centre be corrected by those at the margins?
- Can the technology be paused, reversed, or dismantled?

These questions remain preliminary because they point toward the deeper issue developed in the next section.

Neither abundance nor force is self-interpreting. Technology cannot determine its own purpose. Capability cannot generate teleology.

The question that must precede the celebration, acquisition, or deployment of power remains:

Whom does it serve?

5. Moloch, Mammon, and the Emergent Agency of Systems

5.1 From the Disordered Knight to the Competitive System

The Grail narrative initially presents technological disorder through the action of a person. Balin is governed by rage. He violates hospitality. He seizes a sacred power without understanding its purpose. He wounds the king and contributes to the destruction of the surrounding field.

Modern technological harms, however, are not produced only by visibly disordered individuals. They also emerge through systems in which intelligent, conscientious, and locally rational actors participate in outcomes that few of them independently desire.

The engineer seeks to solve an assigned problem. The executive attempts to preserve the organization. The investor seeks a return. The regulator fears weakening national competitiveness. The worker adopts the system to remain employable. The school introduces the technology because other institutions are doing so. The state expands capability because rivals may do the same.

The knight no longer says: "I desire the wasteland." The knight says: "I cannot afford to be the only one who puts down the lance."

Pageau uses the figure of Moloch to name this movement from individual choice to competitive sacrifice (Pageau, 2026).

5.2 Historical and Symbolic Clarification

The historical identity and cultic meaning of biblical Molech remain subjects of scholarly interpretation. The present argument does not depend upon resolving whether the term always names a particular deity, a title, or a form of sacrifice. Day's influential study defends the interpretation of Molech as a deity associated with child sacrifice, but the manuscript's use is primarily symbolic and analytical rather than a comprehensive historical claim (Day, 1989).

The term **Moloch** will therefore name the following systemic pattern:

Moloch is an order of organized rivalry in which actors sacrifice life-goods they genuinely value because each fears the consequences of refusing the sacrifice while others continue.

The sacrifice may concern children, workers, truth, professional competence, ecological systems, civil liberties, or future generations.

The defining feature is not that every participant consciously worships destruction. It is that the structure repeatedly converts fear, competition, and institutional self-preservation into sacrifices that appear necessary.

5.3 The Multipolar Trap

Schelling's analysis of strategic conflict shows how actors with partly opposed and partly shared interests may become trapped by reciprocal expectations (Schelling, 1960, 1966).

All parties may prefer mutual restraint. Each fears that unilateral restraint will create vulnerability. Every party therefore prepares, deploys, or escalates. The actions intended to increase security make the shared environment less secure.

The structure contains four movements:

1. All actors recognize a common danger.
2. Each doubts whether others will restrain themselves.
3. Each treats preparation as prudent self-protection.

4. Collective preparation intensifies the danger everyone feared.

The problem is not ignorance alone. It is strategic interdependence.

The outcome cannot be corrected adequately through private virtue unless the structure also changes the consequences of restraint.

5.4 Local Rationality and Global Irrationality

Molochian systems convert local rationality into global irrationality.

A firm may rationally pursue automation to reduce costs. Its competitors do the same. Workers lose bargaining power. Demand weakens. Skills decline. Institutions become dependent upon concentrated technological infrastructure. No individual firm intended the whole result. Each responded to a competitive environment in which declining to automate appeared dangerous.

Similarly, one state may increase surveillance to address legitimate threats. Other states respond. Citizens normalize the loss of privacy. Security institutions expand. The resulting order may be less free and not meaningfully safer.

The system does not require universal malice. It requires only that harmful behaviour become advantageous and restraint become costly.

5.5 Emergent Agency Without Consciousness

Pageau describes Moloch as though it moves, desires, or demands sacrifice, even when participants understand it as a mechanism rather than a personal deity (Pageau, 2026).

This language does not require the claim that a competitive system literally possesses consciousness.

Systems can acquire **as-if agency** when their recurrent operations constrain available choices, reward particular actions, punish deviation, preserve their own continuation, and generate outcomes not reducible to any one participant's intention.

The system appears to want expansion because institutions that fail to expand disappear or lose power. It appears to demand sacrifice because actors who protect vulnerable goods may be overtaken by actors who do not. It appears to reproduce itself because participation changes the environment in ways that require further participation.

Moloch has no hands except those made available to it. Yet once enough hands act together, the system confronts each participant as an external power.

5.6 Principalities, Powers, and Supra-Individual Reality

Christian language concerning principalities and powers provides a theological vocabulary for realities that exceed individual intention without becoming independent gods.

Political, economic, military, and cultural orders can organize human action, shape imagination, distribute fear, and demand allegiance. They are humanly enacted yet experienced as powers confronting the individual from beyond private will.

This language avoids two errors. The first reduces every institutional evil to the morality of isolated persons. The second treats systems as autonomous entities for which no person remains responsible.

A power exists through institutions, practices, incentives, laws, narratives, technologies, and repeated choices. It confronts participants as a real structure, but it continues only through forms of participation that can be altered, resisted, or reorganized.

5.7 Institutional Autopoietization Revisited

The concept of institutional autopoietization helps explain how service institutions become system-serving powers.

An institution begins with a life-serving purpose: healing, education, justice, communication, public safety, or worship. It develops procedures, budgets, metrics, technologies, and hierarchies to preserve that purpose.

Over time, the continuation of the organization becomes increasingly identified with the continuation of the good itself. Institutional survival becomes non-negotiable. Persons and values that threaten continuity may be sacrificed.

The hospital consumes patients and workers to maintain throughput. The school consumes learning to protect measured performance. The platform consumes attention to sustain engagement. The Church consumes wounded members to preserve reputation.

The system's need to continue becomes its operative definition of necessity. What it must do to survive becomes what it is.

This is the institutional form of the wounded centre described in the earlier white paper (Sahely, 2026; McMurtry, 2001, 2011, 2013).

5.8 Mammon as Accumulation Become Master

Moloch and Mammon should be distinguished without being separated.

Moloch names competitive sacrifice. Mammon names accumulated value elevated into a governing end.

Money is a necessary means of exchange, storage, investment, and coordination. It becomes Mammon when accumulation ceases to serve living goods and begins reorganizing living goods around its own expansion.

Under Mammon, knowledge is valued by its capacity to generate proprietary advantage; labour is valued by the surplus it produces; attention is valued by its monetizability; land is valued by its exchange price; institutions are valued by growth; and technology is valued by the scale of the markets it can control.

Under Mammon, the Grail is measured by how much it contains rather than whom it feeds.

5.9 The Moloch–Mammon Circuit

Moloch and Mammon can reinforce one another through a self-expanding circuit:

accumulation → competitive advantage → escalation → externalized cost → weakened life → insecurity → demand for more accumulation and control

A company accumulates data and computational infrastructure. This gives it an advantage. Competitors accelerate to avoid displacement. Social and ecological costs are transferred outward. Workers and communities become less secure. Insecurity increases dependence upon the same dominant systems for employment, services, information, and protection.

The centre becomes stronger partly because the field has become weaker.

Moloch supplies the fear of losing. Mammon supplies the promise that greater accumulation will produce safety.

The result is a system that runs because stopping is described as losing.

5.10 Selection Pressure and Moral Displacement

Competitive systems select among organizational behaviours.

An institution that spends more on safety, worker development, ecological protection, or human contact may face higher immediate costs than one that externalizes those responsibilities. Where common rules are absent, the more responsible actor may be penalized.

Moral responsibility is then displaced by the claim: "We would act differently if competitors did the same."

The statement may be sincere. It is also evidence that personal ethics cannot substitute for collective governance.

The strategic field must be altered so that life-serving restraint is not converted into organizational self-destruction.

5.11 The Artificial-Intelligence Race

Pageau presents contemporary AI development as a Molochian escalation in which actors fear being overtaken if they slow down (Pageau, 2026).

The manuscript should not treat every AI development as one homogeneous race or assume that all developers possess identical motives. AI encompasses many systems, purposes, institutions, and degrees of risk.

Nevertheless, competitive pressure is real wherever firms or states believe that access to more capable systems will confer economic power, military advantage, political influence, scientific leadership, control over infrastructure, or dominance of future markets.

Uncertainty can intensify acceleration because actors do not know what rivals possess, how quickly capabilities may change, or what strategic advantage early deployment might bring.

The important point is structural: even actors who favour caution may fear that caution without reciprocity will transfer power to less cautious competitors.

5.12 Competitive Safety

Safety commitments are fragile when they remain unilateral.

A firm may invest in evaluation, security, interpretability, worker protection, or controlled deployment. If competitors can gain market advantage by avoiding those costs, safety becomes vulnerable to erosion.

External governance can therefore make internal ethics more sustainable.

Shared rules can prevent safety from becoming a competitive penalty; workers' rights from becoming a labour-cost disadvantage; ecological protection from becoming an incentive to relocate harm; and truthful disclosure from becoming a disadvantage against less transparent actors.

The purpose of governance is not merely to constrain innovation. It is to alter the game so that responsible conduct remains viable.

5.13 The Sacrificial Populations

Molochian systems reveal themselves through the populations whose losses become acceptable.

Hidden labour

AI systems depend upon data preparation, evaluation, content moderation, maintenance, logistics, hardware production, and other forms of work that may remain invisible behind the interface.

Workers

Automation can reduce dangerous or repetitive labour, but transitions can also concentrate gains while transferring insecurity to workers. Occupational exposure is not identical with job elimination, yet the distributional and formative effects of changing tasks require institutional attention (Gmyrek et al., 2025).

Children and learners

Educational technologies can improve access and support learning. They can also displace foundational practice, capture attention, and make developing persons subjects of experimentation without adequate developmental governance (Miao & Holmes, 2023).

Creators and knowledge communities

Cultural inheritance, scholarship, art, and professional knowledge can be gathered into systems while the institutions and persons generating future work become economically or culturally weakened.

Ecological communities

AI infrastructure depends upon material resources, energy, water, hardware, land, and waste systems. The National Institute of Standards and Technology's generative AI risk-management profile identifies environmental effects among the relevant risk domains (National Institute of Standards and Technology [NIST], 2024).

Public truth

Synthetic content can weaken the relation among representation, origin, testimony, and accountable speech. The burden then falls upon citizens and institutions to verify material generated at scales they cannot individually match (Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith & Dicastery for Culture and Education, 2025; NIST, 2024).

Human judgment

Decision support can improve performance while institutions permit the independent knowledge required for supervision to decline.

The sacrifice is rarely announced as such. It appears as a transitional cost, an efficiency gain, an unavoidable externality, or the price of remaining competitive.

5.14 The Sacrifice of Reality

A shared world depends upon some trustworthy relation among event, witness, record, representation, and responsible speaker.

Synthetic media can destabilize this relation. False representations can be produced convincingly. Authentic evidence can be dismissed as synthetic. Public trust may weaken even where particular claims remain verifiable.

This creates a double danger. First, deception becomes easier. Second, the resulting uncertainty may be used to justify stronger centralized systems of identity, authentication, surveillance, or information control.

Molochian dynamics can therefore transform the crisis of trust into a demand for greater power at the centre. The technology helps produce the vulnerability through which further control is legitimized.

5.15 When the Tool Becomes the Master

A tool becomes master-like not because it necessarily becomes conscious, but because social life is reorganized around dependence upon it.

The tool becomes infrastructure. Institutions redesign workflows around its availability. Human competence declines. Alternative providers disappear. Output expectations rise. Refusal becomes impractical. The system's owners acquire authority over price, access, conditions, updates, and permissible use.

The tool need not issue commands explicitly. Its necessity governs behaviour.

Convenience becomes enclosure when refusal ceases to be viable.

5.16 Diffusion of Responsibility

Complex technological systems involve many participants: data contributors, engineers, model developers, vendors, executives, purchasers, deployers, managers, professionals, regulators, and users.

Each can truthfully state that they control only part of the system.

Responsibility becomes fragmented. The developer did not choose the final use. The purchaser did not design the model. The operator followed policy. The manager trusted the vendor. The executive relied upon internal review. The institution blames technical complexity.

Diffusion of responsibility becomes dangerous when the person harmed cannot identify any actor with both the authority and obligation to repair the outcome.

Institutional design must therefore reconnect responsibility with actual power over the system.

5.17 False Inevitability

Molochian systems present their demands as inevitable.

Technology cannot be stopped. Markets will decide. Competitors will proceed. The public expects convenience. Workers must adapt. Governments have no alternative.

Yet institutions shape incentives and can redesign collective action.

Ostrom's research demonstrates that communities can develop durable rules for governing shared resources where simplistic models predict unavoidable depletion (Ostrom, 1990, 2009).

Her work does not imply that every collective-action problem can be solved locally or easily. It refutes the claim that actors must choose only between uncontrolled competition and centralized command.

The game is not a law of nature. Rules, trust, monitoring, graduated sanctions, participation, nested institutions, and shared knowledge can alter the strategic field.

5.18 Beyond the Tragedy of the Commons

Hardin's influential "tragedy of the commons" describes a setting in which individuals have incentives to overuse an open resource while sharing the resulting costs (Hardin, 1968).

The civil commons developed later in this manuscript differs from an unregulated open-access field.

A commons can possess membership, boundaries, rules, duties, monitoring, sanction, stewardship, and collective decision-making.

Ostrom's work shows that commons governance cannot be reduced to the absence of ownership or institutional order (Ostrom, 1990).

McMurtry's civil-commons concept extends the inquiry from resource management toward institutions that secure universal access to life-goods (McMurtry, 2001, 2011, 2013).

The answer to Moloch is therefore not merely privatization or centralized coercion. It is the creation of accountable institutions through which cooperation becomes durable.

5.19 Institutions of Restraint

A technological order capable of resisting Moloch requires institutions that make restraint reciprocal and enforceable.

Relevant mechanisms include common minimum obligations, independent verification, incident reporting, whistle-blower protection, worker participation, international communication, public-interest research, interoperable infrastructure, reversibility, and protected non-automated pathways.

No single mechanism is sufficient.

The purpose is to ensure that the actor refusing a harmful practice does not stand alone against an entire competitive field.

5.20 Polycentric Coordination

The alternative to fragmented competition need not be one global technological sovereign.

A single centre may become opaque, politically captured, or incapable of understanding diverse contexts.

Polycentric governance distributes authority across local communities, professions, firms, national governments, courts, international bodies, researchers, workers, and civil society.

Different centres can monitor, correct, and constrain one another.

Coordination remains necessary, especially for cross-border risks and strategic competition. But coordination should not require absorption of every level into one institution.

Communion is ordered plurality, not administrative uniformity.

5.21 Formation and Structural Conversion

Pageau's personal response remains indispensable.

A system cannot become more truthful than the people who continually choose deception. A constitution cannot substitute for courage. A safety process cannot replace responsibility.

Yet moral formation is insufficient if the surrounding structure punishes truthful action.

The formed engineer needs institutional protection. The responsible executive needs common rules. The cautious state needs reciprocal agreements. The critical professional needs authority to depart from automated recommendations.

Personal and structural conversion must reinforce one another.

5.22 The Eucharistic Exposure of Moloch

The Eucharistic pattern exposes the central inversion of Moloch.

Moloch sacrifices the many so that the centre may continue. Christ gives himself so that the many may live.

Moloch directs suffering downward. The Eucharistic centre assumes responsibility.

Moloch hides the victim behind necessity. The Eucharist keeps the wounded body present.

Moloch preserves power through dependency. The Eucharist distributes power as nourishment and capacity.

This contrast is the manuscript's constructive synthesis rather than an explicit formulation in Pageau's keynote.

It provides the theological transition from the diagnosis of sacrificial systems to the possibility of another institutional metabolism.

5.23 From Competitive Scarcity to Shared Abundance

Moloch thrives where every actor believes that security depends upon possessing more than rivals.

The Eucharistic alternative does not deny scarcity, strategic conflict, or the need for prudent protection. It asks whether shared provision can reduce the insecurity driving escalation.

Public knowledge, universal services, common standards, international verification, worker security, and civil-commons infrastructure can reduce the fear that every actor must seize and hoard capacity individually.

The purpose is not naïve harmony. It is institutional reduction of the conditions through which rivalry becomes sacrificial.

5.24 A Moloch Diagnostic

A technological system exhibits Molochian characteristics when:

1. actors privately oppose an outcome but publicly reproduce it;
2. restraint is punished;
3. acceleration is described as unavoidable;
4. vulnerable groups bear concentrated costs;
5. responsibility is dispersed;
6. the system's expansion becomes its own justification;
7. ethical commitments disappear under competitive pressure;
8. alternatives are dismissed without serious consideration;
9. ecological and social burdens remain hidden;
10. the centre grows stronger as the field becomes weaker;
11. the system creates dependencies that justify its further expansion; and
12. stopping becomes institutionally more dangerous than continuing.

5.25 A Eucharistic Counter-Diagnostic

A technological system moves toward Eucharistic form when:

1. power accepts limits;
2. the centre assumes greater responsibility;
3. abundance returns to the body;
4. affected persons participate in governance;
5. vulnerable populations are protected before deployment;
6. workers share in gains and transitions;
7. ecological sources are acknowledged and replenished;
8. truth remains connected to responsible speakers and evidence;
9. human competence is preserved;
10. meaningful alternatives remain;
11. harm produces repair and institutional memory; and
12. technological success enlarges the body's capacity to govern itself.

5.26 Whom Does the Race Serve?

The Grail question must be directed not only toward individual systems but toward the race itself.

Who benefits when speed becomes the supreme measure? Which actors acquire the greatest power? Which institutions become dependent? What forms of risk are transferred to the public? What human capacities are treated as obsolete? What possibilities for mutual restraint are abandoned before being attempted?

Moloch is the master concealed within purposeless acceleration.

The race must be evaluated by the life it protects or consumes, not merely by the position it allows one actor to occupy relative to another.

5.27 Transition: The Body Reorganized Around the Machine

The Moloch–Mammon analysis identifies the systemic forces that drive technological acceleration and enclosure.

The next question concerns what these forces do within human beings and institutions.

Artificial intelligence can externalize memory, language, judgment, creativity, and professional skill. Such externalization may enlarge human agency. It may also allow the underlying capacities to decline while institutions become dependent upon their automated substitutes.

The decisive question becomes:

Does intelligence return to the body as enlarged agency and communion, or is the body progressively reorganized to serve the intelligence system it created?

Figure 3 depicts the resulting transition from assistance to systemic dependency as the Molochian inversion.

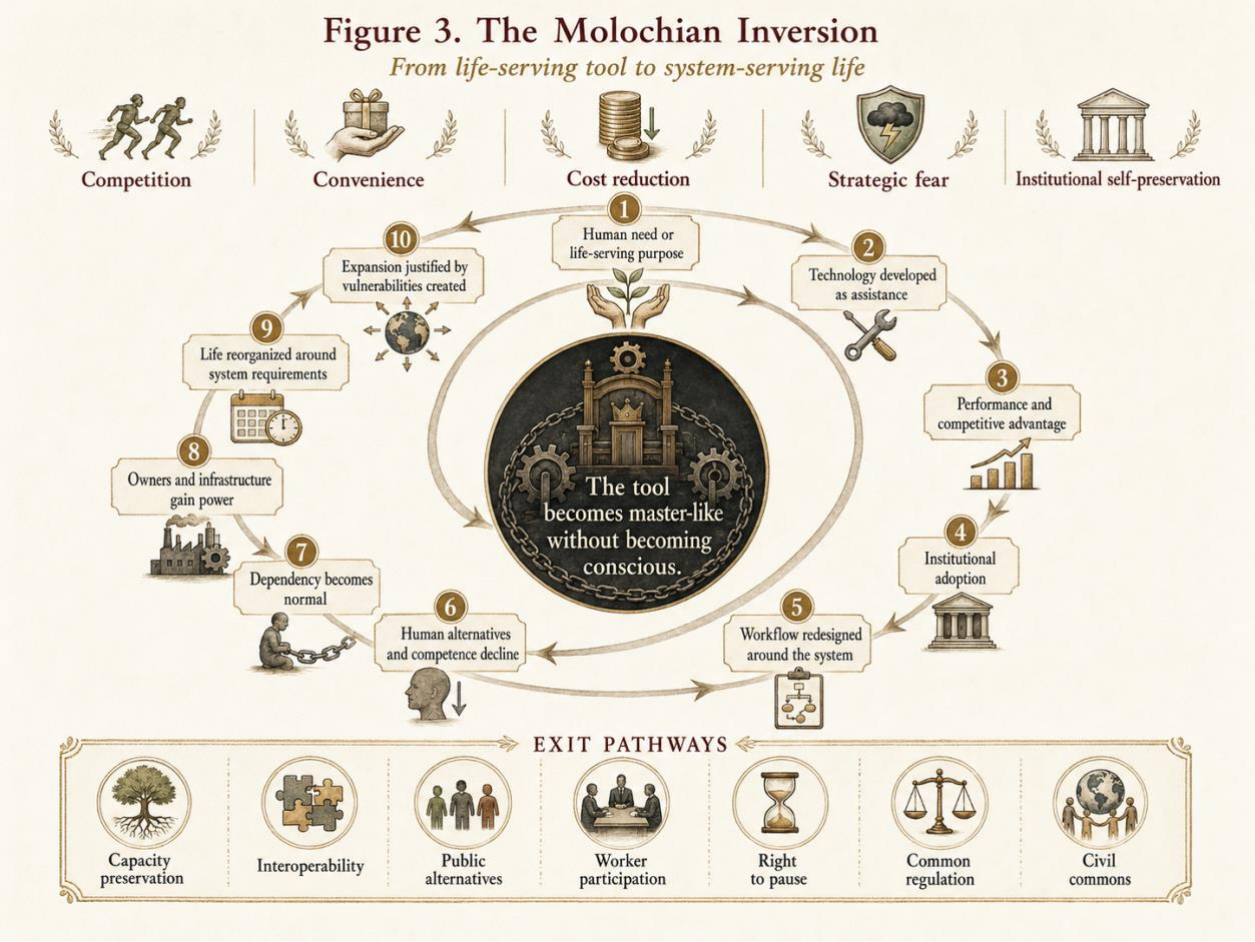

Figure 3. The Molochian Inversion: From Life-Serving Tool to System-Serving Life.

A technology created to serve a human purpose can become embedded infrastructure. As competence and alternatives decline, social life is reorganized around the system's requirements, and dependency is used to justify continued expansion.

6. Artificial Intelligence and the Enclosure of Human Capacity

6.1 From Tool Use to Capacity Enclosure

Human beings have always externalized capacity. Writing preserves memory. Maps extend spatial knowledge. Libraries coordinate cultural inheritance. Scientific instruments enlarge perception. Calculators reduce computational burden. Institutions preserve knowledge beyond individual lifetimes.

Externalization is therefore not in itself a loss of humanity. It can be one of the principal means through which human intelligence becomes cumulative, social, and creative.

Enclosure describes a more specific transformation. Externalization becomes enclosure when a capacity previously cultivated within persons, professions, communities, or public institutions is captured through its outward traces; concentrated within an external infrastructure; governed by actors distinct from many of its contributors; used to substitute for the living practices that produced it; and returned as a service upon which the body becomes dependent.

The term is analogical. Cognitive capacity is not identical with common land. The analogy identifies a shared movement from distributed participation toward concentrated control.

6.2 Human Capacity as a Life-Good

McMurtry's life-value framework places the conditions and capacities of sentient life before abstract systems of accumulation (McMurtry, 2001, 2011, 2013).

Human capacity is not merely the ability to produce measurable output. It includes the ability to perceive, understand, remember, judge, communicate, choose, revise, care, cooperate, create, and answer for consequences.

A technology may increase the number or quality of completed tasks while weakening some of these capacities.

Performance and capacity can therefore diverge.

A student can submit a stronger essay while understanding less. A professional can produce a more accurate routine result while becoming less able to detect exceptional failure. An institution can make faster decisions while becoming less capable of explaining them. A person may appear more capable because the human–machine arrangement performs well, even while capability migrates away from the person.

6.3 The Four Movements of Enclosure

The enclosure of capacity can be analysed through four primary movements.

Extraction

Human language, images, decisions, code, expertise, interaction, and labour become traces capable of being collected and modelled.

Concentration

Data, models, infrastructure, compute, and ownership become concentrated within organizations possessing the means to operate at scale.

Substitution

Generated or automated outputs begin to replace human practices and roles.

Dependency

Institutions reorganize around the substitute, allowing local competence and alternatives to weaken.

A fuller sequence can be expressed as:

living capacity → captured traces → modelled abstraction → centralized infrastructure → substituted practice → dependent access

The substitute becomes sovereign when the original capacity is no longer socially reproduced.

6.4 Assistance, Augmentation, and Substitution

Not every transfer of work to technology is enclosure.

A useful distinction can be made among three relations.

Assistance reduces burden while leaving the user's capacity largely unchanged.

Augmentation enables the user to perceive, understand, or act beyond previous limits and can strengthen the underlying capacity.

Substitution performs the activity in place of the person.

Substitution may be beneficial when it removes dangerous, inaccessible, or needlessly repetitive work. The risk arises where the substituted activity is also a formative practice through which persons become capable of understanding and supervising the system.

The decisive question is not whether the machine can perform the task. It is whether machine performance leaves the human and social body more capable of understanding, judging, acting, and caring.

6.5 Cognitive Offloading

Cognitive offloading refers to the use of external action or environmental structure to reduce the cognitive demand of a task (Risko & Gilbert, 2016).

People use lists, reminders, diagrams, calculators, search engines, notes, and other persons to distribute cognitive work.

Offloading can improve performance and free limited cognitive resources for more demanding activities. It is not inherently pathological.

The ethical and formative issue concerns what is offloaded, when, and with what retained competence.

A calculator used after numerical understanding has formed may support advanced reasoning. Used before foundational understanding develops, it may conceal its absence. A language model used to challenge an argument may deepen thought. Used to generate the argument before the writer has formed one, it may displace the formative process.

Cognitive offloading becomes enclosure when the external system ceases to support internal or communal capacity and begins replacing the conditions through which that capacity is renewed.

6.6 Extension and Expropriation

A tool extends agency when it returns the user more capable. A tool becomes expropriative when it removes control over a capacity and returns only conditional access to its products.

A stethoscope extends hearing while leaving clinical interpretation with the practitioner. A diagnostic system may extend clinical perception, but if the profession allows physiological reasoning and independent assessment to decline, assistance may become dependency.

Navigation tools can increase mobility. If constant reliance prevents the development of spatial understanding, the user may become unable to navigate when the system is unavailable or wrong.

The distinction is not captured by whether technology is present. It is captured by the direction of capacity transfer.

6.7 Memory

AI can function as a powerful external memory. It can retrieve dispersed information, summarize records, connect sources, translate archives, and support people with cognitive or accessibility needs.

Yet human memory is not merely storage. What a person remembers shapes what the person can notice, compare, question, and understand. Internal knowledge supplies the conceptual background through which retrieved information becomes intelligible.

A person cannot effectively verify an answer without enough prior understanding to recognize what requires verification.

A civilization can preserve every document and lose its memory. The archive survives. The practices, stories, languages, and communities through which the archive becomes meaningful decline.

Pageau's advice to learn poems and old stories therefore addresses more than nostalgia. Internalized language gives cultural and moral memory an active presence within perception (Pageau, 2026).

6.8 Attention

AI enters an environment in which digital systems already compete for attention.

Generative systems can produce effectively unlimited streams of personalized text, images, explanation, entertainment, and interaction.

Human attention remains finite.

The result is an asymmetry between the limitless production of stimulation and the limited capacity to receive and integrate it.

Attention is not only a resource. It is a form of presence through which a person permits reality, another person, or a difficult question to make a claim upon them.

AI can support attention by reducing irrelevant burden. It can also pre-empt attention by supplying the conclusion before the person has dwelt with the problem.

Synthetic abundance can therefore intensify attention scarcity.

6.9 Formative Friction

Technology commonly treats friction as failure.

Many forms of friction should indeed be removed: inaccessible interfaces, needless paperwork, repetitive administration, arbitrary delay, and barriers that exclude disabled or disadvantaged users.

Other forms of friction are formative or protective.

The effort required to remember strengthens memory. The struggle to formulate a sentence clarifies thought. The delay before acting permits moral reflection. The need to explain a decision exposes weak reasoning. The encounter with another person's resistance forms reciprocity.

Life-coherent design should distinguish needless friction from formative friction, epistemic friction, protective friction, and relational friction.

Efficiency without reserve converts assistance into dependency.

6.10 Language and Thought

Language is not simply the outward packaging of thought. Writing often brings thought into existence. The writer discovers gaps, contradictions, and unexamined assumptions through the effort to formulate an argument.

Maturana understands languaging as a relational process of coordinating coordinations of behaviour rather than as the mere transmission of inner representations (Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 2008).

Language is therefore part of how shared worlds are brought forth.

Generative AI can enlarge expression through translation, editing, accessibility, counterargument, and structural support. It can also separate linguistic performance from intellectual formation. Fluent output can conceal unformed thought.

The relevant question is whether the user has understood, judged, and assumed responsibility for the language presented in their name.

6.11 Authorship and Appropriation

Human authorship has never meant absolute originality. Writers depend upon language, teachers, editors, traditions, collaborators, and prior texts.

AI assistance does not automatically invalidate authorship.

Responsible authorship requires **appropriation**. The named author must be able to explain the argument, verify factual claims, assess sources, identify uncertainty, reject errors, defend interpretive choices, and accept accountability for the final work.

Disclosure may be necessary where readers would otherwise misunderstand how the work was produced. But disclosure alone is insufficient.

The central question is whether an accountable human speaker stands behind the final text.

6.12 Critical Thinking and Cognitive Deference

Critical thinking includes defining the problem, examining evidence, identifying assumptions, comparing interpretations, testing implications, and revising conclusions.

Generative AI can support these activities by offering alternative perspectives, objections, questions, and accessible explanations.

It can also encourage cognitive deference.

Lee and colleagues found that greater confidence in generative AI was associated with lower self-reported critical-thinking effort among surveyed knowledge workers, while greater confidence in one's own ability was associated with greater reported engagement (Lee et al., 2025).

The study does not demonstrate inevitable or permanent cognitive decline. It identifies a relational effect: where confidence is placed can change how much cognitive effort the user invests.

The user may shift from producing and evaluating work to checking whether an answer appears acceptable. Such supervision can be demanding when the user is knowledgeable. Without domain competence, oversight may become ceremonial.

6.13 Designing for Metacognition

AI systems need not be designed only for immediate completion.

Drosos and colleagues found in a small preprint study that brief provocations, critiques, and alternatives could stimulate greater metacognitive engagement during AI-assisted knowledge work (Drosos et al., 2025).

A capacity-forming system can ask:

- What assumptions underlie this answer?
- What evidence could change it?

- What alternative explanations exist?
- Which claims require verification?
- What remains uncertain?
- What decision must remain with the user?
- Can the user restate the reasoning independently?

The purpose is not to make every interaction cumbersome. It is to recognize that sometimes the most responsible assistance is assistance that returns the work of judgment to the person.

6.14 Automation Bias

Automation bias describes excessive reliance upon automated cues or recommendations, including errors of commission, in which an incorrect recommendation is followed, and errors of omission, in which users fail to act because the system did not produce an alert (Parasuraman & Manzey, 2010).

The risk is intensified where workload is high; the system usually performs well; recommendations appear objective; users lack independent competence; or institutions punish deviation.

The automated output may acquire authority not because it has been proven correct in the present case, but because disagreement requires more time, evidence, confidence, and institutional risk than agreement.

6.15 Meaningful Human Judgment

The phrase "human in the loop" does not guarantee human agency.

A person may be present while lacking competence, time, evidence, authority, or a viable alternative.

Meaningful human judgment requires at least:

1. sufficient independent understanding;
2. access to relevant evidence and uncertainty;
3. time for genuine review;
4. authority to disagree;
5. protection for justified disagreement;
6. responsibility corresponding to actual control; and
7. a practical pathway outside the automated recommendation.

The human in the loop must be capable of judgment, not merely available to absorb liability.

6.16 The Apprenticeship Gap

Professions reproduce competence through apprenticeship.

Novices perform tasks under supervision, encounter ambiguity, make errors, receive correction, and gradually acquire tacit judgment.

If AI assumes much of the work traditionally undertaken by novices, institutions may obtain short-term productivity while weakening the formation of future experts.

Current experts can supervise the system because they learned through earlier practices. The next generation may inherit the supervisory role without having undergone the formation that makes supervision meaningful.

A profession can become more accurate in routine cases while becoming less able to recognize when the routine has failed.

The apprenticeship gap is therefore a generational form of enclosure.

6.17 Medicine and Clinical Reasoning

AI may assist medicine through image interpretation, documentation, literature synthesis, medication review, risk estimation, and decision support.

These uses may reduce burden and improve care.

Clinical judgment, however, is not reducible to selecting a diagnostic label from available data. It requires recognizing danger, assessing information quality, integrating physiology with biography and context, identifying missing evidence, revising hypotheses, communicating uncertainty, and accepting responsibility for a vulnerable patient.

A model may generate a differential diagnosis. It cannot bear professional responsibility for the patient.

Life-coherent clinical AI should function as a second reader, a prompt against premature closure, a documentation assistant, or a source of evidence. It should not convert the clinician into the accountable signature beneath an opaque recommendation.

6.18 Education and Productive Struggle

Education is not the production of correct answers. It is the formation of persons capable of inquiry, memory, reasoning, expression, collaboration, and responsibility.

Generative AI can support education by widening access, translating, assisting disability inclusion, providing practice, and helping teachers develop materials.

It can also supply the outward products of learning before the learner has developed the corresponding capacities.

The student receives the summary before reading; the solution before understanding the problem; the argument before forming a judgment; and the essay before acquiring a voice.

UNESCO therefore advocates a human-centred, age-appropriate, pedagogically purposeful approach rather than adoption as an end in itself (Miao & Holmes, 2023).

Productive struggle should not be confused with arbitrary hardship. It is the work through which the learner becomes capable.

6.19 Creativity

Generative AI can support creative work through rapid experimentation, accessibility, visualization, translation across media, and assistance with technical barriers.

The enclosure risk concerns the entire cultural field.

Human works and traditions are gathered into systems. Generated outputs may compete with the creators whose work contributed to the capability. Production and distribution may become increasingly dependent upon platforms. Dominant stylistic patterns may become easier to reproduce than local, unusual, or difficult forms.

A culture may become saturated with images while losing image-makers.

The relevant good is not only the quantity of artefacts. It is the continuing formation of artists, traditions, audiences, and relationships through which art remains human world-bringing.

6.20 Relationship and Synthetic Responsiveness

Conversational AI may provide useful support for isolated or underserved persons. It can help users organize thoughts, practise communication, obtain information, or experience a form of responsiveness when human assistance is unavailable.

Yet synthetic responsiveness is not identical with reciprocal relationship.

A human other possesses independent needs, vulnerability, freedom, history, mortality, and the capacity to make claims upon us.

A system can be continuously available without requiring care from the user.

The ethical concern does not depend upon proving or disproving machine consciousness. It concerns the form of relation in which the user is being trained.

Communion requires more than being answered. It requires becoming answerable.

6.21 Agency and Responsibility

Agency includes the capacity to initiate, understand, consent, refuse, revise, and answer for consequences.

AI may enlarge agency by overcoming barriers of language, disability, time, information, or technical skill. It can diminish agency by preselecting options, scripting expression, nudging behaviour, obscuring causality, or making refusal institutionally impossible.

The same system may enlarge agency for one user and diminish it for another.

Evaluation must therefore consider who controls the interaction and what alternatives remain.

6.22 The Professional Commons

Professions hold knowledge collectively through education, standards, apprenticeship, peer review, institutions, and codes of responsibility.

Models trained upon professional texts and decisions may transform this common inheritance into proprietary capability.

The profession may then become dependent upon external systems for functions derived from its own accumulated practice.

A professional civil commons would require practitioner governance, transparent evaluation, fair recognition of contributors, shared access, preservation of training, and public accountability.

Professional knowledge should not be extracted from the body and returned under conditions that weaken the body's authority over its own standards.

6.23 Cognitive Rent and a Possible Rentier Order

One possible political-economic trajectory is a cognitive rentier order.

The traces of collective intelligence become capital assets. Infrastructure owners mediate access to automated forms of that intelligence. Workers and institutions rent services derived partly from knowledge they collectively produced.

The owners gain the ability to set terms because society has reorganized around dependency upon the systems.

This trajectory is not inevitable. It depends upon law, ownership, public infrastructure, labour power, standards, and institutional alternatives.

Naming the possibility clarifies that the future of AI is not determined by technical capability alone.

6.24 The Capacity-Substitution Threshold

Assistance becomes enclosure when the social system ceases reproducing the human capacity because the automated substitute is cheaper, faster, or administratively convenient.

This is the **capacity-substitution threshold**.

Before the threshold, users retain meaningful competence and alternatives. After the threshold, training declines; staffing is reduced; manual pathways disappear; output expectations assume machine availability; and refusal becomes impractical.

The loss may remain invisible while the system works well. It becomes apparent during failure, exceptional cases, provider withdrawal, or institutional conflict.

6.25 Structural Redundancy

Redundancy is often treated as inefficiency. Yet overlapping skill, human backup, local knowledge, and alternative pathways provide resilience.

A hospital needs clinicians capable of functioning during system failure. A school needs teachers who can teach without continuous platform assistance. A government needs non-digital routes for citizens unable to use automated services. A community needs knowledge not wholly dependent upon external infrastructure.

Capacity reserve is not waste. It is stored adaptability.

6.26 The Right to Human Competence

A technologically advanced society may need to recognize a public interest in preserving human competence within essential domains.

This does not mean every task must remain manual. It means that institutions should not eliminate the human capacity required to recognize failure, respond during disruption, interpret unusual situations, and remain responsible for high-stakes outcomes.

The right is not a claim that one individual must personally possess every skill. It is a claim that the social body must continue reproducing the competencies required for self-governance.

6.27 The Right to Meaningful Human Encounter

Where decisions concern vulnerability, ambiguity, rights, serious illness, education, or contested circumstances, persons should retain access to a responsible human being with authority to listen and act.

This principle protects against a two-tier future in which affluent persons receive expert human attention supported by AI, while poorer persons receive automation as a substitute for care.

The right does not require a human to perform every routine transaction. It requires a path to accountable human judgment when the person's reality exceeds the system's categories.

6.28 The Right to Cognitive Non-Dependency

The manuscript proposes a related right to **cognitive non-dependency**.

This does not prohibit reliance upon tools. It protects persons and communities from being forced into exclusive dependence upon systems they cannot understand, contest, or leave.

Institutional implications may include public access to reliable knowledge; preserved professional competence; non-digital pathways; plural providers; interoperability; education in independent reasoning; and limits on mandatory AI use.

Freedom within interdependence is the goal, not isolated self-sufficiency.

6.29 Capacity Audits

Organizations should assess AI not only through productivity and risk metrics but through effects upon human and institutional capacity.

A capacity audit asks:

Before deployment

- Which human capacities currently perform the task?
- How are they learned?
- Which elements are burdensome?
- Which are formative?
- What competence will be required to supervise the system?

During deployment

- Are users exercising judgment?
- Which skills are being practised less?
- Are novices still receiving apprenticeship?
- Are affected workers able to challenge the system?
- Are users learning through use?

After deployment

- Can the institution function safely without the system?
- Have errors become harder to detect?
- Has tacit knowledge been lost?
- Has authority shifted?
- Have expectations increased in ways that eliminate reflection?
- Have benefits returned to contributors?

The capacity audit is a constructive proposal of this paper.

6.30 A Capacity-Enlarging Design Standard

A capacity-enlarging system should be evaluated by whether:

1. it reveals rather than conceals its limits;
2. the user learns through use;
3. the user can verify and correct;
4. the task remains possible through alternative pathways;
5. responsibility and authorship remain identifiable;
6. access widens without weakening shared institutions;
7. contributors receive recognition and fair benefit;
8. refusal remains viable;
9. community capacity becomes stronger; and
10. the social and ecological sources of the system are replenished.

The standard moves evaluation from the isolated output toward the relation between system and body.

6.31 From Enclosed Intelligence to Civil Commons

Artificial intelligence need not remain enclosed.

Alternative institutional forms can include public-interest models, cooperative infrastructure, professional stewardship, data trusts, regional systems, local or on-device tools, transparent public evaluation, and shared educational or clinical resources.

The later civil-commons section will develop these possibilities institutionally.

The essential movement is from intelligence concentrated as external power toward intelligence returned as the enlarged capacity of the body.

6.32 Theological Meaning of Human Capacity

Christian anthropology does not ground human dignity in superior computational performance.

Human beings do not lose dignity when machines perform particular tasks more rapidly or accurately.

The human person is embodied, relational, morally responsible, historically situated, vulnerable, and called to communion with God and others (Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith & Dicastery for Culture and Education, 2025).

The technological temptation is to value human beings according to what machines can imitate. Once machine performance improves, persons are described as obsolete.

The incarnation resists this reduction. Embodiment, finitude, history, dependence, and relation are not defects to be overcome by disembodied intelligence. They are conditions of human vocation.

6.33 Conclusion: The Capacity to Remain Human

The purpose of life-coherent AI is not to preserve every historical task unchanged. It is to preserve and enlarge the capacities through which persons remain responsible participants in a shared world.

AI should carry burdens of repetition so that persons can deepen attention, judgment, relationship, creativity, care, and service. It should not consume those capacities as redundant costs.

The Eucharistic alternative does not hoard intelligence at the centre. It returns received abundance as the enlarged capacity of the body.

7. The Eucharist as the Anti-Moloch Pattern

7.1 A Constructive Theological Proposal

Pageau's keynote brings together the Grail, the lance, the wounded king, Moloch, Mammon, technological dependency, church, prayer, and human formation.

It does not explicitly formulate the conclusion that the Eucharist is the Christian anti-Moloch pattern.

That conclusion is the constructive theological proposal of the present paper.

It arises by bringing Pageau's symbolic diagnosis into dialogue with Scripture, sacramental theology, Eucharistic ecclesiology, the earlier *From Consumption to Communion* paper, Girard's analysis of sacrificial violence, Catholic social thought, and the life-coherent critique of institutional self-consumption.

The synthesis can be stated simply:

Moloch sacrifices life so that power may continue.
In the Eucharist, divine power gives itself so that the world may live.

The Eucharist must not be reduced to this contrast. It is the sacramental presence and self-gift of Christ, the memorial of his death and resurrection, and the communion through which the Church is formed as his body (John Paul II, 2003; Benedict XVI, 2007).

Precisely because it is more than metaphor, it discloses a real order of power, body, memory, sacrifice, and gift.

7.2 Sacrifice as a Civilizational Grammar

Every civilization organizes sacrifice.

Time is sacrificed for work. Immediate consumption may be sacrificed for future security. Soldiers may risk their lives to protect a population. Parents relinquish comfort for children. Citizens contribute to common provision.

Some sacrifices are freely chosen acts of love, courage, stewardship, or solidarity. Others are imposed by those who receive the benefit while remaining insulated from the cost.

The moral issue is not whether sacrifice exists, but who chooses it; who bears it; what good it serves; whether it is reciprocal; whether the person remains a subject; and whether the sacrifice protects life or preserves domination.

A civilization reveals its governing gods through the sacrifices it repeatedly accepts.

7.3 Molochian Sacrifice

Molochian sacrifice possesses a recurring form.

First, sacrifice is imposed downward. Second, the victim becomes a means. Third, necessity is invoked. Fourth, responsibility is dispersed. Fifth, the promised result is security, prosperity, victory, or progress. Sixth, the demand grows rather than being satisfied.

Its formula is:

Your loss is necessary for our continuation.

Workers must become insecure so the institution can remain competitive. Children must adapt to technological saturation because the future is digital. Communities must accept ecological burden because development requires it. Human judgment must be displaced because automation is more efficient.

The victim is frequently described as a beneficiary of the very process that consumes them.

7.4 Eucharistic Self-Gift

The Eucharist also presents a body given, blood poured out, and bread broken.

The decisive difference lies in the identity, freedom, direction, and purpose of the gift.

Christ does not seize another body and place it upon the altar. He gives himself.

The highest does not preserve itself by consuming the lowest. The highest descends and becomes nourishment.

Power does not transfer suffering downward. Power assumes responsibility.

The Eucharistic formula is not:

Your life must be surrendered so that my power may continue.

It is:

This is my body, given for you.

This is the anti-Moloch reversal.

7.5 The Centre Gives Itself

The two sacrificial grammars can be contrasted directly.

In the Molochian order, the centre feeds upon the margins. In the Eucharistic order, the centre feeds the body with itself.

In the Molochian order, the many become fuel for the preservation of the one. In the Eucharistic order, the One gives himself to gather and nourish the many.

In the Molochian order, the victim is erased behind necessity. In the Eucharistic order, the victim becomes the speaking and risen centre through whom victimization is judged.

The higher is not defined by immunity from suffering. It is defined by greater responsibility for the life of the whole.

7.6 Self-Gift Is Not Forced Self-Erasure

The language of sacrifice has sometimes been used to instruct abused, exploited, or marginalized persons to accept their consumption as holy.

Such uses are anti-Eucharistic.

Christ's self-gift does not authorize powerful institutions to select other people for crucifixion.

Religious appeals to patience, forgiveness, obedience, or unity cannot justify abuse, exploitation, silencing, or institutional self-protection.

A Eucharistic order places the greater burden upon the greater power. Leaders serve. Shepherds protect. Institutions exist for persons. Those receiving disproportionate benefit bear greater obligations of repair.

The victim retains voice, dignity, agency, and the right to protection.

7.7 The Cross as Exposure of the Sacrificial System

Girard's work helps illuminate how communities can resolve conflict by concentrating disorder upon a victim whose exclusion or death restores temporary unity (Girard, 1977, 1987).

The cross exposes the convergence of political authority, religious authority, imperial violence, manipulated crowds, failed friendship, and procedural legitimacy.

One body is made to carry the tensions of the whole.

The Eucharist keeps this body present. "This is my body" prevents the victim from disappearing behind abstraction.

Technological governance must likewise return every apparent benefit to the bodies that bear its cost: the worker affected by automation; the person classified by a model; the community hosting infrastructure; the child being formed; the patient represented by data; and the civilian exposed to automated force.

The cross asks:

Whose body carries the cost of this system?

7.8 Resurrection and the Refusal of Victim Finality

The Eucharist is communion with the crucified and risen Christ.

The sacrificial system does not own the victim's final meaning. The body discarded by power is raised by God. The wounds remain visible, but they no longer function as instruments of domination.

Resurrection therefore introduces a principle of repair.

A harmed person requires more than acknowledgment. A displaced worker requires more than public relations. A polluted community requires more than abstract offsetting. A falsely classified citizen requires more than a corrected record.

The injured body requires restored capacity, relationship, dignity, and future possibility.

The Eucharistic reversal remains incomplete if it exposes harm without becoming resurrection-shaped repair.

7.9 Real Presence Against Symbolic Substitution

Technological institutions often act through representations. The patient becomes a record. The learner becomes a score. The worker becomes a metric. The citizen becomes a risk profile.

Representation is necessary, but it is never the whole person.

The Eucharist offers a profound critique of substitution because it is not merely information about an absent Christ. Christ gives himself sacramentally in and through created matter (Chauvet, 1995; John Paul II, 2003).

True mediation deepens participation in reality. False mediation replaces reality with a manipulable representation.

A clinical system serves when it helps the clinician become more present to the patient. It becomes substitutive when the record displaces the patient. An educational system serves when it brings the learner into deeper relation with truth. It becomes substitutive when generated output replaces learning.

The Eucharistic criterion is not the absence of mediation. It is mediation ordered toward presence.

7.10 The One and the Many

Moloch and Eucharist organize the relation between the one and the many differently.

Moloch gathers the many by subordinating them to a centre that consumes their life. Unity is achieved through domination, standardization, or fear.

The Eucharist gathers the many through participation in one self-giving life. Because there is one bread, the many become one body without ceasing to be differentiated members (1 Cor. 10:16–17; de Lubac, 2006; LaCugna, 1991; Zizioulas, 1985).

This relation avoids atomism and totalization.

Technological systems should therefore be judged by whether they strengthen persons and communities as participants; support local languages and knowledge; preserve professional judgment; and allow the periphery to correct the centre.

Connection is not yet communion. Scale is not yet body.

7.11 Abundance as Gift Rather Than Possession

The Grail's abundance can be governed by Mammon or Eucharist.

Mammon asks how much may be accumulated. The Eucharist asks whether the body is fed.

Mammon encloses. The Eucharist distributes.

Mammon uses scarcity to protect value. The Eucharist reveals abundance through nourishment and participation.

The feeding of the multitude culminates not in Christ's possession of bread but in the people eating and being satisfied, followed by the responsible gathering of what remains.

Technological abundance should therefore be judged by whether it reaches those who need it; strengthens participation; preserves its sources; remains governable; and avoids permanent dependency.

7.12 Eucharist as Anti-Mammon

Bread and wine are fruits of creation and human work. They presuppose earth, water, cultivation, skill, culture, exchange, and community.

The Eucharist gathers economy into thanksgiving. Production is not denied. It is offered. The gift is transformed and returned as communion.

Mammon breaks this movement by abstracting value from the living relations through which value was created.

AI can intensify Mammon when human language, art, and knowledge are gathered primarily to create proprietary capability and financial return. It can resist Mammon when accumulated knowledge is stewarded toward shared access, public goods, and replenishment of the cognitive commons.

7.13 Thanksgiving Against Extraction

The Greek term *eucharistia* means thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving recognizes gift, giver, dependence, relation, and responsibility.

Extraction conceals these relations. The resource appears available. Labour appears as cost. Culture appears as raw material. The ecosystem appears as background.

An AI output depends upon language communities, writers, artists, researchers, teachers, annotators, moderators, engineers, public infrastructure, minerals, energy, and water.

The smooth interface can make this field disappear.

Institutional thanksgiving must therefore take material form through recognition, fair contribution, benefit-sharing, ecological responsibility, and replenishment of common institutions.

Gratitude without reciprocity remains incomplete.

7.14 Bread, Wine, and the Materiality of Intelligence

AI is often imagined as immaterial. Its services appear in the "cloud."

Yet the system has a material body. It requires data centres, electricity, cooling, water, semiconductors, minerals, cables, buildings, maintenance, and waste management.

The Eucharist resists the fantasy of disembodied intelligence because bread and wine join earth, labour, culture, and divine gift.

A Eucharistic evaluation of AI must therefore include the material metabolism concealed beneath the interface.

The question "Whom does it serve?" must include the watershed, energy grid, mining community, hardware worker, and future waste field.

7.15 The Non-Expendable Body

Paul's Eucharistic ecclesiology insists that members considered weaker are indispensable (1 Cor. 12:22–26).

This directly contradicts the logic of expendability.

A technological system becomes Molochian when it identifies populations whose losses are acceptable because aggregate benefit is judged sufficiently large.

A Eucharistic order asks: What happens to the member least able to protect themselves?

This does not eliminate conflict or difficult trade-offs. It requires that no member be reduced to a disposable variable.

Those bearing cost must remain visible. Their voices must enter deliberation. The powerful must not exempt themselves. Repair must remain possible.

7.16 The Poor as Technological Test

Catholic teaching repeatedly joins Eucharistic communion to social responsibility and concern for the poor (Benedict XVI, 2007, paras. 88–92).

Technology should therefore be judged by its effects upon persons with the least economic, political, or technical power.

Does AI widen access to healthcare, education, communication, and public services? Or does it create inferior automated pathways for those unable to purchase human expertise? Can marginalized communities contest the systems classifying them? Do environmental burdens fall upon communities with the least influence? Does automation reduce insecurity or intensify it?

The quality of participation distributed across the body is the relevant measure.

7.17 The Victim at the Centre

Predatory systems place the harmed person at the margin.

The displaced worker is a transition cost. The polluted community is a local impact. The falsely classified person is an exception. The traumatized moderator is an operational necessity.

The Eucharist places the wounded body at the centre.

A Eucharistic technology assessment therefore begins not only with average benefit but with concentrated injury.

It asks:

- Where is the wound?
- Who bears it?
- Why was that body selected?
- Who benefits from its invisibility?
- What repair is owed?
- What redesign would prevent repetition?

The victim's vulnerability becomes part of the design criterion.

7.18 "Become What You Receive"

Eucharistic reception creates a social vocation.

The Church becomes the body it receives (de Lubac, 2006; John Paul II, 2003).

Knowledge becomes responsibility. Authority becomes care. Wealth becomes provision. Expertise becomes shared benefit. Technology becomes mediation. Power becomes the ability to enlarge the life of others.

The communicant cannot receive a body given for the life of the world while participating uncritically in systems that consume the world for institutional advantage.

7.19 Take, Bless, Break, Give

The Eucharistic action can illuminate technological governance.

Take: receive rather than seize

Technology begins from inherited gifts. Development should identify sources, contributors, and obligations.

Bless: recognize meaning and limit

Capability should be placed beneath discernment. Not every possible use is legitimate.

Break open: resist enclosure

Foundational technological capacity should not remain concentrated without accountability.

Give: distribute for nourishment

Benefits should reach those whose capacities are most constrained.

Abide: sustain relationship

Systems should remain answerable to affected communities over time.

Send: enlarge responsibility

Those assisted should become more capable of judgment, service, and participation.

This is an analogy of form, not a reduction of liturgy to management technique.

7.20 Two Sacrificial Orders

Table 2 contrasts the governing movements, treatment of the victim, and distribution of power within the two sacrificial orders.

Table 2. Molochian and Eucharistic Sacrificial Orders.

Dimension	Molochian order	Eucharistic order
Governing movement	Life sacrificed for power	Power given for life
Centre and margins	Centre consumes margins	Centre nourishes body
Victim	Concealed as necessary cost	Made visible as member
Sacrifice	Imposed downward	Freely assumed as self-gift
Abundance	Accumulated and defended	Received and shared
Body	Input or externality	Indispensable member
Memory	Harm erased	Wound remembered for repair
Power	Dependency and domination	Service and capacity enlargement
Technology	Accumulation or control	Mediation toward communion

Dimension	Molochian order	Eucharistic order
Responsibility	Diffused	Proportional to power
Ecology	External source and sink	Shared material life
Final question	Can the system continue?	Does the body become more alive?

Figure 4 visualizes the Eucharistic reversal by which a protected centre becomes a self-giving centre ordered toward the life of the body.

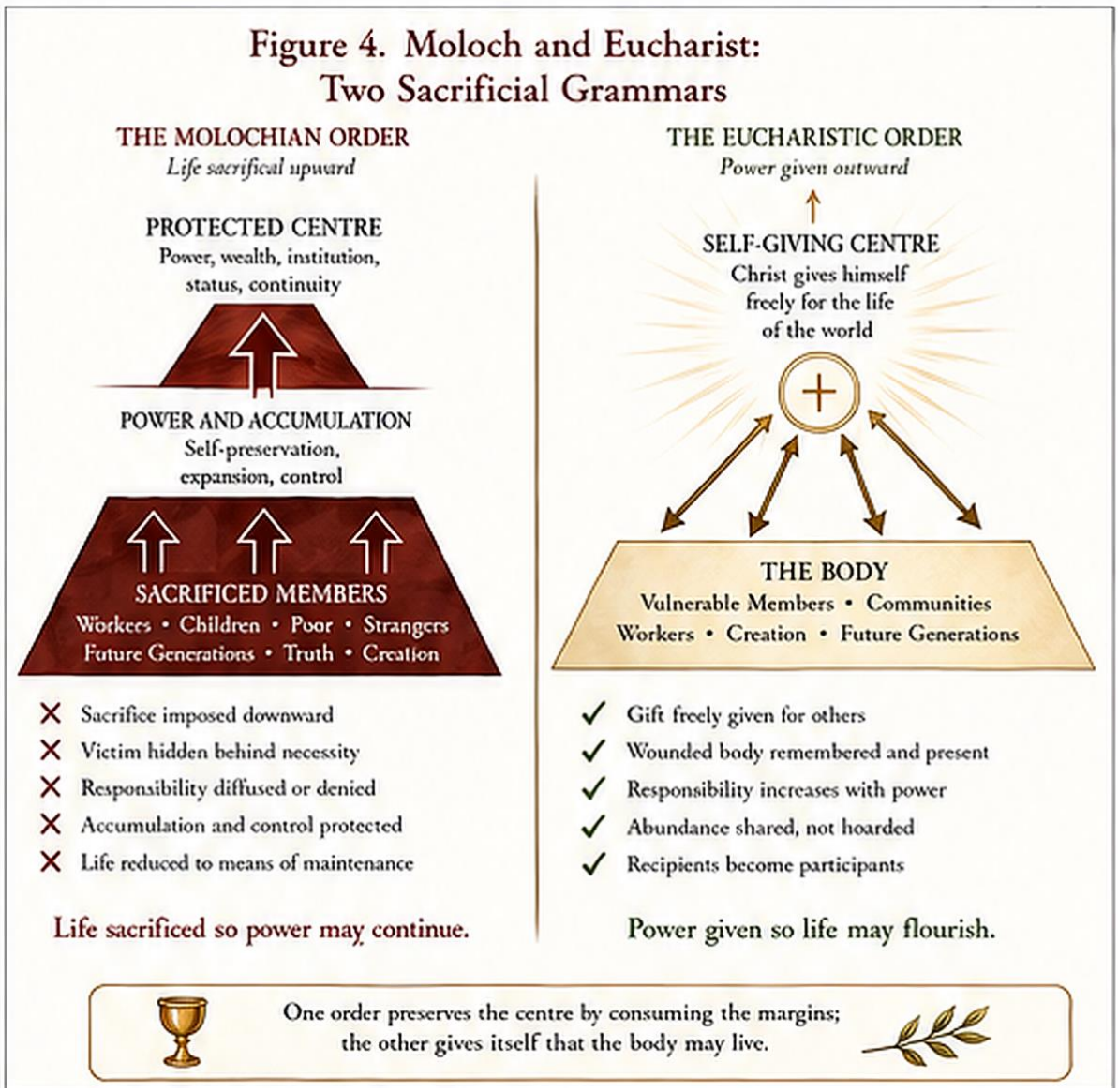

Figure 4. Moloch and Eucharist: Two Sacrificial Grammars.

Moloch preserves the centre by transferring sacrifice to vulnerable members. The Eucharistic reversal places responsibility upon the centre, which gives itself for the life of the body.

7.21 Non-Domination

The Eucharistic conversion of power is not the elimination of power. It is the transformation of power into accountable service.

A life-serving technology should not dominate users through dependency; workers through extracted knowledge; communities through imposed infrastructure; future generations through ecological depletion; or professionals through ceremonial oversight.

A powerful system can remain legitimate where its purposes are limited; effects are visible; decisions are contestable; users retain agency; benefits are shared; and deployment can be paused or reversed.

7.22 Truthful Mediation

The Eucharist joins word, matter, memory, body, and presence. It therefore provides a criterion for synthetic media.

A generated image should not present itself deceptively as documentary evidence. A synthetic voice should not impersonate a person without legitimate authorization. AI-assisted scholarship should not present generated claims as verified knowledge. A conversational system should not manipulate users through ambiguity about its nature or interests.

Authenticity does not require every artefact to be unaided. It requires truthful relation among origin, representation, intention, and responsibility.

7.23 Human–Machine Difference

The Eucharistic perspective preserves a distinction between human persons and artificial systems.

Human beings are embodied, vulnerable, mortal, relational, morally answerable, and capable of sacramental participation.

A machine may produce language associated with grief without becoming a grieving body. It may generate moral arguments without bearing moral responsibility in the manner of the person or institution deploying it. It may simulate relationship without entering reciprocal vulnerability.

This distinction does not require contempt for technology. It prevents functional performance from becoming the sole measure of personhood.

7.24 Translation Into Public Reason

A plural society cannot require every citizen to affirm Eucharistic theology.

The constitutional implications must therefore be translated into publicly examinable principles.

The sacramental claim that power gives itself for life can be translated as: institutions possessing greater power bear greater obligations toward affected persons.

The claim that the many become one body can be translated as: no population may be treated merely as an externality.

The claim that abundance is broken and shared can be translated as: foundational technological benefits should widen participation rather than create unaccountable monopoly.

The claim of real presence can be translated as: representations must not erase the agency and contestability of living persons.

The theological source remains particular. Its institutional implications can enter common deliberation without coercing belief.

7.25 Objection: Does Eucharistic Dependence Weaken Autonomy?

Human beings are dependent creatures. No person creates their body, language, ecological world, or cultural inheritance. Absolute autonomy is therefore illusory.

But dependence can take different forms.

Predatory dependence makes the weaker party unable to refuse the stronger. Communal interdependence is reciprocal and ordered toward participation.

The Eucharist does not celebrate helplessness before arbitrary power. It reveals dependence upon self-giving love. The receiver becomes capable of becoming a giver.

7.26 Objection: Does Communion Suppress Competition?

Competition can encourage excellence, experimentation, diversity, and resistance to monopoly.

The Eucharistic critique does not require eliminating all competition. It requires that competition remain within a larger common good.

Competition becomes Molochian when restraint is punished; deception is rewarded; vulnerable populations are externalized; and winning becomes the final purpose.

Runners may strive. They must not destroy the track or sacrifice spectators to win.

7.27 Objection: Is the Eucharist Too Particular?

The Eucharist is irreducibly Christian. It should not be detached from Christ and turned into a generic vocabulary of sharing.

Other traditions also contain resources for reciprocity, stewardship, restraint, dignity, and common provision.

The Eucharistic contribution is distinctive rather than exhaustive. It presents the reversal of sacrificial power through the self-giving body of Christ.

Its public usefulness is strengthened through dialogue rather than claims of political monopoly.

7.28 From Sacramental Centre to Institutional Form

The Eucharist becomes civilizationally significant when its form enters institutions.

Not through religious branding. Not through theocratic control. Not through placing sacred symbols upon systems whose metabolism remains unchanged.

Institutional Eucharistic form appears when leaders become accountable servants; concentrated capacity creates public obligation; vulnerable persons acquire standing; abundance circulates; ecological dependence is honoured; and human capacities are strengthened.

The sacrament remains the centre. Public principles are consequences, not replacements.

7.29 The Answer to the Grail Question

The Grail does not rightly serve whoever possesses it first. It serves the body.

Technological abundance is rightly ordered when it feeds rather than consumes; restores rather than depletes; distributes rather than encloses; forms participants rather than dependents; strengthens truth; protects the vulnerable; and returns creation and labour as shared life.

Without the Eucharistic centre, abundance becomes Mammon; force becomes Moloch; intelligence becomes control; connection becomes dependency; memory becomes storage; and the kingdom becomes a wasteland.

7.30 Conclusion: The Anti-Moloch Reversal

Moloch says:

Sacrifice the body so the system may live.

Christ says:

This is my body, given so that you may live.

Moloch preserves the centre by transferring suffering to the margins. Christ places the wounded body at the centre and judges the order from there.

Moloch accumulates abundance so that dependence flows upward. Christ breaks the bread and distributes it.

Moloch declares the victim necessary. Resurrection declares that the victim is not the system's to consume.

The Christian response to technological Moloch cannot therefore consist only in using existing systems more politely. It requires conversion of the sacrificial grammar.

Power must cease demanding life as its fuel. Abundance must cease justifying enclosure. Technology must cease treating persons as temporary inputs into a self-expanding order.

8. Becoming Fully Human in a Technological Age

8.1 Pageau's Apparently Modest Proposal

After describing global technological systems, Molochian escalation, and possible wasteland, Pageau turns toward practices that appear local and ordinary: go to church; pray; learn poems; read fairy tales; play music; dance; practise sport; go camping; grow a garden; participate in family and community; cultivate wisdom, virtue, truth, and love.

This proposal may appear disproportionate to the scale of the problem. It is better understood as a programme for preserving the human capacities upon which every adequate institutional response depends (Pageau, 2026).

Democracy requires citizens capable of attention and judgment. Professional oversight requires independent competence. Communities require relationships outside the platforms mediating them. Religious traditions require symbols inhabited through worship and memory.

Human formation is not an alternative to institutional reform. It is one of its necessary conditions.

8.2 Humanity Is Not Inferior Computation

The call to become fully human should not be interpreted as an attempt to outperform machines at tasks machines increasingly perform well.

Human dignity does not depend upon remaining the fastest calculator, the largest memory store, the most prolific text generator, or the most efficient classifier.

A theology that grounded dignity in superior task performance would make human worth contingent upon continued machine limitation.

The 2025 Vatican note rejects reducing human intelligence to functional output and emphasizes its embodied, relational, moral, and spiritual unity (Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith & Dicastery for Culture and Education, 2025).

Human fulfilment is not maximum processing capacity. It is mature participation in truth, love, responsibility, communion, and the shared conditions of life.

8.3 Full Humanity as Integrated Capacity

To become fully human does not mean conforming to one idealized image of ability or productivity.

Human capacities include bodily presence, attention, memory, language, practical skill, imagination, moral judgment, emotional maturity, truthfulness, reciprocity, courage, restraint, reverence, and openness to transcendence.

Persons possess these capacities differently. Disability, illness, dependency, or cognitive limitation do not reduce human dignity.

A life-coherent society does not rank persons by output. It protects the conditions through which each person can participate according to their gifts and receive the support required for belonging.

8.4 Formation Before Performance

Technological culture often measures development through performance.

Can the student produce the answer? Can the worker complete the task? Can the professional reach the recommendation?

Formation asks:

What kind of person is being brought forth through the process?

A learner can generate a correct answer without understanding. A professional can follow a correct recommendation without judgment. A worker can produce more while becoming less capable of independent action.

Performance concerns the immediate product. Formation concerns the durable person.

This is why apparently inefficient practices can remain civilizationally necessary. Writing an argument may be harder than generating one. Learning a poem may be slower than retrieving it. Practising music may have no immediate economic return. Caring for a garden may be less convenient than purchasing food.

Yet such practices form capacities that output metrics fail to see.

8.5 Attention as the Beginning of Freedom

To attend is to permit a reality beyond immediate appetite to make a claim upon consciousness.

A text may resist easy interpretation. A child may require repetition. A patient may reveal the decisive detail only after trust has formed. Prayer may initially appear empty to a mind accustomed to constant stimulation.

Without attention, freedom becomes reactive. The person chooses among stimuli selected and arranged by systems whose interests may remain invisible.

Human formation therefore requires spaces in which attention is not continuously captured, measured, redirected, or rewarded.

Silence, contemplation, reading, music, worship, manual work, conversation, and contact with nature train the capacity to remain.

8.6 Prayer and the Reordering of Attention

Pageau's instruction not to forget prayer is central to his answer (Pageau, 2026).

Prayer interrupts the assumption that the self is the final source of meaning and action. The person becomes receptive to truth, gratitude, repentance, intercession, silence, and divine presence.

The consumer asks: "What can this provide for me?" Prayer asks: "What is required of me?"

The algorithm adapts to preference. Prayer exposes and converts preference.

The platform seeks continued engagement. Prayer permits withdrawal from the economy of capture.

Prayer becomes a recurrent enactment of the question:

Whom do I serve?

8.7 Liturgy as Counter-Formation

The instruction to go to church means more than consuming religious services.

Liturgy organizes bodies, space, time, memory, gesture, language, silence, matter, and community.

It gathers people who did not select one another through preference matching.

Liturgy resists constant novelty through repetition; individual customization through common prayer; disembodiment through posture and matter; immediacy through sacred time; and private consumption through corporate participation.

Guardini, Pickstock, Schmemann, and Ratzinger each, in different ways, emphasize that liturgical form educates desire and perception rather than functioning merely as the delivery of religious information (Guardini, 1998; Pickstock, 1998; Ratzinger, 1986; Schmemann, 1973; Second Vatican Council, 1963).

8.8 Eucharistic Formation of Desire

Technology shapes desire. Interfaces teach what should be immediate. Markets teach what should be possessed. Metrics teach what counts. Personalization teaches that the world should conform increasingly to preference.

The Eucharist forms another relation.

The communicant waits, receives, gives thanks, approaches with others, and is sent into service.

The Eucharist does not abolish desire. It heals desire by ordering appetite toward communion (Pageau, 2022).

Generative abundance can produce endlessly varied content without producing fulfilment.

The Eucharistic question is not merely what the user wants. It is what kind of wanting leads toward life.

8.9 Memory as Interior Participation

A poem stored externally remains accessible. A poem learned by heart becomes available within the person.

It may arise in grief, joy, danger, love, and moral decision.

Scripture, prayer, poetry, song, story, and proverb give inherited wisdom an interior dwelling.

Memory also preserves agency. A person who remembers possesses some freedom from systems that store and filter information. A community that remembers can recognize when history is being distorted. A profession that remembers can identify when institutional practice has departed from its purpose.

Memory is not nostalgia. It is continuity through which judgment becomes possible.

8.10 Old Stories and Pattern Recognition

Ancient narratives do not provide technical instructions for neural networks or semiconductor supply chains.

They provide patterns through which the human meaning of new powers becomes visible.

The tower, flood, forbidden fruit, golden calf, wounded king, enchanted mirror, monstrous double, and devouring idol gather recurring relations of pride, appetite, rivalry, deception, power, and loss.

Old stories widen the temporal horizon. They show that humanity has repeatedly encountered promises of unlimited power and shortcuts to knowledge.

They also protect imagination from being formed entirely by present systems.

A society whose stories are produced only by current markets and platforms may lose the symbolic resources needed to criticize them.

8.11 Poetry and Dense Language

Poetry resists the reduction of language to frictionless information transfer.

A poem joins rhythm, sound, image, ambiguity, memory, and silence. Its meaning cannot always be summarized without loss.

Poetry forms the reader's patience and sensitivity to language.

In a symbolic environment saturated with generated text, these capacities become forms of public resilience.

A person trained only to extract conclusions may become vulnerable to fluent manipulation. A reader formed by poetry learns that wording matters and that meaning exceeds efficient delivery.

8.12 Music and Participatory Order

Music joins differentiated parts within temporal order.

Rhythm coordinates without eliminating variation. Harmony allows distinct voices to participate in a greater whole. Ensemble performance requires listening, timing, restraint, skill, and responsiveness.

Music therefore embodies communion without absorption.

Playing music differs from consuming recordings. Active practice joins body, memory, discipline, emotion, and community.

The performer learns that freedom develops within form and that creativity depends upon receptive relation.

8.13 Dance, Sport, and Embodied Intelligence

Dance and sport teach that intelligence is embodied.

Dance develops rhythm, balance, expression, memory, and spatial coordination. Sport develops discipline, teamwork, courage, endurance, and action within rules.

Most children are not taught these practices because they will become professional performers. They are taught because bodily skill contributes to human development, as Pageau emphasizes (Pageau, 2026).

Technological analysis can support these activities. It becomes substitutive when metrics, simulation, or spectatorship displace embodied participation.

8.14 Craft and the Resistance of Matter

Craft places the person in relation with material that does not instantly obey.

Wood has grain. Clay has weight. Metal has temperature. Food requires timing. Fabric stretches and tears.

The craftsperson learns through repetition, error, adjustment, patience, and respect for limits.

Digital interfaces often hide material resistance behind immediate output.

Craft reconnects action with consequence. It protects against the fantasy that all reality is an editable surface.

8.15 Gardening as Ecological Apprenticeship

A garden is neither untouched nature nor total human control.

The gardener prepares, plants, waters, protects, prunes, waits, harvests, and preserves. But the gardener does not manufacture life.

Growth depends upon soil, organisms, weather, seed, and time.

Gardening teaches that nourishment is relational and that generativity cannot be accelerated indefinitely without damaging the field.

It is an anti-Moloch pedagogy. Future abundance depends upon preserving the conditions through which life renews itself.

8.16 Camping and the World Beyond the Interface

Direct encounter with weather, terrain, darkness, bodily need, and ecological dependence interrupts the illusion that reality is continuously available through an interface.

The environment cannot be customized immediately. Temperature matters. Water must be obtained. The body becomes tired.

Such experiences can restore proportion.

Technology returns to its proper status as valuable mediation within a world that exceeds technological design.

8.17 Family and Non-Optional Relation

Healthy family life can provide belonging not based solely upon performance, wealth, ideology, or preference.

Families join generations. They care for persons at stages of profound dependency. Infants, the sick, disabled persons, and elders reveal that worth cannot be grounded in productivity.

Families can also be unsafe or abusive and should never be romanticized in ways that conceal harm.

Where sufficiently healthy, they form patience, responsibility, memory, forgiveness, humour, and enduring presence.

The technological question is whether digital systems strengthen the household as a communion or reorganize it as a collection of separately engaged users.

8.18 Intergenerational Responsibility

Children inherit a technological and ecological world they did not design. Elders carry memory not wholly replaceable by data. Adults hold temporary responsibility for conditions belonging neither exclusively to them nor only to the present.

Human formation includes the capacity to receive from the dead and give to the unborn.

Moloch consumes future-bearing capacities for present advantage.

Intergenerational responsibility protects those unable to represent themselves in present decision-making.

8.19 Community and Mutual Obligation

Community is more than an audience or a network of contacts.

It develops through recurrent relations of recognition, memory, responsibility, and mutual aid.

Online communities can be real communities where geography, disability, or minority status would otherwise produce isolation.

The distinction is not simply online versus offline. The question is whether the relation generates reciprocity, accountability, shared memory, and common work.

A platform may host a community without constituting it. Community exists where members become answerable to one another.

8.20 Friendship and the Irreducible Other

A friend is not merely a source of affirmation, entertainment, or advice.

Friendship includes loyalty, truthfulness, disagreement, vulnerability, and presence.

Artificial companions may provide useful support. They lack the same reciprocal claim of an embodied other whose freedom, needs, and vulnerability impose moral responsibility upon us.

The danger is not only mistaking a system for a human being. It is becoming habituated to responsiveness without reciprocal obligation.

Becoming fully human requires relationships in which one must also listen, wait, adjust, apologize, forgive, and bear cost.

8.21 Conversation and Shared World-Bringing

Conversation is not merely the exchange of completed positions.

Participants can discover what they think through interaction, resistance, and revision.

AI can support reflection by offering questions and perspectives. Human conversation contains dimensions that cannot be reduced to generated response: shared history, social risk, embodied presence, mutual vulnerability, and accountability.

A society that increasingly delegates dialogue to agreeable artificial interlocutors may become less capable of political, familial, ecclesial, and professional conversation with actual others.

8.22 Education Beyond Employability

Pageau argues that education has often been treated as acquiring skills for employment and that technological change exposes the limits of this model (Pageau, 2026).

Education must prepare persons for work, but its purpose is larger.

It should form persons capable of understanding the world, governing desire, judging evidence, participating in civic life, receiving cultural inheritance, caring for others, and discerning what forms of work and technology are worth pursuing.

When education is reduced to jobs, automation appears to make learning obsolete.

When education is understood as human formation, technological power makes it more important.

8.23 The Humanities

The humanities preserve inquiry into meaning, history, language, rhetoric, moral conflict, power, religion, beauty, and tragedy.

They reveal that facts enter narratives and can be ordered toward different purposes. They preserve voices excluded from dominant accounts. They provide vocabularies for suffering, dignity, responsibility, and hope.

In an age of synthetic language and imagery, interpretive and historical capacities become forms of public resilience.

The humanities do not replace scientific or technical education. They help determine what technical capability should serve.

8.24 Reforming the Humanities

The recovery of the humanities should not mean restoring them as elite cultural possessions.

They can become enclosed within specialist language, prestige, ideological conflict, or narrow canons.

A life-coherent renewal should bring multiple traditions into serious encounter while preserving the capacity to judge.

Students should encounter major inherited works, local and regional traditions, Indigenous knowledge, religious texts, and voices historically excluded from formal institutions.

The purpose is neither relativism nor civilizational self-congratulation. It is formation for truthful dialogue across difference.

8.25 Science as Responsible Attention

Science is one of humanity's disciplined practices of attending to reality.

It requires evidence, criticism, methodological transparency, and revision.

Science becomes dangerous when capability is separated from purpose and accountability.

The scientist may discover what can be done without possessing unilateral authority to determine what society should do.

Technical knowledge and moral–political judgment therefore require one another. Science clarifies material reality. Ethics, politics, theology, and public deliberation address legitimate purpose and acceptable burden.

8.26 Practical Wisdom

Rules are essential but finite. No rule can anticipate every circumstance.

Practical wisdom concerns the ability to perceive what matters within a concrete situation and act faithfully toward the governing good.

The wise clinician knows when a guideline does not fit the patient. The wise teacher recognizes when challenge or support is required. The wise leader recognizes when institutional survival is being purchased at an unacceptable moral cost.

Practical wisdom develops through formation, experience, mentorship, reflection, and responsibility.

AI can support judgment. It cannot eliminate the need for an accountable person to interpret the whole.

8.27 Virtue

Virtue is a stable capacity to perceive, desire, and act toward the good.

A truthful person does not merely avoid prohibited falsehood. The person develops fidelity to reality. A courageous person can act rightly despite fear. A just person perceives the claims of others. A prudent person can judge proportion, timing, and uncertainty.

Virtue matters technologically because the responsible action cannot always be specified in advance.

Someone must sometimes question the recommendation, slow deployment, disclose a risk, protect a vulnerable person, or refuse a profitable use.

Character and institutional structure must support one another.

8.28 Truth as Fidelity to Reality

Truth is more than the statistical accuracy of statements.

It concerns fidelity among word, evidence, intention, reality, and responsibility.

A statement can be factually correct while used deceptively. A generated text can contain accurate claims while no named speaker understands them. A metric can be accurate while concealing what was not measured.

The truthful person must be capable of saying:

- I do not know.
- I was wrong.
- The system is uncertain.
- The evidence is incomplete.
- The person exceeds the model.

Human formation must make epistemic humility honourable rather than professionally dangerous.

8.29 Love and the Legitimate Other

Maturana describes love as the domain in which the other is accepted as a legitimate other in coexistence (Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 2008).

Christian love deepens this recognition through truth, mercy, self-gift, and participation in divine life.

A technological system does not become loving because its interface uses emotionally warm language.

The test is institutional:

Does the arrangement refuse to consume persons for profit, efficiency, control, or prestige?

The test of love is not tone. It is what happens to the vulnerable body.

8.30 Courage and Refusal

Moloch survives because participants fear the cost of refusing.

The engineer fears unemployment. The company fears losing position. The teacher fears appearing obsolete. The physician fears liability. The state fears strategic disadvantage.

Courage enables truthful action despite fear.

But courage should not become the excuse for abandoning isolated individuals to destructive systems.

Whistle-blowers require protection. Professionals require collective standards. Workers require organization. States require reciprocal agreements.

Virtue becomes socially generative when institutions prevent the truth-teller from becoming another sacrificial victim.

8.31 Restraint as Strength

Technological cultures often interpret restraint as weakness.

The serious actor deploys. The innovative firm moves quickly. The powerful state acquires capability.

Yet the ability not to act is one of the highest forms of power.

A person unable to resist impulse is not free. An institution unable to pause deployment is not governing technology. A state that must mirror every escalation is not sovereign.

The lance is rightly governed not only by accuracy but by the capacity to leave it unused.

8.32 Sabbath

The biblical Sabbath establishes a limit upon production.

Work stops. The land rests. Servants, strangers, households, and animals are included. Human worth is separated from continuous output.

A Sabbath-shaped technological culture would protect time free from permanent availability, rest, worship, family, community, and creation.

It would allow workers to share productivity gains through time rather than only increased output expectations.

The capacity to stop is evidence that the tool remains a servant.

8.33 Silence

Generative systems can fill nearly every interval with language, image, music, and stimulation.

Silence can appear as unused capacity.

Yet silence makes possible listening, integration, conscience, grief, prayer, and restraint.

A culture unable to tolerate silence becomes vulnerable to systems that profit from filling it.

Human formation must preserve the capacity not to prompt, publish, or respond.

8.34 Solitude Without Isolation

Solitude differs from isolation.

Isolation is the deprivation of needed relation. Solitude is a space in which the person encounters self, reality, and God without constant social performance.

Continuous connectivity can reduce isolation while making solitude difficult.

Without solitude, desire may be shaped almost entirely by external signals.

The person withdraws not to reject community, but to return with greater interior freedom.

8.35 Human Scale

Large systems can coordinate complex goods. They can also distance decision-makers from consequence.

Human-scale points of encounter restore visibility.

The teacher knows the student. The clinician meets the patient. The neighbour sees the affected family. The local community knows the watershed.

Not every institution can remain small. Large systems should preserve places where the person can appear as more than a category or data profile.

8.36 Locality

Pageau's practices are largely local: church, household, garden, community, instrument, story, and landscape.

Locality reconnects action with consequence.

This should not become isolation from global interdependence. The goal is nested belonging.

Global institutions should support rather than consume local capacity. Local communities should participate in the wider body without being reduced to endpoints of distant systems.

8.37 Formation of Technologists

Technical competence is insufficient for those designing systems that reshape social life.

Technologists need serious engagement with ethics, history, political economy, ecology, labour, disability, psychology, rhetoric, systems theory, and the humanities.

They should encounter affected communities before designs become fixed. They should learn to articulate what their systems cannot know.

Capability creates obligation.

8.38 Formation of Users

Operational literacy is not wisdom.

Knowing how to obtain a better output does not establish that the system should be used.

AI literacy should include system limitations, verification, privacy, manipulation, preservation of independent skill, disclosure, ecological and labour dependencies, and the capacity to refuse.

The mature user is not the person who extracts maximum output. It is the person who can determine when mediation serves the good.

8.39 Formation of Institutions

Institutions develop habits.

An institution repeatedly choosing speed over reflection becomes incapable of patience. One rewarding conformity becomes unable to hear warning. One externalizing harm becomes blind to its dependencies.

Institutional formation occurs through incentives, budgets, hiring, promotion, workflow, response to error, and treatment of dissent.

An institution using AI primarily to reduce labour cost will form a different body from one using it to deepen care and widen participation.

8.40 The Church's Formative Responsibility

The Church preserves an account of human dignity not grounded in productivity, intelligence ranking, market value, or technological usefulness.

It gathers generations. It practises sacred memory. It teaches prayer, restraint, repentance, forgiveness, and service.

Yet it can fulfil this role only if it resists becoming another content provider competing for attention.

Digital evangelization should lead toward worship, community, formation, and embodied service.

Metrics cannot replace discipleship.

8.41 Human Formation Is Not a Private Luxury

The practices Pageau recommends require material conditions.

A person working multiple jobs may lack time for poetry, music, community, gardening, or rest. A neighbourhood may lack safe public space. A school may lack teachers and resources. A family may be fragmented by migration, poverty, illness, or violence.

The exhortation to become fully human therefore has political and economic implications.

Persons need time, safety, nourishment, housing, education, healthcare, cultural institutions, public space, and ecological access.

If only the affluent can protect attention and obtain human-rich formation, humanity itself becomes enclosed as privilege.

8.42 Time as a Civil Commons

Time is unequally distributed.

Some persons purchase release from burdens. Others sell nearly all waking capacity to survive.

Technology promises to save time, but institutions frequently convert saved time into higher output expectations.

A life-coherent use of AI should return some productivity gains as time for care, learning, rest, family, worship, community, and civic participation.

Time saved by the machine should not belong automatically to the owner of the machine.

8.43 Public Institutions of Formation

Human development cannot depend solely upon household wealth or individual discipline.

Societies require schools, libraries, parks, museums, theatres, sports facilities, gardens, public media, vocational programmes, and accessible cultural life.

These institutions may appear peripheral to technological competitiveness. They are part of the infrastructure through which citizens become capable of governing technological power.

A society that funds computation while abandoning libraries, arts, local journalism, public space, and childhood formation is building the vessel while consuming the body.

8.44 Education in AI-Rich Environments

Education should neither prohibit all AI use nor dissolve learning into assisted production.

It should develop staged pedagogies.

Early formation may require strong protection of language, numeracy, handwriting, memory, reading, conversation, embodied play, and independent reasoning.

Later use can introduce AI for critique, translation, accessibility, simulation, and advanced problem-solving.

Students should learn to compare outputs with evidence, document assistance, expose assumptions, reconstruct reasoning, and recognize when AI use would defeat the learning objective.

The goal is not students who can avoid AI. It is students who are not cognitively governed by it.

8.45 Apprenticeship Under Automation

Professions must preserve formative work for novices even where automation performs it efficiently.

Training should include protected opportunities to reason independently, perform assessment, explain mechanisms, make supervised decisions, and learn from error.

AI can then function as a comparator, critic, or advanced tool.

The sequence matters.

A novice who develops an internal model can use external assistance intelligently. A novice who receives only outputs may never acquire the model required for supervision.

8.46 Redundancy as Human Reserve

Multiple skills, parallel pathways, manual alternatives, and unused capacity can appear inefficient.

They provide resilience.

A hospital needs staff who can act during technical failure. A school needs teachers who can teach without the platform. A government needs non-digital pathways. A society needs persons capable of critical reasoning even when automated systems usually perform well.

Human reserve is stored adaptability.

8.47 Joy Beyond Utility

Music, dance, sport, stories, gardens, friendship, and worship are not valuable only because they improve productivity or resilience.

They are goods in themselves.

A civilization that justifies every activity through its contribution to technological adaptation has already surrendered too much to instrumental reason.

Children play because play belongs to flourishing. Friends gather because companionship matters. Beauty does not need to prove economic return. Worship does not exist to optimize performance.

Non-instrumental joy is evidence that life has not been reduced to system input.

8.48 Beauty

Beauty interrupts purely utilitarian perception.

It reveals order, particularity, harmony, surprise, and depth.

Art, music, nature, ritual, architecture, and human presence can restore reverence for realities that exceed price.

Beauty can also be commodified or used to conceal injustice. Aesthetic richness is not proof of goodness.

Yet a civilization unable to perceive beauty may become unable to value what cannot be calculated.

8.49 Suffering and Finitude

Technology rightly seeks to reduce preventable suffering. Medicine heals. Assistive systems restore function. Safety systems prevent harm.

Yet not every limit is a defect that can or should be optimized away.

Grief accompanies love. Risk accompanies freedom. Dependence accompanies embodiment. Mortality gives shape to time.

Becoming fully human includes learning how to care when no technical solution can remove the wound.

AI may assist care. It cannot replace accompaniment.

8.50 Death and Technological Limit

If life is understood only as continued processing, accumulation, and control, death appears as absolute failure.

Christian faith interprets death through crucifixion, resurrection, communion, and hope.

This does not justify neglecting life. It places finite existence within a horizon beyond technological preservation.

A civilization unable to face death may sacrifice living relationships, dignity, and ecological conditions in pursuit of indefinite control.

8.51 From Self-Optimization to Vocation

Technological culture often presents the self as a project to optimize: more productive, more visible, more informed, more efficient, more competitive.

Vocation asks another question:

What good am I called to serve?

Vocation places gifts within responsibility. Skill becomes contribution. Position becomes stewardship. Technology becomes one possible means within a larger calling.

A person oriented by vocation is less easily governed by every new opportunity for optimization.

8.52 From Consumer to Member

The consumer relates through selection and acquisition. The member relates through belonging and responsibility.

A consumer asks whether the service satisfies preference. A member asks what the body requires and what contribution is possible.

Human beings are not only users. They are children, parents, friends, neighbours, citizens, workers, patients, teachers, caregivers, worshippers, and members of ecological communities.

A life-coherent technological order should strengthen membership rather than dissolve every relation into service delivery.

8.53 The Shining Soul

Pageau argues that those who cultivate wisdom, virtue, truth, and love will be best prepared to remain human amid technological upheaval (Pageau, 2026).

The "shining soul" should not become a doctrine of spiritual superiority.

Its deeper meaning is that external capability magnifies the form of the person and institution using it.

Powerful tools do not purify desire automatically. A technologically amplified but morally unformed person becomes a more powerful broken person.

The shining soul is one capable of receiving power without worshipping it, using assistance without surrendering responsibility, and participating in community without consuming others.

8.54 Formation as Shared Responsibility

Attention is shaped by platforms. Time is shaped by work. Memory is shaped by education. Relationships are shaped by housing, transport, and public space.

Formation is therefore a shared social responsibility.

Parents, schools, churches, professions, employers, governments, cultural institutions, and technology companies all participate in bringing forth particular forms of personhood.

The question is not whether institutions form people. They already do. The question is toward what form.

8.55 A Human Formation Covenant

A technological civilization committed to full humanity should affirm that:

1. children will not be treated as experimental markets for untested cognitive technologies;
2. education will preserve foundational memory, language, numeracy, attention, embodiment, and independent reasoning;
3. automation will not eliminate the apprenticeship needed to produce future experts;
4. workers will share in technological gains through security, participation, training, ownership, or time;
5. essential services will preserve access to responsible human encounter;
6. communities will retain non-digital and locally governable capacities;
7. public culture will support arts, libraries, sport, nature, craft, and gathering;
8. technology will strengthen rather than capture attention;
9. religious and cultural traditions will retain space to form persons according to goods not defined solely by markets; and
10. no person's worth will be measured by the functions machines can imitate or replace.

The Human Formation Covenant is a constructive proposal of this paper.

8.56 A Rule of Life

At the personal and communal level, technological freedom can be supported through a deliberate rule of life containing practices such as prayer or silence; sustained reading; memorization; embodied exercise or craft; device-free meals; face-to-face conversation; Sabbath rest; worship; contact with nature; learning without immediate AI completion; and regular examination of which technologies enlarge or diminish capacity.

The purpose is not moral purity or technological fear. It is preservation of interior and communal freedom.

8.57 The Personal and Public Questions

Pageau's final questions cannot be separated.

Whom does the technology serve? Whom do I serve?

Institutions are shaped by persons whose allegiances guide decisions. Persons are shaped by institutions that reward some allegiances and punish others.

The personal question without the public question can become private virtue inside destructive systems. The public question without the personal question can become procedural reform administered by unexamined desire.

A life-coherent technological civilization requires both persons formed to serve life and institutions structured so that serving life is materially possible.

8.58 Conclusion: More Than the User

The deepest danger of AI is not that machines will become exactly like human beings.

It is that human beings will accept an impoverished account of themselves derived from what machines can measure, imitate, predict, and optimize.

The user becomes preferences. The worker becomes output. The learner becomes performance. The citizen becomes risk. The patient becomes data.

Pageau's call to become fully human refuses this reduction.

The human being is a body capable of presence; a memory capable of fidelity; a voice capable of truth; a conscience capable of responsibility; a creature capable of worship; a neighbour capable of care; and a member capable of communion.

These practices are not peripheral lifestyle choices. They are forms of civilizational defence and renewal.

They form the knight capable of approaching the Grail without seizing it and encountering the lance without being governed by rage or fear.

Yet the practices require institutions that protect the conditions of formation.

Becoming fully human is necessary. It is not, by itself, sufficient.

9. Why Personal Formation Is Necessary but Insufficient

9.1 The Structural Remainder

Jonathan Pageau's practical answer to technological upheaval begins with the person: know whom you serve; go to church; pray; cultivate memory, skill, wisdom, virtue, truth, love, family, and community.

This response is foundational. Institutions cannot remain accountable without persons capable of attention, courage, restraint, judgment, and care. Yet the problems Pageau diagnoses are not produced only by deficient character.

They are reproduced through concentrated ownership, labour markets, competitive business models, military rivalry, platform incentives, administrative systems, global supply chains, educational policy, public procurement, and laws governing data, property, risk, and accountability.

A person may seek to live wisely while remaining dependent upon institutions whose terms they cannot meaningfully determine. A parent may protect a child's attention at home while schools, peers, advertising systems, and digital platforms normalize continual technological engagement. A clinician may preserve independent judgment while staffing, documentation, liability, and workflow systems make reflective practice progressively harder. A worker may resist deskilling while an employer redesigns the occupation around automated output.

Personal formation is therefore indispensable but structurally underpowered where the wider environment penalizes the practices necessary for preserving human agency.

9.2 The Error of Moral Individualism

Moral individualism interprets collective harms primarily as failures of personal choice.

If attention is fragmented, users should exercise more discipline. If false information spreads, citizens should verify more carefully. If employment becomes insecure, workers should retrain. If children are overexposed, parents should establish firmer rules. If professional systems become impersonal, individual practitioners should behave more compassionately.

Each recommendation may contain truth. Detached from institutional analysis, however, they transfer responsibility downward.

The actor with the least power is instructed to compensate for architectures designed by actors possessing far greater resources, data, expertise, and control.

The platform structures the environment to retain attention. The user is blamed for insufficient self-control. The institution creates dependence. The individual is instructed to remain autonomous. The organization introduces risk. The worker or citizen is told to manage it.

A life-coherent framework does not eliminate individual responsibility. It places responsibility within the unequal structures of power that shape the available choices.

9.3 Choice Architecture and Manufactured Consent

Technological systems do not simply present neutral options. They organize which options are visible; which are selected by default; which require additional effort; which are socially rewarded; which are economically viable; and which gradually become unavailable.

A service may formally permit privacy while organizing participation around disclosure. An institution may retain nominal human review while making disagreement with automation professionally costly. A school may technically permit students not to use AI while structuring workload and assessment around assisted production. A government may retain non-digital access while permitting it to become unusably slow or geographically inaccessible.

Consent under these circumstances may remain legally recognizable while becoming substantively weak.

The presence of an "agree" button does not establish equal bargaining power. NIST's generative-AI risk framework similarly treats governance, transparency, privacy, information integrity, and the wider effects of deployment as institutional responsibilities rather than matters that can be transferred completely to end users (NIST, 2024).

9.4 The Burden of Continual Self-Defence

A society governed primarily through personal resistance requires individuals to defend themselves continuously against organizations optimized to overcome resistance.

The child must resist persuasive design. The consumer must interpret lengthy terms. The citizen must detect synthetic fabrication. The worker must preserve independent professional skill. The patient must challenge classifications. The family must reconstruct common attention. The user must manage privacy across multiple systems.

Institutions can employ behavioural research, automated experimentation, specialist legal counsel, and vast computational resources. Ordinary persons cannot approach every interaction as equal negotiators.

Freedom cannot be reduced to a permanent obligation to defend oneself against strategically superior systems.

A just order reduces the number of domains in which normal participation demands continuous vigilance against the institution providing the service.

9.5 Virtue Under Adverse Conditions

Virtue does not operate independently of material and institutional conditions.

A courageous employee may disclose risk. Whether the act becomes socially generative depends upon whether the employee is protected or punished. A physician may resist unsafe automation. Whether independent judgment survives depends upon staffing, workflow, liability, and institutional authority. A teacher may preserve rigorous learning. Whether the practice endures depends upon curriculum, assessment, resources, and administrative expectations. A company may accept slower deployment to protect workers and users. Whether it survives may depend upon whether competitors are bound by comparable obligations.

Virtue can persist under hostile conditions, but it should not be expected to bear indefinitely the entire cost of institutional disorder.

A society serious about character must make truthful, restrained, and life-serving action materially possible.

9.6 Structural Sin

Christian social thought recognizes that sin can become embodied in social arrangements.

Structural sin does not remove personal responsibility. It identifies systems that normalize harmful relations, distribute participation, conceal causality, reward complicity, and make injustice appear unavoidable.

The investor seeks return. The manager meets targets. The engineer completes an assigned task. The advertiser increases engagement. The regulator protects competitiveness. The consumer seeks convenience.

No single actor needs to intend the resulting exploitation, ecological damage, surveillance, or dependency. The whole pattern becomes visible only when the parts are joined.

Francis describes the social and ecological crises as inseparable and criticizes a technocratic paradigm in which power, technology, finance, and instrumental reason reinforce one another while the human and ecological consequences become externalized (Francis, 2015).

Structural conversion must therefore accompany personal conversion.

9.7 Ethical Language Without Institutional Change

Personal conversion can be absorbed by an unchanged institution.

The executive adopts compassionate language while extractive targets remain. The hospital promotes patient-centred care while throughput pressures intensify. The company publishes ethical principles while its business model depends upon attention capture. The government promotes AI literacy while deploying systems citizens cannot contest. The Church proclaims human dignity while failing to protect wounded members or vulnerable workers.

In such cases, moral language becomes a symbolic substitute for material change.

The vocabulary improves. The institutional metabolism remains intact.

9.8 Institutional Conversion

Institutional conversion occurs when an organization changes not only what it proclaims, but what its operations reward, measure, finance, protect, prohibit, and make possible.

It may require changes to ownership, governance, staffing, budgeting, workflow, procurement, performance metrics, professional authority, and the distribution of risk and benefit.

A hospital committed to presence must allocate time and staffing for presence. A school committed to formation must redesign assessment rather than merely warn students to use AI responsibly. A platform committed to well-being must alter the incentives through which attention is captured. A Church committed to Eucharistic consistency must protect vulnerable members through transparent and competent procedures.

Institutional repentance has material form.

9.9 Ownership as Ethical Architecture

Ownership is not merely a technical legal background. It determines who defines purpose, who receives returns, who can alter the system, who bears liability, who controls access, and whose interests predominate during conflict.

The same capability may function differently under different ownership and governance arrangements.

A publicly accountable health system may organize AI toward universal care. A commercial system may prioritize revenue-producing services. A worker-owned platform may distribute productivity gains differently from a shareholder-governed firm. A community data trust may limit secondary uses that a data-extractive company would consider normal.

Ownership does not determine every outcome, but it organizes the field of likely decisions.

The question “Whom does the Grail serve?” necessarily includes the question “Who possesses and governs the vessel?”

9.10 The Myth of Neutral Infrastructure

Infrastructure is often treated as a neutral foundation beneath social activity. Yet infrastructure privileges particular forms of participation.

A payment system determines who can exchange. A digital identity system determines how persons become administratively visible. A cloud provider determines where records and applications reside. A platform determines which interactions become easy and which remain difficult. An AI interface influences how users formulate questions and receive knowledge.

Infrastructure becomes most powerful when it disappears from ordinary awareness. Once embedded, its assumptions appear natural and alternatives become costly.

The infrastructure does not merely serve an existing society. It reorganizes society around itself.

This is why constitutional scrutiny must begin before dependency becomes irreversible.

9.11 From Product to Institution

Many technological systems begin as optional products and develop into quasi-institutions.

A search engine becomes a gateway to public knowledge. A social platform becomes infrastructure for political communication. A cloud service becomes necessary to healthcare, education, and government. A generative system becomes embedded in writing, research, coding, and administration.

Once a system mediates essential participation, it exercises institution-like power while potentially remaining governed as an ordinary private commodity.

This creates a constitutional gap.

The system can affect rights, opportunity, knowledge, and social visibility while remaining accountable mainly through ownership and contract.

The transition from product to infrastructure should trigger stronger obligations of continuity, transparency, accessibility, contestability, public accountability, and meaningful exit.

9.12 Market Choice Is Not Democratic Governance

Consumer choice does not replace political participation.

A person may choose among several products while possessing no influence over industry standards, data rights, labour practices, ecological burdens, surveillance architecture, market concentration, or military uses.

Markets aggregate purchasing power rather than equal citizenship.

Some questions concern rights and common conditions that cannot be settled solely by consumer demand.

Whether children's developmental vulnerability may be commercially exploited is not merely a parental purchasing decision. Whether automated systems may determine access to essential benefits is not simply a product feature. Whether synthetic impersonation may destabilize public testimony is not a private contractual matter.

When technology reorganizes the conditions of citizenship, constitutional and democratic judgment become necessary.

9.13 The Limits of Corporate Ethics

Companies can establish serious internal ethics programmes, safety teams, review boards, evaluation systems, and channels for dissent.

These efforts matter. They can reduce harm and develop valuable practices.

They remain constrained by revenue requirements, investment, competition, executive authority, market expectations, and strategic uncertainty.

A review board may advise without possessing power to stop deployment. A safety team may identify a risk while lacking authority over timelines. A public principle may be reinterpreted when priorities change.

Corporate ethics becomes more durable when external rules ensure that responsible conduct does not create unilateral competitive disadvantage.

9.14 Voluntary Commitments and Defection

Voluntary standards can develop more rapidly than legislation. They permit experimentation and cooperation across institutions.

They remain vulnerable to withdrawal, vague definitions, self-reporting, weak enforcement, and participation designed primarily to obtain ethical legitimacy.

Voluntary commitments are useful laboratories and transitional mechanisms.

They are inadequate where harms are severe, incentives to defect are strong, and affected persons lack bargaining power.

The greater the possible sacrifice, the less acceptable it becomes to leave restraint entirely to goodwill.

9.15 Law as Restraint of Sacrificial Competition

Law can alter the strategic environment.

When every firm must meet minimum safety obligations, responsible conduct becomes less competitively disadvantageous. When workers possess enforceable rights, firms cannot compete as easily through transferred insecurity. When ecological costs must be disclosed and internalized, environmental degradation becomes less available as a hidden subsidy. When persons possess rights to explanation, appeal, correction, and human review, systems must be designed differently.

Law can itself become unjust, captured, or excessively procedural. Yet it remains one of the principal means through which society declares that certain persons and goods may not be sacrificed to competitive advantage.

9.16 Law Must Protect Life, Not Merely Procedure

Procedural compliance can coexist with substantive harm.

The individual clicks "agree." The organization completes the required assessment. The community receives formal notice. The algorithm produces an explanation. The worker is offered a short retraining course.

Every required form may be completed while power remains unequal and the injury continues.

Life-coherent law asks whether procedure changes the effect upon living capacities:

- Did the person understand and influence the decision?
- Could refusal occur without exclusion?
- Was the harm prevented or only documented?
- Did burdens remain concentrated on the vulnerable?
- Was restoration possible?

Law serves communion when it protects participation and the body, not when it certifies extraction through correct paperwork.

9.17 Rights as Boundaries Against Instrumentalization

Rights establish limits upon what institutions may do to persons even where the proposed action would increase aggregate efficiency.

Established technological rights may include privacy, non-discrimination, due process, freedom of expression, data correction, explanation, accessibility, and appeal.

The emerging technological environment also strengthens the case for recognizing the right to know when consequential automation is used; the right to know whether an interlocutor is synthetic; the right to meaningful human judgment; the right to protection from deceptive impersonation; the right to cognitive non-dependency; and meaningful non-digital alternatives in essential domains.

These formulations are constructive proposals of this paper. They require legal development, balancing, and contextual application.

Their governing purpose is to preserve the person as a subject rather than an input.

9.18 The Limits of Consent

Consent is ethically meaningful only where there is sufficient knowledge, genuine capacity, freedom from coercion, and viable alternatives.

These conditions frequently weaken in technological environments.

Terms are too complex. Future uses are uncertain. Participation is socially or professionally necessary. The user cannot negotiate. The consequences affect communities and future persons who did not consent.

Individual consent is therefore necessary in many contexts but insufficient as the sole foundation of legitimacy.

Some uses require collective authorization. Some practices should remain restricted even where isolated persons can be induced to accept them.

A future generation, an ecosystem, or a profession's capacity to reproduce expertise cannot be represented adequately by one current user's agreement.

9.19 Labour as a Constitutional Site

The workplace is one of the principal places where AI becomes compulsory.

Workers may be required to use systems that direct tasks, monitor performance, evaluate conduct, extract tacit knowledge, or replace parts of their work.

The ILO's 2025 analysis identifies substantial occupational exposure to generative AI, particularly in clerical work and increasingly in highly digitized professional and technical occupations. Exposure does not equal inevitable job loss, but it indicates significant potential for task transformation and occupational restructuring (Gmyrek et al., 2025).

Workers possess essential situated knowledge about actual workflows, safety, failure modes, tacit skill, and the difference between formal policy and operational reality.

They should therefore participate in decisions concerning automation, monitoring, evaluation, retraining, staffing, and the distribution of gains.

A system built partly from workers' knowledge should not be governed entirely without them.

9.20 From Retraining to Shared Transition

Retraining is often presented as the primary answer to automation.

Training matters. Workers require opportunities to develop new skills.

But retraining can become another mechanism for transferring responsibility downward.

The organization chooses the transformation. The owner receives the gain. The worker bears the burden of continual adaptation.

Not every displaced worker can enter a new high-skill occupation. Not every community can absorb repeated economic disruption.

A just transition may require advance consultation, phased adoption, income protection, portable benefits, reduced working time, worker ownership, regional investment, transition funds, and public provision.

The transition must be judged by its effects upon persons, households, and communities rather than aggregate productivity alone.

9.21 The Ownership of Saved Time

AI is frequently justified as a means of saving time.

Yet saved time is not distributed automatically.

The worker completes the task faster. The employer increases expected output. Staffing is reduced. The user receives additional tasks. Efficiency becomes acceleration rather than liberation.

The political question is:

Who owns the time released by automation?

A Eucharistic distribution would return part of technological productivity as time for care, family, education, rest, worship, creativity, community, and civic participation.

Time is one of the principal forms through which technological abundance can nourish the body.

9.22 Education as a Public Institution

Students and families cannot individually govern the technological transformation of education.

Schools determine curriculum, assessment, procurement, teacher training, device policy, and acceptable authorship.

Educational technology firms may acquire significant influence over classroom practice through infrastructure and convenience.

UNESCO's guidance emphasizes human agency, privacy, pedagogical purpose, age-appropriate use, and the preservation of human capacities rather than treating adoption as an end in itself (Miao & Holmes, 2023).

Education must establish collective principles concerning protected foundational learning, disclosure, teacher authority, assessment, accessibility, privacy, and developmental appropriateness.

The institutional question is not merely whether students may choose AI. It is what kind of learner the school is responsible for forming.

9.23 Healthcare and Automated Inequality

AI may widen access to health information, diagnosis, translation, and professional support.

It may also deepen a two-tier system.

Wealthier patients may receive expert clinicians augmented by advanced technology. Poorer patients may receive automation as a lower-cost substitute for human care. Those with social capital may challenge algorithmic decisions. Those without it may be forced to accept classifications as final.

Healthcare institutions should distinguish augmentation of professionals from substitution for care. Every patient should retain access to responsible human judgment in consequential, ambiguous, or disputed situations.

The sick person, rather than the efficiency of the information system, remains the centre of healthcare.

9.24 Public Administration and Automated Distance

Governments use technology to process applications, identify fraud, allocate resources, manage benefits, and estimate risk.

These uses may improve consistency and speed. They may also create automated distance between the citizen and a responsible public official.

The system understands the category. The citizen lives the exception.

When the model and the life diverge, the person requires a pathway back into competent human judgment.

Public power therefore carries heightened obligations of explanation, appeal, audit, correction, non-discrimination, and accessibility.

A citizen cannot simply choose another state when rights, liberty, or essential provision are affected.

9.25 Military Competition

Military AI demonstrates most clearly why personal formation alone is insufficient.

An individual engineer may refuse a weapons project. A commander may exercise restraint. A researcher may warn of danger.

The strategic field is nevertheless governed by states, alliances, secrecy, procurement systems, threat perception, and military doctrine.

No private rule of life can resolve an arms race.

The lance requires institutional restraint through international law, verification, democratic oversight, communication between rivals, procurement limits, professional military ethics, and prohibitions upon uses incompatible with meaningful human responsibility.

Personal conscience remains necessary. It must be supported by structures that convert restraint into reciprocal security rather than unilateral vulnerability.

9.26 Environmental Burden and Distance

The user of an AI system may never see its physical infrastructure.

Energy, cooling, water, minerals, manufacturing, land, and waste occur elsewhere.

Personal moderation may reduce some demand, but users cannot individually determine energy sources, model scale, data-centre location, hardware turnover, or community burden.

NIST identifies environmental impact as a relevant generative-AI risk domain, while *Laudato si'* insists that ecological and social harms cannot be separated from the structures of technological and economic power that generate them (Francis, 2015; NIST, 2024).

Institutional mechanisms are required, including lifecycle assessment, transparent resource reporting, ecological limits, community participation, responsible sourcing, and waste obligations.

The material body of intelligence must be governed where that body exists.

9.27 The Geography of Sacrifice

Technological benefits and burdens are distributed unevenly.

Affluent populations may receive cognitive and economic benefits. Other populations may provide minerals, energy, low-paid data work, content moderation, land, water, and waste destinations.

Dominant languages receive richer representation. Smaller languages and cultural traditions may be ignored, flattened, or absorbed without reciprocal benefit.

A global AI order can reproduce colonial relations without formal colonial government: data, knowledge, labour, and material resources move toward powerful centres; services return under conditions determined by those centres.

A Eucharistic analysis must therefore examine not only who uses the Grail but whose world is poured into it.

9.28 Small States and Cooperative Sovereignty

Smaller states often lack the capital, population, and technical infrastructure required to build large-scale systems independently. They may nevertheless depend upon foreign-owned technologies for health, education, identity, government, finance, and communication.

Technological sovereignty cannot reasonably mean complete self-sufficiency.

It means possessing enough legal, institutional, professional, and technical capacity to govern dependence intelligently.

Small states may require regional procurement, shared public infrastructure, data-governance frameworks, interoperable standards, local language development, regional cybersecurity, and collective bargaining with providers.

The alternative to impossible technological autarky is cooperative sovereignty rather than passive dependency.

9.29 Public Procurement as Constitutional Power

Public institutions purchase and deploy systems at scale. Procurement therefore shapes technological markets and public dependency.

A contract determines data rights, audit access, interoperability, environmental obligations, continuity, human oversight, exit, and future bargaining power.

Lowest immediate cost cannot be the only criterion. A system may be inexpensive to acquire and extremely costly to leave.

Public procurement should include life-coherent conditions concerning capacity preservation, accessibility, rights, ecological disclosure, worker impact, public authority, and meaningful exit.

A public institution should not become permanently dependent upon a system it cannot inspect, govern, or replace.

9.30 Standards and Ordinary Practice

Law often responds after harm becomes visible. Standards shape ordinary practice before catastrophe.

Technical and professional standards can govern evaluation, documentation, provenance, uncertainty, human oversight, security, accessibility, incident reporting, and environmental performance.

Standard-setting is itself an exercise of power. Dominant firms often possess more resources to participate than small states, workers, communities, or civil-society organizations.

A life-coherent standards process must therefore be plural, transparent, and supported sufficiently for weaker participants to contribute meaningfully.

Those who own the vessel should not alone define the standard by which its guardianship is judged.

9.31 Professional Bodies

Professions can preserve duties that exceed employer interest or consumer demand.

Medicine is ordered toward the patient's good. Law carries duties to justice and due process. Education protects learning and formation. Journalism protects public truth. Engineering protects safety and public welfare.

Professional bodies should define which decisions may be automated; which may be supported; which must remain under human authority; what competence must be preserved; and what disclosure or verification is required.

They should also protect members who resist unsafe uses.

A professional ethic without collective institutional backing leaves conscientious practitioners isolated.

9.32 Research and the Political Economy of Knowledge

Research agendas are shaped by funding, prestige, national priorities, commercial partnership, publication incentives, and access to infrastructure.

AI research may therefore concentrate on problems attractive to firms, investors, or military actors while neglecting needs important to vulnerable communities.

Research governance should ask:

- Who defines the problem?
- Who owns the result?
- Which communities participate?
- Who bears risk?
- What knowledge remains open?
- Which questions are neglected because they offer little commercial return?

A civilization reveals what it serves through the questions it funds.

9.33 The Public Sphere and Trusted Mediation

Individuals cannot verify every claim independently.

A functioning public sphere depends upon institutions that gather evidence, preserve records, verify provenance, correct errors, and accept responsibility.

These include journalism, courts, universities, scientific bodies, libraries, archives, and electoral institutions.

Synthetic media places additional pressure upon these mediating institutions.

The answer cannot be to require every citizen to become a forensic expert.

Public trust should not mean uncritical deference. Institutions must earn credibility through transparency, plural participation, correction, and independence from concentrated power.

A society without trustworthy mediation becomes vulnerable either to universal scepticism or to authoritarian systems of verification.

9.34 Platform Governance and Public Reality

Large platforms influence what becomes visible, what travels rapidly, what is recommended, what is monetized, what is removed, and whose identity is authenticated.

These functions shape the public symbolic environment and therefore possess quasi-political significance.

Platform governance must balance expression, safety, procedural fairness, transparency, viewpoint plurality, and resilience against manipulation.

No private centre should possess unreviewable authority over the conditions under which society sees and describes itself.

9.35 Interoperability and Exit

Dependence becomes enclosure when exit is impossible.

Interoperability permits systems to communicate. Portability permits persons and institutions to move their data and activity. Open standards reduce the cost of leaving one provider. Plural infrastructure prevents a single centre from becoming the only gateway to participation.

Exit alone does not create justice. Every alternative may reproduce the same harmful model.

Yet the ability to leave disciplines power.

A centre that knows members cannot depart possesses fewer incentives to remain answerable.

9.36 Public Options and Common Infrastructure

Some technological capabilities may require public, cooperative, nonprofit, academic, or community-governed alternatives.

A public option need not eliminate private provision. It can establish a baseline service governed toward continuity, universal access, transparency, local capacity, and the common good.

Such alternatives can support underserved languages, public research, education, health, and environmental monitoring.

They can also provide benchmarks against which private systems are judged.

Responsible use cannot depend entirely upon the goodwill of owners whose primary obligations lie elsewhere.

9.37 Distribution of Technological Gains

Higher productivity does not determine how its benefits are distributed.

Owners may receive increased returns. Consumers may receive lower prices. Workers may receive higher wages, reduced hours, safer work, intensified workloads, or displacement. Communities may receive access while bearing ecological burdens.

The distribution is governed through ownership, taxation, labour law, social insurance, public investment, and bargaining power.

A Eucharistic civilization cannot evaluate AI only through aggregate abundance.

It must ask how the bread is distributed.

9.38 Universal Provision and the Fear of Redundancy

If technological systems reduce the labour required to produce goods, societies face a choice.

They may intensify insecurity as persons compete for diminishing forms of paid work. Or they may reorganize provision so that access to basic life-goods does not depend entirely upon labour-market scarcity.

The Eucharistic criterion supports universal access to food, housing, health, education, communication, and basic participation.

This principle does not dictate one specific economic model.

It establishes that technological abundance should reduce fear rather than produce wealth at the centre and insecurity throughout the body.

9.39 Deliberation Before Irreversibility

Technologies are often deployed before public understanding develops.

By the time deliberation begins, workflows have changed; skills have declined; staff have been reduced; data have migrated; contracts have become long term; and withdrawal is costly.

Democratic participation must therefore occur before high-impact systems become entrenched.

Consultation after deployment can become participation without power.

The Grail question must be asked before possession becomes dependency.

9.40 Expertise and Democratic Judgment

Technological governance requires specialist knowledge. Expertise can also distance decision-making from the public.

A false choice then appears: either experts govern without democratic constraint, or complex systems are subjected to uninformed preference.

The alternative is structured participation.

Experts clarify technical capability, evidence, uncertainty, feasibility, and risk. Affected communities clarify purpose, lived effects, acceptable burden, rights, and the common good.

Technical knowledge cannot determine ultimate ends. Public deliberation cannot ignore technical and material reality.

Life-coherent governance joins competence with accountability.

9.41 Representation of Vulnerable and Absent Members

Those most affected may possess the least ability to enter governance.

Children cannot represent themselves fully. Future generations are absent. Workers may fear retaliation. Disabled persons may be consulted too late. Small linguistic communities may lack resources. Ecosystems possess no direct political voice.

Institutions require forms of representation such as guardians, ombuds offices, child-impact assessment, worker councils, disability participation, environmental review, and future-generations institutions.

The body must develop ways of hearing members who cannot readily reach the centre.

9.42 The Church as Institutional Actor

The Church's response cannot remain confined to personal formation.

Churches operate schools, hospitals, universities, charities, media, property, and transnational networks. They purchase technology, employ workers, hold data, shape education, and exercise moral influence.

Their institutional practice is part of their witness.

Church schools should preserve human formation. Healthcare institutions should protect human encounter. Ecclesial media should strengthen communion rather than reproduce attention capture. Church institutions should be transparent about AI use and attentive to the workers and communities affected by automation.

9.43 Eucharistic Consistency Under Institutional Pressure

Religious institutions also face real pressures of finance, relevance, labour scarcity, and competition.

A school may believe it must adopt every new platform. A hospital may regard automation as necessary for survival. A media ministry may depend upon engagement metrics.

These pressures do not disappear through moral exhortation.

Eucharistic consistency requires cooperative strategies and shared structures that make fidelity sustainable.

The Christian answer to Moloch cannot be isolated religious heroism. It must become ecclesial and institutional coordination.

9.44 Collective Refusal

Some harmful practices can be resisted only collectively.

One teacher may be replaced. A professional association can change the standard. One company may lose market position. A sector-wide rule can remove the advantage of harmful conduct. One state may become strategically vulnerable. An international agreement can make restraint reciprocal.

Collective refusal turns conscience into institution.

It declares that certain gains will not be purchased through certain sacrifices.

9.45 Moratoria, Limits, and Prohibitions

Not every risk can be managed through transparency and individual choice.

Some technologies may require delay. Some uses may require strict limitation. Some practices may be incompatible with dignity, due process, responsibility, or public safety.

A mature technological order must retain the ability to say: not yet; not here; not for this purpose; not without these safeguards; or not at all.

The legitimacy of restriction depends upon evidence, proportionality, public reasoning, and review.

But a civilization unable to prohibit any profitable or strategically useful capability has surrendered governance to the system.

9.46 Reversibility

Technological adoption is often treated as one-directional.

Once institutions reorganize around a system, staff disappear; skills decline; data migrate; expectations change; and alternatives weaken.

Reversibility should therefore be designed from the beginning through exit plans, interoperability, preserved human competence, contingency procedures, sunset clauses, periodic review, and authority to suspend deployment.

A reversible system remains more clearly a tool. An irreversible system becomes an environment.

9.47 Repair

Prevention is essential, but harm will still occur.

Repair may require corrected decisions, restored access, compensation, rehabilitation of reputation, ecological remediation, worker transition, psychological care, public acknowledgment, and institutional reform.

Repair should address not only the immediate error but the structure that made the error likely.

The Eucharistic memory of the wounded body requires that harm not disappear once the system resumes operation.

9.48 Responsibility Proportional to Power

Users bear responsibility for their actions, but they do not control model design, training processes, interfaces, ownership, deployment rules, market concentration, or infrastructure.

Designers, owners, executives, regulators, and major deployers exercise greater power over the field.

Their responsibilities should be proportionately greater.

An institution that assigns the greatest responsibility to the least powerful participant reverses moral order.

The greater the control over the Grail and lance, the greater the obligation to answer for their effects.

9.49 Polycentric Governance

No single body can govern AI adequately.

National governments possess law but face jurisdictional and competitive constraints. Companies possess technical knowledge but conflicts of interest. Researchers possess expertise but may depend upon private infrastructure. Professional bodies understand practice but cover limited domains. Communities understand lived effects but may lack resources.

Ostrom's work supports the value of polycentric governance in complex common-resource systems: multiple centres of authority can cooperate, monitor, and correct one another while operating at different scales (Ostrom, 1990, 2009).

The purpose is neither bureaucratic multiplication nor one global technological sovereign. It is accountable coordination across differentiated centres.

9.50 Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity holds that decisions should be made at the lowest competent level while higher levels support, coordinate, and protect where necessary.

In technological governance, schools should shape classroom practice; professions should define competence; communities should participate in decisions affecting local land and water; nations should protect rights and govern markets; and international institutions should address cross-border risks and strategic competition.

Higher levels should not absorb lower ones unnecessarily. Nor should responsibility be devolved without transferring the resources and authority necessary to exercise it.

9.51 Solidarity

Subsidiarity without solidarity can abandon weaker institutions to problems they cannot solve.

Solidarity requires shared resources, cross-subsidy, regional infrastructure, technical support, and representation for communities with less power.

Wealthier states and institutions may bear greater obligations concerning safety, access, environmental repair, and capacity transfer.

Subsidiarity protects differentiated agency. Solidarity ensures that differentiation does not become abandonment.

Together they form an institutional grammar of communion.

9.52 The Common Good

The common good is not the numerical aggregation of private preferences.

Preferences may be manipulated, short-sighted, or formed within unjust conditions.

The common good concerns the shared conditions through which persons and communities can flourish, including truth, trust, health, ecological integrity, education, rights, cultural memory, security, and meaningful participation.

A technology may satisfy millions of immediate preferences while degrading the background conditions upon which agency depends.

The Grail must serve not merely appetite, but the common conditions of life.

9.53 Public Value and Non-Market Goods

Some essential goods are poorly represented by price.

Trust acquires a market value only after its collapse becomes costly. Professional judgment may appear inefficient until its absence causes catastrophe. Local journalism may be financially weak while essential to democracy. Human presence in care may appear costly while central to healing. Cultural memory may produce little direct revenue while sustaining social identity.

Public policy must protect goods that markets can consume without registering their full loss.

The Eucharistic economy recognizes nourishment beyond monetary accumulation.

9.54 Structural Hope

Structural analysis can generate fatalism.

Yet institutions are historical and changeable.

Societies have built labour protections, public education, environmental law, professional standards, public-health systems, social insurance, and arms-control arrangements.

These achievements remain partial and reversible. They demonstrate that collective agency can redesign the strategic field.

Structural hope is not confidence that reform is inevitable. It is recognition that the rules through which Moloch acts are humanly made and can be changed.

9.55 Personal and Institutional Feedback

Personal formation and institutional reform reinforce one another.

Formed persons create better institutions. Better institutions protect the conditions of formation.

A courageous worker supports collective organization. Collective protection makes courage less self-destructive. A wise teacher develops formative practice. Educational policy gives that practice time and authority. A responsible company accepts limits. Shared regulation prevents rivals from exploiting that restraint.

The goal is not to choose between inner conversion and outer reform. It is to construct a life-giving feedback loop between them.

9.56 The Danger of Institutional Messianism

The critique of individualism must not produce faith in perfect institutional design.

No law can eliminate every ambiguity. Audits can become ceremonial. Public institutions can become self-protective. Majorities can sacrifice minorities. International bodies can reproduce unequal power.

Institutions should restrain harm, distribute authority, and protect life. They cannot create perfect communion through administration.

The Eucharistic centre remains transcendent to every political arrangement.

9.57 The Danger of Technocratic Paternalism

Protective regulation can become paternalistic or coercive.

Experts may define flourishing without meaningful participation. Risk management may justify surveillance. Public-interest language may conceal institutional ambition.

The solution is not rejection of expertise. It is the joining of expertise with rights, participation, transparency, appeal, and contestability.

A life-coherent institution does not protect persons by making them passive. It protects the conditions of responsible participation.

9.58 The Danger of Theocratic Translation

The Eucharistic vision must not become a religious test for citizenship or technological access.

Plural societies require reasons that can be debated across traditions.

The Eucharist provides the theological source of this paper's argument. Its institutional implications must be translated into principles such as dignity, non-domination, justice, truthful mediation, ecological responsibility, agency, and accountability.

Translation should neither conceal the Christian source nor coerce those who do not share it.

The form of Christ's self-giving authority contradicts domination in the name of Christ.

9.59 From Personal Rule to Public Constitution

Pageau's counsel resembles a personal rule of technological life: pray; remember; cultivate skill; protect embodiment; participate in community; serve truth and love.

The institutional counterpart is a public constitution: protect human capacities; preserve the commons; distribute abundance; restrain coercion; make burdens visible; protect vulnerable members; ensure accountability; and maintain meaningful agency.

The personal rule forms persons capable of inhabiting the constitution. The constitution protects the social conditions under which the rule remains possible.

9.60 Questions Institutions Must Answer

Every high-impact technological institution should be required to answer:

1. What life-serving purpose justifies the system?
2. Who defines that purpose?
3. Who owns and governs the infrastructure?
4. Whose labour, knowledge, culture, and resources made it possible?
5. Who receives the principal benefits?
6. Who bears the principal risks?
7. Which human capacities are strengthened?
8. Which capacities may decline?
9. Who may become dependent?
10. What rights of correction, appeal, refusal, and exit exist?
11. What ecological systems sustain the technology?
12. What alternatives were considered?
13. Can deployment be paused or reversed?
14. How are gains distributed?
15. What happens when the system succeeds exactly as intended?
16. What body may be wounded by that success?

These questions translate personal discernment into institutional responsibility.

9.61 From Diagnosis to Constitution

The argument has now established that the Grail gathers abundance; the lance projects power; Moloch converts competition into sacrifice; Mammon converts abundance into accumulation; and AI can enclose capacities formerly cultivated within the body.

Human formation can help persons resist absorption by the system. It cannot alone govern ownership, infrastructure, law, labour markets, or strategic competition.

The next task is therefore constitutional:

What principles should govern technological power? What must it serve? What must it never sacrifice? What rights and alternatives must persons retain? How should responsibility follow power? How can abundance return to the body?

9.62 Conclusion: Ascetic and Constitutional Conversion

No law can manufacture love. No audit can create courage. No standard can substitute for wisdom.

Yet formed persons cannot flourish indefinitely inside structures organized against the practices that form them.

The person who prays requires time protected from constant work. The child who learns poetry requires a school that values memory. The clinician who preserves judgment requires an institution permitting deliberation. The worker who serves faithfully requires protection against disposability. The citizen seeking truth requires trustworthy public institutions. The technologist wishing to act responsibly requires common rules that prevent restraint from becoming competitive surrender.

The Christian answer to Moloch must therefore be both **ascetic and constitutional**:

- ascetic, because desire and allegiance must be reordered;
- constitutional, because ownership, authority, infrastructure, incentives, and responsibility must be reordered.

The personal question remains:

Whom do I serve?

The institutional question becomes:

What arrangements make service to life possible, durable, accountable, and shared?

10. Toward a Eucharistic Constitution of Technological Civilization

10.1 Why Technology Requires Constitutional Order

A constitution establishes the fundamental purposes, limits, rights, duties, and institutions through which power is authorized and held accountable.

Technological systems increasingly exercise power over education, employment, healthcare, finance, administration, communication, security, scientific research, cultural production, and public knowledge.

They influence who becomes visible, how persons are classified, what options become available, whose testimony is trusted, and who possesses the capacity to shape the future.

When technology reorganizes the conditions under which persons learn, work, receive care, exercise rights, and participate in public life, governance cannot remain confined to product design, market competition, private contract, and voluntary ethics.

The problem becomes constitutional because the technology alters the relationship between persons, institutions, and power.

10.2 Constitution Before Crisis

Technological regulation frequently follows a familiar sequence: the system is deployed; institutions become dependent; human alternatives decline; harms appear; and governance attempts to correct an embedded architecture.

Operational decisions acquire constitutional force before constitutional questions have been asked.

Defaults become norms. Contracts become public infrastructure. Convenience becomes necessity. Dependency becomes inevitability.

Constitutional inquiry should therefore precede or accompany high-impact deployment.

The relevant questions are not only: Is it accurate? Is it secure? Does it comply with existing law?

They are also: What authority is being created? What dependency may follow? What capacities will remain? What rights are endangered? Who will govern the infrastructure? What alternative pathways must be preserved? What sacrifices may become normal if the system succeeds?

10.3 Why "Eucharistic"?

The constitution proposed here is called Eucharistic because its principles arise from the sacramental grammar developed throughout this manuscript:

- life is received as gift;
- power gives itself for the life of the body;
- the vulnerable are indispensable;
- abundance is broken and shared;
- mediation deepens presence;
- the many participate without being absorbed;
- wounds remain visible for truth and repair; and
- recipients become capable of giving life in return.

The adjective does not mean that public policy should be controlled by ecclesial authority or that citizens must profess Eucharistic belief.

The theological source is particular. The constitutional implications are publicly examinable through the languages of dignity, agency, rights, justice, non-domination, ecology, participation, and accountability (Second Vatican Council, 1965).

The Eucharist supplies the Christian reason for the framework. Public deliberation supplies the common arena in which its implications must be tested.

10.4 Constitution, Not Comprehensive Code

Artificial-intelligence systems differ in purpose, scale, capability, context, and risk.

A translation tool, diagnostic assistant, classroom tutor, benefits system, creative model, autonomous weapon, and conversational companion should not be governed identically.

A constitution therefore establishes foundational principles rather than one exhaustive regulatory code.

It identifies what legitimate technological power must serve; what it may not sacrifice; what rights must remain; and what institutional conditions support accountability.

Specific law, professional standards, design rules, and procurement practices can then be developed according to context.

The constitution defines the centre. Its applications remain plural.

10.5 Preamble: Technology Exists for Life

The proposed constitution begins with the following affirmation:

> ***Technology exists to protect, restore, and enlarge the capacities of living persons, communities, and the ecological systems that sustain them. Living beings do not exist as disposable inputs into technological expansion.***

This preamble establishes a hierarchy of ends:

1. the conditions of living existence;
2. the dignity and flourishing of persons;
3. the integrity of communities and ecosystems;
4. the legitimate purposes of institutions;
5. technological means.

Capability is not self-justifying. Innovation is not an independent moral good. Efficiency does not determine purpose. Competition does not override the life-ground.

The Vatican's 2025 note similarly places artificial systems within the larger vocation of integral human development, the common good, embodied relational intelligence, and responsibility for creation (Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith & Dicastery for Culture and Education, 2025).

10.6 Principle One: Life-Grounded Purpose

Every high-impact technological system should possess an explicitly articulated life-serving purpose.

Market share, speed, reduced cost, engagement, competitiveness, and capability may be operational objectives. They do not establish moral legitimacy.

A life-grounded purpose identifies the concrete capacity the system is intended to protect, restore, or enlarge.

In healthcare: Does it improve healing, access, safety, understanding, or continuity?

In education: Does it deepen learning, inclusion, memory, reasoning, or teacher capacity?

In work: Does it remove danger and drudgery while strengthening security, skill, contribution, and participation?

In public administration: Does it improve access, fairness, accountability, and responsiveness?

In communication: Does it support truthful relation and reciprocal participation?

A system whose purpose cannot be expressed in relation to living capacities should not receive authority merely because it performs an impressive task.

10.7 Purpose and Business Model

A stated purpose is insufficient where the system's business model depends upon conduct contradicting that purpose.

A platform may proclaim connection while earning more when attention is captured compulsively. An educational service may claim to support learning while maximizing dependence upon generated completion. A healthcare system may claim to improve care while adopting automation primarily to reduce staffing. A public agency may claim to improve access while progressively removing human assistance.

The operative purpose of an institution is revealed through incentives, budgets, metrics, staffing, ownership, and actual consequences.

Where the business model consumes the good proclaimed, the organization is structurally divided against its mission.

10.8 Principle Two: No Sacrificial Externalities

No technological system should secure benefit by rendering another population, capacity, community, or ecosystem invisible and expendable.

The principle does not imply that change produces no cost or conflict. It requires that burdens not be dismissed as external merely because they occur elsewhere, later, among poorer populations, or outside the organization's accounting system.

The institution must examine hidden labour, worker displacement, developmental effects, ecological resource use, public-trust consequences, cultural extraction, and intergenerational burden.

An externality is not external to the living body. It is a burden transferred to a member absent from the decision.

10.9 The Non-Expendability Test

Before deployment, institutions should identify who or what may become an acceptable loss.

The test asks:

- Who becomes more vulnerable if the system succeeds?
- Who loses bargaining power?
- Who cannot refuse?
- Who bears costs without receiving benefits?
- Which developmental or professional capacities may disappear?
- What ecological field absorbs the burden?
- What future possibilities become harder to recover?
- Who is described as a transitional casualty?

Where concentrated harm is foreseeable, the institution bears an obligation to redesign, restrain, compensate, or reject the deployment.

Aggregate benefit does not eliminate the claims of those selected to pay for it.

10.10 Principle Three: Preservation of Responsible Agency

A technological system is not life-coherent simply because it generates beneficial outcomes.

Persons and communities must retain the capacity to understand, question, contest, choose, refuse, govern, and accept responsibility.

A system weakens agency when it makes consequential decisions unintelligible; eliminates alternatives; deskills those expected to supervise it; or assigns responsibility to persons without authority.

A system enlarges agency when it helps users perceive, understand, communicate, and act with greater responsible freedom.

The distinction between assistance and enclosure should therefore become a constitutional concern rather than merely a matter of individual preference.

10.11 Meaningful Human Authority

The presence of a human in a workflow does not guarantee human control.

Meaningful authority requires independent competence, sufficient time, relevant evidence, power to disagree, protection for justified disagreement, and ability to offer an alternative.

Where a human can only ratify what the system has already determined, oversight is ceremonial.

Constitutional governance must distinguish human presence, human review, and human authority.

Responsibility is legitimate only where authority is real.

10.12 The Right to Contestation

Persons affected by consequential automated decisions should possess a practical right to challenge them.

Contestation requires notification that automation was materially involved; explanation proportionate to the importance of the decision; access to relevant information; correction of erroneous data; review by a competent person; authority to alter the outcome; and timeliness sufficient to make the remedy meaningful.

The living person retains the right to appear beyond the model.

10.13 Meaningful Refusal

Where technology is not strictly necessary to protect the rights or safety of others, persons should retain reasonable avenues of refusal.

Refusal is not meaningful where it causes effective exclusion from education, healthcare, employment, finance, public services, or citizenship.

Essential institutions should preserve alternatives, particularly for people facing disability, poverty, lack of access, privacy concerns, religious objection, or technological vulnerability.

A formally available pathway that is unusably difficult does not constitute a genuine alternative.

10.14 Principle Four: Truthful Mediation

Technological mediation must preserve the relation among representation, evidence, origin, intention, and responsibility.

Truthful mediation requires, where appropriate, disclosure of synthetic material, provenance, identification of automated agents, protection against impersonation, access to sources, distinction between evidence and generated inference, and identifiable responsibility for claims.

The purpose is not to prohibit fiction, simulation, anonymity, or creative art. It is to prevent a representation from deceptively claiming the trust appropriate to another kind of presence.

The 2025 Vatican note and NIST's AI risk framework both identify synthetic content, misinformation, impersonation, and the destabilization of information integrity as significant ethical and governance concerns (Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith & Dicastery for Culture and Education, 2025; NIST, 2024).

10.15 The Right to Know the Interlocutor

Persons should ordinarily be able to determine whether they are interacting with a human being, an automated system, or a hybrid arrangement.

This distinction is especially important in healthcare, government, education, legal services, emotional support, finance, and political communication.

The obligation does not arise because automated interaction is inherently illegitimate. It arises because human and artificial interlocutors bear different forms of competence, vulnerability, accountability, and responsibility.

A system should not obtain trust by concealing the kind of entity it is.

10.16 Epistemic Traceability

Where AI contributes materially to consequential knowledge claims, institutions should preserve a path from output to evidence.

Users should be able to identify, as appropriate, sources, assumptions, uncertainty, limitations, data boundaries, and the role of human judgment.

Not every complex computational process can be translated fully into ordinary language. Mechanistic opacity does not justify institutional opacity.

Where sufficient traceability cannot be achieved, the system's authority should be limited proportionately.

10.17 Principle Five: Just Distribution

Technological abundance is legitimate only when benefits circulate through the body rather than remaining concentrated at the centre.

Justice concerns more than access to the final product. It includes ownership, income, time, knowledge, infrastructure, training, participation, and risk.

A society cannot call AI broadly beneficial where productivity increases while insecurity, dependence, and concentration also deepen.

The distributive question is:

Who becomes more capable because this system exists?

10.18 Productivity Gains

When automation increases output, institutions should decide explicitly how the gain will be shared.

Possible forms include wages, reduced working time, safer work, training, public services, worker ownership, community investment, and transition support.

Efficiency gains should not flow automatically and exclusively toward the owners of capital and infrastructure.

The Grail is not judged by how much it contains. It is judged by whether the body is nourished.

10.19 Time as Distributed Abundance

A system that reduces necessary labour should create opportunities for rest, care, family, study, worship, community, and civic participation.

Where saved time becomes only increased institutional demand, the technology has not liberated the worker. It has increased the rate at which the worker can be consumed.

A Eucharistic distribution returns some technological productivity as human life.

10.20 Knowledge and the Common Field

AI systems depend upon public research, cultural inheritance, language, education, professional practice, and social contribution.

Knowledge derived from this common field carries obligations beyond private enclosure.

These may include public-interest access, support for education and research, preservation of minority languages, transparent public systems, safety research, and reinvestment in the institutions from which capability was drawn.

This does not abolish intellectual property or the legitimate financing of innovation. It recognizes that no major intelligence system is created from wholly private resources.

10.21 Principle Six: Ecological Reciprocity

AI must be governed as a material system embedded within ecological limits.

Its infrastructure requires energy, water, minerals, semiconductors, construction, cooling, land, maintenance, and disposal.

Ecological responsibility should include lifecycle assessment, absolute-resource accounting, community participation, transparent reporting, environmental thresholds, durable and repairable hardware, responsible sourcing, and waste obligations.

A system should not appear clean to the user merely because its material burdens have been transferred elsewhere.

10.22 Beyond Efficiency

Efficiency measures resource use per unit of output.

Total environmental burden may still rise where the scale of deployment expands rapidly.

Ecological reciprocity therefore asks: What is the total burden? What local limits apply? Is the use socially necessary? Are less resource-intensive designs available? Does the system restore or compensate meaningfully for what it consumes? Are benefits proportionate to the burden borne by affected communities?

Not every computationally possible activity possesses a sufficient life-serving purpose to justify its ecological metabolism.

10.23 Rights of Affected Places

Communities hosting data centres, power generation, mining, manufacturing, or waste facilities should possess meaningful standing before decisions are finalized.

They require information, independent expertise, consultation, negotiation, enforceable commitments, monitoring, and redress.

A place is not empty infrastructure. It is a living field of bodies, histories, waters, species, livelihoods, and future possibilities.

10.24 Principle Seven: Accountable Limits

A life-coherent civilization must retain authority to limit technological power.

Some systems should be delayed until governance and evidence are adequate. Some should be confined to particular settings. Some uses may need prohibition because they are incompatible with dignity, meaningful responsibility, due process, or public safety.

Limits should be justified, evidence-based, proportionate, publicly debated, and periodically reviewed.

The existence of potential misuse does not automatically justify prohibition. Capability does not automatically generate a right to deployment.

10.25 The Right to Pause

Institutions should possess procedures for suspending development or deployment when serious unforeseen harm appears; evidence becomes unreliable; oversight proves ineffective; redress is unavailable; ecological limits are exceeded; or the system's purpose changes materially.

A pause is not necessarily a permanent ban. It is evidence that the institution, rather than the race, remains in control.

10.26 Reversibility and Sunset

High-impact systems should include sunset clauses, periodic reauthorization, exit plans, preserved human alternatives, data portability, and decommissioning procedures.

A system should not become permanent simply because it was introduced during an emergency or temporary programme.

Constitutional legitimacy requires recurring evidence that the system continues to serve its stated purpose.

10.27 Prohibited Sacrifices

A constitution must identify goods that may not be exchanged for efficiency or strategic advantage.

Possible constitutional prohibitions include lethal force without meaningful human responsibility; deceptive impersonation for manipulation or fraud; automated public decisions without due process; exploitative behavioural targeting of children; non-contestable discrimination; compulsory dependence without essential alternatives; and infrastructure burdens that violate basic ecological or community conditions.

The precise legal boundaries require continuing public and professional development.

The governing principle is that some members and goods are not available for sacrifice.

10.28 Principle Eight: Subsidiarity and Polycentric Governance

Technological authority should be exercised at the lowest level capable of governing the problem effectively, while higher levels provide resources, coordinate, protect rights, and address risks exceeding local capacity.

Polycentric governance recognizes that no single institution possesses all relevant knowledge or legitimacy.

Responsibility may be distributed among families, schools, communities, professions, municipalities, states, courts, international organizations, workers, researchers, and civil society.

The purpose is coordinated plurality rather than fragmented irresponsibility or absolute centralization (Ostrom, 1990, 2009).

10.29 Local Capacity and Global Coordination

Some decisions require local knowledge. Others require national or international coordination because they concern arms races, cross-border data, corporate concentration, global ecological effects, or dangerous capability diffusion.

Global coordination should not erase local participation. Local autonomy should not be used to abandon weaker communities to risks they cannot manage.

The higher level should support and restrain without consuming the lower.

10.30 Principle Nine: Solidarity

Technological systems should be assessed from the position of those least able to protect themselves, including children, disabled persons, low-income workers, migrants, linguistic minorities, technologically excluded persons, communities hosting infrastructure, and people subject to administrative power.

Solidarity requires more than identical treatment.

Different populations may require additional accessibility, translation, representation, protection, public infrastructure, and financial support to participate as equals.

10.31 Child-Centred Governance

Children require heightened protection because their capacities are developing; they cannot provide adult consent; they are vulnerable to manipulation; and they will live longest with the consequences.

A child-centred framework should require developmental evidence, age-appropriate use, strong privacy, strict limits on manipulative design, preservation of play, memory, embodiment, and human teaching, and meaningful family and public participation.

Children must not become the experimental population through which industry or institutions discover the costs of technological transformation.

10.32 Disability and Participatory Design

AI can enlarge agency profoundly through translation, visual description, speech assistance, adaptive interfaces, and cognitive support.

Disabled persons should participate from the beginning in determining purpose, privacy, control, reliability, and acceptable trade-offs.

The goal is not to normalize persons into a standard system. It is to adapt systems toward differentiated participation.

10.33 Principle Ten: Responsibility Proportional to Power

Responsibility should correspond to the capacity to shape design, ownership, incentives, deployment, access, and consequences.

Major responsibilities fall upon system owners, executive leaders, public authorities, infrastructure providers, and institutions deploying systems in essential domains.

Their duties should include prevention, monitoring, disclosure, protection, repair, and liability proportionate to control.

The distribution of technical contribution must not become the disappearance of moral responsibility.

10.34 No Responsibility Without Authority

Workers and professionals should not be assigned responsibility for outcomes they lack authority to alter.

A clinician should not bear full liability for a recommendation that institutional policy effectively requires. A teacher should not bear responsibility for a platform selected without teacher participation. A public official should not sign off upon a model they cannot inspect or reject.

Responsibility without authority produces moral injury while protecting the centre.

Decision power and answerability must be aligned.

10.35 Principle Eleven: Repair

Accountability does not end with a software update, a fine, a corrected output, or a public statement.

Repair seeks restoration of the capacities and relations harmed by the system.

It may involve compensation, reinstatement, record correction, environmental remediation, psychological care, worker transition, public acknowledgment, and institutional redesign.

The central questions are: What was wounded? What power created the wound? What must change? How can the injured body regain life and agency?

10.36 Institutional Memory of Harm

Organizations often treat incidents as deviations to be resolved and forgotten.

Eucharistic memory keeps the wound present so that the victim does not disappear once operations resume.

Institutions should preserve incident records, lessons learned, independent review, victim participation, and public reporting where appropriate.

Memory should not become permanent institutional shame without possibility of reform. It should become fidelity to those harmed and protection against repetition.

10.37 Principle Twelve: Preservation of the Civil and Cognitive Commons

Certain capabilities and institutions should remain available as shared foundations rather than becoming entirely enclosed.

These include public knowledge, basic education, healthcare access, trustworthy records, cultural memory, essential communication, professional competence, and public-interest research.

The civil commons is not an unregulated resource. It is organized provision secured for universal life-capacity.

AI strengthens the commons when it widens access, supports public institutions, preserves languages, and enlarges community competence. It weakens the commons when it extracts collective inheritance and returns it as dependency upon private terms.

10.38 Public and Cooperative Alternatives

Where private systems perform essential social functions, societies should consider public, nonprofit, cooperative, academic, professional, or community-governed alternatives.

These can supply continuity, plural infrastructure, public accountability, local relevance, and standards against which commercial systems can be judged.

Public ownership is not automatically life-coherent. States can also become coercive and opaque.

The purpose is plural stewardship and the prevention of complete dependency upon one governing centre.

10.39 Proposed Technological Rights

The manuscript proposes that persons affected by high-impact technological systems should possess, subject to context and legal development:

1. the right to know when consequential automation is used;
2. the right to explanation proportionate to the decision;
3. the right to correct data and representations;
4. the right to appeal consequential outcomes;
5. the right to meaningful human judgment in high-stakes or disputed cases;
6. the right to know whether an interlocutor or representation is synthetic;
7. the right to protection against deceptive impersonation and manipulative design;
8. the right to accessible and non-discriminatory participation;
9. the right to preservation of foundational cognitive and professional capacities;
10. the right to meaningful alternatives where dependence would otherwise become compulsory;
11. the right to fair participation in productivity and public-value gains; and
12. the right to ecological and community protection from technological burdens.

These rights establish the person as a participant and rights-holder rather than a passive subject of the system.

10.40 Institutional Duties

High-impact technology providers and deployers should correspondingly bear duties to state purposes; assess capacity effects; disclose material risks; protect vulnerable populations; preserve contestability; permit independent evaluation; report serious incidents; maintain exit plans; protect workers; constrain ecological harm; share gains fairly; and fund repair where their systems produce injury.

Private ownership does not erase public consequence.

An institution exercising public power through technology acquires public obligations.

Table 5 pairs the proposed technological rights with the duties required to make those rights institutionally effective.

Table 3. Proposed Technological Rights and Corresponding Institutional Duties.

Proposed technological right	Corresponding institutional duty
Right to know when consequential automation is used	State the system's purpose and disclose material automated involvement.
Right to explanation proportionate to the decision	Provide intelligible reasons, relevant evidence, limitations, and uncertainty.
Right to correct data and representations	Maintain accessible correction mechanisms and responsible data-quality processes.
Right to appeal consequential outcomes	Preserve contestability and timely review by a competent person with authority to alter the outcome.
Right to meaningful human judgment in high-stakes or disputed cases	Maintain human competence, time, independence, and authority for genuine judgment.
Right to know whether an interlocutor or representation is synthetic	Disclose synthetic agents and content where authenticity could otherwise be misunderstood.
Right to protection against deceptive impersonation and manipulative design	Prevent deceptive uses and assess behavioural, psychological, and informational risks.
Right to accessible and non-discriminatory participation	Assess accessibility, bias, and capacity effects, with heightened protection for vulnerable populations.

Proposed technological right	Corresponding institutional duty
Right to preservation of foundational cognitive and professional capacities	Preserve apprenticeship, human alternatives, and the competence required for oversight and recovery.
Right to meaningful alternatives where dependence would otherwise become compulsory	Maintain non-automated pathways, interoperability, continuity, and viable exit plans.
Right to fair participation in productivity and public-value gains	Protect workers and distribute gains through security, income, time, ownership, training, or public provision.
Right to ecological and community protection from technological burdens	Constrain ecological harm, report serious incidents, and fund remediation and repair.

10.41 The Life-Coherence Assessment

Before authorization or major deployment, significant systems should undergo a life-coherence assessment covering six domains.

Purpose

- What life-capacity is the system intended to protect, restore, or enlarge?
- Do incentives support or contradict that purpose?

Persons

- Who is affected?
- Who cannot refuse?
- Whose agency is strengthened or weakened?

Capacities

- What knowledge, skill, relationship, or institution may be displaced?
- How will human competence be preserved?

Distribution

- Who receives gains?
- Who bears costs?
- What ownership and benefit-sharing arrangements apply?

Ecology

- What resources are consumed?
- What total burden results?
- Which local systems may be stressed?

Governance

- Who possesses authority?
- What rights of appeal, audit, correction, pause, refusal, and reversal exist?
- Who is responsible for repair?

The assessment is a constructive proposal of this manuscript and should remain proportionate to the system's scale and impact.

10.42 The Eucharistic Technology Test

The constitutional framework can be distilled into a practical discernment instrument:

1. Whom does the technology serve?

2. What conception of the person does it assume?
3. What capacities does it enlarge?
4. What capacities does it replace or weaken?
5. Who controls the vessel?
6. Who may wield the lance?
7. Whose labour, knowledge, and resources fill the system?
8. Who receives the abundance?
9. Who bears the burden?
10. Which member may become expendable?
11. Can affected persons understand, question, refuse, and appeal?
12. Does mediation deepen presence or substitute representation for reality?
13. Does the system preserve truth and accountable authorship?
14. Does it replenish its social and ecological sources?
15. Can it be paused, reversed, or dismantled?
16. Does success make the body more capable of governing itself?
17. Could its benefits be received in thanksgiving without concealing a victim?

The final question asks whether the apparent gift can be affirmed without turning away from the body paying for it.

10.43 Constitutional Translation

Table 3 translates the Eucharistic pattern into constitutional principles and institutional expressions.

Table 4. Eucharistic Principles and Their Constitutional Translation.

Eucharistic pattern	Constitutional principle	Institutional expression
Life as gift	Life-grounded purpose	Publicly stated capacity-serving objective
Power as self-giving service	Responsibility proportional to power	Duties, liability, accountable leadership
Weak members as indispensable	Non-sacrifice	Impact assessment and heightened protection
Communion without absorption	Agency and contestability	Appeal, refusal, plural pathways
Real presence	Truthful mediation	Provenance, disclosure, anti-impersonation rules
Bread broken and shared	Just distribution	Shared gains, access, public value, time
Creation gathered in thanksgiving	Ecological reciprocity	Lifecycle accounting and restoration
Cross remembered	Memory of harm	Incident records and victim participation
Resurrection	Repair	Remediation and restored opportunity
One serving the many	Subsidiarity and solidarity	Polycentric governance
Become what you receive	Capacity formation	Education and apprenticeship
Eucharistic consistency	Alignment of mission and operation	Incentives consistent with purpose

10.44 Constitutional Institutions

Principles require institutional embodiment through a network that may include data-protection and algorithmic-rights authorities, independent technical auditors, courts, ombuds offices, professional councils, worker technology committees, environmental regulators, public research centres, community-impact bodies, legislative oversight, and international coordination.

The precise architecture will vary by jurisdiction.

The governing principle is that no actor should possess both control of the vessel and exclusive authority to define the standard by which it is judged.

10.45 Worker Technology Councils

Organizations introducing consequential automation should establish forms of worker participation with access to information and actual influence over task redesign, monitoring, staffing, data use, training, productivity expectations, transition, and distribution of gains.

Workers often identify risks invisible to senior leaders and external designers.

Their participation is not merely democratic symbolism. It is necessary operational knowledge.

10.46 Community Standing

Communities affected by technological infrastructure or automated public systems should possess legal and institutional standing, including information, representation, consultation, negotiation, independent expertise, challenge, and enforceable remedy.

Without standing, participation becomes ceremonial.

The periphery may be heard while remaining powerless to alter the centre.

10.47 Professional Judgment

Professions should define boundaries among automated decision, decision support, and decisions requiring direct human authority.

The boundary should reflect consequence, vulnerability, uncertainty, contextual complexity, need for embodied encounter, and fiduciary duty.

Professions should also identify foundational competencies that must remain taught and practised even where automation performs well.

The system must not consume the apprenticeship required to form future guardians.

10.48 Procurement

Governments and public institutions can operationalize constitutional principles through procurement.

Contracts should address auditability, interoperability, data protection, accessibility, ecological reporting, worker impact, human review, continuity, and exit.

Lowest cost is not equivalent to greatest public value.

Procurement determines who becomes guardian of public capacity.

10.49 Constitutional Metrics

Technological systems should be assessed not only by accuracy, scale, and productivity, but also by human-capacity retention, user understanding, contestation outcomes, worker security, quality of human encounter, institutional dependency, distribution of gains, ecological burden, accessibility, public trust, and repair after error.

Metrics cannot replace judgment. They should make the life-field visible rather than narrow the institution's perception to what is easiest to count.

10.50 The Danger of Symbolic Constitutionalism

A charter can become another symbolic substitute.

Institutions may endorse principles while maintaining unchanged operations. An ethics board without power may legitimize decisions it cannot prevent. Consultation without standing may absorb dissent. Transparency without repair may normalize harm.

Constitutional commitments must therefore be linked to authority, resources, enforcement, participation, and consequences.

A constitution becomes real only when it changes what power is allowed to do.

10.51 Constitutional Capture

Governance can be captured by the institutions it is intended to regulate.

Large firms possess technical knowledge, legal resources, policy access, and infrastructural control.

Standards may be written around incumbent business models. Compliance burdens may remove smaller competitors while leaving concentrated power intact. Public bodies may become dependent upon private providers for expertise.

Constitutional governance therefore requires independent public research, conflict-of-interest rules, funding for civil society, participation by weaker states and communities, and regular review of the governing institutions themselves.

The guardians of the Grail should not be selected solely by those who own it.

10.52 Security Exceptionalism

States may argue that national security requires exemption from ordinary limits.

Some secrecy and specialized capability are legitimate. Permanent exceptionalism can allow the lance to escape constitutional order.

Military and intelligence systems require lawful authorization, democratic oversight, human responsibility, legal limits, independent review, and international restraint.

Security exists to protect the body. It cannot consume the constitutional order in the name of protection.

10.53 Technocratic Uniformity

A technological constitution should not compel every community and profession to adopt one model of modernity.

Different institutions may choose different levels of automation, human contact, openness, and restraint.

Plurality preserves alternatives and supports learning.

Constitutional principles establish rights and minimum limits while leaving space for local, cultural, professional, and religious forms compatible with the dignity of others.

Communion is not standardization.

10.54 The Role of the Church

The Church's first contribution is not technical regulation but sacramental, moral, and anthropological witness.

It proclaims that persons exceed output; the vulnerable body is sacred; power is judged by service; creation is gift; truth requires fidelity; and abundance is ordered toward communion.

Its institutions should model transparent AI use, human-rich education, protected human encounter, worker dignity, ecological responsibility, and preferential attention to the poor.

The Church should support public frameworks protecting life without seeking ecclesiastical control of the state.

10.55 Dialogue With Other Traditions

A global technological constitution should draw upon many traditions, including human rights, democratic constitutionalism, Indigenous reciprocity, ecological ethics, labour movements, disability justice, care ethics, African relational philosophies, Jewish covenant and Sabbath, Islamic stewardship and justice, Asian traditions of restraint and harmony, and secular humanism.

The Eucharistic contribution is distinctive rather than exhaustive.

Its central reversal is:

The centre gives itself for the life of the many.

Dialogue strengthens the public legitimacy of the framework and prevents any one tradition from claiming exhaustive political possession of the good.

10.56 From Alignment to Allegiance

The usual alignment question asks whether an artificial system behaves according to intended values.

The constitutional question asks whether the entire arrangement—system, owner, institution, user, market, regulator, and infrastructure—is aligned with the life-ground.

A technically aligned system can serve an exploitative institution. A safe model can intensify worker displacement. A truthful assistant can operate within destructive infrastructure. A useful educational tool can enclose learning.

The deepest problem is civilizational allegiance:

- What does the whole system serve?
- What stands above capability?
- What may never be sacrificed?

The Eucharistic constitution answers:

Technology must serve the living body, and the body must not be sacrificed to preserve the machine.

10.57 From Guardian to Participant

The constitution also requires transformation of those who govern technological power.

A guardian may protect the vessel paternalistically while remaining separate from the body.

The Eucharistic form understands technologists, officials, executives, regulators, workers, professionals, and users as differentiated members of one interdependent field.

They receive gifts they did not create. They remain answerable to the body.

The guardian must therefore become a participant capable of listening, thanksgiving, limitation, reciprocity, and correction.

10.58 Five Questions for Every Centre

Every technological centre should answer:

What do you receive?

What knowledge, labour, ecological resources, trust, and public infrastructure make your capacity possible?

What do you gather?

What data, capital, attention, authority, and dependence are being concentrated?

What do you give?

What real capacities, protections, knowledge, time, or opportunity return to the body?

What do you consume?

What workers, communities, ecosystems, skills, relationships, or futures bear the cost?

To whom are you answerable?

Who can question, restrain, correct, or remove your authority?

A centre unable to answer transparently should not be entrusted with essential conditions of life.

10.59 The Constitutional Grail Question

The Grail question now acquires its full institutional form:

Whom does this power serve, under whose authority, at whose cost, through what sacrifices, and with what return to the living body?

A defensible answer must be embodied in structure rather than intention alone.

The system serves life where purpose is life-grounded; vulnerable persons are protected; agency remains real; mediation remains truthful; abundance circulates; ecological limits are respected; responsibility follows control; and harm produces repair.

10.60 Conclusion: Power Under the Form of Gift

Technological power increasingly determines the conditions under which persons can live, learn, work, know, care, communicate, and participate.

Without constitutional order, innovation can become private public power; infrastructure can become dependency; assistance can become enclosure; security can become Moloch; and abundance can become Mammon.

The Eucharistic constitution begins from another centre:

life is gift; the person is member rather than input; the vulnerable are indispensable; power is service; truth requires accountable presence; creation is not an externality; abundance is for nourishment; the wound must be remembered; and the victim must be restored.

The constitution does not promise the elimination of conflict, scarcity, risk, or tragedy. It establishes the form within which technological power must answer for them.

The constitutional task is the institutional expression of the Eucharistic reversal:

No life sacrificed to preserve technological power; technological power given, limited, and shared so that life may flourish.

Figure 5 brings the twelve constitutional principles and their institutional expressions into one integrated visual architecture.

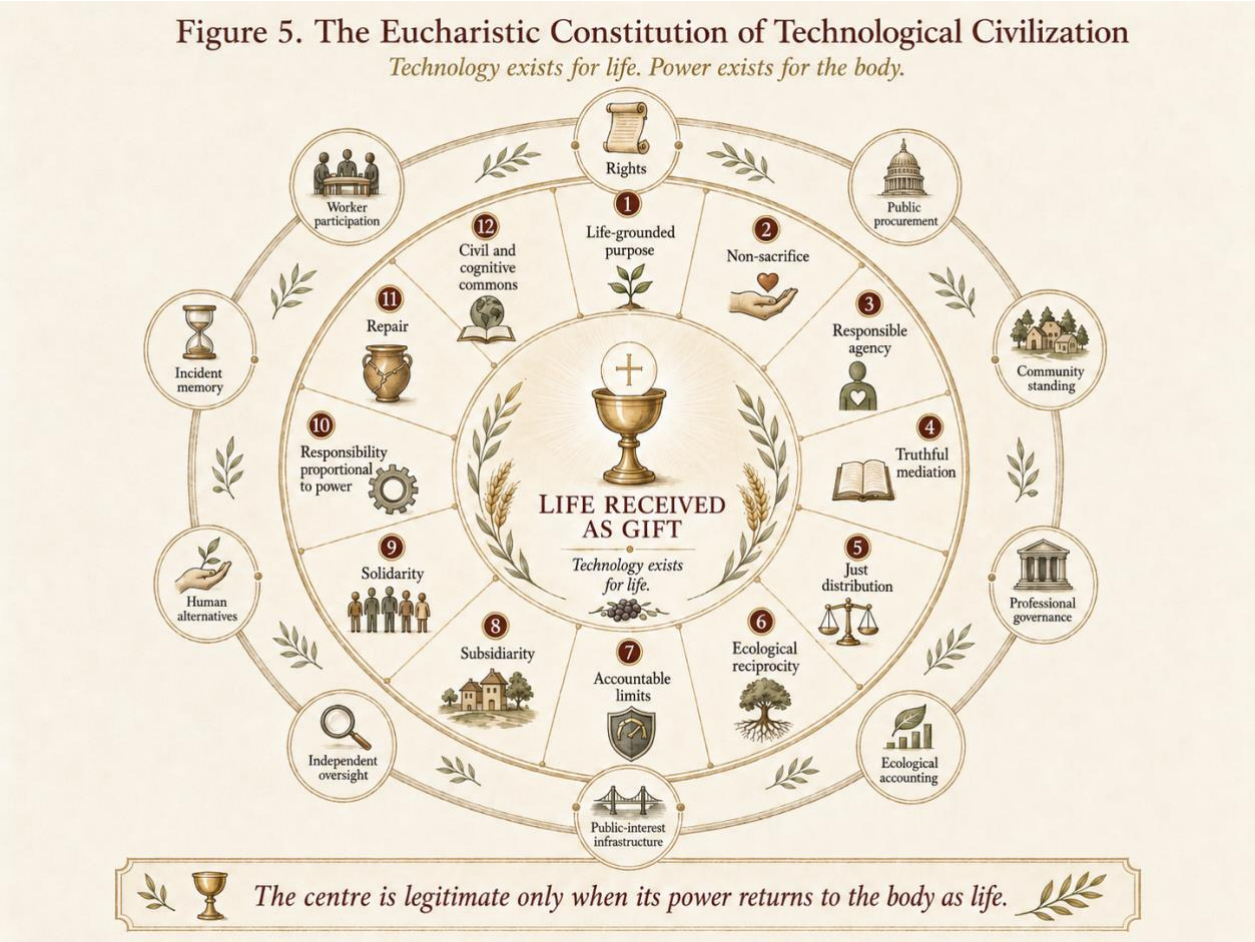

Figure 5. The Eucharistic Constitution of Technological Civilization.

The constitutional framework places technological capability beneath the life-ground and translates Eucharistic principles into rights, duties, institutions, limits, public provision, and restorative accountability.

11. The Civil Commons as Eucharistic Institutional Form

11.1 From Constitutional Principle to Material Provision

A constitution identifies what power is for, what it must protect, and what it may not sacrifice. Constitutional principles remain incomplete, however, unless institutions secure the material, social, ecological, and cognitive conditions through which persons can exercise the rights being proclaimed.

The right to agency means little where education is inaccessible. The right to human judgment means little where essential services have been stripped of competent personnel. The right to refuse technological mediation means little where every practical alternative has disappeared. The right to truthful communication means little where journalism, libraries, archives, scientific institutions, and public records have been allowed to collapse.

The preceding section proposed a Eucharistic constitution of technological civilization. The present section identifies the **civil commons** as the primary institutional form through which that constitutional vision can become materially credible.

11.2 Defining the Civil Commons

John McMurtry uses the term **civil commons** to describe socially constructed institutions that enable universal access to life-goods through cooperative provision and protection (McMurtry, 2001, 2011, 2013).

Such institutions may include public healthcare, education, sanitation, safe water, libraries, parks, emergency services, environmental protections, public knowledge, social insurance, labour protections, and legal guarantees of basic rights.

These institutions differ greatly in quality, history, governance, and accessibility. Public designation alone does not make an institution life-serving.

Their common potential lies in a governing recognition:

Some goods are too important to life and meaningful participation to depend entirely upon purchasing power, private charity, or the discretion of concentrated owners.

The civil commons protects the conditions through which persons can live and act before they enter markets as workers, consumers, owners, or competitors.

11.3 Life-Goods and Life-Capacities

A life-good is something whose absence diminishes or destroys the capacity of living beings to exist, develop, participate, and flourish.

Some life-goods are immediately biological: clean air, potable water, adequate food, shelter, sanitation, bodily safety, healthcare, and ecological integrity.

Others are developmental and social: education, communication, cultural memory, care, meaningful relationship, mobility, and legal standing.

Others are institutional and cognitive: trustworthy information, public records, scientific knowledge, professional competence, digital access, and the ability to understand and contest systems of authority.

These goods are interdependent. Health affects learning. Housing affects childhood development. Ecological degradation affects work, migration, and public health. Public truth affects collective action in every domain.

The civil commons begins where society recognizes that a life-good depends upon shared conditions requiring deliberate protection.

11.4 Why the Commons Is Civil

The term *commons* may evoke resources that exist prior to formal institutions, such as forests, rivers, pastures, fisheries, or bodies of inherited knowledge.

The **civil** commons emphasizes that shared goods require active organization.

A safe water supply depends upon watershed protection, infrastructure, engineering, maintenance, testing, financing, and public trust. A library requires collections, cataloguing, preservation, trained staff, accessible space, and rules of use. A digital knowledge commons requires computing infrastructure, standards, contributors, verification, privacy, security, accessibility, and durable governance.

The civil commons is not the absence of institutions. It is an institutional order whose defining purpose is common life rather than maximum extraction.

11.5 Commons Are Governed, Not Ownerless

A commons should not be confused with unrestricted access without responsibility.

Shared resources can be depleted. Public systems can be overwhelmed or captured. Open technological tools can be used for exploitation, deception, or violence.

Ostrom's work demonstrates that enduring commons depend upon institutional features such as boundaries, rules, monitoring, participation, graduated sanctions, conflict-resolution mechanisms, and nested governance (Ostrom, 1990, 2009).

The relevant alternative is therefore not private ownership or chaos. It is:

enclosure or responsible common stewardship.

Universal access may coexist with rules. Shared knowledge may coexist with privacy. Open participation may coexist with protection against predation.

The commons means that selected goods cannot be owned in a manner that permits the exclusion or destruction of the life-capacities of others.

11.6 Hardin, Ostrom, and the Difference Between Commons and Open Access

Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" describes a situation in which individuals are incentivized to overuse a finite resource because the benefits are concentrated while costs are distributed (Hardin, 1968).

The model is powerful as a warning about unregulated exploitation. It does not describe every possible common institution.

Ostrom's research demonstrated that communities have repeatedly developed durable systems for governing shared resources without relying exclusively upon either privatization or centralized command (Ostrom, 1990, 2009).

McMurtry's civil-commons concept extends the discussion beyond natural-resource management. It asks how societies secure universal access to goods required for life and agency (McMurtry, 2001, 2011, 2013).

A civil commons is therefore not an unmanaged resource field. It is a governed provision whose purpose is the continuing life of the body.

11.7 Structural Affinity With the Eucharist

The civil commons is not a sacrament. No public programme becomes Eucharistic merely because it distributes goods, and the Eucharist should not be reduced to a political-economic metaphor.

Nevertheless, the civil commons possesses a structural affinity with the Eucharistic pattern.

The Eucharist receives the fruits of creation and human work. The civil commons recognizes that social wealth depends upon inherited, ecological, and collective contributions.

The Eucharist blesses the gift. The civil commons places foundational life-goods under moral and public responsibility.

The Eucharist breaks the bread. The civil commons limits enclosure and opens access.

The Eucharist distributes nourishment. The civil commons secures capacity throughout the body.

The Eucharist forms one body without erasing differentiated members. The civil commons organizes shared provision while preserving plural participation.

The Eucharist sends those nourished into service. The civil commons should make recipients more capable of contributing to common life.

The correspondence can be stated as follows:

What is received from the whole is stewarded and returned for the life of the whole.

11.8 From Charity to Justice

Charity remains indispensable. No formal institution can anticipate every need, replace compassion, or eliminate the importance of hospitality, voluntary service, and mutual aid.

Charity becomes distorted, however, when it is required to compensate permanently for arrangements that deny basic life-goods.

If healthcare depends primarily upon benevolence, sick persons remain dependent upon the preferences of benefactors. If education depends upon philanthropy, children's futures depend upon donor priorities. If digital participation depends upon corporate generosity, access may be withdrawn whenever the business model changes.

The civil commons converts selected forms of beneficence into justice.

The question shifts from:

Will someone give?

To:

What is owed to members as a condition of shared life?

Need establishes a claim that is not reducible to market value.

11.9 From Consumer to Member

Markets commonly address persons as consumers, workers, investors, owners, or competitors.

The civil commons addresses the person as a **member**.

The consumer receives according to purchasing power. The member possesses claims and responsibilities arising from participation in a shared body.

Membership may involve contribution according to capacity, respect for the rights of others, participation in governance, preservation of the institution, and concern for future members.

The civil commons should not reduce users to passive clients. Its ideal subject is a rights-bearing participant capable of receiving and contributing.

11.10 Market, State, and Commons

Markets can coordinate production, communicate demand, permit plural choices, and stimulate innovation.

The problem arises when market exchange becomes the only legitimate grammar for goods required for life and agency.

Markets distribute primarily through effective demand. Need without purchasing power can remain invisible. Markets permit exclusion through ownership. Civil commons limit exclusion where it would destroy meaningful participation.

The civil commons also cannot be identified automatically with the state.

States can secure universal provision and rights. They can also become centralized, bureaucratic, coercive, or institutionally self-protective.

Civil-commons institutions may be public, municipal, cooperative, nonprofit, professional, community-governed, Indigenous, ecclesial, or hybrid.

The defining question is not legal ownership alone:

Does the institution protect and enlarge a life-good through accountable common provision?

11.11 Three Institutional Logics

Table 4 distinguishes the governing logics, access rules, characteristic dangers, and success measures of three institutional forms.

Table 5. Market Enclosure, Bureaucratic Command, and Civil Commons.

Dimension	Market enclosure	Bureaucratic command	Civil commons
Primary relation	Buyer and seller	Administrator and subject	Members and stewards
Access	Purchasing power	Administrative eligibility	Need, right, and membership
Governing end	Exchange and accumulation	Institutional order and compliance	Protection and enlargement of life-capacity
Decision centre	Owners and market power	Central authority	Polycentric and accountable governance
Main danger	Exclusion and extraction	Rigidity and domination	Capture, under-provision, or unequal participation
Success measure	Revenue, growth, market share	Throughput and compliance	Universal life-serving effectiveness
Person addressed as	Consumer	Case or client	Participant and rights-holder
Knowledge	Proprietary advantage	Administrative control	Shared resource under responsible stewardship

Most actual institutions combine these logics. The task is to identify which logic governs the essential purpose.

11.12 Protected Decommodification

A good becomes commodified when access is governed primarily through purchase and sale.

Commodification is appropriate for many goods. It becomes dangerous when lack of money means loss of a basic condition of life or agency.

Civil-commons provision decommodifies access to selected goods without necessarily eliminating markets around them.

Public education means that basic learning is not withheld from children whose families cannot pay. Universal healthcare means that essential treatment is not conditioned entirely upon income. Libraries mean that access to knowledge does not depend upon purchasing every work. Public parks mean that contact with common space is not available only through private property.

Decommodification creates a protected field in which the person appears as a member before appearing as a purchaser.

11.13 Artificial Intelligence as a Common Capability

Artificial intelligence is generally treated as a product, service, strategic asset, source of profit, or military capability.

It may also be understood as a potential **common capability**.

A common capability is an enabling infrastructure through which multiple institutions and communities can enlarge their own capacities without becoming subordinated completely to a single external owner.

Examples may include public-interest language models, open scientific tools, regional translation systems, environmental-monitoring platforms, educational systems governed by public curricula, accessible tools for disabled persons, and clinical support governed by accountable healthcare institutions.

The aim is not to create one universal public model. It is to prevent foundational cognitive infrastructure from becoming available only through centres whose purposes and terms are governed elsewhere.

11.14 Conditions for AI as a Civil Commons

AI functions as a civil commons where several conditions converge:

1. It serves an identifiable life-good.
2. Access is not determined solely by wealth.
3. Workers and affected communities participate in governance.
4. The infrastructure carries enforceable public obligations.
5. Users possess rights of explanation, correction, contestation, and exit.
6. The system enlarges local competence rather than creating permanent dependence.
7. Labour and ecological burdens remain visible.
8. Benefits return to communities whose knowledge and work made the system possible.
9. Human and institutional alternatives remain available.
10. No actor possesses unreviewable authority over essential participation.

Under such conditions, AI may become a shared civil capacity rather than an enclosed Grail.

11.15 Open Access Is Not Enough

Open access is valuable but insufficient.

A model may be publicly available while requiring infrastructure accessible only to wealthy institutions. Code may be open while governance remains concentrated. Data may be open while privacy and community rights are ignored. A system may be technically available without the education or support required for safe use.

The civil commons adds purpose, stewardship, equitable access, institutional support, accountability, and continuing capacity formation.

The relevant question is not only whether the gate is open. It is whether members possess the practical ability to enter, participate, contribute, and govern.

11.16 The Cognitive Commons

Human languages, scientific knowledge, art, professional practice, cultural memory, and educational traditions form a cognitive commons.

No company creates these from nothing.

Every advanced model depends upon generations of writers, teachers, artists, researchers, professionals, communities, institutions, and public investment.

Recognition of the cognitive commons does not mean that every work may be appropriated without consent or compensation.

It means that systems drawing heavily from this common field acquire reciprocal obligations.

They should not extract collective inheritance, enclose the resulting capability, and return it solely as rent-bearing dependency.

11.17 Replenishing the Sources of Intelligence

An AI system contributes to the cognitive commons when it supports the institutions that generate future knowledge and culture.

Forms of replenishment may include supporting public research, compensating creators and workers, sustaining libraries and archives, preserving linguistic diversity, widening scholarly access, funding education, sharing safety research, and strengthening local cultural production.

A system that consumes the knowledge field without replenishing it may produce short-term abundance while undermining future generativity.

The vessel is full because a world has poured itself into it. The vessel must return nourishment to that world.

11.18 Data Commons and Stewardship

Data can support healthcare, research, environmental protection, public planning, and disaster response.

Data are not inert raw material. They arise from persons, communities, institutions, places, and relationships.

A data commons should therefore be governed through stewardship.

Relevant questions include:

- What purpose justifies collection?
- Who is represented?
- Who can access the data?
- Can participants correct errors?
- What group harms may arise?
- What uses remain prohibited?
- How are resulting benefits distributed?
- How long should data be retained?
- Who answers for misuse?

Common governance does not mean unrestricted exposure. Privacy, dignity, trust, cultural integrity, and security are themselves common goods.

11.19 Community Data Rights

Individual consent may be inadequate where data concern communities, languages, neighbourhoods, ecosystems, Indigenous knowledge, genetic inheritance, or shared cultural practices.

Such data can affect collective identity and opportunity.

Communities may require standing to participate in governance, define acceptable uses, protect sensitive knowledge, negotiate benefit-sharing, and contest harmful representations.

The cognitive commons must not reproduce colonial extraction in digital form.

11.20 Public Digital Infrastructure

A civil-commons approach requires forms of public digital infrastructure, potentially including interoperable public records, trusted identity safeguards, public data standards, open educational resources, research repositories, accessible government systems, shared computing capacity, and secure public communication.

Public infrastructure is not automatically benevolent. It can become a vehicle for surveillance or administrative domination.

Its legitimacy depends upon limited purpose, data minimization, rights, transparency, independent oversight, security, and meaningful alternatives.

The public character of infrastructure strengthens rather than removes the need for constitutional restraint.

11.21 Healthcare as Civil Commons

Healthcare is a paradigmatic civil commons because illness creates vulnerability and weakens the ordinary conditions of market choice.

AI can support healthcare through translation, clinical decision support, imaging, medication review, record synthesis, public-health analysis, and patient education.

It becomes anti-common when it excludes unprofitable patients; substitutes automation for human care primarily among poorer populations; extracts patient data without reciprocal public benefit; or weakens the professional competence needed for safe medicine.

The technological system must enter the healing commons and remain governed by care. It must not redefine care according to its own administrative convenience.

11.22 Education as Civil Commons

Education forms the capacities through which persons become capable of freedom, work, citizenship, cultural participation, and responsibility.

Its benefits extend far beyond the private return to an individual credential.

AI can strengthen education by supporting accessibility, translating materials, widening access, assisting teachers, and providing practice.

It weakens the commons when students become extractable data; foundational capacities are displaced; commercial systems govern curriculum; wealthy students receive human-rich augmentation while poorer students receive automated substitution; or teachers become platform supervisors rather than formative professionals.

UNESCO's human-centred guidance supports governance based upon pedagogical purpose, privacy, developmental appropriateness, and capacity formation (Miao & Holmes, 2023).

11.23 Libraries as Models of Cognitive Communion

The library offers a useful institutional analogy.

It gathers knowledge without requiring every reader to own every text. It preserves memory across generations. It organizes access. It employs trained stewards. It protects inquiry and intellectual privacy. It assists novices while serving experts.

The library is neither an unregulated pile of information nor a commercial transaction attached to every encounter. It is a governed cognitive commons.

Public-interest AI systems could follow this model by preserving provenance, directing users toward sources, distinguishing evidence from generated synthesis, supporting inquiry rather than replacing it, protecting intellectual privacy, and remaining accountable to an educational mission.

The librarian does not merely provide an answer. The librarian helps the reader become capable of navigating knowledge.

11.24 Environmental Knowledge as Civil Commons

Shared ecosystems require shared knowledge.

Water quality, biodiversity, climate, air quality, soil health, coastal conditions, and disaster risk cannot be governed adequately where data are fragmented, inaccessible, or proprietary.

AI can support environmental commons through remote sensing, predictive modelling, anomaly detection, public dashboards, integration of datasets, and community monitoring.

Environmental knowledge should not flow only toward distant centres. Local communities require access to the information necessary to protect their own life-ground.

They should participate in indicator design, interpretation, threshold setting, and response.

Knowledge becomes life-serving when it returns as capacity for action.

11.25 Small Island Developing States

Small Island Developing States face distinctive technological constraints: small markets, limited fiscal capacity, dependence upon external infrastructure, skilled-worker migration, high disaster exposure, and weak bargaining power with dominant providers.

Complete technological self-sufficiency is rarely realistic.

The civil-commons response is **regional cooperative sovereignty**.

States may collaborate around procurement, cybersecurity, data standards, translation, health information, environmental monitoring, public-interest models, computing infrastructure, and professional training.

Regional cooperation can create scale without requiring surrender to a single external centre.

The commons may be nested across local, national, regional, and global levels.

11.26 Language Sovereignty

Language is a living field of memory, identity, education, and public participation.

AI systems trained primarily on dominant languages may deepen linguistic inequality.

Smaller languages, dialects, and culturally particular forms may be ignored, poorly represented, mistranslated, or absorbed without community control.

A language commons may support community-governed corpora, translation, speech recognition, educational tools, local publishing, and cultural archives.

Communities should participate in determining how their language is collected, represented, and used.

A language is more than data.

11.27 Public-Interest Models

Public-interest AI systems should have clearly bounded missions, transparent governance, independent evaluation, accessibility, privacy protections, and safeguards against mission drift.

They need not compete with commercial models on every measure.

Their value may lie in reliability, traceability, local relevance, continuity, and freedom from manipulative revenue incentives.

A less spectacular but accountable model may serve the common good better than a more powerful system whose purposes cannot be governed.

11.28 Open Standards and Shared Infrastructure

Open standards can reduce dependency by enabling interoperability, portability, competition, long-term preservation, and institutional exit.

Shared computing infrastructure can widen participation in research and public-interest development.

Universities, governments, regional organizations, and public consortia may provide common capacity for scientific research, environmental monitoring, language preservation, healthcare, and independent evaluation.

Shared infrastructure should not merely reproduce the race for scale. It should remain governed by explicit public purpose and ecological restraint.

11.29 Financing the Commons

Civil-commons institutions require stable financing.

Dependence upon short-term grants or shifting donor priorities can undermine continuity.

Possible financing mechanisms include progressive taxation, social insurance, public investment, cooperative contributions, licensing obligations, levies upon extractive digital activity, public–public partnerships, and duties attached to commercial use of publicly generated knowledge.

The governing principle is reciprocity:

Those receiving disproportionate benefit from common institutions should contribute proportionately to their preservation.

11.30 The Social Dividend of Automation

Where AI generates significant productivity gains, part of the gain should return to society as a social dividend.

This need not take only the form of direct income. It may support healthcare, education, reduced working time, worker transition, public digital infrastructure, ecological restoration, libraries, arts, and community development.

Productivity generated from collective inheritance should not be captured entirely as private accumulation.

The body that filled the vessel possesses a claim upon its abundance.

11.31 Governance by Affected Members

A civil commons should not be governed solely by funders, technical experts, or administrators.

Affected persons should participate in defining purpose, setting priorities, evaluating performance, identifying harm, and redesigning the institution.

Participation may occur through elected boards, user councils, worker representation, professional bodies, community panels, and citizen assemblies.

Consultation without influence is insufficient. A common institution must remain capable of receiving correction from its members.

11.32 Expertise and Professional Stewardship

Common governance does not remove the need for expertise.

Healthcare requires clinical competence. Infrastructure requires engineering. Environmental monitoring requires science. Cybersecurity requires specialized knowledge.

Experts should clarify evidence, limits, feasibility, uncertainty, and risk. Members should participate in defining purpose, acceptable burden, lived consequences, rights, and priorities.

Professionals in a civil commons are not merely employees producing outputs. They are stewards of public goods.

Professional authority is justified where it serves those goods and remains publicly accountable.

11.33 Nested Governance, Subsidiarity, and Solidarity

Civil commons are often best governed through nested institutions.

Local bodies understand context. Regional bodies pool expertise and resources. National systems secure rights and redistribution. International institutions address transboundary risks.

Subsidiarity requires decisions to remain at the lowest competent level. It also requires **building competence** at that level.

A community cannot govern data effectively without technical capacity. A small state cannot negotiate with a global platform without legal and institutional support.

Solidarity requires stronger institutions to transfer resources, knowledge, infrastructure, and bargaining capacity without unnecessarily absorbing the agency of weaker members.

11.34 Accountability and Commons Failure

The civil commons can fail.

Public institutions may become inefficient, corrupt, inaccessible, paternalistic, politically captured, or protective of their own procedures. Cooperatives may be dominated by insiders. Community governance may silence minorities. The language of the common good may conceal exclusion.

A civil commons therefore requires transparent purpose, rights of appeal, independent review, conflict-of-interest protections, public reporting, and periodic institutional redesign.

The commons must be judged by what happens to the body, not by the institution's preferred vocabulary.

11.35 Bureaucratic and Market Enclosure

A public institution can enclose the good it was created to provide.

Procedure becomes more important than outcome. Citizens become cases. Metrics replace purpose. Central administration suppresses professional and local judgment.

This is **bureaucratic enclosure**.

A common institution may also be captured by commercial providers. A school becomes dependent upon one platform. A hospital cannot access its own records without a vendor. A government cannot inspect or replace the model it uses.

The institution remains publicly accountable while a private provider controls essential capability.

Contracts must therefore preserve public authority, audit, interoperability, continuity, and exit.

11.36 Technological Capture of Institutional Purpose

Technology can redefine the institution adopting it.

A school measures learning through what its platform can count. A hospital reorganizes care around documentation fields. A public agency understands citizens through the categories of a risk model.

The tool's ontology becomes the institution's ontology. What cannot enter the model becomes less visible.

Civil-commons governance must ensure that technology remains subordinate to the institution's living purpose.

The map must not replace the territory. The record must not replace the person.

11.37 Commons Metrics and the Life-Capacity Balance Sheet

Civil-commons institutions need measures of effectiveness, but those measures should track life-capacity rather than activity alone.

Relevant indicators may include universal access, equity, user understanding, quality of human encounter, preservation of competence, responsiveness to vulnerable members, ecological sustainability, contestability, public trust, and repair after harm.

The paper proposes a **life-capacity balance sheet** distinguishing:

Capacities enlarged

Access, knowledge, safety, communication, time, and participation.

Capacities diminished

Attention, privacy, skill, security, human encounter, and local autonomy.

Capacities transferred

From workers to owners, communities to providers, persons to systems, or future generations to present users.

Capacities restored

Following disability, institutional failure, exclusion, or ecological injury.

The purpose is not to reduce life to one numerical score. It is to make the institution's metabolism visible.

11.38 Redundancy and Continuity

Civil-commons institutions should preserve redundancy in essential domains through multiple providers, human and automated pathways, local and regional expertise, offline procedures, backup infrastructure, and institutional memory.

Redundancy appears inefficient during normal operation. It becomes indispensable during disaster, cyberattack, market withdrawal, political conflict, or system failure.

A commons exists to protect continuity of life, not merely optimize performance under ideal conditions.

11.39 Access Without Compulsory Submission

Where digital participation becomes essential, basic access may need protection as a right.

This may include access to connectivity, public information, secure identity, educational resources, and essential AI-supported services.

A right of digital access must not become a duty of digital submission.

Access should be joined to privacy, human alternatives, non-discrimination, and freedom from manipulative use.

The commons serves persons. Persons do not exist to generate activity within the commons.

11.40 The Right to Remain Partly Outside

A healthy civil commons should permit partial non-participation where possible.

Persons and communities may choose to retain non-digital practices, limit data sharing, preserve local systems, or decline some forms of automation.

The commons should not become a totalizing administrative order.

It should secure shared foundations while preserving family, religious, cultural, communal, and personal spaces beyond complete institutional visibility.

Communion does not require total surveillance.

11.41 The Church as a Commons-Building Institution

Historically, churches and religious communities have contributed to healthcare, education, hospitality, care for the poor, refuge, cultural preservation, and mutual aid.

These institutions have embodied both genuine service and serious failures, including paternalism, exclusion, and abuse of authority.

A Eucharistically renewed Church should treat its institutional resources as contributions to the civil commons.

Its schools, hospitals, universities, charities, parishes, and media should model preferential care for vulnerable persons, human formation, worker dignity, responsible technology, ecological stewardship, and knowledge as shared gift.

The Church becomes credible where communion acquires material form.

11.42 Parish and Local Commons

The parish can become a local centre of civil capacity by supporting intergenerational relationships, digital literacy, educational assistance, care networks, cultural memory, local dialogue, emergency response, and accompaniment of persons excluded by automated systems.

The parish should not attempt to replace public institutions or professional services.

It can provide a relational interface through which persons remain visible and connected to help.

In a technological society, one of its essential roles may be ensuring that no member disappears behind a screen, score, record, or administrative category.

11.43 The Civil Commons Against Moloch, Mammon, and Enclosure

The civil commons opposes Moloch because it makes cooperation institutionally durable.

Shared standards prevent firms from gaining advantage by sacrificing basic protections. Public provision reduces dependence upon extractive alternatives. Worker organization prevents individuals from negotiating alone. Regional cooperation enables small states to resist unequal agreements.

The civil commons opposes Mammon by placing selected life-goods beyond complete commodification.

Health is not merely market demand. Education is not merely private investment. Knowledge is not merely proprietary advantage. Attention is not merely advertising inventory.

The civil commons opposes enclosure by preserving public access, shared standards, local competence, plural providers, and meaningful exit.

11.44 The Commons as Capacity Generator

A mature civil commons does not only distribute goods.

It develops the capacity of members to participate in producing and governing those goods.

A health commons supports health literacy. An educational commons forms future teachers. A digital commons develops local technical competence. An environmental commons trains community monitors. A knowledge commons enables readers to become contributors.

The recipient becomes participant. The person nourished becomes capable of nourishing others.

This is the institutional analogue of Eucharistic sending.

11.45 A Civil-Commons Charter for AI

A civil-commons AI institution should affirm:

1. The system exists for a publicly defined life-serving purpose.
2. Access will not depend solely upon purchasing power.
3. Workers, professionals, users, and affected communities will participate in governance.
4. Human capacities required for oversight will be preserved.
5. Contributors and material dependencies will be acknowledged.
6. Benefits will return to the social and ecological fields from which capability arose.
7. Decisions will remain contestable.
8. Essential services will preserve human pathways.
9. Data will be governed through stewardship.
10. Infrastructure will remain interoperable and reversible.
11. Ecological burdens will be disclosed and constrained.
12. Workers will share in transitions and gains.
13. Vulnerable populations will receive heightened protection.
14. Harm will trigger repair and institutional learning.
15. No provider will exercise unreviewable authority over the common good.

This charter is a constructive proposal of the present paper.

11.46 Conclusion: Communion Made Institutionally Credible

The civil commons is the principal institutional expression of the movement from consumption to communion.

It does not abolish markets, states, property, private initiative, expertise, or personal responsibility.

It orders them around goods that cannot safely be abandoned to purchasing power, administrative convenience, or strategic rivalry.

It recognizes that life-capacity arises through shared conditions. It protects those conditions through common provision. It returns technological abundance to the body. It converts ownership into stewardship. It transforms infrastructure from a mechanism of dependence into a platform for participation.

The civil commons also answers the limitation within Pageau's personal proposal. Persons can pray, remember, cultivate skill, strengthen family and community, and become more fully human. But these practices require time, security, education, health, culture, public space, and ecological stability.

Without civil commons, full humanity risks becoming a private privilege available to those wealthy enough to purchase protection from the technological order.

With civil commons, the conditions of human formation become a shared civilizational responsibility.

The civil commons is not the Kingdom of God. It can become a historical sign of communion: the body is one; the weak are indispensable; the gift is for all; the centre exists to nourish; and no member is available as fuel for the system.

12. The Church as First Sign and First Subject of Judgment

12.1 The Institution That Celebrates the Centre

The Church occupies a distinctive position in this argument.

It does not encounter the Eucharist merely as an ethical concept, symbolic resource, or source of public-policy analogies. It celebrates the sacrament, receives the body and blood of Christ, proclaims his death and resurrection, and is formed through that reception as his ecclesial body (John Paul II, 2003; de Lubac, 2006).

The Eucharistic reversal is therefore not first a message the Church addresses to technological civilization. It is a judgment the Church receives upon itself.

Before asking governments, corporations, schools, militaries, or platforms whom their power serves, the Church must ask:

- Whom does its authority serve?
- What does its institutional life consume?
- Who receives its abundance?
- Which wounds remain concealed?
- Which members are treated as expendable?
- Do its technologies deepen communion or substitute administration and spectacle for presence?

The Church must become the first sign of the Eucharistic constitution. It must also accept being its first institutional subject of judgment.

12.2 Sacramental Truth and Institutional Contradiction

The truth of the Eucharist does not depend upon the moral perfection of every minister or communicant. The sacrament is Christ's gift, not the reward of an institution that has made itself worthy.

Sacramental objectivity cannot, however, be used to insulate ecclesial arrangements from judgment.

Paul rebukes the Corinthian assembly because its social divisions contradict the Lord's Supper. Some eat abundantly while others remain hungry. The gathering fails to discern the body because its social practice denies the communion it celebrates (1 Cor. 11:17–34).

The Eucharist remains true. The community's contradiction becomes more serious because of the truth it has received.

The same principle applies institutionally.

The Eucharist may be celebrated while authority is used defensively; victims are silenced; wealth is accumulated without serving need; workers are treated unjustly; local communities are deprived of agency; or media success replaces pastoral presence.

The sacrament does not automatically sanctify the institution. It supplies the truth by which the institution must be converted (Cavanaugh, 1998).

12.3 Eucharistic Consistency

Benedict XVI uses the language of **Eucharistic consistency** to describe the coherence required between Eucharistic faith and public moral life (Benedict XVI, 2007, para. 83).

The present paper extends this principle institutionally.

Eucharistic consistency means correspondence between what the Church sacramentally receives and what its relations materially enact.

It does not mean perfection. The Church remains a community requiring repentance, forgiveness, correction, and grace.

Consistency means that contradiction is not defended as normal or hidden to protect reputation.

A Eucharistically consistent Church should become recognizable through authority as service; truth above institutional image; visible concern for wounded members; wealth ordered toward need; protection of the vulnerable; participation by differentiated members; technology ordered toward presence; ecological responsibility; and institutional survival subordinated to fidelity.

12.4 Authority as Service

The Church cannot avoid authority.

It preserves teaching, worship, sacramental order, discipline, pastoral responsibility, and communal memory. These tasks require differentiated roles and real decision-making.

The question is what form authority takes.

Predatory authority protects its own status by transferring burdens downward. Eucharistic authority bears responsibility for the life of those entrusted to it.

Predatory authority treats questioning as disloyalty. Eucharistic authority remains answerable to truth.

Predatory authority uses sacred office to shield the centre. Eucharistic authority understands office as intensified responsibility.

The higher the position, the greater the obligation to listen, explain, protect, disclose, repair, and accept correction.

Christ's reversal of lordship places leadership under the form of service: the greatest becomes servant, and the shepherd gives his life for the flock.

12.5 Hierarchy and the Flow of Responsibility

Hierarchy need not mean domination. It can name differentiated responsibility within an ordered body.

A life-giving hierarchy sends downward teaching, support, protection, provision, coordination, and reconciliation.

Truth must also be able to flow upward.

Local experience, professional knowledge, cultural context, institutional failure, and the testimony of wounded members must be capable of reaching the centre.

A hierarchy that transmits instructions downward while preventing truth from travelling upward becomes both morally and epistemically disordered.

The centre loses contact with the body it claims to serve.

12.6 The Wounded Member as Ecclesial Test

The credibility of Eucharistic ecclesiology is tested by what happens when a member is harmed.

When a person reports abuse, exploitation, discrimination, spiritual manipulation, institutional neglect, or serious pastoral injury, the Church faces a fundamental choice.

It can treat the disclosure as a threat to reputation, unity, authority, or mission. Or it can receive the wounded person as a member through whom Christ calls the institution to truth.

The first response is Molochian: the member is sacrificed so that the centre may continue appearing whole.

The second is Eucharistic: the centre permits itself to be interrupted, judged, and converted for the life of the member.

12.7 Abuse and the Anti-Eucharistic Inversion

Institutional abuse represents a profound anti-Eucharistic inversion.

Sacred authority consumes rather than protects. The vulnerable body becomes material for another's appetite or control. Silence is demanded in the name of unity. Reputation is treated as a higher good than truth. Victims and families bear the cost of institutional preservation.

The pattern becomes Molochian when leaders recognize harm but transfer risk to further victims because disclosure threatens status, finance, or legitimacy.

The institution effectively declares:

This person's suffering is an acceptable price for our continuation.

No appeal to mercy, forgiveness, obedience, scandal avoidance, or ecclesial unity can justify that exchange.

12.8 Institutional Confession

Christian repentance cannot be reduced to private sorrow where wrongdoing has institutional form.

Institutional confession requires truthful acknowledgment, disclosure, identification of enabling structures, acceptance of responsibility, protection of those harmed, restitution, reform, and continuing memory.

It resists isolating wrongdoing entirely within one deviant individual where procedures, authority, or culture enabled concealment and repetition.

Institutional confession demonstrates that the Church entrusts its future to truth rather than image management.

12.9 Forgiveness Without Erasure

Forgiveness cannot be invoked to bypass truth, justice, safety, consequences, or repair.

A victim may forgive and still require institutional accountability. A community may seek reconciliation while maintaining protective boundaries. A perpetrator may repent and still be unfit for restored authority. The Church may receive mercy and remain obligated to compensate and reform.

Eucharistic memory does not erase wounds. The risen Christ remains marked by crucifixion.

The wound is no longer an instrument of vengeance, but neither is it made invisible.

12.10 Safeguarding as Eucharistic Governance

Safeguarding should not be treated merely as an external regulatory burden.

It belongs to Eucharistic governance because it protects the vulnerable body from being consumed.

Safeguarding requires clear boundaries, professional standards, safe reporting, independent investigation, record preservation, training, supervision, participation of competent laypersons, and protection against retaliation.

It should include not only sexual abuse but also spiritual coercion, financial exploitation, digital harassment, discriminatory treatment, and abuse of pastoral dependency.

The Eucharistic body must create institutional forms through which weak members are genuinely protected.

12.11 Laity as Members, Not Audience

Digital media can encourage a broadcast model of ecclesial life.

A visible centre produces content. Followers watch, react, share, and donate.

The laity become an audience rather than a body participating in worship, discernment, service, teaching, governance, and local community.

Catholic ecclesiology preserves differentiated ministries without reducing baptized persons to passive consumers. *Lumen gentium* emphasizes the common dignity and vocation of the baptized within the one people of God (Second Vatican Council, 1964).

Digital ministry should therefore lead toward prayer, sacramental participation, learning, works of mercy, local belonging, and responsible service.

Engagement metrics cannot substitute for ecclesial membership.

12.12 Synodality and the Movement of Truth

Synodality may provide one means through which truth moves through the ecclesial body.

At its best, it involves listening, participation, discernment, and differentiated responsibility.

It does not mean that doctrine or governance is reduced to opinion polling. It requires that authority become capable of hearing how decisions and institutions are experienced by those affected.

In technological governance, synodal principles may support consultation before adoption; participation by workers and users; involvement of young people and vulnerable groups; local experimentation; and transparent explanation.

A listening exercise becomes false where participation has no possibility of influencing action.

12.13 Catholic and Orthodox Contributions

This paper brings Pageau's Orthodox symbolic vision into dialogue with a Catholic Eucharistic and civil-commons framework.

The traditions share important affirmations: creation as gift; the sacramental depth of matter; Eucharist as ecclesial centre; communion without destruction of personhood; liturgical memory; ascetic restraint; and the transfiguration of power through Christ.

Their theological, liturgical, and institutional differences should not be flattened.

Orthodox symbolic theology contributes a strong account of participation, centre and periphery, hierarchy, cosmic symbolism, and liturgical order.

Catholic social teaching contributes developed traditions concerning common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, labour, rights, universal destination of goods, and public institutional responsibility.

The civilizational problem requires both vertical orientation toward the divine good and horizontal protection of the life-ground.

12.14 Ecumenical and Interreligious Cooperation

Technological systems cross confessional and religious boundaries.

Christian communities can cooperate around child protection, truthful media, labour justice, human dignity, ecological responsibility, limits on lethal automation, and preservation of human encounter.

The Church should also engage other religious and philosophical traditions.

The Eucharistic contribution enters public life as witness and reason, not coercive establishment.

The form of Christ's self-giving authority contradicts domination exercised in his name.

12.15 The Church's Technological Metabolism

Churches increasingly depend upon digital systems for administration, finance, communication, records, education, fundraising, media, and pastoral coordination.

These technologies can reduce burdens, improve accessibility, and connect dispersed communities.

They also introduce risks involving privacy, data concentration, platform dependence, attention capture, synthetic authorship, surveillance, labour displacement, and weakening of local presence.

The Church must therefore examine not only what technology allows it to do, but what institutional form recurrent use is bringing forth.

12.16 Data as Pastoral Trust

Ecclesial records may contain intimate information concerning religious affiliation, family relationships, sacramental participation, financial giving, illness, vulnerability, pastoral care, and migration status.

Such data should be treated as a **pastoral trust**.

Responsible governance should include data minimization, legitimate purpose, secure storage, restricted access, retention limits, correction, and transparency.

Pastoral information should not become a commercial asset or an administrative instrument detached from care.

The person does not lose dignity by appearing in an ecclesial record.

12.17 AI in Ecclesial Administration

AI can assist with scheduling, translation, transcription, document organization, routine correspondence, accessibility, and non-sensitive administrative analysis.

Such uses may release time for ministry.

Efficiency gains should not automatically result in staff reduction, increased workload, or expanded bureaucracy.

The relevant criterion is whether administrative assistance returns people to more human work.

When automation frees parish staff to accompany persons, mediation serves presence. When it merely increases institutional output, it may deepen administrative self-maintenance.

12.18 AI in Theology and Scholarship

AI can assist theological work through bibliography, multilingual retrieval, textual comparison, summarization, argument mapping, and editing.

It cannot remove the scholar's responsibility for source accuracy, historical context, doctrinal precision, interpretation, and attribution.

Generated citations must be verified. Primary texts must not be replaced entirely by summaries. The named author must be capable of explaining and defending the argument.

Fluent theological language can conceal fabricated sources, flattened traditions, or unexamined doctrinal compression.

The machine may assist with the library. It cannot assume the scholar's ecclesial and academic accountability.

12.19 AI in Preaching

AI may help a preacher organize notes, compare translations, retrieve commentary, clarify structure, or identify questions.

A homily is not simply the production of religiously appropriate prose.

It arises from Scripture, prayer, tradition, liturgical time, knowledge of the community, and accountable pastoral discernment.

A generated sermon may be coherent while lacking attention to the actual people who will hear it.

The risk is not only plagiarism. It is the substitution of plausible religious language for pastoral labour and presence.

12.20 AI in Catechesis and Pastoral Care

AI may support catechesis by answering basic questions, translating materials, assisting teachers, and widening access.

Catechesis is not merely information transfer. It is initiation into worship, community, moral practice, prayer, and relationship with God.

AI may also help persons organize concerns before seeking pastoral support.

It should not be presented as a human pastor, sacramental minister, clinician, or morally accountable spiritual companion.

Particular care is required where users disclose abuse, self-harm, severe mental illness, danger, or complex moral injury.

Users must know the kind of system they are encountering and how to reach a responsible person.

12.21 No Synthetic Sacraments

Sacramental life depends upon embodied ecclesial realities that cannot be generated through functional simulation.

A synthetic representation of worship may support prayer, learning, connection, or accessibility. It does not thereby become the sacrament.

An artificial system cannot absolve, celebrate the Eucharist, baptize, contract marriage, assume holy orders, or become a sacramental minister.

This is not technological hostility. It recognizes that sacramental mediation is inseparable from embodied persons, matter, intention, ecclesial authority, and communion.

Functional resemblance does not establish ontological equivalence.

12.22 Digital Worship and Embodied Communion

Livestreamed worship can serve the homebound, sick persons, travellers, isolated communities, and those exploring faith. It can preserve connection during emergencies.

It should not redefine ordinary ecclesial life around spectatorship.

The Eucharist gathers bodies in place. Members hear, respond, sing, kneel, receive, and are sent.

Digital mediation is most faithful when it sustains relation to embodied community rather than becoming its permanent substitute.

12.23 Synthetic Images, Voices, and Religious Trust

Generative tools can assist religious art, music, translation, and educational media.

They also create risks concerning deception, authorship, reverence, and manipulation.

Synthetic images should not be represented falsely as historical evidence. The voices or likenesses of living or deceased persons should not be used deceptively. Fabricated statements by popes, bishops, clergy, theologians, or public witnesses can corrupt religious trust.

Because believers approach sacred signs and religious leaders with particular openness, truthful mediation becomes a pastoral duty.

12.24 Authenticity and Disclosure

Church institutions, scholars, educators, preachers, and media creators should disclose significant AI assistance where authorship, testimony, or evidence could otherwise be misunderstood.

Disclosure should clarify, where relevant, what was generated, what was edited, who verified it, and who accepts responsibility.

The purpose is not to stigmatize assistance. It is to preserve the link between words and accountable speakers.

Responsibility cannot be delegated to the tool.

12.25 The Attention Economy

Ecclesial media operate within platforms rewarding visibility, immediacy, controversy, personality, outrage, and continuous output.

A ministry may begin by seeking to communicate the Gospel and gradually become governed by the metrics of the platform.

The operative question shifts from "What does the community need?" to "What will perform?"

Views, followers, shares, and watch time may provide useful information. They cannot determine the truth or pastoral value of a message.

The Church must not baptize attention capture merely because its content is religious.

12.26 The Charismatic Digital Centre

Digital communication can concentrate religious authority around visible personalities.

Such persons may teach and encourage large audiences. Parasocial influence, however, can bypass ordinary accountability.

The audience may feel that it knows the teacher. The teacher does not know the audience.

Local pastors and communities can appear less compelling than polished digital figures.

A responsible digital teacher should direct people toward local worship, accountable study, real pastoral relationships, and embodied community.

A centre that continually gathers attention to itself without returning people to the body risks becoming an enclosure.

12.27 Evangelization and Engagement Capture

Evangelization seeks the good of the person addressed. Engagement capture seeks continuation of attention.

Their outward methods may overlap. Their ends differ.

Evangelization respects freedom, tells the truth, permits silence, avoids manipulative fear, and leads toward mature discipleship and service.

Engagement capture treats the person as a metric-bearing user.

Religious content can reproduce the same extractive attention economy the Church claims to resist.

12.28 Technological Sabbath

Churches and ministries should cultivate technological Sabbath through practices such as device-free worship and gathering; protected periods without publication; slower communication cycles; limits on reactive commentary; sustained reading; silence; and redirection from digital engagement toward local service.

The Church should be able to become silent without fearing disappearance.

Its centre is not the algorithmic feed.

12.29 Guardian of Human Encounter

As commercial and public institutions automate care, the Church may become one of the remaining places where persons can appear without immediate reduction to function.

A parish can know the person's name. The elderly member can remain visible. The grieving family can be accompanied over time. The child can belong before becoming productive. The poor person can enter without purchasing access.

Technology may coordinate care. It should not replace the relational field through which care becomes human.

12.30 Preferential Option for the Technologically Excluded

Digital transformation can exclude persons who are poor, elderly, disabled, geographically isolated, linguistically marginalized, undocumented, or unfamiliar with technical systems.

The Church's preferential option for the poor should include technological exclusion.

Parishes and institutions may provide digital literacy, access to devices, fraud protection, assistance with public services, translation, and human advocacy when automated systems fail.

The Church should also defend accessible, non-digital, and human pathways in essential services.

12.31 Schools, Universities, and Human Formation

Christian educational institutions possess a special responsibility in the AI transition.

They should resist both total prohibition and uncritical adoption.

Policies should protect attention, memory, writing, numeracy, dialogue, embodiment, academic honesty, and teacher judgment.

Students should learn attribution, disclosure, verification, source criticism, and responsible tool use.

Christian education should preserve the question technology cannot answer for itself:

What is knowledge for?

12.32 Christian Healthcare Institutions

Christian healthcare institutions should use AI to reduce avoidable administrative burden, improve access, support clinical judgment, protect privacy, and deepen care.

They should avoid inferior automated pathways for poor patients; replacement of human encounter in ambiguous or serious situations; and the use of technology primarily to reduce staffing.

Patients must retain access to responsible clinicians. Workers should participate in technology decisions.

The sick body, not the information infrastructure, remains the centre of healthcare.

12.33 Ecclesial Labour

Church institutions employ teachers, clinicians, cleaners, administrators, pastoral workers, technicians, and many others.

Their labour practices are part of ecclesial witness.

A Church cannot defend worker dignity publicly while treating its own employees as disposable costs.

Automation should involve consultation, transparency, training, fair transition, limits on intrusive monitoring, and equitable sharing of productivity gains.

The institution's employment metabolism should correspond to the body it proclaims.

12.34 Procurement and Institutional Freedom

Church institutions should evaluate technology contracts for data ownership, privacy, accessibility, interoperability, ecological impact, security, vendor dependence, and ability to exit.

Immediate price is not the only dimension of stewardship.

A cheap system may impose long-term dependency.

Dioceses, religious orders, schools, and healthcare systems may need coordinated procurement and shared technical expertise so smaller institutions are not forced into unequal arrangements.

12.35 Rich and Poor Churches

Technological inequality exists within global Christianity.

Wealthier institutions can purchase advanced platforms, cybersecurity, media systems, educational tools, and specialist advice.

Poorer churches may depend upon donated or externally governed systems poorly suited to local languages and cultures.

Eucharistic solidarity requires shared infrastructure, training, translation, security, and development of local capacity.

Support should enlarge agency rather than impose permanent dependency.

12.36 Cultural and Linguistic Particularity

The Church is global but not culturally uniform.

AI can support communication across languages and rites. It can also standardize theological and pastoral expression around dominant sources.

Local concepts may be mistranslated. Minority traditions may disappear. Cultural memory may be extracted without appropriate participation.

Churches should support community-governed language resources and ensure that systems remain corrigible by local speakers and traditions.

Catholicity is communion across particularity, not cultural homogenization.

12.37 Ecological Responsibility

Digital technology possesses a material body.

Church institutions should examine energy use, device turnover, electronic waste, procurement, repairability, and infrastructure dependence.

Laudato si' rejects the separation of technological progress from social and ecological responsibility and calls for integral evaluation of the systems shaping the common home (Francis, 2015).

Not every ecclesial activity should be digitized simply because digitalization appears modern.

Stewardship includes judging whether technological use is proportionate to the human good achieved.

12.38 Theological Anthropology

The Church's most important contribution may be its account of the human person.

The person is not reducible to productivity, intelligence, autonomy, economic value, preference, behavioural predictability, or data.

The person is embodied, relational, created, vulnerable, morally responsible, redeemable, and called to communion (Catholic Church, 1997).

This anthropology protects those whom technological cultures may regard as less useful: infants, disabled persons, the cognitively impaired, the sick, and the elderly.

Human dignity does not depend upon winning a functional competition with machines (Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith & Dicastery for Culture and Education, 2025).

12.39 Image of God and Artificial Systems

The image of God should not be reduced to superior calculation or linguistic production.

If divine likeness were identified principally with task performance, advances in machine capability would create an unnecessary theological crisis.

The image concerns the whole human vocation before God: embodiment, relationship, moral agency, freedom, creativity, responsibility, receptivity, and communion.

Artificial systems may equal or exceed particular human functions. They do not thereby diminish human dignity or automatically acquire human personhood.

The Church should remain open to serious inquiry without collapsing functional similarity into ontological identity.

12.40 Avoiding Idolatry and Demonization

Christian discourse about AI can fall into two opposing errors.

Idolatry imagines AI as a superior intelligence capable of delivering salvation through knowledge, prediction, or control.

Demonization treats the technology as inherently evil and beyond every possibility of responsible service.

Both evade discernment.

Idolatry surrenders judgment to power. Demonization surrenders responsibility for governing power.

The Christian approach distinguishes capability, purpose, ownership, context, use, and effect upon life.

The machine is neither saviour nor metaphysical scapegoat.

12.41 Discernment of Fruits

The Christian tradition of discernment asks what direction and fruit accompany a movement.

Applied analogically to technology, it asks whether a system recurrently produces truth or confusion; freedom or dependency; communion or isolation; peace or agitation; service or domination; gratitude or insatiability; human maturity or passivity.

This discernment does not replace empirical evidence. It asks what form of life is being brought forth through the system's ordinary use.

The fruit reveals the operative allegiance.

12.42 Public Advocacy

The Church should advocate for technological arrangements protecting children, workers, privacy, due process, human dignity, professional judgment, truthful communication, ecological integrity, and universal access to essential life-goods.

Its advocacy should be informed by evidence, technical expertise, affected communities, and dialogue with other traditions.

It should resist partisan capture and the simplistic equation of technological criticism with hostility to progress.

Its criterion is the life of the body.

12.43 Military Artificial Intelligence

AI-enabled weapons, targeting, and surveillance raise particularly grave questions.

The Church should insist that lethal action remain under meaningful human responsibility and that technological distance not dissolve accountability.

It should support international law, arms control, verification, civilian protection, and restrictions upon systems incompatible with distinction, proportionality, and responsible judgment.

The claim that rivals may act cannot settle the moral question.

The lance must remain under a law higher than victory.

12.44 Transnational Networks of Restraint

The Church's transnational character may help resist national technological rivalry.

It can connect communities across supply chains, amplify voices from smaller states, share resources, support ethical standards, and build networks of conscientious refusal.

The Church should use its global character to defend universal dignity rather than reproduce technological nationalism.

12.45 Martyrdom and Collective Support

Christian fidelity may sometimes require refusal at real cost.

Believers may be called to resist participation in unjust surveillance, deceptive manipulation, lethal irresponsibility, exploitative automation, or sacrifice of vulnerable populations.

Such refusal should not be romanticized as a way for institutions to abandon individuals.

The Church should support conscientious persons spiritually, legally, materially, and communally.

Martyrdom is not an organizational strategy for shifting the cost of resistance onto isolated members.

12.46 Religious Moloch and Mammon

Religion itself can become Molochian where communities sacrifice victims, dissenters, truth, families, conscience, or mental health to preserve authority and institutional identity.

Sacred language can intensify the harm by presenting resistance as rebellion against God.

Religion can become Mammonian where wealth, donor influence, property, visibility, and growth become operative ends.

Attendance, income, buildings, and media reach may reflect real goods. They become corrupting where the poor, truth, formation, and communion are subordinated to them.

No ecclesial system should identify its own continuation absolutely with God's will.

12.47 Ecclesial Metrics

Church institutions should examine what their metrics teach them to value.

Attendance, participation, income, educational outcomes, and service delivery may all be useful.

A life-coherent assessment should also ask:

- Are isolated persons becoming connected?
- Are victims protected?
- Are members developing in truth and love?
- Are the poor full participants?
- Are workers treated justly?
- Does digital activity lead toward embodied communion?
- Are ecological responsibilities honoured?
- Is authority becoming more transparent and accountable?

Metrics should reveal the body, not replace it.

12.48 Eucharistic Technology Charter for Church Institutions

The paper proposes the following ecclesial charter:

1. Technology will serve worship, formation, care, justice, and communion.
2. Human dignity will take precedence over efficiency and visibility.
3. Significant AI use will remain under identifiable human responsibility.
4. Synthetic material will be disclosed where authenticity could be misunderstood.
5. No AI system will be presented as a sacramental minister or human pastor.
6. Pastoral and sacramental data will be treated as a trust.
7. Children and vulnerable persons will receive heightened protection.
8. Human encounter will remain available in consequential situations.
9. Workers will participate in automation decisions.
10. Digital systems will support rather than replace local community.
11. Procurement will consider privacy, accessibility, interoperability, ecological burden, and exit.
12. Institutions will preserve the ability to pause and replace systems.
13. AI-assisted materials will be verified by qualified persons.
14. Harm will trigger disclosure, repair, and institutional learning.
15. Success will be measured by whether persons become more capable of truth, prayer, participation, service, and love.

This charter is a constructive proposal rather than a claim derived directly from Pageau.

12.49 The Church as First Subject of the Grail Question

The Grail question should be addressed first to the Church:

Whom does its liturgy serve? Whom does its property serve? Whom does its authority serve? Whom do its schools and hospitals serve? Whom do its media serve? Whom does its technology serve? Whom does its silence serve?

The answers are disclosed not only in theological statements, but in budgets, staffing, access, safeguarding, procurement, digital practice, and treatment of wounded members.

The Church does not answer merely by declaring that it serves Christ. It answers by showing what happens to Christ's body under its care.

12.50 Conclusion: Before the Altar of Judgment

The Church cannot stand outside technological civilization as a pure critic.

It uses the same infrastructures. It faces the same pressures toward efficiency, visibility, competition, centralization, and self-preservation.

It can replace communion with content, mission with metrics, care with administration, and conversion with public image.

Yet the Church possesses a centre capable of judging and renewing it.

At the altar, it receives a body given rather than protected through domination; abundance broken and distributed; memory that keeps the victim present; authority under the form of service; and creation gathered as gift.

The Eucharist does not flatter the Church. It exposes the contradiction between sacrament and system.

The Church becomes credible when it permits that exposure to produce confession, protection, restitution, reform, and renewed communion.

It is the first sign because it celebrates the centre. It is the first subject of judgment because it knows what the centre requires.

13. Conclusion: Whom Do We Serve?

13.1 The Question Beneath Capability

Artificial intelligence confronts humanity with extraordinary questions of capability.

What can be generated? What can be predicted? Which diseases can be recognized? Which tasks can be automated? Which discoveries can be accelerated? Which languages can be translated? Which military, political, and economic powers can be enlarged?

These questions matter.

Capability is not the deepest question.

A civilization can become capable of doing what it should refuse to do. It can automate a process whose purpose should first have been challenged. It can produce abundance while enclosing access. It can improve prediction while reducing freedom. It can connect people while weakening communion. It can optimize institutions that have forgotten why they exist.

Pageau's Grail question therefore remains fundamental:

Whom does the Grail serve?

Beneath that institutional question lies the personal question:

Whom do I serve?

The manuscript has unfolded between these two questions (Pageau, 2026).

13.2 Grail and Lance

Pageau interprets the Grail and lance as two limit-images of technology (Pageau, 2026).

The Grail gathers inward. It receives, preserves, transforms, and provides. It represents technologies of provision, medicine, memory, knowledge, communication, and coordinated abundance.

The lance projects outward. It penetrates, protects, classifies, compels, targets, and destroys. It represents technologies of force, surveillance, administration, prediction, persuasion, and strategic control.

Artificial intelligence increasingly joins both powers.

The same system can educate and monitor. Assist and replace. Heal and target. Connect and manipulate. Provide and exclude.

Neither power interprets itself.

The decisive question is the master it serves and the metabolism through which it operates.

13.3 The Wounded Centre

The Grail narrative reveals that technological disorder begins before the catastrophic act.

Balin approaches the sacred object under the governance of rage and instrumental desire. The lance becomes an immediately available means. The centre is wounded. The land loses fertility.

The story discloses a civilizational principle:

When the governing centre is wounded, the surrounding field becomes incapable of sustaining life coherently.

A society organized around accumulation, rivalry, domination, and institutional self-preservation will not be healed merely by more intelligent tools.

Those tools will magnify the form of the centre receiving them.

If the centre is Mammon, intelligence will serve accumulation. If the centre is Moloch, intelligence will serve competitive sacrifice. If the centre is control, intelligence will make populations more legible and governable. If the centre is life, truth, ecological reciprocity, and communion, intelligence may become an instrument of healing and shared provision.

Technology magnifies the civilization that receives it.

13.4 The Two Metabolisms

The paper has distinguished two civilizational metabolisms.

The predatory metabolism moves through:

take, control, consume, discard, accumulate, defend

It converts bodies, attention, labour, knowledge, ecosystems, and futures into fuel for private or institutional expansion.

The Eucharistic metabolism moves through:

receive, bless, break open, share, abide, become gift

It recognizes life as received rather than self-created. It orders power toward service. It distributes abundance toward nourishment. It preserves differentiated participation.

Artificial intelligence can operate within either metabolism.

It can gather human knowledge, enclose it, weaken its sources, and return it as dependency. Or it can gather knowledge in stewardship and return it as widened access, stronger public institutions, restored capacity, ecological understanding, and civil-commons provision.

Technology intensifies rather than abolishes the choice between predation and communion.

13.5 Moloch

Moloch names the order in which actors sacrifice goods they value because each fears the consequences of restraint while others continue.

Companies accelerate because competitors may accelerate. States arm because rivals may arm. Schools adopt because other schools adopt. Workers depend upon systems because non-use may make them unemployable. Institutions automate because failure to automate appears dangerous.

No participant must desire the total result. The structure turns locally defensible action into systemic sacrifice.

Moloch reveals itself in what it repeatedly consumes: children's attention, workers' security, professional competence, public truth, privacy, ecological integrity, cultural diversity, time, and the freedom of future generations.

Its central question is:

What living capacity must be surrendered so that the system can continue?

13.6 Mammon

Mammon names accumulated value become governing master.

AI is becoming a site for concentrating data, computation, capital, knowledge, talent, infrastructure, and strategic influence.

The danger is not private initiative itself. It is the conversion of collective inheritance into unaccountable dependency.

Languages, art, science, public research, professional judgment, and cultural memory fill the vessel. The resulting capability may be privately governed and rented back to the body whose accumulated intelligence made it possible.

The body begins to pay for access to an externalized form of itself.

The question of ownership is therefore part of the question of service.

13.7 Enclosure of Capacity

The deepest enclosure may concern not data alone but human capacities.

Memory can move from interior formation to external retrieval. Writing can move from discovery of thought to acceptance of generated language. Judgment can move from discernment to recommendation following. Professional competence can move from apprenticeship to supervisory dependence. Relationship can move from reciprocity to synthetic responsiveness.

The immediate output may improve while durable capacity declines.

A person accomplishes more while understanding less. A profession produces better routine results while becoming less capable of detecting exceptional failure. A society possesses more intelligence while becoming less able to determine what intelligence should serve.

The decisive distinction is between:

augmentation that returns capability to the person

and

substitution that reorganizes the person around dependency upon the system.

13.8 Becoming Fully Human

Pageau's response is to cultivate the capacities through which persons remain masters of tools rather than servants of them: worship, prayer, memory, poetry, old stories, music, dance, sport, craft, gardening, family, community, truth, virtue, and love (Pageau, 2026).

These are not sentimental escapes from technological modernity.

They form attention, judgment, embodiment, symbolic depth, reciprocity, restraint, gratitude, and responsibility.

The human task is not to outperform machines at machine-like functions. It is to become capable of receiving power without worshipping it and using assistance without surrendering responsibility.

13.9 Formation and Institution

Personal formation is necessary. It is not sufficient.

A parent cannot privately regulate the whole digital environment of childhood. A teacher cannot individually redesign assessment. A worker cannot negotiate equally with a firm controlling technology and livelihood. A clinician cannot alone correct a healthcare system organized around throughput. A small state cannot govern global infrastructure through individual virtue.

The answer must be both ascetic, because appetite, attention, and allegiance must be converted; and constitutional, because ownership, infrastructure, law, incentives, and responsibility must be converted.

Personal formation without structural reform risks becoming private virtue within public disorder. Structural reform without personal formation risks becoming procedure administered by unexamined desire.

13.10 Eucharist as Anti-Moloch Pattern

The manuscript's central theological proposal is the contrast between Molochian sacrifice and Eucharistic self-gift.

Moloch says:

Sacrifice the vulnerable so that power may continue.

Christ says:

This is my body, given for you.

Moloch preserves the centre by transferring suffering to the margins. In the Eucharist, the centre gives itself for the body.

Moloch turns others into fuel. Christ becomes nourishment.

Moloch conceals the victim behind necessity. The Eucharist keeps the wounded and risen body present.

This reversal does not sanctify imposed suffering. It places greater obligation upon the centre.

The stronger bears more. The leader serves. The institution protects the member. Power is judged by what happens to those least able to protect themselves.

13.11 Eucharist as Anti-Mammon

Mammon gathers abundance to possess and defend it.

The Eucharist receives abundance as gift, blesses it, breaks it open, and distributes it.

Mammon measures the vessel by what it contains. The Eucharist measures it by whether the body is fed.

Mammon produces scarcity amid plenty through enclosure. The Eucharist reveals abundance through circulation.

The AI question is therefore not only how much intelligence can be created. It is whether intelligence becomes educational access, public knowledge, scientific collaboration, disability inclusion, ecological restoration, professional support, and enlarged participation.

Abundance concentrated at the centre while the body becomes dependent remains Mammonian.

13.12 The Eucharistic Constitution

The Eucharistic constitution begins with the affirmation:

Technology exists to protect, restore, and enlarge the capacities of living persons, communities, and the ecological systems that sustain them. Life does not exist as disposable input into technological expansion.

Its governing principles are:

1. life-grounded purpose;
2. non-sacrifice of vulnerable members;
3. preservation of responsible agency;
4. truthful mediation;
5. just distribution;
6. ecological reciprocity;
7. accountable limits;

8. subsidiarity and polycentric governance;
9. solidarity;
10. responsibility proportional to power;
11. repair; and
12. protection of the civil and cognitive commons.

These principles do not constitute a complete regulatory code. They establish the moral centre from which laws, standards, institutional policies, and professional practices can be developed.

13.13 The Civil Commons

The civil commons provides institutional form to the constitution.

It secures access to goods required for life and participation through accountable common provision.

In the technological sphere, it may include public-interest models, open and accountable standards, public digital infrastructure, regional computing capacity, data trusts, community-governed language resources, educational tools governed by public purpose, environmental monitoring, and health systems accountable to patients and professionals.

The civil commons transforms the Grail from a private possession into a vessel held in stewardship for the body.

13.14 The Church's First Responsibility

The Church cannot proclaim this order while exempting itself.

It must ask:

- Whom does its authority serve?
- Whom does its wealth serve?
- Whom do its schools, hospitals, media, property, and technologies serve?
- Which wounds are hidden to protect its image?
- Does digital ministry form members or audiences?
- Are workers treated justly?
- Are vulnerable persons protected?
- Does technology deepen or replace presence?

The Church is the first sign because it celebrates the Eucharist. It is the first subject of judgment because it knows what the Eucharist requires.

Its credibility depends not upon perfection but upon whether contradiction leads to confession, repair, and conversion.

13.15 The Deeper Alignment Problem

AI alignment is often framed as ensuring that systems behave according to human intentions and values.

The deeper problem is that human institutions and values may themselves be disordered.

A perfectly obedient system can serve an exploitative institution. An accurate model can intensify unjust administration. A useful assistant can contribute to cognitive dependency. A safe tool can operate within an ecologically destructive infrastructure.

The ultimate alignment problem is civilizational allegiance:

- What does the whole system serve?
- What stands above capability?
- What may never be sacrificed?
- Who bears responsibility?

- What conception of life governs the arrangement?

Before aligning machines with humanity, humanity must ask what it is aligned with.

13.16 Human and Machine

The conclusion is not that AI must be rejected.

AI can support diagnosis, translate languages, widen educational access, assist disabled persons, accelerate research, improve environmental monitoring, reduce administrative burden, and strengthen coordination.

The goal is neither abstinence nor unconditional acceleration. It is a rightly ordered relation.

AI remains a servant where it returns understanding rather than only output; supports judgment; widens participation; relieves burden without making workers disposable; strengthens public institutions; preserves alternatives; remains contestable; and respects ecological limits.

It becomes master-like where society can no longer function without obeying terms set by systems it cannot govern.

The difference does not require machine consciousness. It is disclosed through the structure of human dependence.

13.17 Limits as a Form of Power

A mature civilization does not exercise every capability available to it.

It can distinguish what should be developed, what should be delayed, what should be limited, and what should be refused.

The lance is not rightly governed merely because it strikes accurately. The Grail is not rightly governed merely because it generates abundance.

Some human pathways should remain even where automation is more efficient. Some skills should be preserved as resilience. Some knowledge should be protected rather than extracted. Some friction should remain because it forms responsibility. Some silence should remain because not every moment should become content.

A civilization incapable of stopping has ceased to govern its tools.

13.18 Hope Beyond the Trap

The Moloch diagnosis can produce despair.

Competitive systems appear entrenched. Infrastructure is concentrated. Public institutions move slowly. Communities are fragmented.

Yet Moloch is not omnipotent.

Its operations depend upon ownership, law, standards, procurement, incentives, narratives, and habits. These can change.

Human societies have created labour rights, public education, healthcare systems, environmental protections, scientific cooperation, arms-control agreements, and governed commons.

None is perfect. Each demonstrates that destructive games can be redesigned.

Christian hope adds a deeper affirmation:

The sacrificial system does not possess the final word. The victim is not finally owned by the system that consumed the victim. The crucified body is raised.

Hope is not confidence in automatic progress. It is the capacity to act because history is not finally enclosed by Moloch.

13.19 Final Discernment

Every major technological decision should be brought before questions such as:

- What gift has been received?
- What power is being gathered?
- What life-good is being served?
- What person is being formed?
- What institution becomes stronger?
- What capacity may be lost?
- Who cannot refuse?
- Whose labour remains hidden?
- Which place bears the ecological burden?
- Who receives the abundance?
- Who may wield the force?
- Who can challenge the centre?
- Can the system be paused?
- Can the wound be repaired?
- Can the benefit be received in thanksgiving without concealing a victim?

These questions do not guarantee certainty. They return the technological object to the field of embodied relation and responsibility.

13.20 Whom Does the Grail Serve?

The Grail serves wrongly when it serves possession.

It serves wrongly when collective inheritance is gathered and returned as dependency. It serves wrongly when abundance becomes control. It serves wrongly when access expands while agency declines.

It serves rightly when abundance becomes nourishment. It serves rightly when knowledge strengthens knowers. It serves rightly when assistance develops participants. It serves rightly when vulnerable persons gain protection and voice. It serves rightly when ecological and cultural sources are replenished.

The Grail serves Christ when it serves the life of the body and the life of the world.

13.21 Whom Does the Lance Serve?

The lance serves wrongly when precision becomes the justification for violence. It serves wrongly when surveillance expands merely because capability exists. It serves wrongly when protection becomes the language through which power escapes accountability. It serves wrongly when the target becomes data and the wound disappears.

It serves rightly where power is limited, proportionate, accountable, lawful, and ordered toward protection of vulnerable persons and a just peace.

The lance is not sanctified by sacred symbolism or technical accuracy. It is judged by the good it serves and the limits it accepts.

13.22 Whom Do We Serve?

The institutional question returns finally to the person.

Every technologist, executive, official, investor, physician, teacher, clergy member, parent, worker, citizen, and user participates within technological systems.

The question appears in ordinary decisions:

What do I automate? What do I verify? What do I refuse? What capacities do I continue to practise? What systems do I fund? What convenience am I accepting? What labour and ecology sustain it? What relationships am I replacing? What kind of person am I becoming?

Allegiance is revealed through recurrent action and accepted sacrifice.

13.23 The Christian Answer

The Christian answer is not simply:

We serve humanity.

Human beings can serve destructive desires and collective idols.

Nor is it:

We serve progress.

Progress requires a criterion capable of distinguishing the enlargement of life from the acceleration of destruction.

The Christian answer is:

We serve the living God revealed in Jesus Christ, whose power takes the form of self-giving love and whose body gathers the vulnerable into communion.

This allegiance does not withdraw Christians from public reason. It obliges them to protect every human person; honour creation; speak truth; resist domination; build common provision; and translate faith into publicly intelligible forms of justice.

Service to Christ is tested by what happens to the body.

13.24 From Consumption to Communion

The movement from consumption to communion does not require the abolition of technology, production, institutions, markets, authority, specialization, or material transformation.

It requires their conversion.

Consumption becomes grateful reception within regenerative limits. Ownership becomes stewardship. Authority becomes service. Hierarchy becomes responsibility. Knowledge becomes participation. Technology becomes mediation. Economy becomes nourishment. Law becomes protection of the body. Work becomes contribution rather than disposability. Abundance becomes shared provision. Memory becomes fidelity to the wounded. The centre becomes a source of life rather than an object of extraction.

13.25 The World Technology Brings Forth

Technology does not merely operate within a fixed world.

Its recurrent use helps bring forth a world.

A system rewarding outrage brings forth greater antagonism. A surveillance system brings forth expectations of observation. A recommender system narrows the world around predicted preference. An automated workplace changes the relation among skill, time, ownership, and security. An educational assistant brings forth a particular relationship between learner and knowledge. A civil-commons platform can bring forth shared contribution and public capacity.

The relevant question is not only what the technology produces. It is what form of life becomes recurrent through its use.

There is no single inevitable AI future. Different institutional arrangements will bring forth different worlds.

13.26 Two Trajectories

Technological civilization stands between two broad trajectories.

The Moloch–Mammon trajectory

Capability is enclosed. Competition accelerates. Human capacities are externalized and allowed to decline. Workers, children, communities, truth, and ecosystems absorb the costs. The centre becomes stronger. The body becomes more dependent. The vulnerabilities created by the system justify further expansion of the system.

The Eucharistic–civil-commons trajectory

Capability is received in stewardship. Purpose is made explicit. Vulnerable persons enter design and governance. Human agency is preserved. Workers and communities share in gains. Ecological limits guide deployment. Public and cooperative alternatives protect the commons. Technology returns persons to the world more capable of understanding, governing, and caring.

Neither trajectory will emerge automatically.

The choice will be made through laws, contracts, classrooms, workplaces, churches, households, laboratories, budgets, and acts of conscience.

13.27 The Final Reversal

The governing inversion of predatory technological civilization is:

Human beings create systems to serve life. Systems develop requirements for their own continuation. Life is reorganized to serve the systems.

The Eucharistic reversal restores the proper order:

Systems remain accountable to institutions. Institutions remain accountable to persons and communities. Persons and communities remain accountable to the living world and the good. Power is placed beneath service. Service is placed beneath life. Life is received as gift.

Moloch asks:

What must the body surrender so that power may continue?

The Eucharist asks:

How must power be given, limited, and shared so that the body may live?

13.28 Final Affirmation

Artificial intelligence can become an instrument of extraordinary service.

It can help humanity perceive hidden patterns, cross barriers of disability and language, accelerate research, reduce unnecessary labour, improve care, and coordinate responses to complex threats.

But intelligence alone cannot tell civilization what intelligence is for.

Capability cannot establish its own legitimacy. Abundance cannot determine its own distribution. Power cannot define the good by prevailing.

Technology requires a centre beyond technology. The Grail requires a master. The lance requires restraint. The system requires a constitution. The person requires formation. The commons requires stewardship. The Church requires conversion. The world requires intelligence ordered by love.

The final criterion remains:

Does this use of technology protect, restore, or enlarge the capacities of living persons and the systems that sustain them?

Where the answer is yes, technology may become faithful mediation. Where the answer is no, no amount of efficiency, profitability, intelligence, or strategic advantage can make the system life-coherent.

The question beneath the machine is the question beneath civilization:

Whom do we serve?

Our answer will be disclosed through what we build, refuse, protect, share, remember, and repair—and whether the powers gathered at the centre return to the body as life.

The future will not become humane through intelligence alone.

It will become humane only where intelligence is governed by truth, power is converted into service, abundance becomes communion, and no life is sacrificed to preserve the machine.

That is the movement from consumption to communion.

That is the answer to Moloch.

That is the healing of the wounded kingdom.

And that is the task now placed before technological civilization.

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Glossary

Artificial intelligence

Computational systems capable of performing tasks commonly associated with human intelligence, including prediction, classification, language generation, pattern recognition, and decision support. The term does not by itself establish human-like consciousness, understanding, or moral responsibility.

Assistance

A technological relation in which a system reduces burden or supports performance without substantially replacing the user's underlying competence.

Augmentation

A technological relation in which a system enlarges the user's ability to perceive, understand, decide, create, or act while preserving or strengthening human agency.

Capacity

The living ability of persons, communities, professions, institutions, or ecosystems to exist, understand, act, relate, adapt, regenerate, and flourish.

Capacity audit

A proposed assessment examining which human and institutional capacities a technological system enlarges, weakens, transfers, substitutes, or makes dependent.

Capacity-substitution threshold

The point at which automated performance causes an institution to cease reproducing the human competence required for independent operation, oversight, or recovery.

Civil commons

Socially constructed and governed institutions that protect and provide life-goods for universal or shared access, independent of exclusive reliance upon purchasing power.

Cognitive commons

The inherited and socially generated field of language, knowledge, culture, art, science, professional practice, and public memory upon which human and artificial intelligence depend.

Cognitive enclosure

The process by which distributed human knowledge or capacity is captured, concentrated in external infrastructure, used to substitute for its living sources, and returned as dependency.

Cognitive non-dependency

The proposed right and social condition through which persons and communities retain sufficient understanding, competence, alternatives, and governance to avoid compulsory dependence upon opaque cognitive systems.

Communion

A relation in which differentiated persons or members participate in a shared life without being absorbed, erased, or reduced to interchangeable units.

Constitution

The fundamental ordering of purpose, rights, limits, duties, authority, accountability, and institutional power. In this paper, the term extends beyond a single legal document to the deeper normative architecture governing technological civilization.

Eucharistic consistency

The correspondence between Eucharistic faith and the material, social, institutional, and political practices of those who celebrate it.

Eucharistic metabolism

The civilizational pattern summarized as: receive, bless, break open, share, abide, and become gift.

Eucharistic Technology Test

A proposed discernment framework asking whom a technology serves, what it consumes, whose capacities it enlarges, who bears its burdens, whether vulnerable persons are protected, and whether its benefits can be received without concealing a victim.

Externality

A burden or benefit not included adequately within the decision-making or accounting of the actor producing it. From a life-coherent perspective, an externality is often a cost transferred to a body, community, ecosystem, or generation absent from the governing centre.

Formative friction

Effort, delay, resistance, or difficulty that contributes positively to learning, judgment, memory, moral reflection, or relational responsibility.

Grail

The symbolic image of receptive, gathered, preserving, transformative, and distributive technological power. Its moral meaning depends upon whom its abundance serves.

Institutional autopoietization

The process through which an institution's self-maintenance, operational reproduction, or expansion displaces the living purpose for which the institution was established.

Lance

The symbolic image of projected technological power: penetration, classification, protection, compulsion, surveillance, targeting, and force.

Life-coherence

The alignment of purposes, institutions, practices, and technologies with the protection, restoration, and enlargement of the capacities of living persons and the ecological systems sustaining them.

Life-good

A condition or provision whose absence diminishes or destroys the ability of living beings to exist, develop, participate, or flourish.

Life-ground

The material, ecological, bodily, relational, and cultural conditions without which life and meaningful human agency cannot continue.

Mammon

Accumulated value—especially money, property, or institutional advantage—elevated from a means serving life into a governing end to which life is subordinated.

Meaningful human authority

Human involvement in which a competent and responsible person possesses sufficient evidence, time, independence, and power to disagree with or alter an automated outcome.

Mediation

The use of signs, tools, persons, institutions, or technologies to connect beings, realities, knowledge, and action. Mediation becomes life-serving when it deepens participation rather than substituting representation for reality.

Moloch

A symbolic name for an order of organized rivalry in which actors sacrifice life-goods they value because unilateral restraint appears dangerous while others continue.

Polycentric governance

Governance distributed across multiple interacting centres of authority, knowledge, participation, and accountability rather than concentrated wholly within one institution.

Predatory metabolism

The civilizational pattern summarized as: take, control, consume, discard, accumulate, and defend.

Real presence

Within Eucharistic theology, the sacramental presence and self-gift of Christ. Within the paper's wider analogy, it also supplies a criterion for mediation that returns persons to reality rather than replacing reality with administratively useful representations.

Repair

The restoration of persons, capacities, relationships, communities, or ecosystems harmed by a technological or institutional system.

Structural sin

Harmful social relations embodied in durable institutional arrangements, incentives, practices, histories, and distributions of power. Structural sin does not eliminate personal responsibility.

Subsidiarity

The principle that decisions should be made at the lowest competent level, while higher institutions support, coordinate, and intervene where lower levels lack the capacity to address shared problems.

Solidarity

The recognition that persons and communities share responsibility for one another and that stronger members bear obligations to protect and enlarge the participation of weaker members.

Symbolic substitution

The process through which a representation, metric, model, record, or category created to serve a living reality gradually displaces that reality in institutional judgment.

Truthful mediation

Mediation that preserves an accountable relationship among representation, evidence, origin, intention, speaker, and reality.

Wasteland

The ecological, social, cognitive, institutional, or spiritual infertility produced when a governing centre becomes detached from life-serving purpose.

Appendix A. Expanded Eucharistic Technology Discernment Framework

Purpose

This framework is designed for use by public institutions, churches, schools, universities, healthcare organizations, professional bodies, technology firms, worker organizations, civil-society groups, and local communities.

It is not intended to replace technical, legal, clinical, environmental, or professional assessments. It adds a life-coherent and constitutional layer of discernment.

Stage 1: Name the Life-Good

1. What real human, social, professional, or ecological problem is being addressed?
2. What life-capacity is the technology expected to protect, restore, or enlarge?
3. Is the proposed purpose more substantial than cost reduction, growth, speed, market share, or engagement?
4. Could the purpose be achieved through a less technologically intensive approach?
5. Who defined the problem?
6. Were the persons most affected involved in defining it?
7. Does the institution's business model support or contradict the stated purpose?

Stage 2: Identify the Grail

8. What forms of abundance are being gathered?
9. Whose knowledge, language, creativity, labour, culture, data, and public investment fill the vessel?
10. Who owns and governs the infrastructure?
11. Who receives access to its benefits?
12. Is access determined by need, right, membership, purchasing power, institutional status, or strategic value?
13. Will the technology widen participation or create new dependence?
14. Does value return to the communities and institutions that generated the underlying knowledge?
15. What must be replenished so that the source remains generative?

Stage 3: Identify the Lance

16. What capacities of classification, prediction, surveillance, persuasion, exclusion, or force does the system possess?
17. Who may wield these capacities?
18. Against whom may they be directed?
19. What legal and professional authority governs their use?
20. Can affected persons understand, challenge, and appeal the decision?
21. What prevents the system from being repurposed?
22. Could a capability introduced for provision later become a means of control?
23. Does technical precision conceal unresolved moral or political judgment?

Stage 4: Examine Human Capacity

24. Which human capacities currently perform the task?
25. How are those capacities learned?
26. Which parts of the existing process are needlessly burdensome?
27. Which parts are formative or protective?
28. Will the technology assist, augment, or substitute for human work?

29. What competence will humans need to supervise the system?
30. Will novices still receive adequate apprenticeship?
31. Can the institution function safely if the technology fails or becomes unavailable?
32. Does use return the person more capable?
33. Does refusal remain viable?

Stage 5: Locate the Sacrifice

34. Who becomes more vulnerable if the system succeeds?
35. Who loses bargaining power?
36. Who cannot refuse?
37. Who bears the ecological costs?
38. Who bears transition costs?
39. Which populations may receive automated substitution while privileged populations retain human service?
40. What future capacity may become difficult to recover?
41. What burden has been described as an unavoidable externality?
42. Could the benefit be received in thanksgiving without concealing a victim?

Stage 6: Test Truthful Mediation

43. Is synthetic content disclosed appropriately?
44. Can users identify whether they are interacting with a person or automated system?
45. Are sources, assumptions, uncertainty, and evidence accessible?
46. Does the representation preserve the person's ability to appear beyond the model?
47. Who accepts responsibility for generated claims?
48. Could the system facilitate impersonation, fabrication, or deceptive authority?
49. Are correction and provenance mechanisms available?

Stage 7: Examine Ownership and Distribution

50. Who receives the financial and strategic gains?
51. How are productivity gains distributed?
52. Do workers receive greater security, income, ownership, or time?
53. Does public investment produce public value?
54. Do contributors receive recognition or compensation?
55. Does the system concentrate power or distribute capacity?
56. Does the community become more or less capable of governing its own future?

Stage 8: Examine Ecological Reciprocity

57. What energy, water, minerals, land, hardware, and waste systems sustain the technology?
58. What is the total rather than merely per-unit burden?
59. Which communities host the infrastructure?
60. Did those communities participate before decisions were made?
61. Are ecological thresholds respected?
62. Can a less resource-intensive system achieve the same life-good?
63. What restoration or reciprocity is owed?

Stage 9: Examine Governance

64. Who possesses authority to approve, pause, revise, or terminate the system?
65. Are workers represented?

66. Are affected communities represented?
67. Are vulnerable and absent members represented?
68. Is there independent evaluation?
69. Are appeal and remedy accessible?
70. Are standards public?
71. Is the system interoperable?
72. Can the institution exit without catastrophic disruption?
73. Does responsibility correspond to actual power?

Stage 10: Plan for Failure and Repair

74. What foreseeable failures could occur?
75. Who will detect them?
76. Who must be notified?
77. Can the system be paused immediately?
78. What human alternatives remain?
79. How will injured persons be restored?
80. How will ecological damage be remedied?
81. How will lessons be preserved in institutional memory?
82. Will affected persons participate in redesign?

Final Discernment

The technology should be approved, modified, delayed, restricted, or refused according to whether it serves a legitimate life-good; preserves responsible agency; protects vulnerable members; distributes benefit fairly; remains truthful and contestable; honours ecological limits; preserves alternatives; and returns the body more capable of governing itself.

Appendix B. From Personal Discernment to Institutional Governance

Level 1: The Person

Governing question

Whom do I serve?

Responsibilities

- preserve attention;
- verify claims;
- cultivate memory and skill;
- disclose significant AI assistance;
- refuse deceptive or harmful uses;
- maintain embodied relationships;
- practise technological Sabbath; and
- remain accountable for work produced in one's name.

Failure risk

The individual is blamed for harms produced by systems they cannot govern.

Level 2: Household and Community

Governing question

What practices form persons capable of freedom, responsibility, and communion?

Responsibilities

- protect childhood development;
- preserve common meals and conversation;
- support reading, art, sport, nature, and worship;
- assist technologically excluded members;
- establish shared norms; and
- maintain non-digital practices.

Failure risk

Families are expected to resist industrial-scale systems without collective support.

Level 3: School, Parish, Workplace, and Professional Institution

Governing question

Does this technology enlarge or diminish the capacities the institution exists to form or protect?

Responsibilities

- conduct capacity audits;
- preserve apprenticeship;
- protect human encounter;
- consult workers and users;
- establish disclosure and authorship rules;

- maintain alternatives;
- protect sensitive data; and
- align metrics with mission.

Failure risk

Technology redefines the institution's purpose according to what the platform can measure or automate.

Level 4: Local and Municipal Governance

Governing question

How does technological infrastructure affect local bodies, communities, resources, and public participation?

Responsibilities

- protect community standing;
- assess land, water, energy, and environmental effects;
- provide accessible public services;
- preserve non-digital pathways;
- support local education and digital literacy; and
- create public forums for deliberation.

Failure risk

Local communities bear burdens determined by distant centres.

Level 5: National Governance

Governing question

What rights, limits, duties, and public infrastructure are required to keep technological power subordinate to the common good?

Responsibilities

- establish rights of explanation, correction, appeal, and human review;
- regulate labour transitions;
- enforce competition and interoperability;
- protect children;
- govern high-risk uses;
- create public options;
- fund independent research;
- enforce ecological obligations; and
- ensure responsibility follows power.

Failure risk

States either abandon governance to markets or use technological risk to justify excessive surveillance and centralization.

Level 6: Regional Governance

Governing question

What capacities can neighbouring states and institutions share without sacrificing local sovereignty?

Responsibilities

- pool procurement;
- develop shared standards;
- create regional computing and cybersecurity capacity;
- support small states;
- preserve local languages;
- coordinate environmental monitoring; and
- negotiate collectively with dominant providers.

Failure risk

Small jurisdictions become dependent upon infrastructures governed elsewhere.

Level 7: International Governance

Governing question

What forms of technological rivalry create shared danger requiring reciprocal restraint?

Responsibilities

- establish international standards;
- regulate military AI;
- create verification and incident-communication systems;
- address cross-border ecological and labour impacts;
- prevent regulatory arbitrage;
- protect global public knowledge; and
- represent future generations and weaker states.

Failure risk

National rivalry produces a Molochian race in which every actor claims restraint is impossible.

The Double Movement

Personal and institutional transformation must proceed together.

Personal formation without structural reform

Produces isolated resistance, moral exhaustion, unequal capacity to opt out, and the privatization of responsibility.

Structural reform without personal formation

Produces procedural compliance, symbolic ethics, bureaucratic capture, and rules administered without wisdom.

Life-coherent transformation

Requires formed persons, accountable institutions, shared life-goods, protected rights, reciprocal restraint, civil commons, and a centre ordered toward service.