

**Jerzy Brzozowski**

Szkoła Główna Mikołaja Kopernika, Kolegium Filozofii i Teologii

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0872-9408>

[jerzy.brzozowski@uj.edu.pl](mailto:jerzy.brzozowski@uj.edu.pl)

## **Modern Technologies in University Teaching – Benefits and Threats from the Perspective of Security Sciences and Ethics**

### **Nowe technologie w edukacji – cyberbezpieczeństwo – zagrożenia społeczne i etyczne**

#### **Streszczenie**

Autor w pierwszej części artykułu wylicza ogromne korzyści, jakie nauczanie uniwersyteckie odnosi dzięki użyciu nowoczesnych technologii, a więc powszechnej dostępności do Internetu, przenośnych komputerów i smartfonów, narzędzi e-learningu, digitalizacji, a także najnowszych postępów Artificial Intelligence. W drugiej części artykułu pojawiają się jednak obawy, że – po pierwsze, AI może być używana w sposób nieetyczny, zaprzeczający misji Uniwersytetu; po drugie, że powszechna cyfryzacja może prowadzić do wykluczenia pewnych grup społecznych; wreszcie – pojawia się problem patologii związanych z użyciem Internetu, takich jak uzależnienie czy wręcz cyberprzemoc. W podsumowaniu autor zadaje pytanie, w jakim stopniu kolejne rewolucje technologiczne XX i XXI wieku zmieniły czy wręcz zaburzyły mentalność zachodniego świata, zakorzenioną w chrześcijańskim systemie wartości.

#### **Słowa kluczowe:**

#### **Abstract**

In the first part of the article, the author lists the enormous benefits that university teaching gains from the use of modern technologies, i.e.

the universal access to the Internet, portable computers and smartphones, e-learning tools, digitization, and the latest advances in Artificial Intelligence. However, in the second part of the article, concerns arise that – firstly, AI can be used in an unethical way, contradicting the mission of the University; secondly, that widespread digitization can lead to the exclusion of certain social groups; and finally – there is the problem of pathologies related to the use of the Internet, such as addiction or even cyberbullying. In the summary, the author asks the question to what extent the subsequent technological revolutions of the 20th and 21st centuries have changed or even disturbed the mentality of the Western world, based on Christian values.

**Key words:** New Technologies in Education – Cybersecurity – Social and Ethical Challenges

## I. Benefits of Modern Technology Development in University Teaching and Research

I would like to begin by expressing my admiration for modern technology in university life from the perspective of a humanities scholar – someone who, in theory, might only need chalk and a blackboard (plus a well-stocked library). This was particularly evident during the Covid-19 pandemic: without remote learning tools – Teams, Zoom, Moodle, and, to a lesser extent, Pegaz – a catastrophe would have been inevitable. It is indisputable that these tools saved the university teaching process. Although initially challenging, as conducting classes without eye contact and feedback was a completely new experience, the alternative would have been the suspension of classes for many months, leading to an educational crisis quite unimaginable in our cultural area.

Of course, the introduction of these technologies was not a seamless success. Directors of various institutes at Jagiellonian University admit off the record that some educators either could not or did not want to learn how to use these tools, and their classes simply did not take place for several weeks. This is quite astonishing, considering that we theoretically have the right to expect above-average intelligence and continuous self-education skills from academic and teaching staff at the university level. But what about the students? Were they satisfied with

this mode of instruction, and how did they evaluate its quality compared to in-person classes?

There are already studies on this issue, one of the most substantial being the work of Agnieszka Roguska from the University of Siedlce, which surveyed a considerable sample of 767 respondents from across Poland. One of the most interesting findings, in my opinion, is that the vast majority of respondents felt they managed well (61%) or very well (24%)<sup>1</sup> with remote education. Moreover, despite all the difficulties, the most positive assessments were recorded in the early months of remote learning. The author comments: “The evaluation of class delivery at the beginning of the pandemic was higher compared to the later period, perhaps because respondents were more forgiving and assessed instructors less critically. Over time, they likely expected online teaching methodologies to be better adapted to emerging needs.”<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that the average rating never dropped below 6.5 on a 10-point scale and was 7.1 in the initial period.

It would certainly be valuable to repeat this survey on the same sample in relation to in-person education. The results might not significantly differ from those obtained in e-learning, suggesting that personal competence and engagement of individual instructors, along with their willingness to break routine and enrich course content, have a greater impact on the quality of education<sup>3</sup>. Another advantage of online tools is the ease of conducting consultations with students remotely. As for myself, I provide most of my consultations in this form: it is a significant time and effort saver. Moreover, in certain situations, especially for students abroad (Erasmus or Erasmus Mundus programs), this is the only feasible option. Last but not least, during recurring flu outbreaks, both instructors and students in the early stages of infection can attend classes without exposing others to illness.

Furthermore, the fact that all students now have laptops or at least smartphones significantly changes the way classes are conducted. It allows for real-time access to information that was not anticipated during class preparation. Similar benefits apply to more efficient and engaging

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<sup>1</sup> A. Roguska, *Edukacja zdalna w opinii studentów podczas pandemii COVID-19*, [in:] M. Fałdowska (ed.), *Bezpieczeństwo podczas pracy i nauczania zdalnego w dobie pandemii COVID-19*, Siedlce 2022, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> A. Roguska, *Edukacja zdalna...*, p. 151.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of the author of this article, the grades obtained in electronic student surveys starting from the academic year 2020/2021 were... higher than in previous years.

ways of verifying and discussing student work during lessons. In subjects such as written or oral translation and sworn translation, the traditional blackboard or even paper often becomes unnecessary.

Moreover, continuously improving remote work tools offer unprecedented possibilities for academic collaboration. Inviting a famous keynote speaker from a distant country—always costly and sometimes impossible due to health or time constraints—has become much more feasible thanks to these technologies. Various webinars, mini-seminars, and necessary yet tedious staff discussions can also be conducted remotely. Even real-time monitoring of surgical procedures by top specialists has become possible—area that will increasingly be performed by robots in the future.

Many aspects of artificial intelligence (AI) extend beyond our current expectations. Translating a simple text, such as a scientific article abstract, using Google Translate now yields good results. Similarly, programs like Copilot and ChatGPT can generate standard correspondence, cover letters, or multimedia presentations on a given topic. Progress in this field is accelerating rapidly: not in decades or years but in months. As noted at the recent *Imago Mundi* conference (University of Warsaw, October 2-3, 2024), AI translation of practical texts and even moderately complex literary texts is already satisfactory, suggesting that the role of human translators may soon be reduced to post-editing<sup>4</sup>.

And that is not all. The widespread electronic publication of scientific journals, often in open-access format, offers further improvements in our academic work—not only in terms of labor efficiency but, more importantly, in qualitative terms, thanks to the radical enhancement of global access to resources. Another significant benefit of modern technology is the digitization of valuable historical works, as shown in the collections of the Polish National Library and the Jagiellonian Library—both literary and scientific—and their online availability through the “*Patrimonium*” project.

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<sup>4</sup> See the lecture Edyta Manasterska-Wiącek “Artistic text marked by gender in AI translation”, October 03, 2024.

## II. The Issue of Threats from the Perspective of Security Studies

For a person aged 70 or older, looking back at past decades means having witnessed several technological revolutions<sup>5</sup>. In the late 1950s, some villages in Poland still lacked electricity. They also lacked efficient means of communication—at best, a motorcycle, which was just beginning to appear on Polish farms on a larger scale. However, farming tools and draft animals (sometimes oxen or cows) meant that rural living conditions were not much different from those of the 19th century. One might even argue that, in terms of mentality, they were not far from biblical times—with the key difference that, after World War II, securing food ceased to be the primary concern absorbing most of people’s energy in Europe.

As Fernand Braudel wrote:

“Some structures, because of their long life, become stable elements for an infinite number of generations: they get in the way of history, hinder its flow, and in hindering it shape it. Others wear themselves out more quickly. But all of them provide both support and hindrance. As hindrances they stand as limits... beyond which man and his experiences cannot go. Just think of the difficulties of breaking out of certain geographical frameworks, certain biological realities, certain limits of productivity, even particular spiritual constraints: mental frameworks too can form prisons of the *longue durée*”<sup>6</sup>.

The entanglement of mentality in this “long duration” will be revisited later in this discussion. At this point, however, it must be said that over the last 50 years, there have been further revolutions, such as the ubiquitous and universally accessible television, to which the famous Italian sociologist Franco Ferrarotti devoted his 2005 book *La televisione*

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<sup>5</sup> This also applies to some extent to the two previous generations. As early as 1934, Lewis Mumford drew attention to the unprecedented acceleration in human history in the movement of people in space (motor powered ship, car, airplane) and the possibility of communication between people without their physical presence (telegraph, telephone, radio), see L. Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, New York 1934.

<sup>6</sup> F. Braudel, *On History*, Chicago 1980, apud: N. Nielsen, *Fernand Braudel and the Structures of Historical Time*, “Medium”, link: <https://jnnielsen.medium.com/fernand-braudel-and-the-structure-of-historical-time-71a10b8685d8>, (Access: March 25, 2025).

– *Cinquant’anni che hanno cambiato i costumi degli italiani*. Another revolution which we could see in Poland was the widespread availability of passenger cars, starting with the famous “little Fiat”, which brought the Polish countryside closer to civilisation; then – the telephone, for decades a marker of high social status, which from the early 2000s in the form of a portable “cell phone” gradually became something available to literally everyone, with consequences to which we will return shortly. It was similar with personal computers: the author of this article wrote his doctoral thesis in 1991 on a computer with 2.5 MB of RAM and 45 MB of hard drive memory – as it turned out, the first at the Faculty of Philology of the Jagiellonian University. Needless to say, the simplest smartphones available today have memory that exceeds the capabilities of this revolutionary device many times over.

These devices have greatly enhanced our comfort of life, but they have also introduced new threats, such as digital exclusion. On a micro scale, this concerned the aforementioned group of university employees who were unable to learn how to use e-learning tools. In a broader sense, an elderly person burdened with certain limitations may be helpless in the face of the demands of a world in which using a smartphone with dozens of applications (including basic ones such as e-patient, m-citizen) is already the norm, and may soon turn out to be a necessity; for many, a cause of great discomfort or even torment. Franco Ferrarotti, who died in November last year at the age of 98, wrote in his last book:

“Un dubbio continua ad aleggiare sul mondo creato dai media e sulle loro cangianti realtà virtuali: forse l’uomo non è stato concepito per vivere alla velocità della luce. L’uomo resiste, ancora oggi mosso dagli appetiti e dalle passioni di cui si occupavano i classici”<sup>7</sup>.

In the university context, AI’s remarkable capabilities create additional concerns. There is a growing fear about the unchecked use of AI and the possibility of students producing seminar papers or bachelor’s dissertations in many fields of knowledge, especially when it comes to the humanities. Should we just fight this phenomenon, or should we civilize it by teaching students how to use AI tools responsibly, in similar way as we once taught them how to use Microsoft Word? If left unaddressed,

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<sup>7</sup> F. Ferrarotti, *Il pensiero involontario nella società irretita*, Roma, 2019, p. 82.

mass AI-generated assignments could undermine the very essence of humanities education, which lies not merely in acquiring skills but in fostering a culture of thought and intellectual engagement<sup>8</sup>.

Zygmunt Bauman, in his book *Razem osobno* (Together Alone), warned that increased reliance on virtual connections has a negative impact on this culture of thought and in fact, diminishes real-life social skills:

“The more attention and effort people put into virtual closeness, the less time they devote to acquiring and developing the skills that the other, non-virtual form of closeness requires. These skills gradually fall into disuse – they are forgotten, their learning is postponed, they are shunned, and if they are used at all, it is only reluctantly and reluctantly; the necessity of using them may turn out to be an extremely difficult, who knows, maybe even too difficult, challenge”<sup>9</sup>.

These are by no means merely theoretical speculations; let us illustrate this with a real-life event from several years ago. A lecturer at one of Kraków’s universities needs to perform a simple but necessary task related to her email account. What is her natural reflex? She runs up the stairs to the next floor, where the system administrator works. The administrator listens with a blank expression, writes something down, and then, with an expression of suffering, says: “But why didn’t you just email me about this?” This person found a short conversation with an otherwise pleasant psychologist to be a burden. One could say that the mind of this “nerd,” conditioned for virtual contact, is on the verge of some mutation...

Another seemingly harmless example: In 2017, the World Championship in computer games took place in Katowice. People enjoy playing games and competing; that is understandable. But another related fact

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<sup>8</sup> See: J. Brzozowski, *Dlaczego warto studiować filologię obce na poziomie magisterskim?* (Why is it worth studying foreign philology at the master’s level?), [in:] J. Brzozowski, A. Hennel-Brzozowska, M. Lenart (eds.), *Sens humanistyki dzisiaj*, Kraków, 2015, p. 49-68. What can we say, however, when artificial intelligence creates quite successful works of art or music, and, as the outstanding writer Jacek Dukaj claims, it will soon perhaps replace writers who will only register their “brand”, and AI will do the rest of the work for them: will it still be creative? (J. Dukaj, *Jakie książki napisze nam sztuczna inteligencja?*, „Wyborcza.pl”, 29.08.2023, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75517,30113788,jakie-ksiazki-napisze-nam-ai-jacek-dukaj-juz-wie.html>, Access: March 25 2025).

<sup>9</sup> Z. Bauman, *Razem osobno*, Kraków, 2003, p. 165. This and the following citations not indicating expressly an English source have been translated by the Author.



is harder to grasp: not only do people play computer games, but they also watch them:

“The Intel Extreme Masters finals will be held from February 25-26 and March 3-5. Last year, 113,000 spectators watched the competition on-site. People waited in queues for hours to enter the Spodek arena, and millions more watched the event online worldwide”<sup>10</sup>.

These rather anecdotal facts could make us smile, but the essence of the matter is that an invisible wall is gradually forming between us: we generally look the same, but we may soon become (or have already become?) incomprehensible to one another. Perhaps even unsympathetic or hostile.

Here is a last real-life example: an aging professor at one of Poland’s top universities runs toward the elevator with an armful of books, trying not to be late for a lecture. But he does not notice a step, trips just a meter from the elevator, and his books scatter. The elevator doors close, and a young woman, likely a student, glances up from her smartphone at the struggling professor before pressing the button—the elevator departs.

One might say that coldness or indifference is not a serious issue, and that these are just isolated observations tinged with subjectivity. After all, they concern relatively harmless matters typical of the age-old generational conflict. Not quite: the conflict is no longer (only) intergenerational or innocent.

In the last few decades, much has been said about internet addiction—a condition where online platforms, games, and social media consume us to the point where we no longer control our own time and even behaviors<sup>11</sup>. This can come at the cost of work quality, family relationships, and personal development. Are we becoming strangers to one another? At the very least, we are becoming less empathetic. The sight of people staring at their smartphones, oblivious to those physically present beside them—on sidewalks, in trams, buses, elevators, or university corridors—is

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<sup>10</sup> Ł. Szwej, *IME: Mistrzostwa Świata w Grach Komputerowych*, “radio.katowice.pl”, link: <https://radio.katowice.pl/zobacz,26280,IME-Mistrzostwa-Swiata-w-Grach-Komputerowych-.html>, Access: January 02 2025.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. K. Young, *Internet Addiction: Diagnosis and Treatment Considerations*, “Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy” 2009, vol. 39, pp. 241–246; J. Pyżalski, *Agresja elektroniczna i cyber bullying jako nowe ryzykowne zachowania młodzieży*, Kraków 2012; D.J. Kuss, M.D. Griffiths, L. Karila, J. Billieux, *Internet Addiction: A Systematic Review of Epidemiological Research for the Last Decade*, “Current Pharmaceutical Design” 2014, vol. 20(25), pp. 4042–4047.



commonplace. Equally common is the sight of people wearing headphones in public spaces—essentially another way to isolate oneself from the surrounding world in a big city.

This has a disastrous impact on human relationships and basic etiquette, but is that all? One of the three chapters in Zygmunt Bauman's final book, *Płynne pokolenie* (Liquid Generation, 2017), is titled "Transformations of Aggressiveness: Bullying." In a conversation with Thomas Leoncini, Bauman states:

"The development you refer to is the return of violence, coercion, and oppression in conflict resolution at the expense of dialogue and debate aimed at mutual understanding and renegotiating our *modus convivendi*. I believe that a key role in this development has been, is, and will be played by new communication technology—not as a cause, but as the primary facilitator"<sup>12</sup>.

Recently, there have been many dramatic reports of school violence, which has always existed but is now reaching alarming proportions<sup>13</sup>. A new form of violence has also emerged: cyberbullying, so serious that the Polish state research institute NASK, in cooperation with the Ministry of Digital Affairs, published Anna Borkowska's *Cyberbullying: Activate the Block on Harassment* (2020; revised edition 2023 available online). The same author also published a similar guide for teachers under NASK, which exists in another version as a collective work. Cyberbullying is therefore real, noticeable, and painful—on a global scale.

A widely discussed article by Jonathan Haidt in *Nature* (2020), titled *Digital Technology Under Scrutiny: A Guilty Verdict*, suggests that after a series of psychological studies on a significant group of young people, children under 14 should be denied uncontrolled internet access and banned from using smartphones in schools<sup>14</sup>. Such restrictions are unthinkable for university students, where the benefits of digital tools undoubtedly outweigh the drawbacks, as noted by Haidt's opponent, Nick

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<sup>12</sup> Z. Bauman, *Płynne pokolenie*, Warszawa 2017, pp. 49–50.

<sup>13</sup> Z. Bauman, *Płynne pokolenie...*, p. 52.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, such measure has been adopted recently in Belgium, Spain and Australia. Cf. Cezary Boryszewski, *Bezdzielni mężczyźni. Gdzie ci ojcowie?*, „tygodnik.interia”, link: <https://tygodnik.interia.pl/news-bezdzielni-mezczyzni-gdzie-ci-ojcowie,nId,7885164>, Access: January 04, 2025.

Allen<sup>15</sup>. But we are talking about children—who will, after all, become our future students.

### III. Ethical Perspective: To What Extent Have We Become “Different” Due to Technological Advancements?

The university, contrary to our nostalgic expectations and (perhaps) memories, is no longer a “better” world—it is the same world that surrounds us. A world whose emblematic institution is the shopping center, with its practical utility and lack of deeper human relationships<sup>16</sup>.

To what extent have we become different from who we were fifty years ago? Have we reached a definitive break in the “long duration” process in which we were immersed since the beginning of the New Era? Put simply, how dramatic and irreversible are the changes in contemporary human mentality from a Christian worldview perspective? What must be preserved from tradition, and what is negotiable?

Increasingly, topics once considered immutable are being debated, such as the celibacy of priests, an issue open since the Second Vatican Council<sup>17</sup>. But pressure is also mounting to “normalize” behaviors or attitudes long regarded as deviant and sinful, such as homosexuality; on other hand, we can see the rising symptoms of a “culture of death.” These range from milder forms like “singlism” and voluntary childlessness (as marriage itself is in crisis in the West) to substituting children with pets, inevitably leading to the self-destruction of such social groups. One might ask whether these attitudes will naturally disappear within a generation, given that they are far less prevalent among traditionally

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<sup>15</sup> See: J. Haidt, *Digital technology under scrutiny: A guilty verdict*, “Nature” 2020, vol. 578, p. 226; N. Allen, *Digital technology under scrutiny: use digital technology to our advantage*, „Nature” 2020, vol. 578, p. 227.

<sup>16</sup> Magdalena Doktorska discusses this topic in an interesting way in her unpublished Phd dissertation *A crise da Pomysła de progresso na literatura portuguesa contemporânea. Entre a filosofia e a literatura*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Uniwersytet Warszawski, Wydział Neofilologii. Writing about the Nobel Prize winner José Saramago’s novel *A Caverna*, on pages 146–148 the author analyses the shopping center, in Saramago’s work an overwhelming space of “organised chaos”, as another of the places imposing social discipline, such as a prison, hospital, barracks, school, factory, described by Michel Foucault in his famous work *Surveiller et punir*, Paris, 1975, pp. 143–151.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. J. Brzozowski, *Crisi del dialogo. Speranze e realtà del dialogo della Chiesa con il Mondo alla luce del Concilio Vaticano* [in:] A. Henel-Brzozowska (a cura di), *Crisi dalla prospettiva fides et ratio*, Kraków, 2023, pp. 177–181.

religious individuals—for instance, only 3% of practicing Catholic women in France and the UK remain childless<sup>18</sup>.

However, the culmination of this trend is the increasingly frequent demand to recognize abortion as a “normal” form of birth control, despite enormous advances in medicine and technology in this field—advances that the Catholic Church has underestimated, perhaps committing a serious sin of omission in the past 20 years. Even more shocking is the growing support in Western countries for euthanasia, or so-called “assisted suicide,” which, according to the latest surveys, is supported by 75% of the population in the United Kingdom<sup>19</sup>.

Since we are directly approaching the issues of spirituality, an inevitable question arises: Are modern communication technologies more of a breakthrough or a threat? This question is by no means new; Pope Saint John Paul II formulated it at the beginning of his pontificate:

“The fact of being technically able to produce a certain result is held by many to be sufficient motive for not having to ask further questions about the legitimacy of the process leading to the result [...] The consequences of such a minimal view of science have not been slow in appearing: scientific progress is not always accompanied by a similar improvement in man’s living conditions. Unwished-for and unforeseen effects have been brought about, causing serious concern in ever wider sectors of the population. It is enough to think of the problem of the environment as a result of the progress of industrialization. Serious doubts have thus arisen about the capability of progress as a whole to serve man”<sup>20</sup>.

The Pope completed these words a year later at Hiroshima University:

“[...] science and technology are a wonderful product of a God-given human creativity, since they have provided us with wonderful possibilities, and we all gratefully benefit from them. But we know that this potential

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<sup>18</sup> *Santé. « Changement sociétal » : Royaume-uni adopte un projet de loi sur le suicide assisté*, “courrierinternational.com”, link: [https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/sante-changement-societal-le-royaume-uni-adopte-un-projet-de-loi-sur-le-suicide-assiste\\_225145](https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/sante-changement-societal-le-royaume-uni-adopte-un-projet-de-loi-sur-le-suicide-assiste_225145), Access: February 05 2024.

<sup>19</sup> “*Changement sociétal: Royaume Uni adopte un projet...*”

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, *Address to a Group of Nobel Prize Winners*, 22.XII.1980, link: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1980/december/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19801222\\_premi-nobel.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1980/december/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19801222_premi-nobel.html), Access: February 07 2025.

is not a neutral one : it can be used either for man's progress or for his degradation"<sup>21</sup>.

The reflections presented so far allow us to state that the threats are serious and undeniable, especially when we consider the ongoing wars—particularly in Ukraine—where both sides of the conflict are successfully testing the latest devices designed to kill people<sup>22</sup>. Leaving aside these most obvious facts, one must also mention the new materialism known as transhumanism, which is sometimes aptly referred to as neo-Marxism—with the caveat that Marxist dialectical materialism demanded from its followers a confession of faith and obedience to doctrine, whereas transhumanism is the product of practical materialism, requiring no special commitment from its adherents to proclaim the correctness of its doctrine.

Transhumanism—the most fashionable form of so-called natural anthropology today—simply denies the transcendence of the physico-chemical nature of the human being, the existence of any tool for perceiving signals other than physiological ones, and the attribution of special (metaphysical) value to humans compared to other components of nature<sup>23</sup>. This view is based on the observation—what else?—of the remarkable advances in science and technology, which, in practice, give modern humans a sense of self-sufficiency. One of the leading figures of this movement, Ray Kurzweil, argues as follows:

Dembski writes: 'We need to transcend ourselves to find ourselves. Now the motions and modifications of matter offer no opportunity for transcending ourselves... Freud... Marx... Nietzsche... each regarded the hope for transcendence as a delusion.' This view of transcendence as an ultimate goal is reasonably stated. But I disagree that the material world offers no 'opportunity for transcending.' The material world inherently evolves, and each stage transcends the stage before it. As I discussed in chapter 7, evolution moves toward greater complexity, greater elegance, greater

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<sup>21</sup> John Paul II, *Address to Scientists and representatives of the United Nations University*, Hiroshima, 25.II.1981, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1981/february/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19810225\\_gi-appone-hiroshima-scienza-ati-univ.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1981/february/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19810225_gi-appone-hiroshima-scienza-ati-univ.html), Access: February 07, 2025.

<sup>22</sup> Wiesław Łużyński's reflections on the encyclical of Benedict XVI *Deus Caritas est*, lead to similar conclusions, see: *Pierwszeństwo etyki przed techniką w świetle encykliki Benedykta XVI "Caritas in veritate"*, "Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana" 2013, nr 2, p. 89.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. T. Grabińska, *Człowiek i wartości w transhumanizmie*, Kraków, 2024, p. 12.

knowledge, greater intelligence, greater beauty, greater creativity, greater love. And God has been called all these things, only without any limitation: infinite knowledge, infinite intelligence, infinite beauty, infinite creativity, and infinite love. Evolution does not achieve an infinite level, but as it explodes exponentially, it certainly moves in that direction. So evolution moves inexorably toward our conception of God, albeit never reaching this ideal<sup>24</sup>.

The facts are that if the science available to us changes the world toward a greater degree of complexity and greater knowledge (but not necessarily greater understanding<sup>25</sup>), and perhaps greater creativity, one could certainly debate whether it also leads to greater elegance or greater beauty. However, in light of the previous considerations, Kurzweil's claim of "greater love" is already something of a bad joke.

Once again, one might say that Saint John Paul II (and before him, the Second Vatican Council) foresaw this evolution, which distorts the aspiration to approach love as designed by God:

In this way, in Christ and through Christ, God also becomes especially visible in His mercy; that is to say, there is emphasized that attribute of the divinity which the Old Testament, using various concepts and terms, already defined as "mercy." [...] The present-day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and the concept of "mercy" seem to cause uneasiness in man, who, thanks to the enormous development of science and technology, never before known in history, has become the master of the earth and has subdued and dominated it<sup>26</sup>.

The very fact that Pope John Paul II understood and foresaw this course of events gives hope that, despite everything, we have not entirely lost mental control over this process. However, since the charismatic presence of the saintly Pope, with his unique gift of attracting great minds

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<sup>24</sup> R. Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near. When Humans Transcend Biology*, New York, 2005, p. 337.

<sup>25</sup> Ferrarotti gives a downright brutal title to Chapter 7 of his latest book: „Un popolo di informatissimi idioti: sanno tutto, ma non capiscono niente”, *Il Pensiero involontario nella società irretita*, 2019, p. 45

<sup>26</sup> John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*, chapter 2, link: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30111980\\_dives-in-misericordia.html#%24D](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html#%24D), Access: February 07 2024.

and ordinary people alike, is no longer with us, the world—including Poland—is squandering the message he left us. Unlike his spoken word, which was alive and engaging, his encyclicals and other theological writings are difficult to grasp; they require specific preparation—the ability to read philosophical texts. The facts are troubling, even alarming: texts that every Christian philosopher or theologian should have at hand—such as the encyclicals *Fides et Ratio* and *Veritatis Splendor*—have been cited in Polish, according to Google Scholar, only 8 and 10 times respectively over the last 20 years. In the case of *Veritatis Splendor*, only two of these citations were by theologians and one by a philosopher. Even if we assume that Google Scholar does not track all citations and that their number should be doubled or even tripled, the situation remains dramatic, considering the number of doctoral, habilitation, and professorial degrees awarded annually to Polish clergy.

The years since the death of the saintly Pope have simply slipped away from us, as evidenced by the unprecedented crisis in the Polish (and universal) Church, which at some point placed too much trust in the good intentions of the modern world<sup>27</sup>. The Polish Church hierarchy seems to have grown accustomed to the idea that John Paul II would think everything through for them, handle everything, and fix everything—an unfounded belief, as it turns out, for being a saint does not mean being omniscient and perfect; only God is. No one can relieve us of the responsibility to think, make decisions, and strive for self-improvement. So, what remains when so much has been lost? When no one truly believes anymore that there exists a “civilization of love,” or that such a thing is even possible?

But perhaps not everything is lost if we return to the proper scale. It is worth paying attention to the paper *Cywilizacja śmierci i kultura miłości w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II* (Civilization of Death and Culture of Love in the Teachings of John Paul II)<sup>28</sup>. Bassa deliberately breaks apart a common phrase, effectively showing in just a few pages how the terms “civilization” and “culture” are not identical. John Paul II was aware of this but succumbed... to the mainstream, which does not pay heed to terminological precision: “A civilization is somewhat [emphasis added by J.B.] the same as ‘culture.’ [...] One could therefore say ‘culture

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. J. Brzozowski, *Crisi del dialogo...*, pp. 175–177, 186.

<sup>28</sup> B. Bassa, *Cywilizacja śmierci i kultura miłości w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, „Studia nad Rodziną” 2011, vol. 15/1-2, pp. 15–29.

of love.’ However, ‘civilization’ has taken hold, and it is best to stick with it”<sup>29</sup>. The word “somewhat” reveals that the author understands that, in fact, they are “not quite” the same. Yet, a few years earlier, he had written that culture grows “within the subject who determines themselves. Its fundamental current is not so much human ‘production’ as it is primarily ‘self-creation,’ which in turn radiates outward onto the world of creations”<sup>30</sup>. Let us dot the “i”: the world of creations, which forms or can form a “civilization.” Bassa refers to Tatarkiewicz’s view that “at times, the opposition between culture and civilization becomes so pronounced that they are outright contrasted. For example, when civilization is dominated by technology, ‘spiritual culture’ becomes threatened by civilization”<sup>31</sup>. In summary, the real impact of a single person, even someone like John Paul II, on shaping the highly complex, chaotic, and unmanageable macro-scale creation that we retrospectively call civilization, is highly questionable—always only partial. The Christian civilization, as a historical fact, was in many respects far from the model left to us by Jesus Christ Himself: only sporadically and partially did it take on the characteristics of a “civilization of love.” These characteristics were generally instilled in it by exceptional individuals—later called saints—who sometimes acted in opposition to the social structures of their time but were able to inspire large crowds through their example and thus partially transform an otherwise resistant world. The question remains open: what kind of impulse is needed today to reverse the troubling trends in the sphere of social life?

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<sup>29</sup> Jan Paweł II, *List do Rodzin Gratissimam Sane Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II z okazji Roku Rodziny 1994*, [https://kodr.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/list\\_do\\_rodzin.pdf](https://kodr.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/list_do_rodzin.pdf), point 13, apud B. Bassa, *Cywilizacja śmierci...*, p. 21.

<sup>30</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Problem konstituowania się kultury poprzez ludzką „praxis”*, „Roczniki Filozoficzne” 1979, vol. XXVII, z. 1, p. 10, apud B. Bassa, *Cywilizacja śmierci...*, p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> W. Tatarkiewicz, *O filozofii i sztuce*, Warszawa, 1986, p. 151; apud B. Bassa, *Cywilizacja śmierci...*, p. 17.



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