Technological and digital transition in Europe- a Challenge for Entrepreneurs and for the Church

Ulrich Hemel, Bratislava, 3rd Catholic European Social Days March 19th, 2022

Let me first of all present my person and my functions and then share a couple of theses with you.

My name is Ulrich Hemel. I am the president of BKU, the Federation of Catholic Entrepreneurs in Germany. We are one of the few associations to have a working group for digital politics which also commented the recent initiatives on Artificial Intelligence in the European Union. Beyond, I am a member of the executive board of UNIAPAC, the world association of Christian entrepreneurs.

From my background, I have studied Catholic Theology as well as Social and Economic Sciences, with a licenciate from the Pontifical University Gregoriana in Rome, a doctorate at the university of Regensburg and a post-doc degree in Religious Education (Habilitation) also in Regensburg.

I have worked as a consultant (The Boston Consulting Group), as a manger (CEO of PAUL HARTMANN AG) and as an entrepreneur with my own company. Transferring operational management to my son, I am now the Director of the Institute of Global Ethics (Weltethos-Institut) at the University of Tübingen in Germany.

As such, I specialized in digital ethics, e. g. with the book "Critique of Digital Reason- Why Humanity must be the Reference", available in German and in Spanish ("Crítica de la razón digital", USIL Lima). I am part of the Public Advisory Board for CyberValley, the biggest AI research hub in Europe with more than 200 doctoral students. We started to ask AI researchers to include in their applications "social and ethical considerations", and we have given ethics courses for doctoral students of informatics, machinery and technical sciences.

This means, I am bridging the practical work experience in digitization as well as the academic research on digital ethics. My last publication has been a leaflet titled "Is there a future for Christian Social Thought in a digital world?", published with the Catholic Central Institute of Social Sciences at Mönchengladbach, Germany (2022).

So, let us arrive to some ideas concerning the present digital transition in companies and in society.

1. The digital change is an **epochal change**, as profound as the transition from nomadic hunting to agriculture or as the industrial revolution, with a huge impact on our identity and our life

2. We need a **new anthropology** based on both, vulnerability and creativity, competition and co-operation, and on the priority of the human person who always is both, the egoistic benefit seeker ("homo oeconomicus") and the helpfully co-operating person in a social context ("homo cooperativus")

3. Humans must learn to cope with the digital world in work, private life and society. They therefore need a way to get along with their **specific digital and non-digital identity!** We therefore exist in three levels: with our physical identity (I), the digitally expanded identity (II) and our unconscious or subconscious personal cloud-identity (III)!

4. We need to go for **the priority of humans** over technology, for the priority of digital personality which means human control of machines even in the "internet of things". Moreover, we must pay high and increasing **attention to human rights in the digital field**!

5. We need to go for **digital subsidiarity** which means the right place for digital responsibility. This also includes the platform economy where we need a "social fund transaction fee" for the benefit of largely unprotected clickworkers and platform workers because these persons might become the starting point of a new "social issue" of "working poors".

6. We need to go for **digital solidarity** which means the creation of guiding norms and laws by the States and as a new expression of the "**common good**" in digital times. As an example, we support the initial regulation of AI risk classes of the European Union but most do more in order to have an ethical access to the use of AI.

7. Companies need to go for **digital fairness** as an expression of their contribution to society. This includes fair practices such as not selling data to third parties, such as a defined cancellation dates for data storage and such as **ethics by design in digital business models.**

8. Society needs to go for ample **digital participation** and a sort of **inclusive digital world**, especially in view of elderly people, in view of access to digital infrastructure also for low-income persons and remote regions, including the offering of non-digital services in case of a lack of digital affinity of end-users.

9. **Digital learning** also needs the answer to two simple questions: Who am I in the digital world and how should I behave in the digital world? This is a huge challenge for schools, universities and companies. In view of action against hate speech, fake news and cyber-mobbing, we need some rules of politeness and good social behavior also in the digital field.

10. The rapid expansion of the digital "symbolic universe" means that we have to learn how to cope with our **digital non-knowledge** including the resource of "digital ignorance competence". We have to learn how to manage our different levels of knowledge, from fields with our personal deep "expert knowledge" to the field of "orientation knowledge" or personal half-knowledge, and finally to the growing field of our specific "non-knowledge" or ignorance. This is important both to private life and to work teams in a business context.

11. The Catholic Church in all countries should become **a principal driver for a humanistic turn in digital transition**, aiming at digital fairness and a digitally inclusive global civil society, aiming

at a sustainable life-style and economy and safeguarding the respect of global ethical minimum standards both in the digital world and in general labor conditions

12. We therefore have to define **structures and levels of digital responsibility** both in the individual life and in society, including sufficient levels of expertise in the faith-based world, and specifically in the Catholic Church. As a principal guide-line in the digital world, we need the criterion of humanity with a simple question: **Does a digital device promote or inhibit humanity- and the development of a more human world?** (U. Hemel, Kritik der digitalin Vernunft, Freiburg/Br. 2020; Spanish: Crítica de la razón digital, Lima: USIL 2021).