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To Live a Life in Christ's Way: the Answer to a Truncated View of Transhumanism on Human Life

Živeti življenje na Kristusov način: odgovor na okrnjen pogled transhumanizma na človekovo življenje

Abstract: The rise of transhumanism reopens the perennial question about the essence of being human, this time exposed to the intentional transformation of human nature through the advancement of modern technology. This transformation includes options from how to overcome certain biological limitations to the creation and expansion of a new global mind and deepening of human consciousness. The authors believe that living a life in Christ's way is the true answer to a truncated view of transhumanism on human life. First, they briefly present two basic ways of understanding transhumanism and its tenuous view of man and his life. Then they show how transhumanistic ideas can be a challenge to Christianity. In the final chapter, they offer a holistic understanding of Jesus Christ as the true human being and the true God. They also posit that Jesus Christ and the life of Christians in His way can be found as the answer to an abbreviated view of transhumanism on human life.

Keywords: Transhumanism, Transformation, Jesus Christ, Christianity, Body, Incarnation, Christ's death and resurrection

Povzetek: Vzpon transhumanizma ponovno odpira večno vprašanje o bistvu človeka. Z njim je izpostavljeno namerni transformaciji zaradi napredka modernih tehnologij. Ta transformacija vključuje možnosti od tega, kako presehati določene bioloških danosti, pa vse do širitve novega globalnega uma in poglobljene človeškega zavesti. Avtorja menita, da je živeti življenje na Kristusov način pravi odgovor na okrnjen pogled transhumanizma na človekovo življenje. Najprej na kratko predstavita dve temeljni smeri razumevanja transhumanizma in njegov okrnjen pogled na človeka in njegovo življenje. Nato prikažeta, kako so lahko transhumanistične ideje izziv za krščanstvo. V zadnjem poglavju pa pokažeta, kako lahko prav v celostnem razumevanju Jezusa Kristusa kot pravega človeka in pravega Boga ter življenja kristjanov na njegov način najdemo odgovor na okrnjen pogled transhumanizma na človekovo življenje.

Ključne besede: transhumanizem, transformacija, Jezus Kristus, krščanstvo, telo, učlovečenje, Kristusovo življenje, smrt in vstajenje

1. Introduction

The first and perhaps the greatest challenge that transhumanism places in front of us is our understanding of the essence of being human that makes all humans equal despite differences in skin color, beauty, or intelligence. The second challenge is the question of what constitutes a good human being despite their mortality and other natural limits? (Fukuyama 2004, 43) Biologically humans are a complex result of a very long evolutionary process and a synthesis or union of good and bad characteristics. Thanks to our rational nature, humans are able and called to transform/improve their incomplete humanness. As spiritual beings we are able to transcend our own limited nature and be in touch with the limitless and the transcendent.

Modifying any one of the key human characteristics will inevitably entail modifying a complex, interlinked package of traits, which will go beyond our anticipation of the ultimate outcome. Through the exploration of nature the environmental movement teaches us humility and respect for the integrity of nonhuman nature. Similarly, we should remain humble and careful in the application of the latest technology to any modification of human nature. Rather than transforming biological aspects of human essence, we need a new all-encompassing spiritual understanding of human nature, which will allow us anew, with help of modern technology, to accept, integrate and transform fallen human nature on the universal level, leaving nobody behind.

We offer the thesis that living a life in Christ's way is the answer to a truncated view of transhumanism on human life. First, we will briefly present two fundamental ways of understanding transhumanism and its tenuous view of man and his life. We will then show how transhumanist ideas can be a challenge to Christianity, especially Christian and ecclesiastical teaching. In the final chapter, we will try to see how a holistic understanding of Jesus Christ as the true human being and the true God as well as the life of Christians in Christ's way can give a response to an abbreviated view of transhumanism on human life.

2. Different understandings of transhumanism and its view on human life

The word transhumanism was first used in 1920 by Julian Huxley in his essay *Religion Without Revelation*. "The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself – not just sporadically, an individual one way, an individual there in another way – but in its entirety, as humanity. We need a name for this new belief. Perhaps *transhumanism* will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature." (Huxley 1979, 195) Transhumanism as an organized movement of technologists, philosophers, and scientists began to emerge in the 1970s with the transhumanist philosopher and futurist FM-2030, born as Fereidom M. Esfandiary. This pervasive movement and an

important actant seek to hack the human biocomputer to extend life, increase welfare, and enhance the human condition in search of immortality.

This idea of bringing a golden age to humanity with the aid of technology can be traced back at least five hundred years to Francis Bacon (1561–1626), called also the father of contemporary science. In his main writing *Instauratio Magna*, his term *instauratio* can be translated as establishment and restoration of human faculties that were lost in the Fall. To bridge the rift between God and humanity is within the power of humanity. With discoveries of the boundaries of man's nature, and with religion, science and technology working together, humans should become able to transform their fallen nature, regain the central position in the entire cosmos and enjoy a more complete life in relation to God.

The meaning of transhumanism has gained new nuances and interpretations, especially in the past decades of accelerated advancement in technology. These interpretations can be divided into two groups. The first group includes interpretations whose common denominator is the belief that humans must embrace science and technology, such as artificial intelligence and genetic engineering, to overcome certain biological limitations. Within this group some scholars have claimed that transhumanism will bring us closer to salvation and immortality, i.e. the promises of Judeo-Christian religions. Consequently, cyberspace will become the disembodied space of salvation with unheard of possibilities of new fantasies and practices that will overstep the boundaries of organic nature. Through the merger of biology and machine, we will reach a seamless continuity when machines will start thinking for humans. The postbiological world with its silicon-based life and ability of mind transplant will create intelligent machines that will provide humanity with personal immortality (see Hans Moravec). Referring to More, transhumanists seek to advance over the legacy of humanist thought with a philosophy of life that rejects deities, faith, and worship. Their view of values and meaningfulness is based on the nature and potentials of humans within a rational and scientific framework, which will bring radical changes by planetary communications technologies and technologies of the body. (Pilsch 2017, 1)

The second group of transhumanists disagrees with the first group in the belief that human perfection of human beings through artificial means is not possible. Technology, especially new ways of transportation and easy access and exchange of information, will create a new global mind and a deepening of human consciousness. This, however, will not lead automatically toward alteration of the human person, but to creation and greater expansion of human community and toward more being. Greater socialization, unification, and advancement of technology will increase the freedom of individuals. The main representative of this group might be Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955).

Especially in academic circles, the second group of transhumanists, with its thought-provoking and more transient ideas does not trigger the same level of academic curiosity, skepticism and uncertainty as the first group does. Since development of technology is continuously opening new unheard of opportunities

and challenges, it is almost impossible, and even unnecessary, to take a definite position either in favor or against transhumanism. Nonetheless, transhumanists' promises need to be critically examined in terms of idealism and realism, in order to avoid unrealistic illusions. What interests us are not so much new solutions and opportunities promised by the latest technology, but motivations, hope, and hidden energy behind transhumanists' promises and plans.

Pilsch delineates transhumanism as utopian thought, as a retrogressive assertion of Cartesian humanism, a techno-secular reimagining of Christian fundamentalist salvation history, and a celebration of the most brutal forms of capitalist excess in the present. This utopia merges together the post-Marxist theories and neoliberal capitalist expansions using the human body and the human soul as the material for imagining a radical future as radically alien as communism's idea of a classless society. This utopian rhetoric of transhumanism however flawed must be taken seriously. (Pilsch 2017, 3–4)

Transhumanism might be in many respects connected to Christian theories of eschatology. Christians' awaiting of the second return of God is, in the minds of transhumanist, replaced with a host of posthuman-making technologies. This phenomenon as such is nothing new and can be dated back to the Middle Age or to every time when most material and mundane activities become invested with spiritual and transcendent meaning. Technological progress has been gradually replacing divine contemplation and associated with the return of lost human perfection. (Noble 1997, 6–12)

Based on the accelerated development of technology, advocates of transhumanism believed in the replacement of religion with another system of meaning, this time based on posthuman technologies promising us a new perfection of fallen human nature. In addition, these technologies (e.g., neuroscience, neuropharmacology, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence) will create not only a new system of meaning, but a much more intimate relationship with our bodies as well. New technology will become so internalized and *integrated with* the human body that it will expand human potential to the point of transforming the innermost part of human nature.

When talking about new technology, Maxwell J. Mehlman talks about enhancement that "raises a person up by improving performance, appearance or capability." Enhancement in this case is not meant as a therapy, aimed "at preventing, treating, or mitigating the effect of a disease or disorder", but to modification of human beings quite apart from any disease. (Mehlman 2009, 6–8) The therapy/enhancement distinction remains blurred and will not go away. One cannot draw a simple line that separates the positive and negative use of technology. Consequently, even the definition and evaluation of enhancement remains blurred and challenging. (Oleksowicz 2018, 235) An invasive transformation of a certain dimension of the human body opens the question about what we value most and what it takes to improve what we value most, states Ronald Cole-Turner. If we believe that the highest value of each individual is expressed in their search for the meaning of life, then the enhancement has to be left to individuals. This,

however, opens another question: are individuals really free to choose their view of life and their way of achieving and enhancing the good? (Cole-Turner 2011, 2) The same definition of *good* calls for a new ethical discussion, which by definition cannot be left to random decisions of individuals. (Marinčič and Čović 2012, 112)

3. Transhumanistic ideas summarize a truncated view of human body and life in the history of Christianity

In short, we can say that in transhumanism, as such, man, with all his limitations, especially at the physical, biological level, has no place: he must not exist. In no way can he accept human aging and dying. He “sees” these two as a disease that must be overcome in any way so that man can live his life in fullness. (Petkovšek 2018, 237) Nor can he accept the human body as it is. He sees it as a prison from which he needs to free himself. He also sees history, society, culture and religion as things that restrict him and not as opportunities for a blossoming of human life.

Such an understanding of man was already present in the view of many Gnostic groups that existed before Christianity and also at its inception. It has remained, particularly in some apocryphal gospels: eg. Judah's Gospel, Thomas' Gnostic Gospel¹, Pilate's work etc. Such reflections on human beings have been excluded by Christianity from the outset. Despite this the idea of Greek neoplatonism, which sees the human body as a major obstacle on the path to divine unity, has been interwoven with it. The view of dualism, which sees the body as the fruit of an evil principle, has also been inserted. Thus, among the first Christians, there were certain groups of believers who saw the body associated with evil and as a prison of the soul. Human salvation was understood as an escape from the body.

After the decline of Gnostic dualism, its remnants reappeared at the threshold of the second millennium with the Bogomils, and later with the Patarens and Katars. Against this background, the Catholic Church fought back with the Inquisition and Evangelization, which was entrusted to the religious mendicant orders. On one hand, they mortified the body, but on the other, they highly valued creation as the creation of God. This is particularly expressed by St. Francis' “The Canticle of Creation”. Thus, St. Francis asks his own body for forgiveness because he did not care enough for it. In the Renaissance, however, the body took on a new centrality; this prompted Christianity to focus on an ascetic, which characterized the body primarily from the perspective of temptation and sin. The slogan also appeared: »Save your soul!«, which is reminiscent of a neoplatonic thinking that sees the body as a prison of the soul. (Špelič 2019, 10–11)

The Second Vatican Council made it clear that the human body is very valuable and important for man's full life, function and the establishment of a personal

¹ Transhumanism cannot accept a human body as it is. This is, for example, explicitly expressed in the Saying 114 of the Gospel of Thomas, which calls for transformation (e.g. of a woman into a man), see Jensterle 2011, 77–88.

relationship with the Triune God. Man, by his bodily nature, takes on the physical elements of the physical world, so that they reach their peak in man, and raise the voice for the free glorification of the Creator. (*Gaudium et Spes* 14.1) The Second Vatican Council's teachings, which also refer to the 2nd century teaching of St. Irenaeus of Lyon, has supplanted centuries of captive Catholic theology and spirituality in the dualistic concept of man. This captive concept often led to a negative view of the human body and its involvement in everyday personal, community, social and political life. (Zyzak 2013, 222)

Despite the fact that it has been a long time since the Second Vatican Council and its clear doctrine on the body, we agree with Špelič (2019, 10), saying: "The Christian view on the body is still 'unchristianized', as many elements foreign to Christianity entered the view. These elements have deprived the body of the goodness bestowed through the Creator's hands." Our stand is that the phenomenon of transhumanism and its views on the body are challenging Christianity to further evangelize its vision of the body and allow seeing as Christ does.

The phenomenon of transhumanism, therefore, calls religious scholars and leaders to take a more active part in this discussion, which is apparently religious on its surface. The Catholic Church's official stance on issues related to modern technology was stated in 2004 in the "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church", published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. In general, the document supports scientific progress and technological advancement; at the same time, the ever-expanding power of technology must always be subordinated to moral principles that respect human dignity and the integrity of other living creatures. Molecular biology, biotechnology, and genetics must bear in mind the ecological impact and long-term effects of one's actions, which should be guided by the order, beauty, and usefulness of individual living beings and their function in the ecosystem. (473) These general guidelines are based on a belief that human beings have a privileged position throughout the universe. Nature should nevertheless be seen as a gift, compelling humans not to dominate but to develop the natural world responsibly and in the light of its inherent harmony.

Transhumanists' promises require a more detailed theological debate, keeping in mind that modern technologies of enhancement, and the idea of human transformation, yearn for transcendence just as theology does. The question of death, human finitude and mortality are calling for a new salvific response and hope through human effort and history. (Huzarek 2017, 217) Following this aspiration, B. Waters claims that transhumanism is a late modern religious response to the finite and mortal constraints of human existence. Transhumanism is not a religion in the formal sense, but a new place of hope and confidence. (Waters 2011, 164)

Christian theology grounds this transformation in a distinctive view of God, who became a human in order to transform the human condition. This transformation takes place through redemption and glorification. At this point one might claim that bioethics' distinction between therapy and enhancement, in many ways, overlaps with the theological principles of redemption and glorification. Both re-

demption and therapy try to restore what was the original or normal human state, and glorification and enhancement take us far beyond our present imperfect condition toward something completely new. Underlying this apparent similarity between redemption/therapy, and glorification/enhancement, lies the crucial dissimilarity as well. Human transformation as it is understood in Christianity would not be possible without God entering into the human condition. God becomes like us so that we might be made like God. So human transformation in terms of redemption and sanctification does not happen without grace and divine intervention, which does not find a place in a general definition of transhumanism.²

4. The significance of Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection for a holistic understanding of the human body and life

The Old Testament description of Human Creation clearly shows that man, as such, is created according to God's image and likeness, and that both man and woman are fully God's image. (Gen 1:26-27) Thus, his biological and physical limitations do not prevent man from being an image of God. (Szamocki 2012, 56–64) And man, with all his qualities and limitations, together with all creation, was proclaimed to be very good (Gen 1:31). This must always be kept in mind when we look at a person in the light of the Holy Scriptures. (Roszak 2013, 519–525) Everything that is created is in itself good, because everything is desired, wanted and originated by God. (Gen 1:1-24; Wisd 11:24-25) But the quality of everything rises to the level of »very good« (Gen 1:28-31), when it enters into a relationship with man. This is also true of man in relationship with creation as well as with a woman and a woman with a man. (Globokar 2018, 356–360)

This view of man was embraced by the Jewish people during their great crisis, when they lost their land and temple and were exiled to Babylonia; however, it has been often lost. In various ways, the prophets have repeatedly revealed God's view on man and his basic mission to become more and more an image of God. In the midst of this world, man is called to represent God and to make Him present as well as to make visible God's relationship with people and the whole creation. For man is called to be God's interlocutor and collaborator on earth.

The goodness of all, including of man in his limitations, was finally confirmed in the fullness of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the second Person of God, the Son of God. (Jn 1:1-17) Because of the incarnation, the Word of God is not expressed and revealed only through human reason and spirit, but also through the human body (bones, blood, muscles, hair, etc.)³ (McIntosh 2005, 182–185) God's

² For the consequences of man's failure to accept God's intervention, see also Žalec 2015, 222–223; 2017, 257–258; 2016a, 285–286; 2016b, 468; 2019, 415.

³ Faith in the Bible appears when one actually sees the »physical« divine activity in the history of salvation, and not vice versa (Palmisano 2013, 513). Both ancient and biblical thoughts attach to the logos

Word has become a true and real man – not a virtual one - with all his limitations as well as with his biological and physical weaknesses. His body was subjected to disease, aging, pain and death. With the incarnation of God's Word, even all creation in it again revives its original language: the language of God, his Creator, his goodness, beauty and truth. (183–185; Petkovšek 2019, 19–21)

If we mistakenly understand the ancient hymn to Jesus Christ, which speaks of His incarnation as His humiliation and kenosis, His fundamental message may be obscured: “Who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (Phil 2,6) His kenosis does not in any way mean that human life is something unworthy of God or that it is not something good. Rather, that *life* God lives in Himself in his infinite, absolute and differently different way than we can imagine. Therefore, the incarnation is the expression of God's immense love and mercy for man, his creation. God does not want to be close to man only in the sense that man is his image and his creation, but also wants to share with him his way of life, with all his limitations and vulnerabilities. That is why God's love for man is infinite. In incarnation, God accepts man's limitations and wants to make it quite tangible and clear to show this life is infinitely valuable to Him, and that he wants every human being to fully live his human life in the way that Jesus Christ lived as both a true man and true God. In Him, God revealed that it is possible for man to freely and responsibly accept the Christ's way of life, which is the life of self-giving love and righteousness as well as being in relationship with God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit (Celarc 2019, 445–448). Thus, it is not necessary for man to refuse his physical limitations or to overcome them in any way, but just to accept them in freedom and to live them in a way that Jesus Christ lived in the power of the Holy Spirit given to Him through the Father.

Of course, this is not so easy; man always tries to reject his human boundaries and sees them as obstacles which he must overcome if he wants to be happy and eternal. This is what the Biblical passages about the temptations of Adam and Eve in Paradise (Gen 3,1-7)⁴ and those of Jesus in the desert (Mt 4,1-11; Mt 1,12-13; Lk 4,1-13) are telling us. Most often, the explanations of Jesus' temptations conclude with the message that Jesus was tempted by our most fundamental human temptations: wealth, fame and power. It turns out, however, that Jesus' fundamental temptation was not to accept that He was always and everywhere a true man living in harmony with human limitations. Satan did everything to turn Him away from living a true human life and make Him take advantage from being also a true God, so that He wouldn't need to be subject to human boundaries (neither in the desert nor on the cross).

(embodied God) two basic characteristics: the word (narrative, thought) and reality (phenomenon) at the same time (Matjaž 2007, 393).

⁴ For a precise semantic analysis of the dynamics of the temptation in the Garden of Eden, see Skralovnik 2017, 273–284; 2016, 89–99.

Jesus Christ, full of the Holy Spirit who led Him into the wilderness, to whom he completely surrendered Himself and allowed to Holy Spirit to guide Him, enabled Him to fully comprehend and accept, in all the pores of his human being, his true identity as God's Son, Father's beloved one. Because he was so convinced about his identity and because He trusted that God the Father loves Him unconditionally, He could endure temptations. He did not question what he was going through, even though he felt the weight of human limitations and suffering because of all the evil and sin of mankind he accepted. Being one with the Father in the Holy Spirit, he persevered until death on the cross in the self-giving love toward the Father and in Him (the Father) to all mankind. With His resurrection from the dead, He revealed the victories of love over hatred, of forgiveness over vengeance and of life over death. Through faith and rebirth in Him through the sacrament of baptism, each person can participate in this victory (Rom 6). Of course, this victory does not mean that man no longer remains man. Even the Resurrected Christ's body and life are still human, though completely transformed and exalted. This reality is revealed to us by several events when the resurrected Christ showed Himself to those whom he chose.

Crucified and risen, Jesus Christ appeared in the image of a wounded man (Lk 24,39; Jn 20,20); a worker who wants to help (Jn 20:15); a passing man who greets others kindly (Mt 28: 9); a traveler who approaches people (Lk 24:15); a stranger who listens and pays attention to a man in his distress (24:17-24); an unknown person who interprets the Bible (24:25-27); a stranger who asks for food (Jn 21: 5); a person who brings peace (Jn 20:19; Lk 24:36); an unknown who counsels with good intention (Jn 21:6); a man who offers food (21:12); a person who takes bread, blesses it, breaks it and gives it to others (Lk 24:30) and a man who invites us to sit by a fire, rest and refresh. (Jn 21:9) Jesus has revealed Himself in all that is genuinely human: in greetings, encounters, gatherings, listening, teaching, reading and interpreting the Bible, in preparing food, eating, drinking, working, walking, rushing, grieving, in joy, doubts, search, flight, failure and acceptance of guests and strangers.

When we read the passages about the Resurrection, we can ask ourselves: Why didn't those to whom the resurrected Christ appeared immediately recognize Him as their Lord and Teacher? He came in the image of a stranger, an unknown person. He was recognized only by those who recognized his voice (Mt 28: 9; Jn 20:16); who truly loved him (Jn 21:7); the one who sincerely searched for Him, even though doubts (Jn 20:11-18; 24-29); the ones who were gathered with their brothers and sisters who believed in Him. (Jn 20:26) Anyone looking for Him in the outward appearance the resurrected Christ had before could not find him. With this He revealed to them and to all future generations that He is present in every human being and that He reveals Himself through every human being. Therefore, he tells the apostles to go to Galilee, where they will meet him. (Mr 16:7) For this reason, as he said earlier about the last judgment: whatever you do to one of the least, you will do it to me. (Mt 25:31-46)

From all these passages about the resurrected Christ, we can see that Christ's resurrection is revealed through all and in everything that is human. Christ wants

to become and remain one with people; he wants to share His joy, His victory over evil and death, His relationship with the Father, the purpose of life in glorifying and serving the Father in every human being and caring for all creation. The resurrected Christ proves that all that is human is both good and a means of meeting with and through Him and, through Him, with the Father.

The Biblical passages about the resurrection of Christ also show that Christ is revealing Himself to man, regardless of the situation in which man finds himself. No human condition, even the most negative, can prevent Him from being able to reveal Himself to man and meet him. It is also remarkable that the resurrected Jesus Christ allows the wounds to remain on his exalted body. (Jn 20:24-29) Thus, He demonstrates in a clear way that man doesn't have to avoid, at all costs, every potential wound or injury to which life subjects him. Even with all its wounds, the human body will be exalted.

The passage on Jesus' ascension also speaks about the preciousness of the human body. (Mk 16:19, Lk 24:50; Acts 1:6-11) It reveals that Christ's human body was transformed through the resurrection and was irrevocably accepted into union with the Father and the Holy Spirit; that is, into the very life of the Triune God. All obstacles that separated man from God after original sin were overcome. Human nature, as represented by its body, now has a real place in the Holy Trinity. (Jn 14: 3) Through the resurrected and glorified Jesus Christ man is now included in the life of Triune God. No one – no human – is excluded from self-giving love in God.

Jesus' incarnation, death, and resurrection reveal that life in its fullness is not life without the body or external to the body, its limitations and vulnerabilities. The union with God begins with the human transformation in the sacrament of baptism, when a man, through his faith in Jesus Christ, dies to his old self and starts a new life in Christ. This allows him to become a son of God and a part of the glorious life in the Triune God. Yet, there still remains a man with all the same limitations that Jesus Christ also accepted and lived. Of course, man is always tempted, as was Jesus Christ. But with Jesus, he can always overcome temptation and accept the plan of redemption and exaltation already realized in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, leading man to the fullness of life and eternal happiness.

For this reason, one does not need to fear one's own weaknesses and limitations or strive to eliminate them. When the Apostle Paul was working hard in this direction, that he might be delivered from that "thorn" and even begged the Lord three times that He might take it away from him (2 Cor 12:8), the Lord revealed to him that this effort was unnecessary: »My grace is enough for you; for my power is made complete in what is weak.« (12:9) Paul therefore begins to rejoice in his weaknesses in order to receive the power of Christ. He came to realize that he can rejoice not only in his weaknesses but also in reproaches, needs, persecutions and distress for Christ: »For when I am weak, then I am strong.« (12:10)

Some people see in the promise of the second coming of Christ and the ultimate fulfillment of God's Kingdom, an incentive for the ideas of transhumanism and the

necessity to transcend human limitations, especially the imperfection of human body, with technology. In this truncated understanding of the Kingdom of God, Christians can see the encouragement to rethink their understanding of the Kingdom of God, which Jesus Christ came to proclaim and which has begun to be realized in the midst of this world: »The time has come and the kingdom of God is near. Let your hearts be turned from sin and have faith in the good news!« (Mr 1:15)

Today the message about the Kingdom of God has been lost. It is forgotten that Jesus Christ came not to announce Himself but the Father and his Kingdom. He who sees Him, sees the Father and how the kingdom of God is being realized. This kingdom is not something that will only be in eternity, after the death of man and the coming of Christ. Of course, at that time, it will be fully realized; however, it has already begun to be realized with Christ, by means of His living and doing. The laws of this Kingdom are presented in a special way in the teaching on the mountain. (Mt 5–7) God's Kingdom is a life of communion, a life that brings people together, connects and unites them. When a person tries to live so, he does something that gets him deeper and deeper into this new life tissue. Into the Kingdom, everybody brings what has been gradually transformed from individuality to the person, into the limb of the Church, into the limb of the communion-body, into the limb of the Kingdom (Rupnik 2018, 14–27). For this Kingdom there are no human biological and physiological limitations, such as aging and death; all this represents the »blessing« of the Kingdom of God. Those who believe in Jesus Christ and with the baptism to put Him on, can, with Him, in the midst of this world, build the Kingdom of God despite their limitations and experience the reality of the blessings. (Pagola 2017, 445–451)

5. Conclusion

The phenomenon of transhumanism, its truncated view of human life and its physical limitations constitute a challenge for Christianity, its theologians and thinkers as well as for the teaching of the Catholic Church. Last but not least, it presents a challenge to all Christians to truly turn toward and contemplate Jesus Christ. They are called to show, even more clearly, with their lives in Christ, how the human body and, indeed, the entirety of human life are where man is fully realized as the image of God.

With a deeper understanding of Christ's incarnation, suffering, death and resurrection, that is, His entire life, Christianity could more deeply see man in his totality, accept it and enable him to discover his preciousness even in his limitations. It is precisely in man's limitations on the biological level that that God reveals His grace and power that enable man to attain the fullness of life and eternal life in the gift of the self-giving love of the Holy Trinity. We come to human fulfillment with synergy, with divine-human collaboration in which man's wounded nature, his fragility and the destiny to death open themselves to God, who descends and works in His Spirit by instilling him to the body of Christ. Fulfillment

therefore means that God's action is accepted by human reality. (Rupnik 2018, 80–82; 113–123)

It is human vulnerability that liberates man from the traps and deceptions of various forms of gnosticism and pelagianism, both of which match the transhumanistic view of man. Because of his vulnerability, man can become ever more compassionate and empathetic with other people and with all creation and thus in solidarity with all humanity and creation. It is only in this way that he can respond more fully to the ethical needs of today's world by virtues, especially solidarity. (Fleming 2019)

Transhumanism wants to free man of his historical, social, cultural and religious boundaries. In this, it sees an obstacle and not an opportunity for a flourishing of human life. Christianity, however, emphasizes that man cannot be fully human without being integrated into all of his dimensions. All this allows him to go out of himself and become free for what he is in his essence: the image of God, the son/daughter of God, the brother/sister of every human being. In union with Christ, in Him and through him, in fact, he is increasingly the interlocutor and collaborator of God the Father in the Holy Spirit. In the midst of this world, he takes part in building the Kingdom of God, which has come to the world through Jesus Christ. The Kingdom can be present through anyone who believes in Him and accepts through baptism being in a father-son relationship in the midst of this world. All human life is equally important and as sacred as prayer, reading of the Bible and celebrating sacraments. The more one is trying to be more human and benevolent, the more he is holy and divine.

For this reason, Pope Francis encourages all Catholics to be aware that they cannot fully live their spirituality if they do not accept the irreplaceable role of the body. Contemplating Jesus Christ in His incarnation and real humanity illuminates and guides every Christian individual and community to become similar to Him (Francis 2013, 89; 2018, 25; 28) and to grow into a deeper relationship with others – both in difficult and joyous moments of life. This enables him/her to share the fruits of His suffering, death and resurrection. (2016, 317) Catholic spirituality embraces the entire human being in all its dimensions. »It is not separated from the body, nor from the nature or reality of this world, but lives with it and in it, in communion with all« (2015, 216) that surround him. Such spirituality makes man more human and at the same time »worships God« (2013, 69), as he is portrayed by Jesus Christ, the true human being and the true God.

In this way, living Christianity and its vision of man will become a real challenge for transhumanism to rethink its view on human life. Thus transhumanism will be able to start looking for »transformations«, which will enable man to live fully within his limitations and be more and more human, responsible, free and capable of both giving love and practicing solidarity. Certainly, this is only possible if transhumanism has in front of it a true human being, if it cares for the common good and a common home for all mankind and if it accepts the valuable gift of religions for all mankind and creation.

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