

From the Material to the Immaterial World: How Did We Get Here?

By Chrysostomos Stamoulis*

I had the good fortune to be guided for the first time in the Churches by an epileptic who lived in the Moutalaski district, a poor district inhabited by Cappadocians, his elder brother was a carpenter, George Gelimi, an epileptic. Let me ask you a question, Mr. Nikos, he says, How to make my Cross, when I know that when I open the door I will see the Cross in front of me on the [Church of the] Virgin of Blachernae, for when I really see it, you understand how troubled the young man is when he reflects on things, how rich, how varied are the states of things and what is the truth of things¹.

Your Excellency, Madame President,
Your All-Holiness,

Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis, in this excerpt from an unpublished speech given in Veroia, on 25 April 1991, poses the question of the real: “What is the real” and what is the “truth of things”? It is a question he had already answered in many of his writings, in a creative and certainly tradition-inclusive way, the Orthodox Christian tradition, of which the “play-writer” is a participator and devotee. Besides, he has always declared that he is undoubtedly a child of the Orthodox Church and feeds on its nourishment. This nourishment that runs through his veins leads him to say that to descend –or descend– down the innumerable steps of

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1. *Unpublished Speech* of N. G. Pentzikis at the Public Library of Veroia, 25/4/1991. This speech, along with G. H. Chionidis’s Prologue, came into our hands from the late teacher Nikos Tzoumakas.

the real one needs to lift a heavy, marble slab². “It is necessary”, he says, “that each man’s soul becomes a plaything of the wind, in order to see the glory of the real”. Besides, he continues, “The beauty of the real is revealed only to those who endure it”. And most importantly: “Beauty is not the lover of the gifted person; it is the perseverance next to, close to what you are not”³.

I have the feeling that many times in the realm of Theology, and certainly that of the Church, we feel that we live within a world that is not akin to us; a world that stands apart from the basic precepts of the Gospel, a world that moves intensely against the deeper way of our existence. A fact that immediately leads to the logic of “Us” and the “Others”, without even a hint that occasionally we are the others and the others are us⁴.

This Conference, on the occasion of the centenary of the publication of the journal *Theologia*, has chosen to deal with a major and essential issue. It wanted to follow theology’s course within the immaterial reality of late modernity. This is because time always defines things. Besides, as it is often said, theology can only be pastoral. This means that it is born out of the need of the ecclesiastical body, which is – or ought to be – in dialogue with the whole world and life. When Nestorius – through the elder Anastasius – accuses St. Cyril of Alexandria of heresy and asks him to explain why he attributes to the Virgin Mary the name Theotokos, which in his opinion is unbiblical, antisynodal and anti-traditional, he

2. See N. G. Pentzikis, *Ποιήματα (Παλαιοντολογικά)*, A.S.E. Publications, Thessaloniki 1988, p. 21: «“Έλα πουλί στὸν τόπο σου, ἔλα στὴν κατοικιά σου”, ἔλεγε, / θρηνώντας ὁ πατέρας μου πού ’φυγε, θάβοντας τὴ χαρά. / Τί βαρειά ἡ μαρμάρινη πλάκα, ποὺ χρειάστηκε νὰ σηκώσω, / κατεβαίνοντας τ’ ἀναρίθμητα τοῦ πραγματικοῦ σκαλοπάτια» (=“Come bird to your place, come to your home”, he said, / lamenting my father who left, burying joy. / What a heavy marble slab I had to lift, / descending the innumerable steps of the real”).

3. N. G. Pentzikis, *Μητέρα Θεσσαλονίκη*, Kedros Publications, Athens 1987, pp. 130-131.

4. Arthur Rembaut often remarked: “I, is an other”, *Alchemy of the Word*. Cf. N. G. Pentzikis, *Πρὸς Ἐκκλησιασμό*, A.S.E. Publications, Thessaloniki 1986, p. 66: «[...] τὸ ἐγὼ μου εἶν’ ἕνας ἄλλος [...]. Τόσοι ἄλλοι εἶμαι ἐγὼ» (=“[...] I am another [...]. So many others are me”).

answers him in the following forceful and revealing way: «Εἰ καὶ μὴ ἐμνήσθῃ ἡ σύνοδος τῆς λέξεως, καλῶς ἐποίησεν; οὔτε γὰρ ἐκινήθῃ τοιοῦτόν τι κατ' ἐκεῖνο καιροῦ. Διὸ οὔτε ἦν ἀνάγκη τὰ μὴ ζητούμενα φέρειν εἰς μέσον. Εἰ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τῇ δυνάμει τῶν ἐννοιῶν, οἶδε Θεοτόκον τὴν ἁγίαν Μαρίαν»⁵. I think this analogously answers the choice of this topic here and now.

The Church, like the world, lives in the age and era of late modernity. We live in a world full of risk⁶, and insecurity, but also one that desires to emphasize freedoms⁷. In a world in which the attempt to formulate a new anthropology, and thus a cosmology –according to Theology's language, a ktistology⁸–, is at the heart of a world that seems to be

5. Cyril of Alexandria, *Ἐπιστολὴ 10, Πρὸς τοὺς Κωνσταντινουπόλει κληρικοὺς στασιάζοντας*, PG 77, 64B.

6. See indicatively, K. Rasborg, *Ulrich Beck: Theorising World Risk Society and Cosmopolitanism*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2021.

7. See Io. Petrou, *Κοινωνιολογία*, Vantias Publications, Thessaloniki 2007, pp. 186, 195.

8. It is by now clear that the environment, because of man's hubris and his instrumental use of it, is reaching its existential limits. This is undoubtedly linked to his inability to see clearly, which would allow an understanding of his eschatological perspective. Hence the need for a reconnection, a restoration of the relationship between history and nature. See Chr. A. Stamoulis, *Ἀπὸ τὴν παθολογικὴ συναισθηματικὴ στὸν οἰκολογικὸ ρεαλισμὸ τῆς εὐθύνης*, <https://antidosis.wordpress.com/2013/08/27/%CF%87%CF%81%CF%85%CF%83%CF%8C%CF%83%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%82-%CE%B1-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%8D%CE%BB%CE%B7%CF%82-%CE%B1%CF%80%CF%8C-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%B8%CE%BF%CE%BB/> [26/09/2023]: “Thus, we have arrived, in many cases, at a ‘total dichotomy between nature and history, sacredness and profanity, logic and myth, art and philosophy’, and more recently, aesthetics and philosophy. These are essentially phobias, fueled by extreme individualism, authoritarianism, and power, all of which constitute a non-orthodoxy. At the limits of such an understanding, creation is left meaningless, a mere material object of processing and positioning itself in opposition to man, or, rarely, it claims all meaning for itself by excluding any other reference. It constitutes a ‘need’ that deprives him of his freedom; therefore, he must quickly free himself from it by submitting to it or surrendering to it to ‘truly’ exist. Essentially, history is repeating itself with human existence's material element. On the one hand, extreme materialism and on the other hand, the process of the matter's spiritualization. The incarnation of the Word seems once again to be forgotten. In both cases, however, the human body and creation are consumables with an expiration date, without an eschatological dimension, without reference, ecstasy, expansion, and opening to the fullness offered in eternity by the incarnate Word, doomed to nihilism. There is

testing the resistance of the materials and thus the stability of modern civilization's edifice and all of its structures – political, religious, economic and cultural. We live within a society called “iconic” which, as has been rightly pointed out, “is characterized by the emergence of a new way of producing and distributing images, through digitalization, which tends to annihilate goods (e.g. power, wealth, information) and relations (interpersonal, economic and political), the architecture, content, and proximity of which are increasingly determined by algorithms. Human activities are being reflected and reality is becoming hybrid, i.e. physical and digital”⁹. Algorithms introduce a new determinism. God of the old determinisms seems to be replaced here by the machine¹⁰; – the machine-

no doubt that such positions are echoes, carrying the marks of past cosmologies with which Christianity encountered, or to put it more clearly, within which it emerged and with which Christianity struggled. By way of illustration, I mention Hellenism, as an expression of an extreme and moderate cosmological enlargement, along with Gnosticism, as an expression of a certain cosmological diminution. On the one hand, that is, the identification with the creation and the latter's idolization and apotheosis; and, on the other hand, its division, abandonment, and even nullification. Of course, we would say that the greatest problem today, in the realm of Christianity, is not the idolization of creation, the naturalism that is not completely absent, but mainly and above all its devaluation and marginalization, the removal of its meaning, which results from the fear of its idolization. In other words, modern Christianity, fearing the worship of creation ‘instead of the Creator’, seems to deny to nature the self-evident fact of its creation, that is to say, it denies its referentiality, its ability to ‘prove’ the Creator God. Indeed, in many cases, the Orthodox person, in order to be consistent with impersonal checks and rules, dressed in the cloak of Orthodoxy, fights what he sees, denies the revelation of truth, and fights nature while striving for the supernatural. Nevertheless, a meaningless nature that has no reason to exist cannot inspire reverence or respect. Everything is lost in anthropological exclusivity”. Cf. St. Ch. Tsompanidis, *Υπὲρ τῆς Οἰκουμένης. Μελέτες γιὰ τὴν Οἰκουμένην Κίνηση καὶ τὴν ἀποστολὴν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας στὸ σημερινὸ κόσμος*, Ostrakon Publications, Thessaloniki 2014, pp. 437-461; St. Giagkazoglou, *Θεολογία καὶ νεωτερικότητα. Δοκίμια γιὰ τὴ συνάντηση τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Θεολογίας μὲ τὸν σύγχρονο κόσμος*, Harmos Publications, Athens 2023, p. 357; Rev. Io. Chrysavgis, *Ἡ δημιουργία ὡς μυστήριον. Θεολογικὴ προσέγγιση τῆς οἰκολογικῆς πρό(σ)κλήσης*, Harmos Publications, Athens 2023.

9. Th. Tasis, *Ψηφιακὸς ἀνθρωπισμὸς. Εἰκονιστικὸ ὑποκείμενο καὶ τεχνητὴ νοημοσύνη*, Harmos Publications, Athens 2019, p. 11; cf. also, by the same author, *Πολιτικὲς τοῦ Βίου II: Ἡ ἐπιμέλεια τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ στὴν εἰκονιστικὴ κοινωνία*, Harmos Publications, Athens 2017.

10. See M. O’Gieblyn, *God, Human, Animal, Machine*, Anchor Books, New York 2022.

God, who claims in His own way man's salvation. The machine leads both society and people. It drives man, whose characteristics are gradually and methodically changing. There is no doubt that we are facing a gigantic effort to alter humanity. We are facing a process of forming a new human type. We are, because of the iconic reality, where the image does not go beyond the original, within a process of displacement of reality itself. We are faced with a mood of transition from the human to the superman –and even further to the metahuman– to a figurative replacement society which, through “radical human upgrading”, seems to run the risk of man's complete eradication¹¹.

To be more precise, I must describe –in short– the phenomena that announce this transition. The movements –mainly although not exclusively scientific– are “Superhumanism” and “Posthumanism”, which have established a clear theory and a sufficiently recognizable practice. More specifically, Superhumanism in its mild forms speaks of a certain improvement of man through eugenic methods and modes of spiritual evolution; in its more advanced forms, it reaches the transcending of man's biological limits through technology¹². Posthumanism, which moves beyond Superhumanism, is divided into Technical and Critical. Technical Posthumanism, understanding technique as an end in itself and not as a means and man as a transitional stage in the evolution of a technical otherness that will succeed him, speaks of the “final transcendence of man in himself [sic] even in a post-biological form”¹³. We are undoubtedly faced with a scientific eschatological vision, an eschatology of technique, in which man loses his value, since at the end of the day what will be saved, what will remain, will not be the whole man, but only the intellect¹⁴. Critical Posthumanism, although it

11. For “human upgrading” see, for example, Th. Tasis, *Φιλοσοφία της ανθρώπινης αναβάθμισης*, Harmos Publications, Athens 2021, p. 14: “The term ‘human enhancement’ describes any intervention aimed at improving a person or their functions to a degree greater than is necessary to maintain or restore health”. Cf. E. Juengst, “What Does Enhancement Mean?”, in: *Enhancing Human Traits: Ethical and Social Implications*, Eric Parens (ed.), Georgetown University Press, Washington D.C. 1998, pp. 29-47.

12. See Th. Tasis, *Φιλοσοφία της ανθρώπινης αναβάθμισης*, op.cit., pp. 22-23.

13. Th. Tasis, *Φιλοσοφία της ανθρώπινης αναβάθμισης*, op.cit., p. 23.

14. See Io. Vogiatzis, *Sci-Fi και Θεολογία. Ο διάλογος των ταινιών Επιστημονικής*

agrees with the representatives of Technical Posthumanism on the fact that man does not constitute value, does not emphasize –this does not mean that it remains completely indifferent– to processes of biological upgrading. He desires to stand against humanism and especially against anthropocentrism. For this reason, he denies any dualism and distinction between man, animal, and machine¹⁵. And even further, it denies the distinction, indeed the division, of man between body and soul. It aims to abolish “class and racial distinctions based on the phenomena of humanism” and, ultimately, the consecration of man to the already existing metahuman that the Western ideology of progress has eliminated¹⁶.

Of course, the struggle and the intolerance against the material element and the body is not a consequence of late modernity, post-modernity, and certainly not of modernity. It is a process that began very early in the wider field of culture. In the Christian Church, it appears with intensity in the teachings of two heresies: Monophysitism and its rival, Nestorianism. In both cases, the devaluation and incrimination of matter, especially of the body, apart from the fact that it echoes the ideas of Gnosticism, Manichaeism, and deformed Judaism, reveals the common ethicism of the different and even highly opposed forms of the heresy, which fails to accept that «Θεὸς ἀνθρώπῳ μείγνυται». It is thus unable to accept that the “supreme” creator can commune and especially be united with the inferior creation, in which sin seems to be an ontological element of the “fallen” human nature¹⁷. It is a fact that has created a

Φαντασίας και της Ὁρθόδοξης Θεολογίας, Harmos Publications, Athens 2022, p. 101: “In the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey [1968], thinking, cognition makes you human [...]”. As the director Stanley Kubrick points out, “We became human when we learned to think. The mind has given us the tools to understand where we live and who we are. Now it’s time to take the next step, to know that we don’t live on a planet but among the stars and that we are not flesh but intelligence”.

15. See M. O’Gieblyn, *God, Human, Animal, Machine*, *op.cit.*

16. See Th. Tasis, *Φιλοσοφία της ἀνθρώπινης ἀναβάθμισης*, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

17. See Chr. A. Stamoulis, «Ἀνθρώπινη φύση τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἁμαρτία στοὺς Ἀντιοχειανοὺς Θεολόγους τοῦ 5ου αἰῶνα», *Ἀσκήση αὐτοσυνηδησίας*, To Palimpsiston Printing & Publishing Company, Thessaloniki 2004, p. 262-263. Cf. G. Martzelos, *Ἡ Χριστολογία τοῦ Βασιλείου Σελευκείας καὶ ἡ οἰκουμενικὴ σημασία της*, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1990, p. 169. Father George Florovsky, in a very interesting

polemic against the body and matter, the echo of which has gone through history like lightning and in many cases has come to poison the members of the ecclesiastical community even today.

In the years that followed from the 4th century AD onwards, even in moments of intense historical highlighting of matter and the body, in moments of hyperbole, such as the era of the Industrial Revolution, historical materialism, and biology, there was always, or almost always, a subtle underestimation of materiality and corporeality, which was born out of the conscious or unconscious rupture of the material with the spiritual; an underground rupture which, in the name of –or because of– the over-emphasis on matter, was unable to grasp the whole and therefore, through addition, led creation and especially man to a devious abstraction, to a refined de-materialization in the name of –or for the sake of– matter.

This has nothing to do with any generalization that would fail to find in history moments when materiality has been highly regarded; moments of defense of materiality and corporeality and, because of this, moments of their creative promotion in the whole of culture and history; moments of brilliance of ancient Greek and Byzantine culture, moments of Renaissance and Enlightenment and certainly moments of Humanism. During these times man progressed, expanded his humanity, created his world, and widened his frontiers.

We often say that the dominance of the immaterial is due to the emergence and development of machines, and the prevalence of the technical spirit and technology, which like a Trojan horse pierced the stability of material history. We believe this is a product of the last two centuries, especially the last fifty years.

but equally enigmatic text writes the following: “It is necessary to be careful not to identify the disease of the ‘fallen’ nature with the inherent defect of every created nature. There is nothing morbid or awful in the ‘natural imperfection’ of created nature except that which creeps in ‘from above’ after the Fall. In nature that precedes the Fall, one might speak of deficiencies and defects. But in the fallen world, there is something more – a perversion, a rebellion, a blasphemy that provokes violence. It is the space of usurpation”, *Δημιουργία και ἀπολύτρωση*, greek transl. Panagiotis K. Pallis, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1983, p. 97.

There is no doubt that on the margins of late modernity¹⁸ we face a transition from Monophysitism's ontological persecution of the body to its technological persecution. "If, according to François Raspail and many others, 'Science is the only religion of the future'", writes Paul Virgilio, "we must agree that this scientific integrationism carries a heavy heretical past, laden with cognitive residues organized around the recurrent hatred of matter, of what used to be called the killing of flesh – the human body and, more generally, the body of the living world"¹⁹.

It is a persecution based on the pursuit of easy profit, the "easiness" of people's processes of transaction and dialogue, the availability of totalitarian subordination, and the emergence of power. It is a paradoxical persecution carried out in the name of man, reminiscent of the phrase: "everything is going well against us"; an imposition-persecution which frustrates the unity of a subject which cannot live *without*, but only *with*; a persecution which leads to a definitive radical substitution. Yes, we can say that the body today is persecuted, and threatened. The late Metropolitan John of Pergamon wrote in 2007: "Another problem is now created by the course of civilization, and don't be surprised, is the salvation of the body. Yes, the body is threatened. If we think more deeply about what IT, the Internet, and all the means through which people communicate with each other entail, we understand that the greatest victim of all these technological advancements is the human body. I no longer have to use my body to shop, to go to the next store to meet my neighbor shopping. I can order the things I want over the Internet, sit at home, and communicate with my neighbors and my friends, without using my body, without having that body as a means of communion with others. The body will therefore be a victim of the civilization"²⁰. This prediction of his most Reverend, only sixteen years

18. For late modernity see, for example, A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 1991; cf. Io. Petrou, *Κοινωνιολογία*, *op.cit.*, pp. 186, 195; Ch. Tsironis, *Ὁ καταναλωτισμός στη σύγχρονη Κοινωνική Θεωρία: τομές στο έργο του Z. Bauman*, Barbounakis Publications, Thessaloniki 2013, pp. 48-49.

19. P. Virgilio, *Αυτό που έρχεται*, transl. into Greek Vassilis Tomanas, Nisides Publications, Athens 2004, p. 20.

20. See John (Zizioulas), Metropolitan of Pergamon, *«Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ σύγχρονος*

ago, seems to be taking on the dimensions of a rule. We read without our bodies, we fall in love without our bodies, we communicate without our bodies, we travel, we tour, we shop, we dress, we mourn, and we participate in liturgical life without our bodies²¹. The changes that have taken place in recent years are cataclysmic, and this is because their speed seems to exceed human beings' biological and mental capacity; weak and bewildered, they watch all that is happening "for their own good".

However, we have to admit that the temptation of the machine and the technical spirit, as an attempt to transcend the limits of creation and to facilitate human everyday life, is nothing new. From mythological times to the present day, from Talos to Frankenstein, we find examples of such an enterprise in the history of civilization²². What distinguishes the past from the present is the intensity and dynamism of evolution. Perhaps also the explosion of the will, a certain gigantism of the will, which sometimes reaches the limits of sanctification²³. It is an acceptance that brings us to the heart of a post-religious and anti-theological era, within which there is a "remarkable weakening of the role of official religious systems and the churches²⁴ and at the same time

πολιτισμός», *Αντίφωνο/Antifono* (November 2007), p. 11, <https://antifono.gr/orthodoksia-kai-syghronos-politismos/> [18/09/2023]. Cf. Al. Katsiaras, «Επιλεγόμενα. Προπατορικό ἀμάρτημα καὶ τεχνικὸ πνεῦμα», *Θεολογία/Theologia* 91, 1 (2020), p. 199: "In modern technology, disembodied communication, the increasingly unnecessary mediation of the human body in historical events is now evident [...] Passivity takes root, communication mediated by the body is discouraged and ultimately the risk of encounter, of relationship, is excluded. The body becomes superfluous, perhaps even useless".

21. See Chr. A. Stamoulis, *Ἐρως καὶ θάνατος. Δοκιμὴ γιὰ ἓναν πολιτισμὸ τῆς σάρκωσης*, Harmos Publications, Athens 2019, pp. 204-212. Cf. Al. Katsiaras, «Εἰσοδικόν. Τὸ τεχνολογικὸ μέσο εἶναι ἡ ἔκφραση ἑνὸς σκεπτικοῦ;», *Ἐφημέριος/Efimerios* 72, 5 (2023), pp. 3-6.

22. See P. Panagiotopoulos, «Χριστιανικὴ τεχνολογία καὶ σύγχρονη τεχνολογία: Ἡ τιμὴ ἐπὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον νὰ διαβαίνει», *Θεολογία/Theologia* 91, 3 (2020), pp. 63-65. Cf. Chr. Malevitsis, «Ἡ πρόκληση τῆς τεχνολογίας», *Εὐθύνη/Efthymi* 115 (1981), pp. 400-401; St. Giagkazoglou, *Θεολογία καὶ νεωτερικότητα...*, op.cit., p. 347 ff.

23. P. Panagiotopoulos, «Χριστιανικὴ τεχνολογία καὶ σύγχρονη τεχνολογία...», op.cit., p. 76.

24. G. Steiner, *Νοσταλγία τοῦ ἀπολύτου*, transl. into Greek, Agra Publications, Athens 2007, p. 11.

their replacement by the new “mythologies”²⁵, which have flourished in the vacuum created by the draining and total drying up of man’s existence by totalitarian and therefore inhuman religious authorities. Moreover, where this vacuum exists, George Steiner observes, “new vital forces and substitutes spring up”²⁶. Yet, for the new system to acquire “the status of a mythology”, it must fulfill certain conditions. First of all, it must have the “seal of universality”²⁷. That is, the new system should affirm that the “proposed analysis of the human condition –of our history, of the meaning of life... and our further aspirations– has universal validity”. In this sense, “a mythology is a complete picture of ‘man in the world’”²⁸. Secondly, to have a set of normative texts, which will allow the emergence of “orthodoxy” and “heresy”²⁹; and thirdly, to develop “its language, its characteristic idiom, its emblematic images, flags, metaphors, dramatic scenarios”, but also a set of “fundamental gestures, rituals, and symbols”³⁰.

I have the feeling that all these characteristics are concentrated in many systems in our time. “Mythologies”, which prove to what degree man today, perhaps more than ever, thirsts for “guaranteed prophecy”³¹. That is, for new religions, for a “theology of substitution”, which, although distinguished for its outright anti-religiousness, or because of it, develops structures and activities that always bear “the marks of the theological past”³².

This vindicates the poète maudit Arthur Rimbaud, who at a similar time, almost century and a half ago, condemned scientific dogmatism, i.e. the new fundamentalist messianism, with the most powerful weapon available to any “accursed man”; irony and sarcasm: “Ah, Science! Everything is taken from the past. For the body and the soul, the last sacrament, we have Medicine and Philosophy, household remedies and

25. G. Steiner, *Νοσταλγία τοῦ ἀπολύτου*, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

26. G. Steiner, *Νοσταλγία τοῦ ἀπολύτου*, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

27. G. Steiner, *Νοσταλγία τοῦ ἀπολύτου*, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

28. G. Steiner, *Νοσταλγία τοῦ ἀπολύτου*, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

29. G. Steiner, *Νοσταλγία τοῦ ἀπολύτου*, *op.cit.*, pp. 14-15.

30. G. Steiner, *Νοσταλγία τοῦ ἀπολύτου*, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

31. G. Steiner, *Νοσταλγία τοῦ ἀπολύτου*, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

32. G. Steiner, *Νοσταλγία τοῦ ἀπολύτου*, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

folk songs rearranged. And royal entertainments, and games that kings forbid! Geography, Cosmography, Mechanics, Chemistry!... Science, the new nobility! Progress. The world moves!... And why shouldn't it?"³³.

Within this environment and in the context of this new challenge, the "current typology of attitudes towards these developments" has been formed, which, as noted, "basically includes two categories: a) the *technical-optimistic*, and b) the *technical-pessimistic*. In the symbiotic man-machine model of the first category, a better future is expected from technology, in which its products will be harmoniously integrated, new jobs will be created, with fewer accidents, a better quality of life, etc. In its most radical version, this optimism approaches the *post-human* ideal of human 'empowerment'. In it, human endeavors are mechanized and the hybrid capacity of the human-machine system is looked forward to, for the sake of general welfare and individual enhancement; in other words, it is a distinctly individualistic model, built on competitiveness. On the other hand, the representatives of technical pessimism see the same future in dystopic terms: social relations will deteriorate, our cognitive abilities will atrophy, new inequalities will emerge³⁴, democratic institutions will be endangered, etc., until the inevitable collapse of our civilization. The extreme version of this tendency is *Bio-preservationism*,

33. A. Rimbaud, *Μιά εποχή στην κόλαση*, transl. (Greek) Chr. Liantakis, Gavriilidis Publications, Athens 2011, pp. 25-27; transl. (English) "A season in Hell, Bad Blood" in: Arthur Rimbaud, *Complete works*, transl. Paul Schmidt, Harper Colophon Books, New York 1976.

34. We are facing another replacement process. The place of the distressed, the crushed and broken of the world, who are, as St. John Chrysostom says, the High altars of a truly new life, seems to be taken today by the wealthy and the powerful, the "High altars" of post-humanism and super-humanism, who will be able to share the "goods" and the "products" of such an endeavor. This is because the financial weakness of the poor will make access to them impossible. St. John Chrysostom writes in this regard: «Ὅταν οὖν ἴδῃς πένητα πιστόν, θυσιαστήριον ὁρᾷν νόμιζε; ὅταν ἴδῃς πτωχὸν τοιοῦτον, μὴ μόνον μὴ ὑβρίσης, ἀλλὰ καὶ αἰδέσθῃ; κἂν ἕτερον ἴδῃς ὑβρίσαντα, κώλυσον, ἄμυνον. Οὕτω γὰρ δυνήσῃ καὶ αὐτὸς τῷ Θεῷ ἵλεων ἔχειν καὶ τῶν ἐπηγγελμένων ἐπιτυχεῖν ἀγαθῶν; ὧν γένοιτο πάντας ἡμᾶς ἐπιτυχεῖν, χάριτι καὶ φιλανθρωπία τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς» (St. John Chrysostom, *Εἰς Β΄ Κορ.* 20, PG 61, 539-40.) Cf. f. Michael Tishel, *Τὸ ἐξαίφνης στὶς πρὸς Ῥωμαίους Ὁμιλίες τοῦ ἱεροῦ Χρυσοστόμου* (PhD Thesis submitted to the Department of Theology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), Thessaloniki 2022, p. 261.

which denies radical technological change in favor of defending human dignity, preserving the sense of human life as a gift, and the capability of remaining the authors of our own lives. The prevailing view ‘sees’ that in the future humans will collaborate with the machines [...]”³⁵.

The question, which arises after such a first description, refers directly to the general title of our Conference. What can be the course of theology within this new environment that has already been formed? I believe that any retreat, either to a certain “protology” or to the corresponding “eschatology”, which ignores history and culture, betrays the very core of the Gospel, which is contained in the phrase: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (*«ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν»*)³⁶; a phrase that introduces a culture of incarnation, that is, of kenosis [self-emptying] and reception³⁷. It is a fact that leads to the conclusion that theology cannot stand in the face of evolution, science, and culture –and it should not, because movement and change are a constituent element of man’s being. Indeed, Gregory Palamas, Thessaloniki’s second patron saint, emphatically notes that the essential element of human beings created in the image of God is creativity, which is directly linked to the *«αἰσθητικόν»*³⁸. Because of the body, or, rather, also because of the body, human beings “in the image of God” are superior –“probably”– to angels. That is why we can say that science, art, craft, and technology represent the continuation of God’s creative work in the world³⁹. This, of course, does not make the works

35. P. Panagiotopoulos, *«Χριστιανική τεχνολογία καὶ σύγχρονη τεχνολογία...»*, op.cit., p. 70.

36. John 1, 14.

37. See Chr. A. Stamoulis, *Ἐρως καὶ θάνατος...», op.cit.*; cf. St. Ch. Tsombanidis, *Ὑπὲρ τῆς Οἰκουμένης. Μελέτες γιὰ τὴν Οἰκουμένην Κίνησιν...», op.cit.*, pp. 495-509.

38. *«Ἔτι γε μὴν καὶ τὸν ἀόρατον τοῦ νοῦ λόγον οὐ μόνον ὑπ’ ἀκοῆς αἰσθησιν γίνεσθαι ἀέρα ἐνημμένον, ἀλλὰ καὶ καταγράφεσθαι καὶ μετὰ σώματος καὶ διὰ σώματος ὁρᾶσθαι, παρέσχε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις μόνοις ὁ Θεός, πρὸς πίστιν ἐνάγων διαρκῆ τῆς τοῦ ἀνωτάτου λόγου σαρκὸς ἐπιδημίας τε καὶ ἐμφανείας ὧν οὐδὲν οὐδαμῶς μέτεστιν ἀγγέλοις»* (Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ, *Κεφάλαια ἑκατὸν πενήκοντα. Φυσικὰ καὶ θεολογικά, ἠθικά τε καὶ πρακτικά καὶ καθαρτικά τῆς βαρλααμίτιδος λύμης, Συγγράμματα*, P. Christou (ed.), vol. V (Ε’), Karamanos Publications, Thessaloniki 1992, § 63, p. 72).

39. *«Μόνοι γὰρ ἡμεῖς τῶν κτισμάτων ἀπάντων πρὸς τῷ νοερῷ τε καὶ λογικῷ καὶ τὸ αἰσθητικὸν ἔχομεν ὁ τῷ λογικῷ συνημμένον εἶναι πεφυκός, τεχνῶν τε καὶ ἐπιστημῶν*

of technology neutral⁴⁰. Of course, neither is the man who creates them and then uses them neutral. He is a being who moves between his perfection and his nihilism – and the same goes for his works. Both the works of technology and all creation, as a result of the created man's created energy, contain the possibility of alteration within them – good or bad.

Of course, neither is the man who creates them and then uses them neutral. He is a being who moves between his perfection and his nihilism – and the same goes for his works. Both the works of technology and all creation, as a result of the created man's created energy, contain the possibility of alteration within them – good or bad.

And this is where the issue of freedom and its limits urgently enters the debate. In Christian theology, we have claimed for too long that human freedom is absolute, ignoring that the latter's relativity is linked to creatureliness. Today it is more than ever apparent that the freedom of the uncreated is the only absolute freedom. God does not know evil. And I want to make clear here the fact that I am talking about ontological, not epistemological ignorance; just as we can certainly assert that the responsibility of choosing within the limits of creativity belongs to man, but also that God himself is the irresponsible-responsible for this reality since he takes the risk of creating man – the created man. This risk, let us call it a blessed risk, runs through the whole of our way of being in the world. Perhaps it is ultimately this risk that increases responsibility and makes human beings look like God. For “as in heaven and on earth” (*ὥς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς*), can be transformed, without a change of meaning but for the sake of emphasis, into “as on

*καὶ γνώσεων ἐξεῦρε πολυειδέστατον πληθύν. Γεωργεῖν τε καὶ οἰκοδομεῖν, καὶ προάγειν ἐκ μὴ ὄντων, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἐκ μηδαμῶς ὄντων (τοῦτο γὰρ Θεοῦ), μόνῳ παρέσχε τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ» (Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ, *Κεφάλαια ἑκατὸν πενήκοντα*..., *op.cit.*, p. 71). Cf. Chr. A. Stamoulis, *Κάλλος τὸ ἅγιον. Προλεγόμενα στῆ φιλόκαλη αἰσθητικῇ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας*, Akritas Publications, Athens 2004, pp. 205-209; cf. Chr. A. Stamoulis, *Holy Beauty. Prolegomena to an Orthodox Philokalic Aesthetics*, transl. (English), Norman Russell, James Clarke & Co., Cambridge 2022, pp. 130-133.*

40. See Al. Katsiaras, «Ἐπιλεγόμενα. Προπατορικὸ ἀμάρτημα καὶ τεχνικὸ πνεῦμα», *op.cit.*, p. 213; cf. P. Panagiotopoulos, «Χριστιανικὴ τεχνολογία καὶ σύγχρονη τεχνολογία», *op.cit.*, p. 60: “As much as we may want to consider technology as morally neutral and determine its value by the way it is used, reality shows that its presence in our lives affects our mindset and behavior”.

earth and in heaven” («ὥς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ»). Finally, let us not forget that the technical spirit is the offspring of creativity, or a part of it, which obviously transcends it. Thus, the point is to reconnect human creativity with the thing that transcends it and is by definition the archetype towards which the image aspires, and because of which it exists, breathes, and hopes. If creativity, art, and technology can lead to man’s nihilism, we must not forget that they are the only forces that can turn him toward his eschatological perspective⁴¹. That is why St. Ignatius Theophorus [of Antioch] when speaking of God’s energy, uses the term art, while when speaking of the energy of the devil he uses the term «κακοτεχνία» (“defect”). Art creates unity in the indivisible heart, while defect, which St. Ignatius urges the faithful to avoid («φεύγετε οὖν τὰς κακοτεχνίας καὶ ἐνέδρας τοῦ ἄρχοντος τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, μήποτε θλιβέντες τῇ γνώμῃ αὐτοῦ ἐξασθενήσετε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ; ἀλλὰ πάντες ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ γίνεσθε ἐν ἀμερίστῳ καρδίᾳ»), it paralyzes the body and leads it to its final necrosis. Nikos Matsoukas writes: “Possession is a denial of life or, better yet, a denial of creative perfection. That is why we only find it in free and personal life. Stones, plants, and animals, as well as electronic machines, cannot become possessed. Possession negates life and at the same time seeks its destruction or the return of life to zero [...]. The failure of creative perfection opens the door to possession, without itself being possession. Nevertheless, this failure makes man vulnerable because he becomes rootless. He wanders in a world of boredom, flabbiness, and stagnation. The ‘spectral’ world of threat and isolation is thus established. Then substitutes must be found. And when this is either not done, or if it is done and does not bring any results, man’s movement towards destruction is dangerously predestined [...]. Man feels envy or hate when he loses his creative role. Then the likeness to God is lost or thwarted”⁴².

And I’m returning to the main question: is theology and the Church ready to welcome such a man and such a world? Is there any possibility

41. See Chr. A. Stamoulis, *Κάλλος τὸ ἅγιον. Προλεγόμενα στὴ φιλόκαλη αἰσθητικὴ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας*, op.cit., pp. 171-173. Cf. Chr. A. Stamoulis, *Holy Beauty. Prolegomena to an Orthodox Philokalic Aesthetics*, op.cit., pp. 108-110.

42. N. Matsoukas, *Τὸ πρόβλημα τοῦ κακοῦ*, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1986, pp. 76-77.

of responding to the fundamental changes in our ways of living? Is there a way of ministering to the new? Do we have a real willingness to contribute to undoing any frustration –direct or indirect it makes no difference– of humanity? Can we even today uphold the mystery of the incarnation of the Word of God and therefore a culture of incarnation arising from the immediacy of relationship? Is the culture of the incarnation capable of accommodating the new within the limits of its existential and ontological spaciousness? To take it in and transform it? Are we ready to recapture the unperceivable, to deny our self-abandonment to the nostalgia of lost paradises and our escape from history and thus the only field in which human history's small and great things are done/performed? It has been written, and I think this is right, that it is "a sin to be absent from the present"⁴³. Are we ready to defend the aesthetic man, burning for meaning and walking with the fullness of his body and all that it implies (desires, loves, senses, imagination, emotions)? Are we ready to escape from our entrapment in distorted understandings of creatureliness and therefore mortality⁴⁴ and to speak again of the eschatological perspective of the creation as a whole? Are we ready to name and denounce, expressis verbis, that latent mood of post-humanism and especially super-humanism within Christianity, which proceeds to a magical vision of holiness? Are we ready to show once again in practice an ascetic and eucharistic vision of life that understands existence as a gift, and stands firmly against any greed, the great sin of our historicity? Are we ready to see the sick, the suffering human being as a monument of infinite beauty and thus to move away from the theories of diverse fascist humanisms who find in perfection the ontological core of being?⁴⁵ If not, we should ask

43. "The absence from the present is a sin. The inexhaustible river that irrigates our innards. It rises many times, but you hesitate to speak because it seems you'll breathe your last. We remain closely connected to the ephemeral shapes. We pay more attention to garbage and litter than to water. But upon the face of water, rests the life-giving spirit of truth" (N. G. Pentzikis, *Τὸ μυστιστόρημα τῆς κ. Ἑρσης*, Agra Publications, Athens 1992, p. 15).

44. On the meaning of mortality, see Th. Tasis, *Ψηφιακὸς ἀνθρωπισμὸς. Εἰκονιστικὸ ὑποκείμενο καὶ τεχνητὴ νοημοσύνη*, op.cit., p. 19.

45. The repression of death, but also of illness, disease, sickness, passion, is most definitely

ourselves if there can be a church without matter, meaning without matter, democracy without matter. Or are we talking about a world empty of man and therefore empty of God? “Behold the man” («*Ἴδε ὁ ἄνθρωπος*»)⁴⁶ behold God; are we talking about anthropology –it has been repeatedly written in the discipline of theology that the 21st century will be the century of anthropology– without the man⁴⁷. Man’s

a repression of life itself. An excellent possibility of operating at the limits of the opposite of such a reality –in the space of accepting that the sight of the dead provokes the understanding of life–, is found in Paul Gadenne’s excellent short novel *Baleine*. P. Gadenne, *Ἡ Φάλαινα*, transl. (Greek). Vania Chatzaki, Agra Publications, Athens 2007. Cf. N. G. Pentzikis, *Σημειώσεις ἑκατὸ ἡμερῶν*, Paratiritis Publications 1988, pp. 119-120: “–You’re against progress, added another doctor, with perfectly settled materialistic views [...]. –We all need a pedagogical and educational second baptism so that we may regain or at least preserve within ourselves, in the deepest perception of what we are as human beings, the awareness of the great mystery of the night, of the continuous but intermittent illumination not following nature, loving and embracing Death with all our minds and hearts, so that we may live truly free, uninhibited and peaceful, in order to be able to live truly free, uninhibited and peaceful. –And what do your theoretical and general ideas have to do with the development of medicine? –Don’t you think that the doctor can be better oriented, if he learns to look at the sick man, the sick person, not as someone who has fallen close to the limits of waste and garbage, but as a monument of ineffable beauty, as a hero on his way to the revelation of truth beyond human measure?”; N. G. Pentzikis, *Πρὸς Ἐκκλησιασμό*, A.S.E. Publications, Thessaloniki 1986, p. 137: “The Suffering Body, not as an object under examination, but as our own self, helps us to feel the Saint-supporter of the mental Prayer”; Cyril of Alexandria, *Ἑρμηνεία ἢ ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὸ κατὰ Ἰωάννην Εὐαγγέλιον* 7, PG 74, 64C: «*Καὶ ὅτι καλὸν μὲν τὸ μὴ ἀσθενεῖν εἰ δέ τις ἀσθενεῖ, εὐχέσθω ἵνα μὴ ἀσθένεια αὐτοῦ πρὸς θάνατον γένηται, ἀλλ’ ὑπὲρ τῆς δόξης τοῦ Θεοῦ*»; Chr. A. Stamoulis, *Ἐρως καὶ θάνατος. Δοκιμὴ γιὰ ἓναν πολιτισμὸ τῆς σάρκωσης*, *op.cit.*, pp. 288-290; Th. Tasis, *Φιλοσοφία τῆς ἀνθρώπινης ἀναβάθμισης*, *op.cit.*, p. 23. Of particular importance for the texts of N. G. Pentzikis is Fr. Basil Gontikakis’s preface to N.G. Pentzikis’s book, *Ὁμιλήματα*, Akritas Publications, Athens 1992, p. 12: “We have made life unlivable. We have brought ourselves into a closed space, airless and windless. That’s why these ‘similar’ texts are undecipherable. They are written in another time, in another space: in this deeply human and desirable space, from which we have voluntarily or involuntarily expatriated ourselves, and thrown ourselves into this alien land of machinery and mechanics, where when something is crumpled, it ceases to exist”.

46. *John* 19, 6.

47. For the phrase “anthropology without man”, see K. Papaioannou, *Ὁ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ὁ ἴσκιος του. Ἱστορικὴ συνείδηση καὶ ἀνθρωπολογία στὸν 20ὸ αἰῶνα*, Pontiki Publications, Athens 2013, p. 9; cf. A. Lazos, «Ἡ σκιά τοῦ Κώστα Παπαϊωάννου στὸ τοπίο τοῦ σύγχρονου πολιτισμοῦ», *Ἡθική/Ithiki* 16-17 (2023), pp. 26-38, <https://doi.org/10.26438/2792023161726>.

death implies and imposes the death of God. It is a reversal of the death of God by Nietzsche, for example, who ultimately returns to it; it is a reversal that confirms the importance of the *κατ' εἰκόνα* and *καθ' ὁμοίωσιν*. This is because the profound truth of “in the image and likeness of God” lies in the connection between life and its reference; a reference that lies beyond the limits of creation and therefore beyond the forfeiture of self-idolatry – that is, of self-representation, or self-glorification.

And now, let me return to the beginning of my speech. After all, “in my beginning is my end”, writes T. S. Eliot, and then “in my end is my beginning” [First and last verse from “East Cooker”, Part II of the *Four Quartets*]. Let me come back, then, to where, through Pentzikis, I raised the question of the real, and said immediately that, for Orthodox theology, for the Christian world, the real is not an impersonal thing, but the very person of Christ. A fact that calls for a passage from the impersonal “what is the truth”⁴⁸ to the personal “who is the truth” («τίς ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια»)⁴⁹. The reality, the truth, is the Word incarnated, to whom all history looks and to whom the whole of creation aspires. The Word of God the Father, who, to save man, became neither superhuman nor posthuman, but a real man⁵⁰; –which leads to the conclusion that the

org/10.12681/ethiki.33674 [27/09/2023].

48. *John* 18, 38.

49. See Io. Galanis, *Βιβλικές, Ἑρμηνευτικές καὶ Θεολογικές Μελέτες*, BB20, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 2001, pp. 389-398.

50. See Ath. Jevtić, «Τὸ περιβάλλον καὶ τὸ πρόσωπο (Προσχέδιο γιὰ τὸ πρόβλημα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου στὸν Ντοστογιέφσκυ)», Introduction to F. Dostoyevsky, *Οἱ φτωχοί*, Imago Publications, Athens 1983, pp. 33-34: «“Ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο”», [The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, John 1, 14”], observes the late Bishop Atanasije Jevtić (1939-2021), “And that is the only hope of the world, says Dostoevsky, and it is the only truly charitable sermon; we have nothing else to say beyond that. Let us add Dostoevsky’s beautiful passage ‘Beauty will save the world’ – that beauty of Christ which is not a system that abolishes you as a human being, as a person, as freedom, as love, as communion in love. Otherwise, freedom loses its meaning when it declares itself an individual end in itself, or, in other words, if freedom is declared a system that does not take man into account, then it abolishes itself. This is the fate of the ‘Possessed’, Raskolnikov’s fate, the fate of all those who strove to take the man out of the man and elevate him to a superman – a theme developed, as you know, by Nietzsche. Man must

solution is not the exit from history offered by the new visionary systems, nor certainly not the proclaimed end of history, but the perfection of history. There, humanity will not be defined by artificial intelligence, nor by an ‘ecstasy’ from nature – a certain escape – but by the Eucharistic ecstasy of nature, which reveals the mystery of expansion as the ontology that transcends corruption and death⁵¹.

Therefore, theology and the Church cannot –and should not– stand against change and evolution, science, and human discoveries. They must nevertheless not operate as a sect and move to the margins of history⁵². But they do not have to submit unconditionally to this “representation”⁵³. This is because the “void” “does not swallow everything, but its power surpasses the usual imagination” and proves how “both solid vulgarity and supposed ethereal elegance have a vital and deadly relationship”

remain man, and in Christ, he remained man; any system that goes to save man by creating a generic man, a faceless man, is inhuman. Therefore, God’s only solution –and the only true– for man’s salvation, is Christ as God-man”. Cf. Chr. A. Stamoulis, *Έρως και θάνατος. Δοκιμή για έναν πολιτισμό της σάρκωσης*, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

51. See G. Themelis, *Φωτοσκιάσεις*, Thessaloniki 1961, pp. 16-17: «Έγώ αγαπώ το σώμα και το αίμα, / Το τίμιον αίμα, τ’ άγιο σώμα. / Τόν έρωτα έγώ αγαπώ, το θάνατο. Έγώ αγαπώ τη θλίψη [...] / Έγώ αγαπώ τη γή, / τη μάταιη γή. / Είμαι από γή» (= “I love the body and the blood, / The honest blood, the holy body. / I love loving, I love death. I love sorrow [...] / I love the earth, / the vain earth. / I am of earth”); and G. Themelis, *Δενδρόκηπος και άλλα ποιήματα. Επιλεγμένα ποιήματα*, «Η Μόνα παίζει Vii: Μεταμφιέσεις», Introd., Ed. Petros Golitsis, Epilogue Christos Malevitsis, Romi Publications, Thessaloniki 2019, p. 274: «Μέσα σέ κάθε σώμα παίζει ο Θεός [...] / Μè φως παίζει και σκότος, μè θάνατο. Όμόσαρκε, / Όμαιμε» (= “In all bodies, the playful God [...] / He plays with light and darkness, with death. From the same Flesh, / From the same Blood”). Cf. Eleni Kitsopoulou, *Γιώργος Θέμελης. Η έκδοχή του σώματος, ή έκδοχή του προσώπου*, Thessaloniki, n.d., p. 32: “Looking around he sees people who have lost their bodies, who have become shadows, who exist lean, disembodied. If there is no precious body, people can’t love, people can’t die. Only with a living whole body can they live, die, and rise again. He suddenly realizes that everything around him has been altered, that the body and things have been degraded and humiliated – the holy body, and the sacred things and essential symbols”.

52. See St. St. Giagkazoglou, *Θεολογία και νεωτερικότητα*, *op.cit.*, p. 351.

53. “This –enigmatic– life must not be understood in the model of the theatre and seen as a theatre of flashes and shadows, as a theatre in which representations reign. Representation has enormous power, but we are not obliged to submit to it”; K. Axelos, *Αυτό που έπέρχεται. Αποσπάσματα μᾶς προσέγγισης*, transl. (Greek) Katerina E. Daskalaki, Vivliopoleio tis Hestias Publications, Athens 2011, p. 126.

with it⁵⁴. The debate should aim at strengthening creativity and criticizing its excesses; preserving the meaning and challenging any unconditional acceptance and costless triumphalism, but also any structural pessimism; contributing to a renewed togetherness⁵⁵. “We don’t go any further. We are going elsewhere walking on the same road”, writes Kostas Axelos⁵⁶, where man will not be transitory and not eternal and without an eschatological horizon, nor certainly a stage of a continuous change with the aim of a certain indefinite and vague immortality. Perhaps the time has come to understand that if technique and technology seem to be straying towards ‘defect’ and becoming civilization’s “black horse, there is also the other view, this ‘other place’, of the poetic settling on earth, which aspires to the “white horse”, which for Christian thought is the Spirit of God⁵⁷. There is the true poetry, which “sows the future. It always does. And today the debt has not changed”, writes the poet Nikos Karousos, and continues: “For, happily still, neither the trees are missing, nor the ears, nor the sky, nor the sea, nor the breast. And yet we are in danger of seeing them vanish. Because the machines have gone their high-as-heaven way, and the mocking ape that has become the Adamic archetype laughs at the Deity. It’s something that will be paid for dearly. We’ve already undone the deepest roots. And we’re moving into

54. K. Axelos, *Αὐτὸ ποὺ ἐπέρχεται...*, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

55. Ioannis Petrou writes that religions “appear ‘on the communication level’ as the agents that can solve all problems”, *Θρησκεία καὶ κοινωνία. Κοινωνιολογικὴ ἀνάλυση τῶν σχέσεων θρησκείας καὶ κοινωνίας στὴ σύγχρονη πραγματικότητα*, Barbounakis Publications, Thessaloniki 2012, p. 11. Without further thought, we must distance ourselves from such a dangerous concept. We could say that theology can contribute to the development of interdisciplinarity and to overcoming the self-love and self-sufficiency that any scientific idiosyncrasy creates, and to the formation of the image of the real, which “is not finished, from whatever position we see it, within an ‘epoch’”. See N. G. Pentzikis, *Μητέρα Θεσσαλονίκη*, *op.cit.*, p. 135.

56. “We do not proceed further. We move elsewhere, yet along the same path. The divergence between speaking and acting – this is our great temptation. Everything that occurs, takes place in accordance with predictions already articulated – those of the audacious, who inevitably reaped what they could not but reap: dense ignorance, rejection, or, at best, reactions framed in backward-looking historicism or in well-intentioned progressive gestures», K. Axelos, *Αὐτὸ ποὺ ἐπέρχεται...*, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

57. See Chr. Malevitsis, *Ὁ φωτισμὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Δοκίμια τῆς αἰχμῆς*, «Οἱ τρεῖς ἀπειλές», *Oi Ekdoseis ton Filon*, Athens 1996, p. 52.

a Medieval Age of Technology with the now unholy examination of the stars. The time of the winged dog has arrived. The lover has become a form of death. And freakery and ideology reign over the world – east and west [...]. With the lights of the take-offs creepy, man is fattening up on lack of freedom for an inversion of the Underworld into the Upper World, on the other side by reciting Lenin's verses, on this side by shredding Jesus with the rage of economic egos, where the monopolies, empty of humanity, are raging. It's a very wild sight – the blinding Lucifer. But what a miracle, the water of the poets is also singing here. Still... And seeks the hearing of man, as hearty as eternity. We must escape from radical disaster and a dark doom. The machines are perfect and will become more and more perfect. Poetry today prays that man will one day meet his soul. And of course, God is the only Sign of this answer. Poetry prays today, recalls the roots, draws from the bitterness, and builds the benefit of suffering. We have recently seen the movie *Silence* – the desolation of everything. God-possessed Bergman, that visionary director, banged a terrible bell, bigger than the rockets. The take-off toward Hades. Man, cold frozen in the vastness of Space. However, Middle Ages and Whatever – man will reap resurrection, man will one day be dressed in white. Because poetry wants it – therefore, life wants it. For the Second of the Millennia to be illuminated”⁵⁸.

And if, as Karousos says, poetry and all poetics act like the lost prophecy, then George Themelis, the poet from Thessaloniki, shoots fairly straight when crashed, thus revealing the reality, he confesses: “An empty Cross / A shadow without flesh, an absence. // Don't lose your body, / Your body. // Keep your flesh: it evaporates”⁵⁹.

Your Holiness,

What would the Cross be without the body? What would the resurrection be without the body? This is the point of our confrontation. Behold Christ. Behold expectation. Theology and the Church are responsible for giving

58. N. Karouzos, «Γιὰ τὴν ποίηση», *Πεζὰ Κείμενα*, Ikaros Publicing, Athens 2010, pp. 53-54.

59. G. Themelis, *Τὰ Πράγματα*, Exodos Publications, Thessaloniki 1968, p. 58.

meaning to the world and life and restoring life to the lost expectation, beyond optimism and pessimism, or, better, to restoring the mystery of expectation in life⁶⁰. Behold...

60. See Chr. A. Stamoulis, *Ἡ γυναῖκα τοῦ Λὼτ καὶ ἡ σύγχρονη θεολογία*, Harmos Publications, Athens 2014, p. 23; Chr. A. Stamoulis, *Ἔρως καὶ θάνατος. Δοκιμὴ γιὰ ἓναν πολιτισμὸ τῆς σάρκωσης*, *op.cit.*, pp. 218-221. Cf. P. Panagiotopoulos, «Δυνατότητες ἐκκλησιαστικῆς παρέμβασης στὸν κυβερνοχώρο γιὰ τὴ διαφύλαξη τοῦ αὐθεντικοῦ Ὁρθόδοξου ἡθους», *Κληρονομία/Kleronomia* 39, I-II (2021), pp. 173-174: «[...] ἡ χαρὰ τῆς Ἀναστάσεως καὶ τῆς προσμονῆς τῆς Ὁγδόης Ἡμέρας κρύβεται στὴ σκιά τῶν κοινῶν φοβιῶν ποὺ ταλανίζουν τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου [= The joy of the Resurrection and the anticipation of the Eighth Day are hidden in the shadow of the common fears that trouble the sons of this age]».