Contemporary Human Being not as a Meta-Human but as a Natural Human Being in Christ:
The Contribution of Orthodox Theology

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The tragic division of the modern man and the failure to understand his nature as a complete psychosomatic entity resulted in the matter and corporeality's absolute prioritization. The body as such and the second body, the sensible world, is separated from its unity with the intelligible and the fall is consolidated.

The sensible world is not connected with the intelligible, the earth with heaven, man with angels, heaven with the present world. God's one and only creation is torn apart and modern man realizes the counterbalancing of his vocation. Instead of functioning, as Saint Maximus the Confessor says, as a ὡς «*συνεκτικώτατον ἐργαστήριον*»[1], destined to gather the

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1. Maximus the Confessor, *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91, 1305A. Maximus astonishingly describes how man would cure all the divisions of the world; In the first place, he would have to proceed to perfecting the knowledge of his own reason. Then, and having dwelled upon it, he could proceed dynamically to the unification of the divided creation: Firstly, by ending, through his behavior, the division of the world into heaven and the ecumene, proving that heaven is no other than this place in its unity. Besides, the tragic fission of the one creation, God's universe into heaven and earth is the consequence of man's conduct. He was then to unite, for the sake of his equality in knowledge with the angels, the sensible and the intelligible world, bringing forth one creation, the whole creation. And finally, at the end of this course, the created being studies the cognitive science of the reason of beings "... in which God's unknowable and uninterpretable knowledge is directly provided to him" («... *κατὰ τὴν ὁποία τοῦ παρέχεται ἀμεσιτεύτως ἡ ἀδιάγνωστος καὶ ἀνερμήνευτος ἔννοια τοῦ Θεοῦ*»). Maximus the Confessor, *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91, 1305D: «... *διὰ τὴν τελείαν πρὸς τὸν ἴδιον, ὡς ἔφην, λόγον καθ' ὅν ἐστιν*

fragments of creation, he has lost the knowledge of his own reason, «καθ' ὅν ἐστιν»[2], he has divided in itself and divided the whole of creation.

It was necessary to save at all costs the sensible part, to perpetuate the biological part and to ensure its uninterrupted residence in perpetuity. This, however, came up against the abyss of the being's constant change, as St. John Damascene famously notes: «ὧν γὰρ ἀπὸ τροπῆς ἤρξαντο τὸ εἶναι»[3], which inevitably bequeaths decay and death. The contemporary anthropology, of the so-called late modernity, deceives itself that it can overcome once and for all human life's mortality and finitude by using technology. Already at a theoretical level there is talk of the post-human, the bionic man[4], according to Professor Nanopoulos; from now on, the

γνῶσιν»; *ibid.*, PG 91, 1305D: «εἶτα τὸν παράδεισον καὶ τὴν οἰκουμένην διὰ τῆς οἰκείας ἁγιοπρεποῦς ἀγωγῆς ἑνώσας...»; *ibid.*, PG 91, 1309B: «Ἐντεῦθεν ὡς κατ' αὐτὸν λοιπὸν μὴ ἐχούσης πρὸς τὸν παράδεισον διαφορὰν τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς οἰκουμένης πάλιν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἐφάνη τοῖς μαθηταῖς συνδιαιτώμενος μετὰ τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀνάστασιν, δεικνὺς ὡς ἡ γῆ μία οὖσα τυγχάνει πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ἀδιαίρετος τὸν καθ' ὅν ἐστι λόγον τῆς κατὰ τὴν διαφορὰν διαιρέσεως ἐλεύθερον διασώζουσα»; *ibid.*, PG 91, 1308A: «εἶτα τὰ νοητὰ καὶ τὰ αἰσθητὰ πρὸς τούτοις ἑνώσας διὰ τὴν πρὸς ἀγγέλους κατὰ τὴν γνῶσιν ἰσότητα μίαν ποιήσῃ κτίσιν τὴν ἅπασαν κτίσιν...»; *ibid.*, PG 91, 1308AB: «... καθ' ἥν ... ἀκραιφνῶς λοιπὸν τὴν περὶ Θεοῦ καὶ ἀμεσιτεύτως παρέχεται τοῖς ἀξίοις ἀδιάγνωστον καὶ ἀνερμήνευτον ἔννοιαν».

2. *Ibid.*, PG 91, 1305D.

3. John Damascene, Ἔκδοσις ἀκριβὴς τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Πίστεως, PG 94, 796A. Cf. N. Matsoukas, Δογματικὴ καὶ Συμβολικὴ Θεολογία Βʹ, Ἔκθεση τῆς ὀρθόδοξης πίστης σὲ ἀντιπαράθεση μὲ τὴ δυτικὴ χριστιανοσύνη, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki ²1992, pp. 178-179: "[...] Therefore, the starting point of the initial and every movement of all creations, especially the rational ones, is their natural state, characterized by constant change and mutation. Created beings are in danger of losing even their very existence; only their relation to being ensures this existence. This key position is the common line of orthodox theology, whether one sees it on a specific basis or not, such as the teachings about the creation from nonbeing, the triadic God, the person of Jesus Christ and the purpose of the Church. If the doctrine loses this key position, it will surely follow slippery slopes".

4. Dim. Nanopoulos, Interview in: iefimerida.gr (16-2-2019): *https://www.iefimerida.gr/news/479406/kathigitis-dimitris-nanopoylos-erhetai-o-meta-anthropos-ti-leei-gia-ton-theo-ton-planiti*: "We've already been a part of the fourth industrial revolution. Soon the new man will appear. Man, as we know him... is coming to an end. We'll have chips in our brains and what will exist will be bionic man or, if you like, the "post-human", "superhuman", who will be totally different form us. That's the evolution of man, which this time will be carried out by ourselves".

machine will not exist and will not be understood as an external addition to him but as one of his internal, integral parts[5].

Descriptions of human-computer construction with digital data implants sound like a pure nightmare for the evolution of future anthropology[6].

5. Dion. Simopoulos, Interview in: *physicsgg.me* (23-10-2018): https://physicsgg.me/2018/1 0/23/%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BF%CE%BD%CF%8D%CF%83%CE%B7%CF%82-%CF% 83%CE%B9%CE%BC%CF%8C%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%BB%CE%BF%CF%82- %CE%BF-%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B8%CF%81%CF%8E%CF%80%CE%B9%CE%B D%CE%BF%CF%82-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9/: "In my statement, I expressed the belief that within the next 50 years remarkable achievements will happen, such as the construction of fully functioning human organs by 3D printers, the creation of vaccines for various cancers, while many people will be able to replace their limbs with bionics! Also, the interconnection of our daily lives with the internet will continue to grow with at least 230 billion devices connected online in a few decades". In the same interview, Simopoulos refers to Professor Konstantinos Daskalakis of M.I.T., who, speaking about artificial intelligence, said the following about the contact of man with the machine in the future: "[He argues that] reality might eventually disprove all predictions, such as the existence of personal secretaries with AI and self-driving cars, while in 15 years the interface of the human brain with technology will possibly become much more direct and the boundary between where the human begins and the machine ends will become more blurred, ending with the realization that the era of AI is coming loaded with promises, challenges and dangers. He even went on to analyze three possible scenarios for the evolution of AI in the next 5 to 50 years. According to the positive scenario, which he called 'Wonderland', the machines do the manual work while humans have more time for recreational activities or intellectual work, and the insurance system is saved, since the lack of young people working and paying contributions is made up for by the existence of robots, who don't need insurance or pensions. According to the negative scenario, 'Pessiland', science conquers general intelligence, yet it is not accessible to all, but only to the laboratories of corporations or states, which use it for exerting their imperialist influence. In the third scenario, 'Stagnatia', science fails to make the leap to general AI and relative stagnation prevails. In any case, it seems that a mixture of the three scenarios will eventually prevail".
6. Marina Bertzemi, *Ρομποτική: Ἐργασιακά, νομικὰ καὶ ἠθικὰ ζητήματα*, Master's thesis in Law and Informatics, submitted to the University of Macedonia and Democritus University of Thrace within the framework of the Interdepartmental Postgraduate Program in Law and Informatics, Thessaloniki 2022, p. 61: "Ilon Musk's eschatological prophecy at the International Forum on the Future of AI in Shanghai in 2019 was that by 2045 it is expected that autonomous robots will surpass the human race in every kind of cognitive capacity. This prospect represents a real danger to humanity. However, there is an 'antidote' to this bleak future – the fusion of man and machine, with implants in the human brain, which will allow him to control machines wirelessly and enrich his brain with the capabilities of AI. This will be the post-human, i.e. man's new version (Papakonstantinou

Biotechnology seems to promise the post-human and the *metaversal*, the universe beyond the various space-time physical constraints. In other words, man, with the irresistible power of technology, will not die and even the natural world will not be threatened with extinction, because technology can cure everything.

Obviously, this placement of technology in the transcendental and metaphysical realm gives it existential and soteriological dimensions. Theology again wrongly casts itself on modern man, deifying technology; in this direction it is not God who will save man from decay and death, but science that will prolong his life without limitations and limits. This is the Luciferian pride in full splendor: man as a god with the instrument of technology trying to crush death; standing attached to matter, trying to save it mechanically from zero, to which it inevitably moves.

The transcendence of nothingness, though, and the real victory over decaying and death does not come from man, but from God who became man for the sake of man's salvation. God's affirmation of matter in Christ is the model of the course on the basis of which modern man must move, realizing that the Word took on matter and through the cross and resurrection made it incorruptible, transforming it into a new life in Christ. The mystery of the matter and creation's incorruptibility, and its incorporation into the true life is abundantly offered in every Eucharistic assembly, in which salvation is realized as man's transformation in Christ and not as a mechanical reality.

We will be surprised, if we delve into the writings of the Church Fathers and see how they describe the enrichment and transformation of the entire psychosomatic human nature by the Lord's body and blood. St. Gregory of Nyssa says that the communion of body and blood

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2020; Chiang 2000)". Cf. *Κυριαχάτικη Δημοκρατία/Kyriakatiki Dimokratia*, 24-9-2023, p. 34: "Ilon Musk is 'playing' with the human brain. Ilon Musk, as he would like to believe, is closer to achieving... medical miracles; his neurotechnology company, Neuralink, has received the coveted approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (F.D.A.) to begin human trials. Neuralink has very ambitious goals, developing brain implants (chips) aimed at restoring very serious health problems, such as loss of movement and vision... The company says that B.C.I.'s initial goal is to give people the ability to control a computer cursor or keyboard by only using their thoughts. Neuralink is part of the emerging brain-computer interface industry or B.C.I., focusing on systems that decode brain signals and translate them into commands for external technologies".

through the bodily senses transmits the remedy of immortality within the bowels[7] of the mortal nature and makes its permutation, always on the borders of the participation and the distinction between the created and the uncreated, to the undefiled divine nature[8]. He stresses that, through concretion, sanctification is obtained, "through the flesh the body and blood are imparted to those whose constitution is of body and blood"[9] so that the "human elements, which the God-receiving flesh admitted"[10], may be transmuted through the reception of the uncorrupted gift and the whole man may be incorporated into the body of life.

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem corroborates the above, by adding the following revealing words: the contact of the body and blood sanctifies the lips, the hands, the eyes, all the senses[11]. Based on this figure, St. Nicholas Kabasilas speaks of the Christianized mind and the will, i.e. Christomorphism[12].

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7. Gregory of Nyssa, *Λόγος Κατηχητικὸς ὁ Μέγας*, PG 45, 93C: «Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλως ἐντός τι γίγνεσθαι τοῦ σώματος, μὴ διὰ βρώσεως καὶ πόσεως τοῖς σπλάχνοις καταμιγνύμενον».

8. *Ibid.*, PG 45, 97B: «ὁ δὲ φανερωθεὶς Λόγος διὰ τοῦτο κατέμιξεν ἑαυτὸν τῇ ἐπικήρῳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων φύσει, ἵνα τῇ τῆς θεότητος κοινωνίᾳ συναποθεωρηθῇ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον».

9. *Ibid.*, PG 45, 97B: «τούτου χάριν … ἑαυτὸν ἐνσπείρει διὰ τῆς σαρκός, οἷς ἡ σύστασις ἐξ οἴνου τε καὶ ἄρτου ἐστί, τοῖς σώμασι τῶν πεπιστευκότων κατακιρνάμενος...».

10. *Ibid.*, PG 45, 97B: «Ἐπεὶ οὖν καὶ τοῦτο τὸ μέρος (ἤγουν τὸν ἄρτον καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ) ἡ Θεοδόχος ἐκείνου σὰρξ πρὸς τὴν σύστασιν ἑαυτῆς παρεδέξατο...».

11. Cyrill of Jerusalem, *Κατηχ. Μυσταγ.* Ε′ 9, ΒΕΠΕΣ 39, 262 (32-34): «"Ἀμήν", ἁγιάζου καὶ ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος μεταλαμβάνων Χριστοῦ. Ἔτι δὲ τῆς νοτίδος ἐνούσης τοῖς χείλεσι χερσὶν ἐπαφώμενος καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ μ Interview ἔτωπον καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἁγίαζε αἰσθητήρια».

12. Nikolaos Kabasilas, *Ἑρμηνεία τῆς Θείας Λειτουργίας*, PG 150, 584D: «Καὶ γὰρ ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα καὶ πᾶσαι δυνάμεις αὐτίκα πνευματικαί, ὅτι ψυχὴ μὲν ψυχῇ, σῶμα δὲ σώματι καὶ αἷμα αἵματι μίγνυται. Καὶ τί τὸ ἐντεῦθεν; Τὰ βελτίω κρείττω τῶν ἐλαττόνων καὶ τὰ θεῖα τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἐπικρατεῖ. καὶ ὅ φησι περὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως Παῦλος, τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς καπίνεται, τὸ δὲ ἑξῆς; ζῶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγώ, φησί, ζῇ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός». Cf. P. Nellas, *Ζῶον θεούμενον, Προοπτικὲς γιὰ μιὰ ὀρθόδοξη κατανόηση τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*, Harmos Publications, Athens ²2000, p. 209: "This 'attachment' and subsequent 'modification' of the man's biological dimensions and functions into functions of the body of Christ is not taking place through the formers' distraction, but through their transformation. As Kabasilas explains, Christ "enters into us in a real, bodily way, through the biological functions ... He makes these functions his own, He 'inhabits' them, is mixed, unconfusedly but truly, with all our psychosomatic powers, and in this natural mystical mixing, under the drastic influence of His resurrected flesh, He transmutes, transforms and renovates our psychosomatic functions into functions of

The Orthodox theology in the era of late modernity is confronted with the complete technicalization of human life: AI, algorithms that enable machines to understand their environment[13], brain implants promising to cure difficult diseases such as paralysis[14] and blindness[15], the creation of humanoid[16] robots, are only some of the applications that the overwinning

His own body". Kabasila's anthropology is thoroughly explained by Panagiotis Nellas, whose contribution to the exposition and interpretation of the anthropology of the Church Fathers has been decisive in the Orthodox field.

13. Marina Bertzemi, *ibid.*, p. 22.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 61: "In 2006, Matthew Nagle became the first patient with a severe spinal cord injury to be able to drive a computer thanks to implants, thus becoming the first cyborg in history. As a rule, the primary aim of these implants is to enhance the brains of perfectly healthy people".

15. *Κυριακάτικη Δημοκρατία/Kyriakatiki Dimokratia*, 24-9-2023, p. 34: "In addition to helping patients with paralysis, specialists believe that B.C.I. could one day help treat diseases such as blindness and mental illnesses. Ilon Musk recently stated that 'even if a person never had sight because he was born blind, we believe we can restore his sight', because the development of the implant in the brain with the right adaptations each time will allow various medical 'miracles', such as allowing the blind to see, the paralyzed to walk, and curing those with anemia, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Musk has expressed his intention for the Neuralink to explore these future use cases, as well as possible applications for healthy people". It is obvious that the scientists have entered the realm of theology, the arrogance of their words and their firm conviction that they, as gods, can now perform miracles through technology, as described in the New Testament, i.e. that the blind can see and the paralyzed can walk. Their exorbitant attitude leads them to exhibit an unprecedented pride, so that the rebellion against the Creator is repeated, this time with the instrument of technology.

16. Marina Bertzemi, *ibid.*, 63. Cf. *Κυριακάτικη Δημοκρατία/Kyriakatiki Dimokratia*, ἀρ. φ./no. 613, 27-8-2023, in the culture pages, edited by Nikos Papoutsopoulos, an article by Konstantinos Vathiotis, former Deputy Minister of Culture of Greece. Konstantinos Vathiotis, in the context of this article, presents one of the many "foreshadowing" texts by Sarantos Kargakos, entitled "*Homo Robato*" published in the Sixth Volume of *Προβληματισμῶν* (Gutenberg Publications, p. 179), where this great Greek 20th century "prophet" of the 20th century cautioned that "we hope for a better automation, so that we can get rid of everything human, to resemble our creators, the machines". "We are slowly becoming 'perfect' creations of 'perfect' creations; in reality, though, it is not a creation but a monstrosity that takes away our ability to 'kiss' our psychic world, to wake up from slumber". Feeling "an indefinable fear as if we were in danger from ourselves, we are living this new revolution that will transform our world into a world of automatons", an "alienation process" that "has begun for us and no one knows when it will end and if it will end". At this point, Kargakos invokes Erich Fromm's view that "the most radical change that automatism will bring about in man's nature is his

technological spirit of man, autonomous from God, is evangelizing as the future for the salvation of humanity[17].

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inability to love". Love, Kargakos continues, "is normal man's 'fabric', the basis of all of his emotions"; when "man is alienated and ends up of being incapable of feeling love", he becomes a "repulsive combination of animal and machine", a "man-cadaver". For Kargakos, the culture of buttons and computers marks the humanity's "great hour", i.e. the deification of the machine. "The 20th century was a century of the great horrors, where the victory of technology meant the defeat of man; where the scientific dream destroyed many human dreams". As "everything tends towards automatization", more and more people "will be regulated, wound up, programmed...". Taking his cue once more from Erich Fromm's quote that "automatons cannot love", Kargakos interprets it as follows: Automatons "do not have the power to exist as self-governing presences, but as imitations, as identical versions of a 'given' pattern. Roboticization seems to be the destiny of a declining man in a declining age, having previously corrupted and loathed every value...". The 20th century Greek "prophet" closes his timeless text with the following statement, which contains a schematic oxymoron: "The world we live in hurts us. It is a world in decline the very moment it is ascending". In the same article, Konstantinos Vathiotis also refers to another text by Kargakos entitled "Science and Logic", published in the same volume of *Προβληματισμοί* (p. 177): "Behind our eyes are the TV screens. The brain is replaced by a written tape recorder and tomorrow by a silicon chip". Indeed, the text by Sarantos Kargakos is prophetic with its masterly conclusion about the fall of this world; the exposition of his views by Konstantinos Vathiotis is very successful in this respect. See also Manolis Kottakis, *Κυριακάτικη Δημοκρατία/KyriakatikiDimokratia*, *ibid*: "... robots will replace humans, who, as the arrogant of the new age say, are unfit for the Fourth Industrial Revolution".

17. https://*www.ethnos*.gr/technology/article/255327/apopeiresgiaaioniazohapothntexnhthnoh mosynhposthanikhsoymetotelossymfonametoysepisthmones: According to Dr. Pratik Desai, founder of many startups, if there is enough video and audio footage of their loved ones, there is a "100% chance" for our relatives to "live with us forever". The process is the following: Through video, audio recordings, documents and photographs of a person we could feed an AI system that would learn everything about that person. Users could then design an avatar that looks and behaves exactly like the human "model". Desai, who has created a platform similar to ChatGPT, even tweeted how this "could be possible by the end of the year". But this does not end here: ChatGPT has enabled the creation of the "Live Forever" project, a virtual reality robot that adopts the speech and behavior of the human it is asked to imitate. Artur Sukov, the founder of this project, who said in 2022 that this technology would be available in five years, now says that due to recent advances in AI, it will happen sooner. Another company specializing in artificial intelligence, Rememory, has created a "memory space" that allows reconnecting with people who are no longer with us in an "immersion" experience. The company uses video and photos, as well as a seven-hour interview with the person while they were alive, to build the "virtual" person, who will appear on a 400-inch screen, having adopted all the expressions, speech and behavior of the person we wish to communicate with. In 2020, a TV show in South Korea showed

Now, let's take a closer look at what the scientists mean by referring to the virtual person and the authentic digital representation of the human being, an AI offspring. It is a technology that can create a digital hologram of a person before his or her death, using photographs, audio recordings and a series of video interviews while he or she is alive. This video footage is then used to train an AI system, which learns everything about the person, even mimicking the way they speak and behave. The final product of this process, which is compatible with virtual and augmented reality systems, is uploaded to a digital corporate platform where a dialogue, or rather an illusion of a dialogue with the deceased person is taking place via an internet connection[18].

Is this a digital blow to death or a modern culture's deception, related to the images' intangible reality? Is the deceased's intangible digital copy, the man we really lost, or a scarecrow of a man, an abomination of engineering, which without moral barriers it will stop at nothing? Is it possible for someone to believe that the virtual person he or she's talking to is the deceased relative or friend and not an algorithm that answers mechanically to a digital data repository?

And yet, people who use these apps, mainly in the US mainly but also in the UK, have already felt since 2020 that they are in some form of communication with their deceased person; the reason, of course, is grief and loss. They think that this is a way of easing the pain of losing the loved ones. Still, this is nothing else but an illusory communication with the deceased; it makes the loss even more painful and can lead to serious psychological problems for the user of these applications. This is

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the virtual reunion of a mother and her seven-year-old daughter, who had passed away in 2016. Again, Ray Kurzweil, a former Google engineer who is attempting to create a digital replica of humans that will make them, let's say, immortal, has said that his father passed away when he was 22 years old and how he "hopes to talk to him again" through this "re-creation". Cf. https://www.newsbomb.gr/bombplus/texnologia/story/1468083/psifiaki-a nastasi-borei-i-epistimi-na-zontanepsei-to-myalo-enos-nekroy-anthropou. In this article, Masataka Watanabe, a professor at the University of Tokyo School of Engineering, describes in detail how a person's mind can be digitally downloaded by the use of a brain-machine interface while the mind's owner is still alive. Many ethical questions are raised by such a project, expressed by his colleagues, as the reader will understand in more detail.

18. https://www.news247.gr/technologia/techniti-noimosyni-nekri-milise-stin-kideia-tis-kai-apantise-se-erotiseis-syggenon.9727273.html.

certainly a major issue with moral, psychological, social, economic and other implications.

However, there are academics who speak of changing and evolving attitudes towards death as a result of technology[19]. Elaine Kasket, author of the book on death in the digital age: *All the Ghosts in the Machine: Illusions of Immortality in the Digital Age*[20], seems to regard all these developments as simply a "continuation of existing behavior". "People", she explains, "have always participated in various kinds of rituals where things are done with the deceased's belongings, where certain property items are preserved. "This", she continues, and concludes, "could be seen as a technological version of these analogical, physical rituals".

Stefanie Schillmöller, an expert on trends around death, seems to retain a similar view. "There is a theory called 'continuing bonds', which says that it is perfectly normal to have a kind of relationship with the deceased, to remember and have an inner dialogue with them. We may have lost the person, but we haven't lost that relationship. This

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19. W.-J. She et al., *"*Living Memory Home: Understanding Continuing Bond in the Digital Age through Backstage Grieving*"*, in: *CHI '21*: *Proceedings of the 2021 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, May 8-13, 2021, Yokohama, Japan pp. 1-14: "More interestingly, studies also provide design directions for technologies currently used by living people to consider how people will be represented digitally after their deaths, to better facilitate the grieving process of surviving families and friends. Following these, social networking sites such as Facebook have implemented 'post-mortem' profile features, providing a personal archive of the deceased, as well as a virtual space for online memorial practices. Brubaker and Callison-Burch outlined three approaches to post-mortem digital profile management: i) Configuration-Based: enables users to make decisions pre-mortem about what the system should do after their deaths; ii) Inheritance-Based: transfers ownership of digital artifacts from the deceased to an heir; iii) Stewardship-Based: focuses on the responsibilities to care for the deceased loved one and the grieving community". Designs for how to digitally represent the dead after death are offered to companies like Facebook, which creates "post-mortem" profiles that users can manage "pre-mortem", deciding before they die what they want the system to do after they die. Cf. J. R. Brubaker and Vanessa Callison-Burch, *Legacy contact: Designing and implementing Post-mortem Stewardship at Facebook*. *CHI '16: Proceedings of the 2016 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, May 7-12, 2016, San Jose, California USA, pp. 2908-2919.
20. Elaine Kasket, *All the Ghosts in the Machine: Illusions of Immortality in the Digital Age*, Little, Brown Book Group, UK, April 2019. Also see Ev. Carroll and J. Romano, *Your digital afterlife: When Facebook, Flickr and Twitter are your estate, what's your legacy?*, New Riders, Berkeley, CA 2010.

perspective of mourning is becoming more and more common"[21]. It can henceforth be served digitally, with the representation of the deceased now being alive and not based exclusively on memory[22].

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21. https://www.in2life.gr/article/2000825/ti-einai-to-life-story-avatar-poy-yposhetai-na-ep anaferei-sth-zoh-anthropoys-poy-ehoyn-pethanei: James Vlahos, CEO of Here After AI, says: "It's not unheard of to collect and store memories of the people we love. But we offer a way that makes it easy to collect memories and equally easy to access them. It is as simple as opening an app, asking a question about someone's life and immediately hearing what they have to say". What exactly is this: a new perspective on grief? Digital? A new perspective on death? Digital? Who'd have thought we'd get this far? And yet, the rampant use of technology and the dominance of the digital presence of the image has long seemed to be gaining momentum to impose itself on the consciousness of immature, unconverted and ignorant of theology users as a panacea, as a supposed victory of Ai over death. If these people knew in depth the existential truth of the person for which theology has fought battles in the history of the Church, they would understand that the avatar, this digital persona of the dead is a caricature of the original person, a mask, a horrible virtual abomination that insults the memory of the dead. This deformation of the man's image, which modern technology attempts to present to us as a normal evolution and make us addicted to it, must be emphatically condemned and castigated by orthodox theology; without further ado, the latter must reiterate the urgent need for a dialogue between science and theology from the beginning, having man at its center.

22. Elaine Kasket, "Continuing bonds in the age of social networking: Facebook as a modern-day medium", *Cruse Bereavement Care* 31, 2 (2012), p. 66: "The continuing bond experienced by mourners can be inferred from modes of address, frequency and persistence of posting messages, and frequency of participants' reported visits to the profiles. It can be seen in the way in which people update the deceased person on everyday things long after the death – 'I think your cousin's so cute', 'We won the game', 'Your brother had his confirmation the other day', 'We're going ice fishing this weekend'. The reassuring sense of 'everydayness' is echoed by research participants: 'I do feel such a comfort in having a normal conversation with her' ('Ava'). There is an investment in the maintenance of the bond: 'I check it... almost every other day, give or take' ('Clare', a year after her friend's death). The persisting digital self and the mourner's bond with it is experienced as somehow 'real', and there is a terrible fear of that bond being broken. '[If the profile were deleted] it would feel like I wouldn't be able to talk to her properly... it would be deleting the last bit of her that's still almost real.' ('Ava'). This brings up a potential criticism of Facebook's current policy of removing profiles at the family's request (Facebook, 2011b). Friends have traditionally been a disenfranchised group of mourners (Carroll & Landry, 2010) but have been admitted into the community of mourners via social networking, even if they had not known the deceased person well. 'A piece of who he was is still going to live on, his heartbeat will always be with his family... but for the rest of us, as a friend, or the people who sat next to him in class, it's a way for them to remember him too... to feel connected' ('Ruby'). The threat of profile removal, however, means that these

friends still run the risk of being marginalised – and traumatised. 'I would be close to inconsolable. Having something that may seem so small to some people is everything to me. [His profile] is the one last thread of him that I have. If we lost it, it would be like losing him all over again. There are just certain things that rip the wounds open.' ('Ava')". The description of the digital relationship and digital links with the deceased person profile is shocking. The mourners use the latter's profile to console themselves, sending them messages, mentioning events of everyday life as if they were present, thinking they are really communicating with them. This digital false communication, which is an illusion, risks trapping the mourners in endless grief, which they will not be able to overcome if the digital profile of the deceased is lost; this loss, according to the mourners, would be as if they had really had them for a second time. This is a huge self-trapping in the age of digital technology, with negative consequences that can lead to complete despair and acute psychological problems for the users of these applications. In any case, state intervention is required to limit the AI's uncontrolled use and to inform citizens about the harsh fairy tale and the overcoming of pain and loss, which not only cannot be overcome, but becomes unbearable with the digital illusion; you have to admit the loss in order to overcome it. The Church and patristic theology have much to offer to the mourner in this direction; see our study on this subject: Ἐν τῷ φωτὶ τοῦ προσώπου Σου. Θάνατος καὶ Αἰσθήσεις στὴν Ἐξόδιο Ἀκολουθία, Ant. Stamoulis Publications, Thessaloniki 2012. For a contrasting view on dealing with pain and loss in the digital age, see: W.-J. She et al., "Living Memory Home: Understanding Continuing Bond in the Digital Age through Backstage Grieving", op.cit., pp. 1-14: "Early studies reported the use of online forums and chat rooms as virtual spaces for social support for the bereaved, where people share stories about their deceased loved ones. More recently, driven by the goal to explore new possibilities in technology design to enable people to be more expressive in engagement with online bereavement tools, empirical work involving surveys and in-depth interviews has been carried out to understand how bereavement is experienced in the context of digital technology. These studies highlight the direct way digital technology has been used to support bereavement, by bringing friends and families from many geographically dispersed locations to 'remember together, even when apart'". Nevertheless, this digital gathering of people, while it is not reprehensible and may temporarily help the bereaved psychologically through conversations with acquaintances and friends about the loss of their loved ones, suffers from the fact that it is completely useless for the deceased. On the other hand, the ecclesiastical gathering not only softens the hearts of the relatives and friends of the deceased by means of the superlative hymns, but also becomes very beneficial for the convert himself, because the whole body of the Church continuously prays for him, «ὅπως Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς τάξῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἐν τόπῳ φωτεινῷ». However, the relevant literature on new digital dimensions of death, funeral, mourning and loss is not negligible. For the reader's information, we refer to studies and conference proceedings on these topics as early as 2000: Carroll and J. Romano, op.cit.; Jocelyn M. Degroot, "Maintaining relational continuity with the deceased on Facebook", OME-GA-Journal of Death and Dying 65, 3 (2012), pp. 195-212; Donna Freitas, The happiness effect: How social media is driving a

We have the feeling that these scientists exceed all limits, reaching to hubris and opting for an anthropology of the fleshless and essentially non-existent human being. A new Docetism is making its appearance, a creature that seems to resemble a human being, but, in reality, it is not.

Against this heretical anthropology of the digital, fleshless, intangible and virtual man of the late modernity's technological civilization, Orthodox theology must reveal and testify, perhaps more than any other previous era, to its anthropology –integrated and undivided–, which includes and encompasses body and spirit. As far as the sanctity of the body and matter are concerned underestimated by modern civilization, Orthodox theology must speak emphatically of the incarnation of the Word[23] and

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generation to appear perfect at any cost, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017; Emily Getty et al., "I said your name in an empty room: Grieving and continuing bonds on Facebook", in: *CHI 11: Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, May 7-11, 2011, Vancouver BC, pp. 997-1000; G. Hagman, "Mourning: a review and reconsideration", *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 76, 5 (1995), pp. 909-925; R. Hertz, "A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death", in: Ant. C. G. M. Robben (ed.), *Death, Mourning and Burial, A Cross-Cultural Reader*, Blackwell Publisshing, Malden MA 2004; Melissa D. Irwin, "Mourning 2.0 – Continuing bonds between the living and the dead on Facebook", *OMEGA-Journal of Death and Dying* 72, 2 (2015), pp. 119-150; D. Klass and T. Walter, "Processes of grieving: how bonds are continued", in: Margaret S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson and W. Stroebe (eds.), *Handbook of Bereavement Research: Consequences, Coping, and Care*, American Psychological Association, Washington DC 2001, pp. 431-448; Rhonda N. McEwen and Kathleen Scheaffer, "Virtual mourning and memory construction on Facebook: Here are the terms of use", *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 33, 3-4 (2013), pp. 64-75; W. Odom et al., "Passing on & putting to rest: understanding bereavement in the context of interactive technologies", in: *CHI '10: Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, April 10-15, 2010, Atlanta, Georgia U.S.A., pp. 1831-1840; Kelly R. Rossetto, Pamela J. Lannutti, and Elena C. Strauman, "Death on Facebook: Examining the roles of social media communication for the bereave", *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 32, 7 (2015), pp. 974-994; T. Walter, "New mourners, old mourners: Online memorial culture as a chapter in the history of mourning", *New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia* 21, 1-2 (2015), pp. 10-24; T. Walter, R. Hourizi, Wendy Moncur, and Stacey Pitsillides, "Does the internet change how we die and mourn? Overview and analysis", *OMEGA-Journal of Death and Dying* 64, 4 (2012), pp. 275-302.

23. John Damascene, *Πρὸς τοὺς διαβάλλοντας τὰς ἁγίας εἰκόνας*, Α΄, 6, PG 94, 1245ΑΒ: «Οὐ προσκυνῶ τῇ ὕλῃ, προσκυνῶ δὲ τὸν τῆς ὕλης δημιουργόν, τὸν ὕλην δι' ἐμὲ γενόμενον καὶ ἐν ὕλῃ κατοικῆσαι καταδεξάμενον καὶ δι' ὕλης τὴν σωτηρίαν μου ἐργασάμενον, καὶ σέβων οὐ παύσομαι τὴν ὕλην, δι' ἧς ἡ σωτηρία μου εἴργασται. Σέβω δὲ οὐχ ὡς θεόν –ἄπαγε; πῶς γὰρ τὸ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων τὴν γένεσιν ἐσχηκὸς θεός;–

its consequences, which are collectively extended to the human race[24]. The human body is transformed, enriched, and through the Resurrection becomes incorruptible. Christ through the Resurrection abolishes death ontologically, i.e. actually. Biological death remains – not as the man's end, but as his entrance into the Kingdom of God, which he anticipates and which will be completed in the Eschata with the body's re-admission[25].

The emergence of a theological approach to the sacrament of the faithful departed[26] and of the sacred memorials through a patristic prism can truly contribute to the real consolation of the mourners and the alleviation of their pain for the loss of their beloved ones; by following this path, the Requiem mass[27], powerfully conveys the message that the body «ὑποχωρεῖ ἄχρι καιροῦ καὶ λύεται εἰς τὰ ἐξ ὧν συνετέθη, ἀλλὰ ἐπ' οὐδενὶ δὲν μεταχωρεῖ στὸ μὴ ὄν»[28].

εἰ καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ σῶμα θεὸς διὰ τὴν καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἔνωσιν γεγονὸς ἀμεταβλήτως, ὅπερ τὸ χρῖσαν, καὶ μεῖναν, ὅπερ ἦν τῇ φύσει, σὰρξ ἐψυχωμένη ψυχῇ λογικῇ τε καὶ νοερᾷ, ἠργμένη, οὐκ ἄκτιστος. Τὴν δέ γε λοιπὴν ὕλην σέβω καὶ δι' αἰδοῦς ἄγω, δι' ἧς ἡ σωτηρία μου γέγονεν, ὡς θείας ἐνεργείας καὶ χάριτος ἔμπλεων».

24. For the theology of the body and its exculpation through its appropriation by the Divine Word, see Cr. A. Stamoulis, *Φύση καὶ Ἀγάπη καὶ ἄλλα μελετήματα*, Palimpsiston Publications, Thessaloniki 1999, pp. 151-152: "the honor offered to the body is the highest honor, it symbolizes the temple, it is the temple of the third person of the Holy Trinity. Christ honors ... human nature".

25. Gregory of Nyssa, *Λόγος Κατηχητικὸς ὁ Μέγας*, PG 45, 52CD: «ὁ γὰρ τὴν ἀναληφθεῖσαν παρ' ἑαυτοῦ ψυχὴν πάλιν ἑνώσας τῷ οἰκείῳ σώματι διὰ τῆς δυνάμεως ἑαυτοῦ τῆς ἑκατέρῳ τούτων παρὰ τὴν πρώτην σύστασιν ἐμμιχθείσης οὕτω γενικωτέρῳ τινὶ λόγῳ τὴν νοερὰν οὐσίαν τῇ αἰσθητῇ συγκατέμιξεν, τῆς ἀρχῆς κατὰ τὸ ἀκόλουθον ἐπὶ τὸ πέρας εὐοδουμένης. ἐν γὰρ τῷ ἀναληφθέντι παρ' αὐτοῦ ἀνθρώπῳ πάλιν μετὰ τὴν διάλυσιν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπανελθούσης, οἷον ἀπό τινος ἀρχῆς εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν τῇ δυνάμει κατὰ τὸ ἴσον ἡ τοῦ διακριθέντος ἕνωσις διαβαίνει. καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ μυστήριον τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ περὶ τὸν θάνατον οἰκονομίας καὶ τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστάσεως, τὸ διαλυθῆναι μὲν τῷ θανάτῳ τοῦ σώματος τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τὴν ἀναγκαίαν τῆς φύσεως ἀκολουθίαν μὴ κωλῦσαι, εἰς ἄλληλα δὲ πάλιν ἐπαναγαγεῖν διὰ τῆς ἀναστάσεως, ὡς ἂν αὐτὸς γένοιτο μεθόριον ἀμφοτέρων, θανάτου τε καὶ ζωῆς, ἐν ἑαυτῷ μὲν στήσας διαιρουμένην τῷ θανάτῳ τὴν φύσιν, αὐτὸς δὲ γενόμενος ἀρχὴ τῆς τῶν διῃρημένων ἑνώσεως».

26. N. A. Matsoukas, *Μυστήριον ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶς κεκοιμημένων καὶ ἄλλα μελετήματα* (Φ.Θ.Β. 24), P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1992, p. 23.

27. For this, see our study: *Ἐν τῷ φωτὶ τοῦ προσώπου Σου...*, *op.cit*.

28. Gregory of Nyssa, *Λόγος Κατηχητικὸς ὁ Μέγας* PG 45, 33D: «Λύεται δὲ τὸ αἰσθητόν, οὐκ ἀφανίζεται. Ἀφανισμὸς μὲν γάρ ἐστιν, ἡ εἰς τὸ μὴ ὂν μεταχώρησις; λύσις δὲ ἡ εἰς τὰ τοῦ κόσμου στοιχεῖα πάλιν, ἀφ' ὧν τὴν σύστασιν ἔσχεν, διάλυσις.

That is why Saint Gregory of Nyssa speaks of the sensible elements' parting, not of its annihilation. The Church Fathers are absolutely certain of the continuation of the departed' life in the hope of resurrection, which is why they do not lament death[29]. St. John Chrysostom will say that excessive mourning calls into question the belief in the resurrection. For you do not weep for the dead as «ἄχρι καιροῦ χωριζόμενον ἀπὸ ἐσένα ἀλλὰ ὡς ἀπολωλότα»[30].

And he refers to the example of Christ, who at the sight of his dead friend Lazarus, weeps. His tear becomes the model of man's attitude in the face of loss. In fact, St. Cyril of Alexandria, the supreme theologian and Patriarch of Alexandria, comments on Christ's act by saying the famous: «Ἐδάκρυσεν οὖν ἡ ἀδάκρυτος φύσις». Again, St. Gregory of Nyssa will speak of the joy and relief that tears offer to man, emphasizing the affirmation in the ἐφ' ἡμῖν[31]; the man of the Church is not that much cruel and beastly not to weep before death.

Saint Paul's dictum: «κλαίετε μετὰ κλαιόντων καὶ χαίρετε μετὰ χαιρόντων»[32] will imbue the behavior of the faithful with reverence and modest silence before the mystery of death. At the same time, however, it will also exert a profound influence on the thinking of the Church Fathers, who, living the experience of the Resurrection[33] and wishing to

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Τὸ δὲ ἐν τούτοις γενόμενον οὐκ ἀπόλωλε, κἂν ἐκφεύγῃ τὴν κατάληψιν τῆς ἡμετέρας αἰσθήσεως».
29. The substance of hope, which in the context of Orthodoxy is not abstract but tangible, stemming from the power of resurrection, if internalized by man, then death is abolished. Then «ἀπὸ τοῦ μνήματος ὁ λογισμὸς μπορεῖ νὰ μεταβεῖ στὴν ἀνάσταση» (John Chrysostom, *Περὶ ὑπομονῆς*, PG 60, 728). Then the attention is distracted "from the (temporary) destruction and segues into the future glory" (John Chrysostom, *Εἰς Λαζ. Λογ.* 5, 1, PG 48, 1019). In other words, the Bible and the Church Fathers' orthodox theology affirms the unquestionability of the Resurrection, by refusing to offer due cause to death. This is expressed on two levels: In funeral rites and customs that should not indicate loss and destruction but the Light of Resurrection, and in mourning –not excessive, but an affirming one of habit and daily companionship that indicates the horrible separation that you cannot bear. This is also the tear of Christ to his friend, who is separated from him (*John* 11, 35-36).
30. John Chrysostom, *Περὶ ὑπομονῆς*, PG 60, 726.
31. Gregory of Nyssa, *Εἰς Πουλχερίαν λόγος*, PG 46, 368B.
32. *Rom.* 12, 15.
33. They did not theologize about death without taking into account the experience of the Resurrection and its catalytic consequences, which spread throughout human

protect the flock from incidents of incessant mourning and incessant fear, an alien and idolatrous behavior, incompatible with the Orthodox ethos, they will emphatically discern the tears and emotion for their loved ones, who have laid "in a place of great light and grassy fields"[34], from the unrepentant and contrite mourning[35].

Instead of mourning, they propose perpetual prayer in the memorials «ὅπως ὁ ἐν Τριάδι Θεὸς τάξῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ τοῦ προσώπου Του». This, from the point of view of orthodox theology, is the only profit and delight, because according to Saint John Chrysostom, «δυνατόν ἐστι καὶ συγγνώμης αὐτοῖς συναγαγεῖν»[36]. The supreme interpreter of Orthodox theology adds that this profit and delight becomes even greater during the liturgical recollection of the names of the deceased in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, because «τὸ κοινὸν τῆς οἰκουμένης κεῖται καθάρσιον»[37].

To conclude, nowadays, during the Postmodern era, Orthodox theology and the Church, based on its biblical and patristic self-consciousness, should comprehensively present its anthropology; she should simultaneously denounce the aberrations of science, especially when the latter proclaims digital blows to death and digital copies of the dead. The discourse of theology, as «πῦρ φλέγον καὶ ὡς πέλυξ κόπτων πέτραν»[38] has to shatter the Apollinarian-like anthropological

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nature, something we often forget when we are dealing with the concept of death. The experience of the resurrection made them capable to see in a vision as already made and present the anticipated mutual reconnection and reunion of the same elements in the first unbroken unity, as it is already described in the vision of Ezekiel's dried bones.

34. Μ. Εὐχολόγιον, Ἀκολουθία νεκρώσιμος εἰς ἱερεῖς, p. 337.

35. Such a mourning is a passion, which offends the mind and leads to unconsolable mourning and to foul manners and things, according to St. John Chrysostom, the supreme commentator of Orthodox theology (Περὶ ὑπομονῆς, PG 60, 723). The discourse on the foul morals and things clearly points to funerary customs and traditions that should not indicate loss and destruction, but the light of the Resurrection (Εἰς Ἰωάννην Ὁμιλ. 85, 7, PG 59, 467).

36. John Chrysostom, Εἰς Α΄ Κορ. Ὁμ. 41, 5, PG 61, 361.

37. John Chrysostom, ibid., PG 61, 361. Then is the moment of the epinician, then the King of Heaven and Earth is present, and «... εὐφημοῦνται μὲν καὶ ὅσοι τῆς νίκης ἐκοινώνησαν, ἀφίενται δὲ καὶ ὅσοι ἐν δεσμοῖς εἰσι διὰ τὸν καιρόν» (John Chrysostom, Εἰς Πράξ. Ὁμ. 21, 5, PG 60, 170).

38. Jeremiah 23, 29.

abominations and to everlastingly denounce in an everlasting and continuous manner that death is beaten only via death!