

HOMO DIGITUS AS A MISSIONARY CHALLENGE IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITISATION

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ABSTRACT: Homo Digitus as a Missionary Challenge in the Context of Digitisation.

The issue of technology and digitisation has become a kind of destiny of contemporary man. Technology and education through digitisation seems to be the last frontier for the new generation. By its very nature, the technical tool is heterogeneous both for whoever uses it and for what it is used for: it is heterogeneous for man, for mind and for meaning.

Two elements always coexist in culture: the technical element and the organic element, and the definitive victory of the former over the latter marks something that is not in keeping with man and the purpose for which it was created. Technique remains alien to the symbols of the spiritual world, it reflects nothing, it creates a new reality, everything in it is present and replaces the irrational organic element with the rational and autonomously organised element. Christian eschatology links the transfiguration of the earth and the world to the action of the Holy Spirit, while technical eschatology aspires to master the earth and the universe, to dominate them by means of mechanical instruments. The question of technology thus ultimately becomes a spiritual and religious problem, the solution to which will decide the fate of humanity.

Keywords: *mission, Church, digitalization, anthropocentrism, deification, grace, communion, eschatology.*

Preliminaries

It has become quite commonplace to say that contemporary man lives in fear and sinks from one day to the next into a state of indescribable agony.

He is constantly overcoming daily hardships: economic deprivation, crises of identity and spirituality. His existential foundations are shaken and his whole being falls apart in a chaotic atmosphere.

The postmodern man is disheartened and loses his inner balance. The mental structure is increasingly out of tune with the rational civilisation of the technicalisation¹ of the third millennium.

Fallen into sin, man has sought to ease his suffering and the burden of his environment through various instruments. These he sought in the strictly immanent world, and because of sin he did not perceive their supernatural rationalities. Everything became objective. But, remaining in this state, he became the slave of these irrational forces and by deifying them made himself their servant.

Created in the image and likeness of God (Acts 1:26), man was endowed with a material body and a spiritual soul. A synthesis of the two worlds, seen and unseen, the main duty of Edenic human existence is to pnevmatise the whole of creation: man - the priest and sanctifier of the whole world.

The sin of disobedience banished man from heaven, and the consequences were most terrible: the loss of bodily eternity, through physical death; the loss of spiritual eternity, through spiritual death; and, last but not least, the tension with the environment, with the entire animal and vegetable kingdom and, above all, with the irrational forces of the universe.

Cast out of heaven, God has not totally abandoned man. He lost the divine likeness, not the image of the creator. In him, as a potency, were hidden the tendencies towards doing good, towards inter-human communion, towards the search for God, as well as the possibility that through the creative aspect of daily concerns he could facilitate his redemption in a world weakened by sin.

1 "Max Weber introduced the concept of rationality to determine the form of economic activity in capitalism, bourgeois private law and bureaucratic domination. Rationalization means, first of all, the extension of the social domains that are subject to the criteria of rational decision. This concept is matched by the industrialisation of social work, which results in the penetration of the criteria of instrumental action into other areas of life (urbanisation of life, technicalisation of transport and communication), Jürgen Habermas, *Tehnica și știința ca ideologie (Technology and science as ideology)*, in vol. *Cunoaștere și comunicare (Knowledge and communication)*, trad. By dr. Andrei Marga, Bucharest, Politică Publishing, 1983, p. 142.

From now on we can talk about technique, about human capacities and faculties put at the service of life, for the relief of the conditions of environment and life that God, and through this, supports the human effort that desires the ascetic ascent of its existence.

In the Book of the Making we are told that Tubalcain, the first blacksmith, or inventor, of tools of brass and iron (Acts 4:22), makes the fruits of his technical creativity available to the community so that all, making use of them, can ease their existence on earth by working and toiling in the sweat of their faces (Acts 3:19).

For thousands of years, mankind has seen scientific, economic, social and cultural progress as a consolation from the Divine, but only insofar as it served life and its high purposes, continually disapproving of deviations and attitudes contrary to human nature, hence two antagonistic attitudes: activities in support/promotion of life and activities contrary to it.

From within the Church there is support for those who obviously support life and those who respect it. The Apostle Paul said to the people of Corinth: All things are lawful for me, but not all things are good for me. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be overcome by anything (I Cor. 6:12). Hypothetically, man can do, think and create whatever he wants, but the ultimate goal is to attune his will to the will of God.

As theologians, we rejoice and welcome the progress of the world, the technical-scientific discoveries, especially in the field of medicine, but we are also saddened when some of these are used against human existence, altering, manipulating and ultimately destroying it. „Originally, the world we live in, shaped by God’s hands, was full of beauty and goodness. But today its nature is corrupted. We live in an unstable, ephemeral world, in a world of speed, immediacy and the violence of the temporal, in a world of disunity and transformation”².

Ever since creation, man has sought, by various ways and means, to improve living conditions. In the field of theology, the expression „improved man” was usually attributed to devout followers of the Church of Christ from the first century of Christianity. With the development of monastic

2 Claude Hiffler, „Cuvânt înainte. Suntem în lume, dar nu ai lumii” („Foreword. We are in the world, but not of the world”), in *Bioetica și taina persoanei. Perspective ortodoxe (Bioethics and the mystery of the person. Orthodox Perspectives)*, trad. by Nicoleta Petuhov, Bucharest, Bizantină Publishing, 2006, p. 9.

communities (3rd century), the term became exclusively directed towards wilderness dwellers and vocational spiritualists, synonymous with saint/holiness.

The two directions of man's improvement are clearly seen: towards/into the world and towards/into God. They must be seen as complementary, not antinomic. When man separates himself from the transcendent and concentrates all his intellectual and physical effort towards the immanent, he becomes autonomous. Free will gives him this right, but this state transforms him into a slave to the irrational forces of the finite immanent. From this limited and uncertain perspective, he can only free himself through his own will, by rising to the eternal dimension of his personal existence and of the whole world, cherishing his earthly life and that of his fellow men. Therefore, Christian bioethics is the only guarantee of human freedom permanently sustained by the will of God, who wants all people to be happy here on earth and in eternal life. Christian bioethics is the result of harmony between what man wants and what God wants, between what man achieves and discovers in his aspiration towards the infinite and what God rewards for this effort.

At the beginning of the third millennium, the Church, in its dialogue with science, finds itself obliged to give concrete answers to certain questions concerning life and its protection. The manipulation of the human mind, electronic databases, in vitro fertilisation, organ transplantation, cloning, etc., are just some of the current missionary challenges of this dialogue. In support of this approach, the openings to theology of leading researchers at home and abroad are of great help. Their initiative is seen as an integral part of the Church's lay apostolate in the sciences. In its mission, the Church needs a pertinent and Christian analysis of the results of scientific discoveries in order to conclude: how many of them are useful for life and for the purpose for which man was created, and how many are harmful, being a real danger to human existence in general.

The Church preaches life and prays for those who help sustain it by means in accordance with God's will. The Church exists for the life of the world, not for itself, for at its head is Christ, the God-Man, the Restorer of fallen human nature, but also the Defender of the conditions of life, of the integrity of the human being and of the whole Universe.

The secularisation³ of contemporary society seeks to draw a line between the immanent and the transcendent, between reason and faith, between theology and culture, between theonomy and autonomy. Autonomous freedom can be detrimental to existence by its total lack of reference to a supernatural azimuth, to a point of support for the whole of creation. Theology has placed the Incarnate Son of God, the Saviour Jesus Christ, in the role of Pantocrator, or Almighty, because through Him all things were made (In. 1:3), from Him they come and to Him they go, He is the first and the last (Rev. 1:17).

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The postmodern man is disheartened and loses his inner balance. The mental structure is increasingly out of tune with the rational civilisation of the technicalisation⁴ of the third millennium.

Fallen into sin, man has sought to ease his suffering and the pressure of his environment through various instruments. These he sought in the strictly immanent world, and because of sin he did not perceive their supernatural nationalities. Everything became objective. But, remaining in this state, he became the slave of these irrational forces and by deifying them made himself their servant.

The Church, through the theosis of man and all created elements, insists on the ontological and soteriological theandry of man in relation to the creature. „Many of the criticisms of technology are the result of the

3 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, „Aspecte ale secularizării și ale omului secularizat” (“Aspects of secularisation and secularised man”), *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Theologia Orthodoxa*, (2006), L-LI, nr.1, Cluj-Napoca, Cluj University Press, pp. 251-266.

4 „Max Weber introduced the concept of rationality to determine the form of economic activity in capitalism, bourgeois private law and bureaucratic domination. Rationalization means, first of all, the extension of the social domains that are subject to the criteria of rational decision. This concept is matched by the industrialisation of social work, which results in the penetration of the criteria of instrumental action into other areas of life (urbanisation of life, technicalisation of transport and communication), Jürgen Habermas, *Tehnică și știința ca ideologie (Technology and science as ideology)*, in vol. *Cunoaștere și comunicare (Knowledge and communication)*, trad. by dr. Andrei Marga, Bucharest, Politică Publishing, 1983, p. 142.

confusion between the thought and will that creates technology, and the thought and will that economically exploits technical invention. The former are driven by the creative impulse, the latter are often self-interested and selfish, portraying the technique in an unfavorable light. But the thought and will of the creator of technology, like that of the exploiter, are in turn dependent on the relationship of man and the cosmos to God.”⁵

This radiography was developed in an age in which man is living the natural rhythm of matter, whose irrational laws he wishes to master more and more. Worse still, he reckons that there is no more direct way to rule over the social order than to manipulate and subjugate one's fellow man using these impersonal and a-rational powers. „Man's situation in the bosom of the natural world is tragic. If once man feared the demons of nature and was freed from demonolatry by Christ, today he fears the universal mechanism of nature. The power of technology is the last metamorphosis of Caesar's kingdom”⁶.

In Eastern doctrine, there is a relationship of complementarity, of confirmation⁷, between man and created nature. The telluric age of human history is coming to an end. The invasion of machines, the vertiginous development of technology have brought about the greatest revolution in history, the yardstick by which the completeness of all human achievements is measured, passing from one brain to another by a process which - in a broad sense - may be called imitation.⁸

Wars, revolutions, dictatorships and totalitarian regimes today are linked by the influence of technology on the human person⁹, by the extraordinary force it provides. Man finds himself in a new position before

5 Dumitru Popescu, *Ortodoxie și contemporaneitate (Orthodoxy and contemporaneity)*, Bucharest, Diogene Publishing, 1996, p. 159.

6 Nikolai Berdiaev, *Împărăția spiritului și împărăția Cezarului (The kingdom of the spirit and the kingdom of Caesar)*, trad. by Ilie Gyurcsik, Timișoara, Amarcord Publishing, 1994, p. 51.

7 The American professor, John F. Haught, (translated into Romanian, *Science and religion - from conflict to dialogue (Știință și religie - de la conflict la dialog)*, Bucharest, Eonul Dogmatic Publishing, 2002), believes that there are four plausible relationships between religion and science: conflict, contrast, contact and confirmation.

8 Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 192.

9 „The technical reason of a social system based on rational action in relation to an end does not thereby lose its political content”, Jürgen Habermas, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

universal cosmic forces, and this has serious social consequences. „In man the work of the mind is more precious than the material side of his existence. The approach between the spirit and the material nature is made in an incomprehensible way and beyond nature, the unity between them taking place both within and without, without being bound to a particular place nor confined to that place alone”¹⁰.

Revolution, in a concrete sense, can be defined as the end of the cosmos, as the ancients considered it. The cosmos, as contemplated by the ancient Greeks, Thomas Aquinas and Dante, no longer exists as a result of the digital revolution, it ends under the pretence that it is fully known and fully subdued. *Homo digitus* „considers all relative values, even those he accepts, and discusses with apparent profundity everything that humanity has held in esteem throughout the ages. The attitude is that of well-meaning agnostics who are ready to agree with anything you tell them, leaving you to understand that, of course, there is no way of proving what they say and therefore leaving them neither warm nor cold”¹¹.

The autonomy of human reason starts from the point at which man considers himself God, self-deifying, believing himself to be the measure of all things, especially life: „I am determined to conquer life and understand it”¹².

The manipulation of life by means of autonomous and digitized reason wants to present the human being only as a body, as matter, as an individual and a figure in an archived statistic. Man is more than that. He is a spiritual being destined for eternity, interpersonal relations and, above all, love. However exciting the scientific conquest may be, it cannot teach us what love and interpersonal communion are. The perspective of a Christian spirituality has other foundations. The improvement of life, for believers, consists in climbing the path of holiness. This set the early Christians

10 Sfântul Grigorie de Nyssa, *Despre facerea omului* (*About the making of man*), in *Colecția Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* (*Fathers and Church Writers Collection*) (further on, PSB), vol. 30, trad. by Fr. T. Bodogae, Bucharest, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române (Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church) (further on, EIBMBOR), 1998, p. 46.

11 Alexander Kalomiroso, *Against false union*, Sf. Nectarios Press, Seattle, Washington 1978, pp. 29-30.

12 J. Craig Venter, *O viață descifrată. Genomul meu uman* (*A life deciphered. My human genome*), trad. by Lavinia Marin, Bucharest, Curtea Veche Publishing, 2013, p. 13.

apart from the rest of the pagan world which saw the materiality of the world as an end in itself. „Christians are called to express their faith in an authentic spirituality a way of living without ambiguity, which does not mean without risk and suffering. Sacred Scripture and Church tradition call this spirituality the art of living and identify it with holiness or purity of heart. The essential element of Christian piety is not the how, the technique or the how, but the substance and quality of this life, which gives the Christian identity. The credibility of spirituality therefore comes from the quality of the person. To cleanse the heart or to be righteous means to live in total fidelity to God, it means to return to simplicity and innocence. A pure heart means a coherent, unified, clear, undivided and unclouded spirit”.¹³

In the history of knowledge of the Universe, some scientists placed the Earth at its centre - for example Copernicus. Pascal was frightened by the infinite spaces that opened up before him. The discovery of the microcosm, the tiny, microscopic infinity, still frightens many scientists. The science of modern physics and chemistry is penetrating the structures of the macro- and micro-cosmos and destroying its transcendental hold. “Like the ancient Greeks the Europeans have deified human reason, its passions, the powers and weaknesses of the soul; in a word they have made man the centre, the measure and the goal of all things. The culture of Europe comes from man, exists for man and finds its justification in man.”¹⁴

Contemporary man, in the middle of the gap between micro and macro-cosmos, is crushed by their grandeur. The revolution in physics and chemistry succeeds by negating the law of conservation of matter. The disaggregation of free matter has been found to release formidable energy. Research into the disintegration of the atom is eloquent in this respect; it has led to the invention of the nuclear bomb, which can put mankind on the road to self-destruction. The contrary attitude to nature was driven by the praxis of theology. “God,” says St. John Chrysostom, “has ordained those things which lead to the preservation of the human race.”¹⁵

In digital technology, everything is about yield. The technique radically changes man's attitude to space and time. The beauty of space, as

13 Ion Bria, *Calitatea vieții creștinilor (Quality of life of Christians)*, in vol. *Misiologie Ortodoxă (Orthodox Missiology)*, Geneva, 1987, p. 45.

14 Ibid.

15 Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilia a XX-a la Facere (20th Homily on the Facere)*, trad. by Fr. D. Fecioru, Bucharest, EIBMBOR, 1987, p. 235.

a commodity, is the greatest possible conquest of postmodern man. "The civilisation of Europe is founded on a religion, but a religion that nobody wants to call a religion, because this religion does not consist in the worship of one or more things, but in the worship of man".¹⁶

The following situation can be observed: the unparalleled force of knowledge and digital technology, which goes to the end of knowledge, is achieved through the exhaustion and enslavement of man. Human knowledge and technical-scientific knowledge appear in antithesis. "The antithesis is more of a rush against human wisdom, against the truculent trust in the human mind. Science is the knowledge of things as far as it is possible for man. Human wisdom, however, is a self-deceiving confidence. It makes us sure that we have understood and explained facts and things, a confidence which most often proves false if the proud man does not come to his senses. Knowledge requires an interpreter of it".¹⁷

Man finds himself placed before a new reality through which he is subjected to spiritual degradation. The machine, technology, digitisation, constitute for contemporary man the new and ultimate reality which bears no resemblance to the organic and inorganic reality, to created nature through which man considers himself a creation of God. This is a reality organised by the universal attraction of all towards a unity, a special world, brought into being by civilisation, by knowledge and man's discoveries with a soteriological sense. Technology and digitization have a cosmogonic meaning... "In this fallen and uncorrupted state, the earth and the whole universe would have exploded and perished if, in His Providence, God had not given His creation these forces of universal attraction to take the place of His uncreated grace."¹⁸

Scientific discoveries grant man an incredible power, a destructive power, which the State wants to control, to misappropriate. We can speak of a true nationalisation of scientific discoveries. Hence the tension that generates conflict. Postmodernism is the era of the rise of etatism. The contemporary state is inclined to believe that man belongs to it as a whole. This is a fatal consequence of the two world wars. During wartime, the power

16 Alexander Kalomiros, *op. cit.*

17 Alexander Kalomiros, *Cele șase dimineți* ("The six mornings"), in vol. *Sfinții Părinți despre originile și destinul cosmosului și omului* (*The Holy Fathers on the origins and destiny of the cosmos and man*), trad. by Fr. Ioan Ică, Sibiu, Deisis Publishing, 2003, p. 21.

18 Ibid. p. 93.

of the state grows out of all proportion and the state survives the war. The habits and instincts of war continue to assert themselves, leading to the ability to impose violence and contempt for human life. Above all, the state seeks to seize the power that digital technology gives it. Statism is not only a peculiarity of the communist regime, but a worldwide phenomenon. The ever-increasing power of technology plays an important role. Man's spiritual and moral progress is no longer keeping pace with the almost miraculous speed of technical and digital progress, and so he is falling behind. This is not the spirit, this is not the moral force of the man who masters and controls digital technology, but the state which does not consider itself subject to any spiritual and moral principle and acts under an autonomous banner, according to its own law and sovereignty. Man, turned outwards, weakens inwardly. This situation threatens the world with a global conflict that no one wants, neither individuals nor peoples, but which can be dangerous through the autonomous forces of digital technology, through the forces of power capital exposed through technology. Christians are not exempt from this temptation either. "Yet anyone who observes carefully the sermons and professions of most Christians will see that what they seek and hope for is not so much the state of the Church as the glory of civilization."¹⁹

The technical nature of civilisation claims man an incredible acceleration of time. Man diverts his function from the production sufficient for living to the bringing of an added profit. In the presence of such a pace, entered in such a race against time, the maximum output of labour is sought, in the presence of the scientific and digital method of organising industrial labour. Man is relentless activity, but this basically means spiritual passivity, the abandonment of the self through an inhuman process. Such a man becomes a passive instrument with no inner activity. This process of accelerating time and transforming man into an instrument of economic production is most clearly expressed in a liberal society in which the theory of competition comes first. "The permissive society proclaimed by liberalism is nothing but materialism absolutized and degraded into consumerism. In it, man is valuable not only to the extent that he produces a certain quantity of products, but also to the extent that he manages to consume a certain quantity of products. He must also consume, because

19 Alexander Kalomiros, *Against false union*, Sf. Nectarios Press, Seattle, Washington, 1978, p. 50.

otherwise production is meaningless. Consumption alone guarantees new production, ensuring that the vicious circle works. And this absolutisation and idolisation of material well-being claims to be the supreme liberation of man.”²⁰

The power of technology has a moral influence on human life. We have already pointed out that mechanised and rationalised industry remains under the pressure of the individual and individuality. Everything is mass production. This is the rule of impersonality and anonymity. Everything becomes collective, not communal. Community is a real fraternity of people, it implies the transformation and transfiguration of people, it is organic, it implies freedom, collectivity, revenge, it means a forced and mechanical aggregation of people, their subordination to a pseudo-reality that lies outside them and above them. People can remain with each other and in solidarity. “The need is to build our lives not on our assumptions, but on the Discovery of God. The tragedy of the events of the world around us is due to the denial of this path. The sin of self-denial - this is what tears man apart and kills him.”²¹

The technical industry creates a very distant morality of human brotherhood, even if it has collectivist treaties. It is characterised by a type of civilisation that fights as in a sporting competition in which it plays an enormous role and where it becomes a source of moral appreciation. The cult of strength and power is growing. “A frightening antinomy characterises Europeans: the antithesis between the inner and the outer man. The European seems to be one thing but in reality is something else. He lives and moves in the lie of compromise. His entire culture is a collection of banal lies with which he has adapted. He is extremely egocentric, but he conducts himself with absolute and almost exaggerated courtesy.”²²

We live in an age where force is worshipped and not justice or truth. We can say that never, as now, has there been such indifference to the truth. Truth brings peace to human life, lies facilitate violence against man. We are witnessing a rupture between evangelical morality and social morality. Evangelical morality is being replaced by production morality. This mora-

20 Francis-Vincent Anthony, *The Ecclesial Praxis of Inculturation*, Roma, Ateneo Salesiano Publishing, 1997, p. 8.

21 Arhimandritul Sofronie, *Cuvântări duhovnicești (Spiritual words)*, trad. by Ierom. Rafail Noica, Alba Iulia, Reîntregirea Publishing, 2004, p. 275.

22 Alexander Kalomirov, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

lity of technical production develops envy, pride, converts evangelical love of neighbour into self-exaltation. The transcendent has increasingly been understood as an absence of God from the created world. "Taking advantage of this absence of God from creation, the Enlightenment declared the autonomy of human reason from any Christian authority and developed a technique, which, losing all connection with God, was animated by the ideal of transforming the heavenly paradise into an earthly paradise."²³

In this age of transition, people find themselves shackled in terms of the outside, the environment, and solitary in terms of the inner dimension of the human being, alone, isolated. Human reason turns to the created immanent in search of its own peace.

The faith-knowledge dialectic was the theological concern of the early fathers. St Clement Alexandrinus²⁴ saw the positive role of reason engaging in ancient philosophy with the aim of acquiring justice. Reason can, and should, engage with the philosophy of knowledge because it involves intellectual training, rational knowledge, which is also present in the discoveries of digital technology. But 'God is the cause of all goodness'²⁵, and therefore also of created goodness, and reason must overcome this by engaging critically and constructively in the ellipse of knowledge. "It (Scripture) advises you to make use of secular culture, but not to remain in it or stop at it, because the gifts given by God at the right time, for the benefit of every generation, are teachings preparatory to receiving the Word of God"²⁶. Between reason and faith, in a supreme goal, there is no contradiction. Reason without the admission of faith, in a supreme mystery, is irrational. To the supreme mystery we rise by reason. The supreme mystery itself demands admission through reason. The variety of natural laws which the inventiveness of human reason discovers and technically works out indicates the creativity of the human mind and enlightens it to see that they do not exist by chance, but an infinitely varied voluntary Being has offered them for synthesis and intellectual judgment, and not a

23 Dumitru Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

24 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, *Aspecte antropologice în gândirea patristică și a primelor secole creștine (Anthropological Aspects in Patristic and Early Christian Thought)*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2005, pp.116-118.

25 Sfântul Clement Alexandrinul, *Stromatele*, 1, 28, trad. pr. D. Fecioru, PSB vol. 5, Bucharest, EIBMBOR, 1982, p. 25.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

monoform impersonal essence. A tri-positive Being with a divine Reason sought to be all in harmony, a harmony found by the emanating speculative intellect which emanates wisdom and senses it in innumerable forms of existence. "It is possible that he who learns the preparatory sciences may attain to the wisdom that stands at the head of all sciences, to the mistress of the sciences... from what has been said it is seen that wisdom is learned, passing from the contemplation of the heavenly to faith in God and to the Justice after God"²⁷

Incaruate reason, Jesus Christ, helps human reason to discover its purpose through intellectual and technical progress. As the Father's Reason, Christ - the Giver of the supreme laws - could not be created (as the Arians said), only as God the Creator and Pantocrator is the Supreme Lawgiver through Himself. A reason totally subject to the technical immanent can no longer discover the Institutor of the fundamental laws of creation. The dependent one cannot show its supreme sovereignty, cannot overcome the autonomous barriers of the purely rational immanent. "The power of technique has another consequence which entails great difficulties for man, for the human soul is not sufficiently adapted to it. We are witnessing a terrible accumulation of time, with which man can no longer keep pace. No moment has any value in itself; it is only a means to the next moment. Man is expected to be incredibly active, an activity that allows him no return to himself. At the same time, these active moments make man passive. He becomes a mere means in the human process, a mere function of the production process."²⁸

When man manipulates the irrational laws of technological breakthroughs he can become their slave. This state of bondage results from the fact that he is self-divine, he wants to manipulate his own life, and the lives of others. Man, however creative and inventive he may become, fails to substitute himself for the Creator. God alone is the Lawgiver, the One who imposes well-ordained laws on the Cosmos, imposing laws on creation according to which the latter can govern itself, but also through man's will to govern himself and the world towards its ultimate goal. God can only be above creation because He is above its laws. On Him depend all things ordained to be, and without Him they cannot exist. Man can use them for

27 Ibid., p. 27.

28 Nikolai Berdiaev, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

his own good and the good of others, or for his own harm and the harm of others. "The technique springing from an autonomous reason, which does not want to know about God, resembles the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Paradise. On the one hand, it appears to be good and serves many of man's vital interests. On the other hand, it turns against man with terrible destructive power."²⁹

This total independence of man from the created, expressed by the objectification of existence in relation to the conquests of technology, substitutes the Creator for the creature, faith for reason, theology for science, the rational for the irrational. In the ascent to deification, man makes use of these, but not separately, not in a Nestorianist or monophysite manner, but in a way that works together, in a mutual confirmation. The imbalance of this relationship can be rendered through four possibilities, or perspectives, through which man can find himself in relation to the creature being scientifically explored and explored: a) man can lose his identity, can be submerged and totally confused with the world of things. From the desire to master the irrational forces of nature, he becomes confused in a materialism of atomo-materialist origin, specific to the ancient philosophy of Thales, Democritus, Heraclitus³⁰ and even to the atheistic-materialist philosophy of the totalitarian communist system. b) From the desire to be liberated from material bondage, man chooses the ascetic path. Through abstinence he eliminates the pleasure offered by materiality. He seeks the tranquillity of authentic religion far from the noise caused by rapid technologicalisation. c) Despairing of the mechanisation of the environment, of excessive industrialisation, he chooses immediate ways of counteracting massive pollution, seeks a greening devoid of the principles of concern for a nature in which - with all the work of sin - there still lingers the uncreated energies of God, personal and deifying, through which the Creator can make himself fully transparent to the creature. Ecology is not an exclusive anthropocentrism, but a collaboration between man and God, with the aim of restoring to nature, and to the things in it, their original, apathetic beauty. d) The lack of a synergistic vision between man as macro-cosmos and man as micro-cosmos leads

29 Dumitru Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

30 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, *Istoria filosofiei, de la începuturi până la Renaștere (The history of philosophy, from the beginnings to the Renaissance)*, Cluj-Napoca, Cluj University Press, 2005, pp.77-78, 80-82,98-101.

to the loss of the personal identity of the image of God in the structure of postmodern human ontology. "The autonomous technique tends to become an end in itself and to make man forget the meaning of his life and existence. Technique is and can only be an instrument and not an end. There are NO technical ends of life, only technical means. Purposes belong to the realm of the spirit. The technical instrument, by its very nature, remains heterogeneous to man, spirit and meaning. Nevertheless, it tends to substitute itself for purpose and, by the importance attributed to it today, can mask or even erase from man's consciousness the very meaning of life".³¹

All created things are not only dependent on the Creator, even by the laws impressed upon them by Him that they may exist and develop, they receive from Him the marks of eternity from the moment of their coming into being from the non-being, and can keep these laws as their servants. Only in so far as they serve the Creator can being have a specific purpose, a specific purpose. Science and technology have the task of investigating the truth about the world and its creatures, about the nature of existence. "The preparatory sciences, which lead to rest in Christ, exercise the mind, awaken the understanding, giving rise to a quickening of the spirit in the search for true philosophy".³²

Man must discover true freedom through experience, he must try all the possibilities available to him. This is what he even wanted. Freedom is explored in all spheres of individual and social life. „Culture is full of symbols, images of heaven appear there in earthly forms, signs of another world are reflected in it. But technology, it remains alien to symbols, it is realistic, it reflects nothing, it creates a new reality, in it everything is present”.³³

Having emerged from the medieval state, contemporary man is embarking on the path of autonomy in all spheres of creative life. He explores the autonomy of social and cultural life, the autonomy of knowledge, of science, of politics, of economics, of technology, of inter-ethnic life, etc. All these separate spheres begin by evolving, obeying only their own irrational and impersonal law.

31 Dumitru Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

32 Sfântul Clement Alexandrinul, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

33 Nicolas Berdiaeff, *L'homme et la machine*, traduit du Russe par I. P. et H. M., Éditions „Je sers”, Paris 1933, p. 14.

Autonomy means precisely that the law acts from within for each particular sphere, without being subordinated to any unifying spiritual centre. The autonomy of digital technicisation is aimed at the death of man as a personal self, on the grounds that the social dimension of his existence can develop more dynamically. Technical evolution diminishes the sacredness and supreme value of the human person.

Christian religion, at the beginning of the millennium, became a particular sphere of culture, it ceased to be a determining force, it was repressed from the cellars of the soul. Christianity is finding it difficult to adapt to this technological process in which man seeks to open himself up to others, to be as free as possible. But it will be increasingly difficult to identify the autonomy of these spheres with the freedom of man who wishes to be as integral and complete as possible.

We find free spheres in science, politics, economics, technology, but not man who has fallen under the power of separate, free spheres subject to their own laws. Under this mask lies hidden scientism, which is not identical with science, and rationalism in the knowledge of the surrounding world; Machiavellianism in politics; capitalism in economics, nationalism in the life of peoples, all these spheres refuse to submit to some higher spiritual or moral principle. This is the breeding ground that gives rise to the force of technique, this technique that develops uncontrollably and in which there is no human law. "The world has become what for centuries it has dreamed of being. Let it marvel then at the work of its own hands"³⁴

Man, increasingly crushed, has fallen into slavery, has become the slave of autonomous spheres. From this state has resulted imbalance, a chaotic state of man. Technical mechanism does not want to obey any spiritual principle and spirituality is increasingly weakened in contemporary man. Man has provoked his own alienation from his nature, he has consented to become *homo digitus*, which is why man is taking the initiative to effectively free himself from what technology offers, he wants an intensification of his spiritual life. "Man has thus been reduced from the elementary biological and cultural needs of his survival (food, reproduction, environment) to the play of fundamental drives created around these needs, economic relations, language, etc. The questioning function of Revelation was usurped by metaphysics and then by ideology, the disastrous result being the catas-

34 Alexander Kalomiros, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

trophe of modern European humanism, whose fragile anthropocentrism could not prevent the mass suicide of man as a theological and religious being, nor the horrors of industrialised homicide and dehumanisations of all kinds that have invaded present-day societies (drugs, violence, exacerbated eroticism, consumerism), intensely depersonalising them”.³⁵

If we were to attest the ontology of *homo digitus*, it would belong to fallen time and not to paradisiacal time. Fallen from the context of divine eternity, the environment becomes a state of tormenting immobility for man. In order to emerge from this mobility, to confront it and then overcome it, man becomes a technician, the initiator of a new context that makes him forget the imperfection and distortion of a world twisted by sin: “Cain built a city... Tubalcain was a smith of tools of brass and iron” (Acts 4:17, 22).

St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his book *On the Making of Man*, maintains that the tools made by fallen man are a help to him if he finds good use for them, and a hindrance when he uses them in a pitying way: ‘man has discovered the usefulness of iron, only when time indicates us to call upon its aid, at other times he is left at home... the art of iron can serve us even in time of war, and in time of peace we can be relieved of such burdens.’³⁶

Hellenism and Christianity are a fruitful combination of matter and spirit. Christianity did not have a theology of the world and man, Hellenism did not disturb the theocentrism of revelation, although it was anthropocentric and cosmocentric. The dialectic of the union of theology and gnoseology will be present in the patristic thought of the early ages. The relationship between faith and scientific knowledge is found in St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in his *Catechesis*: „by faith is also agriculture, for he who does not believe that he will gather fruit does not bear the labor of cultivating the earth. It is by faith that men travel by sea, entrusting their lives to a small wood, and exchanging the most stable element, the earth, for the unsteady tossing of the waves; they give themselves over to uncertain hopes, because faith, which is more sure than any anchor, holds

35 Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., „Îndumnezeirea omului, P. Nellas și conflictul antropologiilor” (“The deification of man, Fr. Nellas and the conflict of anthropologists”), in Panayotis Nellas, *Omul – animal îndumnezeit (Man - a godlike animal)*, Sibiu, Deisis Publishing, 1999, pp. 6-7.

36 Sfântul Grigorie de Nyssa, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

them fast. It is on the basis of faith, therefore, that most of the actions of men are carried out.”³⁷

The confirmation of faith by reason translated as the understanding of created things is found in Theodoret of Cyr: “on the one hand there is God, on the other hand the existences which are in His likeness will be like them by reason”³⁸, and faith is the understanding of what harmonizes with the nature of the unseen.

Knowledge full of wisdom is apophatic knowledge, through technique we have the impression that we know everything, we know everything. Everything becomes immanent. The apophatic is lost in the cataphatic, and the exclusive reason of the cataphatic is powerless to explain all that is created and uncreated. The latter is a false assumption of an unenlightened reason of faith in the process of knowing the world and God. “To express God is powerless, but to understand Him is even more impossible. For what is to be understood, the word can explain, though not sufficiently, but at least in an obscure way, to him who has not utterly rotten ears and a lying understanding. But to understand such a reality is altogether impossible and unattainable, not only to those who are foolish and bent on the lowly, but also to those who are very high and lovers of God; and likewise to the whole born being, and to whom is added this darkness and thick body in understanding the truth.”³⁹

Radicalist anthropocentrism historically detours man (Marxism), brings him a neurotic frustration (Freudianism), a lack of scientific knowledge, a logical positivism with the very denial, ultimately, of human reason (A. Camus). From the above statements atheism has been derived, which is scientism mixed with evolutionism and vitalism. “The astonishing scientific and technological progress of the twentieth century in the knowledge of the universe has been combined with the discovery of the greatness and fantastic perfection of the laws governing it, especially in the fields of microphysics and microbiology.”⁴⁰

37 Sfântul Chiril al Ierusalimului, *Cateheze (Catechesis)*, trad. by pr. D. Fecioru, Bucharest, EIBMBOR, 1943, p. 137.

38 Teodoret, Bishop of Cyrene, *Istoria bisericească (Church history)*, trad. by pr. prof. Vasile Sibiescu, Bucharest, EIBMBOR, 1995, p. 38.

39 Sfântul Grigorie de Nazianz, *Cele cinci cuvântări teologice (The Five Theological Words)*, trad. by Fr. D. Stăniloae, Bucharest, Anastasia Publishing, 1993, p. 24.

40 I. P. S. Dr. Damaskinos Papandreou, Metropolitan of Switzerland, *Biserică, societate*

The ideas and ideals of human reason, immediately after the Enlightenment, were concretized in the Reformation which rationalized dogma, made a major contribution to the affirmation of a technological, more humanistic bourgeoisie in which not Christ but man is the measure of all things. "The ideals of science differ in many respects from the ideas of science. They indicate the image a scientific community has of what science should look like if it were ever completed; they express the ultimate criteria of rationality of their time. The interest of reason, claiming consistency from any concrete scientific explanation, is often compelled to support regulative ideas that would be incompatible or lead to contradictory results if applied with equal rigor to all scientific explanations."⁴¹

Contemporary Orthodoxy must renew its discourse in order to strengthen the credibility of its message in a world that wishes to return to the roots of its spiritual identity, but is not willing to give up the conquests of science and contemporary civilisation in general.

We live in an age of technicality in all fields of activity, sometimes we feel a desire to scientificise religion, revelation and miracles. It is all due to the process of technical secularisation, a universal process with a dualistic structure. The world, with its technical-scientific discoveries, appears to be placed on an equal footing with faith and revelation. Instead of talking about an ethics of technology, how much it uses life as a divine gift, we talk - instead - of a faith of technology, an organisation of technology, an ethos of technology.⁴²

The empowerment of technicisation in the postmodern era aims to promote a strictly rationalist activity with a well-defined purpose: the creation of new means of sustaining life independent of divine grace, but also alternatives for the humanistic elucidation of social needs.

A reason unenlightened by faith isolates the human person. The reverse of rationality is the secularisation and secularisation of contemporary society. From this point of view, the transcendent is excluded from the sphere of social concerns, and culture will be imprinted with new technical-scientific discoveries that will replace the Creator in his own creation,

te, lume (Church, society, world), Iași, Trinitas Publishing, 1999, p. 61.

41 Amos Fukenstein, *Teologie și imaginația științifică din Evul Mediu până în secolul al XVII-lea*, trad. by Walter Fotescu, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing, 1998, p. 20.

42 These secular aspects of technicisation are well captured by hierom. Theophan Mada in his work *Homo ethicus*, Sibiu, Agnost Publishing, 2007, pp. 11-16.

and technology will be used more and more for the tacit political domination of the masses still unaware of progress. The whole involvement of autonomous reason in the social context will provide a quadrangle of interests, strategies, technologies and systems designed to self-deify contemporary man. Autonomous reason has only one goal: the exclusive domination of nature and society.

The Western mentality has not seen a complementarity between reason and faith, between the dogmas of the Church and the human mind. The truths of faith have always conformed to human reason, though in content above it. The Western imbalance is rendered by the inverse proportionality between faith and secular thought: as faith increases, secular or profane concern with the world and its created laws must decrease, or, as economic activities increase, religious pietism decreases.

This view of secular ethics is compatible only with Protestant dogma about the world, man's presence in it and his purpose as a divine image. The Church sees technology as a fruit of spiritual power, a most effective presence of man in God's creation. All the means of technology must be used for the purpose of good human survival in the context of a creation still dominated by sin and corruption. This survival cannot be achieved without Christ, the Pantocrator, the Almighty of all and everything. In this sense, digital technology can help transfigure, pneumatise the world in and through Jesus Christ. The conquests of technology must be gifts that you have a duty to share with the world for the edification of life here and the anticipation of life to come. Here we can even speak of an eschatological character of some technological discoveries for the benefit of human life and its defence against the destructive forces of sin and death: God will be in all things and all things will be in God.

Rational autonomy through technology is due to the doctrinal implementation of predestination, starting with the 16th century Reformation: man predestined to a sinful life, powerless in those of salvation, seeks in technology a way of salvation. Technique, through temporal satisfactions, makes the predestined behave as if he were not chosen. Work becomes the source of direct redemption, and puritanism the exaggerated form of social asceticism

In Protestant circles, where the avalanche of social ethics and the spirit of capitalism began, the utilitarianism of work is considered a sign of divine grace, a kind of redemption through work: *sola labor*. The Pro-

testant work ethic portrays the individual as covetous, punctual, fair and self-controlled. These attributes have generated the development of a utilitarian-materialistic culture based on the facilities of technical means that make up for the lack of divine presence in the work of the prodigal.

Within this framework, Labor Puritanism, Humanist Rationalism and Scientific Empiricism facilitated - and still facilitate - the development of modern, cultural autonomous technology. Protestant capitalist doctrine has been the basis for technical innovation, the influx of material wealth and the expansion of capital markets.

This kind of progress, based on the Enlightenment doctrine of divine personal absenteeism from creation, generated a spirit of work for the purpose of self-deification. In this type of autonomous work, for man and for his own satisfaction, capitalist individualism of the forces of production was illustrated, as well as collectivism of the communist type, in which, in spite of working in collectivity, the worker alone was both beneficiary, producer and owner of all the means of production.

The ethic of autonomous technology highlights the discerning man, gives the sense of guild membership towards which the New Religious Movements (NRM) are increasingly tending. "Protestantism, as a religious movement, has influenced the development of material culture and set a general trend in people's activities. Psychological impulses originating in religious beliefs and practices have given meaning to people's daily lives and led them to adhere to that meaning."⁴³

Conclusions

Orthodoxy sees in the fruits of techno-scientific research an opportunity to sustain life, to give to others what God has enlightened you to create, that is, an exchange of values for the benefit of others. If autonomous technology promotes a new style of life without God, the theonomy of technology, especially digitalisation, urges us to make use of these innovative conquests in order to come as close as possible to the model of life in Christ, because man is not only body but also soul, not only the psychological impulse of ethics, or only a member of an ecclesia militans, but together a life-giver with others in ecclesial, family and social communion, aware that if one

43 Prof. dr. Ioan Mihăilescu, *Protestantism și capitalism (Protestantism and capitalism)*, afterword to, postfață la vol. Max Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

member suffers, all is destroyed. Hence the Eastern imperative to avoid an economic exploitation of technological inventions. Even if autonomous technology desires an earthly heaven instead of the heavenly one it does not want, or cannot acquire, theonomic technical progress is persistently seeking to improve the living conditions of those on their way to eternity. As much as we would like to be objective, in the rush for matter man always remains unsatisfied. The true Christian does not desire a wicked matter, but a transfigured one; he does not desire an old and polluted heaven and earth, but a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. ch. 21).

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