

QUO VADIS HOMO: THE DIGITAL AGE AND THE METAPHYSICAL QUESTION

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Abstract. Everything in the created order is a sign of something else, namely the ontological and metaphysical belonging that man unconsciously longs for. Everything physical and conceptual is metaphysical at the same time. It indicates – as signs do – something beyond itself. There is a kind of metaphysical dimension of the digital world and, in this text, that is compared with the type of metaphysics Christian theology teaches and promotes.

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The question of direction in man's life is as old as man's existence. In the Garden of Eden when God asked „Where are you, Adam?,” the question of direction was implied: „Where did you go? I did not find you where you were supposed to go.” Life is a countless number of intersections and we have to constantly choose. How and what we choose is based on how we understand life, our destiny and destination, and our understanding is based on our values.

Tell me what values you choose and I will tell you where you will be going. Choosing values is in itself a metaphysical operation regardless of whether the values in themselves relative or absolute, local or universal, theological, economic, political or of any other kind. There is always a beyond, an unknown in the complex combination of factors that determine our choice, just as we don't know whether what we consider important or of interest at a certain moment in life is really going to bring us in the right direction.

Far from living in an age that many call the end of metaphysics we see how metaphysics permeates our entire life, even where we think it is less present, and that includes digital technology and our using it.

The relation between the apophatic and the kataphatic

In the universe, in life, in the entire creation, visible and invisible, everything is relation, related and relational. As A. von Heuer puts it, without

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relation nothing can be fundamentally understood.² Yet relation is metaphysic, transcendental and hence apophatic, even if it has a cataphatic dimension as well. The two terms apophatic and cataphatic seem to be opposites, mutually exclusive, yet they are rather complementary, just as when we speak about God. We describe Him in cataphatic terms when we say that God is creator, good, loving, merciful, however the apophatic language describes Him even more appropriately when we say that He is infinite, unknown, incomprehensible, immutable, immortal and so on.

As Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagites explains in his book *The Divine Names*, „of Him [God] there is conception, reason, understanding, touch, perception, opinion, imagination, name and many other things. On the other hand He cannot be understood, words cannot contain Him and no name can lay hold of Him. He is not one of the things that are and He cannot be known in any of them. He is all things in all things and He is no things among things.”³

For instance, we imagine God as being, but He is beyond our conventional and imperfect language; as Pseudo-Dionysius teaches, He is beyond being, and thus the apophatic and the cataphatic language apply concomitantly. This linguistic ambivalence is also present in the universal relation between cause and the caused. Again, in Pseudo-Dionysius’ terms, „in reality there is no exact likeness between caused and cause, for the caused carry within themselves only such images of their originating sources as are possible for them, whereas the causes themselves are located in a realm transcending the caused.”⁴

This is similar to the theological doctrine about the divine revelation to the world. God reveals Himself to us only inasmuch as we can carry or comprehend and inasmuch as it is necessary for our salvation. That is cataphatic. All the rest is apophatic, not to speak of the fact that even in the positive language there is an apophatic dimension.

Among modern philosophers, Giorgio Agamben describes in detail, in his own terms, the relation between cataphatic and the apophatic when he speaks of the relation between the sayable and the unsayable and considers the nonlinguistic, the ineffable, a genuinely linguistic category, even the category “par excellence,” and also, when he considers that any relation is preceded by the unrelated all the while it excludes it.⁵

In other words, the unrelated represents the potential for relation, it presupposes it, to use Agamben’s language; the metaphysical represents the ground

² Anoushka von Heuer, *Le huitième jour ou la dette d’Adam*, Jean-Luc de Rougement Editeur, 1980, Genève, p. 38.

³ *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, translated by Colm Luibheid, Paulist Press, New York, 1987, p. 109.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

⁵ See Damiano Sacco, „Shifting presence: Giorgio Agamben’s and Karen Barad’s Reflections on Quantum Mechanics” in *The European legacy: Towards new Paradigms*, vol. 27, Nr. 1-2, 2022, p. 253.

for everything physical. The first is the unsayable, the apophatic, and then comes the sayable, the cataphatic, even though, as mentioned, only to a certain point beyond which, even there, one meets the ineffable.

That means that whatever comes from an apophatic metaphysics (pleonastically speaking!) – and everything physical comes from there – retains something from the characteristic of the origin. In Agamben's view, even if we use language to communicate ideas, which keeps us in the realm of the cataphatic, the category of language, in fact, belongs to the ineffable as the potency for language. Then, the apophasis is the fundamental, the real category, even if one can think that it may include at the same time other categories and maybe only part of it would be pre-supposing the sayable.

Yet, if the ineffable could have many dimensions or categories, one can think that in the metaphysical realm they are not so clear cut as in the physical or even conceptual realms but are intertwined in a kind of perichoretic relationship, as in the intra-Trinitarian relationships as taught by Christian theology. In such a context every category participates in the other and others and hence it is easy to think of the infinite richness when it comes to their intra-system existence, but also in their extra-system manifestations.

However, if the metaphysical represents the category "par excellence", as Agamben puts it, when, instead of going backward and naming the unnameable starting from the nameable, one would proceed in the more logical way by going forward from the ineffable down to the effable and give to the latter some characteristic of the first just, in a sense, like when describing the effect based on the cause instead of vice versa, thus indicating a true metaphysical realism. That would be in the noumenal world.

Nevertheless, in the human phenomenal world, one can have only some knowledge of the cause and based on that describe the effect and thus give justice to the apophatic. That would also indicate metaphysical realism.

In other words, every real physical and conceptual thing has as a main characteristic the ineffable, which is its origin; that can lead to the idea that the real can be eclipsed into the possible as in quantum mechanics, as Damiano Sacco explains when speaking of a certain similarity of Agamben with Heidegger.

Simply put, everything begins in apophasis and ends in apophasis.

The metaphysics of the digital world

When we read that in 2017 alone „Facebook reported that its WhatsApp and Messenger apps field more than sixty billion messages per day,” „in addition to the half million posts made *each minute* on Facebook proper”⁶ (and that does not include other platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, Tiktok, and others or

⁶ Richard Hugues Gibson, „Just Staying in Touch,” in *The Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 20, Nr. 1, Spring 2018, p. 9.

the increase in numbers since then), the question that comes to mind is as follows: what is this unthinkable quantity of message telling us? How should we understand that? What kind of magnet is this?

One can envision some relative responses: For some, it indicates the fundamental need for relation; for others, the need to belong; for others yet, the need to get exposed.

All these possible responses have a metaphysical dimension. We are not just beings, but beings-in-relation and therefore the search for relation, like the search for meaning and the need to belong and be known by others is an ontological feature of human existence. It comes from the depth of ourselves, depths that we do not „possess”, as it possesses us, and which indicates in one way the metaphysical component of our being, but also propels us forward towards the other, or the Totally Other, as Karl Barth would say, towards the unknown, not any kind of unknown but a personal, personified one where we feel more comfortable as there is a common ground between us and the other. As Roger Garaudy rightly observed, the other is my transcendence.

There is even an unconscientized hope in this tendency to think that in the encounter with the other, face to face, we will recognize our belonging together and that this will strengthen the meaning of our life or offer a new meaning which will make us stronger.

This natural propensity towards the encounter operates like a necessity in all aspects of one's life, including the digital life. To the big question: what is the cause of this existential necessity, one answer can be found in Christian theology based on which we are all made in the image of God, meaning we all belong together and then we all belong ultimately to God.

Yet there is a second category of belonging, even between us and everything else in the created order as everything was made through the divine Logos (John 1, 1-3) and we, as a reflection of God's image – including that of the Logos – share the light of the Logos, a rationality, as Maximus the Confessor wrote in the seventh century, with all created things, or as even much earlier, in the second century AD, Justin the Martyr and Philosopher asserted speaking of the *Logos spermatikos*, the seed of divine rationality disseminated in all things created.

In fact, everything in the created order is a sign of something else, namely the ontological and metaphysical belonging that man unconsciously longs for. Everything physical and conceptual is metaphysical at the same time, it indicates – as signs do – something beyond itself.

That applies to the digital world as well. According to Leif Weatherby, „the digital is not [...] anything other than a (very) long series of signs. But without signs we could have no world in the first place. The digital, precisely as a kind of

abstraction, constitutes our metaphysics, forcing us to reevaluate how we deal, in even the most basic categories, like that of causality.”⁷

This metaphysical character of the digital is in line with Warren McCulloch’s view that the digital is transcendental and real at the same time.⁸

The idea is not foreign to Christian theology. Through parables and analogies Jesus Christ made the Kingdom of God real to us, yet without stripping it of the transcendent, the transcendent being the fundamental, basic condition of the Kingdom.

On the other hand, the digital helps us decipher, imagine, know some things in depth and know others as new, yet neither depth nor novelty will exhaust the thing in itself when it comes to our knowledge of it. We don’t know how long and how much knowledge is still available when the quantity of this knowledge grows exponentially, in geometrical progression thus advancing into an infinite impossible for us to define.

This is what some call the cybernetic „black box” which „denotes that we cannot see what the digital is even by analogy.”⁹ What we do know is that the digital world is based on ever more complex interactions of ever more complex algorithms that make our imagination pale in front of a reality that we understand less and less.

The narcissistic factor

Together with the need to belong, to be in relation and to be validated, there is another need that Joseph E. Davis calls self-optimization. „Seeing and being seen by people whose approval they care about,” he writes, „drives them to introject themselves into the relentless feedback-driven process of self-optimization.” This is a „participatory surveillance, cloaked in the language of self-fulfillment and autonomy.”¹⁰

While the ideas of self-fulfillment and autonomy might have many positive connotations that would justify one’s behavior, they can also indicate a fragile self and a complex of inferiority, that in turn generate an attitude of self-centeredness that can become narcissistic.

Davis writes that people behave the way they do due to social dynamics and influence and not based on their own beliefs or intentions.¹¹

⁷ Leif Weatherby, „Digital Metaphysics: The Cybernetic Idealism of Warren McCulloch,” in *The Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 20, nr. 1, Spring 2018, p. 31.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁰ Joseph E. Davis, „Social Physics Comes to the Workplace,” in *The Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflection on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 22, Nr. 2, Summer 2020, p. 70.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

This is true only partially because in the context of social dynamics I also have my own beliefs and values that also can influence others and that will have an important part in what I decide to do.

Also, if I have narcissistic tendencies, even if there will be external influences, the attitude I take is still based on a personal factor.

In other words, even if we speak of social dynamics, even behind them there is a personal belief at play that generates the waves.

One has to discern what is the belief and motivation of any social dynamic before deciding to adhere to it. And because the waves are visible but the belief or intention behind them are invisible – another type of metaphysics – one needs to be careful when thinking to go to swim in the often welcoming, warm, blue waters of any pool.

Speaking of narcissism, French philosopher Jean Baudrillard describes it in his own way: „The collector aims to surround herself with her own image, until, at last, she sees herself reflected back no matter where she looks. What you really collect, Baudrillard concludes, is always yourself.”¹²

That means that „in the end your collection always ends up collecting you.”¹³

Even if in this phase of the development and use of the digital technology most users seem to be less and less concerned about the fact that the technology collects their data including locations, preferences, hobbies, relations, plans, and that the data will be used to draw them closer and make them more dependent of the system by nourishing their interests and pleasures. This might have to do with a certain narcissistic projection of the individual or it might have to do simply with attitudes like „I don't care-ism” or even „exposure-ism”. Many would base their „I don't care” attitude on the assumption that „I have nothing to hide” or „I am not a criminal” etc.

On the other hand, those who do not care about being exposed or even take pleasure in it, not in the exhibitionist sense, find nothing wrong with sharing with the system, with others, different types of intimacies.

The moving borders of technological innovation contribute to this phenomenon; the technology, as expected, constantly brings new possibilities and opportunities and the user is tempted to try them and see the effects and results. The users are moved incessantly to a new frontier that addresses the natural feature of human curiosity, and by trying to cross the border and step into the new territory gives them a sense of a pioneering activity or type of existence.

¹² See Becca Rothfeld, „To Have and to Hold: Arguing with Maria Konda,” in *The Hedgehog Review: Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 22, Nr. 2, Summer 2020, p. 97.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

Slowly, most of the times, without conscientizing it, man takes the image of the machine and this, because the machine, to begin with, is conceived in man's image in terms of thinking, logic, functions and functionality.

The psychological substrate here lies in the fact that when man discovers something that resembles him, he develops for that thing a type of attraction, somehow in the sense of the French saying: „qui se semble se rassemble” (what is similar has a tendency to get together). When he sees somewhere a copy, a resemblance that reflects and mirrors him, he feels validated, expanded.

One can see here the narcissistic syndrome in covert or overt form.

You look into the mirror of the water, of glass, or of digital systems and suddenly you like what you see, maybe even fall in love with what you see, yourself. A form of idolatry.

What is this entire phenomenon based on? The legend of Narcissus does not explain. Our psychologists often offer contradictory or insufficient explanations. Yet, one possible, simple explanation may come from theology: man was created in the image of God, and consequently the love of God and of himself is part of his ontological condition, embedded in his being. That is why Jesus Christ, speaking about the need to love others starts with the need to love yourself, making it a fundamental criterion for salvation. Self-love is taken for granted by Jesus. It is there, part of who we are.

Jesus, however, refers to the authentic self, the one man received at creation and not to the constructed self, the one we build in our fallen existence, often suffocating the original one.

The artificial self reflects man's corrupted existential condition just like other spiritual features such as reason, perception, understanding, all are imperfect, yet with an open possibility of healing, improvement, perfection.

Narcissism, in any form, including the digital one, is like a prison where you enter on your own willing, and just because you feel good there, your will never get out.

In a sense, the risk is that one can go, *in extremis*, to one's own destruction, somehow in the sense of Nietzsche's story of the overman. In his madness, as he marginalizes or destroys everything around, as he inflates the balloon of the self, he comes to kill even God. He takes God's place, but then he lives the unbearable sentiment of inadequacy and what follows is suicide.

In a regular scenario, like in that of game addiction, the user is pushed by external forces towards the pit in an irreversible fall.

In both cases it is too late to come back. Consequently, as a researcher observes, „we are what we make; but when what we make us in ways that we fail to understand, the human at the core of culture grows dangerously fragile.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Editor, „Are We Marching to Estonia,” in *The Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 20, Nr. 1, Spring 2018, p. 8.

The epektasis of the digital

Epektasis is a concept developed by St. Gregory of Nyssa which means that in the kingdom of God there will be no boredom. As God is inexhaustibly infinite, those in His communion will grow endlessly into the new horizons of joy and fulfillment.

This concept can be applied to digital technology in the sense of how one user can grow in using ever new technological discoveries, each one paving the way for the next one. However, in the machine system one does not have a clear idea as to where this progression will ultimately lead. In the theological system, which is not neutral, but clearly bifurcated - good and evil, right and wrong -, one is informed of the consequences of one's choices. This is related to the theological concept of human freedom. In Christian theology, it is revealed that man was created in the image of God, which consists of reason, feeling and will, with the possibility of achieving the likeness to God, that is holiness and immortality.

The divine planning was for man to be created both in God's image and likeness. However, in God's order, only image was given as a first step based on which likeness was to be achieved, acquired by man's freedom, the highest divine gift bestowed on man at creation, as God Himself is a free person. Man is called to achieve likeness through God's grace but also through his own effort based on obeying the divine commandments and requirements.

Freedom, as a divine gift, will not be annihilated by God Himself who bestowed it as a reflection and crown of the image. God would not go against Himself. That would be neither logical, nor theological. Yet, based on the great gift of freedom, the burden of man's destiny and destination is placed on man himself, as one reads in the Old Testament: „See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction” (Deuteronomy 30, 15). Man is advised to choose to stay within God's commandments and live.

This idea is wonderfully expressed by Pico della Mirandola in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*:

We have given you, oh Adam, no visage proper to yourself, not any endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may with premeditation select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgment and decision.

The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. I have placed you at the very center of the world, so that from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains.

We have made you a creature neither of heaven, nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine.¹⁵

Yes, the machine does offer freedom to the user. But it does not tell him where that choice will lead to in the end. A machine will offer different options in a certain situation but it will not be an arbiter between good and bad, right and wrong, since these categories are increasingly relative in the fluctuating world of values, we are navigating in.

Yet, the theological standards are clear. Either this or that. Divine revelation is clear if one wants to read it. Options are clear with descriptions of outcomes. There is no ambivalence, no confusion. This is exactly what man needs in his complex life, in particular in the age of the confusing digital technology. One needs a guide, and God offers this guidance. We only have to accept it.

Seeing as metaphysics of the digital

Alex Pentland, head of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) proposes the following projection: Imagine „if you could see everybody in the world all the time, where they were, what they were doing, who they spent time with, then you could create an entirely different world”, a system called „God’s eye view”, „a far better world.”¹⁶

We can continue this mental exercise. Imagine in addition: if you could „see” also everybody’s thought and feeling and have total knowledge of what is going on in every person’s life, mind and feelings, that would qualify even more for the term „God’s eye view”.

Yet God does have such knowledge as He is all-knowing, and He does record everything we think, say and do. According to an old saying, everything gets written in one’s book of life; nothing is lost. Jesus Christ warned about that when He said that for every single useless word people uttered, they will have to respond on the day of the Last Judgement (Matthew 12, 36). Yet, every word starts in the mind, and Jesus also drew attention to this when He was confronting the pharisees and teachers of the law: “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?” (Matthew 9, 4).

Big data scientists even call this phenomenon “God’s eye view” with God’s name which validates the doctrine about God as a Seer (as the Greek word for God is Theos which comes from the verb *theastai* which has to do with seeing).

¹⁵ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, Gateway, Chicago, 1956, pp. 7-8.

¹⁶ See Joseph E. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

Also, the use of God's name for this phenomenon indicates a type of metaphysics in two possible stages.

Stage one: if digital science comes to the point of knowing such aspects of everybody's inner and outer life, that would qualify for a metaphysical claim in the sense that based on knowing what is going on currently, one can be imagined as being able to think anything unthinkable.

Stage two: this type of situation validates the theological metaphysics based on which everything in this created order comes from God – and we can call that an *a-priori* metaphysics, and also, that everything goes to God or at least is meant to go to/towards God – and we can call it a *a-posteriori* metaphysics.

This drive of things toward God is ontologically embedded in the created order based on the Logos element in every thing's very existence.

Therefore, in theological discourse there is no physics without metaphysics and if one would think so, that would not be a theological view but a heresy even if the label as such might not be applied.

In his famous book *The Physics of Immortality*, Frank J. Tipler, professor of mathematical physics and a major theoretician in the field of global general relativity, not only proclaims the unification of science and religion but that theology is a branch of physics and that „physicists can infer by calculation the existence of God and the likelihood of the resurrection of the dead to eternal life in exactly the same way as physicists calculate the properties of the electron.”¹⁷

More precisely, he argues that theology „is a natural science, in fact, a branch of astronomy.”¹⁸ Based on his Omega Point Theory Tipler explains how „theology is nothing but physical cosmology,” and that „physics has now absorbed theology; the divorce between science and religion, between reason and emotion, is over.”¹⁹

There is yet another thing that differentiates the metaphysics of the digital from the theological one. The metaphysics of the digital has at its center the machine, even if it is made in man's image. It is still the machine that based on man's brain offers these increasingly new possibilities and brings one to ever new horizons. Yet, slowly, becoming dependent of the machine, man takes the image of the machine, as A. Heschel explains,²⁰ which, in N. Berdyaev's terms, leads to dehumanization, and even bestialization and then to the deification of the bestial;²¹ in other words, when one worships the machine, the machines become idols, and the idols become monsters.²²

¹⁷ Frank J. Tipler, *The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead*, Doubleday, New York, London, 1994, p. IX:

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 336.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

²⁰ Abraham Heschel, *Who Is Man*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1965, p. 21.

²¹ Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, The University of Michigan Press, 1963, pp. 30, 27.

²² A. Heschel, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

In theological metaphysics, however, God is not a machine, He is a person; and more than that, complexifying the mystery, a trinitarian person.

While the machine does not make revelations and does not present itself as ultimate authority for how one has to live in the earthly existence, God, the personal God in whose image we have been created, reveals Himself as being in the closest possible relation to man, yet in a clear and strong position of authority, as we read in the first commandment of the Decalogue: „I am the Lord, your God... you shall have no other Gods, but Me” (Exodus 20, 2-3).

This order can be translated as follows: „I am the Lord, your God, don’t take the machine for a god.” The commandment summarizes the entire discourse on idolatry in the Old Testament where God presents Himself as a „jealous” God (Exodus 34, 14) and does not allow for replacements, and, if that happens, punishment will come.

In the complex machine or digital systems, one can place an order pressing the wrong key or spot and there will be no desired result or a result with negative implications and complications for the user. All the more in the case of a relation with the personal God, in God’s system, where God sets the rules and emphasizes them again and again periodically, in different ways. It is logical to expect success or failure: in other words, more gravely, salvation or punishment, in terms of which direction one takes in life by one’s own choosing.

In addition, and most importantly, in Christian revelation and doctrine, God is a person who loves His creation. Hardly or impossible for one to say such a thing about the machine. Then, as God is a person who loves, this love is the ultimate type of metaphysics one can think of. It goes way beyond logical and philosophical thinking, more so than any type of metaphysics of the digital technology or world.

John the Theologian explains that better than anyone else: „So much God loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3, 16).

The machine can copy a lot of human features. But such a declaration, and then, fact, cannot be stated by a machine, and even if it would, it would have a mechanical character, like being a programmed imitation of the human declaration, yet still a machine.

In other words, the machine will never go into the paradox of God’s sending His beloved Son to be incarnated for us and for our salvation, to teach, accept being crucified and then resurrect.

The machine cannot save, because it does not have a heaven or earth, even if, occasionally, based on programming, it might say: do this or don’t do that, in terms of moral behavior. However, in such a case it will be the algorithm that will say this or a semblance of a human, not God himself or a prophet or His only Son,

meaning a real person, a living person. The imitation will never be a hundred percent replacement of the original.

And even if with technological advances, Big Data scientists will be able to read one's knowledge, preferences, hobbies, attitudes and even feelings, a digital area called „sentiment analytics”, as Joseph E. Davis explains, where people's moods and feelings will be interpreted,²³ the machines and those behind them might be able to make predictions for the future, but not like in theological metaphysics where eschatological realities are revealed, such as those related to the Kingdom of God, the Last Judgment, paradise and hell, and others.

As it is known, „today, every procedure, text, post, like, chat, e-mail, call, search, file transfer, site visit and swipe can be encoded and stored.”²⁴

If one connects this reality to the millions, indeed billions of such acts, each minute, as reported by Richard Hugues Gibson,²⁵ and their exponential growth, one can imagine the power of control the machine and those behind it might have over us. The question that comes to mind is: can I trust them? Can I entrust my eschatological future to them? As the theological metaphysics reveals a loving God, it goes without explanation why I will go in God's direction and live under His commandments.

Conclusion: The need for transcendence

According to Philip S. Gorski „Pre-Axial religions were predominantly immanent, the post-Axial ones, predominantly transcendent” even though „transcendent religions always contain at least some measure of immanence.”²⁶

One can see a development in the evolution of religion in the sense that revelation is offered to man in function of his stage of development. From very simple forms, such as parables, metaphors, and real life illustrations to more complex and abstract forms, revelation addresses man in the place and time of his existence.

One wonders what kind of revelation we have today with the super-development of our sciences and knowledge. Would quantum theories that indicate how little we know about the universe be such a type of revelation meant to show that God is completely beyond what we can imagine and say about Him? Could that be a kind of confirmation of the apophatic way of approaching God described in ancient theology, yet raised to a new level?

²³ Joseph E. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

²⁵ Richard Hugues Gibson, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

²⁶ Philip S. Gorski, „The Return of the King: The Politics of Immanence and the Disenchantment of Liberalism,” in *The Hedgehog Review. Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 24, Nr. 1, Spring 2021, p. 47.

Each age has its own characteristics in terms of human development and consequently each age has its own kind of prophets. One type in the Old Testament, another one in other ancient religions, a different one in ancient philosophy or in the New Testament and in the history of the Christian doctrine and a different one today. Are our frontier scientists the prophets of our current age? How do we distinguish the false prophets from the true ones? From a theological point of view, conformity with or validation of Christ's teaching would make for that criterion, such as in the case of Frank Tipler who demonstrates mathematically the existence of immortality and eternal life.

There are other prophets who, based on how algorithms invade and engineer our lives predict the transfer of the human mind into the "cloud," as futuristic neuroscientists do, or those who adopted the concept of singularity, a prediction that artificial intelligence will allow our mind to transcend biological limits.

What is to be noticed though, in our time, is the fact that not only theologians but also scientists, philosophers, sociologists speak of the need of transcendence, of the need to conscientize people about it and of bringing it in more concrete ways into the daily life, such as through spiritual practices like meditation, for example.

As Carolyn Chen writes, „I saw a social ecosystem where workplaces have taken on the institutional functions of religion, fulfilling employees' social and spiritual needs for identity, belonging, meaning, purpose and transcendence.”²⁷

Rediscovering the sense of transcendence in our lives can take many forms. Of course, one is to go back to God in institutionalized religion that promotes faith as a system of values meant to offer stability in one's relation to God and to other people. Another one would be more directly related to people where, as mentioned above, as Roger Garaudy wrote, we need to see the other person as our own transcendence, in contrast to J. P. Sartre who famously said „l'enfer, c'est les autres" (hell is other people).

Martin Luther King Jr. also drew attention to how important it is to learn to transcend your own self and not be blocked in it when he wrote that man must not become a mirror where he sees himself, but a window that he can open and through which he is seen and sees others.

In fact, with each analysis of reality it is sufficient for one to look inside at the object of contemplation in order to realize that there is an entire universe that transcends us.

To put it more poetically, transcendence plucks us from here, from the hardening of dust, and anchors us in eternity.

²⁷ Carolyn Chen, „When Job Fills in for Your Faith, That's a Problem," in *The New York Times*, Nr. 59435, Thursday, May 26, 2022, p. A 23.