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Ivan Platovnjak and Tone Svetelj

Technology as the Elixir of Immortality – Resurgent Philosophical and Spiritual Enigma of Human Imprisonment

*Tehnologija kot eliksir nesmrtnosti – Obujena
filozofska in duhovna uganka človeškega zapora*

Abstract: Human life has always been understood as an inner tension between the mortality of the human body and the desire of the soul to attain immortality. The tension between mortality and immortality has reached new dimensions with the developments in medicine, technology and artificial intelligence that have the potential to extend our lives in many ways. In this paper, the authors first present a philosophical consideration of the body, which has often been seen as the prison of the soul, and then the modern quest for immortality. In the fourth chapter, they present the good news of Christianity, which is, among other things, that the body enables human beings to live their life in integral relationships and fulfil their vocations, and then the Christian understanding of immortality. They conclude by pointing to the new questions raised by the immense investment in the development of technology, especially artificial intelligence, which deep down is an expression of man's desire for immortal life. At the same time, they point out that man can overcome his fear of death and discern multiple ways to avoid it if he is willing to accept death as an integral part of his life.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, immortality, eternity, Plato, *Soma-Sema*, the good news of Christianity, an integrated view of man

Povzetek: Človeško življenje je že od nekdaj razumljeno kot notranja napetost med smrtnostjo človeškega telesa in željo duše po nesmrtnosti. Ta napetost je z neverjetnim razvojem medicine, tehnologije in umetne inteligence, ki lahko naše življenje podaljšajo na številne načine, dosegla nove razsežnosti. V pričujoči razpravi avtorja najprej predstavi filozofski pogled na telo, ki je bilo pogosto razumljeno kot ječa duše, nato pa sodobno iskanje nesmrtnosti. V tretjem poglavju predstavljata vesele oznanilo krščanstva, ki je med drugim tudi v tem, da telo človeku omogoča živeti celostne odnose in uresničiti njegovo poklicnost, nato pa razmišljata še o krščanskem razumevanju nesmrtnosti. V sklepu odpirata nova vprašanja, ki se zastavljajo ob neizmerno velikem vlaganju v razvoj tehnologije, zlasti umetne inteligence, ki je v globini izraz človekove želje po nesmrtnem življenju. Hkrati nakazujeta, da se člo-

vek strahu pred smrtjo in iskanja najrazličnejših načinov, kako bi se je izognil, lahko reši, ko jo je pripravljen sprejeti kot sestavni del svojega življenja.

Ključne besede: Hannah Arendt, nesmrtnost, večnost, Platon, *Soma-Sema*, vesela vest krščanstva, celostni pogled na človeka

1. Introduction

From the beginning, mankind has been concerned with the question of how to understand and master life; how to master nature outside man and one's own life, for example, in search of the elixir of eternal youth and life (Pevc Rozman 2021, 835).¹ To be human, which implies that one will die, is not the most comforting thought. No surprise that humans, perceiving their lives as imprisonment in the human body, want to escape toward the celestial realms of never-ending existence.

Modern medicine and technological advancement are partially successful in pushing back the human expiration date; however, they cannot grant immortality. The human body might be able to live between 120 and 150 years after which researchers anticipate a complete loss of the body's resilience (Pester 2021). To live beyond this limit, we would have to find new ways to stop the body from aging. Nanotechnology, with the invention of nano-small machines, could repair damaged cells and cure certain diseases in our bodies. Virtual immortality could be reached by scanning our brains and transferring ourselves to a non-biological, computer-like, device; however, we would still not be able to save our personality. Another solution presents an ongoing replacement of our organs and cells, even though this process does not guarantee the preservation of our memory. No doubt, modern science can postpone our bodies' expiration date. Whether this is the elixir of human immortality remains an unanswered question.

The struggle to live and save the human body reaches new dimensions with artificial intelligence, which can complement and replace the unique feature of human nature: the human capacity to think and make decisions, i.e., human freedom. This might only increase the uncomfortable human feeling of being imprisoned in the body, and at the same time, strengthen the desire to become immortal. Christian and non-Christian thinkers are called to redefine the anthropological question about the essence of human existence.

2. The Body as the Prison of the Soul

The short play on the Greek words *σῶμα* - *σῆμα* (*soma* – *sema*), usually translated as body – tomb, exposes the archaic notion that “the body is the prison of the soul”. This notion seems to be older than Plato and Pythagoras, who use it frequently in

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their writings. The *soma-sema* notion belongs to the Orphic mystery cults of ancient Greece. At the same time, it represents the fundamental teaching in much older Egyptian Pharaonic mysticism, in which Plato and Pythagoras were initiated. Either way, the recurring challenge is the question of how to understand human existence in its dual nature: body on one side, and on the other, a divine spark or soul, calling for purification leading to the final reward, i.e., never-ending existence with gods. The true meaning of the *soma-sema* connotation escapes the scientific or naturalist-literalist mentality, unable to see the allegory and parable encoded in the mysteries (Irigaray 2017, 1). The only way to understand it is with the help of spiritual allegory and parable, which are the very instruments of teaching of the mystics.

The notion that “the body is the prison of the soul” is frequently found in Plato’s writings, which indicates its stunning importance. In his *Apology*, which took place in 399 BC, Plato delivers Socrates’ trial at the court. After being condemned to death, Socrates, without any doubt, fear, or hesitation, talks about his death as a blessing and advantage, allowing the human soul to be relieved from its bodily existence and enjoy the company of wise men and women (Plato 2002, 43–44). In *Phaedo*, Plato goes so far as he writes, “those who practice philosophy in the right way are in training for dying” (104). In his famous Allegory of the Cave, Plato illustrates the life of prisoners in the cave, unable to move around and contemplating the shadows of material reality. Once free of the shackles, one’s spiritual journey of new discoveries begins. The true reality cannot be perceived through sense perception; the real world is much different from the shadow world of the prison; the outer world is greater than the one in the cave (1992, 186–190). At the end of this allegory, Plato emphasizes the importance of education, which should not be exchanged for “putting knowledge into souls that lack it”; true education is about “turning the whole soul until it is able to study that which is and the brightest thing that is, namely, the one we call the good” (190). It should not be any surprise that the education of future warriors and philosophers takes so many years, including some years of physical/bodily training (80–88).

With these and similar passages, Plato continuously invites his students to the perception of things hidden from plain sight and existent beyond sensual perception, where the intellect gets lost in the spheres of opinion by contemplating only the illusion of multiplicity (Irigaray 2017, 4). Plato’s invitation to come out of the cave is an invitation to embrace the mystical practice of contemplation of the sight of cosmic principles, known as Forms or Ideas. They govern all things from a sphere of reality that can only be intellectually grasped as long as there is a true love of wisdom, i.e., *philo-sophia*. To explore the world of Ideas, one must transcend the boundaries of his body, which are not the boundaries of his soul (Čović and Marinčić 2016, 478).

It would be erroneous to conclude that Plato did not appreciate his material body. As an Athenian, Plato liked the balance of a beautiful body, physical exercises in a gym, or glistening oils on his strong body. On multiple occasions, Plato discusses the body’s beauty, health, and light, not to mention the care of the body. In addition, Socrates often philosophes in gymnasiums, i.e., in the center of holistic training where body, mind, and soul are exercised together (Pappas 2023). History

records that Plato practiced wrestling with Ariston the Argive, and became good enough for the Isthmian Games, an international wrestling tournament equivalent to the Olympics (Laertius 2020, 135).

The key to a proper comprehension of Socrates as the main actor of Plato's reflection is having an appropriate relationship with one's body. Plato is clear in his *Republic* that the boundaries of one's body are not the boundaries of one's soul. In his dialogue *Phaedo*, Plato describes the last hours of Socrates, who encourages his students to sense how the transcendence they have glimpsed with him in embodied life is a foretaste of the vision to come. Consequently, death might be good because it brings embodied life's fulfilment, not the end (Plato 2002, 118–119).

Referring to these and other similar passages from Plato's *opus*, the question arises of what the possible interpretation of the *soma-sema* notion might be, without finishing with an uncritical interpretation of Plato's dualism in terms of the separation of the human soul and body. Consequently, the human body literally becomes the prison for the soul, desperately waiting to be relieved from its bodily confinement. Such interpretations might be due to ignorance of the Egyptian and Orphic mysteries familiar to Plato, or his idea of the soul's immortality and the soul's ongoing return to the material bodies (1992, 285–292). In his interpretations of the soul's immortality and its return to material reality, Plato refers to the religious and mystic components, implicitly confessing that here we are dealing with something that the human mind struggles to grasp adequately.

Analogically speaking, the integration of the human body with all its boundaries of material existence presents an enigmatic challenge to the father of modernity, René Descartes (1596–1650). In his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, he reflects on the essence of human nature and concludes that nothing else belongs to his human essence except that he is a thinking thing. Even though the human essence is very closely joined with its material body as an extended thing, Descartes does not pay much attention to his body. What matters is his mind, understood as a thinking thing distinct from his body to the point that it can exist without his body (Descartes 1993, 51). The phenomenon and development of so-called *Cartesian dualism*, overemphasizing the importance of the human mind over its embodiment in its material reality, can be taken as an escape from the human body, which will inevitably mark the development of the Western thought of the recent centuries. Cartesian dualism can be taken as a distant reflection of Plato's *soma-sema* notion, i.e., a struggle to integrate the human body's existence adequately. When trapped only in the this-sidedness of human existence, the human mind continues to look for solutions through prolonging the time of bodily existence.

3. New Search of Immortality

With technological advancement, providing new options for a prolonged existence of the human body, the *soma-sema* notions in terms of "the body as a prison

of the soul” reaches new dimensions. The Internet and other ways of communication are loaded with pseudo-philosophical reflections with neat formulas on how to understand the life-giving feelings of our human existence properly but fail to grasp the essence of human life as such, especially the bodily boundaries of human existence. If Descartes overemphasized the importance of the human mind and struggled to properly integrate the existence of his body, with the development of artificial intelligence, nowadays we struggle to find an adequate place for the human mind. Human essence, described as a thinking device like computer software, is apparently losing its importance with the fast development of supercomputers and artificial intelligence, steadily occupying more space and replacing humans in decision-making, planning, and ethical thinking (Shevlin et al. 2019).

The question of how to live in the human body on this earth leads to new challenges due to the fact that modern technology also enables space exploration. In the prologue to her book *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt describes with unmitigated feelings the launch in the universe of Sputnik 1 in 1957 as an unprecedented advancement in modern technology. Joy, pride, and awe filled the hearts of men who could look up from the earth toward the skies and observe a thing of their own power and mastery, even though primarily meant for military purposes. At the same time, Arendt described this success also as a relief about the first “step toward escape from men’s imprisonment to the earth” (Arendt 2018, 1). The *so-ma-sema* notion, with its underlying ideas of imprisonment, reaches new dimensions. What had been previously buried in non-respectable science fiction suddenly became a reality. Paraphrasing Arendt’s reflection, to the Christian narrative about the earth as a vale of tears, and philosophical statements about the human body’s imprisonment of the human mind and soul, now we can add another one: the earth is conceived as a prison for men’s bodies, and finally we can escape from it. “Should the emancipation and secularization of the modern age, which began with a turning-away, not necessarily from God, but from a god who was the Father of men in heaven, end with an even more fateful repudiation of an Earth who was the Mother of all living creature under the sky?” (Arendt 2018, 2)

On the same page, Arendt describes the colossal consequences of this step. The earth, as such, provides whatever is necessary for man’s breathing without effort and without artifice. With great scientific endeavors, man is now able to cut the last ties with the earth and survive in an artificial environment. Underneath this effort to escape imprisonment on the earth, or in the attempts to alter the size, shape, and function of human beings, as well as to produce under the microscope superior human beings, lies “the hope to extend man’s life far beyond the hundred-year limit /.../ This future man /.../ seems to be possessed by a rebellion against human existence as it has been given, a free gift from nowhere (secularly speaking), which he wishes to exchange for something, as it were, he has made himself.” (2–3)

To better clarify this human desire to escape from imprisonment, Arendt recalls the distinction between immortality and eternity. “Immortality means endurance in time, deathless life on this earth and in this world as it was given.” (18) Referring to the Greek understanding of the universe, in the world of deathless and

ageless gods' lives are placed men, the only mortals in an immortal, but a not eternal, universe. Consequently, people are continuously confronted with the immortal lives of their gods. The Greek gods have the same nature and shape as men; however, the gods are immortal, which is not the case for men. Embedded in a cosmos of immortal nature and gods, mortality became the hallmark of human existence. It should not be a surprise that an individual man wants to find a way out of their mortality and find their own place in the cosmos where everything but they are immortal. "The task and potential greatness of mortals lie in their ability to produce things – works and deeds and words – which would deserve to be and, at least to a degree, are at home in everlastingness." (19) By leaving behind non-perishable traces, men hope to attain immortality of their own and prove themselves to be of a "divine" nature. This privilege deserves only the best, superior, and noble (ἀριστος) who constantly prove themselves to be the best (ἀριστεύειν) by preferring immortal fame to mortal things.

In this context of an ongoing effort to gain immortality, Arendt places Socrates' taking a step further and beyond immortality (20–21). As a great thinker, Socrates never wrote down his thoughts, which would be a sign of concern to leave some traces of his thoughts. Unconcerned with immortality, he strives for eternity. The nature of eternity, as such, remains rather enigmatic because of the human lack of a possible experience. Plato describes it as ἄρητον, which means *unspeakable, not to be uttered because it is too sacred*. Aristotle describes it as ἄνευ λόγου, i.e. *without words*. In the Allegory of the Cave, Plato describes it as the realm beyond human concerns and outside the plurality of men. The philosopher leaves the cave by himself, neither accompanied nor followed by others. He literally dies to his existence among men. Arendt describes this experience of the eternal as a contradiction to what is immortal; the eternal has no correspondence with this world and cannot be transformed into any activity whatsoever. The same activity of thinking about it is inadequate; every attempt to grasp it results as inadequate. What remains is contemplation or *theôria*, allowing an experience of the eternal.

4. The Good News of Christianity: The Body Enables Man to Live Integral Relationships and to Fulfil His Vocation

The Christian concept of the body is based on the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Yahwistic narratives of man's creation emphasize that he is the Creator's creation. That he is formed from the earth, *adamah* (Gen 2:7; 3:19), points to his inferiority, transience, helplessness and insignificance. The "breath of life" (*nephesh*)² is breathed into him, revealing his needs and dependencies, in a special way his dependence on God.

The priestly texts on the creation of man (Gen 1:26; 5:1; 9:6) speak of his God-likeness, which makes him transcend all things, but at the same time he is not

² The term, which denotes the human totality, does not only express physical needs, but also the highest form of need – the desire for God (Skralovnik 2022b, 120).

God. It is not a likeness such as between parent and child (Gen 5:3). Man is quite close to God, but he is not divine. In all his fullness he is called to dwell in communion with God, he is a creature of relationships (Lah 2003, 254–256).

The Old Testament views man in his total creational dependence on God and his absolute orientation towards Him. This dynamic existential relationship with God is expressed by the concept of “spirit” (*ruach*) (Deut 1:2; 3:8; 8:1; Ex 10:13, 19; Ps 51:12; Ezek 11:19; 36:26). It always sees man in an extremely integrated way and is alien to the separation into “body and soul”.

The New Testament also speaks of man as created by God (Mt 5:17), dependent on him (Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21), who cares for him (Mt 6:25–34), because he knows that he is weak (Mk 10:27). However, man’s worth is revealed in a particular way by the incarnation of the Second Person of God, the Son of God. By becoming man and assuming human bodily life, and by rising again with a glorified body after his death, he confirmed definitively and for all time the goodness of the body and its immeasurable value.

In spite of the continuity of the New Testament with the Old Testament view of man, we can trace a newness and originality in the conception, which lies precisely in the unique rootedness of the “new man” in Christ and the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:4) and in belonging to the “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). The new man is defined by sharing in the life and love of God himself through Christ (Col 3:4, 14; Phil 1:21; Gal 3:26; Eph 2:19) (Lah 2003, 252; Petkovšek 2022, 600–608).

The Second Vatican Council summarizes a long-standing effort to find a view of the human body that is in accord with the biblical view of it:

“Though made of body and soul, man is one. Through his bodily composition he gathers to himself the elements of the material world; thus they reach their crown through him, and through him raise their voice in free praise of the Creator. For this reason man is not allowed to despise his bodily life, rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and honorable since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day. /.../ Thus, when he recognizes in himself a spiritual and immortal soul, he is not being mocked by a fantasy born only of physical or social influences, but is rather laying hold of the proper truth of the matter.” (Gaudium et Spes 14)

The fundamental message of biblical anthropology, and of the continuing teaching of the Church’s magisterium, is, therefore, that man is a unitary being. The “Catechism of the Catholic Church” (§362) sums this up when it says: “The human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal and spiritual.” The body is the expression of man’s spiritual reality, which can only exist and express itself in the body, and for this reason there is no body without a soul and no soul without a body. This connection between the two is so close that it does not cease even with death but continues to exist in some way (Rahner 1958).

Avguštin Lah (2003, 262–265) points out that there has been much recent criticism of the notion of the “soul” as a “spiritual substance” distinct from and indepen-

dent of matter, which, together with the body, constitutes man. In order to go beyond this notion, which is rooted in the Greek philosophical tradition, it is necessary, he argues, to return to the biblical concept of the spirit, which is that reality of God through which God reveals himself to man and makes him participate in God's own life.

"In the original biblical conception, then, we are not dealing with categories of substance, but much more with categories of relationship or interpersonal encounter and communion of life. In the New Testament this relationship is characterized as an incarnation in Christ (1 Cor 6:17), which does not concern only one aspect of man, but embraces the whole man; the whole human being is 'lifted up' into the dimension of the divine. God personally calls every man and the whole man, as he is, into communion with him through Christ and in the Holy Spirit." (Lah 2003, 264–265; cf. Skralovnik and Matjaž 2020, 505–518)

Because of this personal call of the whole and every human being to a life of communion with God, which he creates in earthly life as well as in the life after death, it makes sense to speak of the human soul as his "I". The self becomes "I" and receives meaning alongside God, to whom it is oriented with the whole being as a unique and divine image.

This integrated conception of man in Christianity makes the body neither a prison nor an obstacle for the soul. It is only through it and in it that man can establish and live an integral relationship with God, self, others, and creation, and realize his vocation in the world and in eternity.

5. Human Immortality in Christianity

The Bible reveals that man is not immortal in himself, but as an interlocutor with God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Since God established a dialogue with man when He gave him life by creation and sustains it by continually creating, man can also sustain this life in a continuous dialogue with Him.

Ratzinger calls this dialogical immortality: "Immortality results not simply from the self-evident inability of the indivisible to die but from the saving deed of the lover who has the necessary power: man can no longer totally perish because he is known and loved by God. All love wants eternity, and God's love not only wants it but effects it and is it." (Ratzinger 2004, 247)

The biblical thought of the resurrection grew out of the believer's dialogical relationship with God. Faith knew that God would establish justice (Job 19:25-27; Ps 73:23-28; Tob 3) (Skralovnik 2022a, 265–291). Faith believed that those who suffered for the cause of God would also receive the fulfillment of the promises (2 Macc 7:9.14.23.29). Immortality in the biblical sense, therefore, does not derive from man's own nature, which would be indissoluble of itself, but from his being involved in a dialogue with God the Creator (Roszak 2022, 587). Man's im-

mortality does not mean that man does not die, but that he is raised from the dead. Ratzinger, therefore, stresses: “Because the Creator intends, not just the soul, but the man physically existing in the midst of history and gives *him* immortality, it must be called ‘awakening of the dead’ ‘of men’.” (Ratzinger 2004, 247)

In man’s dialogical nature, both soul and body are important. The whole man, as a unity of body and soul, is oriented to the Other/God and the other/man/creature. The Christian conception of immortality is decisively rooted in the conception of God and therefore bears a dialogical nature. Since God is the God of the living and calls his creature, man, by name, this being cannot perish (Ratzinger 1988, 150–156). In the Bible, the most unifying force is love, which is both human and divine in nature (Avsenik Nabergoj 2021, 652).

The immortal is not the soul separated from the body, but God’s relationship to man in his unity of body and soul. In his analysis of Ratzinger’s interpretation of dialogical immortality, Ciril Sorč (2003, 644–645) points to his insight that

“the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, as formulated by Thomas Aquinas, is something quite new in comparison with the ancient conception of immortality. The specificity of the Christian conception of the soul, Ratzinger is convinced, is the vocation to an uninterrupted dialogue with eternal truth and love. The soul is not a kind of veiled reality, but a dynamic of infinite openness, which means at the same time a participating in the infinite, the eternal.”

The Platonic view of the human body persisted far into scholasticism due to the great influence of St. Augustine. Thomas Aquinas rebelled against it. Although he accepted Aristotle’s understanding of man, he did not mechanically repeat his doctrine (Roszak 2013). St. Thomas argues that the body and the soul are two separable existential givens which are at the same time mutually oriented. The rational soul is the agent that gives man his form and makes him a living being. Without it, the human body cannot exist. Of course, the soul and the body are not “two beings”, two separate realities. Man is always fully soul and fully body at the same time. It is a “*unio substantialis*”. Death demolishes the unity of man. In this, man’s soul does not succumb to disintegration, but such a life is not natural for it. It cannot be called a person. For scholastic theologians, death is the separation of body and soul, but for them, this does not mean the liberation of the soul. It is the destruction of man’s humanity. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul holds, above all, that man exists both in life and in death only when he is in relationship with God, his Creator, through Jesus Christ, through whom he shares in his resurrection of the flesh (Sorč 2003, 639–640).

6. Conclusion

The immense investment in the development of technology, especially artificial intelligence, is deep down an expression of the human desire for immortality. Ar-

tificial intelligence enables ever faster and more complex information processing, leading to new discoveries and a different understanding of both human nature and the universe as a whole. Even at its current stage of technological development, artificial intelligence can think faster and more accurately than humans, including decision-making. We may have reached a tectonic shift in the intellectual evolution of the human mind. What has been the exclusive domain of man as the heart of his nature and the reflection of his freedom is slowly being superseded by artificial thinking as the result of the computer processing of embedded data.

This raises the question of whether we are witnessing a new enigma of human entrapment. Ancient thinkers were confronted with the question of how to live in a body that should not be a prison for the human spirit. They understood the reason as something divine, something that belongs exclusively to man alone and enables him to become godlike. The use of artificial intelligence, however, raises the question of how to revalorize human reason and thus the very essence of man, without becoming subordinate to computers. If the use of artificial intelligence means that man renounces his privileged place in the universe, it also raises the question of the uniqueness and inimitability of the very essence of man, endowed with reason and freedom.

The answer to this question should be primarily theological. If the integration of the body has been one of the major challenges of Western Christianity in recent centuries, the integration and place of human reason and freedom will be a fundamental issue for the present and future generation of Christianity (Vodičar 2019, 701). What remains unanswered is the question of the meaning of human life, embedded in mortality and the desire for immortality.

Christianity stresses that the whole man, with his body and mind, is oriented to God. There is no other fullness for man on earth and in eternity than that which, after his earthly death, involves resurrection to eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ and remaining in his love (Jn 15). Artificial intelligence cannot replace this orientation towards God and a personal relationship with God. Nor can modern technology discard or replace the communal and communitarian dimension of human life (Kraner 2021, 736). But it challenges us to discover in a profound way what faith in God alone makes possible - eternal life and the making sense of death as an integral part of life and the passage to eternal life.

Modern technology, together with artificial intelligence, wants to achieve man's final liberation of the soul (mind) from the body and attain technological immortality, which is the timelessness of artificial superintelligence. This raises questions, which Branko Klun (2019, 593) also points out: "Would life without death be authentic life? /.../ Would such a life really be 'better' than one in which, because of the finality (and death) accompanying every decision and experience, life takes on a peculiar intensity and finality? One might reasonably ask whether death might not be preferable to technological immortality, where the mind would be uploaded onto a computer and could not die - after no information had completely disappeared."

As we saw in chapter 5, Christianity does not understand man's immortality and eternal life without his bodily death. Man can therefore be freed from the

fear of death and the search for all possible ways to avoid it if he is prepared to accept death as an integral part of his life. This means that he is willing to accept that death, the timing of which he will not determine, will be the natural end of his life, for which he did not determine the time and place when it was given to him. Of course, man will never be able to accept death as something purely natural or as a gift, because it means a separation from a healthy and genuine attachment to the beautiful, the good and the true, especially from the people he has loved and with whom he has shared his life. No one can see the meaning of his natural death if he does not have the opportunity to gradually say goodbye to his earthly life and to loved ones. Research on the accompaniment of dying persons confirms that only those who have satisfied their spiritual needs are able to see their death in this way (Platovnjak 2022).

So those who are willing to accept their vulnerability as that which helps them to become fully human (Globokar 2023, 8–14; Orphanopoulos 2023, 30–32)³ and death as the natural conclusion of earthly life, this helps them to give meaning to life, because they see it as a gift given to them so that through it they themselves can become a gift for others. This is also the basic message of the biblical revelation about the creation of man: man originates from God, who is love (1 Jn 4:16), and therefore his life has meaning only if he lives it himself and becomes as perfect as God his Father (Mt 5:45-48). When a man lives love in all its dimensions, he is on the path to immortality, because his story of love, which he lives with the help of his body in union with the love of the Triune God (like the branch on the vine – Jn 15:1-10) in the midst of this world and time, will continue after his bodily death. For God's love is all-powerful and overcomes even bodily death, as the Good News of Jesus' resurrection proclaims to us.

Abbreviation

GS – Second Vatican Council 1965 [Gaudium et Spes].

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³ Even from the point of view of Hartmut Rosa's seminal theory of resonance, we can say that a person can achieve full humanity only through involvement in resonant relationships, which implies a person's readiness for their own vulnerability (Žalec 2021a, 831). Corresponding to this is the fact that a person's genuine resilience implies their vulnerability, as it implies their being in resonance and their maturity. The latter, just like resonance, implies a person's vulnerability (2021b, 142).

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