

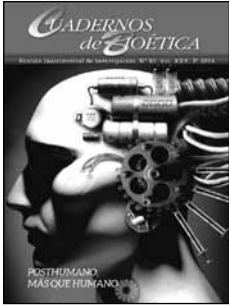
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Modernity and postmodernity in the genesis of transhumanism-posthumanism [Modernidad y postmodernidad en la génesis del transhumanismo-posthumanismo]

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MODERNIDAD Y POSTMODERNIDAD EN LA GÉNESIS DEL TRANSHUMANISMO-POSTHUMANISMO

MODERNITY AND POSTMODERNITY IN THE GENESIS OF TRANSHUMANISM-POSTHUMANISM

LUIS MIGUEL PASTOR

*Department of Cell Biology and Histology, Medical School, IMIB-Arrixaca,
Regional Campus of International Excellence
Campus Mare Nostrum,
University of Murcia, Murcia, Spain.
bioetica@um.es*

JOSÉ ÁNGEL GARCÍA CUADRADO

*Ecclesiastical Faculty of Philosophy
Philosophical Anthropology.
Universidad de Navarra
jagarcia@unav.es*

ABSTRACT:

Keywords:

Transhumanism,
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postmodernity,
humanism,
antihumanism,
technoscience, ethics,
human nature.

There are various authors who, within the realm of bioethics, propose as a model of the human being, a man who is enhanced, transhuman or even posthuman. The philosophical roots of these bioethical thinkers have not been sufficiently analysed. In this article our aim is to demonstrate the connection of this movement with the evolution of philosophy over the past several decades. Therefore –and keeping in mind that the transhumanist-posthumanist proposals appeared in the last decades of the 20th century, a time when important philosophical change was afoot, with a movement from the modern age to the postmodern– we begin our article by identifying the philosophical characteristics of both periods, as well as the relationship that exists between them. We will analyse synthetically the conception of the human being, of ethics and of empirical science in both periods, coming to the conclusion that the postmodern era is the result of the radicalization of ideas that were already latent in modernity. Afterwards, and following a brief summary of the postulates of transhumanism-posthumanism, we study the links that this current of thought has with modern and postmodern perspectives regarding the human person, ethics and technoscientific activity. We conclude that even though transhumanist-posthumanist thought has roots in modernity, its objectives and their theoretical bases reveal a strong dependence on postmodern thought. And further, since this latter current of thought is, at base, antihumanist it is logical that transhumanism-posthumanism, influenced by postmodernity, would reveal a strong tendency not merely to negate what the human being is, but even to forget what it is out of a desire to construct something different from the human in the future.

RESUMEN:**Palabras clave:**

Transhumanismo,
posthumanismo,
modernidad,
postmodernidad,
humanismo,
antihumanismo,
tecnociencia, ética,
naturaleza humana.

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Hay diversos autores que dentro del ámbito bioético proponen un modelo de hombre mejorado, transhumano o más aún posthumano. Las raíces filosóficas del pensamiento que ellos han generado han sido poco analizadas. El presente trabajo tiene por objetivo mostrar la conexión de este movimiento con la evolución de la filosofía durante las últimas décadas. Para ello, y teniendo en cuenta que las propuestas transhumanistas-posthumanistas surgen a finales del siglo XX, momento en el cual se produce un cambio filosófico importante desde la época moderna a la postmoderna, el artículo comienza determinando las características filosóficas de ambas épocas, así como la relación que existe entre ellas. Se analiza sintéticamente la concepción del hombre, de la ética y la ciencia empírica en ambas épocas, concluyendo que la época postmoderna es la radicalización de posturas que se encontraban latentes ya en la modernidad. Posteriormente, y después de un breve resumen de los postulados del transhumanismo-posthumanismo, se estudian los vínculos que éste muestra con los planteamientos que la modernidad y postmodernidad tienen sobre el hombre, la ética y la actividad tecnocientífica. Se concluye que aun mostrando el pensamiento transhumanista-posthumanista raíces en la modernidad, sus objetivos así como sus bases teóricas, presentan una fuerte dependencia del pensamiento postmoderno. Es más, siendo éste en última instancia antihumanista es lógico que el transhumanismo-posthumanismo, influido por la postmodernidad, muestre una fuerte tendencia no sólo a negar lo que el hombre es, sino a olvidarlo en aras de construir algo distinto de él en el futuro.

1. Introduction

This article has as its objectives –within the monographic issue that the journal *Cuadernos de Bioética* is dedicating to transhumanism-posthumanism and its diverse expressions– a characterization of this current of thought, describing it briefly, together with an analysis of the key issues of culture that brought it into being. In exploring these issues, we will proceed backwards. First we will study the cultural framework of the 20th century and of the 21st, where transhumanism-posthumanism arose, in the context of the process of change that has occurred during this period of time, stretching from what has been called “modernity” to late-modernity or post-modernity. We will therefore analyse the concepts of modernity and postmodernity, focusing on the transition between the two. In describing this transition, we will pay special attention to whether there was a clear rupture between the second and the first –if the second is a consequence or epigone of the first– and whether in the present day both cultural realities coexist or whether the cultural transition between them both is now a thing of the past. Finally, we will analyse the historic development of transhumanism-posthumanism,

placing emphasis on those points of contact that this cultural movement has with modernity as well as with postmodernity.

2. Modernity

In the terrain of philosophy and history the concept of modernity is often applied to a specific way of thinking about the world, God and the human being that originated in the West during the 16th century. Clearly, such a conception will have developed in distinct ways over these past centuries in order to resolve the various questions raised by modernity itself. But modernity is principally characterized by certain basic theses that are assumed, to a greater or lesser degree, by all thought generated in this epoch. We can see, therefore, that in this modern period, with nuances, all its systems of thought are based on certain anthropological, ethical and cosmological proposals held in common, either by criticizing them or by radicalizing them.

2.1. Modern anthropology

Perhaps one of the most important changes that distinguishes the modern period from the postmodern is

a shift in the idea of the human being that each rely on. It is never excessive, we believe, to emphasize that Descartes' quest for an indubitable foundation for human knowledge¹ generated a very important change in the reigning conception of the human being. Rationalism, which marks the beginning of modernity, generated a theory of knowledge that brought with it a deep split in the human being. This was a separation not just in man's psychological aspect –where modernity gives greater importance to reason in comparison to those aspects relating to will and affectivity– but also in the most intimate structure in the human person: between his corporeality and his mind or spirit. Thus, by focusing philosophy on the “thinking I”, and holding that the criterion of truth must be sought not in the reality to be apprehended or in the thinking person himself, but rather only in the act of reason that apprehends, means that only those affirmations that participate in the primary and grounding evidence of the “I think” are true.² The finite reason of the human being is what measures reality and, while Descartes needed the existence of God in order to gain access to the world, he does so based on reason itself. In this way there arises an important split between the thinking substance (the “res cogitans”) and the world (the “res extensa”). This latter is conceived of as something that is real to the degree that it is thought by the former. This theory of knowledge, as we have indicated, has an immediate consequence in the anthropological understanding of the human being and, consequently, in the form in which the human being relates to himself. If the body –my body– belongs to the world, it is something different from me, and is only real if it is being thought by my “I”. Corporeal substance is not constitutive of the person; instead, it is something of the world that adheres to my I. Anthropological dualism –thought-body– announces its presence. It does not deny that a body exists, but only that the body ends up belonging to the world and, in consequence, is something that the human being possesses and not something that

he is. Corporeality falls into the realm of that which is not the I, and therefore it exists in the terrain of availability and of the transforming activity of that I.

2.2. Modern ethics³

In the philosophical realm a phenomenon occurs that is derived from the rationalism dominant at the outset of modernity. This phenomenon, in my opinion, has two configuring elements and a final result that we can define as a scepticism regarding ethical truth. Previously the moral philosophy of modernity had sought to give grounding –by various methods– to the way in which the human being knows the good, but ultimately arriving –by diverse theoretical currents– at ethical relativism. This fact, as we have noted, is a consequence of various factors, amongst which we will emphasize two that are consonant with the image of the human being held by the anthropology of the modern era. On the one hand, as we indicated earlier, the dualism introduced into the human person means that the activity of thinking is displaced to the terrain of the mental alone. In this way, ethical truth is unlinked from the corporeal or sensible realm. The corporeal has only a this-worldly character with no relation to the good of the human being. And on the other side, in accordance with the criterion of certainty that gives grounding to the true, within the ethical realm the truth must present itself in a clear and distinct form. The consequence of these two premises –which act synergically– is of importance for the development of modern thought concerning ethical behaviour. On the one hand, if human nature is amputated –the corporeal does not belong to the essence of the human being– a large part of human inclinations cease to have a teleological character⁴ with respect to the human. The good of the human being cannot be deduced from these “human inclinations”, and as a result, one must seek it in the terrain of the mental. If ethi-

1 Cf. Cardona, C. *Rene Descartes: Discourse on the Method*, Hackett, New York, 1998.

2 Cf. Leonard, A. *Pensamiento contemporáneo y fe en Jesucristo*, Encuentro, Madrid, 1985, 145-147.

3 A summary of the various ethical currents of modernity can be found in: Santos, M. *En defensa de la razón. Estudios de Ética*, Eunsa, Pamplona, 1999.

4 An analysis of the process of the de-teleologization of human nature is available in: González, A.M. *Naturaleza y Dignidad. Un estudio desde Robert Spaemann*, Eunsa, Pamplona, 1996, 127-178.

cal knowledge –practical reason– must follow the same methods that speculative reason does, we will arrive at practical truth through only the act of reason that apprehends this truth.

2.2.1. Modern science and its influence on ethics

We must also explore a very important phenomenon that occurred at the beginning of modernity: the birth of the empirical sciences as we know them today. The desire for verification and for evidence strengthened one of the most important achievements of human reason. In the face of doubt regarding the information that the senses provide and the inability to derive practical applications from science, with perhaps too much focus on what classical thinkers would have called the final causes of things, modernity proposes the development of a science that focuses especially on efficient causes, which uses an experimental method for obtaining truth and which seeks concrete applications for humanity. The consequence of this outlook is important for knowledge in general, and also for ethical or practical knowledge. Thus, through using this type of knowledge, the domination that the human being has over the world becomes more evident, with the result that, little by little, empirical rationality comes to be prototypical for modernity. As a consequence, speculative reason and practical reason are hounded by this new kind of rationality on two fronts. One of them is the growing belief, in the modern epoch, that the only true knowledge is that which is obtained through use of the *scientific method*, whose use has resulted in an increase of scientism in the 20th century. This kind of reductionism leads to an amputation of reason, and makes the modern human being unable to access certain dimensions of reality, since modernity had already discarded the possibility of any access to them. In addition, carried to its extreme limit, scientism will end up producing a mistrust of our very capacity for reason. Together with this, another important effect appears. This is the effect that this scientific rationality –which we can call instrumental– will have on speculative and practical reason. Not only, as I have said, does it impede the development of the speculative

sciences, by denying them any capacity to attain to reality, but it also seeks to enforce their adherence to the same method for analysing the questions they raise.⁵ Ethics must resign itself to having only an instrumental perspective –to being a *technê*– in its reflections about the moral life of humans. In this way, and especially through empiricism, a mode of thinking is introduced into ethics –*ad modum mathematicum sive geometricum*– which seeks, through weighings and calculations of consequences, to determine the goodness or evil of human actions.⁶ Even more, in this second case it is no longer a question of knowing good or evil; instead we need merely know the correctness of our actions, what is useful about them. In this ethical model there are no human actions that are always to be rejected, since the end can justify any choice. Clearly this is not the only kind of ethical reflection that existed in modernity, as we stated above. Thus, the impossibility of relying –as a point of reference for the ethicalness of human actions– on the existence of a human nature with its own teleology. Further, the inability of the practical reason to gain access to the good not only gives rise to ethical proposals of an empiricist stamp, but also to others that seek an origin for human obligations that is based in reason itself, whether it be via innate ideas, logical syllogisms, the simple grasping of the good through the autonomy of reason, or by way of grasping values in an affective and intuitive way.⁷ In the end, ethical reflection in modernity was divided between formal options and material options, without any clear connection with reality. Finally, modern science has fostered a certain change in the attitude of the human person regarding the cosmos or nature. Because that nature can be modified or altered through instrumental reason, in modernity there has been a loss, and not only of the attitude of wonderment and respect towards nature, because mechanicism, so closely bound to modern science, fails to capture the teleological character of reality. In previous centuries nature or the cosmos had a divine stamp,

5 Cf. Marcos, A. "Prudencia, verdad practica y razón postmoderna". In: *Racionalidad en ciencia y tecnología*, Pérez Ransanz, A. R. and Velasco, A. (eds.), UNAM, México, 2011, 119-134.

6 Santos, M, *op. cit.* 78-88.

7 *Ibid.*, 16-73.

or was gifted with participation in the divine plan for the world, and was contemplated in all of its integrity. Now nature, often reduced to its merely physical or biological dimension, is seen rather as a limitation on freedom, a limitation which must be overcome in order to conquer true freedom and, in particular, make manifest the true image of the human being. In this context the figure of Francis Bacon laid out an entire program⁸: the subjection of nature as the affirmation of the human. Out of everything I have discussed, there arises a dialectic between the natural as irrational, in contrast with the human as rational and free. As a consequence of this split, ethical goods become unlinked from the physical and biological, and any reliance on those realities is labelled as being “physicism” or “biologism”.

2.2.2. The priority of human freedom and its ethical consequences

However, the split that modernity introduces between the realities of the good, virtue and the norm does not end here.⁹ There is an additional element that, in our opinion, shapes the idea of the ethical life that characterizes modernity. While it is true that the modern project is centred on reason as the source of all knowledge, from the beginning there has also existed a certain internal reaction that is opposed to this project, because of a forgetting of the human will and because of the role that its actions play in human existence. It is symptomatic that, with the human being split into two, with his corporeality divided from his spirit, modernity would also have from its beginning, as a cultural movement, a difficulty with maintaining itself united. The cause can be found in the fact that the cognitive and volitional aspects of the human person (who is only spirit and therefore understanding and will) fight among themselves to attain priority in the person. This issue perhaps has a relationship with a fact that has been written about by various authors. At the beginning of the Cartesian cogito there exists an ele-

ment of voluntarism that determines and conditions it.¹⁰ It is a matter of a voluntary decision not to accept the evidence of the senses. Ultimately, the rejection of and lack of confidence in the evidence of the senses are not caused by any desire to follow a method, imposed in order to better adjust oneself to the proper mode of functioning of human reason. Instead, they are due to a voluntary negation based on prior epistemological commitments that seek an absolute certainty in knowledge. This fact, in our opinion, raises two insoluble problems within modernity, generating an internal contradiction. First, that the act of love is prior to knowledge, is both a generator of knowledge and separate from it. Second, that freedom, which is a basic quality of that human will, is in a position of domination with respect to the end of knowledge, which is truth. These facts have a double transcendence, one on the anthropological plane and the other on the ethical. With regards to the first, it presupposes that, within the dualism of the person, the person, rather than identifying himself with consciousness, will self-identify more and more with the will and, concretely, with its freedom. Regarding the second, freedom understood above all as the capacity of execution¹¹ can end up determining the contents of the truth, in this case ethical or practical. In sum, in the end a will to power ends up imposing itself in the face of the truth; reason –now strictly instrumental– ends up subjecting itself in order to execute that which the will has decided.

2.2.3. The ambivalent identity of modernity

In our opinion the issue is not of lesser weight. Despite the intellectual efforts of both rationalism as well as the Enlightenment to enthrone reason as the fundamental axis of human action, in the interior of modernity there is a seed of dissolution which has been in action right from the beginning, and whose activity becomes more clear in the 19th and 20th centuries. This seed has

⁸ Cf. Bacon, F. *Novo organum*, Nabu Press, Charleston, SC, 2014.

⁹ Cf. Polo, L. *Ética. Hacia una versión moderna de los temas clásicos*, Unión editorial, Madrid, 1995, 89-128.

¹⁰ Cf. Cardona, C. *Metafísica de la opción intelectual*, Rialp, Madrid, 1973

¹¹ Cf. García López, J. *El conocimiento filosófico de Dios*, Eunsa, Pamplona, 1995, 156-158; Rodríguez Luño, A. *Ética general*, Eunsa, Pamplona, 1991, 160-163.

two ways of acting. The first is as we stated previously: the continual exaltation of the scientific method as the only way of attaining truth. The second, in turn, functions to the degree that speculative reason is stripped of its prestige by scientific reason, and consists in the preponderance of human freedom with respect to reason itself, a freedom that determines the truths that reason cannot reach due to its weakness and, shall we say, innate incapacity. If in the ethical realm it is impossible to attain any certainty because ethical questions are not verifiable –unless we look to consequences and base our “truths” on what is useful– it is freedom that decides what is good or bad. It is true that, in the beginning, this underlying vitalist or existentialist vein of modernity arose gradually, with varieties compatible with the existence of God and with the presence of a moral order external to the human being. But it is no less certain that, in advancing slowly, modernity began to move towards a *nihilism* where it is not just that the person identified with his freedom determines the human good; rather, there is an effort to remake, construct or reinvent the human being himself. Ultimately, the modern project reveals its deep voluntarist stamp. What began as the search for certainty through the practice of doubt, ends up weakening reason –both speculative and practical– and sowing a suspicion that fosters an attitude of mistrust about reason itself. Thus, “it is unquestionable that one of the consequences of the Cartesian cogito is the search on the part of modern Western philosophy for paths that lead to certainty for the human mind. This desire for undoubtable verifiability has not just resulted in a trapping of philosophical discourse within the moulds of modern instrumental and scientific reason, but also in an atrophy of reason itself, as postmodernity has revealed clearly”.¹²

To conclude this section, we would say that modernity reveals two souls within itself, souls which inform it. Both proceed, from the very beginning, from those divisions that modernity generates in the human being’s self-understanding. One soul aspires to human de-

velopment and the overcoming of its limits by way of an unending progress, based on reason, and free from beliefs and myths. The other soul thirsts for a freedom that is ever more disconnected from truth, and which has the desire to remake everything through freedom itself. The first is enamoured of empirical science, since it is through that science that the human person reaches his age of adulthood and with it an understanding of the world. The other sees science as a medium, recognizing its cognitive limits, but ultimately sees in it nothing more than a tool by means of which the will recreates reality, insofar as it exists in one form or another according to the desire of the human being. One especially identifies the human person with his consciousness, while the other identifies him with his freedom; one adores reason, whereas the other has traits of irrationality and nihilism. One seeks a new human being based on the old, and achieved through a purification by reason; the other wants to make a new human being through the transforming force of the will. One attempts to base the independence of the human person on the self-sufficiency of his all-knowing reason; the other bases it on the autonomy of his will, a will that proposes its own truth. There is a struggle between them, but what is most tragic is that they are incompatible and cannot be united in the cosmological, anthropological, epistemological and ethical framework that modernity introduces. As a consequence, the conflict is inevitable and the need to overcome it is a challenge for human thought.

3. Postmodernity

This conflict has been, in recent decades, inclining towards the nihilist strain of modern thought, creating what is now known as postmodernity. For many authors this is the inauguration of a new epoch, the result of the decadence of modernity. For others –among whom we count ourselves– it is both the triumph and the hypertrophy of one of what we have called the “souls” of modernity. It is not a question of an opposite reaction, or something contrary to modernity; rather, it is the radicalization of modernity itself or, rather, its natural

¹² Pastor, L.M. “¿Es posible una bioética basada en la evidencia experimental?” *Cuad Bioet.* 24 (81), 2013, 275-88.

evolution. It is true that one author proposes the existence of a struggle between a postmodernism that is called "resistant", which would adhere to the most rationalist postulates of the Enlightenment, conflicting with a decadent postmodernity given over to nihilism.¹³ Or the existence of an ultramodernity that would also be an heir to the Enlightenment and thus opposed to postmodernity.¹⁴ But it is evident that these postures are being defeated by postmodernity, and in such a way that actual reality is configured and defined in a new cultural framework instead: scientific in its intellectual dimension and relativist in regards to ethics. Even so, modernity continues to live on within postmodernity itself, not just because it gave birth to it, but also because postmodernity has shone the light on its own internal contradictions. Postmodernity, as we have stated, has aligned with one of the souls of modernity, taking many points of departure from it: for instance, a confidence in empirical science and a dualist anthropology, as we will discuss later.

How is one to describe in a philosophical fashion that postmodernity¹⁵ that is already found at the very centre of modernity itself? We think it is possible to sketch certain of its traits that will be useful for seeing not just how transhumanist-posthumanist (T-P) thought arose from it, but also appreciating how this thought is one of its most logical and coherent consequences, if not the quintessence of postmodernity itself. Even more, one might say, although this affirmation is still risky, that the terminus or end of the voyage of the philosophical project of modernity could be precisely the T-P school of thought or ideology. Ultimately, what at the outset was a project centred on and developed from the place of the human person –modernity– is turning into an anti-human project. What is human will be abolished and

forgotten in order to make way for a human being that is, more than new, totally different. We will now give a brief description of postmodernity, by sections:

a) The first thing that we believe to be important is that, while it is not a question –from our point of view– of an anti-modern cultural movement, but rather of a triumph of one of the souls of modernity, which in turn shows its opposition to the other soul. Postmodernity is presented as anti-rationalist and therefore disillusioned with the great projects that modernity wished to achieve. The presence of misery, violence and lack of peace between human beings leads to postmodernity being sceptical in the face of great edifices of thought. In this way, postmodernity –basing itself on the contradictions internal to modernity– shows itself to be allergic to metaphysical thought. We must abandon rational systems and impose a more vitalistic way of thinking, non-dogmatic, relativist, sceptical at its core that distances us from intolerance and violence. The existential soul of modernity triumphs: what prevails in human life is more what one chooses than what one thinks. If every choice has an equal value, then any system of thought on which that choice is based is –of necessity– indifferent.

b) As a result the great stories or meta-stories (that is, the efforts by human reason to produce totalizing explanations of all reality) are abandoned as impossible and useless undertakings. This focus also demystifies science and technology, undermining their scientific pretence of being able to explain everything. In addition, other kinds of knowledge not based on scientific rationality are accepted. Even so, science is still considered to be a source of knowledge with practical results that can energize progress and achieve the liberation of the human being. In addition, postmodernism seeks to make things work, and therefore that there be more options for freedom than just knowing the reality of things. It is more interested in a *technoscience* than in great scientific edifices. This is how a so-called *weak* way of thought has found its place. It is a kind of thinking that does not seek to propose any ultimate foundation of reality, nor any normativity in the plane of human action.

13 Cf. Ballesteros, J. *Postmodernidad: decadencia o resistencia*, Tecnos, Madrid, 1989 (4ª ed. 2000).

14 Cf. Marina, J.A. *Crónicas de la ultramodernidad*, Anagrama, Barcelona, 2000.

15 A summary of this philosophical discourse, discussing its origin and its numerous authors can be found in: Quevedo, A. *De Foucault a Derrida: pasando fugazmente por Deleuze y Guattari, Lyotard, Baudrillard*, Eunsa, Pamplona, 2001. In this section we will especially follow the discussion developed in the chapter "Posmodernidad y metafísica" of the book: Forment, E. *Lecciones de Metafísica*, Rialp, Madrid, 1992, 33-50.

The great questions that human thinking has sought to delve into, such as the existence of God, the transcendence of the human being or of reality itself, are substituted by more aesthetic interests, by more prosaic questions, by appearances, within a worldview where everything has a place. What is transcendental about life is handled based on the experience of the everyday, the familiar and the traditional, always in a space that is ambiguous and relativistic. What is divergent arises in culture: we have ecological consciousness but without accepting a teleological “nature”; a rehabilitation of the feminine channelled through an ideological discourse where the outlines of what differentiate the feminine from the masculine are lost; a pacifism that can degrade into weakness in the face of injustice towards the weakest among us; a romantic nationalism about the nation-state that ends up generating new states. Ultimately what is sought is the abdication of reason and of its capacity to know the truth, since nothing is absolute and everything is trivial. With these givens, confidence in the human subject himself is lost, since the very idea of what a human being is and what the human is ends up being dissolved. Anthropology is thus tainted by antihuman traits, not in order to abolish certain facets of the human being, *but rather because all kinds of configurations of the human are admitted*. God is completely forgotten, together with the human being and even being itself. We must give up being nostalgic about this latter issue, for ultimately we must accompany being in its twilight and, as a result, abandon the paradigm of truth in order to substitute for it a plurality of styles of life.

c) Postmodern culture, then, would be configured to have, or would possess, a system of complementarity¹⁶ that is different from that of modernity, despite having arisen from it. If in modernity there exists a positivism or rationalist scientism side by side with existentialist irrationalism, we are now faced with a critical tendency that does not simply want to overcome metaphysics or discover a new way of thinking being: instead, it simply

adopts an attitude of indifference in the face of these issues. Hence, there can be no construction of new forms of metaphysics or ethics; we are simply in the presence of a pure nihilism, both in the theoretical ambit as well as in the practical. This abandonment of the search for truth brings with it a loss of the meaning of individual life –since it would be senseless– as well as that of humanity as a whole. History doesn’t aspire to anything, and we need only worry about the “here-and-now”. Irrationalism, when carried to its extreme, wraps the person and societies in behaviour that is erratic or, in what amounts to the same thing, that lacks intentionality. As a consequence, human behaviour is closed off to a future that is either awaited or sought. Facts are therefore trivial, since they do not obey any project to be realized in life or in history; instead, one can only attend to what is immediate.

d) From what we have indicated up to now, we can deduce that postmodernity, or a decadent modernity, increases the intensity, if possible, of the scepticism that is latent in the ethical plane of the modernist project. Cartesian doubt has resisted all attempts to eliminate it from the project of human knowledge; rather, it has been displaced and definitively established in the knowledge of how the human being himself should behave. An absolute suspicion is maintained in the face of possible ethical criteria or any hierarchy of goods: everything fits, everything is justifiable. In this way, ethical pluralism –or a polytheism of values– has established itself as what is properly human, because –as we have indicated before– the knowledge of what the human being is has dissipated or become blurred. The modern critique of the notion of a human nature, and about possible knowledge of that nature on the part of the human being himself, not only results in the conviction that nothing is true in the real world, but also in the belief that there is no good that is really worthy of being chosen in personal life. The subject, as such, is abolished or is dead in one of his dimensions: that which anchors him in reality, and in this case, in his natural reality. This is a question of the freedom to self-determine in accordance with the good that reason reveals. Now, if what reason

¹⁶ Cf. Apel K.O. *La transformación de la filosofía*, Taurus, Madrid, 1985.

shows the person about himself has no value, then every decision is irrelevant, and any decision is good simply because I desire it. The dimension of rational self-determination disappears. As a consequence, the subject is unbalanced and becomes blurry when there is a hypertrophy of the other dimension of freedom: that of carrying out a given action or not. We thus fall into an idolatry of an irrationalist stamp: "because I want to". When we seek to increase the autonomy of the subject, we dissolve it in itself. It is understandable, then, that certain postmodern authors¹⁷ extol the fact that desire grounds that very senselessness which human action ultimately turns into. The "I" disappears as soon as the root of my actions does not obey any rational proposal. Ethical nihilism submerges itself –in order to explain what the motor of human life is– in the irrationality of emotivity or unconscious tendencies. Ultimately, on the basis of the postmodern anthropological vision we have already sketched out, one comes to these conclusions within the plane of human action, and in turn they reflect the ideal of a human being that has been deformed. The adulthood of the subject that praises modernity not only leads towards a subject that is distorted by power, but now also leads to a subject that has been annulled and caged within its most primitive impulses. The contradictory existentialist option that freedom is the being of man, i.e. it is precisely nothing that makes man, is carried to its ultimate consequences.¹⁸ Thus, if there is no basic structure of the subject, freedom itself –after having been raised to being an axis of the person– throws itself into the void, dissolving itself in other realities ultimately being nothing. To conclude, we see that postmodern anthropology reveals its antihuman character, of a more extreme form than that of so-called atheist humanism.¹⁹ Ultimately, freedom is also subject to being trivialized. Its options for producing a certain type of human being are lacking in value, because the human

being himself is a chimera. Postmodernity, therefore, is not just postmetaphysical: it confronts and critiques the anthropologization of modern philosophy. The human being has died; it is no longer, as with modern atheism, a question of the death of God in aid of focusing the world on the human being. It is the acceptance of the fact that the death of God is also the end of the human being. The human being, in turn, as a finite being that cannot give any reason for his being, becomes diluted; the outlines of his humanity also disappear. The question *What is the human being?* ceases to have any meaning, both regarding what he is at the outset, as well as what he will come to be. Anything goes, both in the beginning and in the end. Modernity focused on the subject, making reality depend on it. Now, the impossibility of this project leads to the dissolution of the subject, insofar as the latter has no objective content. From "everything goes" in human action we pass to "everything goes" in relation to what the human being is, which in the end is tantamount to saying he is nothing concrete. Evidently, this impersonal conception of the human being leaves him without a present or a future to be attained, which leaves humanness at the mercy of shaping factors, be they interior impulses or external action. In the final analysis, the postmodern view of the human being is strongly materialist, and able to admit any form of humanness. Cognitive and volitional uncertainty casts us into an indetermination regarding reality and the human being himself. Everything is insecure and fragmentary. No continuity of the real is possible, nor can one attain a certain integration of it: the only thing that is real is the present, in an ephemeral and passing way. The dark side of modernity has become evident, with all its destructive and dissolving force. It leaves behind it a chaotic vision of the world and of the human being, where becoming fills all things and where the human person not only lives among appearances but also thinks of himself as pure appearance.

f) Finally, although I will return later to this point, postmodern philosophy is not merely unable, with these strips of wicker, to weave a meaningful response to the sciences or to technoscience: it no longer even seeks to.

17 Cf. Quevedo, A. *De Foucault a Derrida: pasando fugazmente por Deleuze y Guattari, Lyotard, Baudrillard*, Eunsa, Pamplona, 2001.

18 Millan-Puelles, A. *El valor de la libertad*, Rialp, Madrid, 1995, 164-168.

19 de Lubac, H. *El drama del humanismo ateo*. Encuentro, Madrid, (2011), (4ª edición).

Moreover, this philosophy gives science the wings it needs for invading the sphere of the human. The entire bioethical discourse over these past 40 years concerning the necessity of humanizing science and technology in order that they serve humans and their dignity is a fantasy according to these authors. What limits can be proposed for scientific or technical development when one begins with indifference regarding what human beings really are? It's not a question of convincing postmodernity to have faith in the saving character of science, nor that science has achieved certainty about reality. Or that it could defeat our limitations by means of a determined improvement in our condition, or that freedom to research should not be limited by a stale paternalism. It is simply the acceptance that science and engineering are generators of diverse possible options, real, virtual or likely, with greater or lesser possibility to be realized. Technoscience need not carry any ethical meaning, since there is no human condition that must be respected. On the contrary, the exercise of the many scientific-technical options offers a diversity of possibilities for the human being, and as a result we must allow experimentation to advance in the search for new forms, since all are valid. Only the results determine the selection of the various alternatives. In this way, the ethical problem is resolved, and the adage "Not everything that can be done should be done" is transmuted into "Everything that we can do, we should do".

4. Transhumanism-posthumanism

4.1. A brief description of the transhumanist-posthumanist proposal²⁰

We are not seeking here to provide a history of this movement of thought,²¹ or to perform an exegesis in or-

20 For this part of my article we will use ideas and data taken from: Postigo Solana, E. "Transhumanismo y posthumano: principios teóricos e implicaciones bioéticas". *Medicina y Ética* 1 (2010), 65-83; Faggioni, M. "Transhumanismo. Volar más allá de la naturaleza humana", *Espíritu y Vida* Diciembre (2010), 3-27; González Melado, F. J. "Transhumanismo (humanity+). La ideología que nos viene". *Pax et emerita* V.6, n°6, (2010), 205-228.

21 There already exists an abundant bibliography—in Spanish as well—about the authors who lead this movement. It is a very complex doctrinal phenomenon, with the various authors having widely differing levels of philosophical training, but it has crystallized in a group of authors with ideals in common. Some of those who were not originally part of this group, such as Peter Sloterdijk, have joined the transhumanists after proposing a path to overcom-

der to differentiate the various forms in which improvement, transhumanism and posthumanism are presented.²² But we do wish to make it clear that the hypothesis that inspires what we have written up to now can be corroborated in the light of the distinct proposals that we encounter in this type of current-day philosophical movement.

Drawing up a rough and ready summary, transhumanism-posthumanism has been defined as a cultural, scientific and intellectual movement that believes that there is an ethical duty to enhance the capacities of the human being, whether they be of a biological, psychological or moral nature. This improvement is justified by several ends that in principle are valuable for the human being, such as the elimination of the pain and suffering associated with illness or aging, the improvement of our societies, eliminating harmful behaviours and fostering the possibility of immortality. As can be seen, the starting point of this proposal has a marked utilitarian character, beyond which one encounters a debate about the terms of this improvement: where does therapeutic action end and where does modification of what is essential to humanity begin? Or in other words, which aspects are inhumane and must be eliminated? Or, what adds up to the same thing, which of these aspects must be

ing the old category of "humanism", understood as the self-exaltation of the human, cf. Sloterdijk, P. "Rules for the Human Park", *Environment and Planning D*, 27, 2009, 12-28; explicitly following the letter on humanism of Martin Heidegger, who was the inspirer of many postmoderns, such as Gianni Vattimo.

22 The transition from transhumanist thought to a posthuman or Humanity+ period is something habitual in the authors of this movement, as for example with Nick Bostrom—one of their principal thinkers—who speaks with clarity about this new paradigm. After citing the transhumanist manifesto (<http://www.transhumanism.org/index.php/WTA/more/158/>) he contemplates a further step or possibility: "Transhumanists promote the view that human enhancement technologies should be made widely available, and that individuals should have broad discretion over which of these technologies to apply to themselves (morphological freedom), and that parents should normally get to decide which reproductive technologies to use when having children (reproductive freedom). Transhumanists believe that, while there are hazards that need to be identified and avoided, human enhancement technologies will offer enormous potential for deeply valuable and humanly beneficial uses. Ultimately, it is possible that such enhancements may make us, or our descendants, 'posthuman', beings who may have indefinite health-spans, much greater intellectual faculties than any current human being—and perhaps entirely new sensibilities or modalities—as well as the ability to control their own emotions". Bostrom, N. "In defense of posthuman dignity". *Bioethics* 19(3), 2005, 202-214.

eliminated from the human being, and which of them should be maintained? At base, this proposal challenges us to question ourselves about what the human being is and what we want him to be. In principle, this intention seemed correct, insofar as it appeared to be a question of affirming the human being by way of human action itself. Quickly, however, the following question was raised: How far? Such a question makes sense when doubt arises about whether the elimination of human limits and conditioning factors, or the strengthening of those capacities that we consider to be positive can end up disfiguring, distorting or transforming the human being himself. Are we really in the presence of a human being? Or could the succession of changes come to transform him substantially, so that he is another reality, having lost the identity of being human? In that case –here we are speaking of suppositions– it would no longer be a case of a fuller affirmation of the human being. We might, in fact, be facing a complete negation of the human. Now, for the proponents of this path for constructing our future this problem either does not exist, or perhaps it is simply that transhumanists never ask the question. Even more: not only do they desire and think in terms of a human being free from such conditioning factors, but they also admit the possibility of new, different beings that would transcend the human being himself. It is not, then, an improvement that they are seeking, but rather a re-creation or re-design based on the human being and realized by the human being himself. And all of it will be done with the help of some of the most specifically human capacities, i.e. science and technology. It is not the case, as modernity proposes, of the fortifying of what we believe to be positive in the human being, which would lead to an autonomous, mature and emancipated human. Rather, it is the possibility of reaching such goals as hybrid beings, or totally different beings, on the basis of the human being as he is now.

The T-P project is divided into various phases, in function of whether the various means are available. Briefly, we can say that the measures proposed can be of the eugenic order (eliminating embryos and fetuses with

congenital abnormalities), nanotechnology and implants of microchips, and the use of drugs that fortify capacities or regulate affect or eliminate negative aspects of the personality. In addition it contemplates the use of genetic therapy, not only in its therapeutic use, but also that employment which makes certain changes in the descendants possible, realizing new characteristics that are held to be an improvement in the human being. Thus, transhumanism-posthumanism is open to other possibilities that may enable us to transcend the human limits of temporality, such as proposals for a postbiological existence through dumping the contents of a human brain into a computer, or the development of a hybrid reality, part organic and part cybernetic.

4.2. *The relation of the transhumanist and posthumanist proposals with modernity and postmodernity*

4.2.1. With modernity

Various criticisms have been made of the T-P proposal and of its postulates,²³ such as the critique of its discriminating character or the limitations that it would involve for human freedom. There are others of greater depth and reach, such as those positions that hold that

23 Fukuyama, F. *Our posthuman future: Consequences of the biotechnology revolution*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2002. Habermas, J. *El futuro de la naturaleza humana*, Paidós Ibérica, Barcelona, 2002. Kass, L. "Ageless bodies, happy souls. Biotechnology and the pursuit of perfection," *The New Atlantis* 1 (2003), 9-28. The President's Council on Bioethics, *Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness*, Washington DC 2003. Some of these authors have been labelled as bioconservatives. For instance, Nick Bostrom uses this label, seeing them as opponents, given that they are against the modification of human nature. This author clearly intuits that this is the most important problem for the transhumanist proposal, and he seeks to denigrate those who defend the reality of what the human being is. "In opposition to this transhumanist view stands a bioconservative camp that argues against the use of technology to modify human nature. Prominent bioconservative writers include Leon Kass, Francis Fukuyama, George Annas, Wesley Smith, Jeremy Rifkin, and Bill McKibben. One of the central concerns of the bioconservatives is that human enhancement technologies might be 'dehumanizing'. The worry, which has been variously expressed, is that these technologies might undermine our human dignity or inadvertently erode something that is deeply valuable about being human but that is difficult to put into words or to factor into a cost-benefit analysis. In some cases (for example, Leon Kass) the unease seems to derive from religious or crypto-religious sentiments, whereas for others (for example, Francis Fukuyama) it stems from secular grounds. The best approach, these bioconservatives argue, is to implement global bans on swathes of promising human enhancement technologies to forestall a slide down a slippery slope towards an ultimately debased, posthuman state." Bostrom, N. "In defense of posthuman dignity". *Bioethics* 19(3), 2005, 202-214.

the T-P ideology involves a materialist conception of the human being, for instance. All T-P proposals are seen to bring with them the assumption that human nature is constituted by simple physical determinisms, and the critics emphasize that this movement has adopted anthropological and ethical principles that are proper to modernity. These principles deeply inspire the T-P proposal, and it is necessary to debate them in order to evaluate not just their degree of originality but also the argumentative weaknesses that this movement suffers from. The mechanist reductionism of the human being is mentioned, which implies an underlying dualism of a Cartesian type where the person is defined only by states of consciousness. This especially applies to those states which are linked to the exercise of reason: acts of reason or functional rationality. Indeed, within transhumanism-posthumanism it is possible to speak of human machines or human animals, provided they can perform reasoning or calculations. This conception would lead to reducing the human essence upon grasping that the corporeal does not enter into its definition, and on seeing that respect for the human –his dignity– is a property strictly linked to the exercise of rationality. If we add to this the modern conception of an emancipated freedom that is the creator of human nature itself, either through making successive choices, or through the adoption of a utilitarian criterion, transhumanism-posthumanism would present itself to us as a typical product of modernity that seeks the liberation of mankind from its own limits and conditioning factors. This ideology connects with the illuminist and enlightened tradition which, basing itself on science, seeks to save us from a dependent existence by self-affirming the human being. Transhumanism-posthumanism would thus be a humanism, since it would affirm the human being in a way never before seen. It's true that existentialist ethics, with the affirmation that existence constructs human nature by way of aptitudes for freedom, would give us access to new forms of human life distant from the traditional Aristotelian model of the man who is happy because he is virtuous. But it is no less true that instrumental reason, which guides this project of the modern human being, encounters elements of resistance in the human

person himself. The desires of the will, crowned ruler of the process, will encounter limits associated with the corporeal human condition. We must obtain more possibilities of choice now that freedom has run up against a limit: our biological structure. What must we do? The answer of transhumanism-posthumanism is simple: let us change this corporeality to our liking, then let us turn to our biological structure and modify it as well. If we can direct human evolution by means of bioengineering, why should we allow it to follow its course? If we can attain more health, a better human being, by means of technology, or through the genetics of germ cells, isn't this a responsibility that man has towards himself?²⁴ Even more: the T-P project can lead us to a post-human era that goes beyond our current condition, so marked by imperfection and intellectual, corporeal and ethical limits as it is. This era would be designed by the human being himself, and would be a change for the better. As I indicated in the section above on modernity, transhumanism-posthumanism presents itself as a biological monism mixed with an anthropological dualism. It is reductionist insofar as it assumes that all human qualities are material, although there are some, namely our mental capacities, that define the human being and rule over his corporeal qualities. At base, there beats a dualist idea of the human being that does not take into consideration the intimate substantial relation existing between the corporeal and the non-corporeal in the human being. The mental uses the corporeal, intending to obtain the maximum advantage from the body in a search for a happiness that is imprisoned within the limits of sensitive or affective welfare.²⁵ Transhumanism-

24 It's common among the authors of the transhumanism-posthumanism camp that there be a justification for their proposals that is based on the dynamic of physical or biological nature. The supporters of T-P ideology are mechanist –something typical of modernity and which still occurs in postmodernity– and thus in certain authors, such as Sloterdijk, the proposals T-P align themselves with evolutionary mechanisms. For instance, since we know how evolution works (natural selection of the most fit individuals), human reason can thus consciously apply those mechanisms (discarding of the less-fit individuals, for example) in order to achieve an improvement of the human species, and so on until we reach a species that is “super-human”, “transhuman” or “posthuman”.

25 Along these lines, some critics have held that posthumanism denigrates the body as being pain-experiencing and mortal, and is opposed to *homo patiens*, a posture that would place posthumanism within a puritanical ideology that pursues perfection

posthumanism, following the lines of the modernist project, would increase freedom –and would thus improve the person– by way of modifying corporeality, without, however, thinking that perhaps the human being might find itself reduced by this change. Transhumanism-posthumanism would hope to free the body from its limits without realizing that perhaps its vitality might suffer. We would thus be in the presence of a progressivist utopia, a messiah-saviour style of thinking, right in line with the Enlightenment, which holds that from within human nature itself man will overcome his current condition. Such a project would not only follow the way of self-constructing a moral world of its own dimensions, but would also self-construct a corporeality that will increase human happiness. A new kind of human being would be the result, passing from ethical self-construction to the biological.

4.2.2. With postmodernity

One of the theses that we have previously written about is that postmodernity, rather than being something new, is an evolved modernity. The seed of postmodern thought, as we have indicated earlier, is already found in modernity, and the failure of the Enlightenment project merely accelerated its growth and development. Thoughts and ideas that were slowed down or inhibited would be made explicit. “While postmodernity, as indicated by the ‘post’ prefix, came after modernity and has criticized it harshly, it is not something completely different from that earlier order. Postmodernity can be characterized as being modernity itself carried to its ultimate consequences, because that radicalization is precisely what produced its dissolution. For this very reason some say that postmodernity should be called ‘tardo-modernity’, since it is the farewell to and simultaneously the consequence of modernity. By taking it on and developing it to its extreme limit, postmodernity represents the end of modernity”.²⁶ As

and loathes any defect. The body, by means of technology, would be progressively substituted, technified, somehow “abducted” by the *res cogitans*. Cf. Ballesteros, J. “Biotecnología, biopolítica, y posthumanismo”. In: *Biotecnología y posthumanismo*, Ballesteros, J. y Fernández, E. (Edit.), Aranzadi, Pamplona, 2007.

²⁶ Forment, E. “Posmodernidad y metafísica”. In: Forment, E.

we have already stated, from another point of view it is the victory of one of the souls of modernity. In relation to the issue that we are analysing here, it is important to return to that fact. On the one hand, we hold that the analysis carried out previously and which links T-P ideology with modernity is correct. And on the other, we further hold that it is an incomplete analysis, insofar as it does not take into account all of the consequences of the new postmodern cultural paradigm. The T-P proposal foresees not only an improvement of the human being or his perfection –on the road to being superhuman– but it also includes something that goes beyond the human being himself. Just as postmodernism did to modernity, the T-P proposal radicalizes and takes the postulates of modern scientism to their ultimate consequences. This modern approach, which for more than two centuries has upheld the thesis that continuous progress and liberation for the human being and humanity itself would be based on and would run in parallel with every increase in scientific knowledge. In conformity with the ideas we presented earlier, postmodernism sees science and technology as being something that is unlinked, not just from the truth about things, but also from any meaning. Technoscience does not need to be given meaning, and not because it can be a basis for deduction, but instead just because its own reality is accepted as one more possible option among many others. As we stated earlier, if there is total indifference to the human, then from this postmodern perspective scientific activity achieves a complete autonomy from ethics. Thus the divorce is a consummated fact: it is no longer possible to build bridges between the two distinct cultures, the humanist and the scientific²⁷ with its technical logos, because at base it is unnecessary. It is banal to seek to dominate what has already been dominated, because there is an open road for allowing oneself to be surprised by the new advances of science, or for allowing the imagination (and often fantasy) to create diverse options of development for the human being. In this sense, the proposals for hybrids, of the

Lecciones de Metafísica, Rialp, Madrid, 1992, 33-50.

²⁷ Snow, C. P. *Las dos culturas y un segundo enfoque*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1987.

man-machine type or other similar things thought up by T-P ideology, are along the lines of “everything goes” in a world of appearances. The human being of the present day is, at most, a material “launchpad” for something not just better, but distinct from the human being. In this way, the postmodern ideology would be imposing an important radicalization of the use of science, as modernity has viewed it up to now. Now it would be at the service, not of a project for human regeneration, but rather of a diversity of new human or pseudohuman forms, or simply forms of rational beings that are distinct from the human being as we know him today. Science, and with it technical reason, would succumb to that postmodern mentality, somewhat infantile and irrational, according to which life is simply a game where science would occupy a central place, since it would be the principal means for the game.

It seems clear, now, that this manner of wanting to “use” science in the T-P project is not just the fruit of the way in which science is conceived of in postmodernity. Rather, it is intimately linked with the conception of the human being and of ethics characteristic of postmodernity. Returning to earlier claims, it is true that modernity centres the ethical life of the person in his autonomy. Indeed, the modern, dualistic vision of the person conceives of this autonomy as that of a free consciousness that self-constructs according to criteria that it gives to itself. Thus, the corporeal is just one more area that is at the service of that I or subject. But, as we stated earlier, this modern proposal is also elevated by postmodernity to greater levels of ethical nihilism, and in anthropological terrain it is raised to a proposal of death for the subject itself. Postmodernity could say that it has no properly human goods, because it also has no idea about the human being. Therefore, there exists no ideal concerning the human person, and human happiness has no concrete content. The anti-anthropological view of modernity is, logically, also a way of seeing the human being. In this case, it is a question not only of constructing the essence of the human being on the basis of human acting, but also recognizing an underlying responsibility to the human and a consciousness of his finitude together

with a desire to perfect him. The postmodern vision, however, is more radical: there is no human project, nor does there exist a way to perfect the human. Everything fits in the essence of the human being because it is emptied of any property that would be characteristic of the human. The diversity and fragmentariness of the human is what matters. There is no answer, nor is there any intent to respond to the question “What is the human being?”, because the question is open to infinite possibilities of human forms, and since human identity, what is proper to it, does not exist. The human being, in sum, is an apparent reality with edges that can be continually redefined, generating a plurality of ways of being and, as a result, of acting as well. We believe that from this perspective one can understand the T-P proposal more deeply. It is not only a matter of creating a new human being, through certain manipulations that make him better. *Rather, T-P ideology seeks to create a new human condition in diverse directions determined by the human will.* It is not a question of human progress, a plenitude of the human²⁸ or a free negation of the same. *Rather it is an affirmation of new realities that begin with the human and, as such, will be the human being of the future.* For the human being is, from the outset, amorphous and undifferentiated, and hence his reality is plural and therefore open and changeable over time. The acceptance, therefore, of hybrid beings –human-machine, animal-human– or of a being distinct from the human being as we understand him today, is fully justified by this perspective. If the good of humanity coincides with the production of transformed or substantially neo-formed beings based on the human model, the actions leading to that good are fully justified on the ethical plane. The technological imperative or postulate validates every action aimed at generating projects based on the concrete, existing human being, insofar as he is simply a jumping-off point for a chain of re-projects that should be performed –out of obligation– as soon as technoscience permits it.

28 “While the automatons of the 17th century had the effect of reaffirming the excellence of the human body and its mind, today the robot, the cyborg, the android of science fiction proclaims the decadence of the human as we have known it”: Caronia, A. // *cyborg. Saggio sull'uomo artificiale*, Shake, Milan 2001.

5. Conclusion: An anti-humanist posture?

After all that has been said up to now, we believe that transhumanism-posthumanism thought grows out of modernity's forgetting of the complex reality of human nature, exacerbating the reductionism that it forces that nature into. Modernity has attempted to *reduce* the human essence to pure culture, history, economics or biology, but it never arrives at an explanation that does justice to the entire human being, and therefore is antihuman at base. Postmodernity –and within it transhumanism-posthumanism– presents itself as being a concrete project, which, beginning with the deconstruction realized by postmodernity, seeks to rebuild the human being as an ateleological reality where the outlines of the human evaporate completely. This is important not only because it results in the abolition or negation of the human at the end of the process, but also because it shows us that at the beginning of the process there is a forgetting or non-acceptance of human identity itself, with its limits and conditioning factors. The attempt by modern thought to liberate the human being through an improvement in society, in education, in biology or by increasing his capacity for choice, gives way to an irrational mode of acting that has abdicated its responsibility to understand the human person. Starting, then, from zero –from the ashes, we would say– something different is searched for, although without wanting to confront the fundamental reality of the human being, and indeed seeking to overcome that reality, starting from the human being himself. At base, T-P falls into the same temptation as modernity in its entirety –something logical if we consider that it is derived from the modern: that of seeking to overcome the human being based on what the human is in himself, and in this case, without even having an exact notion of the natural condition of the human being. A deformed anthropological vision in modernity, and a lack of understanding or blindness in postmodernity, lead us to a conception of the human being that is unreal and fictitious. It was already presumptuous of modernity to seek to improve humanity or design a new man, but at least the human being continued to exist. With the blindness of postmodernity,

the situation has become more critical, and antihumanism has become stronger. For not only can we cause a deterioration in the human being, we can ruin humanity completely,²⁹ since it is impossible to reaffirm the human being if we start from a radical denial –or better, a forgetting– of what he is.³⁰

29 Along this line of human annihilation, Jesús Ballesteros also writes, paraphrasing Pascal: “the human being is neither angel nor beast, and whoever wants to be an angel, a cyborg, ends up being the beast, being destruction”; Ballesteros, J. “Biotecnología, biopolítica, y posthumanismo”. In: *Biotecnología y posthumanismo*, Ballesteros, J. and Fernández, E. (Edit.), Aranzadi, Pamplona, 2007. “Man is neither angel nor brute; and the unfortunate thing is that he who would act the angel acts the brute.” (§ 358) Pascal, B. *Pensees*, Penguin, New York, 1995. This perspective underlies the following assertion: “Human beings are not transcendental subjects that have an instrument –i.e. a body– that in the future may need to be improved. Improved, why? For human ends, but human ends derive from human nature, however contingent it may be. We do not have any criteria for distinguishing a non-contingent part of ourselves, called ‘person’ or subjectivity, from another part that is contingent and hence available for capricious reconstructions. With what aim in mind should we perform this reconstruction? For with this reconstruction we also modify the ends. A similar alteration of human nature with the purpose of achieving a greater aptitude for interplanetary travel, for example, would mean degrading future men and women to the condition of mere means to satisfy the aims of today’s manipulators, for instance, their creative fantasies or their ideas about what human happiness consist in. Therefore, human dignity would depend closely on its natural constitution. Its nature is certainly contingent. Thus, no consciously planned reconstruction of human nature would eliminate its contingency, but would rather intensify it till it becomes unbearable”. Translated by author from Spaemman, R. *Felicidad y Benevolencia*, Rialp, Madrid, 1991, 251.

30 Perhaps this forgetting is a way of avoiding dealing with the reality of the subject. Postmodernity –as we have already discussed– is made uncomfortable by having to respond to the question of the essence of the human being, and as a result for it the best solution would be to dissolve the human in a variety of possibilities: a true flight forwards. Postmodernity involves the ambition to –if possible– convert the *res cogitans* into *res extensa* and, as such, into a place for the transforming action –of the doing– of human freedom. In the face of this, and within the theological context of the Judeo-Christian tradition, in the face of the various posthuman utopias, human work is valued –technoscience in this case– as something positive, as something desired by God in order to complete and make perfect His creation. One need only read the texts of Genesis in order to confirm this. Another issue is that the human has gone beyond its limits: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. That is to say, our human activity has as its goal the free affirmation of the human being. However, according to this tradition, this never includes the free annulment of that being, which would be the result of shaping the human according to our own measure. Or, what adds up to the same thing: in the face of the question “what is more trustworthy or preferable, respecting a nature designed by a wise and good God, or allowing human beings to design a new one?” this tradition answers that the first option must be chosen. The second option is rash, and can even land us in the situation where some people have dominance over others, breaking the equality between human beings, based on all people being constituted by the same nature. Cf. Pastor L.M. <<http://www.europapress.es/murcia/noticia-experto-bioetica-considera-buen-logro-avance-craig-venter-cree-uso-exige-sabiduria-20100530121531.html>> [Consulted: 3/01/2014]

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