

Article

The Glorified Body: Corporealities in the Catholic Tradition

Cory Andrew Labrecque

Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, Université Laval, Pavillon Félix-Antoine-Savard, (bureau 714), 2325, rue des Bibliothèques, Québec, QC G1V 0A6, Canada; cory-andrew.labrecque@fts.ulaval.ca

Received: 5 August 2017; Accepted: 25 August 2017; Published: 28 August 2017

Abstract: The rise of new technologies—robotics, artificial intelligence, and nanotechnology among them—gave the American computer scientist Bill Joy certain pause for deep concern; these, he cautioned, carry the very real potential to push humankind toward extinction. In this essay, I explore an often understated reference in conversations on the promises and shortcomings of said technologies: the disposability of the human body. The Catholic tradition, in particular, boasts a rich and extensive collection of teachings on the theology of the body, which addresses, among other things, the significance of the body for human identity, its relationship to the soul, our (restrained) rights and mastery over it, its (proper) uses over the course of life, its relationship with other bodies, the value of its limitations, and its postmortem fate. Here, I engage the Church’s understanding of the centrality of the body alongside currents in transhumanist philosophy which champion technologies that neglect, or intentionally seek to discard, the body in the name of progress.

Keywords: theology of the body; resurrection; throwaway culture; glorified body; transhumanism

In his *Phenomenology of Perception*, the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty affirms that “the body is our anchorage in a world” (Merleau-Ponty 1990, p. 128). In other words, we gain access to the world because of—and through—the body. Importantly, he refuses to reduce the body to something that we simply *have*, declaring that “I am not in front of my body, I am in it, or rather *I am it*” (Merleau-Ponty 1990, p. 133). The idea that we *are* our bodies, which Merleau-Ponty contends has been vastly undervalued in philosophy, is echoed over and over again in John Paul II’s seminal contribution to the Catholic Church’s teaching on corporeality. In accord with Merleau-Ponty, the pope made plain that since the human person expresses him or herself by means of the body, he or she *is*, in this sense, the body (Paul 2006, n. 55:2). “Together with the spirit,” John Paul II wrote in stark opposition to dualistic renderings, “the body determines man’s ontological subjectivity and participates in his dignity as a person” (Paul 2006, n. 45:1).

In contrast, proponents of transhumanism (such as Nick Bostrom, James Hughes, and Max More)—a vision and movement that is of increasing interest to academics across the disciplines—persistently bemoan the deficiencies of our material existence, urging that we must ultimately liberate ourselves from our confining, mortal bodies. “We will ignore the biological fundamentalists,” More asserts, “who will invoke ‘God’s plan,’ or ‘the natural order of things,’ in an effort to imprison us at the human level. We will move through the transhuman stage into posthumanity, where our physical and intellectual capacities will exceed a human’s as a human’s capacities exceed an ape’s. To fully flower, self-transformation requires a rebellion against humanity” (More 1993).

In order to assure some degree of continuity from one stage to another (and it is *cognitive* rather than *bodily* continuity that matters to transhumanists), More is convinced that self-directed change is “more likely to result in continuous development rather than disruption of self since the outcome will better reflect our values and goals” (More 1993). By a process that he calls “transbiomorphosis,” the human body is expected to be gradually replaced with a magnificently engineered synthetic

life-sustaining vessel that is far more “worthy of our evolving intelligence” (More 1993). This portrayal of the human body as irrelevant or encumbering, and its diminution to a mere “container for the mind, the true locus of personal value” (Campbell 2009, p. 2) reflect a functionalist approach to personhood that prizes cognitive capacity over and above all else.

In this paper, I compare and contrast transhumanist and Roman Catholic conceptions of the human body, paying attention to how these two worldviews evaluate the relevance of the human body for individual identity and for the way we connect to the material world writ large. This comparative study sheds light on how indifference toward, or disregard for, the corporeal—articulated by transhumanist philosophers in light of biotechnological advancement—risks atomizing, mechanizing, or disposing bodies, especially marginalized and non-conforming bodies that fall short of the posthuman ideal. I hope that the content herein prompts a broader, yet ever more urgent, conversation among scholars of religion, theologians, ethicists, and transhumanist philosophers on the necessity of the human body and the parameters (if any) of its mutability as strides are made in fields such as biomedical engineering and regenerative medicine. Evidently, our understanding of the body as disposable or indispensable has important implications for the way we think about human–human, human–nonhuman, and human–environment relationships.

1. Technological Soteriology and Morphological Freedom

It is one thing to speak about biotechnological interventions to aid or even enhance the human body, but it is quite another to propose that these interventions should aim at moving beyond the body altogether. The want to transcend or, better, the want to be delivered from the limitations of humanhood, a fundamental tenet of transhumanist philosophy, sometimes amounts to just this. There is no real need for the human body, many transhumanists argue; in fact, the vulnerabilities wrought upon us by the human body are obstacles to our proper flourishing and they are surmountable. “Your body is a deathtrap,” Bostrom writes in his *Letter from Utopia*, “this vital machine and mortal vehicle, unless it jams first or crashes, is sure to rust anon . . . oh, it is not well to live in a self-combusting paper hut!” (Bostrom 2008, pp. 3–4).

Ironically, when it comes to the quest for immortality, a number of transhumanists—including Bostrom (Leonard 2013)—have signed up for cryonics, which offers a person the option of vitrifying the body (or just the head) until the day when we have the biotechnological means to revive, restore, and improve it (Alcor Life Extension Foundation 2017). However scornful one might be toward the human body and its lamentable imperfections, if one wishes to maintain some continuity in identity then to dispose of the body, at least at this time, risks oblivion unless there is some other way to assure that the person before and after technological self-transformation is still one persisting entity, albeit qualitatively different (More 1993). More seems to suggest that the real pressing concern is in making sure that said transformation is always *self-directed*. This morphological freedom—that is, one’s right to maintain or modify the self as he or she desires (Sandberg 2001)—flows out of the transhumanist proclivity for the autonomy of persons over their own bodies. As an aside, it is interesting to note that some transhumanists make a point to restrain this right by considering the harms that self-modification might cause to others. It is this self-direction, More says, that sustains continuity because “continuity requires that later stages of an individual *develop* out of earlier stages, rather than simply usurping their place” (More 1993). It is not always clear in the transhumanist literature whether an eventual rift in (psychological) continuity as the posthuman emerges is something that can or should be avoided altogether.

Some proponents of mind uploading—that is, “transferring an intellect from a biological brain to a computer” (Humanity+ 2016)—suggest that while embodiment might matter, having a specifically *human* body does not. “For the continuation of personhood,” Bostrom writes, “it matters little whether you are implemented on a silicon chip inside a computer or in that gray, cheesy lump inside your skull, assuming both implementations are conscious” (Humanity+ 2016). Therefore, “an upload could have a virtual (simulated) body giving the same sensations and the same possibilities for interaction as a

non-simulated body. With advanced virtual reality, uploads could enjoy food and drink, and upload sex could be as gloriously messy as one could wish. And uploads wouldn't have to be confined to virtual reality: they could interact with people on the outside and even rent robot bodies in order to work in or explore physical reality" (Humanity+ 2016).

Among the many advantages envisaged for an upload, some transhumanists include that it "would not be subject to biological senescence; back-up copies of uploads could be created regularly so that you could be re-booted if something bad happened (thus your lifespan would potentially be as long as the universe's); you could potentially live much more economically as an upload since you wouldn't need physical food, housing, transportation, etc., [...]; you would think faster than in a biological implementation [...]; you would thus get to experience more subjective time, and live more, during any given day; you could travel at the speed of light as an information pattern, which could be convenient in a future age of large-scale space settlements; [and] radical cognitive enhancements would likely be easier to implement in an upload than in an organic brain" (Humanity+ 2016). Similarly, the development of intelligent machines and the want to create human–robot fusions, a phenomenon that Bill Joy comments on in his article, *Why the Future Doesn't Need Us*, brings to the fore a comparable indifference or outright aversion to the *human* body (Joy 2000).

Herein lies an important debate in transhumanism regarding the necessity of the body for posthumanhood. There is something incongruous about needing the body to build on and enhance it, and the desire to replace the body in its totality in order to combat the tragic forces of ageing and mortality attached to our current material existence. The transhumanist vision, of course, is that enhancement may very well lead to replacement, if the person so chooses to move in that direction. This, though, becomes a delicate matter. John Harris, in his *Enhancing Evolution: The Ethical Case for Making Better People*, is convinced that the future of humankind depends on framing enhancement as a moral duty (Harris 2007, pp. 19–35), but whether replacing the body altogether ought to be a moral duty as well (once the proper technology becomes available) is left up in the air. Whatever the case, both of these propositions seem to impose on individual autonomy and this would not be consistent with transhumanist ethics. Although the enthusiasm, in transhumanist circles, around the biotechnological promise to evolve from human to posthuman is high, it is often tempered—intentionally or not—by this emphasis on autonomy. Most of the transhumanist philosophers I have included here prefer the language of "self-directed transformation" and "morphological freedom" to an endorsement of enhancing or replacing the body as an ethical *imperative* for the future of (post)humanhood despite the fact that the latter underlies the transhumanist mission.

For Bostrom, at least, there is a certain sense of moral urgency in transcending human nature, which he describes as "a work-in-progress, a half-baked beginning that we can learn to remold in desirable ways" (Bostrom 2005, p. 4; Humanity+ 2016). This does not, and must not, amount to the perception and treatment of *people* as disposable and substitutable (say, by some mass of superhuman beings) (Humanity+ 2016), but hinges on making available to all the option to move beyond the body and its limitations.

2. The Human Body in the Catholic Tradition

Although transhumanism espouses a certain soteriological vision that has seriously engaged scholars of religion and theology (some have contended that transhumanism looks very much like a secular religion), the human body is arguably the site of greatest contention between this worldview and the Roman Catholic tradition.

Centuries of Christian discourse on the relationship between the body and the soul reflect a general discomfort with the body that was certainly prevalent in the early Church (Ramsey 1985, p. 59), but that was ultimately assuaged by an affirmation of the body as part of the created order that God deemed to be "very good" in its entirety (Gen. 1.31). Lamentations about the miseries of our mortal existence (including the loss of human control over the body)—introduced to humanhood after the Fall—abounded in the writings of the Church Fathers; many have correlations with the overall malaise

regarding the human condition that characterizes the transhumanist movement. It was Augustine, for instance, who melancholically claimed that “a hard condition is the life of man. What else is it to be born, but to enter on a life of toil? Of our toil that is to be, the infant’s very cry is witness. From this cup of sorrow no one may be excused” (Augustine of Hippo 1844, sermon X.2). Subsequently, in *The City of God*, he listed a host of “cruel ills” that the whole of the human race is condemned to know (Augustine 1999, XXII.22).

Augustine also echoed, in some sense, the dreadful impotence of mortals in the face of death (what transhumanism refers to as “deathism” (Humanity+ 2016)): “for no sooner do we begin to live in this dying body, than we begin to move ceaselessly towards death. For in the whole course of this life (if life we must call it) its mutability tends toward death [. . .] so that our whole life is nothing but a race towards death, in which no one is allowed to stand still for a little space, or to go somewhat more slowly, but all are driven forwards with an impartial movement, and with equal rapidity” (Augustine 1999, XIII.10).

Still, Augustine also recognized and celebrated the “countless blessings with which the goodness of God, who cares for all He has created, has filled this very misery of the human race;” among them, he names: human fecundity, the mind (with its gifts of reason and understanding), our ability to love what is good and virtuous, and, of primary importance here, the extraordinariness of the body (although weak and mortal, its function and beauty bear witness to God’s providence) (Augustine 1999, XXII.24).

When it came to the principal tenet of theological anthropology that describes all human beings as created in the image and likeness of God, many—though not all—of the Church Fathers believed that it was not in the body, but only in the soul—the seat of reason, free will, and dominion—that one resembled God (Ramsey 1985, pp. 68–69). Irenaeus, however, disagreed. “For by the hands of the Father, that is, by the Son and the Holy Spirit,” he proclaimed, “man, and not merely a part of man, was made in the likeness of God. Now the soul and the spirit are certainly a *part* of the man, but certainly not *the* man; for the perfect man consists in the commingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father, and the admixture of that fleshly nature which was moulded after the image of God” (Irenaeus n.d., V.VI.1).

The Catholic tradition echoes this teaching on the composite existence of humankind. In his “Letter to Families,” called *Gratissimam Sane*, John Paul II made a point to underline that “it is typical of rationalism to make a radical contrast in man between spirit and body, between body and spirit. But man is a person in the unity of his body and his spirit. The body can never be reduced to mere matter: it is a *spiritualized body*, just as man’s spirit is so closely united to the body that he can be described as an *embodied spirit*” (Paul 1994, n. 19). In the text, the pope goes on to warn the reader about the challenges of a new Manichaeism in the world that is putting body and spirit in opposition, resulting in the objectification of human persons (Paul 1994, n. 19).

The understanding of the human person as a *unity* (*corpore et anima unus*) that forms a single nature (Catholic Church 1997, n. 365) is grounded in the Incarnation, which affirms the place and significance of the flesh in salvation history, and is a pillar of the Church’s theology of the body. In the Catholic tradition, the body can never be reduced to mere matter nor can it be done away with (not even in the afterlife). It is in the body that one discovers, John Paul II says, “the anticipatory signs, the expression and the promise of the gift of self” (Paul 1993, n. 48). The body, Paul makes plain in his first letter to the Corinthians, is “a temple of the Holy Spirit” and it, ultimately, belongs to God (1 Cor. 6.19–20). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms that the “human body shares in the dignity of ‘the image of God’ and “through his very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator” (Catholic Church 1997, n. 362). Thus, the Church teaches that a person can neither despise nor dispose of his or her bodily life, but must “regard [the] body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day” (Catholic Church 1997, n. 364).

One's identity as a person, therefore, is rooted in the composite reality of body and soul. The continuity of personhood even into the afterlife requires, as we shall see, that both body (that is, the "same" body that one knew in his or her mortal life) and soul re-unite after death. The value of the body—which is what the human person *is* rather than what the human person *has* (Paul 2006, p. 681, n. 2:4, n. 5:5–6, n. 55:2)—is unambiguous in the Catholic tradition; the human body is indispensable. Accordingly, "body language" permeates Church teaching: the physicality of the sacraments and the healing narratives are unmistakable, the Church itself is called the "Body of Christ," and the mystery of the Incarnation—which the Church underscores as "the distinctive sign of Christian faith" (Catholic Church 1997, n. 463)—tells of a God who chooses to dwell among us in the flesh in order to redeem the flesh (Labrecque 2015, p. 309; Catholic Church 1997, n. 1015). Indeed, Tertullian referred to the flesh as "the hinge of salvation" (Catholic Church 1997, n. 1015).

At the same time, the Church is cautious: "if morality requires respect for the life of the body, it does not make it an absolute value. It rejects a neo-pagan notion that tends to promote the *cult of the body*, to sacrifice everything for its sake, to idolize physical perfection [. . .] by its selective preference of the strong over the weak, such a conception can lead to the perversion of human relationships" (Catholic Church 1997, n. 2289). This is particularly revealing in light of transhumanist approaches to the human body, which at once seem to promote such a cult (in the want to enhance and perfect the body) and then disdain it altogether once, or perhaps *if*, the transhumanist model of enhancement and perfectability outgrows what the human body can bear. Indeed, this is exactly how transhumanists describe *posthumans*: "possible future beings whose basic capacities so radically exceed those of present humans as to be no longer unambiguously human by our current standards [. . .]. Posthumans could be completely synthetic artificial intelligences, or they could be enhanced uploads, or they could be the result of making many smaller but cumulatively profound augmentations to a biological human" (Humanity+ 2016). Therefore, for transhumanism, the future of humanhood does not need the body; for the Church, humanhood—in the here-and-now, in the future, and in the hereafter—very much depends on it.

3. What If the Mortal Coil Is Shuffled Off in Death? Postmortem Corporeality in the Catholic Tradition

The centrality of the human body is further accentuated in the Church's eschatology. This is especially apparent in its doctrine on the resurrection.

The Church defines death, theologically, as the separation of the body and the soul (Catholic Church 1997, n. 1005). That is, the human person cannot exist outside of his or her composite-ness. The resurrection, then, is understood as a reintegration (Paul 2006, n. 72:3); the soul is returned to the body, which is "recovered and also renewed" (Paul 2006, n. 66:4), but not replaced (Labrecque 2015, pp. 309–10). The Church's teaching on the glorified body, a body that is granted incorruptible life in this reunion (Catholic Church 1997, n. 997), makes plain that, for this faith tradition, matter can indeed be perfected (Ratzinger 1988, p. 192).

The resurrection accounts in the Gospels highlight this recovery-of-the-body motif. The Risen Christ returns with the body that others knew him as, but in a way that is somehow different. Even those closest to Jesus fail to recognize him in this new manifestation regardless of the fact that his mortal body—though transfigured—has come to life again. Interestingly, what the evangelists make painstakingly clear here is that the body of the Risen Christ is truly physical and that it bears the marks of his crucifixion. "Look at my hands and my feet," Jesus says to his disciples upon appearing to them after his death, "see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Lk 24:39). The glorified body of Jesus, then, is also a *wounded* body; the wounds are not considered to be mere vestiges of his former vulnerability, but are *identifying* attributes of sacrifice imprinted, as it were, on this newly imperishable body.

This does not seem to be in accord with the idea of enhancement or perfectability espoused by transhumanism; this embodiment of humility—the physical manifestation of humbling in a

transfigured body—is in stark contrast with the images of power, hyperfunctionality, and greatness that often characterize the posthuman archetype. Following this, the Church’s International Theological Commission—whose task is to examine pressing doctrinal questions of the day—claims that the aim to use genetic enhancement to create a superhuman being is deeply problematic given that “the spiritual life principle of man—forming the matter into the body of the human person—is not a product of human hands and is not subject to genetic engineering” (International Theological Commission 2004, n. 91). True improvement, the Church teaches, comes with a person’s fuller realization of the image of God (International Theological Commission 2004, n. 91). Note the Church’s criticism here of proponents of enhancement who single out and instrumentalize the body, completely disregarding other dimensions (such as the spiritual in this case) that constitute human personhood, and whose Manichaeic approach inevitably leads to objectification.

At the same time, one cannot deny that descriptions of the glorified body in Catholic literature also point to some ideal of what constitutes the best of bodiliness, whatever the measure of “best” might be. For instance, in *The City of God*, Augustine talks about how all the blemishes and deformities of the body—“whether common ones or rare and monstrous”—will be done away with in the resurrection while “the natural substance shall suffer no diminution” (Augustine 1999, XXII.19). The quality and the quantity of the natural substance of the body is altered so as to produce beauty; incidentally, bodily beauty, according to Augustine, is found in the proportionality of the parts (Augustine 1999, XXII.19). Similarly, Thomas Aquinas describes the glorified body, in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, as that which is “raised up to the characteristics of heavenly bodies: it will be lightsome, incapable of suffering, without difficulty and labor in movement, and most perfectly perfected by its form” (Aquinas 1955–1957, IV.86.6). An exception to the rule, as we have seen above, are the wounds of the martyrs, which are not to be seen as blemishes or deformities, but marks of honour and virtue that “add lustre to their appearance” (Augustine 1999, XXII.19). The implications of this particular rendering of the human body in its glorified state are extensive and I would be especially interested in learning how disability studies scholars might approach this kind of construction.

In the end, the Church teaches that one cannot possibly imagine what the relationship between the human person and matter in the world to come might be or what the risen body might look like (Ratzinger 1988, p. 194) although some have speculated, concerning the latter, something rather grand. The hope is not for the superhuman functionality of transhumanist longing, but for “the fullness of the perfection proper to the image and likeness of God” (Paul 2006, n. 66:1). The Church speaks of a new state of being that does not connote, as we have seen, the disincarnation of human persons, but “the spiritualization of their somatic nature” (Paul 2006, n. 66.3, n. 66:5). Here, perfection is best understood as the height of *communio*; that is, the perfect communion of body and soul, and the eschatological communion of God, the person, and the world (Paul 2006, n. 67:2, n. 68:1).

4. The Disposability of the Body in a Culture of Excess

In his encyclical on care for our common home, called *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis criticizes our “throwaway culture” that delights in excess and is quick to discard and replace (Francis 2015, n. 20–22). Perhaps it is only in such a culture that we might find serious discussions about the disposability of the human body. In a general audience address on this subject, the pontiff proclaimed that “this ‘culture of waste’ tends to become a common mentality that infects everyone. Human life, the person, are no longer seen as a primary value to be respected and safeguarded, especially if they are poor or disabled, if they are not yet useful—like the unborn child—or are no longer of any use—like the elderly person [. . .]” (Francis 2013). Pope Francis refers to the abandonment of these as “hidden euthanasia” (Francis 2014).

Defining personhood and estimating one’s value based on utility and function disqualify those who do not, cannot, will not, or are no longer able to operate at a level that is considered contributive (by whom and to what end are not always clear). The transhumanist ideal of the hyperfunctional posthuman leaves behind the “unenhanced” as a class that will inevitably slip into oblivion if it chooses

(which it is very well free to) not to keep up. The body is an impediment to posthuman flourishing, as some transhumanist proponents make plain, and progress will require new and improved “vessels” that are better suited for the development of capacities that radically exceed what we now know. One could very well argue that this recurrent reference to the need for such new and improved vessels clearly implies that, in the end, one can never be rid of a body of some kind.

Transhumanist attitudes regarding the human body seem to be symptomatic of the “throwaway culture” of which Pope Francis speaks. Interestingly, a number of scholars have drawn attention to how this kind of thinking can also be characteristic of modern scientific medicine, which extricates the body from the self, mechanizes it, and renders it manipulable while neglecting a lived experience of illness that involves the whole person (Keenan 1996; Toombs 1988; Zaner 1981). The body-as-machine motif that is prominent in transhumanist discourse can also be detected in the clinical encounter in which the body “can be divided into organ systems and parts which can be repaired, removed or technologically supplemented; it can be tested experimentally, and so forth [. . .] it omits the person to whom the body belongs, the person whose body it is” (Toombs 1988, p. 201). In this vein, the philosopher S. Kay Toombs describes illness as an experience of bodily alienation (Toombs 1988, p. 202). If “a threat to the body necessarily incorporates a threat to [the] self” (Toombs 1988, p. 207), as she suggests, then it is fathomable to conclude that a complete disposal of the body can only mean an extinction of the self.

The objectification of the body in the clinical encounter, Toombs warns, isolates the body from the self, threatening the patient’s autonomy and sense of control (Toombs 1988, pp. 221–22). It is ironic, for our discussion here that, according to Toombs, the body itself is the locus of freedom of choice and self-dominion. The question for transhumanists is whether shedding the human body for a “new and improved vessel” will automatically result in the eradication of at least two of the values that matter most to transhumanism: autonomy and mastery over the self.

In his appeal to a deeper appreciation for an authentic human ecology (emphasized by Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI before him) that recognizes the irrefutable connection between humankind, the environment, and God, Francis says that “the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us” (Francis 2015, n. 216). The material world—the human body and the environment from which it is drawn—is not expendable; to judge it and treat it as such will eventually assure nothing less than annihilation. Christ himself, the pontiff reminds, was “far removed from philosophies which despised the body, matter and the things of the world” (Francis 2015, n. 98). This pressing appeal for a recognition of an “integral ecology” underlines the fundamental importance of the body as that which directly relates us to the environment and to the other human, nonhuman, and inanimate beings that constitute it. This crucial detail is often overlooked in transhumanist literature.

“The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift,” Pope Francis writes, “is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation” (Francis 2015, n. 155). That is, there is a striking parallel between the way we value or undervalue the human body and the way we value or undervalue the material world of which it is part. Perceiving the body as extrinsic to the self to the point of rendering it expendable or perpetually malleable matches, in many ways, the human tendency to disengage from the natural world and to view it primarily as a resource to use or discard as we see fit.

It is on this point that transhumanist philosophy and the Catholic tradition find little accord. For the former, the human body and, ultimately, all things material are manipulable, disposable, and replaceable. For the latter, the human body is essential for an identity rooted in communion that survives even the sting of death. These conceptions of the human body and, by extension, of the material world evidently have much to say about how we ought to relate to and respect bodies—individual bodies and bodies in community—as well as how we ought to relate to and respect the created order.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- Alcor Life Extension Foundation. 2017. What Is Cryonics? *Alcor Life Extension Foundation*. Available online: <http://www.alcor.org/AboutCryonics/index.html> (accessed on 30 January 2017).
- Aquinas, Thomas. 1955–1957. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Translated by Charles J. O’Neil. New York: Hanover House. Available online: <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/ContraGentiles4.htm#86> (accessed on 30 January 2017).
- Augustine. 1999. *The City of God*. Translated by Marcus Dods. New York: Modern Library.
- Augustine of Hippo. 1844. *Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament*. Translated by Richard Gell MacMullen. Oxford: John Henry Parker.
- Bostrom, Nick. 2005. Transhumanist Values. *Journal of Philosophical Research* 30: 3–15. [CrossRef]
- Bostrom, Nick. 2008. Letter from Utopia. *Studies in Ethics, Law, and Technology* 2: 1–7. [CrossRef]
- Campbell, Alasdair V. 2009. *The Body in Bioethics*. London: Routledge.
- Catholic Church. 1997. Catechism of the Catholic Church. *Vatican Website*, August 15. Available online: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/ccc_toc.htm (accessed on 15 June 2017).
- Francis. 2013. General Audience. *Vatican Website*, June 5. Available online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130605_udienza-generale.html (accessed on 15 June 2017).
- Francis. 2014. Meeting of the Pope with the Elderly. *Vatican Website*, September 28. Available online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/september/documents/papa-francesco_20140928_incontro-anziani.html (accessed on 15 June 2017).
- Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si’*. Encyclical Letter. *Vatican Website*, May 24. Available online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (accessed on 15 June 2017).
- Harris, John. 2007. *Enhancing Evolution: The Ethical Case for Making Better People*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Humanity+. 2016. The Transhumanist FAQ 3.0. *Humanity+*. Available online: <http://humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-faq/> (accessed on 25 January 2017).
- International Theological Commission. 2004. Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God. *Vatican Website*, July 23. Available online: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html (accessed on 15 June 2017).
- Irenaeus. n.d. *Against the Heresies*. Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Available online: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.vii.vii.html> (accessed on 15 June 2017).
- John Paul II. 1993. *Veritatis Splendor*. Encyclical Letter. *Vatican Website*, August 6. Available online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html (accessed on 15 June 2017).
- John Paul II. 1994. *Gratissimam Sane*. Letter to Families. *Vatican Website*, February 2. Available online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.html (accessed on 15 June 2017).
- John Paul II. 2006. *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*. Translated by Michael Waldstein. Boston: Pauline Books.
- Joy, Bill. 2000. Why the Future Doesn’t Need Us. *Wired*, April 1. Available online: <https://www.wired.com/2000/04/joy-2/> (accessed on 30 January 2017).
- Keenan, James F. 1996. Dualism in Medicine, Christian Theology, and the Aging. *Journal of Religion and Health* 35: 33–45. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Labrecque, Cory Andrew. 2015. Morphological Freedom and the Rebellion against Human Bodiliness: Notes from the Roman Catholic Tradition. In *Religion and Transhumanism: The Unknown Future of Human Enhancement*. Edited by Calvin Mercer and Tracy J. Trothen. Santa Barbara: Praeger.

- Leonard, Tom. 2013. Three Senior Oxford University Academics Will Pay to Be Deep Frozen When They Die So They Could One Day Be 'Brought Back to Life'. *Mail Online*, June 9. Available online: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2338434/Three-senior-Oxford-University-academics-pay-deep-frozen-die-day-brought-life.html> (accessed on 3 February 2017).
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1990. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith. Unknown place: Taylor & Francis. Available online: <http://www.mylibrary.com.acces.bibl.ulaval.ca?ID=15777> (accessed on 14 June 2017).
- More, Max. 1993. Technological Self-Transformation: Expanding Personal Extropy. Available online: <http://www.maxmore.com/selftrns.htm> (accessed on 14 June 2017).
- Ramsey, Boniface. 1985. *Beginning to Read the Fathers*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. 1988. *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 2nd ed. Translated by Michael Waldstein. Washington: Catholic University of America Press.
- Sandberg, Anders. 2001. Morphological Freedom: Why We Note Just Want It, But Need It. *Anders Sandberg's Pages*. Available online: <http://www.aleph.se/Nada/Texts/MorphologicalFreedom.htm> (accessed on 14 June 2017).
- Toombs, S. Kay. 1988. Illness and the Paradigm of Lived Body. *Theoretical Medicine* 9: 201–26. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
- Zaner, Richard. 1981. *The Context of Self: A Phenomenological Inquiry Using Medicine as a Clue*. Athens: Ohio University Press.



© 2017 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).