Deconstructing Transhumanism: A *Metanoia* from *Homo Deus* to *Homo Kenosus*[1]

Samson Tadelle Demo
Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology

Abstract

A debate is raging between bioconservatives and bioprogressives regarding transhumanism and its potential for yielding *homo deus*. However, the bioconservatives leave unscathed the philosophical underpinnings of transhumanism. Transhumanism has grown out of the womb of the biomedical model, which is founded on a reductionistic method of Baconian pedigree, a body-mind dualism of Cartesian breed, and a technological imperative of the Promethean stripe. Thus, we need a *metanoiac* turn that counterbalances the excesses of the *active life* of the Baconian approach with a *contemplative life*, a stance of gratitude for the gift of creation. Furthermore, the denigrated body, put asunder from the favored mind, has to be re-valorized by affirming the incarnation and the bodily resurrection of Christ. Such a *metanoiac* reversal is possible if we turn toward Christ, who has equilibrated an active life with a contemplative life. Similarly, Christ's kenosis is a reversal of the gnostic disparagement of the Cartesian "extended body." Such a kenotic embrace of the incarnate life is vindicated by a bodily resurrection, which oppugns the cybernetic immortality envisioned by transhumanism. Moreover, the *logos* of technology implodes if it is not suspended by an ethos of kenotic service. Hence, the audacity of *homo deus* could be rectified by the ethic of the kenotic Christ, *homo kenosus par excellence*. After making introductory remarks on transhumanism and reviewing African engagements with it, I deploy Michel Foucault's genealogical method to deconstruct transhumanism. This is followed by a discussion on how the kenotic life of Christ could deconstruct the ethos of transhumanism.

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About the Author
Dr. Samson Tadelle Demo has earned an MD from Gondar University in medicine, a BA from Addis Ababa University in Developmental Economics, a Post Graduate Diploma (PGD) and Master's in Biblical and Theological Studies (MABTS) from the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology (EGST). Currently, he works as a consultant General Practitioner at Mercy Care Ethiopia Health Care and engages in research activities in collaboration with EGST. He is the author of a book chapter entitled "After-Self Assertion: On a Paraclesis of a Political Theology of Kenosis" in the book *Ethnic Diversity, National Unity: Moral Pedagogies of Togetherness for Ethiopians* (2021). His interest lies in conducting interdisciplinary research that involves issues in theology, medicine, and economics.

Email: samsontadelle777@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

One of the critical tasks of theology is to discern the signs of its contemporaneous age. After making such a discernment, the church is in a position to undertake the task of being a prophetic voice in a proactive manner. When we scrutinize our age, we note it is marked by an incessant and unprecedented encroachment of technology in our lives. Ted Peters, an American Lutheran theologian and Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics, calls for theologians to respond urgently to the challenge posed by technoscience before they become obsolete (2019, 97). The unharnessed growth of technology has moved from facilitating our routine tasks to altering the condition of humanity. The alteration of the human condition via technology is vigorously pursued by the movement of transhumanism. Max More, one of the founding architects of transhumanism, defines it as follows: "Transhumanism is a class of philosophies that seek to guide us towards a *posthuman* condition" (1990, 1; emphasis his). For More (1990, 1), such a posthuman condition entails that techno-scientific advances could radically alter the possibilities and the nature of our lives.

In this regard, the ultimate aim of transhumanism is to surpass the presumed weakness of humanity to attain a state of immortality by employing technology in its myriad forms (nanotechnology, genetic engineering, robotics, and artificial intelligence). The upshot of the process of transhumanism is a posthuman condition. This final outcome of transhumanism is often taken as a kind of *homo deus*, an upgraded form of humanity into immortal gods (Harari 2016, 66). Albeit no one downplays the role of technology in improving our lives and alleviating human suffering, the highly inflated confidence of transhumanism in considering technology as the ultimate savior from bodily weakness into immortality should not be left unchastised. N. T. Wright (2008, 82) posits that such an escape from embodiment into immortality could be considered a parody of the ultimate hope of Christians—bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15:12–26). The resurrection of Jesus Christ functions as the springboard from which our worship and work in the world is ordered (Wright 2008, 259, 269).

Therefore, rather than taking a reactionary pose, the church should be proactive enough to raise the high-water mark of the hope of resurrection. In this regard, Peter Scott (1994, 185) argues that "across tragedy, across death, for the Christian there is the hope of continuity." This continuity is grounded firmly by resurrection, which is "a revolution in embodiment" (Scott 1994, 186). The sting of death, the ultimate enemy that transhumanism attempts to undo via technology, has been vanquished by the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:55). The staunch proponents of transhumanism like Ray Kurzweil are rendering a travesty of the truth of resurrection by resorting to technology in securing cybernetic immortality (radical life extension). According to Kurzweil (2005, 166), cybernetic immortality could be attained by "uploading the human brain." This is undertaken by "scanning all of its [the brain's] salient details and then reinstantiating those details into a suitably powerful computational substrate." In this manner, the whole of a person's personality, memory, skills, and history could be preserved (Kurzweil 2005, 166). Similarly, Yuval Noah Harari, an Israeli professor of history, posits that we are witnessing an emerging religion called *Dataism*. In this religion, what is worshipped is data, whose flow is the foundation of the universe (Harari 2016, 978). Such a techno-religion assumes that the electronic and mathematical algorithms that run machines could be applied to explain biological mechanisms. In Dataism, the nature of life would be transformed through the embrace of biology and computer science (979–982).

Furthermore, Harari (2016, 65–66) states that the project to upgrade the current human condition into gods, or *homo deus*, is a continuation

of the success that *homo sapiens* have achieved in the struggle against starvation, disease, and violence. He opines that *homo sapiens* have saved humanity from abject misery. The contemporary project of *homo deus* takes the baton from "evolutionary humanism" which aimed at the creation of Hitler's "superhuman" by the use of selective breeding and ethnic cleansing. Harari contends that, *pace* Hitler's approach, this new project deploys genetic engineering, nanotechnology, and brain-computer interface in a peaceful manner. In this regard, Elaine Graham (2002, 66) argues that the *Übermensch* of Friedrich Nietzsche finds its culmination in transhumanism's vision of creating the posthuman or superman. Thus, transhumanism inherits the values of Enlightenment humanism. Even though engagements on the issue of transhumanism are predominantly found in the Western world, there are discussions by some African intellectuals on this issue. We now turn to these engagements.

2. African Perspectives of Transhumanism

As noted above, the emergence of transhumanism can be traced to the Western world. Since its emergence, it has attracted enormous attention from philosophers, scientists, theologians, and other intellectuals. However, there are only a few engagements from the African context. On the one hand, these discussions revolve around whether the ethos of transhumanism is congruent with African notions of personhood or communality. On the other hand, some writers attempt to engage transhumanism from the point of view of the technological needs of Africa. I will attempt to show some representative scholars who engaged with transhumanism with a focus on the African personhood or communal perspective, and from the angle of the technological necessities of the continent.

For instance, Ademola K. Fayemi (2018, 54) argues that the basic question that must be addressed regarding transhumanism is whether or not it is congruent with the African concept of personhood. More specifically, Fayemi uses the Yoruba concept of personhood to dialogue with transhumanism. In this regard, he asserts that the dynamic and capacity-enhancing features of transhumanism are consonant with facets of the metaphysical beliefs and values of personhood inherent in the Yoruba culture (70–71). He blends such a notion of personhood with non-evolutionary ontological values of personhood to propose an Afrofuturistic account of personhood. According to Fayemi (72), such an account counters a fixed and non-malleable notion of personhood that is exhibited by cultural essentialism. Thus, the Afrofuturistic rendering of personhood facilitates an optimistic prospectus for transhumanism in the African context (71). The Afrofuturistic studies that he envisages are given the task of integrating the African concept of personhood with "censored essentials" of transhumanism in such a way as to transform the African predicament (73).

Such an understanding of personhood is not left unchallenged. Amara E. Chimakonam (2021, 43) contends that the Afro-communitarian concept of personhood is incompatible with the ethos of transhumanism. This incompatibility casts doubt on the permissibility of transhumanism in Africa (53). Rather, Chimakonam (2021, 52) contends that the notion of personhood as explicated by Ifeanyi Menkiti's Afro-communitarian conception better explains the African context. Chimakonam notes that Menkiti's notion puts personhood as a thing to be acquired as one complies and performs the obligations and responsibilities of the community. In this regard, the "technologized personhood," which is the outcome of Fayemi's enhanced humanity, will be technologically engineered to conform to communal norms. This short-circuits the moral development

as elucidated by Menkiti's notion of personhood. Chimakonam (2021, 52) argues that Fayemi's technologized personhood eliminates the African value of striving to attain personhood.

On the other hand, Leo Igwe (2021, 89) is a scholar who argues from the perspective of the technological demands of the African continent. He laments that the discussions of transhumanism are oblivious to the technological life situation and context of Africa (89). He cites the colossal benefits of technological applications that could elevate the standard of living for Africans. The limitations of the living conditions could be drastically ameliorated via technological interventions. While the gains from technology in the African context are enormous, the debate around transhumanism lacks due consideration of the African situation (89). In order to tackle the problems of poverty, hunger, and diseases that burden the African continent, Igwe (2021, 92) posits that Africa should exploit the possibilities and potentials of emerging technologies. In this regard, a conservative approach that does not support the intervention of transhumanist technologies in the African context would only perpetuate the existing problems (92).

In the same vein, Igwe (2021, 92–93) propounds that the approach that Africa should follow is to design policies and programs that would facilitate the ethical use of emerging technologies. Such an approach would help to narrow the technological gap between Africa and the Western world. Rather than attempting to reconcile transhumanism with the African concept of personhood and notions of communality (like *ubuntu*) as pursued by Fayemi (2018) and Metz (2018), Igwe (2021, 90) suggests that African thinkers should propose a philosophy of "trans-ubuntu." This is because the nature of transhumanism is not based on an interest to align with traditions or validate classical humanism. Instead, the essence of transhumanism is driven by the desire "to transcend, or go beyond, previous or current ideological frameworks and worldviews" (Igwe 2021, 90).

As could be seen from the above discussion, Igwe's proposal to embrace transhumanism arises from the need to ameliorate existential predicaments that ravage the African continent. There is no question that emerging technologies would be of immense use to snatch Africa from the quagmire of poverty, hunger, and diseases. However, the technologies that exist in the Western world are not shared to the extent of elevating Africa from its present dire situation. It would be naïve to think that future and advanced technologies envisaged by transhumanism could be widely disseminated to developing countries. One needs only to consider the outcomes of the previous industrial revolutions to predict the future availability of advanced technologies in Africa. In this regard, Benyera (2021, 20) avers that the previous industrial revolutions and the current data (technological) revolution have not brought sustainable development, human rights improvement, and dignity to Africa. Transhumanism serves as the dominant ideology for this data revolution, or the Fourth Industrial Revolution, to advance the interests of multinational technological corporations like Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft (Giesen 2018, 189–203).

Similarly, Igwe's proposal to forge policies and programs that facilitate the dissemination of existing technologies is commendable. However, he seems to conflate existing technologies that could help Africa catch up with the rest of the developed world with the utopic and esoteric ambitions of transhumanism. It seems illusory to talk of acquiring advanced technologies of the order envisaged by transhumanism while Africa is prevented from sharing the existing technologies that could have enormously enhanced the standard of living for the people of Africa. Moreover, Igwe's proposal is focused only on the policies that facilitate the opening up of

the African continent to the deployment and development of existing technologies. He seems to neglect the role that Africa should play to exert pressure on the developed world to avail existing technologies that Africa needs at an affordable price.

In a similar vein, Igwe does not delineate how the policies and programs could develop the concept of "trans-ubuntu." Igwe has argued that transhumanism is driven by the ambition to transcend the humanism of the Western world, which exhibits features of individualism. However, he does not explicate what is meant by the transcendence of *ubuntu*, which is based on communal living. The virtual nature of the technologies of transhumanism has disembodied properties that do not rhyme with the values of *ubuntu*. In this regard, Graham (2006, 58) argues that the deprivation of face-to-face engagement in virtual reality can result in the degradation of communal life. Despite the advantage of facilitating communication via digital technologies, we could be lured to the illusory world of companionship that shuns the responsibilities of real friendship (Turkle 2011, 1). Hence, one could question whether there is conceptual congruence with the neologism of *trans-ubuntu*. This is because the ideals of transhumanism have grown on the soil of Enlightenment humanism which features individualism, while *ubuntu* is a relational notion that characterizes African communal living. While Igwe (2021, 90) disowns any effort to align the African conceptions of personhood or communality with transhumanism, he seems to commit what he discredits by merging *ubuntu* philosophy with transhumanism.

Overall, we can see that engagement with transhumanism from the African perspective is replete, on the one hand, with discussions about the concordance of African notions of personhood or communality with the ethos of transhumanism and, on the other hand, with the technological necessities of Africa. Such discussions are very important to delineate further engagements with transhumanism. However, such engagements betray a theological lacuna because considerations from theological perspectives are lacking. Furthermore, there is a haste in either reconciling or rejecting transhumanism before unearthing and critically reviewing its anthropological underpinnings in its own Western context. Hence, any discussion of transhumanism should proceed from digging at its Enlightenment roots. This can help us reach conclusions that will enable us to have sound and profound theological engagements with transhumanism. In this manner, we could go back in history to delineate the genealogical inklings of the ethos of transhumanism before making a theological response.

3. A Genealogy of Transhumanism

In order to deconstruct transhumanism, one needs to track its historical meanderings. To undertake this task, we can employ a genealogical method. According to Michel Foucault (1984, 81), this approach is a method of tracing the descents of complex courses of thought. This helps "to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion" in such a way as to recognize changes and deviations. Furthermore, a genealogical approach helps to locate "the complete reversal—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us" (81). Hence, a genealogical approach critically examines the present in light of the complex historical processes and struggles. In other words, historical contingencies are analyzed as to how they shaped the present situation (Garland 2014, 367).

One can begin a genealogical reevaluation of the present state of transhumanism by analysis of the thoughts of Francis Bacon (1561–1626). Bacon's scientific method was founded by downplaying the life of *abstraction* and *contemplation*. The contemplative life is considered as a

"destructive and inveterate habit," and should be curtailed by "the active tendency" to prepare the road to human knowledge. Such knowledge is equated with power (Bacon 2000, 103). According to Max More (2013, 9), the inductive method introduced by Bacon renders him a precursor to the realization of the transhumanist agenda. This is reiterated by Nick Bostrom (2005, 2), a Swedish-born philosopher and Oxford professor with a background in artificial intelligence, computational neuroscience, and theoretical physics, who underscores that empirical methods could lead to "mastery over nature." The emphasis on the inductive method resulted in a mere collection of *facts*, leading to the abnegation of *speculation*, or the contemplative life, including Aristotelian philosophy (MacIntyre 2007, 79).

In a similar vein, Lesslie Newbigin, a British theologian and missiologist, laments that the *facts* that Bacon deploys to forge the inductive method are reduced to mere things that are tangible and measurable. This is contrary to the original meaning of the word fact, derived from the Latin *factum*. Newbigin (1995, 55) underscores that *factum* represents "something which has been done or accomplished." Similarly, the reductionist impulse of Bacon is also reflected in his preference of pre-Socratic philosophers like Democritus, who, for instance, attempted to describe the building blocks of matter as being constituted of atoms (Bacon 2000, 51). For Bacon, nature is studied as a mere artifact that does not possess any intrinsic worth or purpose of its own (Hawkin 1999, 70). Newbigin (1995, 56) contends that the atomistic and inductive study of matter is oblivious to the notion of purpose as an explanatory category. Hence, one of the consequences of Bacon's reductive endeavor is the creation of fact-value dualism. Bacon's inductive strategy is not concerned with the *telos* of a thing. Therefore, the obsession with the atomistic method does not tell whether a thing is good or bad (56).

Similarly, John Milbank (2022, 105) locates the roots of such fact-value dualism in the disturbance of the symphonic unity of the pragmatic or the active life with the contemplative life. Milbank (2022, 105) states that Bacon's reductionist method has disavowed "the symbolic aspect both of the natural world and human works and workings." This method counters the perspective elucidated by Nicholas of Cusa, a philosopher and religious reformer of the early Renaissance, who considers "all the processes and upshots of reality, including our human working and results of working, as a participation in the Trinitarian and Creative operations of God" (Milbank 2022, 105).

The second genealogical vestige that has left its indelible etch on transhumanism is the body-mind dualism of René Descartes. As noted earlier, Ray Kurzweil (2005, 25) hopes that we can one day scan the brain in such a way as to upload its contents onto a suitable computer substrate. This is necessitated by the fact that our physical bodies are weak and subject to infirmity and death. For Kurzweil (2005, 25), such bodily weakness will be transcended at the point of singularity, where the consummation of the merging of biological thinking (cartesian mind) with technology is materialized. Such a proposition betrays that transhumanists are cartesian dualists because of their belief that personhood and the sense of self could "exist in an immaculate reality separate from their bodies" (Nagoshi and Nagoshi 2011, 304).

It is not the mere valorization of the mind leading to the denigration of the body that marks the dualistic nature of cartesian anthropology. Such a dualistic appraisal also lays an emphasis on the autonomy and the freedom of individuals. When the mind is favored in this way, we are appraising our freedom and eliminating any trace of limitation or responsibility (Lake 2013, 14). Transposing this in Paul Ricoeur's parlance, cartesian dualism puts asunder the dialectical tension between our freedom or voluntary

will, which corresponds with the mind, and our nature, which correlates with the involuntary aspect that represents the body (Ricoeur 1966, 4–13). In transhumanism, the shattering of such a dialectical relationship empowers the voluntary will to subjugate the involuntary body, thereby creating a reductionist account of nature (Verhoef and Janse van Rensburg 2022, 11–14). In the same vein, Brent Waters, an American computer scientist, propounds that the body is considered an encumbrance "to the will," thereby necessitating disposal (Waters 2017, 70). When the cartesian mind or will is given free rein, it not only unfetters the shackles of the body, but it will also enable us to attain lordship and mastery over nature. This is attained by the deployment of medical practice patterned on the biomedical model. The mastery is expressed in terms of the curative aspect of biomedicine. At this junction, one needs to remark on the presentiment of René Descartes who anticipated the employment of medical science, under the order of the biomedical model, for furthering the cause of transhumanism. Descartes hoped that medical knowledge might extend its help toward freedom from the ailment of aging (McKenny 2010,152–153).

The final important element of the genealogical footprint of transhumanism is "the technological imperative" that is assumed by the biomedical model (Freund and McGuire 1999, 243). The coupling of the biomedical model with technology has catapulted the offer of medical practice beyond its traditional combat zone of the curing of diseases and alleviation of suffering. With Promethean prowess, medical practice envisages "a nonreligious version of 'salvation' from human sickness, death and finitude" (Freund and McGuire 1999, 243). Such vision is pursued by transhumanism in the process of attaining cybernetic immortality. In this regard, Stanley Hauerwas, an American theologian and ethicist, concurs that the obsession of modern medical practice has become the prevention of death (Hauerwas 1986, 36).

Similarly, the technological salvation envisioned by transhumanism betrays a sense of exceptionalism (Bauman 2017, 33). Thus, on the one hand, such an esoteric mindset builds a fence between humanity and the rest of creation. On the other hand, it creates a barrier between the beneficiaries of technological advancement and the disadvantaged others. In the race to attain technological salvation, transhumanism focuses on the deployment of technology only for the betterment of humanity at the oblivion of the natural order. This is because humans are considered "above the rest of nature." This could be taken as a humanity-nature dualism. Not only have humans delineated "distinct species boundaries," but they have also created a gulf between the self and other, or a kind of individual-other dualism (37). Nonetheless, such exceptionalism flies in the face of our embeddedness and interdependence with the rest of the planetary community. Even our presumably individual bodies are now recognized as ecosystems (37) rather than individual living organisms because of the presence of microbiome in our bodies (Surana and Kasper 2022, 3690).[1]

Overall, such a genealogical survey of transhumanism has revealed some of the historical contingencies and deviations. This brief description of the descent and genealogy of transhumanism could help us to evaluate its contemporary status. From the above historical contingencies, one can decipher the traces of transhumanism in the series of the processes examined. Hence, we have seen that Francis Bacon's introduction of the inductive method has given rise to a reductionistic appraisal of matter. This resulted in the dissonance between the active life and the contemplative life. Such disjunction has yielded the fact-value dualism that marks the mindset

1 The strong symbiotic relationship between humans and the microbiome is known as *holobiont*, a description that shows an ecological understanding of self.

of the modern world. Similarly, Descartes's philosophical approach has yielded a dissected anthropology, thereby shearing humanity into body-mind dualism. This serves a pivotal role in the emergence of transhumanism because of the accent on the mind at the debasement of the body.

Such a dualistic anthropology serves as a launchpad for medical practice by undergirding its foundation, the biomedical model. Moreover, this model necessitates the utilization of technology not only for preventive and curative purposes but for bracing for the final combat against death itself. This technological imperative, tailored to effect cybernetic immortality, betrays a sense of exceptionalism and individualism (individual-other dualism). This creates a gulf between humanity and nature and between the beneficiaries of technological enhancement and the unprivileged others. In saying this, we now move to the evaluation of transhumanism in the light of the kenotic act of Jesus Christ.

4. A *Metanoiac* Turn from *Homo Deus* Toward *Homo Kenosus*

From the above discussion, we have seen how the genealogical footprints of transhumanism have left a series of dualisms: fact-value dualism, body-mind dualism, and individual-other dualism. The desired outcome of all these dualistic genealogical contingencies is to facilitate victory upon the last enemy of humanity—death. Upon vanquishing death, humanity will celebrate the enthronement of humanity as *homo deus*. Therefore, in order to deconstruct the underpinnings of transhumanism, the above dualistic fractures have to be mended. To undertake this task, we resort to the kenotic act of Jesus Christ, *homo kenosus par excellence* (Demo 2021, 168–177).[2]

According to Michael J. Gorman (2009, 9–39), the story of Christ recapitulated in *Carmen Christi* (Phil 2:6–11) is Paul's "master story" as it captures the salvific act of God in the world. Thus, its significance lies in challenging "all other claims to universal salvation on offer, whether ancient or modern" (38). Similarly, Wayne A. Meeks (2002, 111–112) avers that this hymn is a "master model" that delineates the pattern of thought and action of the kenotic Christ. In this manner, this model offers "a practical moral reasoning" that exhorts the Philippian Christians to participate in the kenotic life of Christ (111–112). It is in this master story that we have to search for a "spiritual enhancement" that supplants the ethos of transhumanism (Trothen 2017, 107–120). The type of enhancement that this master story narrates is to transform us into the image of God (*imago Dei*) as manifested in Christ. Thus, in order to attain such divine likeness, we have to tread the path that Christ has trodden in his kenotic act which embodies humility and rebuffs any scent of grandiosity (Graham 2006, 66).

First, in line with Lesslie Newbigin's explication of fact in its original connotation as *factum*, as something which has been accomplished, this hymn narrates the kenotic act of Christ in his incarnation, death, resurrection, and exaltation as a historical fact. In this regard, John B. Webster (1985, 110) posits that Philippians 2 is not an abstract account, but the narration of a historical fact of a salvific event. Thus, this historical fact is loaded with moral injunctions. Pace Ernst Käseman, the historical fact of Philippians 2 does not require a mere acknowledgment of the lordship of Christ, as a kind of disembodied contemplative response. Rather, it demands obedience from believers (Webster 1985, 109). For Gorman (2009, 32), the call of obedience is not a remembrance and imitation of

2 The application of the notion of the kenotic mindset and act of Christ as *homo kenosus* for the problem of ethnic diversity is dealt in the cited book chapter.

a story. More profoundly, Paul prompts the Philippians to participate in the "transformative work of the triune God" in history, which is also called *theosis* (32).

The kenosis of Christ is not limited to thought or contemplation (Phil 2:5); rather, it has been demonstrated in concrete bodily action in obedience to the Father (Phil 2:6–8). Paul's exhortation to have the mind of Christ in kenotic imitation restores the imbalance of the contemplative and the active life in Francis Bacon's inductive method. We have seen that the dissociation between the contemplative and the active life is correlated with the fact-value dualism. Thus, the kenotic elucidation mends the rupture of the fact-value dualism entailed by the inductive method. Whatever condition that could be defined as factual or concretely accomplished, as in Newbigin's parlance, should not be scraped of its ethical connotation. Therefore, the untrammeled action of transhumanism could be harnessed to a morally sound and value-laden technology.

Second, the self-abnegation of Christ in his kenotic act to embrace humanity repugns the gnostic disparagement of embodiment. Christ as *homo kenosus* revalorizes the body in his embrace of humanity. Christ's kenotic act reverses the trajectory of transhumanism's progress to attain a god-like immortal state as *homo deus* by "taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:7 RSV).[3] This underscores the significance of embodiment. Hence, the transhumanists' emphasis on the mind that attempts to discard the body is found wanting. As the emptying or kenotic act of Christ is taken as a weapon to confront the "empty glory" or conceit (Phil 2:3), as argued by Gordon Fee (1995,186–187), his kenotic embodiment also tackles the transhumanists' disdain for the body.

Moreover, when seen in the context of the Roman Philippi, Joseph Hellerman (2005, 129–130) posits that Christ has trodden a downward descent of a "course of ignominies," or *cursus pudorum*. Hellerman (2005, 129–130) contends that the descent of Christ takes progressive stages: descending from the apex of his divine status, taking on of humanity and slave status, and finally, dying an ignominious death on the cross. This oppugns the upward mobility of the Roman ideology of *cursus honorum*, or a race for honor, which has infiltrated nearly all classes of society (Hellerman 2005, 108, 129). In this regard, the deployment of *Carmen Christi* by Paul to the Philippians could be intentional. This is because the Roman Imperial Cult was firmly established in Philippi (Heen 2004, 134).

The kenotic act inverts the gist of transhumanism in its ascent of attaining *homo deus* by climbing on the technological ladder. Christ as *homo kenosus* has demonstrated what is meant by divinity in becoming a servant and suffering a humiliating death on the cross. In this regard, Gorman (2009, 27) argues that the descent of Christ is an exercise of divinity. Thus, what seems to us "*out* of character for normal divinity … is actually *in* character for *this* form of God." In this manner, Christ as *homo kenosus* subverts and deconstructs our expectations in revealing "the *true* form of God" (Gorman 2009, 27; emphasis his). This act of kenosis as an exercise of divinity has been vindicated and recognized in Christ's exaltation from the humiliated state (Phil 2:9–11). Hence, resurrection and exaltation are the works of God, not a fabrication of technology. The exaltation of Christ in his being given "the name which is above every name" (Phil 2:9) has a political connotation--the displacement of Caesar by Christ (Horsley 2004, 4). Therefore, in his descent to death on the cross, Christ has demonstrated that lordship is a matter of servitude, not a manifestation of empty conceit as exhibited in the Roman Imperial Cult. In the bodily resurrection and

3 All quotations from the Bible are taken from Revised Standard Version (RSV).

exaltation of Christ, we are reminded that the body is a good gift of God (Waters 2006, 191), not "mere jelly" to be scrapped off (Moravec 1988, 117).

The last, but not least of the dualisms, the individual-other rapture, could also be repaired by the mediation of the kenotic act of Christ. As indicated earlier, the sense of exceptionalism reflected in the ethos of transhumanism springs from the acquisition of technology to transform the human condition. The sole endowment of humanity by advanced technology has fenced off humanity from nature and also created a barricade of individualism. This could be deconstructed by invoking the mindset of Christ, "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped" (Phil 2:6). This attitude is not a navel-gazing, narcissistic curtailment of divinity around himself. Rather, such disposition of the being of divinity is a disposal for the benefit of others. With an outstretched hand, this kenotic mindset enabled Christ to embrace the other, the different, and the weak. In the other-orientation of Christ, the divinity of Christ is rendered for the service of others. In this manner, the kenotic Christ has identified with the weak and the despicable others by obliterating any sense of exceptionalism.

In this vein, the exhortation to have the mind of Christ is meant to be imitated by the Philippian Christians in their relationship among themselves (Phil 2:5). Christ's kenotic disposition is a pattern that demands a relationship of the interdependence of one with the other. Whatever one possesses is to be shared with others. Christ's other-focused attitude cuts off any aberration of conceited exceptionalism or individualism. In our context, the power of endowment with advanced technology should not be a source for a curtailment of nature, the unprivileged others, and the poor. Christ as *homo kenosus* deconstructs the self-aggrandizing bent of transhumanism in its deployment of technology to make an edifice of *homo deus*. Such a Promethean identification with divinity is contrary to the ethos displayed by the kenotic Christ. While Christ "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped," transhumanism endeavors to produce a parody of divinity in its utilization of technology in the search for digital immortality. Thus, individual-other dualism begotten by transhumanism could be effectively mended by a tincture of, emulation of, and participation in, the disposition and the action of Christ, the *homo kenosus par excellence*.

5. Conclusion

Our age is marked by an inexorable progress of technological advancement. It attempts to digitize whatever it finds on its way. The ethos of transhumanism is an attempt to transpose the human condition in a digital format in such a way as to construct the edifice of *homo deus*. In Ted Peter's (2006, 20) parlance, this process could be dubbed a "technologizing [of] the organic world." The reductive and dualistic smack that has been transmuted from Francis Bacon has continued unabated in the cartesian body-mind dualism, and in the technological imperative that underpins modern medical practice. A head-on encounter with transhumanism's gist can be undertaken by a *metanoiac* turn to the kenotic life of Christ. Christ as *homo kenosus* can mend the ruptures of the fact-value divide, the body-mind dualism, and the exceptionalism and individualism bequeathed by transhumanism. What was in the mind of Christ has been revealed in his kenotic act of obedience, thereby offsetting the fact-value rapture. The revaluation of the body has been demonstrated in the embrace of humanity, thereby countering the body-mind dualism. The sense of exceptionalism has been demolished in the other-oriented mindset of service demonstrated by Christ. In this manner, the morality undergirded by Christ's kenotic disposition and action reveals the true nature of divinity and humanity. The life of Christ as *homo kenosus* narrates a master story, a

blueprint of the way of discipleship that beckons us to participate in it. This marks the way of theosis, a transformation into the likeness of God. It is high time that the church proclaims and demonstrates this transformative model embedded in Jesus Christ as our world languishes in the search for a parody of immortality in technology.

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