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Cur Deus Homo vs Homo Deus and the evolution of humanity: Quo Vadis?

ABSTRACT

This article deals with the profound shifts that are taking place in light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, in which humanity's future is highly topical. The article engages Thomas Merton's re-evaluation of Anselm's Cur Deus Deo with Harari's book Homo Deus (2015) and argues that, while we must take Harari's views seriously, the future evolution of humanity is not the human god suggested by Harari, but that suggested by Merton, who argues that the incarnation shows God's love for creation; shows Christ as the pattern of what it means to live a holy life, and, ultimately, shows the future of both the cosmos and humanity, where all is taken into the very heart of God. Harari views the future as the creation of a benevolent human god; Merton views the future as a place where all of creation is divinised.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that we are living in a time of fundamental technological change. As Langerman and Marchinkowski (2023:1) point out,

[s]ince the eighteenth century there have been four major industrial shifts. The first Industrial Revolution began around 1750 and was characterized by the development of spectacular new manufacturing processes. The symbolic identifier of this revolution was the steam



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engine. The second industrial revolution brought major developments in transportation (railroads), communication (telephone) and infrastructure (sewage, water, electrification, and gas supply). It also heralded the beginning of globalisation, and its symbol was the telephone. The third revolution announced the ascent of electronics, nuclear weapons and nuclear energy, biotechnology, and major developments in automated processes and data processing. The robot became its mascot. The world is now in the midst of a fourth revolution (4IR). In a similar way to the revolutions before, the 4IR will build on the advances of previous ones, but seemingly with increasing pace.

In light of the profound technological changes taking place in the world at present, the question that might well be asked is: “How should humanity respond to these changes?”, particularly taking into account how often humanity has not responded well to technological change in the modern period. During each phase of industrial development, there have been periods where people have been categorised or dehumanised or labelled and then the question becomes: “How should humanity respond without treating people as in some ways ‘other’?” This article presents two different answers to that question. One response given by Harari, an avowed atheist, is that human beings could evolve into a god-like state, from *homo sapiens* into *homo deus*. By contrast, based on his reflection on Anselm’s work *Cur Deus Homo*, Merton presents a future in which all of creation is taken up into Godself through the incarnated Christ, in a process of *theosis*, the divinisation or deification of humanity together with the entire created order. It is clear that these two views of humanity’s future represent two very different potential outcomes of the period we have moved into, namely the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

2. THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The transition into the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) was first identified in a book published by Klaus Schwab (2016), the founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum. Fourie (2020:12) points out that the 4IR is set to create

a new generation of sophisticated and game-changing technologies that are transforming the world into a highly connected and intelligent place.

Clearly this has implications in a range of inter-connected areas.

Quoting Philbeck and Davis, Fourie (2020:12) explains that the 4IR is characterised by the continuous integration of various technologies,

across different “cyber-physical systems”. These are connected to, and with one another

by the tight and intelligent integration of different technologies, seamlessly combining the spheres of the digital, physical and biological with a significant social and economic impact.

Fourie (2020:12) goes on to point out that, as a result of the significant and potentially world changing impact of the 4IR,

[a] global race to change the future of manufacturing is on. Countries are feverishly preparing and re-skilling for the Fourth Industrial Revolution to ensure a significant piece of the world economy. The race is also partly about expensive labour cost countries that are intelligently automating manufacturing to fiercely compete with cheap labour cost countries, as well as competing with each other to be the dominating and global industry leader.

3. THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION’S IMPACT ON HUMANITY

Perhaps the most profound and far-reaching impact that the 4IR will have on humanity is in our understanding of what it means to be human. Recently, there has been much speculation and a fair amount has been written, even in theological circles, about the interrelated, but distinct, concepts of transhumanism and posthumanism. In her inaugural address, Cloete touched on both of these. She states that, by transhumanism, we mean

that humans could transcend themselves if they wish to. This understanding of transhumanism does not mean that humans as we know it should be replaced, but only enhanced (Cloete 2023:334).

Cloete (2023:334) quotes Cahill who

elaborates on the worldview that informs transhumanism and explains that it understands human flourishing as experiencing only pleasure, and therefore suffering needs to be eliminated. Everything that could cause human suffering, such as aging, illness and sadness, should not only be reduced, but we should also reach a stage where people can choose a life without these elements. This world characterised by pleasure and the absence of suffering will be made possible by technological advances. Moreover, it is the responsibility of humans to create this future world, where individual freedom and liberty are fundamental pillars. In the world created by the transhumanist vision, the body is optional and essentially viewed as mind. Put differently, what constitutes human beings are not their bodies, but their minds.

Incidentally, such references to the belief that human beings are not constituted by their bodies but by their minds, and the corresponding elevation of the mind over the body have led a number of contemporary philosophers and theologians to describe the lure of the virtual world as akin to the lure of Gnosticism,

a term with ancient Christian provenance, which views salvation or participation in the divine realm as an escape from the limits and moral corruption of the body and of commitment to and responsibility for history. While condemned as heretical to Christian orthodoxy, various forms of gnosticism have lived alongside and within Christian thought from the beginning (Pramuk 2018:224).

Ganzevoort (2020:57) mentions the work of Elaine Graham who

rightly picks up on this in her analysis of our views of humanity and human personality in light of the transhuman. The key question then is whether we can still see ourselves as qualitatively different from animals and robots.

Ganzevoort (2020:57) goes on to speculate:

If artificial intelligence equals and surpasses our mental abilities, including creativity and ethical discernment, and if neurosciences show that our measurable brain functions can explain many of our cognitive processes, not unlike other animals, what does this mean for the idea of *imago Dei*, the crown of creation, and stewardship?

Van Niekerk (2020:124) quotes Bostrom who

defines transhumanism as 'a way of thinking about the future that is based on the premise that the human species in its current form does not represent the end of our development but rather a comparatively early phase'.

Whereas transhumanism refers to the possibility of the technological advances of the 4IR enhancing human capacities and transcending human limitations, posthumanism refers to the transcending of humanity itself through the integration of the biological and technological through the arrival of the singularity, the point at which the technological and the biological intelligences essentially merge. While a concise definition of this phenomenon is hard to come by, the following is helpful. The singularity is a point at which

technological change is exponential, contrary to the common-sense 'intuitive linear' view; the 'returns' are increasing exponentially; there is 'exponential growth in the rate of exponential growth'; machine intelligence will surpass, within just a few decades, human intelligence, 'leading to The Singularity – technological change so rapid and profound

it represents a rupture in the fabric of human history' based on 'the merger of biological and nonbiological intelligence, immortal software-based humans, and ultra-high levels of intelligence that expand outward in the universe at the speed of light' (Guliciuc 2018: 308).

Fourie (2020:35) points out that, as a result of the singularity,

[e]ventually, technology will overcome the old enemy of finitude and mortality via singularity or the uploading of human consciousness to a computer or robot.

Cloete quotes Peters who states that, as a result of the singularity, "human intelligence will leap from human bodies to machines, making hi-tech machines more human than we are" and Campbell, who points out that posthumanism has the effect of

overturning of a human-centred world in mind, presenting a new state of existence. We could therefore live a longer disembodied, yet more intelligent, life (Cloete 2023:336).

4. THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY: *HOMO DEUS*?

Yuval Noah Harari, Israeli historian and professor in the Department of History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has expressed himself very forcefully and eloquently on the subject of the potentially devastating impact of the 4IR on humanity. For Harari, the history of human evolutionary development from one-celled organisms to *homo sapiens* never suggests or infers that *homo sapiens* is the final stage of human development. Not only is *homo sapiens* not necessarily the final stage of human evolution, but human beings will have to face up to the reality that "they are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness" (Harari 2017:142).

According to Harari, humanity created religion to structure an over-arching and connecting meta-narrative that shapes our social functioning to give meaning to our lives. Because of the cohesive social function that religion performs, human beings will not easily dismiss all religion as a mere fiction. Rather than dismiss or reject religion entirely, Harari argues that, in this century, human beings will create new, more comprehensive religions with meta-narratives that are driven by more powerful fictions than ever before. Using the tools of the 4IR, namely

biotechnology and computer algorithms, these religions will not only control our minute-by-minute existence, but will be able to shape our bodies, brains and minds, and to create entire virtual worlds complete with hells and heavens

and, in turn, humanity's ability "to distinguish fiction from reality and religion from science" will become critical (Harari 2017:207). According to Harari, this will be the culmination of the historically delicate interaction and inter-relationship between religion and technology that has taken place throughout history. Throughout human history, humanity's religious landscape has been shaped and determined by humanity's technological development. What Harari (2017:409) sees for the future is a world in which "[n]ew techno-religions may conquer the world by promising salvation through algorithms and genes".

Harari (2017:427) argues that the technological progress of the 4IR will lead to the "most interesting emerging religion is Dataism, which venerates neither gods nor man – but data". The new philosophy or religion that Harari presents is based on the belief that

the universe consists of data flows, and the value of any phenomenon or entity is determined by its contribution to data processing (Harari 2017: 428).

Harari (2016: n.p.) further explains that

[i]n its extreme form, proponents of the Dataist worldview perceive the entire universe as a flow of data, see organisms as little more than biochemical algorithms and believe that humanity's cosmic vocation is to create an all-encompassing data-processing system - and then merge into it.

According to Harari (2017:410), techno-humanism will soon replace *homo sapiens* and will use its enhanced technological capacity to create *homo deus*, as the next major jump forward in human evolution. Fourie (2020:32) explains Harari's position:

after scientists and technologists have conquered famine, epidemics and war, the focus will turn to achieving immortality, happiness, and, ultimately, divinity.

5. JACQUES ELLUL AND THE CRITIQUE OF TECHNICAL RATIONALISM

It is interesting to note that we can look back, rather than forward, to encounter two persons who offer a critique of the 4IR techno-optimists and those who would echo the techno-scepticism of Harari and nobel laureate Richard Smalley about the new religion of the 4IR (on techno-optimism, see Königs

2022). Jacques Ellul (1912-1994) was a French protestant sociologist and philosopher who, in the 1960s, warned against

[t]echnical rationalism, or *technique*, ... a centripetal force, gradually replacing all alternatives with the efficiency principle and technical expertise-based decision-making. Propaganda plays a fundamental role in this system, by conditioning the ideological content of symbolic culture, while also affecting the perception and use of alternative discourses within what Ellul calls 'the technological society' (Alves 2014:169).

Ellul's use of the word "*technique*" is interesting. Alves (2014:170) points out that

[a]s such, his use of the term technique points to a phenomenon that must not be confused with technology, since it is more akin to Weber's concept of rationalization and its focus on instrumentality. For Ellul, technique's dominion over society is all the more in need of critical analysis as its outputs are unanimously hailed as tools for human progress or emancipation – and its failings presented as human inability in letting technology and experts share their blessings with humanity.

A contemporary equivalent to Ellul's "technique" would be the word "algorithm", which Harari (2017:97) describes as

a methodical set of steps that can be used to make calculations, resolve problems and reach decisions. An algorithm is not a particular calculation, but the method followed when making the calculation.

This appears to be the very process to which Ellul is referring and of which Ellul is critical. This becomes clear when Ellul (1964:vi) explains that, by *techniques*, he is referring to

any complex of standardized means for attaining a predetermined result. Thus, it converts spontaneous and unreflective behavior into behavior that is deliberate and rationalized. The Technical Man is ... committed to the never-ending search for 'the one best way' to achieve any designated objective.

Agreeing with Harari's concern about the new, technologically driven religious meta-narratives, but for different reasons, Ellul warns against

the installation of the mythology of technique needed a wider apparatus of indoctrination and persuasion, in the form of systematic myth-building and strong training and education systems that produce trained personnel amenable to the workings of the technical order (Alves 2014:170).

On this point, Veldsman (2020:103-04) quotes Gill who observes that the new ways of thinking – and worshipping

begin[s] – in the criticism of Jacques Ellul – to function as a substitute religion in which Technique is the new sacred, the locus of meaning and value, the object of adoration and sacrifice, and the hope of salvation.

In light of this, Ganzevoort (2020:50) warns that

[o]ur response to the ambivalence of technology should not only be ethical, but deeply theological, reflecting on the need for a transcendent perspective.

6. THOMAS MERTON AND JACQUES ELLUL

For an ethical and theological reflection from a transcendent perspective, which Ganzevoort seeks, we turn to the second voice that would offer an often-critical response to the possible outcomes for humanity from the technological strides that are envisioned in terms of the 4IR. That voice comes from the Trappist monk, Thomas Merton (1915-1968). Both Merton and Ellul were concerned with the impact of technology upon humanity and human flourishing. Although they lived at the same time, Merton and Ellul never corresponded or met, but there were significant overlaps when it came to their views on technology. Merton wrote words that have a distinctly prophetic ring when we consider the predictions of posthumanism and the warning of both Ellul and Harari with regard to new religious forms:

Technology. No! When it comes to taking sides, I am not with [those] who are open mouthed in awe at the 'new holiness' of a technological cosmos in which man condescends to be God's collaborator, and improve everything for Him. Not that technology is per se impious. It is simply neutral and there is no greater nonsense than taking it for an ultimate value ... We gain nothing by surrendering to technology as if it were a ritual, a worship, a liturgy (or talking of our liturgy as if it were an expression of the 'sacred' supposedly now revealed in technological power). Where impiety is in the hypostatizing of mechanical power as something to do with the Incarnation, as its fulfilment, its epiphany. When it comes to taking sides I am with Ellul (Merton 1997:166).

I would argue that, in this instance, Merton is rejecting Harari's notion of the *homo deus* as well as Harari's prediction about the role of the new technologies. It seems remarkable that Merton, writing in the midst of the Cold

War, in the time of the Third Industrial Revolution, could have so accurately foreseen the potential pitfalls in the middle of the 21st century when Merton and Sahnnon (1985:383-384) passed this evaluation on the nature of technology:

I am not of course saying that technology is 'bad,' and that progress is something to be feared. But I am saying that behind the cloak of specious myths about technology and progress, there seems to be at work a vast uncontrolled power which is leading man where he does not want to go in spite of himself and in which the Church, it seems to me, ought to be somewhat aware of the intervention of the 'principalities and powers' of which St. Paul speaks. I know this kind of language is not very popular today, but I think it is so important that it cannot be left out of account. For instance I think that the monumental work of Jacques Ellul on *La Technique* is something that cannot be ignored by the Church Fathers if they wish to see all the aspects of the crucial question of the Church and the world.

7. THOMAS MERTON AND ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

Merton was clearly in agreement with Ellul as to the potentially negative impact of technology. I shall not focus on Merton in dialogue with Ellul in the remainder of this article as an alternative to the views represented by Schwab and Harari. Rather, I shall focus on another, rather unusual conversation partner, Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). It might seem rather unusual to use something written by a 20th-century Trappist monk in conversation with an 11th-century Benedictine monk to critique technological developments in the middle of the 21st century. However, I believe that Merton's reflection on Anselm's theological contribution, particularly in *Cur Deus Homo*, is a useful tool whereby to present a counterargument to the dangers presented to humanity by the advances in the 4IR.

As mentioned, Anselm would appear a strange dialogue partner for Merton. Considering the fact that Anselm was an influential pre-scholastic theologian and that the theological controversies he addressed would seem to have been well settled by the 1960s, it would appear that there might not be much to attract Merton to Anselm. Initially, this was true, but later, Merton's interest in Anselm was sparked by reading Southern's *St Anselm and his biographer*. In a 1963 letter, Merton wrote:

I think he did a very good job. I took this occasion to get into St. Anselm a little, too. I had always been put off him by the standard philosophy textbooks, but I find him fascinating (O'Connor 2020:49).

Consequently, nothing less than acquaintance with the full range of Anselm's writings would do.

It cannot be said that the full scope of Anselm's argument is appreciated until Anselm himself is really known in all his wholeness. He certainly cannot be said to be known to those who are acquainted only with one or two theses from the Monologion and the Proslogion, or even his great theological exposition of the Redemption in the *Cur Deus Homo*. His other dialogues – for instance, the *De Veritate* or the *De Casu Diaboli*, even the *De Grammatico* – must also be read, studied and meditated. Nor is it sufficient to complete this acquaintance by excursions into his meditations and meditative prayers, or into his numerous letters (O'Connor 2020:49).

The first point that needs to be made is a theological one and comes from Merton's reference in the above quote to Anselm's exposition of the theological concept of redemption in the *Cur Deus Homo*. Redemption underpins both Anselm's work and Merton's reflection on it. It is the central Christian tenet that Anselm addresses in his work which has to do with Christ's mediatory role in the atonement in God's great economy of salvation, whereby human beings are reconciled to God through the death of Christ. Although Harari is ambivalent about the future of humankind, he does assume that the continued evolution of humanity is upward, but the Christian doctrines of redemption and atonement suggest that Harari's assumption about the upward trajectory of human evolution might not be entirely accurate. The variables that Schwab and others, who are so positive about the impact of the 4IR on human flourishing, neglect to consider are human sinfulness (human alienation from God, self and others). As Fourie (2020:29) puts it, quoting Peters,

[n]ot even biological or cognitive enhancement will turn sinners into saints. Only the grace of God can redeem human beings and help them to become who they truly are.

Human capacity for evil is something which those who see only positives for humanity in unrestricted technological advance ignore or naively assume will mysteriously disappear as the technology advances. Sadly, human history does not back this up. Technological development has yielded great advances for human beings and human society, but often at huge cost to both.

8. MERTON AND THE MEDIATORY ROLE OF CHRIST

It is clear that Anselm's approach affected Merton profoundly. Having been deeply impacted by Anselm, Merton expresses the extent of that influence in his most systematic and detailed way in his book *The new man* (1961). In a chapter entitled, "The second Adam", Merton links his concepts of atonement and reconciliation to Christ's mediatory role. For Merton, Christ's mediation is demonstrated in three distinct ways. In creation, Christ is the mediator through whom creation itself comes into being and is sustained. In the incarnation, Christ is the mediator who takes on human identity. In the passion, Christ is the mediator who enables redemption. In each mediatory role, Christ brings together that which is scattered. In creation, Christ is the mediator who sustains creation. In the incarnation, Christ is the reconciler who heals the creation. In his passion, Christ is the redeemer who reconciles humanity to God.

Linked to his reading Anselm and based on the mediatory role of Christ, Merton does not agree with Harari or believe that human beings will evolve upwards to become gods. However, he agrees with Anselm that it is through divinisation, deification or *theosis* that God descends to become part of the creation, in order to take all of creation into God. To demonstrate this, for example, Merton, commenting on a sermon by Anselm on heaven, argues that everything that is good on earth will be present in heaven.

For Merton, this is a deeply sacramental vision, in which everything good and beautiful in this life is a sign and even a participation in the life to come. ... The presence of the resurrected, glorified Christ will be recognized and encountered in the transfigured creation (O'Connor 2020:53).

This is a significantly different view to that of Harari and others, who argue that technological progress will deal with all human suffering and evil, and create a utopia where these are absent. Merton presents a view where all that is good and beautiful in the created order is taken up into God, leaving all suffering and evil to be consumed by the creation transfigured in Christ.

In his mediatory role in the incarnation, Merton (1961:135) writes:

In order to return to God, man had need of a Mediator – One who would unite in himself the nature of God and the nature of man, reestablishing in himself most perfectly the communion of God and man. Jesus Christ is this Mediator.

Merton (1961:135) was convinced that Christ's mediatory role in the incarnation was not necessitated by, or in response to human sinfulness, for

Adam himself has need of a Mediator. How else could he bridge that abyss, no less deep than the abyss of sin, which separates the created from the uncreated, the contingent from the Absolute, the nature of man from the nature of God.

In his mediatory role in creation, Christ holds the whole of creation together, but it is in the incarnation that human nature is potentially united with all of creation. In this regard, Merton (1961:150-151) writes:

The recapitulation of the work of creation sublimated and perfected in Christ is a communion in the divine life, an infusion of the life, and glory and power and truth of God not only into man's spirit but also, ultimately, into all the material creation as well. The end is not yet attained, but it is in view in the spiritual vision of the Church who looks forward to the Parousia when Christ will not only appear on the clouds of heaven in judgment but will also at the same time shine forth through the transfigured trees and mountains and seas of a world divinized though its participation in the work of His Kingdom.

The purpose then of creation, and Christ's role in it, as well as in the incarnation, is articulated by Merton (1962:290) as follows:

The Lord made the world and made man in order that He Himself might descend into the world, that He Himself might become Man. When He regarded the world He was about to make He saw His wisdom, as a man-child, 'playing in the world, playing before Him at all times.' And he reflected, 'my delights are to be with the children of men. The world was not made as a prison for fallen spirits who were rejected by God: this is the gnostic error. The world was made as a temple, a paradise, into which God Himself would descend to dwell familiarly with the spirits He had placed there to tend it for Him.

This idea is confirmed in *The new man*:

The whole character of the creation was determined by the fact that God was to become man and dwell in the midst of His own creation (Merton 1961:137).

Merton (1996:43) is explicit on this:

We seek the Incarnate Word not only as the Creator and exemplar of all things, but far more as the Redeemer, the Savior of the world. The Word was made flesh in order to die on the Cross for the sins of mankind, and to reconcile fallen man to God.

Commenting on this, Scruggs (2017:24) makes a telling point:

Merton does not relegate Christ's redemption to an effect of the incarnation; the problem of sin and suffering is for him another cause – a cause that 'awakens' the divine mercy – alongside and complementary to God's eternal desire to dwell with his creation and raise it to glory through divinization.

Scruggs presents the vital distinction between those who view technological advances as having an overtly positive outcome on human flourishing and Merton's alternate to it. In the view of the techno-optimists, human beings lift themselves up to become like God, whereas in Merton's view, God descends to humanity to take humanity up, together with the whole of creation, into God's very self.

Merton's main criticism of the real dangers to humanity from unrestricted technological progress has much to do with his understanding of his Christology,

inseparably connected with his ... doctrine on the freedom and dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by that passionate love of justice and of the divine glory which brought the Word made flesh to His death on the Cross (Pramuk 2018:61-62).

In the created order, it is in Christ that all things hold together, but the gap between human and divine, which comes from the distinction between Creator and created, can only be overcome by Godself stepping into creation, in order to ultimately bring all of creation into Godself.

9. MERTON AND *THEOSIS*

Merton's reference to the divinisation of the world at the return of Christ introduces the theological concept of *theosis*, or the deification of creation: the belief that, at some point in time, all creation will be taken into God's very self. In an article, Sherman (2009:12) traces the history of *theosis* to show that it has a long history within a variety of Christian traditions. He argues:

This becoming-divine is only possible because of the Protean expansiveness of the human whose transformation goes even beyond the boundaries of immanent virtuality, becoming by grace that which exceeds his or her own grasp ... For the subject is never so self-possessed that its becoming necessarily entails dispossession; rather, we always discover our very selves as continually given from and tending towards a transcendent source with whom, therefore, we are never in competition and whom we can never possess. As *imago dei*, the human capacity for transformation is thereby unbounded and

thrusts us into the most intimate of relations not only with God but also with the diverse beings of creation in all of its plenitude ... The point is that a theology open to transcendence can imagine an infinite becoming that does not dissemble forms but both opens and realizes them in a more profound manner.

Sherman's quote accurately reflects Merton's views on this subject and demonstrates how *theosis* represents the opposite of that which is presented by Harari. Both take account of the possibilities of the transformation of humankind, and the capacity of humankind to transform, or be transformed into something higher than itself. In Harari's view, this takes place through the progress that technology brings – humanity lifts itself up by its own bootstraps, as it were. According to Merton's view of *theosis*, humankind is transformed not by its own ability but by the loving God who transcends the distance between God and human in the incarnation and then takes humanity, together with all creation, into the very heart of God. God becomes human so that, in time, human beings may become like God.

Sherman goes on to describe how Merton's understanding correlates to this with reference to the Fire Watch passage in the appendix to the *Life of Jonas*. Sherman argues that Merton views divinisation as the ultimate goal of contemplative life. Merton believes that, in the incarnation, love, the Word of God, became human so that human beings can be taken up into the very nature of God. For Merton, divinisation is the process in which human beings become one with God, participating in the very essence of the Trinitarian nature, and embraced in an intimate relationship with God. For Merton, divinisation involves a radical transformation and a union with the Creator of all things. Divinisation is the way in which human beings transcend the limitations of the self and realise the infinite potential of human nature. Merton's view on divinisation is rooted in the belief that human beings are created in the image of God and have the capacity for infinite transformation.

This is the main point of divergence between Merton and the techno-optimists, who like Schwab, see the future through rose-tinted glasses and the techno-sceptics like Harari, who are far more cautious about the outlook for the future and the faith-based techno-critics such as Ellul, who doubt the capacity of technology to deliver what it promises and who believe that the future ruled by unrestrained technology may be more dire than can even be foreseen. Although broadly endorsing Ellul, Merton views the future of humankind not in terms of an upward evolutionary trajectory guided by technology and aided by technologically based religious meta-narratives, but in terms of what it is that Christ has already done and will do in the *Parousia*, and, consequently, challenges the techno-optimists and -sceptics. Just as Christ the mediator brought the creation into being, and continues to sustain the creation, and then

took on human nature to redeem all of creation along with humanity, so Christ will one day transform all of creation and bring it together into the very heart of God. Harari argues for the god-like future of humanity through technological advancement, whereas Merton speaks of *theosis*, the divinisation and deification of humanity through Christ who gathers all of creation into the very heart of God.

10. CONCLUSION

This article examined the potential for the 4IR to alter our understanding of what it means to be human in radical and far-reaching ways. Transhumanism, in which technology can enhance human capacity, and Posthumanism, in which technology transcends human capacity entirely and creates a new step in human evolution, represent two such significant potentialities, and reaction to these possibilities have varied. Some are techno-optimists such as Schwab, who believe that unrestricted and largely unregulated technological development will have great potential benefits for humankind. Some such as Harari are techno-sceptics who accept the possibility of technological progress to create a new evolutionary step from *homo sapiens* to *homo deus*; they still warn against the attendant dangers that exist. Then there are those such as Ellul, who began warning against a world run according to algorithms and technological processes already in the 1960s. Over against all of these stands Merton, who broadly agrees with Ellul about the potential pitfalls of technique, but, by engaging with Anselm, paints an entirely different picture of the future of not only humanity, but also of all creation. In Merton's future, human beings do not evolve in higher forms and develop into a god, but it is God, who in and through the incarnate Christ, draws all of creation into Godself. In doing so, God completes the process initiated in and through Christ at creation when God created the universe through the agency of the Christ, the Word of God.

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