

The Return of the Dead in Virtual-Digital Life as “Psychosomatic Resurrection”

By Viktoria Panteri*

A. The Fear of Death

Modern –or, otherwise, post-modern¹– culture is characterized by the concealment and “the oblivion of death”². It is characterized by the fear of death, stemming from the fear of the unknown and the sense of loss³. It reveals the absence of man’s relationship or encounter

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1. Postmodernity “is characterized by the transition from capitalism to a post-industrial economy organized around services, i.e. the financial sector, tourism, culture and the consumption of cultural products, as well as the information and economy technologies” (P. Smith, *Πολιτισμική θεωρία – Μιά εισαγωγή*, ed. N. Boumparis, transl. Ath. Katsikeros, Kritiki Publications, Athens 2006, p. 331). Postmodern social philosophy “rejects the possibility of the existence of truth and reason” (Smith, *Πολιτισμική θεωρία, op.cit.*, p. 371). Extremely pronounces I the constant questioning and the rejection of tradition (A. Giddens, *Ο κόσμος τών ραγδαίων αλλαγών. Πώς επιδρά ή παγκοσμιοποίηση στη ζωή μας*, transl. K. Geormas, Metaichmio Publications, Athens 2002, p. 90), the negation of transcendence and “the death of God” (I. Craib, *Σύγχρονη κοινωνική θεωρία. Από τόν Πάρσονς στον Χάμπερμας*, ed. P. Lekkas, transl. Marianna Tziantzi and P. Lekkas, Hellinika Grammata Publications Athens 2000, pp. 373, 386-387). In a world dominated by the superficial, the seeming, and the chaotic, a “meta-narrative” and the guarantee of correctness that it offers are not acceptable (*op.cit.*, p. 381).

2. Chr. Stamoulis, *Έρωτος και θάνατος. Δοκιμή για έναν πολιτισμό της σάρκωσης*, Harmos Publications, Athens 2019, pp. 203-204, 209. The writer speaks for the “death of death” (*op.cit.*, p. 205); Debra J. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever? Living, Dying and Grieving in Our Digital Society”, *SocSci* 4, 4 (2015), pp. 1127-1139, here 1130; <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/4/4/1127> [25.6.2023].

3. C. Maciel, V. C. Pereira, “Social Network Users’ Religiosity and the Design of Post Mortem Aspects”, in: Paula Kotzé, Gitte Marsden, G. Lindgaard, J. Wesson, M. Winckler

with the transcendent, since death also functions as a challenge⁴, as a tension that leads man to a confrontation⁵ with his inwardness, and his ascension towards the infinite⁶ or his fall to nothingness⁷. In this context, all things that are connected with death are undesirable and are placed far from the world of the living⁸. However, we do not only observe a “deep aversion”, but also an “obsession with death”⁹ thus, the world is transformed into a “secular cemetery”¹⁰.

Of course, death causes pain¹¹:

(eds.), *Human-Computer Interaction – INTERACT 2013, Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, vol. 81, 19 (2013), Springer, Berlin, pp. 640-657, here p. 654, (PDF) Social Network Users’ Religiosity and the Design of Post Mortem Aspects (researchgate.net) [16.8.2023]

4. Nikolaos, Metropolitan of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki, *Ἄνθρωπος μεθόριος*, En Plo Publications, Athens ²⁰⁰⁷, pp. 34-35, 41.

5. See P. Doikos, *Ὁ «θάνατος τοῦ Θεοῦ» καὶ ὁ μεταφυσικὸς ἄνθρωπος*, Indiktos Publications, Athens 2008, pp. 109-111.

6. P. Doikos, *Principia Formarum, Ὀντολογία τῆς Στοχαστικῆς Φαντασίας*, Romi Publications, Thessaloniki ²⁰¹⁷, p. 17.

7. *Nihilism* is considered to be the negation of all values (Chr. Androutos, *Λεξικὸν τῆς Φιλοσοφίας*, V. Rigopoulos Publications, Thessaloniki ¹⁹⁸⁴, entry: «μηδενισμός», p. 240). Konstantinos Papapetrou asserts that “nihilism is the phenomenon of the devaluation of values” (K. Papapetrou, *Ὁ μηδενισμός, ἡ γένεσις καὶ ἡ ὑπέρβασίς του*, private ed., Athens 1973, p. 21) and it is the product of the “individualism, subjectivism and rationalism” (*op.cit.*, p. 26).

8. Stamoulis, *Ἔρωσ καὶ θάνατος, op.cit.*, pp. 205-206, 208.

9. V. Guroian, *Μπροστὰ στὸ τέλος. Ἡ εὐθανασία, τὸ νόημα τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τὸ «σύνδρομο τοῦ θανάτου»*, transl. Polyxeni Tsaliki-Kiosoglou, ed. V. Argyriadis, prologue f. V. Kaliakmanis, En Plo Publications, Athens 2017, pp. 70-71.

10. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *Ἐσχατος ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος*, ed.-transl. V. Argyriadis, En Plo Publications, Athens ²⁰⁰⁴, p. 40. For the term *κοιμητήριο* see fr. Dimitrios Tzerpos, *Τὸ τελευταῖο μυστήριο, ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολοιουθία καὶ ἡ καύση τῶν νεκρῶν*, Ouranos Publications, Athens 2016, p. 85.

11. After the Lord’s victory over death, death still afflicts man, but its power is temporary. Andreas Theodorou writes on this subject: “[...] death receives in the area of faith new content and new orientations. Without, of course, losing its natural tragedy as an inglorious and sad phenomenon that strikes every human flesh and causes suffering and tears, [...] it eventually emerges totally transformed into something totally new, restructured and conducive to the man’s moral perfection and salvation”. (A. Theodorou, *Ἄμωμοι ἐν ὁδῷ, Ἀλληλούϊα*, Apostoliki Diakonia tis Ekklisias tis Hellados, Athens ²⁰⁰², p. 29).

In Gethsemane, the Lord prays in agony before His impending sacrifice¹² asking for the support of His disciples¹³, while on the Cross He turns to the Father¹⁴. In Bethany, after Lazarus's death, the Evangelist John presents Him in tears before the tomb of His friend¹⁵ followed by the command to Lazarus and his resurrection¹⁶.

The four-day-dead Lazarus was resurrected¹⁷, but there is neither any mention to his later life, nor his descent into Hades and return to life in the New Testament¹⁸. Even in popular tradition, in the "Carols of Lazarus"¹⁹, when asked what he saw in Hades in his staying there, the risen Saint gives a brief and reluctant answer about the horrors ("the poison") of the underworld: "In Hades where I went I saw all the evils / I saw fears, I saw terrors, I saw sufferings and pains, / I saw great weariness and darkness in the head [...]", and he refuses to say anything else: "[...] and ask me no more"²⁰.

12. *Matthew* 26, 39.

13. *Matthew* 26, 38.

14. *Matthew* 27, 46. Cf. O. Cullmann, *Ἀθανασία τῆς ψυχῆς ἢ Ἀνάστασις ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν; Ἡ μαρτυρία τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης*, transl. Archim. A. P. Koumantos, Artos Zois Publications, Athens 1994, p. 30.

15. *John* 11, 1-44.

16. Christ weeps, a characteristic expression of the suffering of human nature (*ἀδιάβλητα πάθη*), but also a distinctive difference between the Church and the religions, as far as the perception of death according to Alexander Schmemmann is concerned. (f. Alexander Schmemmann, *Ἐσχάτος ἐχθρός*, *op.cit.*, pp. 37-38; see also Hieromonk Grigorios, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμος ἀκολουθία καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ μνημόσυνα*, Ἱερὸν Κελλίον Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Θεολόγου, Ἁγίου Ὁροσ, En Plo Publications, Athens 2019, p. 137). Regarding the Jesus's commands for the Lazarus's resurrection, see Regarding the Jesus's commands for the Lazarus's resurrection, see M. Goutzioudis, «Βιβλικές καὶ Ἐξω-βιβλικές Μαρτυρίες γιὰ τὸν Λάζαρο», *Σύνθεσις/Synthesis* 9, 2 (2020), pp. 35-39, here p. 29, <https://ejournals.lib.auth.gr/synthesis/article/view/9385/8826> [27.8.2023].

17. *John* 11, 1-44.

18. Regarding Jesus's commands for Lazarus's resurrection, see M. Goutzioudis, «Βιβλικές καὶ Ἐξωβιβλικές Μαρτυρίες γιὰ τὸν Λάζαρο», *op.cit.*, p. 34. According to Christian Literature, Lazarus lived and acted in Cyprus after his resurrection (*op.cit.*, pp. 38-39).

19. G. Pavlakis, *Ριζίτικα, Κρητική Δημοτική Ποίηση*, preface G. N. Aikaterinidis, Vivliotiki Publications, Athens 1997, p. 50.

20. His full answer is the following: "To Hades where I went, I have seen all the bad things. / I have seen fears, I have seen terrors, I have seen sufferings and pains, / I have seen great weariness and darkness in my head / Give me some water to wash away the poison / of my heart, of my lips and ask me no more" («Εἰς τὸν Ἄδη ὅπου πῆγα ὄλα τὰ

These express a desire that has never ceased to inflame the heart of humans throughout the ages, their desire to talking to the dead to illuminate the mystery of death, but also to get back in touch with the loved ones they have lost, saying to them what they had not enough time to say.

In the Old Testament, communication between the living and the dead is contrary to God's will is a sin, an abominable and despicable act, which even carries the penalty of death²¹. The case of King Saul is a most characteristic one. After God did not give any answers to Saul's questions («έν τοῖς ένυπνίοις και έν τοῖς δήλοις και έν τοῖς προφήταις»²²), he turned to a necromancer, a woman who communicated with the spirits of the dead («γυναῖκα έγγαστρίμυθον») to speak with the spirit of the prophet Samuel²³, despite God's prohibition. Thus, the first king of Israel, Saul, turning away from God and in despair, ended his own life when he was badly wounded in battle²⁴. In the same battle his three sons were killed²⁵.

κακά τὰ εἶδα. / Εἶδα φόβους, εἶδα τρόμους εἶδα βάσανα και πόνους, / εἶδα κούραση μεγάλη και σκοτούρα στο κεφάλι. / Δώστε μου λίγο νεράκι να ξεπλύνω τὸ φαρμάκι / τῆς καρδιάς μου, τῶν χειλέων και μὴ με ρωτᾶτε πλέον»), see Pavlakis, *Ριζίτικα*, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

21. The prohibitions are explicit and clear in *Deut.* 18, 10-12: «οὐχ εύρεθήσεται έν σοι περικαθαίρων τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἢ τὴν θυγατέρα αὐτοῦ έν πυρί, μαντευόμενος μαντείαν, κληδονιζόμενος και οἰωνιζόμενος, φαρμακὸς έπαιδῶν έπαιδιῶν, έγγαστρίμυθος και τερατοσκόπος, έπερωτῶν τοὺς νεκρούς. ἔστι γὰρ βδέλυγμα Κυρίῳ τῷ Θεῷ σου πᾶς ποιῶν ταῦτα: ένεκεν γὰρ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τούτων Κύριος έξολοθρεύσει αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ προσώπου σου», in *Lev.* 19, 31: «οὐκ έπακολουθήσετε έγγαστρίμυθους και τοῖς έπαιδοῖς οὐ προσκολληθήσεσθε. έχμιανθῆναι έν αὐτοῖς: έγώ εἰμι Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ὑμῶν», and in *Lev.* 20, 27: «Και άνηρ ἢ γυνή, ὅς αν γένηται αὐτῶν έγγαστρίμυθος ἢ έπαιδός, θανάτῳ θανατούσθωσαν άμφοτέροι: λίθοις λιθοβολήσετε αὐτούς, ένχοι εἶσι».

22. *1 Kings* 28, 5-6: «και εἶδε Σαουλ τὴν παρεμβολὴν τῶν άλλοφύλων και εφοβήθη, και έξέστη ἢ καρδία αὐτοῦ σφόδρα. και έπηρώτησε Σαουλ διὰ Κυρίου, και οὐκ άπεκρίθη αὐτῷ Κύριος έν τοῖς ένυπνίοις και έν τοῖς δήλοις και έν τοῖς προφήταις».

23. *1 Kings* 28, 3-29.

24. *1 Kings* 31, 3-6.

25. *1 Kings* 31, 6.

B. The Contemporary Necromancy – *Thanabot*

The same longing and fear of the unknown drives man today to commit hybris, like Saul, but within a different and ever-changing context, seeking communication with the dead in the so-called digital²⁶ or modern necromancy²⁷. Modern necromancy is a historical continuation of ancient magical practices²⁸, which also exist in the form of the *séance*, the invitation of spirits, which survives to this day.

A contemporary form of communication with the world of the dead is *Thanabot*²⁹. It is an application created for people who are struggling to overcome the loss of a loved one, managing grief and accepting death, but also for those who want to leave their digital traces forever in order to be remembered by their family or known by their descendants³⁰. It guarantees the continuing “existence” of the dead and the latter’s uninterrupted “relationship” with the world of the living³¹.

26. See T. Morse, “Digital Necromancy: Users’ Perceptions of Digital Afterlife and Posthumous Communication Technologies”, *Information, Communication & Society* 27, 2 (2023), pp. 1-17, here p. 16. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370280120_Digital_necromancy_users_perceptions_of_digital_afterlife_and_posthumous_communication_technologies [28.8.2023].

27. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., p. 1134.

28. Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, op.cit., p. 6.

29. Debra Bassett, “Digital Afterlives: From Social Media Platforms to Thanabots and Beyond”, *Death and Anti-Death*, Vol. 16 (2018): *200 Years After Frankenstein*, ed. Ch. Tandy. Ann Arbor, Ria UP, 2018, p. 1; L. Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead: The Hermeneutics of Thanabots”, *Media, Culture & Society*, 45, 5, pp. 949-966, here p. 949. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/01634437221147626> [7.7.2023].

30. With regard to the companies operating in the area, such as *Eternime*, *LifeNaut*, βλ. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., p. 1128. For Here After AI see also (<http://www.hereafter.ai>) see <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/tapestry/aging-better-dad-bot-1.5282568/from-dad-to-dadbot-one-man-s-attempt-to-capture-human-essence-in-ai-1.5282575> [3.7.2023].

31. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., p. 1132.

The composite term *Thanabot* comes from the words «θάνατος» and *robot* (*software robots*)³² and refers to the creation of a *digital self*³³; it falls under the category of AI³⁴ that imitates humans and makes use of speech³⁵. It is a Chatbot (AI Chatbot), a digital application with data from people who have passed away, which interacts in writing or orally with the living³⁶. It belongs to the rapidly evolving “thanatechnologies”³⁷ of the thanatology sciences, whose field of research is death³⁸. More

32. M. Ferrara, O. Varol, C. Davis, F. Menczer, A. Flammini, “The Rise of Social Bot”, *Communications of the ACM* 59, 7 (July 2016), pp. 96-104, here p. 96; <https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/2818717> [10.9.2023].

33. Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

34. “Artificial intelligence refers to the machine’s ability to replicate the cognitive functions of a human being, such as learning, design and creativity. AI enables machines to ‘understand’ their environment, to solve problems, and to act towards a specific goal. The computer receives data (either ready-made or collected via sensors, e.g. a camera), processes them and responds on the basis of them. AI systems are capable of adapting their behavior, to a certain extent, by analyzing the consequences of previous actions and solving problems autonomously”. (Εὐρωπαϊκὸ Κοινοβούλιο, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/el/headlines/priorities/i-techniti-noimosuni-stin-ee/20200827STO85804/ti-einai-i-techniti-noimosuni-kai-pos-chrisimopoieitai> [5.8.2023]).

35. Archim. Aristarchos Grekas, *Τεχνητὴ νοημοσύνη καὶ ἀνθρώπος: Ὁρθόδοξη θεολογικὴ προσέγγιση*, Apostoliki Diakonia tis Ekklisias tis Hellados Publications, Athens 2022, p. 23. AI imitates the human intelligence and behavior (*op.cit.*, p. 23).

36. Nora F. Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, *Science and Engineering Ethics* 28, 60 (2022), pp. 1-15, here pp. 1-2, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365676294_The_Ethics_of_Deathbots [26.6.2023]; Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-2.

37. Carla Sofka, “Social support ‘internetworks’ caskets for sale, and more: thanatology and the information superhigh way”, *Death Studies* 21, 6 (1997), pp. 553-574, here pp. 553-554, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/13117946_Social_support_Internetworks_caskets_for_sale_and_more_Thanatology_and_the_information_superhighway [10.8.2023];

Carla Sofka, “Adolescent Use of Technology and Social Media to Cope with Grief”, in: K. Doka & A.S. Tucci (eds.), *Living with Grief, Helping Adolescents Cope with Loss*, Hospice Foundation of America, Washington D.C. 2014, pp. 205-228, here p. 205; Leah Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead”, *Media, Culture & Society* 45, 5 (July 2023), pp. 949-966; cf. V. Özdemir, S. Springer, A. Yildirim *et al.*, “Thanatechnology and the Living Dead: New Concepts in Digital Transformation and Human-Computer Interaction”, *OMICS* 25, 7 (2021), pp. 401-407, here pp. 402-403, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352867511_Thanatechnology_and_the_Living_Dead_New_Concepts_in_Digital_Transformation_and_Human-Computer_Interaction, Epub 2021 Jun 29. PMID: 34191613 [31.8.2023].

38. “Thanatology is the scientific study of death, dying, loss, and grief” (Özdemir *et al.*, “Thanatechnology...”, *op.cit.*, p. 402; Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, *op.cit.*, p.

particularly, these are the *posthumous communication technologies* (PCTs)³⁹. Apart from the term *thanabot*, the following terms are also used: *chatbots of the dead*⁴⁰, *deadbot*⁴¹, *digital ghosts*⁴², *digital zombies*⁴³, *living dead*⁴⁴, *Virtual Deceased Person*⁴⁵, indicating that there exist some differentiations between them. The term *griefbot* is also associated with the expression of the grief of the living⁴⁶, although the purpose of these programs is now to create a second, digital afterlife⁴⁷. In this context, there has been talk about “*digital immortality*” and “*digital endurance*”⁴⁸ or “*digital afterlife*”⁴⁹. *Digital immortality* consists of the assemblage of the *digital remains* of the *informational corpse*⁵⁰. The term “*symbolic immortality*” is also used to describe the acceptance of death by living users⁵¹.

Also, as it happens the case with new technologies and the Internet in general, with the *Thanabot* people seem to gain “global accessibility” and

1128).

39. Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, op.cit., p. 1.

40. Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, op.cit., p. 4.

41. Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead”, op.cit., p. 951.

42. Op.cit., p. 951.

43. This is the case when the deceased’s social media account is managed by third parties, usually relatives. (Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., pp. 1131, 1134). For this practice, see also Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, op.cit., p. 1134.

44. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., p. 1131; Özdemir *et al.*, “Thanatechnology...”, op.cit., p. 402.

45. J. H. Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortal Society of Virtualised Ancestors? The Virtual Deceased Person and the Preservation of the Social Bond”, *Mortality* 28, 1 (2023), pp. 90-105, here pp. 91, 93-94, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348753877_Towards_a_postmortal_society_of_virtualised_ancestors_The_Virtual_Deceased_Person_and_the_preservation_of_the_social_bond [8.8.2023].

46. Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, op.cit., pp. 3-4.

47. Özdemir *et al.*, “Thanatechnology...”, op.cit., p. 402; Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortal Society...”, op.cit., p. 95, where we can find an exposition of the history of the concepts and technologies’ evolution based on particular theories – see the relevant page on p. 95.

48. Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortal Society...”, op.cit., p. 93.

49. According to Bassett, the last two terms are the correct ones, since digital immortality is very difficult to be achieved [Debra Bassett, Ctrl+Alt+Delete: The Changing Landscape of the Uncanny Valley and the Fear of Second Loss, *CurrPsychol* 40 (2021), pp. 813-821, here p. 814, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12144-018-0006-5> [12.9.2023].

50. Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, op.cit., pp. 9, 12.

51. Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortal Society...”, op.cit., p. 93, which mentions the function of symbolic immortality in a theological, biological, experiential, physical, creative way.

“participatory multi-sensory telepresence” in simulated environments, with sensors that give a sense of real presence and “contact”⁵², even if it is in the world of the dead⁵³.

Clearly the above describes the creation of a “post-mortem society”⁵⁴ that wants to interact with the living society and vice versa. Thus, *Thanabots* and *thanablogs*⁵⁵ (places for post-mortem messages)⁵⁶, the post-mortem communication platforms, function as spaces for organizing imaginary, digital communities⁵⁷ and as *mediators* between the living and the dead⁵⁸.

According to Debra Bassett, these are part of the established way of communicating on social media⁵⁹. In many cases, people who have passed away still survive on online platforms and receive messages; the messages

52. K. Robins – F. Webster, *Η εποχή του τεχνοπολιτισμού. Από την κοινωνία της πληροφορίας στην εικονική ζωή*, ed. P. Papathanasiou, transl. Katia Metaxa, Kastaniotis Publications, Athens 2002, pp. 347-348.

53. A devastated mother “meets” her dead seven-year-old daughter and confesses things she didn’t have enough time to tell her when she was alive using virtual reality glasses (*Virtual Reality*) (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/11/12/artificial-intelligence-grief/> [20.11.2022]; cf. <https://www.lifo.gr/now/tech-science/synantontas-pali-toys-agapimenoy-s-mas-nekroy-s-meso-teh-nitis-noimosynis> [20.11.202] and Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, op.cit., p. 11).

A two-year-old boy who was murdered in 1993 in the USA is shown recounting his abduction, torture and murder. An unknown person created and released the relevant video on TikTok, using AI. Despite the reactions of the child’s parents, the video is still circulating; <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/james-bulgers-mums-fury-sick-30580334> [10.8.2023]; cf. <https://www.lifo.gr/now/world/binteo-sto-tiktok-deihnei-2hrono-na-perigrafei-meso-ai-ton-fono-toy-orgismeni-i-mitera> [10.8.2023]. Of course, apart from the ethical issues, legal issues are also arising regarding the insult to the memory of the dead, since their personal data are often used without permission; thus, it can be used by anyone at will (Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead”, op.cit., p. 11).

54. Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortem Society...”, op.cit., p. 96.

55. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?” op.cit., p. 1135; “Ctrl+Alt+Delete: The Changing Landscape of the Uncanny Valley and the Fear of Second Loss”, op.cit., pp. 813-821, here pp. 813-814.

56. Debra Basset, “Digital Afterlives”, op.cit., pp. 2-4. Of course, the interaction is *postmortem*, not the available data. See C. Maciel – V. Pereira, “Social Network Users’ Religiosity and the Design of Post Mortem Aspects”, op.cit., p. 645.

57. Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortem Society...”, op.cit., pp. 96-97.

58. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., p. 1128; Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, op.cit., p. 9.

59. Basset is dealing with this subject in her article: “Digital Afterlives”, op. cit.

are often answered by relatives⁶⁰. Thus, these digital environments are turned into spaces for expressing grief⁶¹. Pages with content of support for the bereaved⁶² and new websites are being created as places of remembrance, *digital memorials*⁶³, where digital funeral rituals are taking place⁶⁴.

C. Death in the Context of a New Worldview

As it becomes obvious, the Internet is changing the way mourning is expressed⁶⁵ in the digital as well as the real world. In the digital cemeteries one can lay a bouquet of flowers or light a candle at a digital memorial⁶⁶. However, in the traditional cemeteries it can also be placed “*interactive tombstones*”⁶⁷ with digital material from the lives of the deceased. Here one can watch some of the latter’s video recorded speeches and get information about their lives⁶⁸.

All the above are expressing a new worldview, an ontology, and a vision of life and death that could be linked to applications such as the “*Internet of Things*”⁶⁹. According to the historian Yuval Harari, all

60. See Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., p. 1127.

61. Op.cit., pp. 1128, 1130.

62. Sofka, “Adolescent use of technology”, op.cit., pp. 206-207.

63. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., pp. 1130-1132.

64. Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, op.cit., p. 8.

65. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., p. 1131.

66. Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, op.cit., p. 8. See also <https://virtualgrave.eu/>, <https://cemetery.org/create-a-memorial/> [10.8.2023]. Cf. Sofka, “Social support ‘internetworks’ caskets for sale, and more: thanatology and the information superhighway”, op.cit., p. 559, and: https://digitaltombstonesolutions.com/#4dd339ef-d5ec-4fcc-b264-e40166_94c5d0 [12.8.2023].

67. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., p. 1135. See also <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-4537552/DIGITAL-tombstone-unveiled-Slovenia-world-first.htm> [10.7.2023].

68. Op.cit., p. 1135.

69. Özdemir *et al.*, “Thanatechnology...”, op.cit., pp. 402, 404. As far as the *Internet of Things* is concerned, see Y. N. Harari, *Homo Deus. Μιά σύντομη ιστορία του μέλλοντος*, transl. M. Laliotis, Alexandria Publications, Athens 32022, pp. 336-337; see also <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/el/policies/internet-things-policy> [10.9.2023], among other things, we can read there the following: “The *Internet of Things (IoT)* allows us to merge the physical and virtual worlds. It offers innovative solutions, permitting us to create

algorithms, i.e. all things including man⁷⁰ should be linked to this “*secular data processing system*”, with the ultimate aim of merging them with it⁷¹, in the context of *Dataism*^{72 / 73}, as he calls the “religion of data”, the “techno-religion”⁷⁴, directly linked to the “faith of techno-humanism”⁷⁵. He writes: “As the global communication system becomes omniscient and omnipotent, the connection with the system becomes the source of all meaning. They want to merge with the data stream because, when you are part of the data stream, you belong to something much bigger than yourself”⁷⁶. It is obvious that Harari attributes metaphysical, divine features⁷⁷ to the *Internet of Things*, emphasizing the vital importance of connecting and merging “true believers” (or *witnesses/martyrs*⁷⁸) with it, in order for them to be fully manipulated⁷⁹. Therefore, the connection is equivalent to participation in this new transcendent in a “data-centered

smart environments. *Internet of Things* technologies are at the forefront of the global economy’s digital transformation, alongside with the application of distributed and artificial intelligence (AI). Data collected by IoT sensors can be monitored and fed back to a central system to trigger an action, gain knowledge or respond to another connected object hundreds of kilometers away”.

70. Harari refers to scientific evidence about the non-existence of soul (Y. N. Harari, *Sapiens. Μία σύντομη ιστορία του ανθρώπου*, transl. M. Laliotis, Alexandria Publications, Athens ³2022, p. 233; *Homo Deus, op.cit.*, pp. 101-102). For some relevant views, see also Archim. Aristarchos Grekas, *Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη, op.cit.*, pp. 87-92.

71. Harari, *Homo Deus, op.cit.*, pp. 352, 366, 371-372, 374-375. Humans are “an assembly of many different algorithms, and they don’t have an inner voice or a single self” (Harari, *Homo Deus, op.cit.*, p. 216).

72. *Dataism* is based on Biology and Computing (Harari, *Homo Deus, op.cit.*, pp. 337, 353-534). The same writer speaks of the “dataist revolution” (*op.cit.*, p. 375).

73. Archim. Aristarchos Grekas, *Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη, op.cit.*, p. 91.

74. Harari, *Homo Deus, op.cit.*, pp. 353-354. “Techno-religious emotion” is another equally acceptable term (Archim. Aristarchos Grekas, *Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη, op.cit.*, p. 89).

75. Harari, *Homo Deus, op.cit.*, pp. 337-338. For the history of the “ideology or religion of communication”, aiming to “bring people closer together”, see Robins – Webster, *Η έποχή του τεχνοπολιτισμού, op.cit.*, pp. 331-332 ff.

76. Harari, *Homo Deus, op.cit.*, p. 371.

77. *Op.cit.*, p. 375; Archim. Aristarchos Grekas, *Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη, op.cit.*, pp. 98-99.

78. Harari, *Homo Deus, op.cit.*, p. 368.

79. *Op.cit.*, pp. 350, 371-372.

worldview”, which is going to overcome the anthropocentric and the more ancient theocentric one⁸⁰, recognizing in man an evolution⁸¹.

In relation to the absolutization of the internet and its religious significance, we should note at this point the particularly interesting observation of the researcher Joshua Hurtado, concerning the recognition of the ritual dimension in the construction and operation of *digital selves for the dead*⁸², as it is exactly the case with *the rites of passage*⁸³. It refers to the passage of a human being from the state of life to that of death and its gradual reactivation as a “digital persona” within a new environment in the cyberspace dimension⁸⁴. In the evolution and creation of *Thanabot*, he identifies the following phases: a. collection, b. encoding, c. activation, and d. data integration⁸⁵. It is considered that the user’s “*digital legacy*”⁸⁶ is part of his “*digital soul*”⁸⁷, which after death appears as his “*digital personality*”⁸⁸, (*digital persona*)⁸⁹. It is the “*virtual interactive you*”⁹⁰, a “partial, performative, speaking self”, “without body and mind”, that has been programmed to interact with the living⁹¹. It is installed as an application on the computer or mobile phone⁹². However, regarding its integration, the possibility of creating a hologram, avatar or robot is foreseen⁹³. At a later stage, the companies operating in this field, in addition to the digital fingerprint, which they present as the human

80. *Op.cit.*, p. 375.

81. In his book entitled *Sapiens*, Yuval Harari refers to the “evolutionary humanism” and the creation of the *Übermensch*, presenting the evolution of this idea by the Nazis (Harari, *Homo Deus*, *op.cit.*, pp. 228-233).

82. Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortal Society...”, *op.cit.*, pp. 97-99.

83. *Op.cit.*, p. 100.

84. *Op.cit.*, p. 100; Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead”, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

85. Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortal Society...”, *op.cit.*, pp. 99-100.

86. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, *op.cit.*, p. 1129.

87. *Op.cit.*, p. 1129.

88. Özdemir *et al.*, “Thanatechnology...”, *op.cit.*, p. 402.

89. Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortal Society...”, *op.cit.*, p. 94.

90. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, *op.cit.*, p. 1128.

91. Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortal Society...”, *op.cit.*, pp. 93-94.

92. Regarding the cases mentioned by Debra Bassett, see her article: “Digital Afterlives Social Media Platforms to Thanabot and Beyond”, *op.cit.*

93. Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortal Society...”, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

being's personality (creation by algorithm)⁹⁴, encourage their customers to save their genetic material (DNA) so that after death and when their birth by ectogenesis (development of the embryo in an artificial womb) will be possible, their memories and consciousness can be installed in their new body⁹⁵.

Of course, an upgraded form of existence will concern only a few people who will have the financial means to secure it, an elite, which will constitute *the superhuman biological caste*⁹⁶. Clearly, the above practices are part of the attempt to achieving digital immortality or resurrection of the dead⁹⁷. But the resurgence of the deceased into digital life, as will be shown below, seems to create the illusion of a psychosomatic resurrection.

Indeed, the *Thanabot's* function as a medium⁹⁸ between the living and the dead resembles rites of passage and places the phenomenon in the religious sphere, while for some it fits in with the AI's religious character⁹⁹ as "super-intelligence"¹⁰⁰ and the Internet as a metaphysical "super-genius"¹⁰¹ since there is talk of *AI churches*¹⁰² and eternal life in the *Virtual Kingdom*¹⁰³. It also matches with online mourning as manifested in funeral rituals.

94. Bassett, "Who Wants to Live Forever?", *op.cit.*, p. 1128. Personality is approached on a relational-intersubjective basis (Hurtado, "Towards a Postmortal Society...", *op.cit.*, pp. 92-93).

95. <https://www.lifenaut.com/biofile/>, Create a Biofile, Create a Mindfile [10.8.2023].

96. Harari, *Homo Deus*, *op.cit.*, p. 332 and *Sapiens*, *op.cit.*, p. 233; see also Hurtado, "Towards a Postmortal Society...", *op.cit.*, p. 100.

97. *Op.cit.*, pp. 97-98, where the writer speaks of ("revivalism and resurrective practices"). *Basset refers to the resurrection of the dead in relation with the digital zombies* (Bassett, "Who Wants to Live Forever?", *op.cit.*, pp. 1134-1135).

98. Henrickson, "Chatting with the Dead", *op.cit.*, p. 4.

99. Archim. Aristarchos Grekas, *Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη*, *op.cit.*, pp. 85-92.

100. According to a view, AI as superintelligence will replace traditional religions (*op.cit.*, p. 87).

101. Harari, *Homo Deus*, *op.cit.*, p. 298.

102. The Church of AI seems to be as an alternative to faith-based religions. Regarding the Churches of AI, see Archim. Aristarchos Grekas, *Τεχνητή νοημοσύνη*, *op.cit.*, pp. 112-114.

103. *Op.cit.*, pp. 103-105.

It follows, therefore, that when life reaches its natural end, man still exists as a digital self, personality, or soul, retaining elements of the departed; thus, it is considered to be a real part of him¹⁰⁴. That is why there is talk of immortality or –in the case that the digital existence is created after death– of resurrection. Besides, it is called “digital resurrection” or “life after death”¹⁰⁵. It initially seems to be a resurrection of the soul; the creation of a digital soul is evidence of a belief in the materiality and therefore in its mortality, whereas, if there has been a belief in the soul’s spiritual existence, communication with the deceased would be spiritual. Secondly, as the corporations are “evangelized”, the physical resurrection will also be carried out in various ways¹⁰⁶.

D. Reflections on the Thanabot’s Uses

It follows, therefore, that man moves consciously and unconsciously between two realities, that of the real world created by God, and that of a world which he himself as a god has constructed¹⁰⁷ in order to fulfil his desires – from the simplest to his most fervent one¹⁰⁸. However, despite

104. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, *op.cit.*, p. 1129.

105. It is also called “alternative, digital format” (Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead”, *op.cit.*, p. 4).

106. Many strongly believe that technology will achieve the resurrection of the dead (Archim. Aristarchos Grekas, *Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη*, *op.cit.*, pp. 98-99).

107. See f. Nikolaos Loudovikos, *Ἡ ἀνοικτὴ Ἱστορία καὶ οἱ ἐχθροὶ τῆς. Ἡ ἄνοδος τοῦ Βελούδινου Ὀλοκληρωτισμοῦ*, Harmos Publications, Athens 2020, p. 228. This second world is within the boundaries God’s creation and represents a post-Fall part of it, but unbelief and arrogance create the impression of its autonomy and self-truth. Indeed, there is the possibility of creating infinite networked worlds, with particular spatiotemporal dimensions and characteristics – expressions of human subjectivity. This world is placed in the “isolated” and “geographically liberated” cyberspace far from the unpleasant real world (Robins – Webster, *Ἡ ἐποχὴ τοῦ τεχνοπολιτισμοῦ*, *op.cit.*, pp. 328-352). According to Cevin Robins and Frank Webster, in cyberspace man participates in a quasi-ecumenical, “post-national” and self-referential “cyberculture” –space-time and cognition-wise– in a “new universe” (*op.cit.*, pp. 328-329).

108. The subject is capable of digitally constructing a world of his choice, where he will be able to satisfy all his fantasies (f. Nikolaos Loudovikos, *Ἡ ἀνοικτὴ Ἱστορία*, *op.cit.*, p. 227).

the hopes raised for some by the above developments and the positive results from the use of the *Thanabot*, there are many concerns about this issue, as has been shown by research into many aspects of life and death. Some of which are the following ones:

a. Elderly and seriously ill people concentrate on collecting¹⁰⁹ their personal data in collaboration with specialized technicians, losing contact with their loved ones in order to leave their digital traces after death, their digital self for their descendants¹¹⁰. These data are recalling their memory only in a fragmentary fashion, and they are likely to be used in ways that distort the truth about them¹¹¹.

b. While the use of *Thanabot* seems to contribute to the psychological support of the bereaved, in many cases these practices prolong the duration of mourning¹¹²; by strengthening the relationship that existed in life, they inhibit the reconstruction of the relationship between the living and the dead and the acceptance of death¹¹³. In fact, Nora Lindemann refers to the “*Prolonged Grief Disorder*” (PGD), which negatively affects the lives of those who intensely experience grief, and for long periods of time, and considers that this condition is very likely to be aggravated by the use of *Thanabot* (*Deathbot*), while she does not exclude possible beneficial effects if they are going to be used in a controlled manner as medical devices¹¹⁴.

109. As far the creation process of the digital self, see Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortal Society...”, op.cit., pp. 97-98; Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., p. 1134.

110. Research has shown that people who believe in God and the afterlife are in a small percentage in favor of the post mortem dissemination of their digital data, since there exists the taboo of death (Maciel – Pereira, “Social Network Users’ Religiosity...”, op.cit., pp. 648, 653).

111. Özdemir *et al.*, “Thanatechnology...”, op.cit., pp. 403, 405; Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, op.cit., p. 8.

112. Maciel – Pereira, “Social Network Users’ Religiosity...”, op.cit., p. 645; Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, op.cit., p. 6; Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., p. 1133.

113. Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, op.cit., p. 4. Related studies indicate that, for many users, communication with the dead has a negative, unpleasant character and is seen as an expression of disrespect to them (Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, op.cit., pp. 19-20, 24-25).

114. Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, op.cit., pp. 7, 11.

c. Relationships through Thanabots (Deathbots) are considered to be “pseudo-bonds”; apart from the external digital bond there is also the internal, psychic, emotional one, which exists without it¹¹⁵. Moreover, despite the “one-sidedness” that characterizes them¹¹⁶, these relationships are so real and strong that the mourners risk experiencing a second¹¹⁷, digital death (second loss) if the data would be disconnected, lost, or deleted¹¹⁸. Besides, the digital self cannot last more than the specific program or platform¹¹⁹.

d. Although users are fully aware that they are dealing with a program and not a person¹²⁰, in certain cases there is talk about a *séance*¹²¹ and to the Chatbot’s “*anthropomorphism*”¹²² or “*humanization*”¹²³. In this case, the ontological boundaries become blurred, leading even to “delusional thinking”¹²⁴, since the impression is given that “the dead are listening”¹²⁵. Other users are socially isolated, since they expect the machine to behave humanly¹²⁶. The above relationships give the impression that they are not subject to physical, spatiotemporal constraints and are described

115. Op.cit., pp. 4-5.

116. Op.cit., p. 7; Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, op.cit., p. 7.

117. Bassett, “Ctrl+Alt+Delete...”, op.cit., p. 819.

118. Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, op.cit., p. 10; Bassett, “Ctrl+Alt+Delete...”, op.cit., p. 814.

119. Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead”, op.cit., p. 9.

120. It is a “conversation” with a program and not with the person as if it were still alive (Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead”, op.cit., p. 14).

121. Op.cit., p. 8. See also T. Morse’s relevant survey, which also shows that three out of four respondents do not believe that it is a communication with the dead. However, a small percentage gave a positive response (Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, op.cit., pp. 19-20).

122. Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, op.cit., p. 7. Regarding the AI’s anthropomorphism, see E. Herman, “Anthropomorphized artificial intelligence, attachment, and consumer behavior”, *Marketing Letters* 33 (2022), pp. 157-162, here pp. 157-158, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11002-021-09587-3> [25.9.2023].

123. Herman, “Anthropomorphized Artificial Intelligence”, op.cit., p. 157. Because of the consistency, in terms of the frequency of responses from the AI, it is often considered by users as an entity (Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead”, op.cit., p. 9).

124. Op.cit., p. 10.

125. Bassett, “Who Wants to Live Forever?”, op.cit., p. 1132.

126. Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, op.cit., pp. 7-8.

as “para-social”¹²⁷. In some cases, we could speak about the user’s “dehumanization”¹²⁸.

e. One of the most serious problems that has already been underlined¹²⁹ is the “misalignment” of time from birth to death¹³⁰. The boundaries between life and death become blurred;¹³¹ the loss of loved brings confusion and more pain¹³². Death in cyberspace seems to cease to exist as we know it; time takes on a different meaning¹³³. There is a loss of consciousness of the eschatological dimension in human life, since everything is experienced as a continuous present¹³⁴, but not as a liturgical, sacred time with the existential¹³⁵ meaning of “today” and “now”. Time is altered; the impression of the abolition of the temporal dimensions of past and future¹³⁶, is created, resulting in a sense of a peculiar immortality¹³⁷.

f. The living are familiarized with death and have the illusion of controlling it¹³⁸, considering the fact that many young people are coming into contact with death and mourning for the first time on the internet, this is extremely worrying¹³⁹.

127. Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead”, op.cit., p. 12; Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, op.cit., p. 7.

128. Herman, “Anthropomorphized artificial intelligence”, op.cit., p. 160.

129. Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead”, op.cit., pp. 3-4.

130. Maciel – Pereira, “Social Network Users’ Religiosity...”, op.cit., p. 640.

131. Hurtado, “Towards a Postmortal Society...”, op.cit., p. 100.

132. Lindemann, “The Ethics of ‘Deathbots’”, op.cit., p. 6.

133. Archim. Aristarchos Grekas, *Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη*, op.cit., pp. 110-111.

134. Robins – Webster, *Η εποχή του τεχνοπολιτισμού*, op.cit., p. 340.

135. P. Evdokimov, *Η προσευχή της Ανατολικής Εκκλησίας, Η βυζαντινή λειτουργία του Αγίου Ιωάννου του Χρυσοστόμου*, transl. Maria Papazachou – f. D. Tzerpos, Apostoliki Diakonia tis Ekklesias tis Hellados Publications, Athens ³1997 («Η προσευχή της Ανατολικής Εκκλησίας», pp. 50-51).

136. The future is understood as “the perpetual continuity of the present” (Robins – Webster, *Η εποχή του τεχνοπολιτισμού*, op.cit., pp. 341-342).

137. Chr. Stamoulis, referring to the denial of death and the eschatological dimension, writes: “Morbid, earthly immortality... the present absolutizes the moment and ignores eschatology” (Stamoulis, *Έρωσ και θάνατος*, op.cit., p. 210).

138. Robins – Webster, *Η εποχή του τεχνοπολιτισμού*, op.cit., p. 342.

139. Maciel – Pereira, “Social Network Users’ Religiosity...”, op.cit., p. 641.

g. A tragic consequence of the AI's use in death technologies is that the humans are completely disconnected from reality, the experience of the world, and the problems of life and death¹⁴⁰. Because of the pleasure they feel and the habit of acting in the digital world, humans prefer the latter to the real one¹⁴¹. They feel detached from physical space-time, having the illusion of an absolute freedom. In the case of the *Thanabots*, the AI interacts with the humans in an *anthropomorphic* way, often creating positive emotions, mainly meeting their psychological needs¹⁴².

h. At this point, we should briefly refer to the imagination, since people have always felt that they could communicate with the dead through imagination, while symbols and rituals marked and signified their relationship¹⁴³, as they were defined by religion¹⁴⁴. In fact, the “digital self” has also been described by Leah Henrickson as the “ghost / mental image of the living” in reference to the “symbiotic relationship” of the Thanabot with the users¹⁴⁵, thus, in this case, the imagination plays crucial role¹⁴⁶. According to Aristotle, “... *The soul never thinks without a mental image*”¹⁴⁷. The imagination is the soul's descriptive energy, which transforms sensory experience into new forms¹⁴⁸ by making the sensible,

140. Robins – Webster, *Η εποχή του τεχνοπολιτισμοῦ*, *op.cit.*, p. 345.

141. f. Nikolaos Loudovikos, *Η άνοικτή ιστορία...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 227-228. The writer asserts that man enters “voluntarily into an uncharted world of imaginary power and unreal completeness”, which offers stimuli that “open even further the field of fantasy” (*op.cit.*, pp. 227-228).

142. Herman, “Anthropomorphized Artificial Intelligence”, *op.cit.*, p. 158. He speaks about the relationships between people with physical and other disabilities and their “personal assistants”, their positive and negative aspects. (*op.cit.*, pp. 158-160). See also Harari, *Homo Deus*, *op.cit.*, pp. 327-332.

143. Maciel – Pereira, “Social Network Users' Religiosity...”, *op.cit.*, p. 642.

144. *Op.cit.*, pp. 642-643; F. Morse, “Digital Necromancy”, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

145. “*Phantasm of the living*”, – a reference to an earlier study: “*Phantasms of the living*” τῶν Edmund Gurney, Frederic William Henry Myers, Frank Podmore, vol. I, vol. II, Rooms of the Society of Physical Research, London 1886; βλ. Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead”, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

146. Henrickson, “Chatting with the Dead”, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

147. Aristotle, *Περί ψυχῆς*, Βιβλίο Γ', 431a 15.

148. Androutsos, *Λεξικόν Φιλοσοφίας*, entry: «φαντασία», *op.cit.*, pp. 352-353; Doikos, *Principia Formarum*, *op.cit.*, pp. 59-60.

external reality subjective¹⁴⁹. There are several interesting philosophical considerations about imagination, from which it follows that it can be disruptive¹⁵⁰, contemplative¹⁵¹ and visionary¹⁵². When imagination functions as the intermediate world, the locus where the union of the external, material and the internal, spiritual world is realized¹⁵³, then it offers man the possibility of participating in truth (creative or contemplative imagination, reaching its visionary dimension¹⁵⁴. On the other hand, when it prevents this participation (disruptive imagination), it leads man away from truth, it is identified with illusion, and leads to nothingness¹⁵⁵, as it happens in the case of the confusion between the virtual and the real¹⁵⁶. Accepting the sensible world as being the only real one and fixating on it leads to the rejection of the metaphysical dimension and man's readiness to penetrate it¹⁵⁷. The consequence of man's confinement to the measures and limits of his reason is the experience of nothingness, the most tragic "manifestation" of which is death¹⁵⁸. The subject is subjected to a pernicious illusion, that of the dead end leading to fear and despair,

149. *Op.cit.*, pp. 59-61, 63-64.

150. Doikos, *Principia Formarum*, *op.cit.*, p. 298, note 459, p. 345.

151. *Op.cit.*, pp. 145-146, 272-273, note 400.

152. H. Corbin, *The Theory of Visionary Knowledge in Islamic Philosophy*, translated into English from French: Liadain Sherrard, *Temenos* 8 (1987), p. 229, https://www.amiscorbin.com/wpcontent/uploads/2012/05/Corbin_en_1987_Theory_of_Visionary_Knowledge.pdf [15.1.2023].

153. Corbin, *The Theory of Visionary Knowledge in Islamic Philosophy*, "Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal", Colloquium on Symbolism in Paris in June 1964, appeared in the *Cahiers internationaux de symbolisme* 6 (Brussels 1964), pp. 3-26, here p. 5, http://www.bahaistudies.net/asma/mundus_imaginalis.pdf [15.1.2023].

154. Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth. From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*, transl. from the French by Nancy Pearson, [Bollingen Series XCI: 2], Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1977, pp. 11-12, 196-197.

155. Doikos, 'Ο «θάνατος τοῦ Θεοῦ», *op.cit.*, pp. 18, 70-71.

156. Henrikson, "Chatting with the Dead", *op.cit.*, p. 8.

157. Doikos, 'Ο «θάνατος τοῦ Θεοῦ», *op.cit.*, pp. 17-22.

158. Nikolaos Metrop. of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki, Ἄνθρωπος Μεθόριος, *op.cit.*, pp. 83-85. J. Simon, „Friedrich Nietzsche“, *Klassiker der Philosophie II, Von Immanuel Kant bis Jean-Paul Sartre*, Hrg. Ot. Höffe, Verlag C.H. Beck, München ³1981, pp. 203-224, here p. 220; Doikos, *Principia Formarum*, *op.cit.*, p. 168; Papapetrou, 'Ο Μηδενισμός, *op.cit.*, pp. 6, 23.

by disruptively using the imagination¹⁵⁹. Thus, it deprives him of the imagination's liberating power and the possibility of an encounter with the transcendental¹⁶⁰.

Thus, while in the 20th century the “surrealistic” of the imagination was the great weapon of the surrealists against the onslaught of “rationality” and “technocracy”¹⁶¹, in the 21st century the imagination is used by the forces it was called upon to fight for the creation of virtual reality, depriving man of any hope of being awakened. A world devoid of imagination and creative change is stacked in a perpetual present. The control of imagination leads to the loss of contact with truth and the ontological degradation of man. Thus, in the future, the “useless class”, as Harari describes the class that does not contribute to the society's economic development, glory and prestige –the masses that nobody cares about– will be able to live contentedly and subordinated to the cyberspace's “fairyland”¹⁶².

E. Death and Mourning in the Life of Church

According to the above, the use of AI in the technologies of death can lead humans to spiritual confusion and their inability to distinguish life from

159. Doikos, *Principia Formarum*, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

160. *Op.cit.*, p. 298.

161. Andreas Empeirikos, *Περὶ Σουρρεαλισμοῦ. Ἡ διάλεξι τοῦ 1935*, ed. Y. Yatromanolakis, Agra Publications, Athens 2009, p. 69 and «Συζήτηση στὴ Θεσσαλονίκη, Προσκεκλημένος στὸ Πανεπιστήμιο τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης (στὴ σειρὰ ἐκδηλώσεων “Ποιητικὸ Ἐργαστήρι”) στὸ Σπουδαστήριο τῆς Νεώτερης Ἑλληνικῆς Φιλολογίας», 22.5.1973, ἠχογράφηση Ξ. Κοκόλης, ἐπιμ. ἀπομαγνητοφώνησης Ἑλένη Καλοκούρη, *Χάρτης/Chartis, Ἀφιέρωμα στὸν Ἄνδρᾶ Ἐμπεϊρικό/Afieroima ston Andrea Empeiriko* 17/18 (Athens, November 1985), pp. 629-640, here pp. 632, 634.

162. Robins – Webster, *Ἡ ἐποχὴ τοῦ τεχνολοτισμοῦ*, *op.cit.*, pp. 339, 342. The writers claim that, despite the sense of absolute freedom that cyberspace gives, these worlds are controlled and designed to suppress any differences; they are “peaceful” and “neutral” but “false” worlds, functioning as a “refuge from the world” (*op.cit.*, pp. 343-345, 372, 355). Furthermore, because of the fact that knowledge as information and digital data is collected and stored in digital form (Craib, *Σύγχρονη κοινωνικὴ θεωρία*, *op.cit.*, p. 382), it is easily accessed through the internet –functioning as “Panopticon” – securing the absolute control and the social suppression of those participating in it (Robins – Webster, *Ἡ ἐποχὴ τοῦ τεχνολοτισμοῦ*, *op.cit.*, p. 347). Harari, *Homo Deus*, *op.cit.*, pp. 313-314.

death, to the suppression of their creative imagination and entrapment in the material world, and to their alienation from God, Truth and Life. Man's memory is not his digital imprint, his Data stored and merged in the super-intelligence of the Internet¹⁶³, but "his preservation in the memory of God"¹⁶⁴. In the context of liturgical space-time, the Militant Church is united in the Holy Spirit with the Triumphant Church as the Body of Christ¹⁶⁵. The deceased are benefited¹⁶⁶ by their commemoration

163. *Op.cit.*, p. 298.

164. P. Evdokimov, *Ἡ προσευχή τῆς Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

165. Chr. Androutsos, *Δογματική τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Astir Publications, Athens 1992, pp. 421-422. What is taking place during the Divine Liturgy, is the asperges of the whole Church, of both the living and the dead (Hieromonk Gregorios, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμος ἀκολουθία*, *op.cit.*, p. 124). «Διὰ τῆς συμμετοχῆς του (πιστοῦ) εἰς τὸ ἀναίμακτον Δεῖπνον ἐνοῦται οὗτος μυστικῶς μετὰ τοῦ Σώματος καὶ τοῦ Αἵματος τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ ἐξαγιάζεται» [Ath. Vourlis, *Ἡ βίωσις τοῦ Πάθους καὶ τῆς Ἀναστάσεως κατὰ τοὺς ὕμνους τῆς Μ. Ἑβδομάδος*, Ἀνάτοπον ἐκ τῆς Ε.Ε.Θ.Σ.Π.Α./*Epistimoniki Eperitis Theologikis Scholis Panepistimiou Athinon KH* (Athens 1989), p. 35]. According to f. Demetrios Tzerpos, this unity is also revealed by the placing of the cemeteries, which are traditionally located in the courtyard of the churches (f. Dimitrios Tzerpos, *Τὸ τελευταῖο μυστήριον*, *op.cit.*, p. 87).

166. P. Trempelas, *Δογματική*, Γ', The Brotherhood of Theologians "O Sotir" Publications, pp. 411-415, Androutsos, *Δογματική*, *op.cit.*, pp. 426-428. Regarding the position of the dead within the "Church's Liturgical memory", see f. Dimitrios Tzerpos, *Τὸ τελευταῖο μυστήριον*, *op.cit.*, p. 85. See also St. Nektarios, *Μελέται περὶ τῶν Θεῶν Μυστηρίων*, Nektarios Panagopoulos Publications, Athens 1990, p. 55; Io. Kogoulis, Chr. Oikonomou, P. Skaltsis, *Ἡ Θεία Λειτουργία τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου*, O.X.A. «ΛΥΔΙΑ», Thessaloniki 1995, pp. 176-179; Hieromonk Gregorios, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμος ἀκολουθία καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ μυστήρια*, *op.cit.*, pp. 124-125, Hieromonk Benedict Hagioreites, *Τὰ μνημόσυνα καὶ ἡ ὠφέλειά τους*, *Συνοδεία Σπυρίδωνος Ἱερομονάχου*, Nea Skiti Hagiou Orous 2021, pp. 19-21. The commemoration of the dead by the living for their benefit is attested in the Old Testament in 2 *Mac.* 12, 40-45 (Androutsos, *Δογματική*, *op.cit.*, p. 427; Nektarios, Metropolitan of Argolida, *Τὸ χρέος μας ἀπέναντι στοὺς κεκοιμημένους*, Epistroti Publications, Nafplio 2020, p. 37), where Judas Maccabeus and his troops are offering supplications to God and donations to the Temple of Jerusalem in order for the dead soldiers to be forgiven for their faith in the idols of Iamnia, which they were wearing as amulets. They are praying in anticipation of their resurrection. It is also mentioned in *Nehemiah* 9, 1-5, where the Jews are asking God for the remission of sins, not only for the living but also for the dead (cf. Hieromonk Benedict Hagioreites, *Τὰ μνημόσυνα*, *op.cit.*, pp. 12-14). In the New Testament, a relevant passage is the 2 *Tim.* 1, 16-18 (Nektarios, Metropolitan of Argolida, *Τὸ χρέος μας ἀπέναντι στοὺς κεκοιμημένους*, *op.cit.*, p. 37; Hieromonk Benedict Hagioreites, *Τὰ μνημόσυνα καὶ ἡ*

during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, by performing memorial services, by the prayers and alms¹⁶⁷ that are being offered in their name for the repose of their souls by their living brethren¹⁶⁸, who, by participating in the life of the Church, are consoled and overcome their grief and mourning¹⁶⁹.

As we've already mentioned above, during the postmodern times death is concealed as a human condition¹⁷⁰, a post-Fall consequence¹⁷¹,

ὠφέλειά τους, *op.cit.*, p. 14), where the Apostle Paul refers to the care that Onesiphorus and his family showed in difficult times for him, as well as for the latter's work in Ephesus, and wishes the Lord to show mercy to them on the Judgement Day. The *Apostolic Ordinances* indicate the exact time of the commemorations, namely, on the third, ninth, fortieth day and one year after the death. [*Αποστολικαὶ Διαταγαί*, Η', Β.Ε.Π., vol. 2, Apostoliki Diakonia tis Ekklesias tis Hellados Publications, Athens 1955, XLII, 8-12 (1-4), p. 169]. For the prayers, see f. Konstantinos Kallinikos, *Ὁ χριστιανικὸς ναὸς καὶ τὰ τελούμενα ἐν αὐτῷ*, Grigoris Publications, Athens 1969, pp. 567-568; Hieromonk Gregorios, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμος ἀκολουθία*, *op.cit.*, pp. 124-125.

167. *Αποστολικαὶ Διαταγαί* Η', XLII, 12-13, (5), p. 169.

168. f. Konstantinos Kallinikos, *Ὁ χριστιανικὸς ναὸς*, *op.cit.*, pp. 564-565; in p. 567, he refers to *Tobias* 4, 17: : «ἔκχεον τοὺς ἄρτους σου ἐπὶ τὸν τάφον τῶν δικαίων καὶ μὴ δῶς τοῖς ἀμαρτωλοῖς». See also Hier. Gregorios, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμος ἀκολουθία*, *op.cit.*, pp. 124-126.

169. Ascribing meaning to death most certainly presupposes ascribing meaning to life (Guroian, *Μπροστὰ στὸ τέλος*, *op.cit.*, from f. Vasileios Kalliakmanis's Prologue, p. 14).

170. While death and mourning were traditionally experienced and become meaningful within the family and the community through religiosity –the participation in spiritual and liturgical life–, today they are treated with horror and concealed (Guroian, *Μπροστὰ στὸ τέλος*, *op.cit.*, pp. 61-62, 67-68). They are turning their backs to the living for the sake of maintaining a contrived lasting happiness, a smooth and pleasant daily routine (Bassett, "Who Wants to Live Forever?", *op.cit.*, p. 1130).

171. With the disobedience (*Gen.* 3, 6), the forefathers' turning away from God the Creator, the loss of "communion" with Him (Chrys. Stamoulis, *Κάλλος τὸ Ἅγιον. Προλεγόμενα στὴ φιλόκαλη αἰσθητικὴ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας*, Akritas Publications, ³2008, pp. 160-163; K. Papapetrou, *Προσβάσεις, Ζητήματα ἀπολογητικῆς Θεολογίας καὶ φιλοσοφικῆς κριτικῆς τοῦ καιροῦ μας*, private edition, Athens 1979, p. 86), death and the tarnish of "in the image", "the beauty of the image" of God, man is unable to attain to his likeness to Him, to reach theosis (Stamoulis, *Κάλλος τὸ Ἅγιον*, *op.cit.*, p. 163). Adam and Eve's Fall is "man's first meeting with nothingness" (Papapetrou, *Προσβάσεις*, *op.cit.*, p. 84). Man's rehabilitation to his pre-Fall beauty is achieved with Jesus Christ, the Incarnation of God's Word (Stamoulis, *Κάλλος τὸ Ἅγιον*, *op.cit.*, pp. 160-163) His world-saving work, His Entombment, and His Resurrection.

but also as God's wisdom and providence¹⁷², directly related to the victory of life¹⁷³, the triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ over death, who by His resurrection from the dead made the resurrection of all men certain¹⁷⁴. Of course, death as a consequence of man's fall during his ascent to theosis is not considered a "normal" condition and there is no question of reconciling it with the denial of life, since man, as God's creation, belongs to Life¹⁷⁵, while the acceptance of death is tantamount to God's denial¹⁷⁶.

According to the Christian tradition, there are three types of death: physical, spiritual and eternal¹⁷⁷. Physical death is related to the end of life in this world, while spiritual death is the break of man's relationship with God, the source of life¹⁷⁸. When the spiritually dead man, cut off from the Life-Giver, reaches his biological end, then we could talk of his eternal death, i.e. the irretrievable separation from the truth and eternal life¹⁷⁹. After the biological death, the deceased are in a state of "dormition", anticipating the Last Days¹⁸⁰, while they are pre-tasting beatitude or hell¹⁸¹. The righteous are close to God¹⁸². After the Resurrection of Christ in the Church's journey towards the Last Days, death is a finite condition. The Church in the Divine Liturgy is already "recalling" the Second Coming of Christ. After the Resurrection

172. *Gen.* 3, 22. See also f. Dimitrios Tzerpos, *Τὸ τελευταῖο μυστήριο*, *op.cit.*, p. 23 and Hieromonk Gregorios, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμος ἀκολουθία*, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

173. *John* 11, 25-26; 14, 6.

174. *1 Cor.* 15, 14-17.

175. «...Ὁὐκ ἔστιν σοι τοῖς δούλοις σου θάνατος...» (Io. Fountoulis, *Τελετουργικὰ Θέματα «Εὐσχημόνως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν»*, Apostoliki Diakonia Publications, Athens 2002, p. 164, where the author in his introduction on the "Death Rites" is referring to the specific Blessing of Pentecost «Ὁ Θεὸς ὁ μέγας καὶ αἰώνιος...» and its theological significance).

176. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *Ἐσχατος ἐχθρός*, *op.cit.*, pp. 39-40.

177. Androutsos, *Δογματική*, *op.cit.*, pp. 163-164.

178. *Op.cit.*, pp. 164-165.

179. *Op.cit.*, pp. 163-164.

180. Cullmann, *Ἀθανασία τῆς ψυχῆς*, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-19, 71-72.

181. For the souls' intermediate position, see Theodorou, *Ἄμωμοι ἐν ὁδῶ*, *op.cit.*, pp. 23-24; Androutsos, *Δογματική*, *op.cit.*, pp. 410-411; Cullmann, *Ἀθανασία τῆς ψυχῆς*, *op.cit.*, pp. 64-67.

182. *Op.cit.*, pp. 66-72; Androutsos, *Δογματική*, *op.cit.*, p. 410.

of Christ in the Church's journey towards the Last Days, death is a finite condition. The Church in the Divine Liturgy is already "recalling" the Second Coming of Christ¹⁸³.

In the Church's ecclesiastical tradition, death and mourning are presented in their true dimension¹⁸⁴. As it is stated in the Blessing of the Departed in the *Apostolic Orders*, their souls live close to the Creator. The righteous are in the hands of the God of the living in the bosom of the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles and all those who pleased Him; they are in the hands of the One who kept Enoch and Elijah from death¹⁸⁵. In the "Prayer for the bereaved" of the Codex Barb. gr. 336, the Church asks the merciful Lord to console the faint-hearted and heal the heartache of those who have lost a beloved person, for He is «ἡ παραμυθία τῶν θλιβομένων, ἡ παράκλησις τῶν πενθούντων, ἡ ἀνάπαυσις τῶν ἐπ' ἐλπίδι ἀναστάσεως κεκοιμημένων»¹⁸⁶.

F. Conclusions

Death, a consequence of man's Fall, has always caused fear. This feeling is prevalent in our time, especially because man is being separated from God. However, the use of ever-evolving technology, above all AI, gives the impression that death could be transcend. The use of *Thanabot* (*Chatbot of the dead, Deadbot*) –which belongs to the technologies of death (*Thanatechnologies*)– offers the living the possibility to "chat" with the dead in virtual, digital life, and has been described as a form of *digital* or

183. Evdokimov, *Ἡ προσευχή τῆς Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, *op.cit.*, pp. 51-52.

184. As it happens with all the stages of life, death gets its meaning through the Church's sacraments (f. Dimitrios Tzerpos, *Τὸ τελευταῖο μυστήριον*, *op.cit.*, p. 19).

185. *Ἀποστολικά Διατάγματα* Η', XLI, 4-7 (22-38), 41, pp. 168-169; see also Io. Fountoulis, *Ἀκολουθία τοῦ Μνημοσύνου*, Thessaloniki 1979, pp. 70-71.

186. S. Parenti, E. Velkovska, *L'Euclologio Barberini gr. 336*, CVL, Editioni Liturgiche, Roma, 2000, 265.3, (248v-249r), p. 235; *Νεκρώσιμοι καὶ ἐπιμνημόσυνοι ἀκολουθία*, Apostoliki Diakonia tis Ekklisias tis Hellados Publications, Athens 101999, p. 83; Fountoulis, *Ἀκολουθία τοῦ Μνημοσύνου*, *op.cit.*, pp. 72-73. The "Blessing for the Bereaved" is part of the "Service for the burial of an unbaptized infant of Christian parents" (*Ἐγκύκλιος ὑπ' ἀρ. 2716/2001*). See also https://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/holy-synod/committees/worship/akolouthia_nipio.htm [7.10.23].

modern necromancy. The integration of the deceased's digital data, which is *their digital self*, their *digital soul*, with their hologram, avatar or robot is called *digital immortality* or *resurrection*. It seems that all the above are an integral part of a new worldview, the *data religion*, which, in exchange of their followers' absolute control, offers unlimited possibilities to them.

As far as the consequences of using *Thanabot* are concerned, the researchers have concluded that there are both positive and negative ones. The latter have to do with the users's mental confusion, their inability to distinguish life from death, and the prolongation of the bereavement period. They also raise serious concerns about the suppression of the creative imagination, the entrapment of man in the material world and the embrace of nothingness. However, man's memory is not his digital footprint, his *Data* stored and merged in the Internet's superintelligence, but, as the liturgical life of the Church reveals, his "preservation in the memory of God", in anticipation of the Christ's Second Coming and the resurrection of the dead.