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"a thing which has not been determined by God cannot determine itself to act." In *E*1p26 and *TTP*4, I find likely symmetry between God and Nature insofar as their power is actually determining things. *E*1p28s also shows how only God's determination makes things follow in an absolute or necessary sense. If God and Nature are not equivocal, why would Spinoza attribute the absolute determination of things to Nature in the *TTP* instead of God?

However, as Carlisle concludes, "Spinoza offers us the freedom to name this ontological ground 'God' or 'Nature,' 'YHWH' or 'substance,' or perhaps something else" (186). Nothing of this criticism is conclusive against Carlisle's captivating reading of Spinoza's *Ethics*, a long overdue analysis which puts Spinoza back into intimate conversation with and not against major religious and philosophical themes in medieval Christian philosophy. One can only hope Carlisle's book ignites further work of such high quality on the fecund relationship between Spinoza and religion, panentheism, and Christianity.

Religious Transhumanism and Its Critics, edited by Arvin M. Gouw, Brian Patrick Green, and Ted Peters. Lexington Books, 2022. Pp. xxiv + 464. $135.00 (hardcover); $50 (e-book).

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The prospect of using biotechnology to enhance human capacities has captured the imagination of science-fiction writers, research scientists, and ethicists of both secular philosophical and religious/theological stripes. One of the central questions for those in the latter camp is whether the goals of human enhancement and the means utilized to attain them are compatible with various religious tenets, which include beliefs about creation and its ultimate fulfillment, humanity's relationship with the rest of the natural world, and the anthropology of the human person, just to name a few. The desire to pursue human enhancement through biotechnological means is most ardently captured by the tenets of *transhumanism*, which include "morphological freedom" and "substrate independence," eschewing the limitations of human embodiment either by modifying our bodies (including our brains) extensively or by divesting ourselves of them altogether in the creation of a "posthuman" species.

While some religious scholars have contended that transhumanism cannot be compatible with various theological, particularly Christian,

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understandings of God, creation, nature, and humanity, others have articulated and defended specifically Christian and other religious forms of transhumanism. For example, while a secular transhumanist may argue that biotechnology allows us to take intelligent control over the unguided process of biological evolution and that human embodiment itself has no intrinsic value, a *Christian* transhumanist (such as Micah Redding in this volume and, with reservations, Ron Cole-Turner) might hold that God's purpose in bringing intelligent creatures into existence is precisely for us to harness technology to better ourselves and the rest of creation, and furthermore that doing so increases the inherent value of our embodied condition. The present volume collects the latest scholarship from a comprehensive group of scholars representing multiple—though predominantly Christian—religious perspectives, both supportive and critical of the transhumanist project and its coherence with their respective religious worldviews. The views represented are also methodologically diverse with not only theological, but also philosophical and scientific analyses of the promise and perils of transhumanism.

I have argued elsewhere against the idea of "Christian transhumanism" (see Eberl, "Enhancing the *imago Dei*: Can a Christian Be a Transhumanist" *Christian Bioethics* 28 (2022): 76–93) while also defending some forms of human enhancement as compatible with a Christian—specifically, Thomistic—understanding of human nature and flourishing (see Eberl, "A Thomistic Appraisal of Human Enhancement Technologies" *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 35 (2014): 289–310; Brian Patrick Green argues similarly in this volume). It is in light of these arguments that I will address some of the viewpoints presented in this collection. One point addressed by Ted Peters is whether *radical life extension* has significant theological implications. He notes the concern that the *futurum* of ongoing life in our current embodiment differs from the *adventus* promised with human bodily resurrection and glorification; the former may be conflated by transhumanists with the latter. While it would indeed be a mistake to place one's hope in a technologically-mediated *eschaton*, greater longevity could provide one with greater time to actualize their natural- and divinely-endowed potentialities, cultivate virtue, eliminate vice, and work toward a more just society. Of course, there are several practical issues related to the use of the earth's limited resources by those who have had their lifespans radically extended, as well as fairness in the availability of such technology; but these issues are distinct from any principled theological or moral objection to radical life extension.

A fundamental issue with respect to transhumanism is the anthropology espoused by its adherents. Jeanine Thweatt characterizes transhumanist anthropology as embracing a notion of *bodily perfectionism* that is at odds with alternative views, such as cyborg feminism and other forms of posthumanism, that reject the "the underlying dualism of Enlightenment anthropology" (223). Such Enlightenment dualism—of both Cartesian and Lockean varieties—is also critiqued by Christian philosophers

such as Robert George and Patrick Lee (see their *Body-Self Dualism in Contemporary Ethics and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2008)). The form of dualism rejected is one in which the psychological self is viewed as ontologically distinct from the physical self. To be clear, the reasons George and Lee reject body-self dualism and the anthropology they espouse in its place is quite different from Thweatt's; nevertheless, one can see the intersection of their views in the case of persons with disabled bodies. Recent Christian disability scholarship rejects the myth of bodily perfectionism—in this life and perhaps even in the life of the world to come. Even in humanity's pre-Lapsarian state, death was only staved off by the availability of the fruit of the Tree of Life and, as Thomas Aquinas notes, there would have still been diverse forms of embodiment—with different degrees of physical and intellectual capacity as well as beauty—among pre-Lapsarian humans (see Miguel J. Romero and Jason T. Eberl, "The Tree of Life: Aquinas, Disability, and Transhumanism" in *Bioenhancement Technologies and the Vulnerable Body*, ed. Devan Stahl (Baylor University Press, 2023)). Transhumanism, in its quest for asymptotic cognitive and bodily improvement with no inherent limits, fundamentally denies the value that exists among the diverse forms of human cognitive and physical capacity.

The ultimate theoretical expression of transhumanism's dualistic anthropology is Ray Kurzweil's proposal to one day "upload" human consciousness into a cybernetic mainframe (whether some sort of android body or the electronic "cloud")—the *apotheosis* of "morphological freedom" and "substrate independence." As Noreen Herzfeld notes in this volume, "Kurzweil presupposes a computational theory of mind, what we might dub, *patternism*" (309). Patternism is not a unique or even new idea to Kurzweil, however, but has in fact been a staple of science-fiction stories since at least the 1960s. *Star Trek* first conceived of a teletransporter that could "beam" a person from starship to planet by converting matter to energy and then back to matter. Key to the teletransporter's capacity to function is to maintain the "pattern" of one's body, including the neurological structures of one's brain, throughout the conversion/de-conversion process. (It is worth noting that this differs substantially from the destruction/copying process Derek Parfit describes in his teletransporter thought-experiment (see his *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford University Press, 1986).) What would an anthropology such as that espoused by George and Lee say about the metaphysical possibility of patternism?

The non-dualist anthropology that informs George and Lee's view is the Aristotelian hylomorphic account that came to prominence among Christians thanks to Thomas Aquinas, in which a human being is identified with the composite unity of a rational soul informing a suitable material body. On this view, a human being is identified with neither their body nor their soul alone, but rather with the substance comprising both metaphysical parts (for further elucidation, see my *The Nature of Human Persons: Metaphysics and Bioethics* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2020)).

It would seem apparent that Kurzweilian patternism would be denied on such a view since a rational soul needs to inform a "material" body. This leads Lee to affirm a Thomistic form of "animalism," in which a human being is identified with a living organism of the species *Homo sapiens*; insofar as patternism entails that a human being can survive without there being a living human organism, it is incompatible with Christian hylomorphic anthropology. As Ilia Delia notes in this volume, referencing the merging of the human mind with information-based technology, "The fact that human nature can be hybridized challenges our prevailing views of nature as fixed, biological and physical" (356).

Two points bear mentioning here. First, despite its dogmatic endorsement by the 14th-century Council of Vienne, not all Christians espouse hylomorphic anthropology. Richard Swinburne, for instance (see his *The Evolution of the Soul*, rev. ed. (Oxford University Press, 1997)), advances a contemporary argument for substance dualism in which a human being is identified with their soul—not the composite of soul and body—and thus it is at least conceivable that one's soul could become causally connected with a computational pattern; though such thinkers would resist Kurzweil's reduction of one's soul to simply *being* such a computational pattern. Second, even on a hylomorphic construal of human nature, it is only required that one's soul inform *matter* to compose a human being; but the relevant matter arguably need not be in its typical solid, organic form. If, *á la* the *Star Trek*-style teletransporter, matter can be converted to patterned energy and then reconverted back into a solid form, then there is no principled reason why one's soul could not continue to inform the patterned energy-state during the teletransportation process. If so, then it is at least metaphysically possible that one's soul could inform the patterned energy-state of one's "uploaded" mind.

Another question I would like to address in this brief review is some transhumanists' goal of *morally enhancing* human beings in order to prevent the global disasters that could be precipitated by industrially-caused climate change, nuclear war, and other catastrophes that result when the "haves" have no moral regard for the plight of the "have-nots." A traditional Christian perspective on how to improve human beings morally is by appeal to the concept of *virtue*—both in terms of character traits that may be naturally cultivated within families and civil society, and those with which one may be divinely graced. Some transhumanists consider such natural or divine sources of virtue to be, respectively, inadequate or non-existent; hence, they promote the use of biomedical means to make human beings more amenable to far-sighted social cooperation and self-abnegation.

As Braden Molhoek affirms in this volume, "enhancing abilities does not actually engineer virtue; it only increases the capacity to act morally" (391). Arguably, certain cognitive enhancements could allow one to practically reason better by, for example, overcoming certain cognitive biases or the "weakness of will" problem (see my "Can Prudence Be Enhanced?"

Journal of Medicine and Philosophy 43 (2018): 506–26). Molhoek notes that "if one is more empathetic and their physical desires are regulated then one is more likely to make better decisions. Increasing memory and intelligence would also likely lead to improved moral deliberation" (399). Yet, such enhancements would only be effective—in a way that does not undermine human freedom—if a person *voluntarily* elected them, implying that they were already predisposed toward morally improving themselves. Hence, it is not apparent that licit—i.e., freedom-affirming—moral enhancement would actually achieve what its transhumanist proponents are seeking: Would Milton's Lucifer, Adolf Hitler, or a modern-day industrial polluter or nuclear warmonger seek to be morally enhanced? Furthermore, Molhoek insightfully warns that "if . . . transhumanists change human nature so much that we no longer identify the resulting individuals as human, then this new nature would require new virtues to be acquired" (392). This echoes concerns that Nicholas Agar (see his *Truly Human Enhancement* (MIT Press, 2014)) has raised that a transhumanist agenda should not be pursued that would create "posthumans" whose needs and interests are unrecognizably distant from our own. Biotechnological enhancement should improve *us*, not create a new species of being wholly other than us.

Eschewing both an uncritical Christianized form of transhumanism and a bioconservatism afraid to embrace biotechnology, Levi Checketts in this volume, from a Catholic perspective, offers a defensibly sound anthropology to inform deliberations among all Christians going forward:

> The vision of the person I argue Catholics ought to embrace is one that recognizes our biologically contingent makeup, our relationships with other persons and with technologies, and our orientation toward the fullness of God's reign with hopeful and active anticipation. The central element of this vision is our eschatological orientation because in this aspect of our humanity, we consider what it is God calls us to become. Questions of moral action, of social structure, of biological manipulation or technological Luddism are all subordinated to the question of what we are to be as a people and how we are to accomplish this aim (349).

This volume is a valuable contribution to the scholarly literature on religious transhumanism, both as a primary resource for scholars working in this area and as a potential textbook for a graduate seminar. I am grateful to the editors and contributors for pushing the envelope in this lively discussion, which will undoubtedly continue as biotechnological advances abound and human beings' desire to live longer, healthier, and more productive lives—however one defines "productive"—persists. Transhumanism may or may not be compatible with specific religious worldviews, including Christianity; yet, Christians and other religious adherents must reckon with the continual advent of technological media that shape, for better or worse, our understanding of human nature, creation, and our relationship with God.