



## REDEFINING HUMAN IDENTITY BETWEEN CORPOREALITY, GENDER DYSPHORIA AND TRANSHUMANISM: THEOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Researcher PhD. Bogdan Mohor OBREJA,

Ovidius University of Constanța,

ROMANIA

Email: bogdan.mohor@yahoo.com

### ABSTRACT

*Starting from the tension between subjective identity and biological corporeality, reflected in the experience of gender dysphoria, the research investigates the ontological, anthropological and theological implications of the process of redefining personal identity. In this sense, the foundations of biblical and patristic anthropology are analyzed, on the one hand, which affirms the ontological unity between body and soul and the constitutive character of corporeality in the definition of the person, and, on the other hand, the conceptual mutations of late modernity, which promote a constructivist vision of identity, detached from natural determinations. In counterpoint, the theological perspective is harnessed to reaffirm the ontological character of personal identity and the substantial unity of the human being, emphasizing the risks of anthropological fragmentation generated by the separation of identity from corporeality. The analysis thus proposes a critical reflection on the new cultural and technological paradigms, highlighting the need for a rearticulation of the anthropological discourse in dialogue with the theological tradition, with a view to an integral understanding of the human person.*

**Keywords:** *identity; corporeality; gender dysphoria; theological anthropology; transhumanism, ontology; person;*

### INTRODUCTION

The issue of human identity constitutes, in the contemporary context, one of the most sensitive and complex themes of anthropological reflection, located at the confluence of philosophy, theology, social sciences and bioethics. The accelerated cultural and technological transformations of late modernity have led to a profound re-evaluation of the concept of the person, generating significant mutations in the way of understanding the relationship between nature, freedom and corporeality. In this framework, identity is no longer perceived exclusively as a stable ontological reality, grounded in the constitutive structure of the human being, but tends to be reinterpreted as a dynamic construct, susceptible to redefinition through subjective consciousness and technological intervention.

One of the most striking expressions of this mutation is the phenomenon of gender dysphoria and the experience of identity incongruence, which call into question the traditional relationship between biological sex and personal identity. In this context, corporeality is no longer understood as the ontological foundation of identity, but as a reality on which the subject can intervene in order to achieve a correspondence with his own self-consciousness. This perspective is amplified by the development of the transhumanist discourse, which proposes to overcome the biological limits of



the human condition through technology, inaugurating a new anthropological paradigm centered on the idea of self-transcendence and deliberate modeling of identity.

In contrast to these tendencies, the classical anthropological tradition, especially the biblical and patristic tradition, affirms the ontological unity between body and soul, emphasizing the constitutive character of corporeality in the definition of the person. From this perspective, identity is not the result of an arbitrary construction, but the expression of a given ontological reality, which underpins and guides the exercise of freedom. Thus, any radical separation between identity and corporeality implies a profound reconsideration of human nature and the ontological status of the person. Thus, Orthodox theology emphasizes that, "the human person was created by God to live in grace and implicitly in the love of the Holy Trinity. The first disobedience had as its first consequence the exit of man from grace. In the absence of grace, man, expelled from the face of God, has come to be limited to material-rational things, and through sin he has come to sink into the darkness of ignorance, considering himself God.

The present study aims to analyze these transformations from an interdisciplinary perspective, located at the intersection of philosophical anthropology and systematic theology, aiming to highlight the ontological, anthropological, and theological implications of the contemporary redefinition of human identity.

## 1. GENDER DYSPHORIA AND THE EXPERIENCE OF IDENTITY INCONGRUENCE

Old Testament accounts also record other episodes of moral degradation comparable, in severity and consequences, to those attributed to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, highlighting the association between sexual violence, ethical disorder and communal or divine sanction. A paradigmatic episode is reproduced in the Book of Judges (chapter 19), where the inhabitants of the city of Gibeah, belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, are described as manifesting profoundly deviant behaviors, materialized in acts of extreme violence and flagrant violations of moral norms and sacred hospitality.<sup>1</sup> The seriousness of this crime generated a major crisis within the Israelite tribal confederation, leading to the outbreak of an armed conflict between the tribe of Benjamin, who refused to surrender the perpetrators and chose to implicitly support their guilt, and the other tribes of Israel, who perceived this attitude as a threat to the collective moral and religious order.<sup>2</sup> The confrontation resulted in considerable human losses and a drastic reduction in the number of members of the tribe of Benjamin, the episode constituting, in the context of biblical theology, an eloquent example of the disastrous consequences of tolerating lawlessness and solidarity with sin at the expense of justice and fidelity to the divine law.<sup>3</sup>

In the Levitical legislative corpus, homosexual behaviors are included in the category of serious deviations from the moral and cultic norms of the Israelite community, being qualified as practices incompatible with the order established by God. The capital sanction provided for such acts (Lev. 20:13) expresses, within the theology of the Old Testament, the fundamental importance given to the preservation of the moral and cultic integrity of the chosen people, in the context of fidelity to the covenant. Also, the explicitly worded prohibition — *That there shall be no sodomite among the children of Israel* (Deut. 23:17) — reflects the concern for the clear delimitation of the religious and moral identity of the community, as opposed to the practices associated with neighboring peoples, considered incompatible with the demands of a life of holiness.

<sup>1</sup> REV. JOSEPH ADAM PEARSON, PH.D., CHRISTIANITY AND HOMOSEXUALITY RECONCILED: NEW THINKING FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM, CHRIST EVANGELICAL BIBLE INSTITUTE, 2014, p. 59

<sup>2</sup> REV. PH.D. J. A. PEARSON, *Christianity and...*, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> EUGEN SAFTA ROMANO, *Legal Archetypes in the Bible*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 1997, pp. 196-197.



These examples highlight the fact that, in the Old Testament legislative and theological vision, the fundamental concern of the divine Lawgiver was the preservation of the moral, religious and community order, as well as the prevention of its dissolution through behaviors considered deviant. The severe sanctions associated with such deviations had not only a punitive function, but also a normative-pedagogical one, since they sought to reaffirm the requirements of holiness and fidelity to the covenant. Within this conceptual framework, behaviors that contravened these norms were perceived as affecting not only the individual moral integrity, but also the spiritual and identity balance of the entire community, as well as its relationship with God, the foundation of its existence and its historical vocation.<sup>4</sup>

Within scriptural revelation and patristic reflection, homosexual behavior is constantly framed in the sphere of serious moral deviations, being interpreted as expressions of a deviation from the ontological and ethical order instituted by God through the act of creation. The Old Testament tradition establishes a symbolic and theological link between moral degradation and the consequences of divine judgment, the paradigmatic example being that of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose destruction is evoked in Deuteronomy 29:23 as a manifestation of divine sanction on a state of radical moral corruption. In biblical exegesis and subsequent patristic interpretation, this episode is received not only as a singular historical event, but as a typological illustration of the consequences of the collective departure from theologically grounded moral norms.

This assessment is explicitly expressed in Levitical law, where the prohibition is formulated in categorical terms: *Thou shalt not lie with a man as with a woman; this is defilement* (Lev. 18:22), and the reiteration of the prescription in Leviticus 20:13 is accompanied by the indication of capital punishment. In the context of covenant theology, these norms reflect the need to preserve the holiness of the community and to conform fully to the divine will, understood as the foundation of the religious and moral identity of the chosen people.<sup>5</sup> The patristic tradition, by assuming and deepening these scriptural landmarks, integrates them into a broader anthropological and soteriological framework, in which sexual morality is interpreted in relation to man's vocation to holiness, to communion with God and to the realization of his ultimate spiritual goal. Thus, such behaviors are evaluated not only as simple violations of legal norms, but as expressions of a spiritual disorder that affects man's relationship with God and the moral order of human existence.<sup>6</sup>

The Holy Fathers of the Church have maintained a firm attitude of condemnation of homosexual practices, interpreting them as a serious deviation from the order of nature founded by God. In Canon 7 of St. Basil the Great, bodily sins, among which homosexuality is mentioned, are framed alongside other major crimes, such as adultery and idolatry, emphasizing at the same time that authentic repentance opens up the possibility of forgiveness and spiritual restoration. In the same vein, Apostolic Canon 61 states that such an act constitutes an impediment to access to the sacrament of priesthood, which highlights the moral gravity attributed to this deviation in the canonical conscience of the Church.

St. John Chrysostom characterizes homosexuality in particularly severe terms, describing it as a profound error and a manifestation of man's estrangement from God. In his interpretation, this conduct represents an alteration of the natural order and an expression of spiritual degradation, having serious consequences for the dignity and integrity of the human person, since it reflects the rupture between man and his divine foundation.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> E. S. ROMANO, *Archetypes...*, p. 197.

<sup>5</sup> REV. PH.D. J. A. PEARSON, *Christianity and...*, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> E. S. ROMANO, *Archetypes...*, p. 197.

<sup>7</sup> E. S. ROMANO, *Archetypes...*, p. 199.



Therefore, both Scripture and patristic theology express a unitary position regarding the rejection of homosexual practices, which are interpreted as sins that contravene the divine order and the Christian moral norm. In this perspective, they are understood as serious deviations from God's plan for humanity and as alterations of the natural order instituted by the act of creation. In this theological framework, Orthodox anthropology emphasizes that sexuality is integrated into the divine plan of communion and the transmission of life, which is why any use of it outside of this purpose is considered a deviation from its original purpose.

In the same vein, in the biblical account, certain Pauline texts, such as I Corinthians 6:9–10, warn that various forms of immoral conduct constitute impediments to the attainment of the Kingdom of God, emphasizing the soteriological dimension of the moral life. At the same time, in I Corinthians 6:18–19, the Apostle Paul insists on the dignity of the human body, which is defined as *the temple of the Holy Spirit*, which is the foundation, in Orthodox theology, of an ethic of responsibility towards one's own body, understood as the space of God's presence and work.

In the contemporary context, the Orthodox Church expresses concern about the cultural and ethical transformations that affect the traditional understanding of sexuality and the family. From this perspective, certain modern reproductive practices and technologies are critically evaluated, insofar as they are perceived as dissociating procreation from the conjugal framework and from the sacramental vision of the family.<sup>8</sup> This position is based on the conviction that human life and its transmission cannot be separated from its spiritual dimension and the moral responsibility that derives from it.

Consequently, Orthodox theology continues to affirm the importance of respect for the human body and for the profound meaning of procreation, understood as participation in God's creative work, considering that fidelity to this plan constitutes an essential expression of human vocation and dignity.

## 2. BODILY TRANSFORMATION AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE REDEFINITION OF IDENTITY

The structural transformations generated by the accelerated development of contemporary technologies have produced profound mutations in the way the human being conceptualizes and substantiates his own identity. If within the classical tradition identity was understood as a stable ontological reality, based on the dual-unitary, bodily and spiritual constitution of the person, in the contemporary context there is a radical re-evaluation of this concept, within which the body itself becomes the object of intentional intervention and programmatic transformation.<sup>9</sup> This mutation indicates the emergence of a new anthropological paradigm, characterized by the shift of emphasis from corporeality as an immutable ontological given to corporeality open to manipulation, optimization and improvement by technical means.<sup>10</sup>

Transhumanism, one of the most influential philosophical-anthropological orientations of contemporary times, is based on the premise that the human being does not represent a definitive ontological form, but an intermediate stage within an open evolutionary process, in which technology becomes the main vector of self-improvement.<sup>11</sup> From this perspective, the biological limits that have defined the human condition until now are interpreted as contingent, and human

<sup>8</sup> REV. PH.D. J. A. PEARSON, *Christianity and...*, p. 64.

<sup>9</sup> JUSTIN SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith*, Wipf and Stock Publishing, 2018, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 13.



nature itself is conceived as malleable and susceptible to improvement through technological interventions aimed at increasing the physical, cognitive and psychological capacities of the individual.

Such a perspective implies a fundamental reconfiguration of the ontological status of the body and, implicitly, of human identity. The body is no longer conceived as a constitutive foundation of personal identity, but as an instrument subject to modeling and optimization, integrated into a continuous process of transformation.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, identity is no longer understood as a stable ontological reality, grounded in the nature of the person, but as a dynamic construct, defined by processes of self-design and self-reconfiguration.

This paper aims to analyze the issue of bodily transformation as an expression of the contemporary process of redefining human identity, from an interdisciplinary perspective, located at the intersection of philosophical anthropology, theology and transhumanist discourse, following the ontological, anthropological and theological implications of this paradigmatic mutation.

Within biblical anthropology, human identity is inseparably constituted in and through corporeality. Man is not conceived as an autonomous consciousness or as a self-sufficient spiritual principle, but as an integral ontological unity, in which the bodily and spiritual dimensions are not juxtaposed realities, but constitutive aspects of the same personal existence, in a relationship of ontological unity, complementarity and indissoluble interdependence.<sup>13</sup>

The account of creation in the Book of Genesis grounds an anthropological vision in which the human being is understood as an integral and unitary reality, and sexual differentiation is affirmed as a constitutive dimension of his ontological identity, and not as an accidental or secondary element. Man and woman are created equally in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), participating fully in the same human nature and sharing the same ontological dignity, which excludes any form of essential hierarchy between the two modes of existence of the human. Sexual difference does not introduce a division at the level of nature, but expresses relational plurality within the unity of the same ontological condition.<sup>14</sup>

This scriptural perspective underpins an anthropology of the substantial unity of the person, in which corporeality is not conceived as a mere instrument external to the personal subject, but as a constitutive and inseparable dimension of his existence. The body is not an extrinsic element of personal identity, but the concrete and irreducible way of the person's presence in the world, the environment through which he enters into a relationship with otherness and the framework in which personal identity becomes manifest and communicable. In this sense, corporeality does not limit identity, but expresses and actualizes it, constituting the visible form of personal subjectivity.

Therefore, personal identity cannot be conceived as a reality independent of corporeality, since the person is not a subject who *possesses*<sup>15</sup> a body as an external object, but an indissoluble ontological unity of body and soul. The body is not a simple attribute of the person, but belongs to his own way of existence, expressing the unitary character of the human being. This conception goes beyond any form of reductive dualism and affirms the constitutive character of corporeality in the definition of the person, emphasizing that human existence is essentially embodied existence.

In the context of late modernity and the accelerated development of biomedical technologies, this anthropological vision is undergoing a significant transformation. The possibility of technical intervention on the body and its ability to modify have generated a profound conceptual mutation

<sup>12</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 17.



in the way of relating to corporeality.<sup>16</sup> The body tends to be reinterpreted in terms of objectuality, becoming not only the subject of personal existence, but also the object of intervention, manipulation and technical reconstruction.<sup>17</sup> This shift marks the shift from understanding the body as a constitutive dimension of the person to perceiving it as a reality available to control and transformation, which reflects a radical change in the anthropological paradigm, with major implications for the way of understanding human identity.

One of the most profound anthropological mutations associated with late modernity consists in the reconceptualization of personal identity, which is no longer understood as a stable, given and constitutive ontological reality, but as an open project, susceptible to deliberate intervention, modeling and reconstruction. In this new conceptual framework, the human body ceases to be perceived as the immutable foundation of identity and is redefined as material available for its configuration. Identity is no longer conceived as a received reality, inherent to the human condition, but as a construct resulting from the will and the technical capacity for self-modeling. This shift signifies the transition from an anthropology of the given, based on the recognition of the constitutive limits of human nature, to an anthropology of the possible, centered on the unlimited openness to transformation.

Transhumanism represents the paradigmatic expression of this mutation, affirming the necessity and legitimacy of overcoming the biological conditioning of the human being through technology.<sup>18</sup> Within this perspective, fundamental bodily limits — such as aging, illness and death — are no longer interpreted as constitutive dimensions of the human condition, but as contingent imperfections that can be corrected or eliminated through technological progress.<sup>19</sup> Technology thus acquires the status of a privileged instrument for the redefinition and expansion of identity, becoming the environment through which the human being is reconfigured beyond his original biological determinations.

This vision implies a radical reversal of the traditional relationship between identity and corporeality. If, in classical anthropology, personal identity was understood as constitutively determined by bodily reality, in the contemporary paradigm there is a tendency to subordinate the body to the identity will. The body is no longer perceived as the foundation of identity, but as an expression of it, as a plastic reality, capable of being shaped in accordance with the subjective project of the individual.<sup>20</sup> This transformation reflects the emergence of a new form of subjectivity, characterized by the affirmation of radical autonomy and the claim of the capacity for self-creation, in which the subject is no longer limited to assuming his own nature, but aspires to redefine it.

Recent advances in biotechnology, genetic engineering and artificial intelligence have decisively contributed to strengthening this new paradigm, transforming the human body into a space of direct technological intervention. The development of neural implants, bionic prostheses and advanced gene therapies allows not only the restoration of affected biological functions, but also their modification and augmentation, thus redefining the relationship between natural and artificial. In this context, the human body begins to be configured as a hybrid system, located at the intersection of the biological and the technological.

This evolution marks the beginning of a process of ontological hybridization of human identity, in which the traditional distinctions between organism and technology become

<sup>16</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 19.

<sup>18</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 21.



progressively more permeable. The human being tends to be reconceptualized as a technologically augmented entity, in which artificial elements are structurally integrated into the dynamics of personal existence. In this sense, the figure of the cyborg ceases to belong exclusively to the speculative imaginary and becomes a relevant conceptual category for the description of new emerging forms of existence.<sup>21</sup>

Fundamentally, this transformation expresses the contemporary tendency to overcome the biological limits that have traditionally defined the human condition, inaugurating a new stage in the evolution of anthropological self-understanding, characterized by the redefinition of the relationship between nature, technology and identity.

Transhumanism states that these transformations mark the beginning of a new evolutionary stage, in which the human being would transform into a posthuman entity, capable of overcoming the biological and cognitive limits that have defined the human condition until now.<sup>22</sup> In this perspective, not only is corporeality subject to a process of redefinition, but the very structure of human identity is radically reconceptualized, being detached from its traditional ontological determinations and reconfigured in the horizon of technological possibilities.

One of the most significant consequences of this paradigm lies in the progressive separation of personal identity from its biological substrate. If, in classical anthropology, identity was inseparably linked to the substantial unity of the person, constituted by soul and body, in the transhumanist vision identity tends to be understood as a reality autonomous from biological corporeality, capable of being preserved, transferred and reproduced by technological means. The body thus ceases to be the constitutive condition of identity and progressively becomes a contingent support of it.

The concept of mind uploading expresses this conceptual mutation in its most radical form. According to this hypothesis, human consciousness could be transposed into a computer environment, allowing the continuity of personal existence independently of the original biological support. Such a perspective implies a profound redefinition of identity, which is no longer conceived as an embodied ontological reality, but as a set of information that can be encoded, stored and processed.<sup>23</sup> Identity thus becomes equivalent to information, being detached from the material conditionings that have traditionally defined human existence.<sup>24</sup>

This transformation reflects the emergence of a new ontological paradigm, characterized by the tendency to reduce the person to actionable informational structures. In this framework, personal identity is reinterpreted in terms of data continuity and cognitive functionality, and corporeality is relativized or even considered dispensable. Such a reduction marks one of the most profound ruptures with traditional anthropology, which has consistently affirmed the constitutive character of the unity between the spiritual and corporeal dimensions in the definition of the person.

The desire to transform and overcome bodily limits is closely linked to man's fundamental aspiration to transcend mortality. Death has always represented the ultimate limit of the human condition, marking the finitude of biological existence and the fragility of personal identity in the temporal order.<sup>25</sup> In the context of the transhumanist paradigm, technology is invested with the function of overcoming this limit, being conceived as the means by which the continuity of identity could be ensured beyond biological constraints.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 24.

<sup>24</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 27.



In this sense, technology acquires a significance that goes beyond its instrumental dimension, being invested with a soteriological function. The promise of a form of *technological immortality*<sup>27</sup>, achieved through the preservation or transfer of consciousness, reflects the transposition, into a secular register, of one of humanity's deepest aspirations. Transhumanism thus configures a true technological soteriology, within which the overcoming of the limits of existence is no longer attributed to divine intervention, but to technological progress and the human capacity for self-transformation.

This conceptual mutation expresses, fundamentally, the process of secularization of human hope, through the transfer of expectations related to the overcoming of finitude from the sphere of religious transcendence to the immanent horizon of technology. In this context, technology is no longer perceived exclusively as an instrument for improving living conditions, but as a means of ontological redefinition of human existence, assuming a role that traditionally belonged exclusively to the religious dimension.<sup>28</sup>

The issue of bodily transformation occupies a central place in contemporary anthropological reflection, since corporeality is no longer understood exclusively as an immutable biological given, but as a space of meaning, expression and identity construction. Within traditional anthropology, human identity was conceived in close correlation with bodily reality, which was considered the objective foundation of individuality and the criterion of ontological differentiation between persons, including with regard to sexual difference.<sup>29</sup> In the context of modernity and, more accentuated, of postmodernity, this correlation has been subjected to an extensive process of reinterpretation, under the influence of the philosophy of autonomy, constructivist theories and new cultural paradigms centered on the primacy of subjectivity.

Within this conceptual framework, the transgender experience is configured as one of the most radical forms of redefinition of the relationship between corporeality and identity, as it introduces an explicit distinction between biological sex, understood as an objective somatic reality, and gender identity, conceived as a dimension of self-consciousness and subjective experience. The bodily transformation thus acquires a meaning that goes beyond the sphere of medical intervention itself, assuming the character of an existential and symbolic act through which the individual aims to achieve a correspondence between the assumed inner identity and the external bodily expression. The body becomes, in this sense, not only the biological support of existence, but also the environment of manifestation and validation of personal identity.

From this perspective, the phenomenon cannot be adequately analyzed exclusively in terms of medical or sociological discourse, but requires an approach specific to philosophical anthropology, since it calls into question fundamental aspects related to the nature of the person, the relationship between nature and freedom, and the ontological status of corporeality in the constitution of personal identity.<sup>30</sup> The issue of bodily transformation directly involves questions about the given or constructed character of identity and about the legitimate limits of intervention on one's own corporeality.<sup>31</sup>

Within classical anthropology, the body was understood as a constitutive dimension of the person, inseparable from his ontological identity. The person was not conceived as a subject possessing a body, but as a substantial unity of body and soul, in which corporeality represented the

<sup>27</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 29.

<sup>29</sup> J. SABIA-TANIS, *Trans-Gender: Theology...*, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> KEN SMITH, *Homosexual Theology*, Universe Publishing, 2012, p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> K. SMITH, *Homosexual...*, p. 43.



concrete mode of existence of the personal subject in the world. The body was not an object external to consciousness, but the visible form and expression of personal existence, the environment through which the person entered into a relationship with the world and with others.<sup>32</sup>

Modernity, however, introduces a significant mutation in this understanding, through the emphasis on subjectivity and personal autonomy. The person begins to be defined not exclusively by his ontological nature, but also by his reflective capacity for self-determination. Identity is no longer perceived only as a constitutive fact, but also as a result of the exercise of personal freedom. This shift in emphasis reflects the emergence of a subject-centered anthropology, in which self-awareness and will become essential elements in defining identity.

The modern philosophy of autonomy has played a decisive role in shaping this new paradigm, stating that the dignity of the person is closely linked to his or her ability to self-determine in accordance with his or her own reason and will. In this perspective, the person is no longer conceived exclusively as an object of natural determinations, but also as an active subject of his own existential constitution. Autonomy thus expresses the participation of the person in a normative order that gives him dignity and distinguishes him from simple biological conditioning, affirming the primacy of the reflective dimension over natural determinations.<sup>33</sup>

This anthropological mutation creates the conceptual premises for the reinterpretation of corporeality as a reality susceptible to resignification and transformation in accordance with subjective identity. The body begins to be perceived not only as the foundation of identity, but also as a reality on which the subject can intervene in order to make a correspondence with his own self-consciousness. In this context, the transgender experience is characterized by the appearance of a perceived incongruence between biological sex and lived gender identity. This incongruity is not interpreted as a simple variation of social roles, but as a profound dissonance between bodily reality and assumed personal identity, generating the perception of a tension between the objective dimension of corporeality and the subjective dimension of the self. Consequently, intervention on the body is understood as a process of harmonizing this tension, reflecting a profound transformation in the contemporary way of understanding the relationship between nature, identity and freedom.

For the transgender person, biological corporeality can be felt as a factor of alienation, to the extent that it is perceived as inadequate to the assumed inner identity. In such a situation, the body is no longer experienced as an adequate expression of the self, but as a reality that contradicts or does not reflect the person's self-awareness.<sup>34</sup> This dissonance generates a significant existential tension, which directly influences self-perception, interpersonal relationships and the general way of relating to the world. This tension expresses a discontinuity between two fundamental dimensions of personal identity: on the one hand, the objective bodily identity, based on the biological reality of the body, and, on the other hand, the lived subjective identity, constituted at the level of self-awareness and inner experience. In this situation, corporeality can be perceived not as the foundation of identity, but as an element that contradicts it, generating a form of distancing from one's own somatic reality.<sup>35</sup> This rupture goes beyond the level of a simple psychological tension, having profound ontological and symbolic implications. The body is not only the biological support of existence, but constitutes the environment through which the person is present in the world and through which his identity becomes visible and recognized on an intersubjective level. Consequently, any dissonance between the lived identity and the bodily expression affects not only

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<sup>32</sup> K. SMITH, *Homosexual...*, p. 44.

<sup>33</sup> K. SMITH, *Homosexual...*, p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> K. SMITH, *Homosexual...*, p. 45.

<sup>35</sup> K. SMITH, *Homosexual...*, p. 46.



the inner balance of the person, but also the way in which he assumes his own existence and is perceived within social relationships, highlighting the constitutive role of corporeality in the articulation of personal identity.

### 3. THE PROBLEM OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IDENTITY AND CORPOREALITY

The issue of the relationship between identity and corporeality imposes itself, within contemporary anthropological reflection, as one of the most complex and disputed themes, located at the intersection of philosophical anthropology, systematic theology, identity psychology, human biology and cultural studies.<sup>36</sup> In particular, the transgender phenomenon brings into discussion fundamental questions regarding the ontological status of personal identity, the constitutive role of corporeality in defining the person, and the relationship between subjective freedom and the objective determinations of human nature. This issue does not concern exclusively the empirical dimension of existence, but implies a reconsideration of the very ontological structure of the person, insofar as it calls into question the relationship between consciousness, nature and corporeality.<sup>37</sup>

In the context of contemporary debates, gender identity is frequently defined as a reality distinct from biological sex, being understood as the expression of reflective consciousness and subjective self-identification.<sup>38</sup> This approach implies the possibility of a dissociation between personal identity and biological corporeality, in the sense that the body is no longer considered the ontological foundation of identity, but a contingent element, susceptible to reinterpretation according to the dynamics of individual consciousness. In this paradigm, identity is no longer conceived as an expression of nature, but as the result of subjective self-determination.

The Congregation for Catholic Education's document, *Male and Female He Created Them* (2019), identifies this separation as one of the defining features of contemporary gender theories, emphasizing that they promote a conception of personal identity and affective intimacy as radically independent of the biological difference between male and female.<sup>39</sup> From this perspective, the transgender issue goes beyond the framework of a simple medical or sociological question, constituting a real anthropological challenge, since it involves a redefinition of the concept of person and the relationship between nature and freedom.<sup>40</sup> The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between identity and corporeality in the context of the transgender phenomenon, from the perspective of philosophical and theological anthropology, having as a point of reference the mentioned magisterial document and its implications for the understanding of the nature of the human person.<sup>41</sup> Personal identity constitutes the ontological nucleus of the person, since it expresses the principle of the unity and continuity of individual existence. In the classical metaphysical tradition, identity is intrinsically linked to the category of substance (*ousia*), understood as reality that subsists in itself and constitutes the permanent support of accidental determinations. In Aristotelian anthropology, identity is not the result of an arbitrary construction, but the expression of the very nature of being.<sup>42</sup> Thus, each reality is what it is by virtue of its nature, and this nature constitutes its constitutive and normative principle.

<sup>36</sup> MARK A YARHOUSE, JULIA A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity and Faith Clinical Postures, Tools, and Case Studies for Client-Centered Care*, IVP Academic Publishing, 2022, p. 36.

<sup>37</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 37.

<sup>38</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 38.

<sup>39</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 39.

<sup>41</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 40.

<sup>42</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 41.



This conception is systematically developed in Thomistic anthropology, which defines the person as *an individual substance of a rational nature* (*individua substantia rationalis naturae*). In this definition, the identity of the person is inseparably linked to his nature, and freedom is not the constitutive principle of being, but the faculty through which the person actualizes his own nature. Consequently, nature is not the product of freedom, but its foundation.<sup>43</sup>

This realistic perspective is also reaffirmed in the document of the Congregation for Catholic Education, which emphasizes that the human person possesses a nature of his own, which *he cannot manipulate at will*.<sup>44</sup> This statement expresses an ontological anthropology, according to which identity is not the product of absolute freedom, but the expression of an objective ontological reality, which precedes and substantiates the exercise of freedom. In contrast to this perspective, a number of currents of modern and postmodern thought have redefined identity in predominantly subjective terms, as a result of reflective consciousness. In this paradigm, identity is no longer understood as an expression of nature, but as a result of self-perception. This mutation has its origins in modern philosophy, especially in Cartesian thought, which identifies the foundation of identity in self-consciousness (*cogito ergo sum*).<sup>45</sup> Gender theory radicalizes this orientation, affirming the autonomy of gender identity from biological sex and upholding its elective character. The document of the Congregation for Catholic Education notes that, according to these theories, *human identity becomes the choice of the individual, which can change over time*. This perspective implies a radical transformation of the concept of identity, which is no longer based on the ontological reality of corporeality, but on the dynamics of subjective consciousness.<sup>46</sup> In opposition to this conception, classical philosophical and theological anthropology affirms the substantial unity between body and soul. In Aristotelian thought, the soul is defined as *the first act of a natural body that has life in potentiality*, which means that the soul does not constitute a separate reality, but the constitutive principle of the living body.

This unity is explicitly reaffirmed in Christian anthropology. St. Thomas Aquinas states that the soul is the substantial form of the body, which means that the human person is neither soul nor body, but the substantial unity between them.<sup>47</sup>

This conception is explicitly reaffirmed in the document *Male and Female He Created Them*, which states that the body constitutes *the integrating element of personal identity*.<sup>48</sup> This statement expresses the conviction that corporeality is not an accidental element of the person, but a constitutive dimension of his identity.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, the separation of identity from corporeality implies a fragmentation of the ontological unity of the person and a radical reconceptualization of human nature. This perspective is particularly developed in contemporary theology by St. John Paul II, who affirms that the body possesses a personal meaning, being the visible expression of the person. In this view, corporeality is not a limitation of the person, but the concrete mode of his existence.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, the transgender issue is not exclusively a psychological or social issue, but involves a fundamental anthropological issue, since it calls into question the relationship between identity, nature and corporeality, as well as the ontological status of the human person.

<sup>43</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 42.

<sup>44</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 43.

<sup>45</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 45.

<sup>46</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 46.

<sup>47</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 46.

<sup>48</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 47.

<sup>49</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 48.

<sup>50</sup> M. YARHOUSE, J. A. SADUSKY, *Gender Identity...*, p. 49.



## CONCLUSION

The analysis of the relationship between corporeality, identity and contemporary anthropological transformations highlights the fact that the current debates on gender dysphoria, the redefinition of identity and transhumanism go beyond the strictly medical, psychological or sociological framework, constituting a real anthropological and theological challenge. At the heart of these discussions is the fundamental question of the nature of the human person and the ontological status of his identity, as well as the relationship between individual freedom and the constitutive reality of human nature. The study showed that biblical and patristic anthropology constantly affirms the ontological unity between body and soul, considering corporeality a constitutive and indispensable dimension of the person. In this perspective, human identity is not the result of an arbitrary construction of consciousness, but the expression of an objective ontological reality, grounded in the creative act of God. Sexual differentiation, far from being an accidental element of existence, belongs to the fundamental structure of the human being and participates in the concrete manifestation of the person in the world.

In contrast, a significant part of contemporary discourse promotes an understanding of identity centered on subjective autonomy and the possibility of permanent self-definition. In this context, the body tends to be perceived not as the foundation of identity, but as an object of transformation and remodeling according to the inner experience of the individual. The phenomenon of gender dysphoria and the development of body modification technologies express this paradigmatic mutation, in which identity is progressively detached from biological reality and transferred to the sphere of individual consciousness and self-determination.

At the same time, the analysis of the transhumanist phenomenon highlighted the emergence of a new vision of the human condition, characterized by the desire to overcome biological limits through technology. In this perspective, the body becomes a project open to technical intervention, and the identity itself is reinterpreted in terms of flexibility, optimization and permanent self-construction. The aspiration to increase human capacities, eliminate suffering and even overcome biological death reflects a profound mutation of the contemporary anthropological imaginary, in which technology is invested with functions that traditionally belonged to the religious and soteriological domain.

From a theological perspective, these tendencies raise essential questions regarding the legitimate limits of intervention on human nature and the risk of reducing the person to his or her functional or informational dimensions. The separation of identity from corporeality can lead to the fragmentation of the ontological unity of the person and to the loss of the integral understanding of the human being as a unity of body and soul. At the same time, contemporary challenges call for the development of an authentic dialogue between theology, philosophy and the modern sciences, capable of providing nuanced and responsible answers to the new questions generated by the cultural and technological transformations of the current age.

Redefining human identity is one of the great intellectual and spiritual challenges of the twenty-first century. In the face of tendencies to relativize corporeality and radically autonomize identity, theological anthropology reaffirms the unitary character of the person and the constitutive value of the body in the economy of human existence. Only by preserving this integrative perspective can the dignity of the person be protected and the balance between freedom and nature, between technological progress and the ontological truth of the human being, can be maintained. Thus, the reflection on corporeality, identity and transhumanism is not only a theoretical debate, but a fundamental interrogation of the meaning of human existence and the future of humanity in the context of new cultural and technological paradigms.



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