

# LIMEN

Journal of the Hungarian Migration Research Institute

2 (2020/2)



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MIGRATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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**Migration Research Institute**

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Limen is a semiannual International Journal  
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## **Frontispiece:**

A girl from the minority Yazidi sect, fleeing the violence of the ISIS in the Iraqi town of Sinjar, rests at the Iraqi-Syrian border in Fishkhabour, Dohuk province August 13, 2014. REUTERS/Youssef Boudlal/File Photo – stock.adobe.com

ISSN: 2732-0200

## **Founders:**



## Table of Contents

Nikolett PÉNZVÁLTÓ How Strong is Turkey's Refugee Card? Lessons learned from the events of February-March 2020	5
István TARRÓSY Africans in China: The Migration-Related Consequences of China's "African Policy"	20
Rashed DAHER Crisis on the edge of Europe. Migration and self-defense in Hungary	37
José Luis BAZÁN Objectification of the Human Body and Trafficking in Human Beings: Postmodern mentalities and the Impotence of the Law	61
David ENGELS Demagogy, Destruction and Manipulation. Putting the 2020 Riots into a Comparatist Historical Perspective	81
Tamás DEZSŐ Demography and Migration. Population boom in the Muslim world: causes and consequences	103
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	187

# Objectification of the Human Body and Trafficking in Human Beings: Postmodern mentalities and the Impotence of the Law

José Luis Bazán

## Abstract

The modern understanding of the body as an accidental reality of the soul has led to a practical dissociation of man from his body, and its transformation into a reality that can ultimately become an object of transaction. Despite international and national legislations prohibiting slavery and assimilated forms of crimes, these practices continue and new forms have appeared beyond labour and sexual exploitation. In a hyper-technological, consumerist and desire-driven culture, the emergence of so-called “surrogacy” constitutes a reality of reproductive exploitation, which should be classified as human trafficking. Although the law is an important and necessary instrument to fight against this new form of human trafficking, given that the cultural and ethical roots that lead to the social acceptance of surrogacy are deeper, it is necessary to generate new cultural contexts that allow for a change in social mentality that recognises this new form of trafficking.

**Keywords:** human body, dualism, soul, Christianity, trafficking in human beings

## 1. Dualism and objectification of the human body

The dualistic view of the human being as composed by two contradictory principles (body and soul) accidentally united is rooted in the Hellenistic philosophy represented by Plato and has extended its influence over centuries.<sup>1</sup> Modern dualism, as promoted by prominent thinkers such as Descartes, Bacon and Locke, has shaped our contemporary societies. “*It is impossible to make personal identity to consist in any thing but consciousness*”, wrote Locke in his *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, Locke expressed in Chapter V of his *Second Treatise on Civil Government* that “*every man has a property in his own person: this no body has any right to buy himself*”.<sup>3</sup> In similar

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<sup>1</sup> “While duality is about difference”, writes Heller, “dualism concerns hierarchy and more often than not, an irreconcilable one. (...) Plato’s metaphor about the body as the prison of the soul presents a very strong case for dualism.” RUNDELL 2011, p 109.

<sup>2</sup> LOCKE 1824, § 21.

<sup>3</sup> LOCKE 1821, p 209.

line, Bacon considered the body as *“the tabernacle of the mind”*.<sup>4</sup> But above all, Descartes clearly identified the “I” with one’s mind,<sup>5</sup> and considered the human body as a kind of “machine”. This perspective has had enormous implications for the contemporary understanding of the human body and its relation with the human person and the world. Descartes looked upon man as a spiritual creature inhabiting (not informing) a body. Cartesian rationalism has converted man into an angel (“angelism”, as labelled by Maritain),<sup>6</sup> which is only tenuously connected to the body.<sup>7</sup> By privileging thought over body as constitutive of the person, suggests Cahill, *“Descartes laid the way for later disembodiments and dehistoricizations of subjectivity, and for the body’s deprivation of its role in knowledge and in moral valuation.”*<sup>8</sup> When the dignity of human being is placed exclusively in his soul or mind the human body is “downgraded”, and easily becomes an object and an instrument of the “real I”, with limited moral meaning and ethical relevance. In this context, the predominant contemporary ethics of the body is exclusively based on free will and absence of coercion and deception (e.g. sexual ethics). In Bioethics, this principle, which is expressed in the – often more “ritual” or theoretical than real – free and informed consent of the person concerned,<sup>9</sup> has enormous repercussions. Under the Cartesian paradigm, as Ferguson writes, *“the body becomes an addendum to a freely chosen, and freely changing, personal identity (...) The human body loses its specifically given reality and is understood eccentrically in terms of fashion, health, sport, leisure, sexuality, art”*.<sup>10</sup> The human body is functionally fragmented and “used” in different dimensions of life, not necessarily interconnected. Arbitrary decisions over one’s own body contradicting its natural reality and identity are not seen as a despotic abuse but, on the contrary, as a genuine expression of individual’s nearly unrestricted sovereignty,<sup>11</sup> based on

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<sup>4</sup> BACON 1854, p 44. It is difficult to resist the comparison between this sentence and that of 1 Corinthians, 6, 19-20 (“your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you”).

<sup>5</sup> “So that ‘I’, that is to say, the mind by which I am what I am”: DESCARTES 1850, p 75. See also his Meditation VI, in: TWEYMAN 1993, p 91.

<sup>6</sup> See: FOWLER 1999, p 159.

<sup>7</sup> WOODS 2002, p 155.

<sup>8</sup> CAHILL 2012, p 411.

<sup>9</sup> This is particularly evident in countries where euthanasia has been legalised. In spite of the existence of legal procedures and protocols to assure the free consent of the person, as Pereira suggests, in these countries “laws and safeguards are regularly ignored and transgressed in all the jurisdictions and ... transgressions are not prosecuted.” PEREIRA, 2011, p 38. See: DELANY 2007; DIXON 2008.

<sup>10</sup> FERGUSON 2000, p 21.

<sup>11</sup> In this respect, abusive interpretations of the notions of “privacy” as an expansive right to “self-determination” by some courts unduly privilege arbitrary individual decisions and undermine its necessary harmony with other fundamental rights, such as life or freedom of religion. It is

the belief that man (the spiritual “I”) is a free and unlimited will,<sup>12</sup> with full and unlimited power over his soul and body.

In the context of highly technological and consumerist contemporary societies, the objectification and instrumentalization of the human body has facilitated its trivialization. As a result, the dehumanization and alienation of the human person has increased. Noble moral purposes such as the elimination or alleviation of suffering and the expansion of human choice were achieved by Modernity,<sup>13</sup> but frequently at the cost of the de-subjectification of the person and the dominion of the human body as an instrumental object. Modern calculative and instrumental thinking (Heidegger)<sup>14</sup> has “disenchanted” the world and transformed it into a meaningless reality beyond purely practical and technical issues (Max Weber).<sup>15</sup> The desacralization of the human person<sup>16</sup> and his increasing alienating loneliness (Arendt)<sup>17</sup> reinforced by secularization,<sup>18</sup> have made human beings defenceless against any type of dominion, whether technical, political, economic or social. New forms of slavery have appeared in contemporary societies, fuelled by body-soul dualistic mentalities,<sup>19</sup> and exacerbated by hyper technologies and economic globalisation that expel humanism from society and from culture.<sup>20</sup> Nowadays,

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the case of the US Supreme Court judgement in *Roe v. Wade*, in 1973 (“the right of personal privacy includes the abortion decision”): [BIT.LY/25994NQ](#); but also, the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in *Goodwin v. The United Kingdom*, Gran Chamber, 11 July 2002, §90 (personal autonomy includes the right to establish details of one’s own sexual identity): [BIT.LY/1LWG2IQ](#).

<sup>12</sup> See: BENEDICT XVI 2012.

<sup>13</sup> MCKENNY 2012, p 402.

<sup>14</sup> “Calculative thinking”, as Heidegger explains, “is not meditative thinking, not thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is” – HEIDEGGER 2003, p 89.

<sup>15</sup> WEBER 1946, p 139.

<sup>16</sup> Sacred means, as Pieper writes, the exceptionality of certain realities and their ordination to the divine: PIEPER 2000, pp 33–34. Modern’s man body “is without religious or spiritual significance”, suggests Mircea Eliade (ELIADE 1956, p 178).

<sup>17</sup> Arendt expresses this view in saying: “The modern age, with its growing world-alienation, has led to a situation where man, wherever he goes, encounters only himself” (ARENDR 1993, p 89).

<sup>18</sup> “Secularization, with its inherent emphasis on individualism, has its most negative effects on individuals who are isolated and lack a sense of belonging.” (BENEDICT XVI 2007, paragraph 76).

<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, some feminist approaches to the body reject “dichotomy between mind and body, in which the mind is the master that controls the body” because it paves the way for a female “enslaving identity”. In this line, Saucedo writes that: “this mind-body split is a condition that forces woman to ‘live in’ her body in a special sense: the body is her essential, enslaving identity”. (SAUCEDO 2004, p 116).

<sup>20</sup> The crisis of humanistic studies, such as philosophy or literature, has diminished their influence in postmodern science and technology, which have become self-driven realities.



it seems that there is little room or time for human relations, for “*meditating and caring, that man be human and not inhumane, ‘inhuman’, that is, outside his essence*”,<sup>21</sup> and the postmodern culture “*risks blurring that which is specifically human*”.<sup>22</sup> Contemporary societies, frequently inspired by consumerism, anti-birth mentality and lack of family protection, can’t be the place for building the civilization of love that John Paul II encouraged people to create.<sup>23</sup> The risk of totalitarianism as total domination,<sup>24</sup> in any of its forms, is real whenever its root causes remain, specifically “*the denial of the transcendent dignity of the human person who, as the visible image of the invisible God, is therefore by his very nature the subject of rights which no one may violate.*”<sup>25</sup>

## 2. Man as substantial unity of soul and body

As Wheeler Robinson wrote, the Hebrew (and, we can add, Christian) idea of personality “*is an animated body, and not an incarnated soul*”.<sup>26</sup> Man is *terra animata* or animated earth (Saint Augustine),<sup>27</sup> and therefore there is no pre-existing soul that becomes imprisoned in an earthly body.<sup>28</sup> It is revealing that God named the first man “Adam”: the Hebrew word for earth is *adama* (*dam* means “blood”).<sup>29</sup> “Adam” alludes also to *adameh*, which means “*I will liken myself, indicating one’s ability to emulate God.*”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, from a Christian point of view, dust or earth is not a subsequent reality in human being, but the starting point of the creation of man by God.<sup>31</sup> Body is essential to human being, as it is his soul. In this respect, Aquinas says: “*the soul, since it is part of man’s body, is not an entire man, and my soul*

<sup>21</sup> HEIDEGGER 1977, p 200.

<sup>22</sup> ROMERA 2015, p 39.

<sup>23</sup> JOHN PAUL II 1994, paragraph 13.

<sup>24</sup> ARENDT 1962, p 422.

<sup>25</sup> JOHN PAUL II 1991, paragraph 44. For a relation between total domination and the denial of the juridical personality of man, see: ARENDT 1962, p 447.

<sup>26</sup> ROBINSON 1925, p 362. Cf. 1 Corinthians, 15, 46–47.

<sup>27</sup> AUGUSTINE 2020.

<sup>28</sup> BROMILEY 1979, p 134.

<sup>29</sup> BARON 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Rabbi Doniel Baron (op, cit) explains that: “In the name Adam, the word ‘dam’ is preceded by the letter ‘aleph’. The letter ‘aleph’ is also a word which means to teach or inculcate. It similarly indicates leadership, as implied by the related word ‘aluf’ which means a general or tribal head. God created man with many base desires that reside in the blood, but he also gave us the means to assert our control over them and be an ‘aluf’ over the dam. By being in control instead of subject to the dominion of our impulses, man, who is created in the image of God, resembles God.” Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> See: Genesis 2, 7., Ecclesiastes 3, 19–21.



*is not I ('anima mea non est ego').*<sup>32</sup> The soul is naturally united to the body and its departure from it is “*contrary to its nature and per accidens (...) the soul devoid of its body is imperfect, as long as it is without the body.*”<sup>33</sup> The human body cannot be seen simply as a limit and restriction to human soul knowledge and freedom, but the natural way of being human person because, as expressed by Benedict XVI, “*man is not merely self-creating freedom nor creates himself: he is intellect and will, but he is also nature, and his will is rightly ordered if he respects his nature, listens to it and accepts himself for who he is, as one who did not create himself. In this way, and in no other, is true human freedom fulfilled.*”<sup>34</sup>

The Christian vision of human body has assumed and empowered this perspective on its dignity, strongly rooted in natural reason that is able to discover the substantial unity between body and soul.<sup>35</sup> But it has been also enlightened by divine revelation about God’s creation of man (male and female, including their bodies) “*in his own image*”.<sup>36</sup> The incarnation of God<sup>37</sup> and the resurrection of Christ have elevated the dignity of human body to the highest level. The Assumption of the Virgin Mary who “*was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory*” is also a central belief in Catholicism.<sup>38</sup> It reaffirms the importance of the unity between body and soul, and the eternal vocation of the person as a whole, including his body. The presence of the body and blood of Christ in the sacramental communion as the most holy reality reveals the importance of flesh in the Christian understanding of the human being. The mandate of one’s love and the love to the neighbour contains the respect and care of the body, too.<sup>39</sup> Not less the spouses’ community of persons embraces their entire life “*so they are no longer two, but one flesh.*”<sup>40</sup> It is against this background that Christian humanist perspective considers the human body not being merely an external instrument to be used by the “real person” – namely, the “spirit” or “soul” enjoining a formal will free of the body’s constraints<sup>41</sup> – or even

<sup>32</sup> AQUINAS.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> BENEDICT XVI. 2011.

<sup>35</sup> See: ARISTOTLE 2008, p 43.

<sup>36</sup> Genesis 1, 27.

<sup>37</sup> John 1, 14: “the Word became flesh” (“et Verbum caro factum”). The term „flesh” refers to man in his state of weakness and mortality (CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 1993, p 990). Cf. Genesis 6,3. Interestingly, Husserl makes a distinction between the live or animate body, as an organism, the flesh body as inhabited by an ego that holds sway over it (“Leib”) from the body as a piece of physical nature (“Körper”). See: MORAN 2012, pp 129 et seq.

<sup>38</sup> PAUL VI 1964, paragraph 59.

<sup>39</sup> The corporal works of mercy are “charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his bodily necessities”: (CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 1993, 2447).

<sup>40</sup> Mathew 19, 6; Genesis 2, 24 (“Et erunt in carnem unam”).

<sup>41</sup> LAKOFF ET ALT 1999, p 554.

by other individuals to fulfil their wishes and desires. On the contrary, the human being is considered as a distinctive and unified reality (the human person), which intrinsically holds an inalienable dignity, natural and supernatural. The unique Christian doctrine of God's becoming human, suggests Zimmerman, made the *imago Dei* the foundation of a humanism that has contributed significantly to the formation of the European cultures.<sup>42</sup>

The official modern doctrine and “dogma of the Ghost in the Machine”, as Ryle calls it, is a philosopher's myth “*entirely false, and false not in detail but in principle.*”<sup>43</sup> We would add that it is not only false, but dangerous: a mechanized view of human body as a machine and an object composed by parts opens the door to unlimited replacement and inter-changeability of “pieces” (organs, cells and tissues) and could easily justify the creation of cyborgs, cybernetic organisms, and even human beings that are “pieces” providers.<sup>44</sup> Contrary to this myth, we find that the human body is integral to the human person, and receives from the spiritual principle a supreme dignity. The body is not just a part of every human being: the person is also his body, an indivisible dimension of personhood along with his spiritual aspect. John Paul II expressed this view in his 1989 speech to the expert scientists who participated in the Working Group on Brain Death: “*when we consider that every individual is a living expression of unity and that the human body is not just an instrument or item of property, but shares in the individual's value as a human being, then it follows that the body cannot under any circumstances be treated as something to be disposed of at will.*”<sup>45</sup> As new research accumulates, notes Berecz, it is more evident that “*man emerges more and more as a total, unified organism, and the concept of the ‘ghost’ within the ‘machine’ is less tenable.*”<sup>46</sup> Most advanced research provides new evidences on the unity and interactions between soul and body in both directions, and opens the door to refreshing perspectives that combine philosophy and social sciences with health sciences in a more holistic approach to human body.

Ordinary language expresses properly the reality of the human body as integral part of the human being. Shinagawa underlines how obvious it is “*that we tend to say that the body is the person rather than that it is her property, consistent with Warren's claim that ‘it would be very odd to describe, say, breaking a leg, as damaging*

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<sup>42</sup> ZIMMERMANN 2015, p 58.

<sup>43</sup> RYLE 2009, pp 5–6.

<sup>44</sup> KLUGMAN ET ALT 1998, p 5.

<sup>45</sup> JOHN PAUL II 1992, p XXIV.

<sup>46</sup> BEREZC 1976, p 285.

*one's property, and much more appropriate to describe it as injuring oneself*".<sup>47</sup> Other examples in the same line of reasoning could be mentioned: e.g. any violation of the right to physical integrity is not an attack against a human body, but a violation of the dignity of the person whose physical integrity has been injured. The term "possession" when it refers to the human body should not be identified with legal property rights: possession in this context is not a "*condition of fact under which one can exercise his power over a corporeal thing at his pleasure, to the exclusion of all others.*"<sup>48</sup> The use of that word could be misleading if it implies the power of a person over the body (his body or of a third person) merely as a "thing", that's to say, an object susceptible of being appropriated and owned.

All parts of the human body are elements of the human person, and therefore, no single part of the human body, even those considered less noble than other parts, are worthless, and all parts of the human body are worthy. On the other hand, the *terra animata* exists from the zygote to the end of life, including extreme situations such as irreversible coma: each life from its very beginning by conception until death is a single personal history, Meilaender notes: "*that story begins before we are conscious of it, and, for many of us, continues after we have lost consciousness of it.*"<sup>49</sup> Obviously, the acceptance of these principles has an enormous impact for bioethical issues, including artificial reproduction (in particular, frozen embryos and "discarded" ones), genetic manipulation, research with embryonic stem cells, cloning in human beings, abortion and euthanasia.

### 3. Commodification of the human body and Trafficking in Human Beings (THB)

The objectification of the human body provoked by dualistic mentalities converts it into an object at disposal, initially of the "real I" (the soul). The human body as a private "possession" of the "real I" is under his scope of autonomous decision, and includes the possibility of "transferring" the use of his body as an object to third parties. Popular slogans like "*it's my body: I do what I want*" or "*my body... my business*" express this mentality. But what is the role of the law in this area of "personal business"? Certainly, any legislation promoting justice, particularly human rights law, generally contains and expresses certain ethical principles related to the protection of human dignity and the common good, including the human

<sup>47</sup> SHINAGAWA 2013, p 146.

<sup>48</sup> BLACK 1971, p 1324. "Possession".

<sup>49</sup> MEILAENDER 1995, p 22.

body. We can find a clear example of this inter-connection between ethics and law in the area of the protection of the human body's dignity in the 1997 Council of Europe Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, that has legally expressed this *extra commercium* principle in the following terms: "*The human body and its parts shall not, as such, give rise to financial gain.*"<sup>50</sup> For this reason, as recognized in international law, "*there is a need to protect individual rights and freedoms and to prevent the commercialisation of parts of the human body involved in organ and tissue procurement, exchange and allocation activities.*"<sup>51</sup> We find another example of the interlink between legislation and ethics in the EU legal ban on patenting the human body "*at any stage in its formation or development, including germ cells, and the simple discovery of one of its elements or one of its products, including the sequence or partial sequence of a human gene*" so as "*to respect the fundamental principles safeguarding the dignity and integrity of the person.*"<sup>52</sup> In this regard, the protection of the human body and of human embryos by the European Court of Justice from the moment of fertilisation "*since that fertilisation is such as to commence the process of development of a human being*"<sup>53</sup> is of utmost importance. From this perspective, as the human embryo has a true human body, he can also be subject to attacks against his dignity. But these legal protections of the human body and its dignity are permanently in tension with the broader and predominant social understanding that, as autonomous individuals, one's decisions over one's body are beyond the scope of others, including the state. The law exists and imposes limits, but restrictions to individual's moral autonomy tend to be interpreted in a restrictive way, and therefore, this personal autonomy becomes an expansive reality. Legal restrictions are progressively falling, and the law is increasingly impotent before this irrepressible expansion. From the idea that the human body is an object possessed by the "real I" to its commoditization and transfer of its use

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<sup>50</sup> Article 21. See also Article 3.2 c) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, and Article 12.1 of Directive 2004/23/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 March 2004 on setting standards of quality and safety for the donation, procurement, testing, processing, preservation, storage and distribution of human tissues and cells ("Member States shall endeavour to ensure voluntary and unpaid donations of tissues and cells"). This principle does not prevent, for example, the transplantation of certain organs and tissues of human origin carried out for therapeutic purposes. See: Article 2 of the 2002 Council of Europe's Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine concerning Transplantation of Organs and Tissues of Human Origin.

<sup>51</sup> 2002 Council of Europe's Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine concerning Transplantation of Organs and Tissues of Human Origin, Recital.

<sup>52</sup> Directive 98/44/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 1998 on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions, Recital 16. See also its Article 5.1.

<sup>53</sup> Judgment of the Court (Grand Chamber) of 18 October 2011, case *Oliver Brüstle v Greenpeace eV*. (C-34/10), paragraph 35: [bit.ly/1TziepL](http://bit.ly/1TziepL).

to third persons, there is just a little step, in spite of legal limits. Whether the free transfer of the use of the human body to a third person is a true free choice or not is disputable in certain circumstances: frequently, persons in vulnerable situations make choices with limited freedom.

One of the classical areas of defence of the human dignity in law and politics is the fight against slavery and trafficking in human beings. Over the last years, this phenomenon has gained more and more attention at international, European and national levels. The EU Anti-Trafficking Directive defines trafficking in human beings (THB) as: *“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of control over those persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”*<sup>54</sup> The underlying principle in this definition is that the human being who is victim of trafficking is a person under exploitation. Exploitation includes the prostitution of others, or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, including begging, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the exploitation of criminal activities, or the removal of organs. THB is, therefore, an umbrella expression *“for activities involved when someone obtains or holds a person in compelled service.”*<sup>55</sup> THB is labelled as “modern slavery” because new *“institutions and practices similar to slavery”*<sup>56</sup> have appeared after the definition of slavery was adopted in the Slavery Convention (1926) and the ILO Forced labour Convention (1930). If, strictly speaking, slavery means the *“status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised”*,<sup>57</sup> then modern slavery embraces related situations of exploitation such as: forced marriage, bonded labour, children’s petty theft and drug trade and children’s military recruitment. Some other phenomena regarding the exploitation of human beings have emerged more recently, and should be examined under the rubric of THB, in particular reproductive exploitation (e.g. trafficking in human embryos and the so-called “surrogacy”).<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Article 2 of the Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA.

<sup>55</sup> US DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

<sup>56</sup> Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, adopted by a Conference of Plenipotentiaries convened by Economic and Social Council resolution 608(XXI) of 30 April 1956.

<sup>57</sup> Article 1.1 of the Slavery Convention signed at Geneva on 25 September 1926.

<sup>58</sup> WHITE 2014.

THB is a complex phenomenon, with a variety of roots, causes and drivers, one of which is precisely the dualism of the human person and the objectification of the human body, in the context of a mainstream consumerism in contemporary societies, which privileges individual desires.<sup>59</sup> Certain forms of THB are fuelled by a predominant culture of unrestricted desire, promoted by omnipresent stimulating messages, that considers goods or services primarily in terms of their marketability, including human beings and their bodies. In a “civilization of consumption”, wrote John Paul II in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* “an object already owned but now superseded by something better is discarded, with no thought of its possible lasting value in itself, nor of some other human being who is poorer.”<sup>60</sup> Consumerism necessarily involves a culture of “throwing-away” and “waste” in which individuals can be simply “discarded” when they are considered as a “burden”<sup>61</sup> or easily replaced. As Miles expresses it, consumerism is a powerful and seductive ideology, and a way of life “rooted in the fact that the pleasures which consumers find through consumption outweigh any comparable concern as to its ideological underpinnings.”<sup>62</sup> Since desire is oriented, not to the action, but to its result, as Norrie highlights, it can lead to a form of alienation, focusing not on the doing itself but on the result.<sup>63</sup> The alienation of the perpetrator of the exploitation and of those who knowingly take direct benefit of it is the reverse side of the exploitation of the victim of trafficking.

Some examples can illustrate this correlation between “desire-driven” societies and the diverse forms of objectification and commoditization of the human body: e.g. the production of children under demand through so-called “surrogate motherhood” involving the use of third women’s wombs or the preselected choice of sex or hair colour in artificially conceived children. More explored has been the relation between sexual exploitation and a market approach to sex, particularly evident in the colossal pornography industry, mostly of women, in which “*woman’s body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person and she is viewed primarily as a physical object*”.<sup>64</sup> As Faith writes, feminists tend to see the objectification and commodification of female bodies as a reality promoted by pornography and prostitution.<sup>65</sup> The globalised economy of sex certainly reinforces

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<sup>59</sup> Some scholars argue positively about the benefits of consumerism, such as James B. Twitchell, who defends the idea that consumerism provides a meaning to people replacing the meaning formerly provided by religion and is actually a source of happiness and emancipation. See TWITCHELL 1999, and TWITCHELL 2004, pp 37–48.

<sup>60</sup> Paragraph 28.

<sup>61</sup> POPE FRANCIS 2015.

<sup>62</sup> MILES 1998, pp 153 and 155.

<sup>63</sup> NORRIE 2007, p 120.

<sup>64</sup> SZYMANSKI ET AL 2011, p 8; BARKTY 1990, p. 35.

<sup>65</sup> FAITH 2004, p 259.



this phenomenon, and as expressed by Penttinen, “creates the domain of subjects as a population of consumers and the zone of the abject as consumable bodies”.<sup>66</sup> One of the most far-reaching effects of cultural globalisation is the commercialisation of culture, as rightly points Akande,<sup>67</sup> and the reduction of moral goods to marketable goods. Moral goods are reduced to commodities subject to the law of supply and demand, with limited further restrictions: they are priced and tradeable. These practices create an unhealthy cultural atmosphere of false normality that deeply harms the most vulnerable persons in our societies, in particular the elderly, the severely handicapped or ill, and children (including the unborn). As Benedict XVI reminds us, the market is “shaped by cultural configurations which define it and give it direction,”<sup>68</sup> and therefore, societies that predominantly consider the human body as an “external asset” and primarily as a resource for production or pleasure, will tend to discard their most vulnerable members as “non-valid.”<sup>69</sup> The “production and leisure” cultural paradigm applies also to other vulnerable persons (e.g. young foreign women) that can easily become exploited “in a market conceived as a place where strong subdue the weak.”<sup>70</sup> The objectification of the human body brings the objectification of the person as a whole, as the human body is not something different than the person herself. As objects can be generally replaced in consumerist societies, individual human beings, and even categories of human beings, become replaceable. When this practice is transformed into an ideology, it paves the way for an incipient totalitarianism aiming at the improvement of the human species and the production of “perfect” individuals, or the creation of a paradisiac collective society that might justify the “suppression” of some individuals for the “improvement and wellbeing” of the rest.

We should not underestimate the relevance of the cultural framework and prevailing mentalities in society and their relationship with certain emergent forms of trafficking in human beings, despite legal restrictions and limits to exploitation of human beings. A civilization rooted in the utilitarianism of production and use is a civilization of “things” and not of “persons”: then, persons are used in the same way as things are used, as John Paul II stated.<sup>71</sup> For example, the objectification and commodification of the human body has

<sup>66</sup> PENTTINEN 2008, p 17.

<sup>67</sup> AKANDE 2002.

<sup>68</sup> BENEDICT XVI 2009, paragraph 36.

<sup>69</sup> In “Centesimus Annus (op. cit)”, John Paul II mentioned the “excessive promotion of purely utilitarian values, with an appeal to the appetites and inclinations towards immediate gratification, making it difficult to recognize and respect the hierarchy of the true values of human existence” (paragraph 29).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> JOHN PAUL II 1994, paragraph 13.



contributed to making prostitution widespread in many European countries. In spite of the limited research and information, the relation between prostitution and THB is becoming more evident. The European Parliament recognised that “*prostitution and forced prostitution are forms of slavery incompatible with human dignity and fundamental human rights (...) prostitution markets fuel trafficking in women and children*”. It also stressed that “*there are several links between prostitution and trafficking, and recognises that prostitution – both globally and across Europe – feeds the trafficking of vulnerable women and under-age females*”, and “*that looking upon prostitution as legal ‘sex work’, decriminalising the sex industry in general and making procuring legal is not a solution to keeping vulnerable women and under-age females safe from violence and exploitation, but has the opposite effect and puts them in danger of a higher level of violence, while at the same time encouraging prostitution markets – and thus the number of women and under-age females suffering abuse – to grow*”.<sup>72</sup> The Dutch experience, as expressed by its national Rapporteur on Human Trafficking, shows that “*there has always been a clear relationship between human trafficking and prostitution in the Netherlands*.”<sup>73</sup> This association between THB and prostitution existed ever since trafficking was included in Dutch criminal law. A high percentage of prostitutes are actually controlled by criminal gangs. In Germany, legalization of prostitution has not diminished cases of THB.<sup>74</sup> At the global level, an empirical analysis for a cross-section of up to 150 countries showed that on average, countries with legalised prostitution experience a larger degree of reported human trafficking inflows.<sup>75</sup> As Leidholdt suggests, the boundaries between prostitution and sex trafficking are blurred: “*Sex trafficking and prostitution overlap in fundamental ways (...) The sex industry business in which trafficked and prostituted women are exploited are often one and the same, with trafficked and domestically prostituted women ‘working’ side by side*”.<sup>76</sup> However, the European Court of Justice has adopted a “neutral” position concerning prostitution, due to the diverse legal regimes in EU Member States, and has recognised the freedom of movement of “sex workers” offering “sexual services” in *Adoui v. Belgian State*: if a Member State allows prostitution for its own nationals, it can’t claim the activity

<sup>72</sup> Resolution of 26 February 2014 on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality: [bit.ly/1Ppm1OE](https://bit.ly/1Ppm1OE).

<sup>73</sup> DUTCH NATIONAL RAPPOURTEUR ON TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS 2010, p 26.

<sup>74</sup> Official statistics don’t reveal, as Herz suggests, the actual extent of THB, but they reflect the number of investigations of the law enforcement authorities. The difficulty of proving THB – very dependent on the testimony of the victim – is also an obstacle to reduce the number of investigations: HERZ 2006, pp 12 and 26. See: GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR FAMILY AFFAIRS, SENIOR CITIZENS, WOMEN AND YOUTH 2007.

<sup>75</sup> CHO ET AL 2013, pp 75–76.

<sup>76</sup> LEIDHOLDT 2003, p 178.

to be against public policy in order to deny free movement for prostitution for nationals of other Member States.<sup>77</sup> The same position was reaffirmed 20 years later by the ECJ in *Jany and Others*, extending this tolerance of prostitution to EU candidate countries (at that time from Central and Eastern Europe).<sup>78</sup> This ECJ perspective, based on a definition of work which is in “*true liberal style economically determined*”,<sup>79</sup> is hardly compatible with a humanistic view of the human being that takes ownership of the dignity of the human body.

Another less explored case, though no less important, is the connection between the so-called “surrogate motherhood” or “surrogacy” and the cultural framework that accepts more or less openly – and certainly in practice – the treatment of the human body as a commodity. In surrogacy, usually a couple (“the intended parents”) agrees with a woman to become either the “gestational mother” (after the human embryo produced by in-vitro fertilisation is transferred to her) or the “traditional” one in which the mother is impregnated naturally or artificially. Leaving aside the controversial issue of the consent of the surrogate mother (frequently in situation of need and vulnerability, and not sufficiently informed about the practice), from the exploitation point of view, she (even with her consent) is being misused by third parties as an object and instrument to “provide” them a child. Whether or not this agreement is profitable, that does not exclude the exploitation dimension. Profit surrogacy could be assimilated also to bonded labour when the surrogate mother has to stay in the hostel provided by the reproductive clinic for nine months until the delivery of the child, as happens in India.<sup>80</sup> No less, surrogacy is a form of exploitation of babies,<sup>81</sup> who are deprived of the full and integral filiation with the natural parents (one mother and one father) and their identity.<sup>82</sup> The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child recognises “*the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents*”,<sup>83</sup> a right violated by surrogacy. Moreover, babies are transferred

<sup>77</sup> *Adoui v. Belgian State and City of Liège, and Cornuaille v. Belgian State*, Joined Cases 115 and 116/81, Judgment of 18 May 1992: [bit.ly/1MtXt79](http://bit.ly/1MtXt79).

<sup>78</sup> *Jany and Others v. Staatssecretaris van Justitie*, Case C-268/99, judgment of 20 November 2011: [bit.ly/25bvULE](http://bit.ly/25bvULE).

<sup>79</sup> ASKOLA 2007, p 57.

<sup>80</sup> CHATTERJEE 2015, p 68.

<sup>81</sup> COMECE REFLECTION GROUP ON BIOETHICS 2015, p 9.

<sup>82</sup> The list of contentious ethical and juridical issues is much larger: e.g. extreme restrictions in “surrogate mother” privacy during pregnancy; absence of transparency in the contract provisions; provisions imposing “contractual abortion” when the baby becomes an “unwanted object” of the contract; the relation between baby and “surrogate mother” after birth; the selection of “wanted children”, good-looking and with high academic potential, etc. See: EUROPEAN CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE 2012.

<sup>83</sup> Article 7.1.

to third persons as a result of a private agreement that should never be legally enforced. Filiation is a matter of *ordre publique* and private agreements should not be allowed to violate it. Moreover, the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibits the sale or traffic of children “for any purpose and in any form”.<sup>84</sup> Some countries in the world have legalised all forms of surrogacy, while some others admit non-commercial surrogacy or tolerate commercial surrogacy practiced in a third country.<sup>85</sup> Surrogacy is not legally qualified as a form of trafficking, even in those jurisdictions where the practice is illegal, except in Cambodia.<sup>86</sup> However, there is an increasing awareness that this understanding creates inconsistencies in the legal systems. The European Parliament has recognized that the practice of surrogacy “undermines the human dignity of the woman, since her body and its reproductive functions are used as a commodity”, and that “gestational surrogacy (...) involves reproductive exploitation and use of the human body for financial or other gain”.<sup>87</sup> This is a promising start which should lead to a general legal ban of these practices in order to protect women and children’s rights, as they are direct victims of this new form of trafficking in human beings.<sup>88</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

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Any dualistic philosophy that considers the soul as the real “I” of the person, and reduces the human body to an instrumental object of the soul, not only downgrades the human body but paves the way – in a hyper-technological, global and consumerist world – for its use as a resource of production or a source for immediate pleasure or emotional gratification. The risk of any object (including the human body when is considered as such) becoming an object of trade (commodity) in postmodern consumerist societies is undeniable, despite the number of existing legal prohibitions and restrictions in domestic and international legislations,

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<sup>84</sup> Article 35. See Articles 1 and 2 of the Article 2(a) of the 2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography: [bit.ly/1qNtkEv](http://bit.ly/1qNtkEv).

<sup>85</sup> See: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT 2013.

<sup>86</sup> See: THE CENTER FOR BIOETHICS AND CULTURE 2015; TAKIHIRO 2015.

<sup>87</sup> European Parliament resolution of 17 December 2015 on the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2014 and the European Union’s policy on the matter, paragraph 115: [bit.ly/1RgFYgm](http://bit.ly/1RgFYgm).

<sup>88</sup> Contrary to this perspective, the European Court of Human Rights, in its judgement *Paradiso and Campanelli v. Italy* (27 January 2015, referred to the Gran Chamber) reveals a lack of sensitivity towards the exploitation of the gestational mother and the child, justifying commercial surrogacy on the basis of a misleading interpretation of the best interests of the child and a wrong understanding of the right to private and family life: [bit.ly/1LH6mQe](http://bit.ly/1LH6mQe).

and the general recognition that the human body is *res extra commercium*. Legal restrictions are insufficient to stop certain irresponsibly expansive interpretations of individual autonomy, as the social context and mainstream mentalities undermines the legal implementation of those restrictions. Recovering the dignity of the human body as an integral and substantial part of the human being will create a cultural framework in societies that will help to better prevent human exploitation, including emerging forms such as reproductive exploitation. This cultural framework will facilitate the enforceability of specific international and European legislation to prevent exploitation, in particular of children and women, and to better protect the rights of the victims.

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