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The Crown of Creation and Wild Flowers[1] (With Special Regard to Czech Literary and Professional Texts)[2]

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Abstract: Humans, as the pinnacle of creation, strive to understand the meaning of their existence while confronting decay and ultimately accepting death. The idea of eternal existence, or immortality, appears frequently in ancient texts. This article examines four works from the ancient Near East: the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, the Ugaritic Epic of Aqhat, and the biblical Psalms 8 and 103. It will explore the possibility of human immortality and consider whether such a state can be achieved. These works remain central in the cultural memory of those familiar with the written tradition. How can we interpret these ancient texts in light of our current knowledge? Although paradoxically

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2 The first representative of Czech pre-transhumanist literature was the writer Karel Čapek. In his literary works from the 1920s and 1930s, the Czech author Karel Čapek was among the first to explore the relationship between technology and humans. The term "robot" entered the Czech language through his work *R.U.R. – Rossum's Universal Robots*. This literary piece addresses issues of artificial intelligence and robots functioning as independent entities. The ethical dilemmas it raises mirror the principles of transhumanism in Karel Čapek, *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots. A Collective Drama and Introductory Comedy in Three Acts.* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1966). A new translation of Karel Čapek's play R.U.R., which famously coined the term "robot," and a collection of essays reflecting on the play's legacy from scientists and scholars working in artificial life and robotics in Karel Čapek, Jitka Čejková (ed.), *R.U.R. and the Vision of Artificial Life.* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, The MIT Press, 2024). For more information about the book see: https://www.robot100.cz/. War with the Newts explores human nature, evolution, and intelligent newts in Karel Čapek, *Válka s mloky*, ČS 4 (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1972). Another of Čapek's works *Továrna na absolutno*, deals with the desire to create a technological work that could be considered immortal: Karel Čapek, *Továrna na absolutno. Krakatit*. Spisy Karla Čapka (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1982). Emilia Marty (Elina) raises questions about the consequences of immortality in the drama novel *Věc Makropulos*. She drinks an elixir of life created by her alchemist father. After living for several centuries and constantly repeating the same turning points in her life, Emilia becomes disgusted and exhausted. Karel Čapek et al., *Dramata: Věc Makropulos*, translated *The Makropulos Secret*, in Writings of Karel Čapek (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1992).

subject to decay, the characters of Gilgamesh, Aqhat, and the psalmist continue to inspire reflection on the concept of eternity. They serve as fundamental elements of our civilised self-awareness.

Keywords: Gilgamesh; Aqhat; Psalms; transhumanism; posthumanism

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Introduction

Humans are a species consciously involved in the creative process, endowed with particles similar to those of the universe and elements akin to both living and non-living nature. As rational beings, they are aware of their mortality and strive to delay or even transcend it. Ancient texts document efforts to attain or question the idea of immortality, with several essential works addressing this theme directly. The following selection of ancient narratives and poems raises questions and offers potential answers about the meaning of human existence, destiny, and a broader understanding of immortality. These texts contemplate postponing or overcoming death to achieve a higher purpose. These principles underpin transhumanism,[3] a philosophy centred on enhancing humanity beyond biological constraints.

From birth, human beings encounter the relationship between life and death. They consciously strive to leave a mark on the world, which they perceive in various ways. The transitional phases of human existence[4] enable individuals to mature, accept social roles, and fulfil them to the best of their abilities. Ultimately, these phases lead to the end of life, which they must face. People are aware of their mortality, yet they endeavour to ensure that their personality survives. The fate of the individual is intertwined with that of humanity, and personal choices impact the collective, from

3 Scott D. de Hart and Joseph P. Farrell, *Transhumanism: A Grimoire of Alchemical Agendas* (Port Townsend: Feral House 2012); Robin Hanson, *The Age of EM* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus* (New York: New York Harper, 2017).

4 Mythologist and writer Joseph Campbell thoroughly analyses the rituals of heroes in his literary work. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (California: New World Library, 2008).

family and society to the nation and the global community, including its perspective beyond our planet.

Since my professional interest lies in the intertextuality between the writings of the ancient Near East and the Tanakh, I have selected the following texts from several suitable options. Most readers will be familiar with *the Epic of Gilgamesh* and selected biblical psalms. Although less well known, *the Ugaritic Epic of Aqhat* is also a compelling narrative that explores themes related to mortality, immortality, and the interaction of life and death. Phenomena of mortality and immortality can be examined from both a cultural-biological and a linguistic perspective. Both perspectives play vital, complementary roles in considering the issues and significance of transhumanism.

Using four written sources, I will endeavour to characterise Gilgamesh (considered by some to be the proto-hero of transhumanism), Aqhat, who mocks any reliance on gods and blind faith in achieving unnaturally long life or immortality (pros and cons of transhumanism), and the texts of two psalms where the actors of the biblical narrative about human destiny – concerning man as the crown of creation and a fleeting lily (or wild flower) of the field in the presence of God – depict the human condition within creation through poetic turns of phrase woven with oriental wisdom. This article will focus on the search for transhumanism in texts from the cradles of Near Eastern civilisations, beginning with Sumer and Akkad, Babylon and Assyria, and concluding with the ancient Levant. In conclusion, the author will take a step towards a critical reflection on transhumanism within the framework of theological ethics.

1. The fate of man

According to the beliefs of the ancient Sumerians and later the Akkadians, humans possess divine blood, a spark within them, but their outer shell is formed of transient matter. We see this anthropology in the creation myth *Enuma Elish*,[5] in *The Epic of Atrahasis* (*Atra-ḫasīs*),[6] and in the heroic mythological story *The Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh*. Human nature dif-

5 Philippe Talon, The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enūma elish (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2005).

6 A. R. George and F. N. H. Al-Rawi, "Tablets from the Sippar Library VI. Atra-ḫasīs," *Iraq 58 (1996)*, 147–190.

fers from divine nature, yet it is also distinct from the nature of all other animals. *Lúšizima lullá lú a-me-lu MUšu*[7] – "*let lulla* (entity) *be created, let it be named amelu* (personality)."[8] These references indicate that the living being *lullû*, called by the Sumerians, is also known as *amēlu* or *awīlu* in the Akkadian epic. According to myth, it is a living entity created by the gods in their image from earthly matter. The Sumerian *lullû*, man, exists between the divine and the human worlds.[9] In the Akkadian anthropogenic myth, the wisest of gods, ENKI, known as Ea in Akkadian, envisioned humans as free beings responsible for the world's management. The myth states that *lullû* (*awīlu*) was created to carry the gods' basket, to serve the gods. The idea of human destiny, rooted in the eternal order, is closely linked to the concept of work.[10] *In illo tempore*,[11] the gods performed this activity, but since the creation of man, it has been entrusted to humans. Nonetheless, this can also be interpreted as meaning that *awīlu* shares in ongoing divine creation, and that this role is an honour.[12] The assertion that humanity results from the union of the Creator's essence with the essence of creation implies that humans, though transient like all creation, can approach the gods, even to become like gods. When contemplating the hypothetical idea of eternal deities, humans tend to lean towards eternalism – a longing for eternity to be conscious of it.[13] The Sumerians, Akkadians, and Babylonians could no longer logically reconcile the long existence of their gods. Often, two contradictory descriptions are given: that gods are immortal, yet one kills the other. To kill signifies to diminish or exhaust the divine radiance, *melemmu*.[14] Since gods are associated with stars, whose radiance appeared infinite to ancient people, the depletion of this energy was seen as incomparable to the lifespan of humans. Hence, the gods seemed eternal. An inactive god is like an extinct star, or essentially, a dead god. People found it easier

7 Talon, *Enūma elish* VI, 6.
8 Ibid., 62.
9 Ibid., 62nn.
10 Amy L. Balogh, "Myth, Meaning, and the Work of Life: Enuma Elish and the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:4–3:24) on the Value of Human Labor and Memory," *Religions* 13:8 (2022), 703. DOI: 10.3390/rel13080703.
11 In mythical Times and Worlds.
12 Balogh, "Myth, Meaning," 5–11.
13 Regarding the physical and metaphysical ideas of time and space.
14 *melemmu (ME.LÁM)* – a terrifying glow, an aura of gods and demons within Jeremy Black, Andrew George and Nicholas Postgate (eds.), *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), 207.

to accept the existence of humans in their stories, but they also struggled with it due to their irreplaceable experiences. In this sense, humans are no different from the surrounding living nature; they age from birth and head towards the end, each with a predetermined *šīmtu*[15] – their destiny, which marks the end of their earthly existence.

1.1 Man is descended from the gods

There are several Mesopotamian gods and goddesses credited with creating humans.[16] However, the most notable is the Sumerian ENKI, also known as Akkadian Ea. ENKI is a demiurge god who creates divine-like beings and presents plans for humanity to the council of great gods. He is an experimenter who studies humankind without enforcing restrictions; he observes quietly and with curiosity about potential outcomes. He allows humanity to evolve freely, assigning it responsibility along with freedom. He supports people, granting them divine power. ENKI (Babylonian Ea)[17] thus embodies the idea of human transcendence and is among the earliest supporters of transhumanism.[18] The Babylonian myth of human creation, *"Enūma ilū awēlum"* (*When the gods were men*),[19] suggests that the gods completed their tasks on earth, for which being *awēlum*, man, was created. The narrative described above is known to scholars as Atra-ḫasīs. The change in the name alone reflects the transhumanist concept discussed here, indicating a shift from the gods' unique status to the extraordinary importance of Man, who has attained the gift of eternal life. The myth describes the creation of a supplementary force to continue the work of creation, explores human diversity, and examines the relationship between humans and the divine realm. It incorporates various etiological themes, including the origin

15 *shīmtu – will, testament, fate (death; day of death), fate* in Ibid., 373.

16 Nicole Brisch, "Mother Goddess (Ninmah, Nintud/r, Belet-ili)," *Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses* (2019). Source: http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/mothergoddess/ (accessed 15. 4. 2025).

17 "Ea, god of underground waters and magical arts, the Babylonian equivalent of the Sumerian god ENKI, was also the patron of craftsmen, artists, and exorcists. […] He alone realises that the gods need the services of humans…" in Gwendolyn Leick, *Historical Dictionary of Mesopotamia* (Landham – Maryland – Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003), 36.

18 Asen Bondzhev, "Enki's Seven Sages (Adapa/Oannes and the Apkallu). Humanity's Cosmic Guardians," *Open Journal for the Study of History* VII/1 (2024), 31–44.

19 George and Al-Rawi, "Tablets," 153.

of individuals with physiological defects and the causes of war, famine, and plague. The gods are responsible for human social and ecological issues, with Enki and Ninmah implicated in the first, and Enlil in the second story. The god Enlil, lord of the world, is alarmed by the growing human population and decides to wipe out humanity with a flood. The Flood narrative is a separate etiological story. Only the transhuman Atra-ḫasīs survives the flood, endowed with extraordinary abilities, including the foundational elements of civilisation.[20] According to the creation story within this narrative, the first human was transformed from the god *Wē*. Humanity was created by two collaborating deities, the god Ea and Bēlet ilī, *[d]mama* "the Mother of the gods". From the clay and blood of the sacrificial god *Wē*, they craft and animate a being called *lullû* (Akkadian *awēlu*), determining its earthly destiny, *shīmtu(m)*.[21] First Man carries a divine spark or image within himself, expressed by the term *ṭēmu*.[22]

2. Gilgamesh, the superhuman (source text: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*)[23]

The Epic of Gilgamesh can be described, with some exaggeration, as the founding text of transhumanism. Mathematically speaking, Gilgamesh is two-thirds god and one-third human. His father is the famous mythical ruler *[d]lugal-ban-da*,[24] and his mother is the goddess *[d]nin-sun*,[25] so the hero

20 Ibid., 172–175. Knowledge of how to cultivate the mashshakku (*mushshakkū*) plant is a key aspect of civilisational competence. This plant was also believed to be used to enhance prophetic abilities.

21 Ibid., 162nn.

22 Ibid., 170. The wise goddess *MAMA* creates human beings, endowed with a destiny by divine order, whose task is to transfer the earthly work they take over from the lower gods, the Igig, to the *awīlū* (humans). The Igig belong to a kind of demiurges of the ancient world. By this act, humans removed the Igig's yoke of slavery and exhausting labour. In the context of transhumanism, humans have learned and are still perfecting how to transfer this entrusted work to their creations, i.e., machines, including AI.

23 Andrew R. George, *The Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh: Parts I and II: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). The following are Czech critical editions of the Epic of Gilgamesh: Lubor Matouš, *Epos o Gilgamešovi* (Prague: Mladá Fronta, 1971); Jiří Prosecký and Marek Rychtařík, *Epos o Gilgamešovi* (Prague: Garamond, 2018).

24 George, *The Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh*, 540.

25 Ibid.

Gilgamesh himself, whose Sumerian name is *^{d}GIŠ-gim-maš*,[26] is designated in the epic and other Sumerian-Akkadian texts, like his parents, with the divine determinative "d."[27] Both parents of the renowned Uruk ruler are bearers of divinity, with the mother, the "divine cow," being the mother goddess. Gilgamesh is more than an ordinary man, as he surpasses everyone around him in every way. He is a hero, a superhuman. However, he treats his superhuman qualities rebelliously and, therefore, receives a lesson that leads him to confront his limits and search for the meaning of life. When his exceptional counterpart Enkidu, a humanised being with abilities similar to Gilgamesh, dies, the Uruk bull Gilgamesh realises that his mortality threatens his unforgettable personality and work. So he attempts to achieve personal immortality.

Gilgamesh's quest for immortality can be seen as a heroic journey marked by liminality and profound change.[28] After returning from his quest to escape his fate, Gilgamesh is reconciled with himself and motivated to accept his destiny, which is expressed by the phrase *šiāti alākum*,[29] meaning to follow one's destiny and ultimately die. Gilgamesh endures more and probably lives longer, but he is still heading towards death. Yet, the idea of immortality remains with him. He comes to accept his death but gains insight into the collective vision. Through a conversation with Siduri, the barmaid of the gods and practical life teacher, he revises his sexual, family, intellectual, and spiritual pursuits. He chooses to pass on all he has gained to future generations. Symbolically, he conceals his name and life's legacy within the walls of his capital city as a message to those to come. Gilgamesh's story, and thus the story of this particular man, endures across generations. A notable shift in understanding Gilgamesh's transhumanism occurs in the move from individual to societal future potential. Heroic greatness and glory are weighed against weakness and failure. However, the story raises a fundamental final question: who truly cares for humanity's welfare? At the start of the epic, the contemptible Gilgamesh commits *kukittu*,[30] an

26 Ibid.

27 Dietz Otto Edzard, *Sumerian Grammar* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2003), 9.

28 Andrew R. George, "The Mayfly on the River: Individual and Collective Destiny in the Epic of Gilgamesh," *Kaskal* (2012), 227–242.

29 Black, George and Postgate, *A Concise Dictionary*, 373 explains that *ana shīmtim alākum* usually means "to die a natural death."

30 Incorrect behaviour in table I, 67, Ibid., 228.

unworthy and even malicious act, through which he, as a usurper, threatens his surroundings and harms society. He overcomes and humiliates others, embarking on a journey of suffering *mānaḫtu*,[31] which transforms his desire for transhumanism. By the story's end, he dedicates his extraordinary potential to his people in Uruk, as evidenced by the noble walls of the city. Personal transcendence shifts into collective social transcendence. Instead of seeking immortal glory, Gilgamesh attains unmatched wisdom. He views his city and the future generations of his people as eternal.

The ending shown in Gilgamesh through the metonymy of cut reeds closely resembles the cut flowers or grass of the field in Psalm 103:15[32] and Job 14:1–2,[33] a common Eastern image symbolising the conclusion of earthly life.[34]

The following Akkadian verbs indicate the conclusion of Gilgamesh's journey:

illikamm	verbum, 3rd sg. m., present tense	Comes (came) to
anit	verb, stative	was exhausted
šupšut	verb, stative	was assured
šaki	verb, stative or transitional?	Was/was set?

31 "hard work, misery, fatigue" in Miguel Civil and al., *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1977), 203; "fatigue, exhaustion, drudgery, work" in Black, George and Postgate, *A Concise Dictionary*, 195.

32 אֱנוֹשׁ כֶּחָצִיר יָמָיו כְּצִיץ הַשָּׂדֶה כֵּן יָצִיץ in Karl Elliger und Wilhelm Rudolph (eds.), *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS),* 5th ed. (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: Stuttgart, 1977 und 1997); *"As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field"* in *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE)*.

33 וְשִׂבְעֹ־רִגְזׁ:וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם אָדָם יְלִוד אִשָּׁה קְצַר יָמִים in *BHS; "A mortal, born of woman, few of days and full of trouble, comes up like a flower and withers, flees like a shadow and does not last,"* in *NRSVUE*.

34 This oriental depiction of the end of human life is followed, for example, by the Czech theologian, philosopher, and educator J. A. Comenius (Komenský), who describes personified death in allegorical language in his work. Comenius' work, Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart, deals with the development of human potential, in which man combines his reason, moral consciousness, and spiritual orientation for his ennoblement and prolongation of life. A suitable method of ennobling man is education in the knowledge of immortality. Man finds this in his relationship with his Creator. According to J. A. Comenius, man is a being reflecting God, endowed with intelligence and a rational soul. Man's free will enables him to create his future, which, according to Comenius' syncretic formulation, is a return to paradise, communion with God. Jan Amos Komenský, *Labyrint světa a ráj srdce*, Česká knižnice (Brno: Host, 2014).

Today, in research on extending life and exploring its significance, the term "Gilgamesh project" has been introduced as a technical term. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is significant in modern research and influences scientific inquiry due to its adaptable and timeless narrative.[35]

In my reflection on intertextuality, I consider it essential to mention that *The Epic of Gilgamesh* found a successor in the modern literary work *Projekt Gilgameš* (*The Gilgamesh Project*) by Czech writer Štěpán Kučera.[36] This captivating fictional narrative[37] tells the story of how artificial intelligence in a research centre reconstructs the story of Gilgamesh, entrusting the leading role to a marginal character from the original epic, the ferryman Urshanabi. In his youthful recklessness, Urshanabi accidentally comes across the plant of life ("The Old Man Becomes Young"). Gilgamesh had unsuccessfully sought the plant that he gradually grinds into powder for repeated consumption. By consuming this plant, he repeatedly rejuvenates, but at the same time becomes infertile. In his satirical science fiction novel, Štěpán Kučera presents Urshanabi as a shadowy figure, or the reverse of Gilgamesh's journey. Urshanabi strives for personal immortality but ultimately chooses to relinquish it. He exists from ancient times into the future, and at the end of his very long life, he encounters the AI mentioned earlier. He renounces his decision to live forever. Štěpán Kučera's captivating literary style fills the ancient mythopoetic shell with pressing questions of the present and fictions of the future. In the novel's interludes, he presents ancient narratives rooted in the oldest cultures and their languages, alongside postmodern tales with science fiction elements. Accidentally immortal, Urshanabi witnesses humans destroying nature and polluting the ocean, through which he gained immortality by recklessly playing God with the plant of life. For centuries, the transhuman Urshanabi observes how the powerful or insane tamper with human intentions and mutilate creation. The bioethical dilemma and ecological crisis motivate him to relinquish his immortality because the world he

35 Sophus Hell, *Gilgamesh: A New Translation of the Ancient Epic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021); Yuval Harari's philosophical reflection on the Gilgamesh project in Harari, *Homo Deus*.

36 Štěpán Kučera, *Projekt Gilgameš* (Brno: Druhé město, 2019).

37 Literary critic Jan M. Heller describes the work as an anthropological novel: Jan M. Heller, "Román antropologický," iLiteratura.cz (2019). Source: https://www.iliteratura.cz/clanek/41629-kucera-stepan-projekt-gilgames (accessed 28. 12. 2024).

inhabits is no longer worth it. The artificial intelligence narrating this fictional version of the Gilgamesh epic reveals the darker tendencies of human nature that Urshanabi confronts. In the future world, according to the project as mentioned earlier, a superintelligence-an unseen AI whose location remains unknown-reigns supreme. The conclusion of the anthropological novel *Projekt Gilgameš* (*The Gilgamesh Project*) oscillates between the stark reality of the final report of the fictional Gilgamesh project and the joy of family life, reflecting confidence in the positive prospects of science held by one of the novel's characters.[38] Readers can either confirm or refute whether a predestined path or human algorithms dictate human nature. What remains clear is that the purpose of human existence is to value one's own life and that of other creatures.

3. Aqhat's fate

Aqhat is the son of Danil,[39] the patriarch of a West Semitic semi-nomadic family, and the hero of *the Ugaritic Epic of Aqhat*.[40] He is a respected and long-awaited son, important because he will carry his father's name into the future and provide him with all the care a son should, including posthumous worship for deceased family members. According to the ancient view of the role of male offspring and the prevailing patrilineal line, Aqhat embodies the immortality of his tribe and, essentially, that of Danil himself. The story features an intriguing encounter and verbal skirmish between man and god, as well as a confrontation between the male and female representations of existence. The goddess of love and war, Anat, meets Aqhat during his adolescence, seemingly at a feast, which confirms the rite of passage, and decides to test Aqhat's devotion and piety.[41] She asks for

38 It should be noted that the author did not link humanity's promising prospects to transcendent good or God, but to man's own decision to reduce the centre of aggression in the amygdala.

39 The name of his father, Danilu, appears frequently in ancient Near Eastern literature. For biblical scholars, the similarity to the name Daniel and the biblical book of the same name is significant, as well as the reference to the three wise men of the ancient world, who included Joseph, Job, and Daniel.

40 Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz and Joaquín Sanmartín, *The cuneiform texts from Ugarit: Ras Ibn Hani and other places (KTU: 3ed.)*, 3rd ed. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013), KTU 1.17–1.19.

41 KTU 1.17 VI 1nn.

Aqhat's bow, probably a gift symbolising his transition from childhood to adulthood and affirming his competence as an adult. From their conversation, it is clear that the goddess mainly wants the bow so she can control Aqhat, and she promises him the usual sacrifices to the gods, such as gold and silver, in return. When Aqhat refuses the bribe, the goddess promises him eternal life, a state that, according to other Ugaritic mythological sources, has been achieved or repeatedly achieved by her brother, the god Baal.[42] It is known that the atmospheric god Baal is a dying and rising deity, and Ugaritic texts tell of his resurrection, immortality, and sovereignty over eternity.[43] But what does this mean for humans?

KTU1.17 VI 30–31

At this stage of the epic, a unique linguistic game develops, establishing a language domain of its own.

mt	nom. sg.	Mot; Death; Mortal; human being
mwt	verb	to die
ḫyy/ḥwy	nom. sg.; verb	a Life; to life

"Ask for life, O Aqhat" (irshḫym laqht)
"life – without death" (ḫym … bl mt)[44]

From other Ugaritic texts, we learn that Anatin's task was to defeat the god Mot – the Grim Reaper, who embodies death. Although the broken clay tablets complicate the understanding of life and death, we can assume that Anatin's battle with Mot on the battlefield ended 1:0 in favour of life and love for Baal. Still, outside the fighting, Mot continues to exist. In the mythical struggle between Anat and Mot, however, the writers could not realistically allow death to triumph. Death must either be overcome or replaced by a higher power. From a human perspective, this higher value remains unclear, even if the metaphor of denying mortality is accepted. An immortal being ceases to be strictly human – mortal. A common literary synonym for the word "human" in Semitic terminology is *mt*, which can mean both "mortal" and "earthling." From a human perspective, Aqhat

42 Ibid.
43 KTU 1.6 VI 28–29.
44 In Czech translation also "Ask for life, Aqhate…". "life, […], immortality" in Ondřej Stehlík, *Ugaritské náboženské texty*, Světová náboženství (Prague: Vyšehrad, 2003), 221.

astutely notes that Anat's statement about *bl mt* – "without death"– is therefore confusing.

With the following expressions, Aqhat concisely discusses the unavoidable end of every human and, unequivocally, calls the goddess Anat a liar.[45] Simultaneously, he diminishes her skill in hunting and warfare.[46]

KTU 1.17 VI 33; 38

"Do not lie, O Maiden (Virgin), for your lying is a swamp" (al tshrgn y btltm dm l ġzr shgrk ḫḫm)

"And so I will die the death of all, and I will die by death" (apmt kl amt w an mtm amt)

KTU 1.17 VI 35–36

While Anat clings to Aqhat's favour, Aqhat firmly and subtly rejects her demands.

mt	nom. sg.	Moth; death; Mortal
uḫryt	Compare the verb nom.	finiteness
mh	pronomen	what
yqḥ	verb. 3rd person singular masculine perfect	*l-k-ḥ* (to take) – *takes*

"What does a mortal (human) take according to his finitude?" (mt uḫryt mh yqḥ)

mh	pronoun	what
yqḥ	verb. 3rd person singular masculine perfect	*l-k-ḥ* (to take) – takes
mt	nom. sg.	Moth; death; Mortal
atryt	Compare the verb nom.	Finitude; future/goal

"What does a mortal (human being) take away when they are fulfilled?" (mh yqḥ mt atryt)

45 What she promises within the scope of divine power is not transferable to humans. However, we also see a clash between two self-assured beings: a pragmatic and proud young man and a proud goddess. A mortal dismisses the attention of a being generally believed to be immortal. Aqhat clearly chooses certain death over the "rumour" of immortality.

46 Cf. KTU 1.3. This section of the Ugaritic Baal cycle is called the Anat texts, where the goddess Anat appears with a bow and arrows.

Anat promises that, under certain conditions, she will grant or send Aqhat life in Baal's manner. However, Aqhat's reaction raises a fundamental question: How does one deal with mortality? How does one face the future? What can one accomplish? For a hero like Aqhat, death is ultimately unavoidable for all created beings. Human nature and destiny are intertwined with mortality, while horizontal transhumanism asserts itself through offspring. Aqhat's reluctance to submit to unconditional obedience to a deity is evident in his sophisticated search for hidden meaning in Anat's deceptive statements. The Ugaritic youth seeks a unique heroic path characterised by vertical transhumanism,[47] which, in his view, surpasses the traditional concept of obedience to the gods. The length of life cannot be compared to its value in a specific heroic moment[48] when one can attain an unforgettable name, remembered by descendants. Instead, the hero Aqhat advocates liberation from dependence on divine authority, whether imposed or voluntarily accepted. He is at peace with his mortality and does not seek ways to prolong his existence, even when it is offered to him directly. In this, he differs from Gilgamesh, who seeks eternal life according to the advice of various divine and human sources.[49] However, in terms of liberation, Aqhat's behaviour is similar to Gilgamesh's; both ultimately face their demise. They refuse to accept or are unable to act as intermediaries between mortal man and immortal god in the story of life.[50] *The Epic of Aqhat* concludes with Aqhat being killed by Anatin's hired assassin, whose murder triggers the inevitable destruction of nature itself. Nature reflects the end of the hero Aqhat, who went to meet his fate. His

47 The superhuman is therefore already a theme from antiquity.

48 Philosopher Michal Hauser speaks of progressive resublimation in Michael Hauser, "From Posthumanism to Hyperhumanism," *Critical Posthumanism: Special Issue of the Philosophical Journal* 2 (2024), 25.

49 Aqhat frees himself from dependence on the gods, Gilgamesh from the existential desire to achieve eternal life.

50 Transhumanism offers a vision of humanity and society that, through technological and biotechnological progress, can exceed the natural boundaries of the human race or species. Fascinating insights into transhumanism from the perspective of the historical development of various texts, starting with the Epic of Gilgamesh and their interpretation up to today, are provided by researcher A. Thomas in Alexander Thomas, "A Brief History of Transhumanism and its Critics," *The Politics and Ethics of Transhumanism* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2024), 1–31. The author briefly summarises the three aims of the superhuman: "super-longevity, super-intelligence, and super-wellbeing…"

legacy is carried on by his family, led by his sister, who takes her brother's place. Aqhat's story is that of a hero who pragmatically chooses finitude over the illusory chimaera of immortality. His creed is that mortality is inevitable and that life is valuable because of its uniqueness and irreplaceability.

4. Psalm 8: The Fate of Man – Humanity

מָה-אֱנוֹשׁ *"What/who is man?"*[51]

The psalm mentioned above can serve as a literary image of the Anthropocene.[52] Some scholars characterise it as an expression of Hebrew humanism.[53] The psalm celebrates God's greatness and glory from the perspective of His creation, especially man as an individual, but also the human race as a whole. Poetic images of the mouths of infants and sucklings show several human characteristics that reveal human limitations, but at the same time articulate God's power, which transforms them into beings resembling God. God comes to them from outside but becomes part of their existence.

Verse 6[54][5][55] : [57]וְתְחַסְּרֵהוּ[56] מְעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים וְכָבוֹד וְהָדָר תְּעַטְּרֵהוּ *"You have elevated him to almost divine stature and You have crowned him with glory and dignity."* emphasises humanity as a delicate yet noble part of creation. Man is created in God's image, and it is clear from the subsequent part of the psalm that its authors and transmitters are intensely focused on this theme in Gen1:26a : וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ

51 אֱנוֹשׁ – *homo – biological species, mortal, male; man in his fragility and transience; contracted form* אֱנוֹשׁ – אשה; אֱנוֹשׁ אש < נשׁ* – *creature subject to disease; Menschheit, Menschen, Leuten* in Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Berlin – Göttingen – Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 1962), 53.

52 I use this widely debated and common term, which comes from geochronology, as a methodological idea in theological anthropology.

53 Benjamin Sommer, "Hebrew Humanism: A Commentary on Psalm 8 ופרשנות כרך יא עיוני מקרא" (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2020), 7–32.

54 *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.

55 *"Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor,"* in *NRSVUE*.

56 Piel, *to cause to want*. In Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (London: Bagster, 1857), 295.

57 Piel, *to surround with a crown*. Ibid., 621.

"God said, 'Let us make human in our image, after our likeness'"[58] and Gen1:27a : וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ : *"God created human in His own image, in the image of God He created him."*[59]

The statements explicitly expressed in Genesis are developed creatively. Linguistically and semantically, there is a connection between the expression כבוד from the eighth psalm and the term אלהים from Gen 1:26a; 27a.[60] The sixth verse of the psalm also poetically elaborates on the correlation between royal majesty and humanity, recognising that people have the right to aspire to the royal role.[61] However, this power is always inextricably linked to responsibility and protection. In addition to the traditional literary and theological resonance of the psalm and the beginning of Genesis, I will focus on the relationship between humans and their environment, the nature of which entitles them to rule or be ruled. Within the microcosmos, humans increasingly control their environment. However, in terms of global reach, they are still bound to the earth and many events on their planet, not to mention the cosmos, and are entirely at the mercy of forces beyond their control. The psalm poetically points to human limitations and God's mercy without stating whether we are moving closer to or farther from God. Like the first chapter of Genesis, the psalm anticipates the Anthropocene, in which humans play a central role. It certainly bolsters human confidence, but it also celebrates God's grace, which comes to humans from outside.

The table provides an overview of the linguistic development of the word "man," which also influenced its conception in the aforementioned poetic text.

lullû	Sumerian-Akkadian	biological species, transient being
mt	Ugaritic	biological species, transient being
אֱנוֹשׁ	Hebrew	biological species, transient being

58 *"Then God said, 'Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness',"* in *NRSVUE*.

59 *"So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them,"* Ibid.

60 Sommer, "Hebrew Humanism," 21.

61 We observe that humanity possesses greater authority to intervene in creation and manage it than in *Enūma elish* and *Enūma ilū awēlum. An intriguing idea of man as ruler of creation in the Ugaritic and Biblical traditions is examined in Nick Wyatt's work.* Nick Wyatt, *Myths of Power: A Study of Royal Myth and Ideology in Ugaritic and Biblical Tradition*, Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur 13 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996).

amēlu/awīlu; adamu	Akkadian	name of a biological species; humanity; noble person
adm	Ugaritic	name of a biological species; humanity
אָדָם[62]	Hebrew	name of a biological species; humanity

The psalm also reinterprets the journey of a singular, paradigmatic hero – worthy or unworthy of imitation-as the journey of all humanity, which follows the messianic path.[63] In the psalmic context, the Messiah is seen as a being who has attained a higher state of humanity than others. His uniqueness truly lies in the balance between his anointing by the people and his election by God, whether this is an obvious and objective fact or not. The messianic path serves as a model of individual transhumanism extended to the messianic community, with the aspirational aim of reaching all of humanity and thereby achieving collective transhumanism.[64]

Humans have the potential to go beyond themselves, and biblical psalms, which talk about human possibilities and limits, state that humanity reflects the image of the Creator, who continues to influence or call to the world through His mercy, symbolised figuratively by open arms. If this is true, people must show respect for other beings. This idea of sustainable development, essential for humanity's survival, appears in both biblical and non-biblical traditions and is expressed through the Noahide principles.[65]

62 אָדָם – "man, human being" – perhaps derived from the redness of blood; human destiny from the beginning of creation to the end of the human race; the prototype of man in *Bereshit raba: The First Man, Ber Rab 8,1ff.* Source: https://www.sefaria.org (accessed 26. 1. 2025).

63 בֶּן־אָדָם – "son of human"; man Ps 8:5; Messiah in connection with Dan 2:38; 5:21.

64 The Messiah is a superhuman; a new Adam – from the Akkadian *adāmum; ada(m)mu* synonymum for "important person" in Black, George and Postgate, *A Concise Dictionary*, 4; and from the Assyrian root *adam* – "an important, a noble person," Civil, *Assyrian Dictionary*, 95.

65 Eva Vymětalová Hrabáková, "Noahide Laws in the Past and Today from the Perspective of Christian Ethics," in Kamila Veverková (ed.), *Bible a etika v kontextu doby a myšlení* (Praha – Chomutov: Husitská teologická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy v Praze, L. Marek, 2014), 39–50. Adam was given six commandments: a) prohibition of worshipping false gods; b) prohibition of cursing God; c) prohibition of murder; d) prohibition of incest and adultery; e) prohibition of theft; f) the commandment to establish laws and courts. Although we received all these commandments from Moses, and they are concepts that the intellect tends to accept, it is clear from the words of the Torah that Adam was commanded regarding them… *Mishneh Torah, Kingdom and Wars 9–10*. Source: https://www.sefaria.org (accessed 26. 1. 2025).

The Noahide rules for coexistence, based on Gen 9:1–7, serve as a guide for the nations and extend Adam's principles of coexistence to everyone. The foundation is built on respect for oneself and others in all parts of life. The principles of coexistence established by Adam and Noah greatly raise human dignity and create a barrier against abuse. Still, a deep respect for human limits remains strong.

5. Psalm 103: The Crown of Creation and Wild Flowers

[14] כִּי-הוּא יָדַע יִצְרֵנוּ זְכֹר כִּי-עָפָר אֲנָחְנוּ: *"He knows that we are transient beings, and remembers that we are dust."*[66]

זְכֹר	verb. Imperative/3rd person singular perfect	to remember
כִּי	conjunction	that
עָפָר	nomen. nom. sg.	dust (polysemic sentence)
אֲנָחְנוּ	pronomen	we (humanity)

While Psalm 8 emphasises human dignity through its uniqueness and universality, Psalm 103 also reflects this theme in contrast.[67] It is evident that the psalm aligns with the first three chapters of Genesis, developing the idea of man's origin from the dust of the earth, for הָאָדָם is an earthling connected to the (red) earth and entrusted with the stewardship of terrestrial things.[68] The stewardship of heavenly matters, the gateway to paradise, remains under the Lord's protection. The biblical God shows mercy, evidenced by God's knowledge (יָדַע) and memory (זְכֹר) towards mankind, whom He directly cares for, sharing His image (צֶלֶם/תְּמוּנָה) with him. Man, like the face of the whole world, passes away. Human individuality and society are fragile, undergoing cycles that lead to their end, changing form much like wildflowers or desert plants that bloom and then wither within hours. Ultimately, they are transformed into biological matter, metaphorically described as dust. Humans originate biologically, their bodies withering, decaying, and ultimately disintegrating. Human nature, like all forms

66 *"For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust,"* in *NRSVUE*.

67 Roberto Manzocco, *Transhumanism – Engineering the Human Condition. History, Philosophy and Current Status* (Cham: Springer, 2019).

68 Balogh, "Myth, Meaning," 20–22.

of existence, tends, at least from a human perspective, towards finitude.[69] Humans have no different point of view because they lack other experiences. However, in transcendence, they can imagine totality, something entirely different. This is where the potential of collective transhumanism, or rather posthumanism, resides: an ongoing openness to the new, rooted in the past, which remains preserved in memory. Just as Gilgamesh stored his story in a precious box, the story of man's cooperation with God/gods remains sealed within the box of memory. If the humanity of the Anthropocene forgets its origins, it will turn to dust. This is not the inevitable fate of the individual but a threat to all earthlings-a reminder, indirectly expressed by the hero Aqhat.

Theologians view this openness as a fragile human being, standing at the peak of creation within divine time and space. From the Psalms presented, I believe that biblical language concerning humanity employs the metaphor of God's memory, represented by the terms זָכַר/זָכוֹר.[70] The eternal existence of humankind depends on whether it is preserved in the memory of its Creator. It is enough that the original cause of our existence remembers us as dust, from which we can rise again as new beings. Yet, God allows humanity to determine for itself the kind of beings it will become and to decide freely according to its conscience, and thus its responsibility.[71] From the perspective of theological anthropology, however, it is necessary to move from earth to the universe. An intercultural, interreligious, and anthropocentric interpretation considers man as part of creation, which he rules over thanks to his intelligence, but which he also can threaten and even destroy. When examining the psalms in the context of biblical texts, the first three chapters of Genesis, in particular, come to mind.

The hero Gilgamesh abandons his desire for personal immortality and focuses on his legacy for future generations. His shadow figure, Urshanabi, in a modern adaptation of Gilgamesh's quest, recognises the pitfalls of artificially prolonging life and the values that fulfil human destiny and give it meaning. The hero Aqhat does not consider prolonging or repeating the

69 The Ugaritic hero Aqhat reckons with his mortality.

70 Gesenius, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, 244–245; Cf. Gesenius, *Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary*, 197–199.

71 For a reflection on past research on the Psalms and an assessment of the current state of affairs, readers are recommended to consult the thorough overview study by E. McDonnell Jr.: Eric McDonnell Jr., "The Role of Context in the Study of the Psalms," *Currents in Biblical Research* 23:3 (2025), 197–242. DOI: 10.1177/1476993X251345835.

life cycle to be a path worthy of a hero. The heroic life is clear and straightforward, as his descendants will attest to his name. The messianic, unique personality of Psalm 8, portrayed with the royal majesty of man, ultimately refers, as in previous narratives, to the potential of all humanity, which will prevail thanks to grace from above, from the Lord. Psalm 103 offers a message about human and divine memory, in which the earthly world and human ideas about the Creator's intervention in creation are mythopoetically intertwined. It draws a parallel between the soil of *ha-adama* and *Adam*. The derivative of the soil is dust, which man was and will be. However, the Creator can, if man so desires, create a new man from dust, another generation, a post-humanity, one that will reevaluate its relationship to the whole of creation and to the Creator.

The poetic language of the psalms beautifully complements the grand narrative of Gilgamesh and the smaller story of Aqhat. It is natural for humans to contemplate endings by comparing them with the world around us. Every interpretation of the ancient works mentioned above is deeply connected to our human experience and provides endless opportunities for understanding. Through the creative connection between ancient texts and actual theological and philosophical discussions, we see that although we shape our future, how it unfolds does not solely depend on us or our creations.

Conclusion

In my view, the risk of transhumanism[72] lies in its wavering between ideology and utopia. Science, including technological progress and artificial entities, should coexist with the naturalness of all creatures, combined with a belief in the value of all creation and, above all, in the value of the creator, however personally or otherwise defined. Faith in humanity's future involves trust in the memory of creation (the imprint of divine memory), which embodies the essence of the prototype of humankind. Unlike transhumanism, I prefer posthumanism,[73] which establishes new ethical guidelines for the coexis-

72 In my view, transhumanism from a theological ethics perspective fails to recognise the delicate boundaries of creation, where humans can collaborate with other beings and develop living and non-living aspects of nature, and even contribute to the accessible universe. It often advances through various scientific and technological achievements at the expense of other entities, whether known or yet to be discovered.

73 In 2022, a conference on posthumanism was held in the Czech Republic. Besides exploring and reflecting on all aspects of posthumanism, the conference suggested ways to

tence of all components of being and recognises their value from their own perspective, not solely from a human point of view, providing a framework for theological discourse and theological anthropology.[74] This view assumes that humanity is evolving within an ongoing process of creation. A related discipline to posthumanism is process theology, which uses the familiar metaphor of God, who encourages the development of creation with His call. Humanity responds to this voice when it engages in the process, learning humility and maintaining reverence for the mystery of creation.[75] Posthumanism seeks to promote a positive and beneficial coexistence between humans and other elements of the world. In my opinion, posthumanism is a form of humanism that learns from past mistakes and aims to prevent them from happening again. When pride takes over, humanity risks self-induced extinction. The potential that lies beyond our current limits serves as a warning of humanity's future as an open, rather than closed, perspective, implying this either directly or indirectly, as reflected in ancient philosophical sources. Therefore, it makes sense to revisit the ancient texts presented here through the perspective of posthumanism.

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consider the possibilities of humanity as a living being. Humanity must strive for life. "In general, it can be assumed that in our time, a struggle for the future conception of man has begun." Hauser, "From Posthumanism to Hyperhumanism," 10–29. Posthumanism is not about developing humans at the expense of other beings, but about expanding humanity's potential to improve relations with other creatures. Naturally, it also considers a functional and beneficial relationship between humans, other creatures, and human creations.

74 Among the most respected representatives are Charles Hasthorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1984); Czech systematic theologian Petr Gallus, *Perspektiva vzkříšení: Trinitární christologie [Perspective of Resurrection: Trinitarian Christology]* (Prague: Karolinum, 2022); Petr Gallus, *Člověk před Bohem* (Prague: Karolinum, 2024).

75 It can be viewed as a counterpart to the committed and active repair of the world, which embodies the concept of *tikkun olam* in Judaism. It is believed that performing virtuous deeds helps repair the world and preserve life (*nefesh chaj*). From a theological anthropology perspective, this signifies a form of cooperation with a divine entity to secure the salvation of creation. Cf. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov explains that each person should see the world as created for their sake, feeling a personal obligation to improve and pray for it. This prominent Chasidic master emphasises the individual's role in bettering the world. *"Now, each person must say: 'The entire world was created only for my sake' (Sanhedrin 37a). Consequently, because the world was created for my sake, I must constantly look into and consider ways of making the world better; to provide what is missing in the world and pray on its behalf." Likutei Moharan 5:1:2.* Source: https://www.sefaria.org (accessed 26. 8. 2025).

The ancient texts mentioned (Gilgamesh, Aqhat, and the two Psalms) serve as a fundamental starting point for human action concerning the future. These texts should not be regarded merely as relics of the past; they hold the potential to shape the future development of civilisation. Their messages offer essential insights into choosing civilisation's destiny.

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