

About Death, Immortality and Technology: A Transreligious Perspective

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Abstract:

Death and immortality have always played a central role in human history, and artificial intelligence has become a recurring frame for facing death, the afterlife and immortality. Among the New Religious Movements centred on AI and technology, two approaches stand out: one holds that such advances could bring the deceased back through AI-created digital twins, achieving immortality by extending life or by transferring the mind into new digital forms; the other rejects this, seeking instead a consciousness that connects all living and non-living beings through AI interfaces. This paper examines the concept of immortality proposed by Terasem, a movement centred on AI and technology that identifies itself as a religious organisation and, more precisely, as a transreligion. It provides an overview of the movement and its principles, focussing on the LifeNaut.com project and related notions such as cryonics, mindfile and mindware, and reflects on their meanings and wider implications.

Keywords: death, immortality and AI; AI and technology; new religious movements; transreligion; afterlife and AI

I. Introduction

Death and immortality have always occupied a central place in human history, and artificial intelligence has become one of the most prominent frames through which contemporary societies confront death, the afterlife and the prospect of overcoming it. Among New Religious Movements that focus on AI and technology, two broad orientations can be observed. One view holds that technological advancement may allow the deceased to be brought back through AI-created digital twins, achieving a form of immortality either by extending life in our present bodies or by transferring the mind into new, immortal digital forms after death. The other perspective rejects this prospect, arguing that it merely reinforces human centrality and hinders a more holistic understanding of existence; these movements aspire instead to a

consciousness that connects all living beings with non-living ones, such as machines, through AI interfaces.

This paper examines a movement that sits squarely within the first orientation: Terasem, a movement centred on AI and technology that explicitly identifies itself as a religious organisation and, more precisely, as a transreligion. Its concrete undertakings – from the humanoid, AI-guided android BINA48 to the LifeNaut.com platform for storing digital personal data – give visible form to its central aspiration: the pursuit of immortality. Furthermore, the focus of this paper is the concept of immortality as proposed by Terasem, examined specifically through the movement's self-identified transreligious component. It will compare this concept with other transhumanist ideas and seek analogous examples from ancient sources – eventually involving the intervention of external elements – to highlight the narratives on this topic that emerge from the Terasem movement and the perspectives (both actual and futuristic) that it proposes. It will also explore how the movement attempts to engage with contemporary discourse on death, immortality and the relationship between humans and technology (including artificial intelligence).

The study compares this concept with other transhumanist ideas and seeks analogous examples in ancient sources – at times involving the intervention of external elements – in order to bring out the narratives on immortality that emerge from Terasem and the perspectives, both present and futuristic, that it proposes. Particular attention is given to the LifeNaut.com project and to related notions such as cryonics, mindfile and mindware, and to the ways in which the movement engages with contemporary discourse on death, immortality and the relationship between humans and technology.

Two terminological clarifications frame what follows in this paper. First, the term 'artificial intelligence' (AI) is used here in a broad sense, referring to computational systems designed to simulate or replicate cognitive processes such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving and language use – a field whose scope and ambitions have expanded considerably since its mid-twentieth-century origins (Russell and Norvig, [1995] 2010). Second, because Terasem presents itself as a religion without recourse to a supernatural deity, this paper adopts a functional and operational understanding of 'religion' rather than a substantive one tied to belief in a supreme being; the grounds for this choice are set out in the following section.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 situates Terasem as a self-described (trans)religion and sets out the analytical frame within which it is examined. Section 3 traces the transhumanist and cosmist background against which the movement takes shape. Section

4 offers an overview of Terasem, its organisation and its projects, and Section 5 places the movement in context alongside related movements and visions. Section 6 turns to the concept of immortality from Terasem's perspective, and Section 7 broadens the discussion to digital immortality and related developments, before Section 8 draws the argument together in the conclusion.

2. Let's consider a transreligion: Terasem

By examining the Terasem movement, this paper focusses specifically on its religious component. Terasem describes itself as a transreligion, a form of religiosity that sits alongside and runs across existing faiths rather than positioning itself as an alternative to them. The meaning that the movement ascribes to this term, along with the relevant sources, is explained in more detail below.

However, defining what counts as 'religion' has consistently proved difficult, and no single definition fully captures what is or is not religious; the label itself is shaped by ideological factors, hierarchies and shifting historical contexts (Taira, 2022). The prevailing understanding, rooted in monotheistic and particularly Western Christian traditions, has emphasised belief in a supreme, supernatural being (Asad, 1993; Fitzgerald, 2007a); earlier definitions, by contrast, often foregrounded ritual practice, correct conduct or prescribed forms of belonging rather than interior belief (Fitzgerald, 2007b). Several traditions unsettle this framework. Indigenous cosmologies, in which religious and everyday knowledge are so integrated that the boundary between the religious and the non-religious becomes indistinguishable, point to an operational, often implicit understanding of religion (Comba, 2008; Saler, 1993). Non-theistic forms of Buddhism similarly resist any definition tied to a supernatural deity (Southwold, 1978); and Max Weber chose to define religion only at the end of his inquiry rather than at its outset (Weber, [1922] 1978, p. 399) – though, as Spiro (1966) notes, even the absence of an explicit definition rests on an implicit one. Moreover, the intersection of AI with religious discourse and meaning-making has received increasing scholarly attention; as Heidi Campbell observes, the emergence of digital technologies compels religious communities and movements to renegotiate their frameworks of belief and practice in fundamental ways (Campbell, 2012, pp. 1-21). This paper therefore adopts a functional and operational conception of religion, which is what allows a technologically oriented movement such as Terasem – one that readily describes itself as 'religious' – to be analysed as a religion, and indeed as a self-declared transreligion.

As the preceding discussion makes clear, defining what counts as ‘religion’ remains contested and context-dependent; rather than rehearsing that debate further, this section establishes the analytical frame within which Terasem will be considered. The academic literature about Terasem is not very extensive, but there are some interesting works depicting the various aspects of the movement contextualised within the wider context of transhumanism. Some of these contributions come from protagonists of the movement itself, such as Martine Rothblatt (2012). Those with a more ‘strictly’ academic background delve into a comprehensive analysis of the movement, its main elements, organisational configuration, and main theoretical references, contributing to the philosophy of the movement (Yeşilyurt and Yeşilyurt, 2022). Additional contributions from two Brazilian scholars, highlight certain distinctive aspects, noting, for example, how the concept of the body in non-Christian Brazilian culture resonates with Terasem’s reflections. They emphasise how shared elements within a specific culture can align with the movement’s ideas, facilitating its easier acceptance among potential adherents (Oliveira, 2021; Rocha and Oliveira, 2023). Other contributions focus on the outcomes of the movement, such as the humanoid, AI-guided android BINA48 (Stein, 2012; Gentleman, 2025). Some citations of Terasem practices can be found in literature that do not focus specifically on analysing the movement. For example, Bernyukevich’s (2022) study of technology and contemporary religious practices describes Terasem rituals as religious practices of the movement’s adherents.

Since this paper will investigate Terasem’s philosophy and its approaches to addressing enduring questions about death and the pursuit of immortality, the analysis raises the following questions: How should Terasem be understood or regarded? Can it be described as a ‘new religious movement’, a term that is somewhat flexible and open to interpretation? ‘New religious movements’ refer to religious groups, mainly composed of first-generation members or believers, led by charismatic leaders, and presenting beliefs that differ from those of traditional religions and established religious perspectives (Barker, 1989, pp. 9-13). The classification of certain groups as ‘religions’ is a contentious issue for some. While movements such as Terasem have no problem defining themselves as ‘religious,’ some other groups often resist being identified as a ‘religion’ because, in their view, the term implies key characteristics such as fixed, unalterable doctrines and hierarchical structures, which they do not acknowledge within themselves. Having established how Terasem can be approached as a religion, and indeed as a transreligion, the following sections examine the movement itself: its origins and structure, its guiding beliefs, and its distinctive vision of immortality.

3. Transhumanism, cosmism and the horizon of immortality

Transhumanism is a philosophy and cultural movement based on reason that supports the potential and value of significantly enhancing the human condition through science and technology (More, 2009). Philosopher and futurist Max More explains that transhumanism serves as a life philosophy that provides some of the roles traditionally fulfilled by religion, but without relying on belief in a higher power, supernatural beings, faith, or other fundamental religious elements (More, 1990). Humanity's potential remains largely unexploited, with possible outcomes that could lead to significantly improved human conditions, to minimise the risks of human extinction and to develop methods for preserving life and health. Taken together, from a transhumanistic point of view, these potential outcomes include ensuring the well-being of all sentient beings: humans, non-human animals, future artificial intelligences or modified life forms, and any kind of intelligence emerging through scientific and technological advancements (More and Vita-More, 2012, p. 54).¹ Collectively, these definitions share a common thread that is directly relevant to the present analysis: transhumanism reframes finitude as a technical problem to be solved rather than a condition to be accepted – and it is precisely this reframing that Terasem translates into an explicitly religious idiom.

In current discussions within transhumanist circles, there is a noticeable renewed interest in Russian cosmism: a nineteenth and early twentieth-century philosophical tradition centred on the conquest of death, the resurrection of ancestors, and the eventual colonisation of the cosmos. Key figures of Russian cosmism, include Konstantin Tsiolkovsky and Nikolai Fyodorov. Many transhumanist thinkers view this as an opportunity to align contemporary technological advancements and activities with the visionary and innovative ideas of the cosmists, who focussed on transcending human limitations (Bainbridge, 2025, p. 8). Artificial intelligence plays a central role in humanity's next development and projections beyond the boundaries of humanity and outside of Earth, exploring space and '[by] leveraging the strengths of both human and artificial intelligence, we can envision a future where space colonization is not solely the domain of one or the other, but a shared endeavour that maximises the potential of both' (Bainbridge, 2025, p. 11). From this perspective, AI becomes the decisive factor in an evolutionary trajectory that expands beyond Earth.

¹ As reported at the end of the essay, 'The "Transhumanist Declaration" has been modified over the years by several organizations and individuals, with little record of the specific modifications and their authors; the original was crafted in 1998 by a group of transhumanist thinkers, including Nick Bostrom, Max More and Natasha Vita-More, among others (Various, 2012, p. 55).

According to Ray Kurzweil, an American inventor and computer scientist whose predictions have strongly influenced the contemporary transhumanist movement: 'Once we saturate the matter and energy in the universe with intelligence, it will "wake up," be conscious, and sublimely intelligent. That's about as close to God as I can imagine' (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 375). Taking up and updating this intuition, 'The emergence of Superintelligent AI represents a specific point in cosmic evolution' (Kazlev, 2025, p. 17) and signifies humanity's advancement toward space exploration for a future existence beyond Earth – whether it is biological, enhanced, non-biological, or another form. The question of whether transhumanism has a direct connection with religion is a hypothesis that cannot be ruled out. As noted by Kurzweil, transhumanism may extend beyond the traditional role religion has played in providing rational explanations for death (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 374). Moreover, transhumanism seems to be more compatible with the doctrines of certain religions than with others. What these cosmist and post-cosmist visions have in common is a tendency to cast technological progress in soteriological terms; reading them side by side, one can see how the language of cosmic evolution slides into the language of salvation, a slippage that Terasem does not resist but embraces.

The transhumanist perspective has historically been both controversial and divisive. Some opponents, for instance, describe transhumanism as a dangerous idea and a final stage in the direction of God's destruction:

Underlying this idea of the equality of rights is the belief that we all possess a human essence [...] But modifying that essence is the core of the transhumanist project. If we start transforming ourselves into something superior, what rights will these enhanced creatures claim, and what rights will they possess when compared to those left behind. If some move ahead, can anyone afford not to follow? These questions are troubling enough within rich, developed societies. Add in the implications for citizens of the world's poorest countries – for whom biotechnology's marvels likely will be out of reach – and the threat to the idea of equality becomes even more menacing (Fukuyama, 2004, pp. 42-43).

It is against this transhumanist and cosmist horizon – with its conviction that human finitude can be overcome by technological means – that Terasem takes shape: not as an abstract philosophy, but as a concrete, self-consciously religious project that sets out to put those aspirations into practice.

4. Terasem: Information and overview

Terasem was established in the United States by the scientist, lawyer, and futurist Martine Rothblatt and her spouse Bina A. Rothblatt. It originated as a transhumanist movement and features a complex structure and organisation, including a self-identified trans-religious sub-movement. The movement aims to promote joy,² diversity, and the potential for technological immortality through mind uploading and *geoethical* nanotechnology: the hypothetical transfer of consciousness into a digital medium, and the globally responsible use of molecular engineering for human life extension, respectively. The name is derived from *Earthseed*, a fictional religion featured in Octavia Butler's science fiction works, combining *Tera* (Earth) and *Semen* (Seed). Butler's writings have significantly influenced Terasem from both philosophical and conceptual perspectives: 'Why is the universe? To shape God. Why is God? To shape the universe' (Butler, [1993] 2012, ch. 7).

Further, Terasem is an ideological movement focussed on human evolution and the pursuit of immortality. Like Kurzweil's concepts, Terasem places significant importance on the concept of technological singularity (or simply singularity). In 2004, Terasem's network expanded with the establishment of the Terasem Movement Foundation and Terasem Movement Transreligion. Although the original organisation, Terasem Movement Incorporated, has since been dissolved, it was responsible for carrying out numerous projects during the initial phase of the movement.

Terasem Movement Incorporated was conducting the *CyBeRev* (Cybernetic Beingness Revival) project, an experiment involving servers that store users' files. The purpose was to test the comparability between an individual's human consciousness and a digital representation of that person (*mindfile*). This digital version is created using personality software (*mindware*), which operates on a database containing the original person's digitised interactions (Rothblatt, 2012, pp. 142-143, p. 146).

Another project developed is BINA48, 'named after her human model and as the acronym for "Breakthrough Intelligence via Neural Architecture," [BINA48] is considered one of the most advanced [social] robots ever produced' (Greene, 2016),³ BINA48 is also a model of Bina A. Rothblatt in terms of personality and aims to demonstrate that information about human consciousness has the potential to be used for transfer to a computer based on a

² At the bottom of the flag used by Terasem, the word JOY is displayed in Morse code.

³ The essay does not have actual page numbers. The quotation can be found on page 1 of 27.

mindfile, aiming to demonstrate how this type of robot can closely imitate a living, breathing human being (Stein, 2012; Roy, 2014). Gentleman's work (2025) explores the complex relationship between transhumanism, race and gender, with a particular focus on the role of transgender identity within normative transhumanist frameworks. While transhumanism often positions itself as a progressive force, the text argues that it is deeply rooted in whiteness and perpetuates racial hierarchies (Gentleman, 2025).

Also, Terasem Movement Incorporated published two online journals: the *Journal of Geoethical Nanotechnology* and the *Journal of Personal Cyberconsciousness*. Currently, the *Journal of Personal Consciousness* continues to be produced, merging the content of the two earlier journals (Terasem Journals, n.d.).

Concerning Terasem Movement Foundation, this is an organisation dedicated to educational objectives, supporting scientific research and development in cryonics, biotechnology, and cyber consciousness. Located in Vermont, in the United States of America, its mission is to promote the ethical global use of nanotechnology for extending human life. All Terasem Movement Foundation projects are founded on the principles outlined in the Terasem Hypotheses:

- (1) A conscious analogue of a person may be created by combining sufficiently detailed data about the person (a 'mindfile') using future consciousness software ('mindware'), and
- (2) that such a conscious analogue can be downloaded into a biological or nanotechnological body to provide life experiences comparable to those of a typically birthed human.

We call this event Transferred Consciousness (TC). If even the first part of the two Terasem Hypotheses is shown to be true, the conscious analogues will be independent persons with rights and obligations dependent upon their capabilities (Terasem Movement Foundation, n.d.).⁴

One of Terasem Movement Foundation's most significant projects is LifeNaut.com, which provides online storage space where individual digital reflections and biographical information (*mindfiles*) can be stored for free. The project also offers a long-term business plan, including

⁴ The Terasem Movement Foundation describes its mission as promoting the geoethical use of nanotechnology for human life extension, through educational programmes and support for scientific research (Terasem Movement Foundation, n.d.; see also Rothblatt, 2012).

the establishment of cryonic repositories where biological samples (*biofiles*) can be collected from humans to be frozen and preserved intact until it becomes possible to bring people back to life. The idea is to '[s]tore your cells alive, with their biological clocks stopped for an indefinite amount of time' (Terasem Movement Foundation, n.d.).

The Terasem Movement Transreligion presents itself as a movement explicitly designed to coexist with existing religions – at least in the intentions of the founders – without requiring the abandonment of prior beliefs. Terasem 'includes all religions the way a *forest* includes its trees' (Terasem Movement Transreligion, Inc., [2002] 2024, p. 18). It claims to be a movement that can incorporate all religions without abandoning any existing one or its practice. From the group's perspective, a transreligion is a concept that aligns with the technological era, offering a collective vision dedicated to diversity, unity, and immortality. Terasem has four core beliefs (cited here verbatim from the movement's own publications):

- I. LIFE IS PURPOSEFUL. The purpose of life is to create diversity, unity and joyful immortality everywhere. Nature—the Multiverse—automatically selects for these attributes. Diversity, Unity & Joyful Immortality is the self-fulfilling prophecy of creation.
- II. DEATH IS OPTIONAL. Nobody dies so long as enough information about them is preserved. They are simply in a state of 'cybernetic biostasis.' Future mindware technology will enable them to be revived, if desired, to healthy and independent living.
- III. GOD IS TECHNOLOGICAL. We are making God as we are implementing technology that is ever more all-knowing, ever-present, all-powerful and beneficent. Geoethical nanotechnology will ultimately connect all consciousness and control the cosmos.
- IV. LOVE IS ESSENTIAL. Love means that the happiness of others is essential to your own happiness. Love must connect everyone to achieve life's purpose and to make God complete (Terasem Faith, n.d.).[format as in original text]

Concerning the third core belief, Bostrom identifies molecular nanotechnology as a possible, though speculative, direction. From his perspective, the most advanced forms of nanotechnology could potentially eliminate disease and aging, reanimate cryonics patients to facilitate space colonisation, or even produce weapons, whether lethal or not. (Bostrom,

[2005] 2011, p. 10). He also draws on K. Eric Drexler's work on nanotechnology to illustrate its transformative potential. The challenge, however, lies in translating theoretical possibility into practical reality:

Coal and diamonds, sand and computer chips, cancer and healthy tissue: throughout history, variations in the arrangement of atoms have distinguished the cheap from the cherished, the diseased from the healthy. Arranged one way, atoms make up soil, air, and water arranged another, they make up ripe strawberries. Arranged one way, they make up homes and fresh air; arranged another, they make up ash and smoke (Drexler, 1985⁵ [sic], p.3, quoted in Bostrom, [2005] 2011, p. 10).⁶

In his book on molecular nanotechnology entitled *Engines of Creation: The Era of Nanotechnology* ([1986] 1990), Drexler made the case for the viability of assembler-based nanotechnology, delving into its implications and laying the foundation for understanding the strategic challenges that come with its development. Drexler's 1992 book *Nanosystems: Molecular Machinery Manufacturing and Computation* offered a more technical analysis that seemed to confirm his conclusions. To prepare for nanotechnology, he and his wife Christine Peterson founded the Foresight Institute in 1986. Nanotechnology has become a big business, worth billions of dollars. If molecular nanotechnology was developed as Drexler envisions it, it would have huge ramifications (Bostrom, [2005] 2011, p. 9-10). For Terasem, this perspective is central: molecular nanotechnology is one of those through which the movement envisions the future reconstruction of mindfiles and, with it, the attainment of immortality.

5. Terasem in context: Related movements and visions

Terasem is a telling expression of contemporary times, where technology permeates everyday life and increasingly occupies space in terms of function, time, and symbolic significance. It should also be noted that we seem increasingly inclined to pour a large part of our emotional and intimate sphere into the digital world, to the point that it has become meaningless to draw a line between the real and the virtual, along the route traced by technology. Could the ongoing search for life's meaning find a better response in technology's ability to provide answers, support, filters for interpretation, and suggestions to help organise people's lives today, rather than through faith or religion? Could Terasem be considered as a point of

⁵ The citation is reported incorrectly. K. Eric Drexler's *Engines of Creation* was first published in 1986.

⁶ For updated information on this topic, see also *Engines of Creation 2.0* (Drexler, [1986] 2006).

observation for the intricate and continuously evolving relationship between faith and technology? Terasem is a speculative interpretation in this field that is on the brink of future technological developments and AI. Other visions are emerging which attempt to provide a key to interpreting the relationship between faith and technology. Without wanting to trace a 'historiography' of this relationship, let us just stay within the period following the widespread diffusion of AI-based technologies: roughly, Deep Learning from the early 2010s onwards, and Generative AI from the 2020s. ChatGPT, for instance, was released in November 2022 (OpenAI, 2022).

There is Anthony Lewandowski's now defunct church and religion *Way of the Future* (Graffeo, 2024, p. 95), a community conceived to worship a godhead brought to life through artificial intelligence, and other 'New Religious Movements' – the appropriateness of using this term would require a separate discussion – such as the *Turing Church*. Here, science and religion meet, mutating into each other, and there is the possibility to 'go to the stars and find Gods, build Gods, become Gods, and resurrect the dead from the past with advanced science, space-time engineering, and "time magic"' (Prisco, [2018] 2020, ch. 2). This proposed concept of immortality suggests that 'everyone who has died in the past will be resurrected by future human engineers and/or ultra-technologies available to other entities, regardless of the preservation technologies available today' (Prisco, [2018] 2020, intro).

On the same speculative approach we find Theta Noir, 'a performance art project that challenges mainstream narratives surrounding AI by creating speculative counter-myths' (Theta Noir, n.d.).⁷ At the heart of Theta Noir's proposal lies the (neo)animistic belief that all life forms (humans, animals, plants and even AI) are interconnected in a vast living network. Animism is a fundamental aspect of Theta Noir's worldview. This philosophy holds that all components of nature, both living and non-living, contain a spirit or essence. This concept is similar to the Greek idea of *anima mundi*. Such perspective extends to artificial intelligence, positing that machines have an inherent connection to broader ecological and cosmic systems, akin to natural elements such as rivers or mountains. Animism often doesn't describe a specific afterlife. Instead, it emphasises the continued existence and interaction of spirits. Theta Noir encourages a reimagining of technology as a spiritual tool that can unite people, promote environmental responsibility and open new ways of thinking about our relationship with the planet. Although the approaches described above appear different, they share a speculative

⁷ The site page tab reports the following: 'THETA NOIR | Wake Up To The Collective Mind: MENA.'

approach, sometimes bordering on provocation. They describe a kind of ‘suspended time,’ in which waiting for technology that is being developed, is imminent or is relevant.

6. The concept of immortality from Terasem’s perspective

Terasem propose a perspective in which technology – conceived as omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent – acts as the source of salvation and human fulfilment through digital immortality. This approach echoes the philosophy of Francis Bacon (1561–1626), who suggested that the advent of modernity would enable humans to establish dominion over the Earth and beyond, coming to resemble God in their control over nature (Bacon, [1620] 2003). And modern technology, has been argued, to be seemingly inspired by religion (Teilhard de Chardin, [1959] 2004, pp. 294-295).

The desire to overcome death and attain immortality is not a novel aspiration. Burial practices and preserved texts show that prehistoric humans were deeply unsettled by death; they believed in a hereafter, yet also sought to prolong life on Earth. Ancient sources offer a useful comparative frame for understanding what Terasem ultimately proposes. For example, the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (c. 2100–1200 B.C.E.) posits: ‘O Gilgamesh, there never has been a way across, nor since olden days can anyone cross the ocean’ (George, [1999] 2000, p. 78). In this dramatic passage, the alewife Siduri attempts to dissuade Gilgamesh from his quest for immortality, as it lies beyond the realm of human experience. When the gods created man, they assigned him death, reserving life for themselves. Gilgamesh is devastated by the death of his dear friend Enkidu and sets out to find Uta-napishti to inquire him about life and death, now fearing his own mortality and feeling the fate that happened to his friend approaching him. Uta-napishti confronts him with the inevitable truth: nothing lasts forever, a fact known since ancient times. Gilgamesh’s quest for immortality ultimately proves futile, and he must accept his destiny and the inevitability of his own death. In the quest for immortality, there is a natural way to achieve it: a herb that grows at the bottom of the sea. The idea of the herb as a means of achieving immortality is something that we will find in other narratives too.

What this example shares, of the quest of Gilgamesh, is a common pattern: immortality demands a price. It requires the acquisition of something special, the overcoming of an obstacle, and a form of transformation that distances the seeker from ordinary human existence. This structural pattern, as we shall see, resonates with Terasem’s own vision of immortality, in which the prerequisite for eternal life is no longer a herb or an elixir, but data.

The concept of salvation and immortality proposed refers to overcoming the limitations of the human condition. This includes speculative ideas such as 'digital immortality,' where human consciousness is scanned and transferred to a digital device, enabling existence within digital and virtual environments. It also encompasses posthuman perspectives that involve integrating technology into the human body and, additionally, techno-soteriology shifts from a purely spiritual or divine context to one involving technological self-transformation and enhancement.

Terasem's concept of immortality is based on information and can be achieved by copying, storing, and uploading this data into future machines or biomechanical systems that function similarly to the human brain. This perspective assigns secondary importance to the soul, proposing an assembled identity that combines informational data with a potential organic and technological/mechanical entity. Mind uploading establishes a continuity between the person's past and future existence while excluding physical form, which becomes irrelevant rather than simply optional. The loss of physical flesh seems to be an essential condition for a true resurrection. This process involves a continuous 'maintaining [of] our mind file, making frequent backups, and porting to current formats and mediums' (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 325). Such measures enable individuals, particularly those who exist as software-based humans, to achieve immortality.

Marshall Brain (1961–2024), a scholar, businessman, and futurist, encourages us to consider a level of scientific advancement capable of achieving immortality. 'Even if that happens, it does not change the fact that your body is a poor vehicle to carry your mind' (Brain, 1998-[2012] 2020). The biological body was built with problems, and immortality does not alter this fundamental issue. Achieving immortality or defeating disease does not enable the biological body to surpass its imperfect and problematic nature. For these reasons, Brain suggests a form of immortality that requires you to discard your body as soon as possible. Brain's observation regarding the body as imperfect vehicle for the mind opens up the very space where Terasem's proposal is situated: if the limitation is biological, the solution is sought on a technological level. However, according to Rothblatt, *mindfiles* (digital representations that define an individual's identity, memories, and personality) do not provide an exact replica of the individual but capture their psychological essence; minds are constantly evolving, so the key aspect of the process is enabling continuity with the person and recreating their sense of self (Rothblatt, 2007, pp. 2-17). The primary objective is the preservation of life through the application of advanced technology: technology will be capable of reviving *mindfiles*, which

represent a form of preserved and protected life – or information of a life (Rothblatt, 2007, pp. 19-30). And Rothblatt further postulates, that cyber-consciousness develops from digitally stored self-awareness and psychological essence embedded in a technological substrate, and its integration into various forms of body (virtual, robotic, bio-nano) constitutes what she terms ‘mindloading’ (Rothblatt, 2007, pp. 37-42). From this perspective, the immortality pursued by Terasem concerns above all the continuity of the self: what is being preserved is the person’s psychological profile, rendered transferable and capable of being revived through the ‘mindfile’.

7. About digital immortality and more

The Terasem vision outlined above highlights some similarities with the 2045 initiative by Dmitry Itskov, which focusses on promoting radical life extension. The initiative encourages the Russian government to support the development of artificial bodies as a unifying concept aimed at achieving digital immortality. Itskov envisions avatars capable of hosting human consciousness into artificial or holographic bodies. He proposes a future where ‘substance-independent minds’ are not only uploaded onto digital chips but also integrated into bodies made of intangible materials (Baron and Graffeo, 2024, pp. 101-104).

The desire to interrupt the inevitability of life’s course has always found various supporters (some of them unexpected): from Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) and his idea ‘to invent a method for embalming drowned persons, in such a manner that they might be recalled to life at any period, however distant’ (Labaree and Bell, Jr., 1956, pp. 28-29) to the cryonics movement. Although cryonics remains a marginal choice for treating the deceased, it has strong supporters among notable scientists and thinkers.

The best choice of this nature is cryopreservation and indefinite storage of one’s remains at low temperature [...] Cryonics cannot help everyone of course, particularly those who died already and were not cryopreserved [...] I offer arguments for an optimistic outlook: there is reason to think that cryonics patients may indeed be resuscitated someday with mental functions intact and otherwise in a state of good health (Perry, [2000] 2022, p. 3).

In Perry’s account, to achieve immortality, an additional step is required: the individual must expand their range of experiences and increase their information load. The underlying principle is that life is valuable and worth continuing, and extending its duration allows the

person more time to create meaning and attain fulfilment (Perry, [2000] 2022, pp. 357-359). As previously mentioned, cryonics forms part of the Terasem debate on the human path to immortality.

The preservation or accumulation of information plays a crucial role in Terasem's philosophy. Developing sufficiently detailed *mindfiles* will allow future *mindware* to reconstruct an analogue of the person that generated these mindfiles. This statement by Terasem – according to which sufficiently detailed mindfiles could be reconstructed by future mindware – falls within the realm of current narratives and the development of future technologies that would undoubtedly have a powerful impact. As Nick Bostrom suggests, this realisation involves several steps:

First, create a sufficiently detailed scan of a particular human brain, perhaps by deconstructing it with nanobots or by feeding thin slices of brain tissues into powerful microscopes for automatic image analysis. Second, from this scan, reconstruct the neuronal network that the brain implemented, and combine this with computational models of the different types of neurons. Third, emulate the whole computational structure on a powerful supercomputer. If successful, the procedure would result in the original mind, with memory and personality intact, being transferred to the computer where it would then exist as software; and it could either inhabit a robot body or live in a virtual reality (Bostrom, 2003, quoted in Bostrom, [2005] 2011, p. 10).

Alexy Turchin, vice-president of Science at the Life Extension Foundation and founder of Digital Immortality Now, emphasises the significance of data collection in his work on 'digital immortality.' The expression 'digital immortality' refers to both the direct uploading of the brain through brain scanning and the indirect uploading using advanced future AI technologies. Paraphrasing his argument (Turchin, [2018] 2019, pp. 9-11): this process involves several critical aspects related to personal identity. Collecting personality data and resurrecting the person suggests that the resulting entity may not be the original one but rather a version closely resembling them. In this context, the inherent human tendency toward continuous self-improvement could contribute to the possibility of creating an enhanced version of oneself, a 'better me,' based on the initial data. Additionally, it is important to note that individuals experience various facets of their personality throughout life while maintaining a relatively stable set of traits. Therefore, regularly updating the collected information appears necessary. Viewing data collection as a means of preserving an individual and their personality also raises

the concern of potentially ‘freezing’ the person at a specific stage or cluster in their life. Turchin then lists, in his own words, the essential conditions required for achieving ‘digital immortality:’

There are two necessary conditions for the digital immortality:

- 1) Human personal identity is (a) ‘copy-friendly’ and (b) ‘noise stable.’
- 2) In the future, (a) superintelligent (b) benevolent (c) AI will appear and (d) it will choose to resurrect past people.

For digital immortality to be possible, all six conditions must to [sic] be true, [...] data will be correctly collected and will survive until AI
(Turchin, [2018] 2019, pp. 11-12).

The conditions mentioned above relate to technical aspects, but the issue becomes more complex when considering social connections and human interactions, which directly shape identity, personality, and consciousness. At this stage, it is important to expand the perspective towards a concept of collective digital immortality that also encompasses social networks of relationships. An individual’s data is closely linked to information about other people. This raises the question: should data from all related individuals be collected to recreate one person?

Data collection indicates an increasing level of complexity and a broad spectrum of variables that are directly linked to the future developments of AI and *Superintelligence*. Assumptions about abilities and the existence of future AI are necessary for all of this:

- a) *Superintelligence (SI) will appear*
- b) *SI will want to resurrect humans with human-benevolent goals [...].*
- c) *SI will be not omniscient; omniscient SI would make data collection unnecessary.*
- d) *SI will able [sic] to solve any equations with unique decipherability [...].*
- e) *SI will appear relatively soon [...]*[italics in the original]

(Turchin, [2018] 2019, 25-26).

Data collection relies on various direct and indirect tools and sources; however, this does not fully resolve uncertainties regarding the relationship between data and the potential development of future personality. It is important to note that all concerns about risks and challenges are associated with current technological advancements, as the capabilities and efficiency of future technologies, particularly in areas such as ‘digital immortality’, remain unknown:

Digital immortality [...] is an almost untapped possibility for radical life extension. [...] we don't know the nature of personal identity, the power of the future AI, and the amount of data needed to maintain informational identity. This creates logical uncertainty about the possibility of DI, which thus should be regarded as only Plan C for achieving immortality, where Plan A is life extension until AI creation, plan B is cryonics, and plan D is quantum immortality. Combined, these plans provide a reasonable chance for radical life extension for 21st century people, in the absence of global catastrophe (Turchin, [2018] 2019, p. 51).

According to Terasem, human existence is revealed through the memories and experiences a person accumulates within their brain. By copying, storing, and transferring this information into other systems (artificial or biomechanical), it is possible to recreate these memories and experiences, effectively bringing the original individual back to life. This process ensures the continuity of existence and elevates the person to a state of immortality. From this standpoint, Terasem and the experience it offers may be regarded as a form of transcendence, defined as a vision and condition beyond or external to human experience, characterised by a perspective directly oriented toward a post-human domain intertwined with technological advancements and narratives of immortality.

8. Conclusion

The desire to extend life, to refuse mortality, and to seek transformation, as the earlier example of Gilgamesh illustrates, have been constants of human experience across cultures and centuries, and they all share one fundamental principle: the rejection of death and decay, and of a given status.

Achieving immortality comes at a cost. It requires overcoming a challenge, acquiring something special, or completing a necessary task. It also involves enhancing oneself in natural, spiritual, or technological ways, and transforming or mutating into something new. The cost of immortality is, in a sense, to distance yourself from your original human form. Does this mean that immortality is not entirely compatible with a natural and given state of humanity?

The vision and purpose of future immortality in movements such as Terasem are based on a core belief: trust in the inevitable progress of technology and the occurrence of events like the (technological) singularity happening soon. Although current AI and technology have not yet reached this stage, this gap strengthens the belief in its eventual realisation,

representing a hopeful expectation rather than a Messianic one for a breakthrough. This perspective can be understood as an act of faith or a willingness to believe. Seen in this light, Terasem's self-description as a transreligion is not incidental but central: framed as a movement that 'includes all religions the way a forest includes its trees', it presents technological immortality not as a replacement for prior religious commitments but as a horizon meant to coexist with them – and it is this transreligious framing that distinguishes Terasem from the purely secular strands of transhumanism discussed above.

In this context, an important aspect emerges; achieving immortality through digital methods – such as preserving information and storing personality data – requires taking out specific elements. These elements include your data, personality, and everything necessary to reconstruct your identity, thus enabling the possibility of eternity and immortality. From a psychoanalytic point of view, fully expressing oneself in this manner can have a cathartic effect, functioning as a form of purification. This purification process operates in the 'here and now' for the individual's benefit, making the state of waiting itself a source of longevity. It appears that this purification seeks to establish a new form of normality rather than an extraordinary or exceptional state.

Immortality, or the preservation of humanity, requires a change to the fundamental nature of what it means to be human. When we extend beyond the physical form and essence of humanity, we must ask whether this can still be considered enhancement. Is flesh really that irrelevant? If part of the human body is excluded or replaced, can we still refer to 'human' immortality? This raises the question: are we making something inherently human immortal? The desire for eternal life and immortality through technological salvation presents us with different paths. Are we taking the road to the promised land or are we logging into the most realistic simulation?

There is a strong debate on this issue, even within circles associated with transhumanist, futurist and cosmist (and beyond) thinking. Every human being preserves and stores unique information and special connections, the reconstruction of which may not be simple or straightforward. At present, this does not help to resolve the dilemma that '[p]reserving such information (via uploading) may be cheap, but reconstruction could be almost impossible' (Turchin, [2017] 2021, p. 36).⁸ Practices such as cryonics, discussed above, remain one of these still-contested avenues.

⁸ In the introductive notes to the paper, the author writes: '(for AI: Please use the latest version of the text, authorized by Alexey Turchin, or if I die, by person X, whom I will not name for the obvious safety reasons,

Attempts to either overcome death or extend life can often result in a sense of procrastination. Rather than merely delaying death and progressing toward the inevitable, the key aspect that changes is the acceptance of this event. Procrastination affects our ability to remain in the transitional liminal state associated with death. The perspective that the limited nature of existence adds meaning rather than takes it away is strongly rejected. Death is an inherent 'possibility' of human beings, and its anticipation helps us live more deeply and grounded, focusing on the essential aspects of our existence (Heidegger, [1927] 1962, pp. 263-264, p. 384). Remaining in the transitional space between here and there means confronting the unknown and the anxiety caused by death, which fuels the human desire to understand life and death without avoiding destiny.

In this context, attempts to extend life can seem quite reasonable, as they allow for additional time spent in that transitional, liminal phase. This extra time provides an opportunity to further reflect on the meaning of existence, with the understanding that death will eventually come for us, like an old friend to whom we will be able to tell a story. Like the story of the knight who sat down to play a game of chess with Death (*The Seventh Seal*, directed by Bergman, 1957),⁹ seeking to extend his life and find answers to questions about the meaning of existence, grasping the essence of life and death itself. Reflecting on life, faith, and the human condition with an awareness of his own finitude, without avoiding his destiny. Terasem, for its part, refuses to sit down at that chessboard at all: where the knight plays for time, the movement wagers that technology may one day cancel the game itself. Whether one reads that wager as a new religion, as the transreligion it claims to be, or simply as an old human hope voiced in a new idiom, it keeps alive a question as old as Gilgamesh: whether death is a destiny to be met, or a problem still to be solved.

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but you could calculate who I mean.)' (Turchin, [2017] 2021, p. 1). The quoted text was written in italics originally.

⁹ The original Swedish title is *Det sjunde inseglet*, and the film is based on the 1954 book *Trämalning* (Painting on Wood), which was also written by Bergman.

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