Concept of Humanity in The Last Temptation of Christ: Critical Analysis

According to Christianity, there are answers in Holy Bible for every question. Interpretations and explanation of the bible was not allowed to every man and it was given by the church officially. Here it is just a matter of belief that from the perspective of common man whether to think about the rationality or to go with the church's explanation.

Thinking about the title of the novel The Last Temptation of Christ will not make the people confused that much but will make them think twice thinking whether the presentation here is presented positively or not. This is a last temptation which came in space of a lightning flash to trouble the saviour's final moments. We have seen the divine part presented by the church where he could easily overcome all the conflicts and temptations of life. Here the humanity part of the Christ's from the perspective of the novelist is presented clearly and reading and completing this novel is a little struggling thing for a highly believer of the church.

The Last Temptation of Christ is a highly controversial novel; the German edition was placed on the Vatican's list of forbidden books. The Christ in Kazantzakis's novel presented as he engaged in the struggle for freedom, freedom from limitations imposed by family, freedom from the pleasures of the flesh, and freedom from the fear of death. He must have struggled to overcome these doubts and desires. For Kazantzakis, the wonder of His sacrifice lies less in his divinity but in his humanity. The stronger Jesus's attraction to temptation, the more meaningful is his choice to reject it. It is a Gospels reinterpretation that depicts Christ as divine but very human. Unsurprisingly, the book was met with controversy at first, but critics praise it for its bold subject matter and complex characterization. Kazantzakis wrote many novels, poems, and essays about the relationship between man and God, and he's famous for losing the 1957 Nobel Prize for Literature by a single vote to Albert Camus.

Here Jesus is presented as vulnerable, flawed, and human, even if he remains free from sin. For him, if Jesus succumbed to sin and cowardice during his lifetime, he wouldn't be any more significant than the average philosopher. If he'd saved himself from crucifixion, he'd have faded into relative obscurity. He shows readers that Jesus is vulnerable to evil. Everyone, Jesus included, is good and bad by nature. Our dual instincts fight to control us, and it's up to us how we channel our energies. Jesus excels by acknowledging his imperfections and channelling them into positive actions. He accepted his flawed humanity and offered himself to the cross, and to death. In The Last Temptation of Christ, Jesus has one goal: to live out God's plan for him while avoiding sin. Throughout the narrative, Jesus hangs from the cross and considers the choices he made that led him to his crucifixion. He ponders what he could have done differently to change his fate, and what options are open to him now as he hangs dying. At first, although Jesus wants to fulfil God's plan, he does not want the responsibilities that go with it. He does not really want to be God's Messiah. He does not feel that he's worthy of the role God has given him, and he constantly doubts himself. In the hope that God abandons him and picks a new Messiah, Jesus rebels.

Here in this novel Jesus works as a carpenter for the Romans. He builds crosses upon which the Romans execute zealots and self-proclaimed Messiahs. Jesus' reasoning is that, if God

sees him behaving so disrespectfully, he will kill him or leave him alone. However, God doesn't have any such plans. Eventually, Jesus tires of his work and loathes himself for working for the Romans. He flees to a desert monastery where he hopes to find spiritual guidance. He's looking for a man called Abbot Joachim. Abbot Joachim is famous for interpreting dreams and prophecies. When Jesus discovers Abbot Joachim isn't there anymore, he secretly hopes he can live out his life in the desert in relative obscurity. Again, God has other plans for him. While at the monastery, Jesus meets a blacksmith called Judas Iscariot. Unbeknownst to Jesus, Judas is an assassin tasked with murdering him. Judas pretends to be his friend so that he can get close to him. The Romans want Judas to be sure that Jesus is a Messiah before executing him. If Judas has any regrets at betraying Jesus by pretending to be a friend, he doesn't show it. Jesus, however, doesn't stay at the monastery for long. He leaves for Capernaum, where he finds the town in an uproar. The townsfolk are stoning Mary Magdalene, a prostitute, and for reasons Jesus can't explain, he feels compelled to intervene on her behalf. He asks whoever is free from sin to cast the first stone. Unsurprisingly, no one moves. His powerful speech inspires others to follow him including Judas, who's followed him from the monastery. Jesus can't understand why others are so convinced there's something special about him. He doesn't want it to be true, because then there's no escaping God's plan. Meanwhile, Jesus does many great deeds in Capernaum. As word of his greatness spreads, his list of potential enemies grows. Although Jesus has conquered many of his human emotions, such as doubt, he still can't shake off his fear of what is to come. He knows now that his fate is inescapable, whatever that fate happens to be. Judas betrays Jesus, and Jesus is sentenced to death by the Romans. He will die on a cross just like the wooden ones he built for others a long time ago. He feels like God's abandoned him, and he's consumed by feelings of self-doubt and terror again. On the cross, he dreams of a normal life like everyone where he had no mission to fulfil. He dreams of the family he'll never have, and he spends his final moments in pain. At this last point in life, Jesus could succumb to his fear and repent, hoping to save himself. However, he masters his emotions in ways no other human has ever achieved. He acknowledges his imperfect humanity and gives himself up to save humankind. His death ushers in a new world order, which is his mission all along.

The novel begins, for example, with Jesus' tortured dreams, his subconscious and human struggles between flesh and spirit, and it ends with his agonized fantasies on the cross. In addition to gospel this novel discusses Jesus' early life in detail. After the incident in the temple, The Gospel does not mention Joseph. But here in the novel we see a kind of emotional presentation of Joseph.

Kazantzakis is a wonderful modern author Greece has produced and those who are familiar with his works will recognize the conflict between flesh and spirit which he has explored again and again in many of his novels and philosophical writings. Here Kazantzakis follows the gospels in accepting the miraculous event they relate. Where he deviates is in the psychological make-up of the Christ who is portrayed as a reluctant messiah moved by the calling of god but also drown towards living a normal life among men. Catholic and even orthodox Christians may also be disturbed by the characterisation of Mary and Mary Magdalene and Judas who is portrayed sympathetically.

Men in the world will struggle in this world. He will experience the world in his own way. Whenever he feels that here there is the presence of a force ruling all the living as well as the non-living organisms in the world he tries to find a god of his own. Based on the Christian idea, there should be a conflict always between soul and worldly drives. How a human being is

overcoming that conflicts is the divine aspect here. Here in this novel Kazantzakis brings the humanity part of the Jesus. We never read in bible that Jesus fears about nature, darkness and all. But here in this novel what the novelist tried to bring is the common traits of a human being who is dependent and influenced of the nature and natural phenomenon. In the liturgical view joseph the step father of Jesus is a carpenter. And Jesus also is presented as a carpenter and cross-maker, the son of Mary and the carpenter Joseph. Here the profession of a carpenter is criticised because they make crosses for the people. In this novel people always blame Jesus for making crosses for hanging the revolutionaries. A troubled youth, full of fear and rebelliousness, and tormented by “vulture claws” seemingly sent from God, he is also possessed by a strong pity for humanity. Continually tempted to be something other than who he really is, he grows as he travels from home to the monastery, where he loses much of his guilt, and turns to preaching love to the people. Through the novel the novelist first criticise Christ by telling him that he is just a human being. All the limitations as a human is highlighted and mentioned here.

He calls Jesus as “skinflint, venom nose, and profit mad person. He says that you dare devil, chatter box, gobble jaw […] you don’t murder, steal, or commit adulteries because you are afraid. All your virtues are daughters of fear.”

So through such words the novelist is trying to tell Jesus that he is just a human with all the limitations and temptations of the world. After all this blaming and negative thoughts here in the novel he mentions that Jesus felt that he was all alone too.