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A Phenomenological Perspective on Transhumanism from the Perspective of the Spoken of Being

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Abstract

Transhumanism is a cultural phenomenon that is gaining increasingly more notoriety in the Western public space. The transhumanist movement is an eclectic, interpretative community, bringing together concerns referring to the extension of human life, the creation of a non-human alterity – particularly in the form of Artificial Intelligence –, the radical improvement of cognitive, sensory and motor performances, and even the increase in the level of morality of the individual.

All these enhancements of the human condition are due to the current or immediate progress of science and human technology. The relatively heterogenous currents that constitute this transhumanist movement are coagulated by a trust in technology and the techno-optimism they show.

This paper aims to analyse the semiotic possibility to signify the Being in the condition of a posthuman existential state, without an effective analysis of the transhumanist discourse on the Being.

Keywords:

transhumanism, posthuman existential condition, techno-optimism, transcendence of the limitations of human condition.

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Introduction

Transhumanism is a cultural current that is gaining increasingly more notoriety within the Western public space. The transhuman movement is actually an eclectic, interpretative community, bringing together concerns about extending human life, diminishing suffering and achieving immortality through technological means of prolonging life, creating a non-human alterity (especially Artificial Intelligence), dramatically improving cognitive, sensory and motor performances, and even increasing the person's level of morality. All these human condition enhancements are due to the current or immediate progress of science and human technology.

Among the representatives of the different currents of transhumanism, we mention Nick Bostrom (2016), Irina Deretic and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner (2015), Ray Kurzweil (2006), Max More and Natasha Vita-More (2013), Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner (2014), Julian Savulesc and Nick Bostrom (2011), etc. The relatively heterogeneous currents that constitute this transhumanist movement are coagulated by a general trust in technology and the techno-optimism that is specific for them. The current paper aims to analyse the possibility of a discourse on the Being, which would consonate with the techno-optimist vision specific to transhumanism. The emerging point of the paper is the assumption of the artificial improvement of the human condition up to the level of the emergence of a posthuman existential condition, without an effective analysis of the transhuman discourse of the Being.

The posthuman existential condition

We call a posthuman existential condition: the state in which the existential limitations specific for current humanity are partially, or completely transcended. The existential limitations we refer to can be considered, metaphysically, a restraint of the Being in transition to the beingness in the world. A previous paper (Sandu, 2011) presented a series of possible existential limitations of the human condition, starting from the categories proposed by the philosopher Abhinavagupta, and the Trika philosophical-spiritual tradition from Kashmir. Based on these categories, and reformulating them in the current, accessible philosophical language, we can talk about (Sandu, 2015) a series of existential limitations of the human condition, as follows:

1. **Limitation in temporality.** In the Shivait philosophy, this limitation is called **Kaala Tattva**. It is an existential condition in which the elements are in *sequence* (Evola, 1992). The Subject's Experience is sequenced between one experience and the other, creating a surrogate of Totality. This sequencing makes every experience insufficient for the Subject and requires another one in order to achieve the illusion of completeness. In an existential metaphysical manner, the limitation distinguishes the beingness from the Divine Condition of Eternity. Eternity is not just about the lack of any impairment of the Subject on the passing of time, but also his constant presence in all dimensions of time. This limitation is convergent to that expressed by Heidegger, called beingness in time and in the horizon of death. Beingness in time is accompanied by the anguish of death, the awareness of one's own finitude. Overcoming the limitation in temporality represents a challenge of any soteriological currents, but also of any practices aiming at self-transcendence. The transhumanist discourse encompasses a scientocentric soteriology and an anthropocentric one, eventually. Overcoming the temporal conditioning constitutes the objective of the current, which we would call *longevity and immortality* within the transhumanist studies. We have previously opined that achieving immortality is the decisive point for moving towards a poshuman existential state, the overcoming of other limitations placing us in a transhuman existential condition, of limitation between the human and the posthuman one. The technology of downloading the human consciousness to virtual environments and loading them into surrogate biological bodies is the most promising from the point of view of transcending the limitations in temporality, not necessarily in the sense of obtaining an absolute immortality, but also an exceptional longevity, even at the level of millenia. The technology of time-travelling can also lead to the transcendence of the temporary limitation, ensuring the presence of Consciousness in the different dimensions of time.

2. **Limitation in plenitude.** The Shivaite philosophy calls this limitation **Raga Tattva** (attachment) (Evola, 1992). It appears to be an awareness of dissipating the Totality, being the root of any subjective causality. Limitation in plenitude generates the separation of self-consciousness (of the transcendental Self) from the Consciousness of experimenting Alterity, and also of the Consciousness of experimenting Self-Consciousness as alterity, which leads to the alienation of the Being into

Beingness. The limitation in plenitude generates what we call today the *society of consumerism*, as a need of filling the experience of Totality. From a technological perspective, the most promising discourse that aims to overcome the limitations in plenitude can be connected with the Game Machine: strategies of virtualizing the Reality, that allow the Consciousness (somewhat digitalized) to simulate any sensation and satisfy any attachment or desire. The transhumanist discourse, although it does not directly point to this limitation, can be interpreted, in this regard, when it takes into account the subjective improvement of the human condition, especially through means of cognitive enhancement.

3. **Limitation in containment (spatiality).** The Shivait tradition calls this experience **Niyati**, understood as the limitation in absolute liberty or in absolute autonomy (Evola, 1992) of the Supreme Aware Subject. The consciousness of spatial infinity and the containment of the entire existence is an attribute of the Absolute Being. This limitation is generally correlative with the consciousness of one's own corporality and the belonging of the Being in the world. Limitation in spatiality constitutes, in consciousness, the separation of the Epistemic Subject from the Epistemic Object and generates the report with Otherness. The same limitation induces the idea of separating Consciousness from the World, generating the report with Alterity. The same limitation induces the idea of separating the Consciousness from the World and generates the worlds of experience, including the participation of the elf to the communicative construction of reality. Limitation in spatiality opens the temptation of transcendence through the access to multidimensionality, the attraction towards parallel Universes, embedded dimensions etc. Also, the limitation of spatiality is exceeded through the practices of *expansion of consciousness* meant to permit the consciousness of the human being's limitlessness. The psychedelic experiences and trances can generate such an overcoming of the limitations in containment. From the techno-optimistic perspective, the most promising technologies that may lead to the overcoming of limitations in containment are those of virtualizing the space and the separation of consciousness on biological support. A non-local consciousness can be interpreted as transcending the limitation of spatiality in a continuum of beingness.

4. **Limitation in efficiency.** In the Shivait tradition, this limitation is called **Kalaa-Tattva** (Evola, 1992). The representations on Divine

Consciousness are centred on the ex-nihilo creation and on omnipotence. The creation by Word means the absolute and total fulfillment of any objectives of the Absolute Being. In Genesis, it shows that each stage of the Creation relates to one of axiological reflection, expressed through that of God being seen as Good. Limitation in efficiency represents, at the level of the human condition, the incapacity of the individual to achieve all objectives. This limitation is approached from the perspective of overcoming the human condition through technologies, such as 3D printing, tele-action, symbolic constructions in the space of virtual reality, etc. Most technologies that aim at the enhancement of the human condition – the increase of the cognitive, sensory, motor skills, and why not, the moral potential – is addressed, one way or another, to the limitation in efficiency: whether it is bionic prosthetics that would help not only the restoration of a lost potential, but also obtain capabilities that are superior to those that are normal for the human condition.

5. **Limitation in knowledge.** In the Shivait tradition, this limitation is called **Vidya-Tattva** (Evola, 1992). Limitation in Omniscience occurs when the Supreme Knower limits itself to a limited epistemic subject. For the consciousness, it appears to be the feeling of impossibility of absolute knowledge or of a Global Consciousness. The transcendence of this limitation from a technological perspective represents the creation of Singularity, of an Artificial Consciousness of Self, capable to instantly communicate with all existing data-bases, eventually with a global consciousness obtained by interconnecting the human minds with AI and the vast neural networks where the human mind is a node of interconnectivity.

The posthuman being

The posthuman condition represents, in essence, a Consciousness that through a technological intervention has significantly overcome at least one of the existential limitations of the Human condition. What is more, it was shown in a previous paper (Sandu, 2015) that the transcendence of the limitation in temporality can be considered a sufficient ontological mutation to consider that the Consciousness belongs to an ontological class. Transcending other limitations is likely to transform that consciousness into a Transhuman one, placing it in an

intermediate existential class, between the human and the superhuman one.

Uttering of the being

The speech on *overcoming the existential limitations* of the human condition, as a form of self-transcendence, makes *the uttering of the Being* possible, as overcoming the self-finitude of Beingness. The meaning of the being – or uttering of the being in Romanian philosophical language (Noica, 1981; Rotila, 2009) – represents the possibility of the consciousness to accede to the Being itself by overcoming the ontological limitations of the human condition. Of interest for our paper is how a posthuman being could utter the Being. In our opinion, the uttering of the Being can be understood as an inclusion of the Being in the language. The phrase *the uttering of the being* represents, in Romanian, a pun on the assonance of the word “to utter”. To utter means to say (speak or tell), but etymologically, the word uttering also means, “giving a meaning (sense)”. To utter the being not only means to communicate it, but also establish it for the Consciousness. The Being Itself cannot appear in Consciousness other than by the act of uttering. This perspective subordinates somehow the Being in front of the Consciousness, reducing the Being to the Consciousness of the Beingness.

Consciousness of Self and for Self

Self-consciousness is to us what an operating system is for the computers – namely, the totality of memory programs and functions. The management is, in this case, done for the Self. So, we can consider that all programs run simultaneously in mind: sensations come from the senses; thoughts are shaped into a unique experience of the for-Self. We don't have the image of a pole, but the for-Self representation of the pole. Consciousness associates the image of the pole to the previous experience from memory referring to any pole, unifying it in the idea of pole, adding the experience of for-Self. The pole is not a reality but an object of the consciousness; for whatever reason, he is in the objective reality, it reconstitutes in the consciousness as an object that is present to Himself, for which I can feel safe under a roof supported on that pole, or on the contrary, I can panic, want to tear it down and so on. The fact is that I cannot be axiologically neutral towards it. An object can enter

the broad field of consciousness (at the periphery of consciousness) without being axiologically labelled, but cannot constitute an object of consciousness without assigning value the for-Self.

For an object to be in the conscience, it needs to generate a movement in consciousness that would identify it with the for-Self. This movement in consciousness generates, however, the idea of self-consciousness as a receiving pole of alterity. In the absence of the objects of consciousness, self-consciousness cannot work, lacking the capacity to relate to alterity. However, some spiritual traditions show that some exceptional states of consciousness lead to the full unification of the subject and the object, leaving only the consciousness of the existence.

From the perspective of our research on the digitized consciousness, we are interested in how the Consciousness for Self could be established in a form of non-biological consciousness, the way an AI (or a hypothetical person, whose consciousness was downloaded into the virtual environment) would represent the for-Self, and how could a transcendental appear – for Self – in the operating system of the AI (or the digitized consciousness). The belief, according to which Self-consciousness is a function of the memory, is a founding assumption of all speculations on technological singularity, but also on the artificial immortality as downloaded consciousness. The preservation of memory should preserve those fundamental processes that are attached to the idea of self and the self-reflexive orientation.

However, this assumption excludes any transcendental dimension of consciousness. We can be in a form of pure empiricism, according to which, there is nothing that hasn't previously existed in the senses (Locke, J., 1961). To this statement, Kant would reply by invoking the intellect itself, i.e. of *a priori* categories.

If we admit the idea, according to which consciousness is a function of memory, then any computing system, performant enough to have a memory comparable to the human one, will eventually generate self-consciousness.

On the other hand, we could consider self-consciousness as being a function of memory reconfigured by the language experience. Constitutive alterity is not a general and absolute one, but a restrictive and liable to convictions. In this case, self-consciousness can be preserved in digitized systems, as long as the virtual space allows the

interaction between different digital Egos, generating a utopia similar to those described in the movie *The Matrix*. A trapped self-consciousness in the digital environment will never know precisely if the environment in which it operates is virtual or real.

Towards a phenomenology of the digitalization

The above-mentioned limitations constitute the edges of Self-consciousness, created in the process of separating the aware subject from the whole of reality. Virtualizing the social space may lead to exceeding these limits, as follows:

- Temporal reversibility and the possibility of virtualizing immortality by excluding the biological sphere from what we call and interpret as being *life*;
- Limitation in containing (spatial) can be overcome by virtualizing, the spaces in which the digital consciousness can be presented as being virtually unlimited;
- Limitation in knowledge offers the possibility of transcendence by unifying the object with the digital subject and including the object in the subject's digital code.

Even if these limitations are dissolved by digitalization, the possibility of the existence of a digitized consciousness implies the compulsoriness of limits that would personify that consciousness and separate it from the rest of the virtual environment. So any real or virtual world has a series of ontological characteristics that would permit its existence within:

- The capacity of containment – which digitizes spatiality
- The capacity of iteration – which digitizes temporality
- Calculability – which digitizes the other 3 limitations (plenitude, efficiency, knowledge).

So, a digitized consciousness is constituted in the presence of the limitations that manifest at the same ontological level with the world in which the digitized consciousness is present. Digitized A.I. does not have absolute characteristics in the absence of Alterity. As such, we find possible the phenomenological experience for the digitized consciousness, as well as for the mundane consciousness. The situation, however, can be similar for an A.I. singularity, since these limits should be included in their own operating systems in order to establish as transcendental.

Instead of conclusions: on the transhuman uttering of the Being

The transcendence of existential limitations put a posthuman being in a position to establish, within the Conscious Being from an existential perspective, a coincidence of the Epistemic subject with the Epistemic Object. This fusion of the Subject to the Object prevents the *uttering* itself on something, which automatically becomes different from He who utters, and which subjectively includes it in the consciousness. Thus, the specific way of uttering by a potential posthuman being could be the uttering of Self as a particular way of being in the world, namely the same way of uttering that the human being has.

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