

**Statement on “IN THE SEARCH FOR A POSTHUMAN ERA A CRITIQUE ON MERGING HUMAN BIOLOGY WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE” by Sechil Yuzergan**

The dissertation is almost 208 standard pages long, including the used sources section. This size goes well above the standard volume of a dissertation. It is well-structured in introduction, five chapters, and conclusion. A peculiar feature is the use of a large number of online news outlets. This is technically permissible, especially in the case with such an “up-to-date” topic.

It seems that the main goal of the dissertation is to show the philosophical problems, both ethical and ontological, that are relevant to human enhancement that involve the introduction of AI systems either invasively or non-invasively. The title of the dissertation suggests that the author’s claim is that such introduction is problematic/unacceptable but unfortunately this claim is not justified/argued for systematically and in a clear argumentative manner anywhere in the dissertation. Rather, it is inserted tacitly in passages in which Sechil Yuzergan informs us of what the state of affairs within a certain domain (e.g., generative AI) is and raises doubt of its further technological, ontological, moral, social, etc. implications.

Chapter I is essentially a synopsis of some of the contemporary technological advancements that can affect humans. The author employs the concepts of the 4th and 5th industrial revolution in order to demonstrate that the direction of technological advancements will likely lead to “mergers” between humans and machines (p. 22: “In short, human - machine mergers appear to be a common practice in the near future within 5IR.”) The work of Floridi is quoted to raise claims of increasing man - machine “hybridization” of societies.

Unfortunately, the clarity of the author’s own views is often impaired. For instance, in the section “Reflections on How Technological Developments Impact Us” there is more reconstruction and summarizing of information regarding information communication technologies and the 4th and 5th industrial revolutions.

Chapter II is dedicated to discussing the relationship between human beings and technology. It starts with a reconstruction of various definitions of what technology is, covering a number of both historical and contemporary claims by various authors on the matter.

The most systematic part, offering best understanding of “technology”, is the reconstruction of 3 definitions by Val Dusek (pp. 46-50): technology as hardware, technology as rules, and technology as a system. An extensive part of the chapter is devoted to a reconstruction of M.

Heidegger's views on technology, which seem to be closely related to Yuzergan's own views, focusing on the dangers that technology poses to human beings.

The chapter ends with a brief historical reconstruction, going back as far as the times of the Old Testament, of views on what a human being is. As usual, Yuzergan does not make her conclusions explicit enough but it seems that she is on the position that the human body's contribution to what a human being has been overlooked in the philosophical tradition.

This sets the stage for Chapter 3, which discusses technological enhancements of human bodies, and thereby changes of the human condition enforced by technology. The chapter starts with reconstruction of views on human enhancement, both pro and contra, and features some reflection passages which exhibit more of Yuzergan's own thought compared to other sections of the text.

BCI, or Brain-Computer-Interface enhancements are discussed separately in yet another reconstructive section, featuring thoughts by Elon Musk on Neuralink, and Slavoj Žižek's warnings on the dangers to human individuality that such technologies pose.

In Chapter 4, Yuzergan deals with the doctrines of transhumanism and posthumanism, defining and distinguishing them from one another. This chapter is extensive in volume, tacking in detail these doctrines and clarifying them via historical remarks. I was unable to see clearly the relation of this chapter to the main goal of the dissertation, as well as to other structural elements of the text. It seems to be a bit disconnected, its presence being a goal in itself.

Chapter 5 is an attempt to phenomenologically describe what is like to be a human in the digital era. It is constituted by yet another reconstruction of M. Heidegger's philosophy, along with reconstruction of Merleau-Ponty's body-centered phenomenology which is well-suited to explain the alterations which bodily alterations play on perception and imagination. This latter reconstruction is better related to the dissertation's goals although it could have been even better if it featured the contemporary embodiment paradigm.

To move to more general remarks, the style in which the goal of the dissertation is pursued is not a style of explicitly structured arguments but rather discussion and reconstruction of various philosophical positions and doctrines (transhumanism, posthumanism, phenomenology, etc.) which could be relevant to the goal although for some of them this relevance is not clearly demonstrated (for instance, why is transhumanism presented in such detail?). The structure is

peculiar even for a reconstructive work, as often it looks more like a journalist article stating main points on a topic than a research piece that aims at reaching new insights.

Since the work is mainly reconstructive, its main problems are related to the choices regarding relevancy and interpretation of the literature used. For instance, additional justification is needed to attribute the label “phenomenology” to Heidegger’s work in a manner that would distinguish it from the philosophy of other phenomenologists. Additionally, why is Merleau-Ponty’s work used in order to clarify the concept of “embodiment” when there is a contemporary paradigm dedicated to embodied approaches in several disciplines, including Philosophy of Mind, Epistemology, Cognitive Psychology, Neuroscience, etc.? Embodiment is indeed a very relevant topic for the problems discussed in the dissertation, but it has much more modern and well-developed variants compared to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology.

The main claim of the dissertation is made in its most explicit form only in the conclusion of the text, where its justification is somewhat limited, based on the assumption that security problems are likely in cases where private information is stored on devices interfacing with the human brain. Taking into account other reasons for limiting the feasibility of human enhancement requires reading more meaning into tacit assumptions throughout the text.

Nevertheless, the dissertation is mostly written in an academic manner and demonstrates philosophical understanding on part of the candidate. To me, for instance, the most fruitful part of the dissertation involved reconstruction, discussion, and summary of various conceptions of technology (Chapter 2). Despite the prevalence of reconstructive writing, the author has positions of her own and is not hesitant to disclose them although this should have been done in a much more clear and systematic style.

The text is also written well from a stylistic and grammatical perspective. The candidate has studied significant amounts of literature and demonstrates sufficient erudition. To me there is no doubt that the dissertation fits into the set of criteria employed to assess PhD works in the department. Thus, I vote for awarding PhD candidate Sechil Yuzergan with a PhD degree in Philosophy 2.3.

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