

Milenko Bodin¹

Full Professor

Faculty of Security Studies

University of Belgrade

DIGITAL ASPECTS OF STRUCTURAL TOTALITARIANISM

Abstract: *This paper examines the relationship between two approaches to the risk of digital totalitarianism. The analysis of the internal and external approaches leads to a deeper philosophical inquiry into the status of artificial intelligence. The question arises as to whether artificial intelligence can be understood as an internal property or as something that should be conceived externally, that is, outside the human being. It is established that an exchange of positions (a topology of properties) also occurs with respect to the question of corporeality. Corporeality may appear merely as an external aspect of the human being, while in fact it is an internal property, understood as that which allows us to grasp what counts as a human being. Accordingly, we point out the unjustified feature of the critique of (traditional) dualism, since the use of dual relations is not grounded in any categories, including metaphysical ones, but rather in a mode of ontological description through which we gain access to the concept of intelligence and to the concept of the human as such. Structural totalitarianism is the framework for the philosophically conceived risk of digital totalitarianism, insofar as it is shown that artificial intelligence can be considered within the same*

¹ milenkobodin@fb.bg.ac.rs.

ontological status as intelligence itself, thereby creating the conceptual conditions for a systemic order grounded in it.

Keywords: *intelligence, artificial intelligence, structural totalitarianism, dualism, transhumanism, internal–external, corporeality.*

1. Introduction

The relationship between philosophy and intelligence in this paper is examined through the extrapolation of the theory and practice of so-called artificial intelligence. Our primary concern lies in understanding the risk of digital totalitarianism.

Two general approaches are possible:

1. Externalist
2. Internalist

The first approach presupposes the determination of intelligence as a fundamentally human property, that is, as a key element in the integrity of the human being. If this is the case, then the digital variant of totalitarianism may be understood through the already familiar risks of totalitarianism, namely, through the formation of a recognizable, external form of control over human life.

Artificial intelligence is a legitimate product of human (natural) intelligence. The agents of totalitarianism therefore remain the “standard” ones: ideological programs, party structures, and the mechanisms of control and coercion exercised by the system of power. Power, of course, is established by force.

From this external approach, the risks of digital totalitarianism are merely the most recent manifestations of already known forms, one could even say their technological extension or augmentation.

The second approach considers the risk of digital totalitarianism from the internal perspective, one might even say through the *onto-genetic* (generic) relation between the human being and intelligence.

In contrast to the previous view, the question of intelligence is not self-determining for the human being; rather, it is something external to the human. Thus, in reversal of the earlier approach, since intelligence lies outside the originary understanding of the human, the risk associated with the use of artificial intelligence, and its consequences for the human being, consists in a transformation of human essence. In other words, the danger arises from within.

The risk of digital totalitarianism is the risk whereby artificial intelligence, and the digital systems built upon it, emerge as an autonomous threat, potentially entrapping the human being within a totalitarian system.

It is clear that, through the first approach, the risk is defined as the danger posed by an external system driven by artificial intelligence, whereas in the second approach, the risk is defined as the danger to the human being from (artificial) intelligence as an internal problem of humanity.

If intelligence is not an internal property of the human being, it is evident that we can also speak of non-human intelligence, not referring to the intelligence of animals or plants, but to what we call artificial intelligence. Yet, the question arises: is it “artificial” in the sense that we

perceive the capabilities and increasing power of technologies, or is it something that still belongs to the human being, albeit in a way that does not define an originary property? This implies that it would require some supplement to be categorized as “human” or natural intelligence. Clearly, from this perspective, it is possible to extrapolate the meaning of intelligence and apply it in an understanding that does not presuppose a human context.

How, then, should we understand the phenomenon of intelligence, and how can we truly grasp the danger of digital totalitarianism based on intelligence? For, speaking of intelligence in general, we know that artificial intelligence was not necessary for the establishment of a totalitarian system, yet this artificial intelligence could internally strip away properties of *human-ness* in a way that the earlier form of intelligence could not.

If we assume that intelligence represents a phenomenon that is not essentially human in character, it seems that it can be easily “extracted” from the usual compound term “human intelligence.” This raises the question of whether the phenomenon can then be considered entirely independently, or whether it must necessarily carry a prefix or designation, as in “non-human” intelligence.

The most fundamental question, which would bring us closer to a more significant definition of the concept of intelligence, is the following: what, in fact, makes intelligence human or non-human? Does this open the possibility that, from the non-human character of intelligence, it can be understood as anti-human intelligence?

For the moment, we seemingly leave these most important questions open, but by posing the following,

we hope to create a broader context as a framework for possible answers to the preceding issues. There exist various tendencies and justifications in different situations where what is called the replacement of the human is highlighted, the most familiar example being where, instead of human strength or mechanical functions, a robot appears. However, if we recall precisely the philosophical reflections on the replacement of humans from the perspective of transhumanism, we may ask whether this idea, supported by technological arguments, aligns with the totalitarian ideological notion of creating a “new human.”

If we recall that the Industrial Revolution went hand in hand with political revolutions under the banner of liberalist ideology, it is therefore not surprising that subsequent discourse on human progress has become increasingly saturated with technological terminology, terminology that has long since “swallowed” the discourse on scientific development.

There is an increasing number of examples suggesting that the human being can, at least initially, be replaced by something similar. Long-known experiments and their accompanying moral dilemmas regarding the cloning of living organisms, and, by extension, of human beings, are associated with frightening experiments about which only partial knowledge exists. These matters have long been presented in such a way that those participating in this discourse of progress (since the *ideology of progress* generally encompasses human society as a whole, or humanity) can gradually but reliably accept the idea of the “replacement of the human.” This points to the notion that the human is not an exclusive, unrepeatable, and unique being. Contributing to this perception are the widely present ideas and “products” in media communication and public discourse, based on the programming of robots

resembling humans or fully human-like organisms with implanted properties of human-ness.

This would not suffice to achieve the purpose of habituation if the entire relation that has always stimulated philosophical thought, the human–world relation, were not also put into operation. What does this mean?

It means habituation to an ontological reversal and to a way of life within it. The media product known as *reality program* has long been familiar, in which people take an interest in what occurs in the media as if the media as a mediator did not exist. More precisely, there is an attempt to integrate a totality in which there is no longer a boundary between the real and the unreal, or a mediating point that indicates the difference between truth and falsehood.

The ultimate outcome of such modeling is an artificial reality in which the distinction between the human and the non-human, as ways of being, is definitively blurred. Here, one observes the general sense of the transition from the concept of non-human intelligence to that of anti-human intelligence, since the entire process is carried out in an intelligent manner.

The idea of creating autonomous, “self-contained,” yet simultaneously protected entities against unwanted influences is the concept behind the development of so-called “smart cities” from urban communities. Such cities already exist in practice, and, naturally, in the name of human progress, they are designated as experimental cities, akin to the scientific experiments of the (Cold) War era, representing desirable procedures in which the world of human life within them intersects with virtual

reality due to the intensive digitalization of life. What, or rather, who, might emerge over time from such cities? At the very least, this is not merely an experiment in the application of digital technologies, but primarily concerns human beings, who can be assumed to contribute to the ultimate goal: an alternative form of humanity.

With regard to the original distinction between the externalist and internalist approaches to the risks of digital totalitarianism, one can also recognize their overlap here. The potential effects of experimenting with the digitalization of human life strongly resemble the well-known practices of so-called “brainwashing,” both on the individual and collective level.

They even more closely resemble large-scale social engineering. Many of the indicators related to the general trend of so-called open structures of the human being are connected to the phenomenology of “soft” control and, consequently, its application in human thought and behavior. “Educated” through the Internet and the phone as a universal device, the millennial generation exhibits accompanying characteristics that point to changes in the perception and even the understanding of humanity. Some may perceive these changes as progressive, and therefore normal...

If we succeed in connecting the externalist with the internalist approach, we can then trace the trends of neoliberalism and the promotion of globalization in the everyday life of individuals, trends which, on the so-called micro-sociological level, contribute to the ontological reversal. The aim is to achieve the “boiling-frog” effect: to render total control, on the ontological level, over the *Lifeworld* a matter of normality (and of “normal” progress), so that totalitarianism (i.e., totalism

on the socio-political level) is recognized as such only much later, that is, when it is already “too late.” For this reason, the transparency of totalitarianism in the (neo)liberal mode will always be “delayed” in comparison with other ideologies. And for the same reason, we can speak of the most dangerous form of totalitarianism: *structural totalitarianism*.

From the habituation to the status of a consumer of commercial and media content to the *de-substantialization* of all values in the name of the dominance of neoliberalism, now appearing in the form of *WOKE* ideology, over the democratic institutions of society, everything that belongs to tradition is deemed false, in some way already predetermined for deconstruction.

Let us become accustomed to the fact that in the critique of “all that exists,” everything is placed under a question mark. From this follows what Dostoevsky once foretold for the near future, that everything has become possible and justifiable; *all of it is (already) considered normal in advance*.²

The genus-character of the concept *human* is, therefore, itself at issue. Moreover, in light of what has been said, it may legitimately be interpreted in relation to the future outcomes of ongoing transformations. Yet long before such processes, conceptual thinking about the human being, or about what the human is, was unable to coherently follow the human as a phenomenon of oppositions. It suffices to note that the human being has been described along the spectrum *human – non-human*.

² A precursor to these analyses is Günther Anders’s study *The Obsolescence of Man*, in which the ontological superfluity of the human world as such is recognized—that is, the obsolescence of the human being as a being. See more in (Anders 1985: 60–81).

How can something or someone be determined simultaneously by an affirmation and by the negation of that very affirmation? Thus, determinations are attributed to the phenomenon of the human that co-determine it. This marks the decisive point at which we may assert the paradoxical character of the concept “human.” Here we are not speaking of the paradox of the human’s position in the cosmos, the tension between finitude and infinitude in human being, nor even of the paradox of existence. Rather, we situate the paradox within the straightforward contradiction inherent in the conceptual apprehension of the human. This, of course, points to the necessary question of what it is within the phenomenon itself that, on the conceptual level (the level at which the phenomenon is grasped), gives rise to the contradiction or paradox whereby we can speak of the human being as both human and non-human within the same horizon of thought.

When we speak of the “non-human,” are we still referring to the human at all? Or are we referring to something that negates the human being while at the same time remaining a part of that being? If such an element could be *extracted*, as in the case of the concept of intelligence, then we would know precisely what we were referring to, just as we do in speaking of “artificial intelligence” (as non-human). If it cannot be extracted, then this “something” must be a constitutive element of the genus-character of the human, unlike intelligence, to which the qualifier “human” can then be rightfully added.

If we imagine the logical span of affirmation and negation in a physical manner, we might represent it as a vertical line that separates (and at the same time connects) two poles at the extremes, or two sides (surfaces) of a unified phenomenal field.

Their horizontal connection (a line) in this thought experiment would represent that which is variable in the expression of the whole, as well as the possibility of transition from affirmation to negation and *vice versa*.

What is at issue is, of course, that which is “invisible” within the phenomenon and, on the conceptual level, “indeterminate.” Does this mean that the secret of the paradox is forever buried? Not in the least. Philosophical experience and the lived testimonies of many generations of human beings attest to this phenomenon and to this problem. But precisely so: to a *phenomenon that is a problem*. And this means that what is at stake is a living being situated within the external determination, of both the phenomenon and its accompanying concept. Furthermore, it means that we are dealing primarily with an inner dynamic through which either affirmation or negation is realized.

In this sense, the human is not some “nature” (except in an indirect sense), nor merely a “species” among other species. All of us who are supposedly human are only *seen* or *recognized* as being human in the sense implied by the concept “human.”

As Saint Paul the Apostle expressed it, directly pointing to this very phenomenon, this very problem:

“The outer human must die, and the inner human must live.”

The enclosure in the name of the perfect functioning of a human community manifests as a demonstration of the capacity to control human life. For this purpose, the concept of intelligence is employed, but it is no longer human, it is artificial. Yet what we have attempted to indicate thus far suggests that it is not human even *within*

the human, and not only outside of it. It is not human within the human because, when self-isolated, it serves an internal reflection that does not perceive the human as such. In order for the humanity of intelligence to be understood, it must be permeated with some form of reflection of humanity.

The very existence of such a phenomenon is attested to by the most recent arguments and entire monographs devoted to the claim: "*We (humans) have always been cyborgs!*"

Thus, there exists an evident *differentia specifica* by which intelligence can be understood and properly named human.

Is this a particular kind of *wisdom* with which intelligence is endowed? Does philosophy itself become implicated in this dilemma through the interpretation of its very name as a certain *love of wisdom*? Wisdom, however, seems to arise from experience or to conform to experience. This implies that the disposition toward wisdom is primarily connected with external, rather than internal, experience.

What, then, would internal experience signify in the disposition of philosophy, as opposed to external experience? It would represent a kind of orientation that possesses a strictly internal character, something *invisible*. This means that it would elude explanation or any form of argumentation.

This is a reflection that externally appears as a determination, but is in fact a movement along a line of demarcation in which the duality of the human being, or the lack thereof, is taken into account. In this sense, determination is, in fact, an *attunement*. An attunement that cannot consent to the rejection of duality is one oriented toward the discovery of truth. Accordingly, *philosophical thought, when viewed externally, is a love of wisdom, whereas in its internal sense it is a love of truth.*

The paradox of the human has long been at the root of philosophical thought as a love of truth. For, as Socrates or Plato stated, *θαυμάζειν*, wonder or astonishment, arises from the recognition of one's own duality, and this duality exists within the being itself, primarily in its internal and invisible aspect.

Thus, the previous assertion that we have always been cyborgs would be accurate only if it were not for this philosophical discovery of duality, which is continually bridged. This bridging reveals that it is life, not intelligence, that resides within the human being. Intelligence, therefore, is merely one way of describing and replicating this dynamic.

Of course, from this deeply philosophical reflection, it should be understood that the fate of the human depends on whether the reflection of humanity occurs within or outside the use of intelligence as an augmentation of human consciousness regarding its own duality. If philosophy withdraws or is excluded from this process, all such developments will lead to the technologization of bridging that duality. It is for this reason that closed systems exist, which create unambiguous structures of control over these processes, thereby signaling that the human is an integral part of this closed circuit.

2.The Return of (Neo)Liberalism

Elsewhere³, we have discussed the characteristics of the discourse of liberal ideology, which highlighted, on the one hand, a *polycentric structure* and, on the other, its *fusion with the discourse of progress*. Everything that

³ See more in my book *Philosophical Discourse of Liberalism* (2019).

could be called progressive became the “new weapon” of liberalism. Thus, we also emphasized at that time that the mechanism of legitimation proceeded from what comes from the future.

Regarding polycentricity, the motifs retained in the historical structure of liberalism are those that rely on what I have called the *metaphysics of rationality*, namely, that we must adhere to the rational capacities of the human being and to the perception derived from so-called Enlightenment thought. From the perspective of so-called economic liberalism, of course, there is an insistence on the freedom of the market and the free flow of capital, people, and ideas.

With the process of globalization, the universal legitimation of liberal ideology in its classical form is no longer sufficiently universal. Liberalism could serve as a legitimation for certain, specific, societies and states, but not for the entire world. In its expanded form, liberalism acquires a new visage. Originally, in response to changes in the paradigm of economic liberalism, its new economic form was termed *neoliberalism*.

However, as in the phenomenon of classical liberalism, it is neither possible nor necessary to separate the economic from the political aspect, nor from the philosophical understanding of the totality of liberalism. Therefore, I designate this new form of liberalism, not only in the economic but also in the *comprehensive* (overall) sense, as neoliberalism.

All the previously enumerated and unenumerated characteristics of classical liberalism remain in functional use, but they are complemented by a broader legitimizing framework. Thus, the demand for deregulation evolves into a demand for transcending the limitations represented by state boundaries.

This, of course, pertains to the call for a global economy, but it simultaneously concerns the political legitimization of this global order, which has increasingly been termed the *global liberal system*. Naturally, this process is not entirely linear and experiences its ups and downs; one such instance is that in recent years China has also advocated for this global system, and another is that the democratic principles within individual states are increasingly coming into conflict with the effects of this process.

The introduction of digitalization is typically implemented unquestioningly as a continuation of the application of the principles of the metaphysics of rationality. In other words, it represents a more rational form not only of the flow of information but also of the organization of human social life. Moreover, to make this even clearer and more connected to the other aspect of the aforementioned phenomenon of liberalism, that is, its link to the ideology of progress, its legitimization, among other things, invokes assistance to people in their daily lives. Therefore, discursively, it should be accepted as being aimed at the improvement of human life.

However, neoliberalism, much more clearly than its earlier assumptions, comes into conflict with the democratic perception of society. The introduction of so-called improvements, which in reality constitute a more intensive consolidation of the system, calls into question the democratic will and the very possibility for people to express whether their lives have actually improved or not. In addition, the introduction of various forms of media technologies, which intensify so-called communication within society (social networks), also

produces an effect of democratic caution regarding influence over people, by creating a closed world not only of information but of the overall worldview.

Freedom has supposedly been the value through which liberalism contributes to democracy, so one might think that the term “liberal democracy” arose in this context. However, freedom in democracy is perceived differently: it is not only freedom *from* but also freedom *for*, whereas in liberal ideology there is an absolute primacy of so-called *negative freedom*, that is, freedom *from*. Here, the difference in perception becomes evident, since democracy requires a balanced approach to social life in general, and especially regarding its own premise, which is freedom.

In its new form, neoliberalism surpasses the former ideological boundaries and assumptions. On one hand, it speaks of a global system that can even accommodate China, within which people are not only influenced but also controlled. On the other hand, or simultaneously, it panders to democratic legitimacy by claiming that the system is established *for* people and for their benefit. The levers of such a process are supposed to fulfill their democratic character in that the vast majority of people support faster rather than slower internet; more rather than fewer hypermarkets in urban communities; voting on the most popular products, which can then be translated into a market-based interpretation of the political democratic process in specific societies.

Does the modern American saying “There is no democracy in business” still hold true?

If the meaning of this saying is linked to the expansionist logic of economic neoliberalism, then it is entirely logical that democratic principles are gradually

but surely being pushed out of people's lives in society in general.

One of the obvious questions is how to reconcile the principle of deregulation, which allows the positive effect of free movement, with self-regulation, which systemically leads to undemocratic or anti-democratic consequences. Therefore, are deregulation and self-regulation clearly connected? This question is important due to the overall perception of the risks of digital totalitarianism, which we associate with the structural character of totalitarianism in the ideology of (neo)liberalism. Can deregulation or self-regulation be placed within the perception of a specific human community? Can a particular human community make a choice regarding one or the other, and primarily regarding the assessment of whether things are better for us or not; whether we truly experience progress or not?

We therefore have a relationship between the old liberalism, which encompassed the term liberal democracy, and the new liberalism, which relocates that relationship into a global system in which both liberalism and democracy function in service of that system. This phenomenon exists precisely because there is a contradictory relationship between the democratic principle and the universal properties of the liberal system on the one hand, and the inability of the democratic principle to articulate an alternative legitimization of neoliberalism on the other. In this sense, an essential lever for evaluating processes and their effects necessarily requires an additional principle, for example, a *meritocratic* one.

At first glance, this may appear contradictory to the deregulatory demands characteristic of liberal democracy. But let us remember: liberal democracy

“applies” to a specifically defined society and ceases to apply globally. Therefore, the concept of deregulation here is directly connected to the concept of regulation, but not through the levers of the old mechanism of state intervention *per se*; rather, it is connected to the democratic legitimacy of the evaluation by the people of a given urban community. Thus, the meritocratic principle is not only not in conflict with democracy but is its necessary ally because, and this is often forgotten in analyses, these contradictions and dilemmas occur in the context of introducing a global system, not one specific to particular societies or states.

The meritocratic principle is grounded in the evaluation of whether something has value or does not. Values, however, cannot be formulated, nor can they be articulated independently of humans. When we say this, of course, we can imagine a situation in which robots or other robot-like beings, using *artificial intelligence*, express opinions about certain values.

Of course, the foundation of the success of such artificial intelligence lies in the synthesis of high-quality hardware and high-quality software, that is, ever-better operating systems and ever-better “memory” of the content that has been inserted into a framework meant to imitate human intelligence.

However, value does not arise from intelligence, not even human intelligence. It cannot be understood, let alone interpreted, as something individual. Therefore, no matter how perfect its imitation, it cannot be recognized as a genuine expression regarding values.

Why is that so? For a very simple reason: *because evaluation itself, and then values as such, originate from the reflection of human custom.* This further means that

evaluation is tied to life within a human community. And here lies the secret closeness of the terms εθνός and ἔθος. In a human community, there is a way we value our life, we value our actions, and we value ourselves as members of that community, based on which we know who we are and what kind of people we are. Evaluation, then, is the path to the specific identity of people and the way we begin to regulate our lives within the community. Hence the connection between the *ethical* and the *ethnic*. Moreover, thanks to evaluation, we acquire identity, not only as members of a specific community but also as a particular human being with certain virtues and flaws. From all this, it is clear that no intelligence that is not human, and, perhaps even more importantly, not even human intelligence if it is merely intelligence, can imitate, let alone replace, the process of evaluation, no matter how strong its operating system or memory may be.

All that we have said about evaluation also brings us back to the very meaning of philosophy itself. It has been said that philosophy is the love of wisdom, although we have discovered that it is probably primarily a love of truth. Wisdom is connected to experience, in this case, experience with intelligence. How to use intelligence, how to improve human life thanks to intelligence. And here, intelligence is understood in a natural sense as human intelligence. What does this mean? The very sense of this kind of described wisdom shows us that even human-understood intelligence is of a so-called technical character. If we remove it from the scope of wisdom, its technical character will become the broader character of the world in which we live. Intelligence in this technical sense is intelligence extracted from the human being. But it returns to it as a form of self-reflection in which the loss of community is witnessed.

For the community is simultaneously the framework for understanding wisdom as the reflection on evaluation and action, and for maintaining intelligence in its technical sense as a purpose that can improve the life of the community.

When the extraction of intelligence occurs, its return does not require any evaluation; rather, it demands a new understanding of humans and their world. Fully in line with the great ideologies, beginning with liberalism, human beings become functions, and their community is transformed into the concept of a collective.

In this way, the collective thus understood can be structured and restructured as required by the rationality of a system that strives for self-sufficiency.

Thus, the human community and the organization of the community are transformed into a system governed by the principles of intelligence, which is no longer necessarily human. In this context, intelligence becomes ever richer with information, with ever faster distribution, and with an unknown decision-maker. And by definition, it is fed by the inputs and recommendations of the decision-maker.

The community, as a distinctly human way of being, represents a kind of reflection of the collective reason, which stands above any sense of intelligence. For it is nourished by a different kind of sustenance, not by information, but by insights that themselves are nourished by the same content, and also by experience imbued with values. This is the meaning of wisdom, which is a constitutive part of philosophical thought in its externalized sense, while the pursuit of truth is its internal meaning. What unites them is that they are based on memory as a counterbalance to forgetting. Memory,

which seemingly pertains to what has passed, is actually about what exists within the human being itself. The impression of the past arises from the flow of forgetting and the process of narration, while the meaning of truth, as the removal of forgetting, is not the knowledge of the past, but the knowledge of the present.

Thus, in contrast to human communication within a community, we are dealing with a system that strives for self-sufficiency, in which communication is of a technical nature, including that which seemingly pertains to human communication. In one part of the text, we demonstrated clear outlines of the reduction of the democratic potential of the human community in the context of neoliberal globalism. Now, in a more radical version of digital domination over human lives, we can see how the nature of structural totalitarianism characteristic of neoliberalism manifests itself within the technological system.

As early as the 1970s, Dreyfus believed that the limitations of artificial intelligence were of an *a priori* nature.⁴ This means that artificial intelligence cannot replace the human. Consequently, the idea of replacing humans is excluded. However, the effort is not excluded to create conditions that would constitute an anti-human form of establishing an intelligent environment and system, which could potentially limit human freedoms.

It is particularly interesting when Dreyfus talks about the limitations of artificial intelligence, claiming that it cannot reach the capabilities of the intelligence that

⁴ See also the chapters *Limits of Artificial Intelligence* (pp. 289–296) and *The Future of Artificial Intelligence* (pp. 296–316) in the book (Dreyfus, 1977).

exists within the human body. For some reason, he believes that embodiment is a vital part of human intelligence and that this intelligence within the body cannot be “imitated” or functionally achieved.⁵ This concerns an indirect demonstration that the phenomenology of perception, which relies on the body as a mode of apprehension and simultaneously as the ambient of reflection, supports the thesis of dualism. It does so in a manner that can be understood in the spirit of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s efforts, as well as those of many others, to eliminate dualism through a reduction to a non-metaphysical status of human being. In this sense, it should be understood as body and embodiment.

However, embodiment is in fact merely the designation for a mode of being that cannot be reduced to metaphysical categories, but rather to the lived life

⁵ “The human body contributes through three functions that are neither present nor, until now, conceived in digital computer programs:

1. Internal horizon – a partially indeterminate, pre-structured anticipation of partially indeterminate data (this does not mean the anticipation of fully determined alternatives, nor of completely unspecified alternatives, which would be the only possible forms for digital implementation);
2. The global character of this anticipation – which determines the meaning of the details it assimilates, while simultaneously being shaped by them;
3. The transferability of this anticipation – from one sensory modality and one organ of action to another.

All these functions are encompassed by the general human capacity for acquiring bodily skills. Thanks to this fundamental ability, the embodied subject is able to inhabit the world in a way that avoids the infinite task of formalizing everything” (Dreyfus, 1999: 255).

through which a being reflects upon its own existence. This, among other things, is the phenomenology of perception in Merleau-Ponty,⁶ but it also aligns with the significant accounts of the attunement (*Befindlichkeit*) of *Dasein* in Heidegger. Neither can be understood without the other, which fundamentally enables signification, description, or perception itself, perception that cannot be reduced to what it describes.

What is it, then?

A more relevant distinction than the one we might establish as bodily versus non-bodily in human being is that between the *internal* and the *external*. “External,” certainly (as is the internal, after all), denotes *spatial categories and relations*. However, here, in the case of the human being, it signifies the *manner in which one experiences one’s own being, what concerns one in the world and what concerns one within oneself*. In this sense, the external would be secondary, and the internal primary. According to our initial definitions of intelligence, if it were external to the human, it would not be a generic property; if it were internal, it would constitute a generic property of the human being.

In this regard, the notion of the “inner man” of the Apostle Paul designates the internal property of the human being, that is, *all that makes one human in oneself*, rather than externalized in the world. In this way, intelligence, which certainly appears here, would constitute an internal, and thus generic, property of the

⁶ “Embodiment and perception, in their initial generality and the bodily functions and the entire sphere of the aforementioned temporally, socially, and historically mediated structured meanings— are sedimented in the phenomenon that we most generally designate as the body” (Ponty, 2003: 425).

human. This, in some sense, can also be recognized in familiar philosophical attributes, where the state of the human is described as a state of *θεωρία* (“contemplation”), as well as a state of so-called *introspection* (self-insight). Furthermore, it extends to the property of what is termed “maturation,” in which our internal perception emerges as an autonomous perception, even when compared to the perception of the external world. Naturally, when we consider *Dasein*, we can also observe that Heidegger’s designation refers to the internal, rather than the external, aspect of human being, despite, or precisely because, he consistently speaks of *being-in-the-world* (*in-Der-Welt- Sein*).

It is as if we stand on the threshold of a paradox, how can *Dasein* pertain to the internal when it is all the time oriented toward the external? Precisely because, in speaking of the external, it determines itself in relation to it as an internality, the selfhood (*authenticity*) of the *being present there*. This kind of co-determination is not made explicit in this way, as it avoids a dualistic mode of considering this exclusive being, which can be understood through three levels of categories:

1. The concept of the *human being*;
2. The concept of *existence*;
3. The concept of *Dasein*.

Heidegger *de facto* distances himself from the first two [concepts] in order to entrust them to authentic understanding as *Dasein*. What, then, does this signify in the field of philosophical analysis?

It signifies that, precisely through a dualistic approach, Heidegger himself explains that we can better understand the human being by elucidating what makes it externalized and what makes it its own (internal).

Dualism,⁷ in this context, should be understood as a methodological approach that enables us to participate in shaping our authentic “beat”.⁸ “Beat” is the mark of living respiration, which can be sensed and registered in a non-breathing manner, that is, a *feeling as a cognition of the selfhood of life and being within ourselves*.

When it comes to intelligence, the entire account of *Dasein*, and not only Heidegger’s, testifies to a particular phenomenology. This phenomenology, emerging from his analysis, transforms into an *existential hermeneutics*. In fact, it is a *phenomenology of intelligence*, of all those properties by which *Dasein* manifests itself as its own

⁷ Transhumanists build their position on a critique of dualism that fails to distinguish between the ontological and the methodological level. Unjustified divisions are presented as self-evident and are criticized as if they were metaphysical categories. The constructed need for such critique necessarily leads to a reductionism of outcomes and perspectives, with far-reaching consequences—particularly for the concept of the human being. The following statements reflect this trajectory in transhumanist argumentation: “Propositions such as ‘Nature = good’ and ‘Technology = evil’ are part of the traditional dualistic mode of thinking that is no longer sustainable and carries numerous dangerous implications” (Sorgner, 2021: 185).

⁸ This concerns a translational difficulty. In the original Serbian text, the word “bilo” appears. When pronounced with a prolonged vowel “i,” it signifies *the past*. However, when pronounced with a short-rising accent on “i,” “bilo” denotes something that could be most accurately rendered as a “pulse of life” or “essence,” in a metaphorical sense akin to the beating of the heart as a physical manifestation and a criterion for whether an organism is still alive. Consequently, in translation, we have chosen “beat” for “bilo,” understood as a rhythmic pulsation in a metaphorical sense, signifying the authentic pulse of being, the “rhythm of inner human existence.” (trans. remark)

and as a being with a specific way of being. If we agree with Heidegger that this is a way of being should be named *Care* (*Sorge*), because it is fundamentally determined by *being-toward-death* (*Sein-zum-Tode*), then all that this *way* (of being) requires is precisely the *intelligence* that enables *Dasein* to attain such a status. Translated into some contemporary frameworks of understanding intelligence, this can be described as the *alternation of thought and action that leads to the capacity for developing one's own being*, beginning and ending with the notion of *orientation*. And this, in essence, underlies the dualistic relation between the internal and the external.

When understood in such a fundamental way, intelligence, as the foundational phenomenon of the inner human, is a constitutive property of the human being, because through the possibility of developing this being, the entity we call human is literally brought forth. In this sense, philosophically articulated intelligence precede more philosophical elaborate categories, such as the concepts of reason or mind.

Moreover, it enables their mutual understanding, differentiation, and correlation.

If, as some contemporary transhumanists claim, we (presumably humans) were always cyborgs, this would imply that we have always been artificial beings. Consequently, we would not have been truly our own, and we would have been equipped with some inserted (artificial) intelligence. From this, it follows that our earlier analysis is justified, primarily in regard to the only possible, yet for critics unacceptable, dualistic approach to human intelligence. Why?

Because speaking of intelligence in this context actually refers to something external to the human, which

can, as such, be treated as independent of the human, as if it were not ours. It can be entrusted to the unforeseeable development of so-called artificial intelligence. Yet, at the same time, proponents of these views argue that this externality is somehow still part of the human interior, insofar as they consider the human being as determined by the possibility that artificial intelligence can be understood as part of him.

The problem with transhumanists (and with us in relation to them) is that *they fail to understand that duality has never truly possessed an ontological character, but only a methodological one*. This further implies that the interiority of the human being is defined by intelligence, as that which does not determine the human from the outside, but as a constitutive concept, which exists with the human or not, while exteriority is employed as the means by which we come to know these constitutive properties. It is therefore a paradoxical truth that we have always been cyborgs, if by the term “cyborg” we understand a novel mode of articulating the word *Dasein*, as well as the word *existence*, and likewise the word *human*.

Yes, you heard (or rather, read) correctly: the cyborg is, in fact, human. There is no room for ontological dualism, yet if we say that the cyborg is human, and the human a cyborg, we are in effect referring, in an external manner, to the constitutive concept of the human. After all, have not transhumanists, like the previously mentioned ideological projects, also longed for or dreamed of the birth of a *new man*, yet alas...

Man is new because he is born. What they will find unpalatable, however, is the observation of the converse, that “the cyborg has always been human.” For if the proponents of the previous thesis (“human has always

been a cyborg”) are correct, then so-called artificial intelligence (in principle) does not differ from natural intelligence; they differ only in the context of their respective development environments. Thus, artificial intelligence develops as we know, and its development is influenced by its surrounding environment, which includes the intervention of so-called natural intelligence. Therefore, we cannot claim that there is no direct connection separating artificial intelligence from the potential to reach or even surpass so-called natural intelligence, again, dependent on the environment in which it develops.

If this is indeed the case, then there is some basis for the thesis that we (presumably human beings?) have always been cyborgs—in the sense that intelligence, whether called artificial or natural, is conceived as something that can be placed, displaced, and developed independently of whether we name it human or artificial.

However, this impression—that we have always been cyborgs, changes once we understand that what is at issue here is a reduction of the human being to intelligence. Even if we allow that, in a purely physical sense, we might appear artificial, or even deformed, to someone encountering us as a particular kind of life form, this still would not mean that we are cyborgs *in ourselves*. Why?

This is because a cyborg is a being based on the idea of the portability of intelligence and its diverse augmentation, which enriches the cyborg’s environmental status. Here, we note that precisely due to the fact that intelligence is defined in relation to its external use, it cannot be an internal property of the human being in its narrower, i.e., essential determination. This means that, alongside the environmental property

by which we can determine every external dimension of intelligence, including that of the so-called body, this does not determine its essential level of reflection. In other words, even corporeality, as the “accompanying” environment of intelligence, must be understood from within for intelligence to be self-comprehending.

3. Conclusion

In this text, we have sought to demonstrate that the risk of digital totalitarianism is profoundly connected with the understanding of so-called “artificial” intelligence. The initial formulation of the analysis concerned the so-called externalist and internalist approaches to the issue of digital totalitarianism, which, in the course of further argumentation, was transferred to the question of the status of artificial intelligence.

Philosophical understanding of intelligence in general has led us to the conclusion that the externalist and internalist approaches are displaced from the general methodological plane into the relevance of the question of the property of intelligence as such, and consequently, of so-called artificial intelligence. The internal aspect is a property that determines the human being, and considering the *differentia specifica* for the self-determination of man, we can speak of it as an essential property of that concept. However, this does not define intelligence in any standard way, but rather the manner of ontological orientation in relation to what we experience as external. In this context, there is even a reversal of position (topology of properties) regarding, for example, the question of corporeality. Corporeality only seemingly appears as an external aspect of the

human being, whereas it is in fact an internal property of existence as something we can apprehend as a human being. Accordingly, it becomes evident that the critique of (traditional) dualism is entirely unjustified, for the use of dual relations is not based on any categories, nor on metaphysics, but on a type of ontological description through which we access the concept of intelligence and the concept of man in general.

It follows from the foregoing that the concept of artificial intelligence serves as the basis for a reductive understanding of intelligence in general, insofar as it seeks to establish a systemic order in which the human being loses its ontological relevance.

This is the essence of the danger posed by the risk of digital totalitarianism (as understood through a philosophically deepened perspective).

References

1. Anders, H. (1985). *The Obsolescence of Man* (Nolit: Belgrade).
2. Radun, Viktor (2016). *Transhumanism – A Future Without People* (Pešić and Sons: Belgrade).
3. Sorgner, Stefan, Lorenz (2021). *We Have Always Been Cyborgs – Data, Gene Technologies, and an Ethics of Transhumanism* (Bristol: Bristol University Press).
4. Dreyfus, Hubert (1977). *What Computers Can't Do* (Nolit: Belgrade).

5. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002). *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge: London).
6. Bodin, Milenko (2019). *Philosophical Discourse of Liberalism* (Faculty of Security Studies: Belgrade).