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The illusion of limitlessness: Engaging Cornel du Toit's perspective on transhumanism and being

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This article, in honour of Cornel du Toit, examines his scholarship, broadly in relation to science and religion, but particularly zeroes in on his idea of the nature of transhumanism and being and implications for religion. In his article titled *Artificial intelligence and the question of being*, Du Toit raises pluri-significant concerns regarding the emergence of superintelligent machines, capable of human-like and even superior intelligence. He explores the implications of this development for human existence, as it shifts the role of humans from being subjects to objects, with artificial intelligence taking precedence. Despite this, he concludes that there is nothing to fear about the superintelligent machines as they cannot replace human beings. This article analysed Du Toit's arguments and concedes with him that religion has its place even in a supposedly ultra-techno-deterministic world. It does this by deploying the theory of incompleteness and mobility – that both humans and technology are incomplete in themselves, and evolving.

Intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary implication: This article contributes to the debate on the relationship between religion and science and grounds it on the premise that they are not only complementary but also their agonistic differences can be meshed through the understanding of the nature of being and incompleteness.

Keywords: Cornel du Toit; transhumanism; being; illusion; science and religion.

Introduction

Transhumanism, with its aspiration to transcend human limitations through technological advancement, has exacerbated extensive debates across humanistic fields such as philosophy, theology and ethics. Central to these discussions is the nature of 'being' – the essence of what it means to exist, particularly as technology begins to blur the boundaries between humans and machines. This article critically examines the philosophical stance of Cornel W. du Toit, particularly his exploration of the concept of being about transhumanism. In his work, *Artificial intelligence and the question of being*, Du Toit (2019) raises critical concerns about the rise of superintelligent machines and the implications they carry for human identity, consciousness and existence.

Du Toit presents a compelling analysis of how artificial intelligence (AI) and machine advancements challenge traditional human roles, potentially demoting humans from subjects to objects. As machines 'grow' or rather develop in intelligence and capability, the human essence of agency and self-determination faces erosion, with AI assuming a dominant role in decision-making and function. In this shift, Du Toit highlights the philosophical and existential threat to human subjectivity, prompting deeper reflection on how the rise of AI impacts not only human identity but also fundamental metaphysical questions surrounding the nature of existence.

Beyond existential concerns, Du Toit examines the interplay between technology and religion, with techno-messianism beginning to rival or even attempt to replace traditional religious messianic ideas and ideals. The transhumanist pursuit of immortality and perfection, which finds its roots in religious aspirations, is mirrored in the rise of technological utopianism, where machines and enhancements are seen as pathways to salvation. By focussing on mimesis or imitation, Du Toit probes the implications of machines mimicking human consciousness, thought processes and emotions, raising concerns about the authenticity of both machine and human existence in this new reality.

Utilising the concept of incompleteness and mobility, this article explores the paradox inherent in transhumanism's quest to surpass human limitations and argues that transhumanism is a work

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in progress rather than a destination. While transhumanism aims to enhance human capacities (mobility), this process of continuous enhancement may create an unanticipated limitation (incompleteness): the endless cycle of upgrades. Rather than achieving ultimate transcendence, beings – including AI – may become trapped in a perpetual state of modification, dependent on further enhancements to overcome their evolving inadequacies. This paradoxical outcome questions whether transhumanism truly fulfils its promise of overcoming limitations or simply redefines them.

The article is divided into six sections – the first section, which is the introduction, sets the stage of the discourse for Du Toit's perspective on transhumanism and being. The second section explores the theoretical framework – incompleteness and mobility – arguing that both technology and religion are work in progress. The third and fourth sections introduces Du Toit as a great scholar whose ideas on science and religion among other areas of his influence, express the idea of incompleteness and mobility. This clears the ground to interrogate his arguments on transhumanism and is then followed by the fifth section on how illusion is also incomplete in itself and in relation to the transhumanism. The last section concludes the article.

Theoretical foregrounding

I borrow the concept of incompleteness and mobility from Nyamnjoh (2024) who argues that incompleteness takes monopoly away from an individual or institution that exclusively appropriates to itself the right to observe or interpret. Nyamnjoh argues for interpenetration of thought, methodology and concept as an enriching dynamic of understanding and expansion. Being and becoming are an unfinished work; they are work in progress. In the same vein, meaning and sense-making are unfolding phenomena of life; they do not have permanent fissures. Nyamnjoh (2024:15) avers: 'Incompleteness is a framework for thinking, articulating, relating to, understanding, living and letting live in a world in which incomplete is normal and universal'. The dimension of incomplete is transgressive because it borders on and beyond human and non-human, natural and artificial and so on and seeks to connect and interconnect with them. Thus, it becomes radically fruitless and unproductive to pursue a zero-sum or exclusionary agenda of interpretation of truth or reality.

Given this, the hypothesis that religion or science solely will make or mar humanity is a zero-sum assumption that falls in the face of reality. Scientific achievements, on the one hand, and ultra-fundamentalist religious ideologies, on the other hand, are a work in progress, unfolding and being unfolded. This means that human beings cannot claim absolute knowledge of a thing; they must admit that they are fallible and finite. Human ontological imperfections (limitations) and constant quest for scientific and technological perfections are stereotypes of incompleteness and mobility. Thus, recognising the limitations of religion and science and their complementarity are a work in progress. This is heightened by the idea of mobility, which as Nyamnjoh (2024:28) perceives it, entails a 'movement of our ideas, cross borders, transgressing' despite our efforts at disciplinary and methodological boundaries erected to control our thought. The crossroads and crossovers of ideas – religion and science in this context – make us to perceive our world in ways that are more meaningful.

Cornel du Toit's analyses of religion and science encapsulate the votaries of incompleteness and mobility, as he analysed the impact of AI on religion – techno-messianism versus traditional *religio*-messianism – which may at first unsettles the believers. However, Du Toit delves into the concept of mimesis and demonstrates how machines mimic human reality, acting, thinking and feeling in ways that resemble human behaviour. This imitation raises questions about the authenticity of being human, creating an illusion where it becomes difficult to distinguish between what is human and what is artificial. Both humans and machines seem capable of consciousness, rationality and emotion, complicating our understanding of what it means to be conscious. These disturbing thoughts for traditional believers do not change the reality of the advance of AI, as Du Toit maintains. It is on a whole, an invitation to think scientifically and live theologically. After all, both thinking and living are a conscious activity that human beings engage in. It is this that explains the idea of incompleteness and mobility. In other words, while humans cannot stop science from delving into human space supposedly protected by religion, it is also humans that define and regulate the intrusion by realising the ethical issues therein. Appraising and building on Du Toit's perspective, this article explores the essence of being, presenting an argument that despite transhumanism's goal of overcoming human limitations, the enhancement of beings and the development of robots may lead to a new kind of limitation – continuous upgrade of the enhanced. This, paradoxically, contradicts the very aim of transhumanism – to transcend human limitations, because it is in itself incomplete.

Meeting Cornel du Toit at the intersection of religion and science

There are many ways one can meet great scholars without meeting them personally. For instance, in one of my philosophy classes, I asked my students if they knew Aristotle. The chorus, yes, was astounding. When I asked them to tell who were Aristotle's parents as they had told me about Jesus Christ, the class went quiet, and like Thales, the students were gazing at the sky or ceiling of the class. I could not dispute their knowledge about knowing Aristotle even though they had and will never meet him physically. The point is that the students, just like me, all knew Aristotle either through his direct writings or thoughts about his ideas, which have continued to excite philosophical, scientific, political discourse. Like my students, I can claim to know Cornel du Toit in the same vein that my students knew Aristotle, indirectly, through his writings and interrogation of his ideas by scholars who are familiar with him and his ideas.

Bentley (2013) described Du Toit as:

> [*A*]n exploratory thinker. He is a wide thinker, who refuses to be confined by the limitations of a specific discipline or dogma. In the years that I have worked with Du Toit, I have found his work to be innovative and fresh, ground-breaking and constantly testing the limits of convention. It is such a mind that is helpful in the tensions between science and religion, between religion and politics, and between existentialism and metaphysics. (p. 55)

For Lombaard (n.d.), Du Toit is a 'critical thinker' whose 'openness allows for critical engagement: the intellectual pursuit of difficult issues that do not allow for the at times all-too-cosy church, popular and populist answers'. From the array of descriptions of Du Toit, one can claim without equivocation that he is a scholar of many parts, and like a Jazz musician, he not only improvises ideas spontaneously but also harmonises and synchronises them to make an intellectually stimulating menu for more critical articulation and interrogation. As an intellectual, he believes there is no idea that does not warrant scrutiny, for in scrutinising ideas do we birth fecundity. The transgressive nature (versatility in science and religion, faith and reason, Christian spirituality, ethics, religion and politics, existentialism and metaphysics, eschatology and so forth) of Du Toit's scholarship and pluri-methodological and theoretical analyses of ideas, both point us to incompleteness of ideas and the progress that humans can continue to make to advance knowledge.

For such a great scholar like Du Toit, meshing his ideas into one single 'Jazz' article of this nature will be a miracle. It is for this reason that we will concentrate broadly on his thoughts on science and religion, zeroing in on his work *Artificial intelligence and the question of being*. In doing so, it is important to state that Du Toit (2012) did not elevate science and epistemology derived from it as overarching route to define, understand or relate to reality. Humanistic epistemologies are also critical and indeed required in understanding the human nature. Balancing science and theology, broadly religion, is a distinct area of his interest: the purpose of making humans realise that living in a modern world, characterised by the scientific presence, they can still synthesise both realms and live a meaningful life (Du Toit 2007). In other words, science in all its reach is not to be used to prove the existence of God (this does not suggest; however, that it cannot be used in that sense [Du Toit 2013]), but to understand and appreciate God's reality and human self-understanding of God. According to Du Toit (2013):

> [*F*]aith in and experience of God are so powerful that they are sufficient proof of his existence. So even if God cannot be proven, one can prove that, for many people, he is the very ground of reality. (p. 3)

In Du Toit (ed. 2010) words:

> [*T*]he aim of the debate cannot be to find fresh proofs of God's existence in recent research findings … Its value lies in deepening the self-understanding of both theologians and scientist. (p. ix)

To make sense of this harmony, Du Toit (2013) argues that religion must be understood as a natural phenomenon even though it appeals to faith or the supernatural. This evolutionary perspective of traditional religion aligns with Du Toit's thought on other forms of belief systems as product of human intelligence. Their complexities are explainable in the light of the advance in human consciousness. He arguing that religion is natural and science is unnatural or counter-intuitive does not make them true or false or make a hierarchy of them. If anything, it is that both are open to constant interpretations and innovation. For the Western mind, there might be a possibility that technoscience can have devastating influence and effects on religion in a post-modern world characterised by 'rugged' secularism, globalisation, electronic media and so on. Although this argument is not a recent one, there seems to be new ways to seek its fulfilment. That questions the universality of many of the arguments and ideas that Africans have appropriated from the West for most part of their colonial experience. However, it has to be mentioned that religion has also 'smartly' utilised these technological products as a means of self-propagation.

Science will always pose serious questions for religion. Du Toit's thoughts on emergence and the possibility of its progression will consistently put religion on its toes; but in reality, it expresses the idea of incompleteness, mobility and dependence. Thus, Du Toit (2013) posits:

> Consider, moreover, that human consciousness and thought rely on each synaptic contact as well as a combination of numerous simultaneous contacts. It follows that a human person is necessarily creative, imaginative and highly complex. That is apparent in the artworks, literary creations and religious activities that are hallmarks of human life. Restricting the human brain religiously, philosophically or in any way whatever is to restrict a whole universe of emergence. … In time to come, more powerful computers, new methods and insight will probably make it possible to map, even predict, multiplicity and even chance and probability. Nonetheless it is equally likely that new metaphysical questions will keep surfacing. (p. 7)

Subsequently, we will examine Du Toit's argument about transhumanism as a form of more powerful (intelligent) computer in relation to being.

Engaging Du Toit's perspective on transhumanism and being

When the One Hundred Year Study on Artificial Intelligence (OHSYAI) was inaugurated in 2014, its broad aim was to underscore AI's influences on people and societies. The OHSYAI prospected to advance and monitor the progress of AI on economics, ethics and human cognition, all bordering on expertise and 'enhancement' of life on earth (Stanford University 2016). The thrust of the project is that it borders more on secular, this-worldly projection of humanity. It seems to not reach the core of metaphysics, the nature of being, its ontology and relations with eschatology, a concern that Du Toit (2019) has raised. It is important to note, however, that it is not all AI systems that border on human

subjectivity, morality or ethics and eschatology. The field of AI is increasingly becoming so vast that delimiting of discourses and discussions has become imperative:

Artificial intelligence is defined as (Stanford University 2016):

> [*A*] science and a set of computational technologies that are inspired by – but typically operate quite differently from – the ways people use their nervous systems and bodies to sense, learn, reason, and take action. (n.p.)

Officially birthed and christened at a workshop organised by John McCarthy at the Dartmouth Summer Research Project in 1956, AI was then meant to investigate how machines could be made to stimulate aspects of intelligence. Although AI has continued in the trajectory proposed at that workshop, it is pertinent to state that the technical ideas associated with AI had existed prior to the workshop.

The thrust of Du Toit's inquiry into the nature of machine intelligence is to determine whether it is the same as humans. According to Du Toit, it is important for us to understand the kind of future interaction that will take place between human beings and machines. Du Toit's (2019) three categorisations of AI are:

> Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) or weak AI; Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) or 'strong' AI that refers to self-thinking, autonomous machines; and Artificial Super Intelligence (ASI) which refers to machines that far exceed human abilities. (p. 2)

These three levels are known as capability-based artificial intelligence (Ibanga 2024:2). Firstly, Artificial Narrow Intelligence performs only tasks at a time better than humans can, faster and quicker. Du Toit wonders whether these machines are intelligent. Intelligence is simply more than machines fulfilling tasks, solving problems, and performing tedious tasks that were previously assigned to humans' (Du Toit 2019:3). Secondly is Artificial General Intelligence – intelligence that can closely imitate humans as they are conscious, autonomous, self-aware, sentient and driven by emotions. Although this stage, according to Du Toit, is uncertain and the probability of its real existence lies in the future and not now. He, however, avers that these machines will be 'able to reason, solve problems, make judgments when clear-cut options are not available, plan, learn, integrate prior knowledge in decision-making, and be innovative, imaginative, and creative' (Du Toit 2019:3). Thirdly is Artificial Super Intelligence, which is the advanced stage of machine intelligence or plausibly, the novel idea of machine intelligence – the intelligence that supervises human intelligence, 'from creativity general wisdom to problem-solving' (Du Toit 2019:3). He states further quoting Bostrom's definition of this type of intelligence as 'any intellect that greatly exceeds the cognitive performance of humans in virtually all domains of interest' (Du Toit 2019:3).

Introducing this type of intelligence is a crucial factor in the transhuman era as every aspect of biology can be hacked, ranging from (Du Toit 2019):

> [*T*]echnology augmentation, nutrigenomics, experimental biology, and grinder biohacking. Biohacking includes technology augmentation, nutrigenomics, experimental biology, and grinder biohacking making use of Biochips, Biotech, Cultured or Artificial Tissue, Brain-Computer Interface, Augmented Reality, Mixed Reality, and Smart Fabrics. (p. 5)

This calls for concern. One must think about the capitalists behind the idea, and as all the companies must gain from their investment, one must also think about the ethical issues that come with it. However, it is not just the gain but the extent of gain as we all know what capitalism does through the Marxist's revelation. Thomas (2022:47) aptly captures this essence when he asserts, 'to abstractly argue for human enhancement technologies without thinking through the logics of capitalism is egregiously myopic'.

Du Toit goes further to discuss the consequential impact on religion as technological messianism and techno-religions overthrow natural religion (Du Toit 2019). However, here machines and humans become the replacement of religion. Instead of spiritual immortality, we have digital immortality. However, both transcend the physical limits of the present man, setting humans free of the current limitations and inviting a more powerful force over man (Du Toit 2019):

> Through machine-human interface, humans can become more autonomous and independent, possibly immortal, transcending the confines of time and space. Ignorance may be overcome by acquiring a god-like mind through a human-machine interface. This may replace traditional Christian notions like belief in and dependence on God, the experience of creatureliness and sin, and the longing for salvation. Humans become their creators. The human individual can choose his or her virtual paradise and enjoy a life of constant recreation without the need to labour and fulfill all the desires. (p. 4)

He, however, concludes that techno-religion cannot take the role of religion basically because of the interpersonal relationship, the sensory feeling that arises from the God-spot in the brain, manifesting through consciousness of the self about the transcendent. However, the fear that AI can be out of control cannot be romanticised. Should it happen, for instance, 'an-out-of-control race to develop and deploy ever more powerful digital minds that no-one – not even the creators – can understand, predict, or reliably control' (Nyamnjoh 2024:145) raises both ethical and existential concerns. But will it be ethical to legislate to halt the capacity of the human brain (mind) to think and produce what it thinks? Although the fears of AI are real, they are not absolutely real to cause human (mind) paralysis or retard social progress. However, the relationship between humans and machines may become coaxed. Machines or AI will replace humans turning humans into objects rather than subjects. Du Toit (2019) states that:

> The fear of humans becoming enslaved by their inventions is the theme of many science-fiction movies. Artificial intelligence is the outcome of the evolution of technology. It may overturn the traditional subject-object relationship humans have with machines and replace humans as subjects. Machines will decide what we can do, how we live, and what programs we use, and

> determine our movements and boundaries. This will change our experience of reality, influence our values, and alter our style of living. (p. 5)

The probability of this happening depends on the nature of the intelligence the machine would possess. If machines or robots would be able to store data more than humans, enabling them to behave in certain ways that humans do – mimesis, the concept of imitation, the question of 'being' and 'self' becomes inevitable. Machines imitate being's reality: behaving like humans, thinking and feeling like humans. This imitation begs the authenticity of being human. It becomes an illusion because we are no longer certain of who is a being or not as both the natural – human and artificial – robots can do the same in terms of consciousness, rationality and feeling (Du Toit 2019). However, the capacity to store and process big data is not correlated with wisdom or knowledge. This arises from a sense of self that machines do not have. In other words, there is more to being than Cartesian mode of logic, the zero-sum capacity to think. Unlike machines, what makes humans intelligent is consciousness that arises from freedom. We feel free and that is why we are intelligent. Our emotions are what make us free, and we can choose not to act based on threat, love or betrayal. As Francis Nyamnjoh (2024:134) puts it, human beings are capable of being 'present in and draw sustenance from many places at the same time, and to be able to see, feel, smell and hear things that are not tangible and visible in ordinary terms. … Human capacity to decipher the multiple spices and ingredients of being human and to discern interconnections despite appearance of discontinuities' are contents of human intelligence. On the other hand, machines are emotionless, which begs the question, are they intelligent? (Du Toit 2019):

> Genetically, we are programmed to operate in a certain way. Culturally, we think within a specific language, community, and education system with its paradigms, methods, and epistemologies. We feel free to improvise within these parameters, but there are limits to this freedom. Are programmed computers so far away from the freedom and choices that humans have? The answer is probably 'no'. In the case of humans, emotion comes into the equation. (p. 2)

When we speak of qualia, we speak of subjective, first-person experiences of individuals – what it feels like to have mental states or sensations. For example, the redness of red, the taste of chocolate or the pain of a headache are all considered qualia. They represent the 'what it's like' aspect of consciousness and are central to discussions in philosophy of mind, particularly in debates around consciousness, perception and the nature of subjective experience. Science combines both the physical and metaphysical realms. Both parts, metaphysical and physical, contribute to what is known as consciousness (Du Toit 2019:2). This implies that reducing consciousness to just physical functions is absurd. Self-thinking, which is an intuitive quasi-physical or meta-physical function in response to the physical world is only human enabled. Without the combination of both parts, consciousness is not achievable from the angle of a machine. A machine that can only react to the physical world based on physicality is not conscious. This further implies that an advanced or upgraded person (person turned robot) cannot be sure that the consciousness is dependent on his/her human perception.

As Dery (1996:244) argues, consciousness 'polluted by technology' portends serious implications for humans as they progress towards techno-determinism. This new construction of what it takes to be a human being or to define the self technologically is post-human. Ourselves as biological machines being replicated in AI do not confer consciousness on the created (Igboin 2010). As John Locke (1975) argues, in relation to personal identity, one's consciousness is inseparable from one's identity in so far as that can guarantee that one's self-awareness continues from the past thoughts or actions:

> To find wherein personal identity consists, we must consider what a person stands for, which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places, which it does only by that consciousness that is inseparable from thinking and, as it seems to me, essential to it. (p. 39)

Locke's argument on consciousness is problematic because, in reality, there can be cases of amnesia and paramnesia that can result in a person's inability to consistently remember correctly what transpired in the past. As Du Toit, however, points our attention to, consciousness becomes more puzzling than it is with a normal human being. Even if a robot can utter that a colour is blue, it still does not understand what blue is, consciousness makes us understand based on several perceptions of what that thing constitutes. Human consciousness presupposes intelligence, but intelligent machines do not possess consciousness. This implies that the machines do not possess the nature of human intelligence, and even if they possess intelligence, this is not the same as human intelligence (Du Toit 2019:2).

Here, one can echo the words of Bricklin (2015) in his exploration of the works of William James:

> [*O*]f the fact of a body is not the fact of a self. Though stable enough to seem a substance in which experience inheres, the body is more an address than a resident. And a none-too-certain address at that since, far from being 'too, too solid flesh', the body, like all matter, is a swirl of energy, an energy construct. While this energy construct of the body may survive in a rarefied form after death, without its bones, sinews and liquids and may even reincarnate, such a construct is not a self. For whatever the self may be, it cannot be reduced to an objectifiable entity of energy or matter; insofar as the self exists at all, it must include something nonobjectifiable: consciousness. (p. 118)

This means that what characterises a robot – machine is not consciousness. Du Toit (2019) concludes that being a human being is extraordinary and unique ranging from our emotions to our socialisation and the awareness of transcendence:

> What it means to be human is uniquely a human phenomenon. It is precisely human vulnerability and notions like emotion, desire, dependence, sin, hope, and mortality that make us human. Human greatness is characterized by human interaction with transcendence. Being self-transcending beings makes us more than any well-programmed machine. We are 'programmed' to live toward the future, expecting more, always beginning afresh, and dreaming about new possibilities. This is what characterizes being as ineffable. In the mode of luring ineffability, being enfolds humans in its special dynamism. (p. 9)

It can be inferred that the experience of sin implies that only a conscious being can strive for righteousness – the deliberate effort to amend wrongful actions. As Du Toit suggests, human intelligence, rooted in consciousness, highlights the limitations of machine intelligence. Therefore, the transhumanist belief that AI or robotic intelligence will be 'superior' is an illusion. The difficulty in denying the inherent dependence on machines further complicates this notion. This brings us to the next section of this article, which will be elaborated upon in the following paragraphs.

The illusion of limitlessness in transhumanism

The concept of illusion, as raised by Du Toit (2019), deals with the ability of a machine (robot or AI) to perfectly imitate a being. However, central to this section is the aspect of self-consciousness that machines do not possess. If machines are not self-conscious, it means they rely on humans for upgrades; it signifies that they cannot escape the notion of limitation – revealing a paradox of supposed limitlessness. The need for an upgrade indicates that the machine's abilities are finite, and the upgrade serves to address these shortcomings. Even if machines were conscious, self-aware and capable of upgrading themselves without human intervention, the necessity for upgrades still challenges their existence and questions whether they can truly surpass human capability. I shall deepen the conversation by reviewing the word 'illusion' from different perspectives to provide an in-depth understanding of the background information in this section.

Heighton (2020) explains that the word 'illusion' is almost always construed as a negative term or a pejorative in semantic terminology. He emphasises that:

> You never tell anyone 'I think you're trapped in an illusion' and mean it as a compliment. Even if your motives are benign – say, you're trying to coach or console a heartbroken friend through a divorce or other disappointment – you're still warning the person about a problem, an issue, or a toxic psychic phenomenon. You're telling your friend he's clinging to a false conception; you're saying she's bought into a lie, a delusion. (p. 4)

Heighton sees illusion as delusion, but Rogers (2010:287) discusses the idea of illusion from the sensory organ, explaining that illusion hinges on the idea that our perception is contrary to the available information. He explains that most times, the information reaching us from our external stimuli differs from its true content, making our perception subjective and limited to individual sensation. Sabastein Dieguez (2018:108) goes further than Rogers to explain that even when people experience bodily illusions in virtual reality, they still believe that the illusion is false, and the body parts are still theirs. Consequentially, what our bodies, either in a 'virtual state' or in 'reality', see, touch or feel are sometimes unreal, creating a false impression of our external experience.

In *Illusions: A psychological study*, Sully (2006) explains that 'illusion is something essentially abnormal and allied to insanity'. This implies that the perception of a madman differs from that of a sane individual. Although this article does not dwell on the experience of madness to know what it constitutes, however, a return from madness in several testimonies amplifies Sully's statement, as most persons do not remember whether they were insane or not. This explanation is like Rogers' and Dieguez's on bodily perception and feeling. Certainly, 'illusion' is not only experienced by insane individuals but by sane people. Sully (2006) agrees to this and states that:

> Notwithstanding the flattering supposition of common sense, that illusion is essentially an incident in normal life, the careful observer knows well enough that the case is far otherwise. There is, indeed, a view of our race opposed to the flattering opinion referred to above, namely, the humiliating judgment that all men habitually err, or that illusion is to be regarded as the natural condition of mortals. This idea has found expression, not only in the cynical exclamation of the misanthropist that most men are fools, but also in the cry of despair that sometimes breaks from the weary searcher after absolute truth, and from the poet when impressed with the unreality of his early ideals. (p. 2)

Illusion, from the foregoing analysis, expresses the idea of incompleteness, unwholeness of humanity. Illusion is thus a work in progress. Conversely, the term limitlessness undeniably refers to being beyond any boundary or restriction, possessing the capacity to be infinite. A limitless being would be supremely powerful, capable of achieving anything and everything that lesser beings cannot. In the context of machines and beings, a limitless machine or robot would possess boundless power, with the ability to perform tasks without end. The idea that machines will be infinite is a poser because if machines are dependent on humans, how can they be infinite? Importantly, we must note that AI (either general or super intelligence) is human made and human programmed. This means that the human is responsible for programming them to act in ways that they are programmed. This is the first idea of limitation. In this connection, Nick Bostrom (2014) avers that:

> [*M*]ost technologies that will have a big impact on the world in five or ten years from now are already in limited use, while technologies that will reshape the world in less than fifteen years probably exist as laboratory prototypes. (p. 4)

The word prototype agrees with the idea of a being dependent on human beings to create them.

However, this presents a paradox: if we can control the creation of an ultra-intelligent machine, it raises questions about the limitations of its intelligence. Consequently, if such a machine

is uncontrollable, it prompts ethical concerns regarding its creation. As it stands, we do not have any general or super-intelligent machines because of the complexities involved in developing a general intelligence system (Bostrom 2014:14). Therefore, we will examine a closely related example in robotics – Sophia, the first humanoid robot. According to Bhatia (2018), this robot represents a significant advancement beyond narrow intelligence machines. Bhatia (2018) argues that:

> At best, Sophia is described as a chatbot2 with a face; researchers assert that what human-machine interaction designers have done is link narrow AI algorithms together to give the functionality of a more capable algorithm. The result is a speech-reciting robot that can drum up witty conversations with pre-loaded text, follow it up with machine learning to match facial expressions and pauses to the text. [...] However, Sophia also scores on some counts: 1. For e.g., the voice recognition technology is better as compared to Siri or Alexa; 2. Hanson Robotics humanoid robot displays a better dialog understanding [of] system sentences; 3. Virtual agents like Siri, Alexa, Cortana are designed for simple tasks, not for conversation; 4. Sophia is akin to a preprogrammed robot that runs chatbot software which can respond to cues with actual facial expressions and scripted answers. (n.p.)

Analysing Bhatia's humanoid robot, Riccio (2021) argues that:

> [*S*]ophia is different. She is a humanoid social robot mirroring humans, blending fascination with delight and existential unease. She is essentially a computer with a body and human-like agency. If Sophia is an alluring symbol to celebrate, she also gives pause to wonder how her kind will alter life on what has been a human-centric planet. (p. 44)

This explains the reason Sophia is seen as the closest form of general intelligence. This robot works on natural language processing and facial recognition software to relate to the humans it encounters. It can here be inferred that the robots need continuous upgrades unlike humans to learn the social worlds even if they can autonomously respond through the help of chatbot programming. In other words, as earlier explained by Du Toit, robots are not self-conscious, which means that apart from relying on humans to create them, they also rely on humans for subsequent maintenance and upgrades – creating an illusion that they will be self-sufficient.

Then, the limitation here can either be a result of human's continuous upgrade or self-upgrade. The former has been explained earlier. The latter is the ability of the robot to initiate an upgrade without the help of external factors such as humans. This implies that general intelligence systems can be able to function independently without the help of external systems. This is emphatic in the argument presented by Roli, Jaeger and Kauffman (2022:2) that natural systems with general intelligence, like humans or animals, can creatively use their environment to achieve their goals. This ability to adapt and improvise – called using 'affordances' – goes beyond what current AI can do. Artificial intelligence systems, even advanced ones, are just algorithms that process information based on rules and inputs, so they cannot fully replicate the flexible problem-solving of biological organisms. While a general organism (in this case, humans) can upgrade by self-learning and self-understanding through experiences of the past transforming its relationship with other beings, AI's upgrade is dependent on the input of humans. Roli et al. (2022) go further to explain the relational dependence of AI on humans, stating that:

> Since they cannot employ situational knowledge, and since they cannot represent and reason metaphorically, AI systems largely fail at dealing with and exploiting ambiguities. These limitations have been identified and formulated as the frame problem more than fifty years ago … Today, they are still with us as major obstacles for achieving AGI. What they have in common is an inability of algorithmic systems to reckon with the kind of uncertainty, or even paradox, that arises from context-dependent or ill-defined concepts. In contrast, the tension created by such unresolved states of knowing is often a crucial ingredient for human creativity and invention. (p. 2)

Situational knowledge would further mean that the AI can choose to either self-upgrade or not. A conscious being can decide to either go for A or B or neither because as an organism, she or he is conscious to seek alternatives. Roli et al. (2022) describe this process as 'interactive autonomy' – the ability of the organism to gain some autonomy over its interactions with the environment if it can regulate its boundaries. As Chomsky, Roberts and Watumull (2023) further explicate, AI machines merely correlate data but humans explain it. AI lacks the intelligence and consciousness to engage in reasoning:

> [*I*]t [*AI*] summarizes the standard arguments in the literature by a kind of super-autocomplete, refuses to take a stand on anything, pleads not merely ignorance but lack of intelligence and ultimately offers a 'just following orders' defense, shifting responsibility to its creators … Given the amorality, faux science and linguistic incompetence of these systems, we can only laugh or cry at their popularity. (n.p.)

Lastly, there is a need for pros of AI to understand that consciousness stemming from emotion also differs between men and women. To prove that AI would be more intelligent, it must be able to mirror the genders that exist and their reactions to the environment (including transgenders) and not just mirror actions and attitudes but also, internal consciousness that is central to either gender.

Conclusion

We have argued, from Du Toit's perspective, that as AI cannot possess true consciousness or self-upgrade, it is an illusion to think they can transcend limitations, unlike what transhumanists claim. Consciousness is an inherently internal experience, far deeper than merely simulating mental processes like thinking to act in a particular way. A conscious being can choose between two alternatives or neither. Whether general or super artificial intelligence, it cannot transcend limitations completely. This is crucial for us to digest, given the prevailing belief that AI, as it continues to grow and develop – being an incomplete whole – will supersede the intelligence of human beings. The fear of the believers evaporates when it is realised that AI does not depersonalise them nor take their place in relation to

themselves and their God. However, the fear can be understood from the perspective of human and technoscience incompleteness and mobility; their constantly becoming or unfolding creates lively tension that attests to their finite emergence. The uniqueness of this incompleteness and mobility lies in the fact that it is only humans who know, consciously, that they are incomplete; the AI does not have that consciousness.

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