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*Being human in a
technology-driven world:
Checkmate or opportunity for
social responsibility?*

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THEOLOGY
EYEZENKOLO NEZIFUNDO NGENGQIQO BUTHIXO
TEOLOGIE

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Being human in a technology-driven world: Checkmate or opportunity for social responsibility?

Ubomi kwihlabathi elizele bubuxhakaxhaka betekhnoloji: Ingaba yingxingongo na okanye kukuthwalela uluntu uxanduva?

Menswees in 'n tegnologie-gedrewe wêreld: Skaakmat of geleentheid vir sosiale verantwoordelikheid?

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Biography of author

Prof Cloete completed a diploma at a Bible school in 1992 and thereafter performed missionary work for four years. She continued her theological studies at Unisa, where she obtained undergraduate and postgraduate degrees between 1997 and 2008. She lectured at Huguenot College for eight years, after which she joined the Department of Practical Theology and Missiology at Stellenbosch University.

Her research focus developed into three key areas, namely youth ministry within a congregational context, education and technology, and religion and media. In her research on youth ministry in a congregational context, she critically reflects on at least four approaches in youth ministry, namely the inclusive congregational, family, relational and intergenerational approaches. Her research on education and technology aims at illuminating the complex nature and ambiguous effect of technology on the training of ministers and education in general. In her research on religion and media she dissects the complex nature of technology and the impact on community, spiritual formation, religious authority, and everyday living.

Between 2007 and 2022 she participated in 16 international and 20 national conferences. She has supervised 17 research assignments, 12 master's theses, three doctoral studies and one postdoctoral fellowship, and is currently supervising another five doctoral candidates. She received the Rector's Award in 2015 and is an NRF-rated scholar with several national and international publications. She is the section editor for practical theology of the *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* and a member of several academic societies.

Being human in a technology-driven world: Checkmate or opportunity for social responsibility?

Prof Anita Cloete

Abstract

The goal of this lecture is to demonstrate the continuous need for reflection on the reciprocal relationship between being human and technology as well as religion and technology. In fulfilling this aim, I explain what is meant by a technology-driven world, followed by a look at the use of technology in everyday living. An overview of key frameworks is given, which describes the vision of a life that is increasingly altered by technology. The framework that is discussed includes transhumanism, posthumanism and singularity. The possible values that informed this vision of/for life directed and controlled by technology are identified and described. The vision as articulated by trans- and posthumanism is compared with the vision of especially Christian theology and possible similarities and fundamental differences are outlined. Considering the complex relationship between technology and being human as understood from especially a Christian theological perspective, the final section addresses the question posed in the title: Checkmate or opportunity for social responsibility?

Keywords:

Technology, transhumanism, posthumanism, singularity, checkmate

Being human in a technology-driven world: Checkmate or opportunity for social responsibility?

Prof Anita Cloete, Inaugural lecture, Stellenbosch University, May 2022

Introduction

In my previous work, I emphasised the social embeddedness of technology and the ambiguous impact on religious and educational institutions (Cloete 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019). The ambiguous impact of technology alludes to the complex nature of technology. While technologically mediated education, for instance, could provide broader access to students who cannot attend in-person classes, it could exclude the very same constituency it promises to reach. Many students who cannot attend residential universities or in-person classes unfortunately often lack digital literacy (skills) and resources such as a stable internet connection to effectively engage in online teaching and learning. The interactive nature of technology could create opportunities for more active participation of students, but the very same characteristic, however, made it possible for students to use technology during classes for non-educational purposes. The use of technology in education results in the need for an increased budget to maintain and upgrade infrastructure and upskill both lecturers and students, while the use of technology does not automatically guarantee effective teaching and learning (Cloete 2017:4).

Similarly, digital religion that includes religion online (religious information) and online religion (practising religion online) shapes a different form of community than what we came to know and experience offline. Online communities are primarily formed by individual choice based on personal needs and preferences, and commitment is often very fragile, as people can leave any time. In contrast to the scattered online communities, offline communities are shaped by context and situatedness and not so much by personal choice (Cloete 2015:5). Online communities can complement offline communities, while they could also actively resist traditional forms of community. Online religious communities give more authority (power) to users, while offline communities often operate based on power seated in an individual or individuals. As such, online communities are often more self-serving than in service of the other/world. Online communities represent a mixture of different religious traditions informed by individual choice, resulting in what is sometimes referred to as 'broccoli spirituality' (Cloete 2016:4-5).

It is hopefully becoming clear that the impact of technology on society and our everyday living is not linear. Therefore, the processes involved in the development of sophisticated technology require continuous constructive engagement to establish a reasonable understanding of the nature of technology as medium whereby life is mediated. Moreover, I want to argue that such reflection becomes more urgent as we begin to understand the significant impact of technology and its ability to enhance, but at the same time reduce, our being as humans. I would like to plot the discussion against the backdrop of the image of a chess game, where two actors have limited opportunities to make moves on the board to progress in the game and eventually complete the game when one is the winner. Checkmate in the game of chess means that moves in the game have become limited: The king is attacked and there is no possible move to safeguard the king. It basically means the game is over, and the winner makes the final move.

Although I don't necessarily see technology as an opponent or enemy of humanity, I do, however, think it is a

Banda, C. 2019. The privatised self? A theological critique of the commodification of human identity in modern technological age in an African context professing Ubuntu. *HTS Theological Studies*, 75(1):1-10.

Barth, K. 1981. *The Christian life: Church Dogmatics 1V*, 4 lecture fragments. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

Brent, W. 2016. *Christian moral theology in the emerging technoculture: From posthuman back to human*. Abingdon: Ashgate.

formidable actor that needs to be reckoned with on the playground of life. In the game of chess, each move counts and could determine the outcome. It would help if you can image the serious faces of the players and how deeply they think before they make their next move. However, the game doesn't depend only on the act of thinking, however important that may be. More is needed; each player has the responsibility to make a move. Similarly, we as humans are participants in a project that is bigger than our individual life, where we must decide which values will inform our participation. As human beings we are interconnected and in a direct or indirect way in a relationship with one another and with nature. I would like to describe this connectedness here as our responsibility towards the kind of life we create and in which we participate.

The goal of this paper is to demonstrate the continuous need for reflection on the reciprocal relationship between being human and technology, and religion and technology. In fulfilling this aim, I firstly look at key frameworks that describe the vision of a life that is increasingly altered by technology. The frameworks that will be discussed are transhumanism, posthumanism and singularity. The possible values that informed this vision of life directed and controlled by technology are identified and described. Secondly, the vision described will be compared with the vision of especially Christian theology and possible similarities and fundamental differences will be outlined. Considering the complex relationship between technology and being human as understood from especially a Christian theological perspective, the final section will address the question posed in the title: Checkmate or opportunity for social responsibility? Suggestions will be offered of what such responsible actions/moves could entail by focusing on attentive living, discernment, and dialogue.

Before we engage with the promised frameworks that could help us to understand the vision of technology for our lives, it may be useful to briefly explain what is meant with technology and a technology-driven world.

Cahill, M.A. 2014. Freedom for life: Karl Barth, transhumanism and human flourishing. *Ethics and Medicine*, 30(2):81–95.

Campbell, H.A. 2016. Framing the human-technology relationship: How religious digital creatives engage posthuman narratives. *Social Compass*, 63(3):302–318.

Childs, J.M. 2015. Beyond the boundaries of current human nature: Some theological and ethical reflections on transhumanism. *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 52(1):8–18.

Technology and a technology-driven world

To critique technology is difficult, because we are so dependent on it and cannot live without it. Although the use of different forms of technology gives us the feeling that we are independent, we are becoming more dependent on technology (Du Toit 2019:5). The benefit of technology is widely known – just think how it bridged the gap of distance during the Covid pandemic, enabling many of us to continue our work by teaching fully online. It literally saved our jobs and our income. No wonder some hold a Messianic view (Du Toit 2019:10) of technology, implying that it can save us from a lot of pain and disaster in life. Technology is expected to bring order in the world, and that signifies a key component of progress (Herzfield 2009:4). Initially, technology had a defensive role, but with genetic engineering and nanotechnology, this function has changed, as the focus is now on creating something entirely new. Herzfield (2009:8) states: "The new products of modern technology do not simply disclose or shape nature but replace nature." With reference to the work of Postman (1993), Herzfield (2009:8) underscores the status of technology in contemporary culture as seeking satisfaction and authorisation from technology. Technology is not just gadgets or tools, but includes techniques, processes, and methods of how they could be used. These three elements (techniques, processes, and methods) are important for this paper, because they present a broader understanding of technology and point to the complex process of production and use thereof. We often think of technology merely as the products we can buy and use, but these products come with a certain set of values; what they can be used for and how to use them. Moreover, only a few role players are involved in the production process, implying that consumers have little to no say or input in the production process.

Brent (2016:8) holds the view that no technology is genuinely novel, because it would not be adopted if it did not address existing needs and desires. It does, however, address these desires in unanticipated ways, and the use thereof could lead to reformulation of existing values. It is however important to realise that technology is not neutral instruments or tools that are under absolute human control. The fact that technology could be used to reach different outcomes, for example healing people or scamming people out of their money, means that the choices of users are significant. Therefore, I would like to argue that technology and especially how it is utilised by consumers mirror the existing values of humanity. One could argue that this cyclical pattern between the development of technology, the acceptance and the use thereof demonstrates technological determinism and neutrality of technology being at play simultaneously.

Brent (2016:10) describes this as a continuous (cyclical) tension between determinative and instrumental tendencies of technology. The question of this paper is also situated within this tension: What or who will ultimately gain the biggest power in this tension? Who will make the final move on the board? Will it be the prescriptive power of technology or the values of humanity that are demonstrated in how we use them? In the words of Brent (2016:10), "it is far from clear whether a technoculture will primarily be the product of a determinative force beyond human control or an artifact of human inventiveness afforded by technology's instrumental neutrality". The manufacturing and use of technology are both value-laden processes that alter our being in the world. Put differently, a world driven by technology impacts us at an existential level (Cloete 2015:1; Fourie 2020:22).

Apart from the value-laden process that is inherently part of a world driven by technology, another layer of this

Cloete, A.L. 2015. Living in a digital culture: The need for theological reflection. *HTS Theological Studies*, 71(2):1-7.

Cloete, A.L. 2016. Mediated religion: Implications for religious authority. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 37(1):1-6.

Cloete, A.L. 2017a. Film as medium for meaning making: A practical theological reflection. *HTS Theological Studies*, 73(4):1-6.

Cloete, A.L. 2017b. Technology and education: Challenges and opportunities. *HTS Theological Studies*, 73(4):1-7.

social embeddedness is the economic level. Peters (2015:140) states: "Both biology and economics are driven by a single law: survival of the fittest." In the transhumanism project, money talks, and therefore the values of the free-market capitalism become a primary driving force. Therefore, it is safe to argue that technological development is firmly embedded within existing political and economic power and should serve the agenda of these masters. Peters (2015:145) explains it aptly by stating: "No way exists to liberate technological progress from the vested interest of the economic and political powers which make such progress possible." The companies that invest in research and manufacturing of cutting-edge technology expect corporations to produce profit (Du Toit 2019:4). Although money could be made by investing in technological development, the spread of the profits is not even.

Despite many technological advances, South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. Technological development is important as an economic and a culture force, but are the stakes not too high if it deepens inequality instead of alleviating it? This is one of the main concerns articulated by Schwab and Davis (2018:4): the uneven spread of benefits produced by technology. Increased inequality and social injustice are indeed a tremendous challenge, especially in developing countries such as South Africa, caused by the need for higher-skilled educated people while lower-skilled/-paid workers are displaced by technology (McMaster 2018:139). I would like to now turn this enquiry to the relationship between technology and everyday living.

Cloete, A.L. 2019. Unstoppable: A critical reflection on the socio-economic embeddedness of technology and implications for the human agenda. *HTS Theological Studies*, 75(2):1–8.

De Villiers, P.G.R. 2013. Communal discernment in the early church. *Acta Theologica*, 17:132–155.

Du Toit, C. 2019. Artificial intelligence and the question of being. *HTS Theological Studies*, 75(1):1–10.

Technology and everyday living

Although it is common knowledge that technology affects every sphere of life, it does not necessarily mean that we critically reflect on how the use thereof impacts our everyday living. I guess it is easier to formulate a vision of the future controlled by technology than to dissect the impact thereof on everyday living. Although several applications promise that we could be connected at any time anywhere, it does not necessarily include in-person contact, but rather machine-operated or technologically mediated communication. The hyperconnectivity carries with it the benefits and the burden of being available all the time. This over-connectedness may lead to many having more scattered and distanced virtual connections but unstable and weak offline and immediate connections. As we continue to migrate to virtual spaces, interpersonal relationships may suffer. Uleanya (2020:33) states that: "technological gadgets, tend to serve as double edged sword: serving enabling devices on one end, and aiding the weakening of social ties and roots, on the other end".

When we are in the physical presence of others, we struggle to focus on what is happening in the moment and we will easily ignore people speaking by using our phones or laptops without looking at them and paying attention to them. It seems that we came to value mediated communication more than in-person communication. Banda (2019:3) argues that human identity is commodified within a technological age. Technology is understood as a commodity that is only available to those who can pay for it. This leads to the commodification of human identity that is no longer depending on our intrinsic values of being human, but rather on the extrinsic qualities that could be acquired. This shift in identity formation is described as the 'thingification' of human identity, when people are reduced to things that can be bought. According to Banda (2019:2), "[t]he essence of human identity becomes anchored on commodities owned by the individual or marketable functions fulfilled by the individual".

We became so used to taking instructions from machines that nothing is strange anymore. We store our personal information on digital devices and can connect with people across the globe, yet we must live with the risk of being hacked any time. Let us now turn to transhumanism, posthumanism and singularity and the future envisioned, created and dominated by technology.

Fourie, L.C.H. 2020. Technology ad theology: Finding the real God. In J.A. van den Berg (ed.). *Engaging the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Perspectives from theology, philosophy and education*. Bloemfontein: Sun Media, 11-37.

Harari, Y.N. 2018. *21 lessons for the 21st century*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Herzfield, N. 2009. *Technology and religion: Remaining human in a co-created world*. West Conshohocken, USA: Templeton Press.

Transhumanism

Julian Huxley (1967) first used the term 'transhumanism', by which he meant that humans could transcend themselves if they wish to. This understanding of transhumanism does not mean that humans as we know it should be replaced, but only enhanced (Peters 2015:132). The Transhumanist Declaration by the former World Transhumanist Association (2010: n.p.) states as follows:

Humanity will be radically changed by technology in the future. We foresee the feasibility of redesigning of the human condition, including such parameters as the inevitability of aging, limitations on human and artificial intellects, unchosen psychology, suffering, and our confinement to the planet earth.

In similar fashion, Childs (2015:9) defines 'transhumanism' as providing us the vision of perhaps "the most dramatic scenario for transcending the boundaries of human nature as we have come to think of it". Peters (2015:133) understands the aim of transhumanism as the recontextualisation of humanity in relation to technology, which operates on three levels, namely a metaphysical, psychological, and ethical level. The metaphysical level implies that the world is continuously involved in a complex process of evolution, while the psychological level holds the view that humans instinctively want to evolve for the sake of their own well-being and survival. According to the ethical level, humans should foster their will and ability to evolve to find meaning and purpose.

In his fascinating reflection on the relationship between technology and the future of humanity, Harari (2018:3) argues that three stories have been told to the world, namely the fascist story, the communist story, and the liberal story. Today, only the liberal story remains, because both the others collapsed. The liberal story centres power and liberty and is expressed in democratic regimes that replaced dictatorships. Within democratic regimes it is assumed that people can think for themselves and make choices that suit them (Harari 2018:4–5). As we have the responsibility to create and update the story of the world in which we will live, the acceleration of technological development could be understood as part of fulfilling this task. Transhumanism could be viewed as an adjusted liberal project or vision that lost faith in the globalised idea thereof, and therefore instead emphasises individual choice.

Cahill (2014:85–88) elaborates on the worldview that informs transhumanism and explains that it understands human flourishing as experiencing only pleasure, and therefore suffering needs to be eliminated. Everything that could cause human suffering, such as aging, illness and sadness, should not only be reduced, but we should also reach a stage where people can choose a life without these elements. This world characterised by pleasure and the absence of suffering will be made possible by technological advances. Moreover, it is the responsibility of humans to create this future world, where individual freedom and liberty are fundamental pillars. In the world created by the transhumanist vision, the body is optional and essentially viewed as mind. Put differently, what constitutes human beings are not their bodies, but their minds. Childs (2015:9) states that transhumanism is a "progeny of the Enlightenment tradition". As such, transhumanism is the continuation and advancement of the Enlightenment that centres human reason and scientific progress to create a better world.

Huxley, J. 1967. Religion without revelation. London: CA Watts.

Kagge, E. 2018. Silence in the age of noise. Cape Town: Penguin Books.

Lanteri, A. 2021. Strategic drivers for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 63:273–283.

McMaster, R.N. 2018. Is the Fourth Industrial Revolution relevant for you? *Nurse Health Science*, 20:139–141.

Peters, T. 2015. Theologians testing transhumanism. *Theology and Science*, 12(2):130–149.

Posthumanism and singularity

While transhumanism focuses primarily on the extension of human life, posthumanism signals going beyond being human as we know it (Fourie 2020:21). According to Childs (2015:10), "[p]osthumanists anticipate the arrival of Singularity". This process will be a result of the acceleration and increasing levels of abstraction of technological advances that could change being human beyond recognition. Rapid technological changes therefore could result in irreversible change of life as we know it. Singularity also refers to the integration or melding of humans and machines. Peters (2015:134) states that "human intelligence will leap from human bodies to machines, making hi-tech machines more human than we are". We could therefore live a longer disembodied, yet more intelligent, life. According to Campbell (2016:303), posthumanism has the overturning of a human-centred world in mind, presenting a new state of existence. To reach this state of existence, humans need technological intervention to save us from ourselves and transcend our current physical, emotional, and cognitive limitations. Major drivers of the posthumanists vision are already at work through artificial intelligence, whereby smart machines mimic human intelligence, bioengineering that makes gene editing possible and nanotechnology that enables the control of atomic and molecular levels (Fourie 2020:13–15). Mind uploading is the goal representing the merger of human and machine to such an extent that the differences between the two become insignificant (Fourie 2020:20).

Comparing the vision of posthumanism (singularity) with that of Christian theology

At first glance, the vision put forward by transhumanism and posthumanism seems good and something from which humankind could only benefit. We can only imagine a world without pain and suffering, but this has never existed in our lifetime. Here is a reminder of the values underlying transhumanism and posthumanism (Cahill 2014:85):

- Eternal life filled with pleasure and the absence of suffering
- Human capability to transcend its current limitations and therefore altering our nature is a good act
- Individual choice and freedom; in short, autonomy
- Disembodied intelligence.

Fourie (2020:32–33) points out that a dual eschatology is developing, where technology is saving us from all pain and other bodily limitations we may have. Therefore, he invites us to take on the responsibility to theologically evaluate this technological eschatology and contrast it with Christian eschatology.

Postman, N. 1993. *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Vintage Books.

Schertz, P. 2018. Living indefinitely and living fully: *Laudato Si'* and the value of the present in Christian, stoic, and transhumanist temporalities. *Theological Studies*, 79(2):356–375.

Schwab, K. & Davis, N. 2018. *Shaping the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. Geneva: World Economic Forum.

Uleanya, C. 2020. Ubuntu in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the African Society. *African Renaissance*, 17 (3): 33-45.

Drawing on the work of Karl Barth (1981), Cahill (2014:88–90) compares the posthumanists and theological visions of human life. I present a summary of this comparison in the following table:

Posthumanist vision of human life	Theological vision of human life
Life is a personal possession, and individuals have autonomy to make decisions regarding their life according to own desires and interests.	Human life is a loan that needs to be respected and lived before God and in fellowship with other human beings.
Life is good and should be protected (extended) at all costs.	Life is good and should be protected (extended) at all costs.
Humans can change the world and themselves as they find best.	Humans are creative, but such creativity needs to be used in correspondence to God's work, and not independently.
Autonomy and freedom of choice are ultimate values.	Humans are free to choose to be obedient to God.
The body is reduced to a mind (memory).	Anthropology is grounded in Christology.

At first glance, the posthumanists and theological visions show similarities, but it is only at a closer and deeper look that it become clear that there are fundamental differences. Peters (2015:143) describes the difference between the posthumanists vision and that of theology as that of becoming and coming. While posthumanism envisions a future made possible through humans becoming engendered and controlled by technology, the theological vision is about the coming of God's Kingdom, which is not under our control and therefore a mystery. It should therefore not be a surprise that religion is often regarded as an obstacle in the way of the posthumanism dream, because religion assists people in accepting death by providing comfort in times of grief. Religion is also often accused of living in the past by resisting change (Peters 2015:142).

Van den Berg, J.A. 2012. Theoretical signpost for tracing spirituality within the fluid decision-making of a mobile virtual reality. *HTS Theological Studies*, 68(2):1–6.

Venter, R. 2020. Theologising emerging technologies. In J.A. van den Berg (ed.). *Engaging the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Perspectives from theology, philosophy and education*. Bloemfontein: Sun Media, 65–78.

Waaajman, K. 2013. Discernment and biblical spirituality: An overview and evaluation of recent research. *Acta Theologica*, 17:1–12.

Checkmate or opportunity for social responsibility?

How do we ascertain what move to make? Due to the complex and value-laden nature of technology, the unintended consequences could be significant for the human agenda. This implies that there are aspects that will not be known beforehand but may have a significant impact on who we are becoming. Accelerated manufacturing and use of technology make it a moving target and the impact on who we are and become is not clear at the best of times. The emphasis on the paradoxical effect of technology confirms that the impact thereof can go in any direction.

Du Toit (2019:10) states that the envisioned future as articulated by posthumanism could lead to techno-religion that includes an artificial 'God' of which the primary functions will be fulfilled by technology. The fear of humans to become enslaved by their own inventions is addressed in many science fiction movies (Du Toit 2019:5). Peters (2015:140) warns that the posthumanists vision does not reckon enough with the ability of humans to act in destructive ways and assumes that decisions people make will only be constructive. However, history has taught us a different lesson on how destructive human action could be. The existence of viruses that could cause significant damage to information/data stored on computers is a case in point. It is therefore a naïve and unrealistic understanding of the nature of humans that assumes that virus-fixers will always be the winners in securing data.

Where to from here?

Avoiding technology is not an option, as we need it in our everyday living, and we can all testify how it has improved our lives. Therefore, I would like to make a few suggestions for responsible living in a technology-driven world.

Living with tension through embracing and resistance

Technology is here to stay, and so is religion. Venter (2020:74) suggests two postures for theology to engage with emerging technologies, namely, to embrace what technology offers, but at the same time to resist that which is not acceptable. This is no easy task, as these seem to be the exact opposite tasks, and therefore we need wisdom to discern what to do when. Choice is everything in a technology-driven world and so in responsible living. Van den Berg (2012:2) argues that spirituality should play a role in decision making in a fast-changing virtual world.

Herzfield (2009:17) provides an interesting example of how an Amish community in Pennsylvania decided to make choices regarding technology by using the following questions:

1. Does the technology provide tangible benefits for the community?
2. Does the technology change the relationship between the individual and the community?
3. Does the technology change the nature of the community?

From a theological perspective, the community is important, because communities shape our identity and should therefore take the lead in assisting us in faithful and meaningful living. To develop the skills for living with ambiguity, I suggest attentive living, discernment and dialogue as theological processes and spiritual practices to inform our everyday living.

Attentive living, discernment, and dialogue

We will have to live more attentive lives where we try to ascertain the time in which we are living. Being present in the moment is something we struggle with, but it could assist us to live more authentic lives. The processes behind transhumanism and especially posthumanism are called 'rapidification' and 'social acceleration'. Subsequently, we start living in fear of losing out and of a lack of time. This leaves us time poor. Although freedom is promised, acceleration results in competition and imbalanced lives characterised by 'frenetic activity' (Schertz 2018:358). Erling Kagge (2018:37), a Norwegian explorer, describes the times in which we are living as "the age of noise", where silence doesn't exist. He argues that we need silence not because it is better than noise, but because we are losing bits of ourselves and are becoming addicted to all the distractions we must deal with constantly.

From a business perspective, Lanteri (2021:273) gives an interesting overview of the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on business. The average lifespan of businesses listed on the Fortune 500 was about 60 years for the past 50 years, but today it is only 18 years due the continuous and accelerated changes to which businesses must adapt. Lanteri (2021:279) describes the change that is taking place because of the Fourth Industrial Revolution as "a shift in kind rather than degree", meaning these are very deep changes that cause

disruption and ask for new approaches, rather than just an update of existing ones. He proposes foresight as process to engage this ongoing change in a strategic manner and defines 'foresight' as follows:

Foresight is aimed at the future, by connecting it to the past and the present. In other words, it is an exercise rooted in the past to uncover the dominant forces that determine strategic success in the future, so that companies can respond now (Lanteri 2021:274).

We are familiar with the phrase "Speed Kills" as part of the Arrive Alive campaign. I guess speed kills in more than one way, not only as part of driving, but also when we don't reflect on what it takes to live a meaningful life. I wish to argue that we need similar spiritual processes that slow us down to reflect on where we are heading so fast. We need to revisit and even revise our theological literacy (knowledge and skills) to practise attentive living that is informed by discernment. Venter (2020:65) articulates this task as follows: "The theologian should read the signs of the time and rethink the way theology speaks." Theologians, be it in the academy or in faith communities, need to take the responsibility of naming the time in which we are living.

What does discernment entail? Although discernment takes place in our mundane everyday living, it becomes paramount during times of rapid change that bring us at crossroads where we must contemplate on the way forward. It includes reflection on our experiential reality and should therefore result in practical wisdom that provides guidance for everyday living (De Villiers 2013:140). Another way to describe discernment is by explaining what it is not. Discernment is not a power play where the ideas and instructions of people in power count alone. Moreover, it is not only a cognitive process, but includes our experience and emotions. It focuses not only on the future (looking forward), but an important aspect is also looking back to the past, remembering God's presence and faithfulness in the past (De Villiers 2013:143-144). It is exactly this recognition of God's presence in the past that ignites the living hope that God is also present now and will provide in the future, and that gives discernment a contemplative gaze (De Villiers 2013:149). Discernment is therefore more than mere judgement to distinguish between good and evil but is a hermeneutical process to discover the way of God in our time (Waaajman 2013:8-9). Discernment necessitates dialogue. Theology can be understood as a dialogical enterprise (Venter 2020:67). A valuable partner, I think, is the arts. Considering the vision to live forever as articulated by transhumanism and posthumanism, the song by the famous rock group Queen came to mind, and I quote sections of the song:

There is no time for us

There is no place for us

What is the thing that builds our dreams, yet slips away from us?

There is no chance for us

It's all decided for us

This world has one sweet moment set aside for us

Who wants to live forever? Who wants to live forever?

Forever is our today

The arts may assist in asking the best questions for our time. I find this song a good example of how the artist tried to engage with death by questioning it, while accepting it at the same time. In the end the question is not about death, but *why* we want to live and do so forever. What will be good about living forever as proposed by posthumanists and singularity?

Conclusion

Although the benefits and promises offered by technology are mind boggling, we should not lose sight of how the use thereof is transforming who we are (identity) and our everyday living. The paper reflected on the complex and value-laden nature of technology that makes it difficult to foresee the impact on everyday living and human becoming. How technology is used is another component that makes the outcome more evasive. We are invited not to think of the vision articulated by transhumanism and posthumanism as something that does not concern us, because most people will be excluded from the benefits it promises. Moreover, we are encouraged to live with the ambiguity produced by technological advances with a dual response, namely, to embrace and resist. Attentive living, discernment and dialogue are suggested as spiritual processes to guide us. Technological development is happening fast and is infiltrating all spheres of life, and we have a personal and communal responsibility to make wise moves to prevent a situation that could be described as checkmate: where technology becomes the single power that dictates life and the values by which we live.