Technological and Digital Identities – In Whose Image?

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Technological and Digital Identities – In Whose Image?A philosophical-theological approach to identity construction in social media and technology

Abstract

New technological developments have fundamentally transformed human life. Throughout this process, fundamental questions about human beings have once again been posed. The paper examines how technological change affects understandings of human beings and their bodies, thereby requiring new approaches to anthropology. First, Section 2 illustrates how the use of technology has changed the understanding of human beings and their bodies. A new connection between the human being or the body and technology has emerged. Section 3 then moves onto considering the increasing blurring of the boundaries between organisms and machines, showing how the understanding of humans and bodies is constantly being renegotiated in relation to machines. Based on this, Section 4 explores how the understanding of the human being and the body can be redesigned in the context of modern technology. To this end, approaches for a contemporary anthropology can be derived from critical posthumanism. Section 5 addresses concrete practice and examines the construction of identity in social media platforms such as Instagram.

The paper argues that technological processes and social media are places where theology is constructed and appeals for a responsible theological co-creation of these places. It advocates that technology offers the opportunity to question traditional anthropological concepts and to renegotiate understandings of the human being and the body.

1. Introduction

Technology has found its way into and has been shaping many areas of human life. Insofar as technological change is transforming many areas of life, the places and topics of theology are also changing. The anthropological question – the question of the human being – plays a central role in this. Technology influences how people understand what it means to be human. How are the human being and the body understood within technological change? How is identity constructed? The advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and the increasingly human-like robots that have taken over more and more human activities has brought people back to the question of what being human means in the first place. What (still) distinguishes humans from machines? Alternatively, what *should* distinguish humans from machines?[1]

This paper investigates how technological change affects understandings of human beings and their bodies, thereby requiring new approaches to anthropology. To this end, the intersections of identity, the human being and the body are examined and then explained from a (philosophical-)theological perspective. First, Section 2 examines how understandings of the human being and the body have changed through the use of technology, as a new connection between the human being or the body and technology has emerged. The boundaries between organisms and machines have become blurred. Section 3 then moves onto addressing this blurring of the boundaries between organisms and machines. The history of the machine demonstrates how the understanding of machines has changed over the centuries and how the understandings of humans and their bodies have been negotiated in relation to machines. The understanding of machines is subject to cultural and time-specific negotiations. In Section 4, this leads to the question of how these boundaries and understandings of human beings and their bodies can be renegotiated. To this end, the anthropological-ethical approach of critical posthumanism is presented, thereby deriving perspectives of a contemporary anthropology in the context of modern technology. Finally, Section 5 addresses concrete practices and examines the construction of identity on social media platforms such as Instagram. For this purpose, Henning Luther's concept of "fragmented identity"[2] has been adopted for concrete, practical-theological practice.

2. The Understanding of the Human Being and the Body Has Been Changing Due to Technology

Due to the use of technology, the understanding of the human being and the body has changed. Gernot Böhme draws attention, for example, to the "technologisation of sensory perception"[3], which refers to the fact that sensory perception has not merely

been imitated and expanded by technology but also transformed. Through hearing aids, microphones, cameras, glasses and contact lenses, human beings can now see and hear differently.[4]

This can be illustrated through some examples. First, I examine sensory perception. Technology has changed and shaped conventional patterns of perception. Those who look through a microscope for the first time may find it difficult to recognise anything. Teachers often describe to children what they are supposed to see. Furthermore, notions of celestial bodies, in particular, have been strongly influenced by the telescope and by modern visualisation technologies, as they cannot be explored by everyone themselves. Gernot Böhme notes that it is only through optical devices that humans have come to favour sharp vision.[5] The ultramicroscope, endoscopy, ultrasound and X-rays have provided greater insight into the body.[6] Parts and processes of the body that cannot be seen have been made visible, and humans' understandings of them have been shaped by technology. A good example of this is the ultrasound image during pregnancy, which makes visible what was previously invisible. A woman's own bodily sensations thus recede into the background, as the "primacy of vision"[7] comes into play.[8] The first movements of a child, which could previously only be perceived by a woman herself, used to be considered a legal criterion[9] that enabled a woman to have a "power of definition over her own condition"[10] (That being said, new technologies also afford women a new form of self-determination). Today, a woman usually does not come into first contact with her child through physical sensations, but through a sonographically generated image.[11] What was once subjective has now been transformed into an objective fact. The then-invisible and mysterious within a woman's body has thus become a someone with claims and rights. A mother's self-perception has been changed, as has the perception of the child as well as what pregnancy and prenatal life mean within society.[12]

An interesting question is how selfies, image-processing programmes and filters on Instagram that favour image sharpness, strong contrasts and high colour saturation have influenced human beings' perceptions of the world around them. The notion of the photograph may already come to mind when people enjoy a delicious meal or a wonderful view.

Thermometers, modern biofeedback devices, fitness trackers and basically all medical measurement devices have shown a shift from relying upon one's own physical senses to information provided by the devices. The data determined by the devices are often

regarded as facts, while one's own perception of body temperature or heartbeat might often be regarded as potentially erroneous.[13] At the same time – a notion not carefully considered by Gernot Böhme – these technologies can also sensitise and promote one's own bodily awareness. Instead of discussing avoiding bodily senses, it might be more appropriate to explore changes in bodily senses.

In addition, biofeedback devices, which aim for individuals to learn to influence their own bodily processes based on the data collected, make it clear that technology and data have an impact on everyday actions and self-understanding.[14] Doctor's appointments have also come to take place in "technical settings", as doctors often spend a significant portion of consultations looking at computers. Then, medical conditions are formulated as findings and categorised in a way that can be billed to insurance companies. Patients are understood through their data. Personal conversations with the patient, as well as communicative and social skills, often take a back seat.[15]

It must be noted that the aim here is only to show the *changes* and not to evaluate them. For an assessment, other aspects would have to be taken into consideration, and concrete, individual cases would have to be examined. The primary concern is thus *to create an awareness* of how the understandings of human beings and their bodies have *changed* through the use of technology.

Technology has come closer very to human beings and has found its way into people's private sphere. The smartphone is usually carried close to the body, technology has become part of the bathroom, contraception is organised using mobile applications (hereinafter apps), fitness trackers count every step and people fall asleep while using sleep apps. A new connection between body and technology has been formed, developing a new sense of intimacy.[16] With the notion of cyborgs, the body has almost merged with technology. "Cyborg" is an abbreviation of "cybernetic organism", referring to a hybrid being in which organic and technical material are mixed to achieve a unity between organism and technology.[17] Neil Harbisson, Kevin Warwick and Richard Lee have already been referred to as cyborgs. Neil Harbisson can recognise colours via acoustic signals with an antenna implanted in his skull. Kevin Warwick has a radio frequency identification (RFID) chip implanted. Richard Lee has magnets in his ears that can perform a headphone-like function.[18]

3. Blurring Boundaries: The Relationship Between Human and Machine

The aforementioned observations have raised the question of where the boundary between humans and machines lies. Where is the boundary between the body and technology? Can technology also be understood as part of the body? Throughout the course of technological developments, the boundaries between human and machine, organism and machine, animal and human, as well as natural and artificial have become increasingly blurred.

Donna Haraway notes that at the end of the twentieth century, there was a blurring of three boundaries. With regard to language, social behaviour or the use of tools, for example, it is no longer possible to draw a clear line between humans and animals (especially in the case of apes). Distinguishing between living organisms (i.e., humans and animals) and machines has become just as problematic. Machines have taken over tasks from humans, and human abilities and even intelligence (AI) have been attributed to them. Human existence has essentially been linked to technology, and what remains uninfluenced by technology and culture can no longer be defined (thus, the boundary between "artificial" and "natural" has also been blurred). Moreover, in physics one can see how the distinction between the physical and the non-physical has become fragile.[19] Donna Haraway further mentions other problematic dichotomies, such as the divisions between self and other, man and woman, mind and body, reality and appearance, as well as nature and culture.[20]

In responding to the existence and the development of the machine, human self-reflection has been taking place for centuries. An examination of the history of the machine and the machine metaphor (the metaphorical parallelisation of human and machine) shows that the understanding of the machine has constantly changed since antiquity. Over the years, varying concepts of liveliness, matter, (self-)movement, steering and control have been ascribed to the idea of the machine:[21]

In antiquity the Greek μηχανή encompassed a wider range of meanings than the modern "machine"; although it could refer to an object (as a means or technical tool), it was primarily associated – often with negative connotations – with cunning, machination and wonder (i.e., something extraordinary). It was not until the Renaissance that the Latin *machina* denoted automatic transmission mechanisms. Moreover, ancient cosmology did not recognise a strong opposition between the mechanical and the organic and still understood the world as a living organism.[22] Descartes thought of the human body as a machine: The body (*res extensa*) is extended, divisible and mortal, while the mind (*res cogitans*) is not extended, indivisible and immortal.[23] To Descartes, matter is passive and inert.[24] To La Mettrie,

not only the body but also the whole human being is a machine.[25] La Mettrie rejected Descartes' passive, inert concept of matter and considered matter to be active and self-moving. The human machine does not need any external control and regulation, but rather controls itself through its drives and affects.[26] The automata of the eighteenth century seemed alive with their increasingly complex precision mechanics. The automaton stood for liveliness despite – or perhaps precisely because of – its constantly repeated, mechanical sequences of movements.[27] The boundary between body and machine as well as the connection between matter and its properties, such as animate or inanimate, shifted.[28] Aliveness could come about both on an organic basis (e.g., flesh, bones, skin, blood) and on the basis of technology.[29] In this way, matter emerged as a "culturally negotiable concept"[30].

In the cybernetics of the twentieth century, the focus then shifted to information. Life was understood as information processing. Machines as well as living organisms were understood as cybernetic systems.[31] The boundaries between machines and living organisms were blurred. Self-regulation is a core aspect of cybernetics, as cybernetic systems do not require external control but rather maintain themselves. Today, techno-euphoric movements such as transhumanism and posthumanism consider machine consciousness possible, assuming that in the future machines will be alive, act independently and surpass humans, even replacing them.[32]

Thus, it has become apparent that there has been no set prior understanding of machines but that the current understanding of machines has been subject to centuries of change. Throughout the history of the machine, various culture- and time-dependent concepts of body, matter and life have been inscribed in automata and robots: "Automata and robots are media of negotiation".[33] They are "cultural formations from which inferences can be drawn about acute and current conceptions and ideas of bodies and machines"[34]. Within them, concepts of human, body and machine, as well as the boundary between human or body and machine, have been negotiated.

4. In Whose Image? – New Anthropological-Ethical Challenges of Modern Technologies

4. 1 Technologies As Anthropological-ethical Challenges: Questions About Human Beings

In the following section, the paper argues that technological processes are also places of theology. If human identity and the boundaries of man and machine are continually being renegotiated, the question of in whose image the concepts of human and machine are designed may arise. How are human beings understood? What normative implications are made? Here, cultural, racist and discriminatory implications, as well as assumptions about gender can also be uncovered. In accordance with Elaine Graham, it may be important to consider: According to whose image is today's technology (or also figurations of the technological posthuman in science fiction) designed? Who produces the technologies, and which social groups are underrepresented?[35]

However, this perspective must now be supplemented by the fact that technology can be understood not only as an answer but also as a question:[36] It can bring human beings back to the question of what it means to be human in the first place and can be seen as an opportunity to renegotiate understandings of human beings. The many shifts in boundaries have provoked a greater need for orientation and have given rise to enquiries about a new place for the human being. However, technologies are also to be made strong here as questions, as sites of reshaping and negotiation. Technology and various body-machine approaches have opened up spaces to renegotiate the concepts of the human and the body.[37] Thus, these not only offer answers that can be determined through deconstruction and other methods, but these answers refer back to a question that enables responsible design and agency. They are questions of how human beings want to shape the relationship between body and technology. A very new, perhaps also provocative approach to this has been represented in critical posthumanism, which I briefly introduce below as a source of inspiration.

4.2 Critical Posthumanism

Critical posthumanism[38] addresses such border blurring and sees technology as a chance to question understandings of human beings and bodies. Critical posthumanism is a movement that strives to gain a new understanding of the human being, desiring to overcome the current – in its view humanistic – understanding of the human being. Its focus is on the exercise of criticism, where technology serves as the core category for such criticism (However, it does not criticise technology, but uses it to criticise other facts. Critical posthumanism has a positive attitude towards technology).[39] Critical posthumanism is directed against humanism, anthropocentrism, speciesism and essentialism. It criticises the academic humanities landscape and is

characterised by many ethical reflections.[40] Well-known representatives of this movement include Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles, Rosi Braidotti, Karen Barad, Neil Badmington, Cary Wolfe and Pramod K. Nayar.[41]

Frequent points of reference of critical posthumanism are Foucault's "Les mots et les choses" ("The Order of Things") (1971), Derrida's essay "Les fins de l'homme" ("The Ends of Man") (1968), Lyotard's "La condition postmoderne" ("The Postmodern Condition") (1979), Lacan, Baudrillard and Althusser. Critical posthumanists continue the approaches and themes of poststructuralism, feminism and postmodernism as well as the method of deconstruction.[42] Critical posthumanism, however, should not be confused with transhumanism or technological posthumanism, which seek a concrete technological transformation of the human. In the context of new technology, critical posthumanism seeks to deconstruct the dichotomies of woman and man, human and animal, human and machine, nature and culture, as well as human and machine.[43]

The Cyborg

An important figure in critical posthumanism is the cyborg, which does not denote an actual fusion of humans and technology, but is used as an ethical figure from a political, epistemological and ontological position.[44] Donna Haraway also speaks of the "cyborg myth"[45] (the cyborg is thus a type of narrative figure). The cyborg functions as a critical instrument to reveal structures, hierarchies and dichotomies.[46] In Donna Haraway's work, the cyborg is female. As a hybrid being, the cyborg exemplifies the aforementioned boundary blurring. As a "cybernetic organism" in which technical and organic material are mixed, she cannot be placed in any fixed category. The cyborg thus blurs the boundaries (e.g., the one between human or organism and machine) and questions "ontological hygiene".[47]

Her existence refuses a fixed, unambiguous identity[48] and opposes essentialisms and universalisms.[49] Instead, her identity is "fragmented, partial and unfinished"[50]. The cyborg's identity is essentially relational. The cyborg needs connectedness and relationships – she is "needy for connection"[51]. Donna Haraway particularly emphasises connectedness with non-human actors, including (laboratory) animals, viruses and bacteria, machines and other objects. Laboratory animals play an important role in Donna Haraway's conception.[52] Animal experiments make it clear that, on the one hand, a relationship between humans and animals has been

presupposed, but that, on the other hand, this relationship is denied so that human beings can dispose of animals as they wish:

> The logic of animal experimentation depends crucially but implicitly upon a recognition of kinship between the human and the nonhuman; without such kinship, there is nothing to learn from [them, A. P.] … At the same time, however, a denial of kinship often functions as the rationalization for the morality and necessity of nonhuman animal experimentation.[53]

"They are us insofar we can learn from them and their bodies; they are not us, so we can do what's necessary to their bodies in order to learn from them".[54]

Furthermore, the identity illustrated in the cyborg figure is embodied, as the body is not faded out as in transhumanism or in other technological concepts. The hybridity of the cyborg precisely reveals her material and multidimensional embodiment. Through her hybridity, she thematises "multiple possibilities of embodiment",[55] bringing "ontologically confusing bodies"[56] to the fore. Donna Haraway's new materialism not only focuses on embodiment, but also on the differences between bodies. For example, women are embodied differently from men, but women's bodies are also different from each other: "The cyborg's hybrid embodiment is not a generic universality, but a specificity and a multiplicity".[57]

Enjoying Transgressing and Reconstructing Boundaries

While in the past the relationship between organism and machine was seen as a "border war",[58] the cyborg is not afraid of crossing borders and, in fact, celebrates this. "[W]hy is it that Haraway can celebrate the breach of these boundaries, while others perceive only ontological threat?"[59] To blur boundaries, however, is not to remove all boundaries. Instead, Donna Haraway argues for their reconstruction.[60] In a responsible manner, existing boundaries should be changed, new social practices developed and new boundaries drawn.[61] Donna Haraway is thus simultaneously concerned with both "*enjoying* the blurring of these boundaries and taking *responsibility* in their construction"[62].

4.3 New Approaches to Critical Posthumanism for a Contemporary Anthropology

Because of the many instances in which boundaries have been blurred, long-established anthropological categories have come under question. Grappling with technology has presented an opportunity for theology to question its understanding of

the human being (and the body) once again. The understanding of human beings and bodies has an impact on how human beings determine their actions, relationships and society as a whole. Thus, digital media and technologies are places for theology. This paper draws upon anthropological and ethical approaches to critical posthumanism for inspiration. Critical posthumanism offers many starting points to reshape understandings of the human being and the body against the backdrop of modern technology:

1. A strength of the critical posthumanism is its trans-, multi- and interdisciplinarity.[63] Anthropology can only be pursued as a multidisciplinary project that is not limited to just one method and one discipline. A conversation between theology and other disciplines is necessary for contemporary anthropology and meaningful engagement with new technology.

2. The concept of the cyborg requires the perception of border blurring and hybridity. This includes the questioning of dualisms, clear boundaries and unambiguous categorisations. The cyborg does not engage in 'border warfare', but stands for fearlessness towards the kinship of humans with animals and machines. Boundary crossings and hybridity are also directed against essentialism, universalisms and totalisations.[64]

3. An anthropology that takes the cyborg seriously cannot start from a fixed catalogue of human characteristics. A cyborg can be understood as a subversive figure that constantly calls to mind the indeterminacy of the human being, of its openness and changeability. The cyborg and her body, which cannot be universalised, stand for a plurality of understandings of the human being and the body, but at the same time also draw out the differences between people and the differences between the various bodies.

4. Critical posthumanism presents an approach that represents a change to anthropological thinking by striving for a perspective that is not anthropocentric. Such a critical perspective of anthropocentrism is particularly well suited against animal and environmental protection efforts, as well as the debates on climate change and sustainability, which have called for a rethinking of the relationship between humans, animals and the co-environment. Critical posthumanism undermines the categorical distinction between human, animal, co-environment and machine, refuses speciesism and is characterised by connectedness, solidarity and responsibility.

5. Closely connected to this aspect is the relational orientation of anthropology. On the one hand, it is important to reference interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, critical posthumanism emphasises the relationship to the non-human: to animals, inanimate nature, machines and objects. This relational perspective can also be applied to understandings of health and illness since health is not a micro but a macro phenomenon.[65] Scientific methods and the various health technologies (e.g., information technologies) have broken down people and their bodies into different data measurements (e.g., heartbeat, steps, blood pressure) and have thus suggested a holistic improvement in understandings of health. However, health is not a micro phenomenon that can only be seen through a microscope, through exact data collection and through dissection of the human being into the smallest pieces of information. Some things cannot be recognised by taking steps closer to them, but only by taking steps away from them. Health is a macro phenomenon, as it can only be seen by examining the big picture of how human beings are embedded in the world, in interpersonal relationships and social recognition processes as well as in personal well-being.[66]

6. A special feature of critical posthumanism is its close linking of anthropology and ethical considerations. Normative implications and powerful inscriptions can be uncovered and reformulated. Along with Elaine Graham, one can ask: "In whose image?"[67] In what image are today's technologies designed? "To ask 'in whose image' […] is […] also to consider what – and who – is denied a place in these projects".[68]

> What kind of agenda is at work? What kind of representations of being post/human are favoured, and whose voices and experiences are muted? The power of sectional interest to construct models of human universals in the name of scientific objectivity is, therefore, another element of [the] enquiry into the politics of representations of the post/human.[69]

In this way, normative implications (e.g., sexist, speciesist or racist assumptions) can be highlighted. The task of theology could be to draw attention to the voices of those who are underrepresented in technological processes (and disadvantaged in the form of algorithmic bias), such as ethnic minorities, people with disabilities or lower-income people. In addition, religious values can be integrated into technological processes.

The Human Body

Technology can also significantly affect the body. Modern technology can thus represent an opportunity to renegotiate what the body means. The hybridity of the cyborg has broadened people's view of the possibility for many genders, for queer bodies, different skin colours or people with disabilities.[70] Modern technology has led to multiple layers of blurring the boundaries and approximations for bodies and machines, which can be an opportunity to contribute to a more inclusive understanding of the body (instead of being based on "algorithmic bias", for example). Thus, attention can be drawn to the plurality and diversity of bodies.

An interesting question to discuss would be whether various technologies might also be understood as part of the body. Can they not be integrated into the understanding of the body and also constitute part of what "body" means? This is particularly conceivable when technologies – whether for medical purposes or in the form of enhancement – assume essential human functions, when they are not removable or when they have been integrated since the earliest years of life. This could include cochlear implants, implanted chips or prostheses. Disability studies have shown that prostheses are seen by users as part of their bodies.[71] Jeanine Thweatt-Bates and Elaine Graham take the notion of a cyborg as an opportunity to argue for a broad conception of embodiment in disability studies. They argue for a broad definition of embodiment that also includes prostheses, wheelchairs and physical sensations and abilities.[72] This shows how modern technological developments can be an opportunity to expand the current understanding of the body towards a broader, inclusive concept of the body.

Machine and Autonomy

Despite the convergence of humans and machines at many sites, there are often sharp, polemical demarcations of humans from machines. This has led to ideas in which AI "takes work away" from humans or makes humans completely superfluous. Machines are imagined here as independent, powerful and stronger opponents to which humans are inferior and helpless, at their mercy. Such ideas are often based on ignorance of what machines can be expected to do and can be clarified through education about technology. Transhumanism, for example, promotes "the control problem" in addressing the question of how humans can still control machines when they take over in the future.[73] The autonomy of the machine is thus radicalised to the point of outright domination by the machine. Such a view is not conducive to a responsible approach to technology because it prevents the co-design of technological processes. Donna Haraway, on the other hand, points to the close connection with technology and

thinks of animals, humans and machines as being within constellations of kinship. She indicates that machines are designed by humans and are therefore not an "externally demonised force beyond our control":[74] "The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; *they* do not control or threaten us. We are responsible for the limits, we are they".[75] In this way, it is precisely from the thoughts of machines as constructs and spaces of negotiation that the possibility of taking responsibility and developing autonomy can be derived.

5. Digital identities – a practical-theological approach

Finally, a further perspective on identity, the human being and the body in technological change must be addressed. In doing so, it is essential to now examine concrete, practical-theological practice. Identity construction has become particularly concrete through social media. Why are digital media places of theology, and what are their practical-theological tasks?

New forms of identity construction have emerged on social media. On Instagram, for example, identity is creatively shaped with new technical possibilities. There are new means of communication, emotions are expressed in new ways and relationships are shaped through different means. Despite virtuality, the role of the body has not diminished, but new attention has been paid to the body in nutrition, fitness and fashion. The body is now designed and staged. Social media enable new forms of narration of one's own biography and identity. What is important to people is made the subject of discussion. Moments of joy and sadness are shown, political statements are made and appeals are launched. Life and relationships also take place on Instagram. This is where everyday life happens, along with all the things that are important to people. Through Instagram, young people, in particular, have shed light on brand new insights into their lives and have come to share them with many people. A theology that hopes to address the reality of young people's lives must also go to these places because a large part of many young people's lives takes place here. Social media are therefore also places of theology. Some church communities and organisations have already discovered these places for themselves, but further engagement and interaction is likely needed. A theology or churches that have difficulty reaching young people because they no longer come to church congregations may find them accessible via social media across spatial and temporal distances.

Viera Pirker has characterised the construction of identity in digital media such as Instagram as "fluid and fragile". First, identity is fluid in a postmodern, digitalised

society, insofar as it is always in process.[76] It is possible to reinvent oneself on different social media platforms and act out different social roles, as one encounters a great deal of plurality. An individual must choose from a wide range of ideological, cultural and religious. Heiner Keupp speaks of "patchwork identity"[77] and Roland Hitzler of "tinkering existence"[78]. Identity work is a lifelong process of change and refuses to be clearly defined. Second, Viera Pirker describes identity in postmodern, digitalised society as fragile. People experience themselves and their environment as vulnerable, fragile and unstable. In a fluid, constantly changing world, they are in search of orientation, are dependent on successful relationships and recognition (which depends, among other things, on an algorithm), as well as experience hate speech and exaggerated ideals for beauty.[79] If digital media are places of theology, what can a specifically theological perspective look like?

Fragmented Identity

A guiding theological perspective for the struggle for human identity in the age of digital technologies might be Henning Luther's concept of "fragmented identity"[80].[81] Luther designs identity as a fragment. He defines fragments as "remnants of a destroyed but formerly whole", such as a torso or a ruin, or as "unfinished ... works", such as the sketch.[82] Fragments are often interpreted as deficient in themselves, but are distinguished by their conscientious character: They point beyond themselves to the past or the future and are thus in constant tension with wholeness.[83] If human identity in the age of digital technologies is made strong as it is fragmented, human existence is first designed to always be determined by ruptures and losses, requiring constant completion the others.[84] Second, as a fragment, it is always oriented towards wholeness (without being whole). The whole is already present in it.[85] To Luther, faith means "to live and to be able to live as a fragment".[86] Luther developed his explanations from theological thoughts, such as orientation towards wholeness and relationship, vulnerability or the fragility of the body, using, for instance, the example of the cross.

Such a theological perspective is able to bear the tension between a limitation and dislimitation of a human being, without fixing the human being. On the one hand, it takes into account their vulnerability and creatureliness. It makes it possible to deal with contingency. On the other hand, such a perspective attributes wholeness to the human being, but does not fall into the ideological trap of assuming a perfect identity. Only if the theologically conceived identity of the human being is understood as an

open, unfinishable identity that is constantly in the process of becoming can it account for the possibility of change. Preserving this tension between limitation and exclusion can be a guiding principle for the aforementioned responsible co-creation of technological processes. Autonomy can also take place in the tension between self-transgression and the limitations and vulnerability of the human being, which are prerequisites for autonomy.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined how technological changes transform understandings of the human being and the body and what new approaches in anthropology this leads to. Section 2 used selected technology to illustrate how the use of technology has changed understandings of the human being and the body. It has become clear that a new, intimate connection between the human or the body and technology is emerging. The boundaries between organisms and machines have increasingly become blurred. In Section 3, these blurred boundaries were further explored. Based on the history of the machine (and the machine metaphor), it has become apparent that there is no prior understanding of the machine. What is considered a machine and what is included in the idea of the machine is subject to constant change. Human self-reflection takes place when confronted with machines. In the same way, robots, automata or prostheses have offered insights into the understanding of the human being and the body and negotiated such understandings.

Section 4 explored how the boundaries of organism and machine, as well as the understanding of the human and the body can be renegotiated. Technology was considered in two different ways: as a question and as a response. On the one hand, it can be read as an answer: It offers an answer to what understanding of the human and the body is inconspicuously incorporated into technology. What normative implications are being made? Which voices are neglected? On the other hand, technology must also be read as a question: How does technological change shape understandings of human beings and their bodies? In whose image and according to which values should technological processes be shaped? The technologies and various body-machine approaches or hybrids have opened up opportunities to renegotiate concepts of the human and the body. To this end, the anthropological-ethical approaches of critical posthumanism were presented, and perspectives for a reshaping of anthropology were derived. Technology has proven to be an opportunity to question traditional anthropological concepts and to renegotiate the understanding of the human being and the body. Arguments were made against rigid attributions of identity, various

dichotomies, discriminatory implications, essentialism, anthropocentrism and speciesism. In this way, the new blurring of boundaries through modern technologies can contribute to a pluralistic, inclusive and diverse understanding of people and bodies.

After approaches for a contemporary philosophical-theological anthropology were suggested, the focus in Section 5 was directed towards concrete practice. In social media, it is already concretely clear how technology has been integrated into the reality of people's lives and how important identity construction processes take place here. Identity is "fragile and fluid" according to Viera Pirker and "fragmentary" according to Henning Luther. Identity, as is evident in social media, is thus fragile and pluralistic, subject to constant change and standing in tension between contingency and wholeness. Theology is able to endure this tension of limitation and dislimitation and can accompany the construction of identity.

This paper argues that technological processes and social media should be perceived as places of theology. This means that shaping technological process and social media must be done responsibly and autonomously because in technological change, identity as well as the understanding of the human being and the body are renegotiated. There is a need for further theological engagement with technology and an intensive study of how theology can actively contribute in concrete terms. To do this, it will be necessary to creatively explore new paths.

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Footnotes

1. See Puzio, "Ent- und Begrenzung". ↩
2. Luther, *Religion und Alltag*. Own translation. ↩

3. Böhme, *Invasive Technisierung*, 224. Own translation. ↩

4. See Böhme, 228. ↩

5. See Böhme, 234–38. ↩

6. See Böhme, 239. ↩

7. Böhme, 239. Own translation. ↩

8. See Duden, *Frauenleib*, 17–50, 67, 106–110; Böhme, *Invasive Technisierung*, 239–41. ↩

9. See Duden, *Frauenleib*, 67–74, 96, 116f. ↩

10. Duden, 109. Own translation. ↩

11. See Duden, 37–41, 67, 106–110; Böhme, *Leib*, 68. ↩

12. See Böhme, *Invasive Technisierung*, 240–42. ↩

13. See Böhme, 236–240, 245. ↩

14. See Böhme, 245. ↩

15. Böhme, *Leib*, 69. ↩

16. Puzio and Filipović, "Personen als Informationsbündel?". ↩

17. See Loh, *Trans- und Posthumanismus*, 58–60; Braunstein, "Posthumanismus in der Popkultur," in *Anthropologie 2.0?*, 196f. ↩

18. See Şahinol, "Überwindung der „Natur des Menschen"," in *Designobjekt Mensch*, 464. ↩

19. See Haraway, "Manifest für Cyborgs," in *Haraway: Die Neuerfindung Der Natur*, 36–39. ↩

20. See Haraway, 67. ↩

21. For a more in-depth discussion of this, see Westermann, *Anthropomorphe Maschinen*. ↩

22. See Basile, "Weltmaschinemetapher". ↩

23. See Decher, *Philosophie des Geistes*, 95f; Descartes, *Meditationes*, Synopsis, Medit. 6; Descartes, *Prinzipien*, II. ↵

24. See Jank, *Homme machine*, 44; Descartes, *Von der Methode*, 91–93. ↵

25. See La Mettrie, *Mensch als Maschine*. ↵

26. See Jank, *Homme machine*, 51; La Mettrie, *Mensch als Maschine*, 71, 81–83; Hampe and Strassberg, "Regelung und Steuerung," in *Mensch-Maschine-Interaktion*, 120. ↵

27. See Venus, "Vitale Maschinen," in *Mediale Anatomien*, 262f. ↵

28. See Westermann, *Anthropomorphe Maschinen*, 79. ↵

29. See Westermann, 49. ↵

30. Westermann, 50. Own translation. ↵

31. See Jank, *Homme machine*, 230. ↵

32. For a more in-depth discussion of trans- and posthumanism, see Puzio, "Ent- und Begrenzung". ↵

33. Westermann, *Anthropomorphe Maschinen*, 152. Own translation. ↵

34. Westermann, 80. Own translation. ↵

35. See Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human*, 61, 123. ↵

36. See Westermann, *Anthropomorphe Maschinen*, 152. ↵

37. See Westermann, 152. ↵

38. The following description of critical posthumanism refers to Loh, *Trans- und Posthumanismus*. ↵

39. See Loh, 130f. ↵

40. See Loh, 137–62. ↵

41. See Loh, 130–34. ↵

42. See Loh, 132f. ↵

43. See Herbrechter, *Posthumanismus*, 70. ↵

44. See Thweatt, "Cyborg-Christus," in *Designobjekt Mensch*, 37, 40. ↵

45. Haraway, "Manifest für Cyborgs," in *Haraway: Die Neuerfindung Der Natur*, 39. Own translation. ↵

46. See Westermann, *Anthropomorphe Maschinen*, 242. ↵

47. Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human*, 203; See Haraway, "Manifest für Cyborgs," in *Haraway: Die Neuerfindung Der Natur*, 33. ↵

48. See Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human*, 205. ↵

49. See Thweatt-Bates, *Cyborg Selves*, 37. ↵

50. Hammer and Stieß, "Einleitung," in *Haraway: Die Neuerfindung Der Natur*, 30. Own translation. ↵

51. See Haraway, "Manifest für Cyborgs," in *Haraway: Die Neuerfindung Der Natur*, 36. ↵

52. See Hammer and Stieß, "Einleitung," in *Haraway: Die Neuerfindung Der Natur*, 20. ↵

53. Thweatt-Bates, *Cyborg Selves*, 39. ↵

54. Thweatt-Bates, 39. ↵

55. Thweatt-Bates, 80f. ↵

56. Haraway, "Fetus," in *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™*, 186. ↵

57. Thweatt-Bates, *Cyborg Selves*, 81. ↵

58. Haraway, "Manifest für Cyborgs," in *Haraway: Die Neuerfindung Der Natur*, 34f. Own translation. ↵

59. Thweatt-Bates, *Cyborg Selves*, 21. ↵

60. See Westermann, *Anthropomorphe Maschinen*, 244. ↵

61. See Thweatt-Bates, *Cyborg Selves*, 36; Westermann, *Anthropomorphe Maschinen*, 244. ↵

62. Haraway, "Manifest für Cyborgs," in *Haraway: Die Neuerfindung Der Natur*, 35. Own translation. ↵

63. See Loh, *Trans- und Posthumanismus*, 137–62. ↵

64. See Haraway, "Manifest für Cyborgs," in *Haraway: Die Neuerfindung Der Natur*, 71. ↵

65. The image is borrowed from the neuroscientific-ph nomenological concept of Fuchs, who uses it uses it quite differently, however, by relating it to the question of consciousness and spirit: Fuchs, "Lebendiger Geist," in *Post-Physikalismus*, 149. ↵

66. Puzio and Filipović, "Personen als Informationsbündel?". ↵

67. Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human*, 123. ↵

68. Graham, 61. ↵

69. Graham, 111. ↵

70. See Thweatt-Bates, *Cyborg Selves*, 133. ↵

71. Thweatt, "Cyborg-Christus," in *Designobjekt Mensch*, 371. ↵

72. See Graham, "Words Made Flesh," 119; Thweatt-Bates, *Cyborg Selves*, 152. ↵

73. See Bostrom, *Superintelligence*, 127–44. ↵

74. Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human*, 204. ↵

75. Haraway, "Manifest für Cyborgs," in *Haraway: Die Neuerfindung Der Natur*, 70. Own translation. ↵

76. See Pirker, *Fluide und fragil*, 361–63; Pirker, "Fragilitätssensible Pastoralanthropologie". ↵

77. Keupp, "Patchwork-Identität," 425–38. Own translation. ↵

78. Hitzler, *Kleine Lebenswelten*. Own translation ["Bastelexistenz"]. ↵

79. See Pirker, "Fragilitätssensible Pastoralanthropologie," 55. ↵

80. Luther, *Religion und Alltag*; Pirker, *Fluide und fragil*. ↩

81. Puzio and Filipović, "Personen als Informationsbündel?". ↩

82. Luther, *Religion und Alltag*, 167. Own translation. ↩

83. See Pirker, *Fluide und fragil*, 347. ↩

84. See Luther, *Religion und Alltag*, 168–71. ↩

85. See Luther, 287. ↩

86. Luther, 172f. ↩