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### An Alternative to Post-Humanism: Neo-Humanism. The Argument of Consciousness Singularity

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## An Alternative to Post-Humanism: Neo-Humanism. The Argument of Consciousness Singularity

Viorel ROTILĂ<sup>1\*</sup>

### *Abstract*

*Due to development of science we are in the situation of an intervention in the complex area of nature without being able to yet identify the inflection point from which the artificial created by the natural man becomes in turn natural. Perhaps this is just another strong sense of singularity, Consciousness Singularity (CS) is the key moment of this transition. By CS we understand the ability of a consciousness to understand what consciousness is. It is to know in a scientific sense, that brings along prediction with it, the possibility to create a consciousness, finalizing the status of human creator. Instead of the leap assumed by TS the key challenge is the "revolution of consciousness", generated by the new understanding of humanity brought along by CS. Most of the arguments in favour of Technological Singularity (TS) involves the possibility of a qualitative leap based on the quantitative accumulation, missing the problem represented by the knowledge of consciousness. We cannot predict the time / period when the CS occurs or provide strong arguments for the burst of the CS. We think, however, that TS assumes CS. Namely, that the debate about TS is really about CS. The prediction of CS consequences is impossible. The study of consciousness inevitably changes the human's image and that of the society, finally resulting in the redefining of humanity. Contrary to many expectations emerged on the marketplace of ideas, it is not the switch to trans-humanism the one that will characterize such a change, but the redefining of the humane. Not the post-humanism, but the new humanism is the social-moral objective of the socio-moral consciousness research results. The main feature of the humane is the all-humane: the tendency of people to remain within the humanity regardless of the severity of the practiced behaviours.*

**Keywords:** Consciousness Singularity, consciousness revolution, trans-humanism, posthumanism, neo-humanism.

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## 1. Introduction

The ideas presented in this article are hypotheses and in a fortunate case, theories through which I suggest several variations of interpretation for the themes undertaken, none of which being supported by irrefutable evidence; their only support is the arguments (strong or weak) that I bring in their favour. Methodologically, the target consists of a combination of the truth (coming from) consistency with timid forms of truth based on some correspondences.

The major problem of scientific interventions in the area of complexity of social life is the unpredictability. In case of discussions about post or trans-humanism we are both in the event of an intervention in the social dimension of existence and of one held in the order of nature, the anticipation capacity smashing the multiplication of variables that the action produces. This difficulty could have a solution: if we consider the premise of a higher predictability of nature (as it underpins the "exact sciences") we could identify the inflection point from which the artificial created by the natural man becomes in turn natural, thus moving the social in a "zone of scientific certainty." Note that the acceptance of human creation in the order of nature could be a strong sense of singularity in terms of understanding existence.

The prediction of an event such as *singularity* tends to fall within the predictions area about black swans, especially if we accept the most frequent method describing the Technological Singularity (TS): it will appear in a short period of time and will lead to a radical change in humanity with unpredictable effects (prediction of events has in fact the same status as the prediction of their effects by adopting the same dimension, namely the society, which has an identical degree of complexity).

Research on consciousness tends to show that the great leap to something else, namely *singularity*, could come not from artificial intelligence, but from new discoveries about man. The limits of conscious will is only one example: the presumption of total rationality of the human, of groups and societies, proves to be increasingly unfounded. The most important expectation is concerned with the scientific knowledge of consciousness, which could bring with it the possibility of creating consciousnesses. This is one of the points where research of the philosophy of mind / consciousness theory proves its revolutionary character, in the hard sense of social change that it tends to generate. In the moral order such a change is more important than the issues introduced in the public debate by the artificial intelligence

and its status in the human world, bringing with it possible solutions for the latter. We shall refer to this change of paradigm under the title of Consciousness Singularity (CS), indicating by this term the anticipation of a milestone in the evolution of humanity (characterized by scientific knowledge of consciousness and the ability to create consciousness) and its transition to another stage.

Consciousness research entails inherent fears, some of them regarding the danger of a leap of humanity (which would leave outside of it much of what belongs to it today) others postulating a happy development of humanity. Compared to our cognitive habits on humanity topic, the post-human, trans-human, super-human etc. are all generating fears against a humanity that has turned equality into one of the ordering principles of social existence. In addition, political equality risk in turn of being broken by the differences within the humane that tend to be discovered by research on mind, breaking this fragile balance established by the current social ideal. Knowing what consciousness is will inevitably change the image of the human as well as the one of the society, the end result being represented by the redefining of humanity. Contrary to many expectations emerged on the marketplace of ideas, it is not the transition to trans-humanism or post-humanism that characterizes such a change, but the redefining of the humane, namely the *new humanism*.

## 2. Theoretical Background

The first author who proposed the concept of Consciousness Singularity (CS) is Shawn Mikula [1], in this article making reference especially to the definition of CS proposed by him, indicating the places where we disagree with his proposals. In this way, at the end of the article it will be obvious that the meaning that we give to CS is significantly different from that proposed by Mikula.

Based on the ideas of S. Mikula, Barclay Powers proposes another meaning for CS: „The consciousness singularity is the eventual result of the convergence of Buddhist and Taoist meditation with neuroscience”. [2]

A perspective on the nature of consciousness singularity can be found in an article published by Ryan C. Burke and Michael A. Persinger: „The perspective developed in this paper is that consciousness is a boundary condition between a singularity (black hole) and space within the brain.” [3]

Erwin Schrodinger addresses the issue of existence of a single consciousness, using the term *singularity* referring to a consciousness, relying on the fact that every time we know only one consciousness. [4]

John Chelen proposes the concept Organic Singularity (OS) through it suggesting the possibility of creating an intelligence which can exceed the human one by using genetic engineering. The solution should be based on a characteristic of neurons: „The self-organizing nature of neural networks is a crucial element that will enable an Organic Singularity to occur prior to a Technological Singularity”. [5]

If we consider that the Technological Singularity (TS) includes CS then the whole discussion on TS could be placed in theoretical background of CS. We will not make such a move, even if we consider that TS at least involves CS. The problem is the need to address explicitly CS, as it can significantly change the prospective analyzes specific to TS.

A broad discussion on the issue of the topic that is the knowledge of consciousness based on singularity is held by David Chalmers in the work *The Singularity: A Philosophical Analysis*. [6] Although we do not share all the ideas in this article we think that the basis of the problem is correct, as the article can be seen in the light of the need to discuss about consciousness when we approach the singularity problem.

Neo-Humanism already has a history, knowing at least two conceptual proposals. The best known is that of Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar made through the work *The Liberation of Intellect: Neohumanism*. [7] Sarkar's proposal has at its core the idea of evolution of humanism towards universalism. Another option is that of the Argentine writer Mario Luis Rodríguez Cobos, also called Shiloh, the work *Diccionario del Nuevo Humanismo* [8] being the most obvious approach for the launch of a new Human Movement.

### 3. Argument of the paper

The emergence of consciousness is a singularity. The understanding of consciousness could realize another singularity. The emergence of consciousness is a singularity held for a long period of time. The duration of *the first singularity of consciousness* legitimates the assumption of a long duration for the second singularity of consciousness (CS).

CS expresses two different things in the first instance, to which we can however identify complementarity: *the event of occurrence of consciousness* (which took place over several thousand years) and *self-knowledge of consciousness* in the scientific sense of the term, including the capacity of technological reproduction. Complementarity is given by the orientation of consciousness to self-knowledge, complicating a bit the identification of the

moment of occurrence of "the second singularity of consciousness", namely the possibility to determine whether there are two singularities or only one, which can be observed by changing the time perspective.

Insofar as it occurs, CS will be determined by extension of consciousness through the society and technology. If we accept this thesis we can consider that humanity is already involved in the discovery of the consciousness, the cognitive route legitimacy depending on the endpoint. The long length of CS has as an effect the impossibility of precisely indicating its beginning and end. In these conditions, we may already be located in this phase of transition to another way of calling the CS, the concept *conscience extension* providing a relevant methodological tool.

TS involves CS. Namely the debate about TS is really about CS.

The prediction of CS consequences is impossible, history being an insufficient basis of support for forward-looking judgments. In an identical situation there is the very occurrence of an event called CS.

CS appears to be an epistemic arrogance of humanity, a defiance of the creation status by its transition to that of Creator. Singularity is an achievement and a threat to the status of creator of man: whether the creation will be able to create itself, in turn, independent of man, then its orientation directions may be distant from human interests.

The main feature of the humane is the all-humane: the tendency of people to remain within the humanity regardless of the severity of the behaviours practiced. Not the post-humanism or trans-humanism, but the new humanism is the social-moral objective of the consciousness research results.

#### 4. Arguments to support the thesis

One of the explanatory options for the impossibility of the leap specific to TS is the role played by intentionality in the existence of consciousness, the assumption involving the difficulty of transferring it to the area of artificial intelligence (AI) being founded. From this perspective we can assume that the emergence of creations more intelligent than man realizes *another kind of intelligence*, lacking one of the essential characteristics of consciousness: intentionality.

In case of a new humanism in question it is the transition from the cultural understanding of the humane to the one fundamentally oriented by the data of scientific knowledge. This field assumes significantly a distance between what we know, for the purposes of scientific knowledge, and what

we are willing to accept. A kind of social prudence (that could be generated by the fear from new) still situates the understanding of the humane in the old cognitive contexts imagining their overcome rather as rupture (eg. Trans-humanism or post-humanism) than as a natural evolution. The new definition of the humane is somehow already here, in these times, being hidden from us by the blindness generated by the adherence to old cognitive models.

Instead of the leap assumed by TS our main challenge is the "revolution of consciousness", generated by new understanding of the humane. We suggest therefore that it is possible for now to look in the wrong direction when we are concerned about TS, the key issue being actually CS.

To talk of singularity Amnon Eden, the chief editor of the volume *Singularity Hypotheses* ", considers that three conditions must be met [9]:

1. The existence of an acceleration process (all versions including one of the intelligence faces).
2. Super-intelligence, in one of its two variants: artificial and (post) human.
3. Discontinuity / rhythm rupture/ leap - a turning point that changed the path of humanity.

To argue CS we can check whether these conditions are met in the case of consciousness:

1. There is a process of acceleration of knowledge, especially through cognitive externalizations. There are at least a few ways in which we can thoroughly speak about extensions of the mind and, in some cases, of consciousness.

2. If we measure intelligence in computing power / computation it is possible to have a shadow of argument. But we think that is more fitting to talk about the growth of a variable like IQ, which seems to find a scientific demonstration. A simple argument in favour of this idea: the increase of the complexity of the world (as an effect of the human behaviours) determines the need of human's adjustment to this new environment characterized by an increase in intelligence.

3. The leap would be, as we said, self-knowledge of consciousness - in the scientific sense of the term. At this point one shall apply a number of interpretations and contextualization starting from the question of the leap duration and ending with the multiple possibilities for defining it.

The main feature of CS (of the following singularity of consciousness) we think that it is its duration. As a benchmark for such a prediction we take the estimates regarding the duration of the emergence of consciousness (first singularity of consciousness). We admit that here we

resort to the transformation of a working hypothesis – the long duration that was necessary for the emergence of consciousness – a conviction; yet without conclusive evidence. We think that reasonable expectations on the *future singularity of consciousness* could be slowed by the need of evidence on the manner of emergence of consciousness. At this point, the conventional establishment of the moment from which we start talking about history ("getting out" by writing from a prehistory that has had for centuries a cultural situation similar to the Middle Ages) gives a helpful hint on the error caused by thinking in terms of rigid time horizons of the events actually developing for long periods of time.

## 5. Arguments to argue the thesis

Given the desire to differentiate ourselves from the ideas of the authors listed in the section *theoretical background*, we believe that they contradict my thesis, since their synthetic presentation can be regarded as arguments in this respect. Also, all the supporters of TS or of trans-humanism or post-humanism can be seen as arguing against the two fundamental theses: the singularity of consciousness and neo-humanism.

The knowledge of consciousness should operate with an additional variable: the possibility of its transformation (evolution) as we approach it. The acceptance of this hypothesis leads to the decrease of the probability of consciousness singularity.

Shawn Mikula's statement „The Consciousness Singularity bears no relation to the Technological Singularity, which involves the creation of smarter-than-human machines” [1] contradicts my thesis on the extremely tight relationship between TS and CS. The same is true in the case of the extension of consciousness: Mikula claims that the singularity will be based on the expansion / spread of consciousness [1], a concept different from that of the extension.

Neo-Humanism automatically implies that man is a form of endpoint of evolution, being impossible to have a qualitative leap above this level. Even if we do not use the term neo-humanism with the meaning of the end of history, this idea may be a weakness of my arguments in favour of neo-humanism, which we assume as such.

## 6. Dismantling the arguments against

Shawn Mikula's statement on the absence of the link between TS and CS misses an aspect crucial for the evolution of consciousness, namely the

fact that its continuous development is based on technology, the prediction that this will still happen being a reasonable one. As we tried to show elsewhere [10], we can speak of a form of extension of consciousness mediated by the society and technology. We think that the assumption that singularity called consciousness was mediated by the society and further supported by specific technologies is legitimate, justifying the estimation of a role that technology can have in what we think it will be CS.

Unlike S. Mikula, we think that the extension of consciousness than its expansion is more likely. The extension of consciousness is based on the use of specific tools, without an extension being present. The evidence so far suggests consistently the tendency to use different forms of extension of the mind / consciousness as variant of development. Knowing consciousness in the scientific sense of the term, it is more likely to bring with it the possibility of creating another consciousness than that of the expanding human consciousness.

By CS, we not propose a meaning similar to the one conveyed by E. Schrodinger, considering that there is no evidence on the status of consciousness to another dimension of existence.

The solutions proposed by Chelen push the boundaries of ethical contemporary acceptability: „We might couple the use of a neurological growth factor with removal of a section of the cranium to permit an expansion of the cortex.” [5]. I think that development, to the extent that the term is appropriate, will take place "inside the skull" and through extensions. The version proposed by John Chelen OS suffers from the same confusion between consciousness and intelligence that is manifested by most TS promoters when they deduct from the increase of the power of computation the TS need. I think this type of arguments involving the possibility of a qualitative leap based on quantitative accumulation represents a problem. Moreover, More's Law (doubling the number of transistors every two years) tends to be undermined, weakening the argument of accelerated development. In the way in which Chelen presents OS is difficult to say whether it would include SC. In addition, given the technical solutions used or the genetic engineering, I think that OS is actually a variant of ST.

The search of emotional security [11] as a substrate of action of conservatism is a key challenge for the new humanism. If we judge history in terms of the fight against the humane, of the number of casualties of any humanism, the twentieth century has no equivalent in terms of overcoming the humane, of a form of "beyond the humane". The fact that such behaviours have not resulted in the emergence of post-humane, or trans-humane is an implicit form of support for the idea of all-humane, namely og

neo-humanism as a dimension where we would be moved by the anticipated leap assumed by singularity.

## 7. Conclusions

The descriptions of singularity, regardless of their references have to a large extent the character of a black swan, the predictions being questionable. The social dimension of consciousness could complicate the discussion about singularity. The ingredients of socialization are more complicated than the possibilities of their simulation based on different algorithms. Yet there is still a significant distance between what we know and what we are willing to accept. A kind of social prudence still places the understanding of the humane in the old cognitive contexts, imagining their overcoming rather as a rupture than as a natural evolution. There are no guarantees on the direction of development of the society, the expectations having unknown probabilities.

The discussion on CS topic involves the ontological status of intelligence or its relationship between it and the existence of consciousness. If consciousness is a necessary condition for a certain level of intelligence, be it only one intermediate, then consciousness remains in question even after the singularity moment. However, maintaining consciousness as a fundamental value in the order of creation and in the creators' concern can keep the place of the humane in the hierarchy of existences.

The effort of understanding consciousness, namely the generation of an adequate cognitive context, could realize a number of changes likely to be classified a posteriori as giving account of singularity. At issue there are the changes determined by the advance of cognitive sciences over humanity that can lead to the emergence of a new humanism.

We cannot predict the moment / period when CS emerges. We cannot even provide solid arguments for the emergence of CS. But we believe that TS assumes CS. Namely, the debate about TS is in fact about CS.

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