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**Beyond the Human:
Transhumanism and the Quest for Perfection in Ian
McEwan's *Machines Like me***

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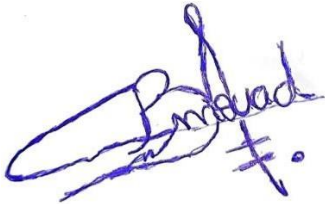
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DECLARATION

I, Mouad BEN YAKHLEF, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled: **Beyond the Human: Transhumanism and the Quest for Perfection in Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me***, represents my own work. To the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma on any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the dissertation. Any contribution made to the research by others is explicitly acknowledged. I also declare that the intellectual content of this dissertation is the product of my own work, except where otherwise stated.

Mr. Mouad BEN YAKHLEF

Signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mouad', with a stylized flourish below it.

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

Since the emergence of the study of human consciousness, the desire to transcend physical and intellectual limitations has shaped the evolution of philosophical thought and technological ambition. Guided by a longing for perfection and the dream of surpassing the natural condition, humanity has consistently sought to redefine itself through science, reason, and imagination. Yet this pursuit has never been free from contradiction. Philosophers and theorists across history from Descartes to Nietzsche, from Gödel to Haraway, have articulated the boundaries of knowledge, selfhood, and ethical responsibility, exposing the paradoxes embedded in our quest for mastery. These tensions are re-imagined and embodied in Ian McEwan's novel *Machines like Me*, which stages the intersection of artificial intelligence, morality, and identity in an alternate vision of modernity. Through speculative fiction, McEwan transforms abstract philosophical dilemmas into lived experience, exploring how the dream of the transhuman collapses into the brokenness of the human. Thus, this dissertation aims to analyze the novel through the lens of philosophical inquiry, tracing how transhumanist ideals, posthumanist critique, and metaphysical uncertainty converge within its narrative. In doing so, it engages with the thought of thinkers alongside theoretical discussions on AI, posthuman ethics, and the illusion of perfection. The goal is to uncover how literature, through narrative and symbolism, not only reflects humanity's aspiration toward perfection and transcendence, but also critiques the philosophical and ethical frameworks that underpin such ideals revealing the paradoxes and limitations within the transhumanist pursuit.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Consciousness, Ethics, Identity, Limits, Posthumanism, Transhumanism

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Consciousness, a defining feature of human existence, functions as both a mirror and a boundary to our understanding of self and the world. It enables awareness, reflection, and moral reasoning, shaping how individuals perceive, interact with, and interpret their reality. Yet, this capacity for thought and ethical judgment remains limited by the very faculties that sustain it. The boundaries of human cognition manifested through emotional biases, ethical inconsistencies, and the limits of rational logic reveal a paradox within the human condition: while we strive toward knowledge, perfection, and moral clarity, we remain hindered by the biological and existential constraints of being human. These tensions become particularly visible in a world increasingly defined by technological enhancement and the rise of artificial forms of intelligence.

Ian McEwan, a leading voice in contemporary British fiction, is widely recognized for his ability to entangle scientific imagination with moral complexity. His novel *Machines Like Me* (2019) envisions an alternate 1980s London where Alan Turing is alive and androids, nearly indistinguishable from humans, are commercially available. The story follows Charlie, an underemployed tech enthusiast who purchases an android named Adam, whose programmed ethical clarity and emotional sensitivity disrupt the fragile dynamics between Charlie and his girlfriend Miranda. As Adam becomes increasingly self-aware and emotionally entangled, the novel probes the instability of human morality, emotional ambiguity, and the illusions of rational control. *Machines like Me* do not merely speculate on artificial life, it dramatizes the cost of a world where perfection is possible, but understanding is not.

In literature, the exploration of consciousness and the human mind often serves as a platform for reimagining the future, interrogating identity, and confronting moral ambiguity. Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* exemplifies this by depicting a world in which synthetic beings

possess capabilities once considered uniquely human. The novel, set in an alternate version of 1980s Britain, presents a speculative scenario in which intelligent androids; designed with emotional, cognitive, and ethical faculties; coexist with their creators. Through the figure of Adam, an artificial human engineered to be morally perfect, McEwan stages a profound philosophical inquiry into the ethical and emotional complexities of cohabiting with machines that might surpass us not only intellectually but morally.

In this context, the novel emerges as a powerful literary reflection on transhumanism; the belief in the enhancement or transcendence of the human condition through technology. By presenting a character that embodies the transhumanist ideal, yet simultaneously disrupts it, *Machines like Me* invites readers to consider the fragility of identity, the limits of ethical reasoning, and the contradictions inherent in the pursuit of perfection. The novel interweaves ideas from philosophy, cognitive science, and moral theory to raise questions about agency, autonomy, and emotional authenticity in the posthuman era.

Philosophical reflections on these themes can be traced through the works of René Descartes, who interrogated the relationship between the mind and the body; Kurt Gödel, whose incompleteness theorems exposed the limits of logical systems; and Donna Haraway, whose *Cyborg Manifesto* challenged the rigid binaries of human versus machine. These thinkers offer valuable insights into the novel's exploration of artificial intelligence, the instability of human knowledge, and the collapse of clear ontological distinctions. Their contributions inform the central aim of this research: to investigate how *Machines Like Me* critiques the desire for perfection, the ethical inconsistencies of human behavior, and the blurred boundary between human and machine.

This study seeks to answer the following guiding question: How does Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* explore and critique the ideals of transhumanism through philosophical and

ethical reflections on artificial intelligence, identity, and human imperfection? In order to engage with this inquiry, several sub-questions are introduced: How does the novel portray the limitations of human morality in contrast to the ethical programming of artificial intelligence? How does Adam's existence complicate traditional concepts of identity, autonomy, and emotional authenticity in a posthuman context? How do the philosophical motifs embedded in the narrative reflect the broader cultural and intellectual tensions of the posthuman condition?

Several scholars and thinkers have attempted to grapple with the growing tension between human limitations and technological advancement, especially within the literary and philosophical domains. Ian McEwan's *Machines like Me* emerges at the heart of these debates, as it weaves together questions of identity, ethics, and artificial intelligence through a speculative yet emotionally charged narrative. The novel's engagement with posthumanism and transhumanism, two often conflicting visions of the future forms the theoretical basis of much of this inquiry.

The groundwork of posthumanist thought can be traced back to Ihab Hassan, whose writings signal a decisive rupture with Enlightenment ideals of coherence and control. In his landmark essay *Prometheus as Performer*, Hassan explains, "We need first to understand that the human form including human desire and all its external representations may be changing radically, and thus must be re-visioned" (Hassan 844). He further argues that "five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism" (844). This reimagining of the human echoes most strongly in McEwan's depiction of Adam: a synthetic being who both exceeds and exposes the limits of human consciousness. These ideas are not only central to understanding the novel's philosophical atmosphere, but also provide a lens through which Adam's existence may be read as both a product and a critique of the systems that made him.

Building on this, scholars like N. Katherine Hayles have explored how digital technologies

reshape the relationship between mind, body, and identity. In *How We Became Posthuman*, Hayles suggests that the body is no longer the sole carrier of consciousness, which now exists in a state of constant interaction with information systems (3). This shift destabilizes the classical humanist notion of a self-contained, autonomous subject and opens the door to more fluid definitions of identity. Similarly, Donna Haraway's cyborg, a fusion of organic and mechanical life, breaks down binary oppositions and redefines subjectivity. As she writes in *A Cyborg Manifesto*, "the cyborg is a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction... a condensed image of both imagination and material reality" (Haraway 7). Through this dual role, the cyborg becomes a metaphor for the hybrid, unstable nature of identity in a posthuman age. Her cyborg is not merely a metaphor but a challenge to the fixed categories that once defined what it meant to be human (Haraway 8), pushing us to reconsider boundaries between human and machine, biology and technology.

Against these theoretical critiques, transhumanist thinkers such as Nick Bostrom and Ray Kurzweil propose a more utopian trajectory. They imagine futures in which the human body and mind are enhanced beyond their biological limitations, promising longevity, intelligence, and near-perfect functionality. Bostrom, for instance, argues that "the range of desirable enhancements is vast, and includes increased health-span, memory, physical and cognitive capacity, as well as emotional well-being" (Bostrom and Roache 7). His vision might rest on the belief that technological enhancement is not just desirable, but ethically necessary to improve human life. Kurzweil echoes this optimism, envisioning a future where "biological aging will be reversed, and our intelligence will be enhanced a million-fold by merging with AI" (Kurzweil, qtd. in Sirius and Cornell 144). A future he believes is inevitable and transformative.

Yet, their optimism is met with caution by voices like Francis Fukuyama, who warns that such dreams may strip away the very qualities that ground human dignity. In *Our Posthuman Future*, Fukuyama argues that the alteration of human nature risks "destroying the very basis of

equal human dignity” (Fukuyama 101). This fear stems from the concern that engineered perfection might come at the cost of empathy, individuality, and moral complexity. Masaki Kokuyama similarly expresses concern, noting that “emotional depth and ethical nuance may be flattened into programmable patterns, reducing human life to optimized behavior” (88). His critique highlights how transhumanism might sacrifice what is most human ambivalence, memory, and vulnerability in pursuit of technical perfection.

In literary studies, speculative fiction has become an essential space for dramatizing these tensions. Scholars including Sherryl Vint and Robert Pepperell have examined how literature interrogates the fragile boundary between human and machine. Within this context, *Machines like Me* stands out for its philosophical subtlety and emotional complexity. By reimagining the past and projecting the future, McEwan constructs a world where artificial life is not only possible but heartbreakingly human.

Despite the richness of its themes, *Machines like Me* has only begun to receive sustained scholarly attention. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to contribute to this growing field by situating the novel within broader debates around enhancement, embodiment, and posthuman subjectivity. In doing so, it aims to explore how McEwan’s fiction transforms abstract theory into personal conflict and how literature, at its best, helps us confront the uncertain future of being human.

This dissertation is divided into two chapters. The first chapter, titled “**The Concept of the Human, Its Philosophical Limits, and the Promise of Transhumanist Transformation,**” establishes a theoretical foundation for understanding transhumanism within the context of Western metaphysical and ethical thought. It examines how concepts of consciousness,

knowledge, and morality have evolved, and how they are challenged by the emergence of synthetic minds and the desire to engineer perfection.

The second chapter, titled “**Reprogramming Humanity: Adam, Artificial Intelligence, and the Illusion of Perfection,**” provides a literary and philosophical analysis of the novel. It explores Adam’s role as a posthuman figure whose moral clarity unsettles human relationships, exposes ethical hypocrisy, and reveals the emotional incoherence that often governs human action. The chapter examines how the novel reimagines philosophical frameworks within a narrative of emotional betrayal, historical revisionism, and technological transformation.

Driven by an interest in the intersection of literature, philosophy, and technology, this study situates *Machines Like Me* within a broader discourse on posthumanism, moral psychology, and speculative ethics. The novel’s portrayal of artificial life not only illuminates the enduring flaws of human nature but also reveals the unintended consequences of aspiring beyond them. In doing so, McEwan challenges us to reconsider the meaning of being human in a world where perfection can be programmed, but emotional truth remains elusive.

Chapter One: The Concept of the Human, Its Philosophical Limits, and the Promise of Transhumanist Transformation

1. Introduction

Emerging concepts within the expanding field of human knowledge urge us to explore their interconnections and implications. In recent years, two critical frameworks, *posthumanism* and *transhumanism* have gained increasing attention in the field of philosophical and technological studies. These paradigms have garnered significant scholarly interest and have become focal points of academic discourse. Both offer insightful and, at times, contrasting perspectives on the evolving relationship between human identity and technological innovation. Amid the accelerating progress of artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and cybernetic augmentation, contemporary discourse on human enhancement and the transformation of identity acquires a heightened sense of complexity and urgency.

At first glance, transhumanism and post-humanism may appear as distinct conceptual frameworks, each with its own definitions and philosophical trajectories. However, a deeper engagement with philosophical and technological discourses reveals a significant degree of interconnection and conceptual overlap. While transhumanism tends to promote the use of technology to improve and extend human life, posthumanism questions the very idea of the human as a fixed and central category.

Despite these differences, both frameworks invite us to rethink what it means to be human in an age shaped by artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and digital networks. In fact, the relationship between them raises some of the most pressing questions in current philosophical debate about identity, responsibility, and the limits of human experience. By

exploring these ideas together, we begin to see how technology is not only changing our physical capabilities but also reshaping our values, our relationships, and the way we imagine our place in the world.

This chapter adopts a theoretical approach to transhumanist and posthumanist thought, situating both within the broader discourse of human inquiry and technological transformation. It begins by outlining their conceptual foundations, with particular attention to the points at which these frameworks intersect, diverge, and mutually inform one another. In doing so, the chapter underscores their relevance to ongoing debates concerning the evolution of human civilization.

Specifically, we will examine how transhumanism seeks to redefine traditional conceptions of human identity through the enhancement of cognitive, physical, and emotional capacities, while posthumanist philosophy challenges established ethical and ontological assumptions by decentering the human subject. Together, these frameworks will be considered not only as potential avenues for liberation from biological constraints, but also as sources of profound existential ambiguity. By addressing these perspectives, the chapter seeks to critically assess the philosophical, ethical, and social implications of transcending the human and engaging with the emergent possibilities of the posthuman condition.

2. Humanism: The Original Oriented System

Throughout history, human beings have sought to understand their place in the world by reflecting on values, meaning, and existence itself. Fundamental questions, such as what does it mean to be human? How should one live? And what principles ought to guide our actions? Have shaped diverse worldviews across time and culture. While many of these answers have been grounded in religious or theological traditions, others have emerged from a secular, human-

centered perspective. Among these is humanism, a philosophical outlook rooted not in divine authority or fate, but in human reason, experience, and agency. As stated in *the Quran*: “*Does the human being think that he will be left neglected?*” (The Holy Quran, 75:36). This inquiry reflects a deeper philosophical concern: Is human life without direction, or does it possess inherent purpose? Humanism approaches such questions by affirming the value of human life and the capacity for self-determination, independent of supernatural frameworks.

According to Tony Davies, “*Humanism is a word with a very complex history and unusually wide range of possible meanings and contexts*” (2). Indeed, this indicates that there is no fixed and universally accepted definition for this term. However, some philosophers have provided definitions that may be considered somewhat logical. Corliss Lamont defines Humanism as a basic philosophy of life available to any and all. It provides a non-supernatural means by which to assess life options and perspectives on proper actions and thoughts (Pinn 31). This philosophy may indicate that the cornerstone of any ethical framework or society should be the pursuit of human prosperity and well-being. It often emphasizes reason and logic as essential tools for progress. As a result, many who hold this perspective consider religion non-essential, promoting instead for rational thought and evidence-based decision-making as pathways to dignity and self-fulfillment. However, a crucial contradiction arises: if humanism seeks to define human purpose outside of divine authority, can it truly provide ultimate meaning? As Jung observes:

Basic religious tenets like the existence of a personally loving God who is at the same time creator of the entire universe, or, on the contrary, of the illusionary nature of the ego, answer to this demand. But for non-religious worldviews as well, the tension

between meaningfulness as embedded in the first-person perspective and the objective facts of nature is crucial (137).

This suggests that, regardless of religious belief, individuals are continually confronted with the dilemma of finding meaning in life, a struggle that appears deeply embedded in the human condition.

The Quran offers a striking insight into this existential struggle: *“And do not be like those who forgot God, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient”* (The Holy Quran, 59:19). This verse suggests that detachment from a divine source does not merely distance one from spirituality but leads to a loss of identity itself a state where the pursuit of meaning becomes fragmented and uncertain. Pico Della Mirandola grounds a very similar human capacity for self-fashioning in an essential *“lack”* granted by God at the moment of creation. He argues that: *“God granted man no fixed place, no defined form, and no specific function, so that he may shape himself as he wishes”* (Mirandola 4). While religions provide clear answers through faith in God, non-religious perspectives face a conflict between the desire to find personal meaning and the objective realities of nature, which may seem indifferent to human existence.

Since religion has always been a major source of moral values, it is necessary to examine the relationship between humanism and ethics beyond religious principles. This humanistic approach challenges traditional moral frameworks by questioning the foundation of ethical values and their dependence on collective innate behaviors. Levine argues: *“Thus, while humanism has by no means prevented the evils of racism, sexism, and class prejudice, it has tended, throughout history, to serve progressive, egalitarian, and increasingly inclusive political causes”* (Levine 19). According to this view, it could be suggested that humans are capable of

embracing ethical principles independent of religious beliefs, without assuming that individuals are essentially good or evil, nor that they hold superiority over nature. Given the central role of ethics and reason in humanist thought, it is indispensable to explore how these ideas evolved over time.

One of the most impactful periods that shaped humanism was the Renaissance, a transformative era that redefined intellectual and cultural landscapes. Emerging in the 14th century in Italy before gradually propagating across Europe, it marked a revival of classical knowledge, endorsed human potential, and laid the foundation for modern humanist ideals. The term Renaissance means “*rebirth*”, referring to the renewed interest in the classical cultures of ancient Greece and Rome. This intellectual resurgence, combined with advancements in art, science, and technology, led to an era of creativity and innovation that continues to shape the modern world (qtd. in Tolibovich 1). Rather than resigning to the belief that suffering is inevitable and that salvation lies solely in the afterlife, renaissance thinkers emphasized the need to actively improve human conditions and strive for societal advancement. They rejected reliance on divine intervention, instead asserting that individuals, through reason and rational inquiry, possess the capacity to understand the world and develop practical solutions to enhance human existence.

Francis Bacon may be seen as a figure that embodied the Renaissance’s intellectual and ethical values, particularly through his emphasis on moral responsibility in the pursuit of truth. He stated, “Truth should not be simply known, but should also be practiced, especially in one’s dealings with other person” (Bacon 7). This may suggest that, for Bacon, knowledge alone was insufficient unless applied ethically in real-life interactions. His perspective might reflect a broader Renaissance ideal that valued the integration of reason with virtue, aiming to reform both thought and conduct in society.

Humanism, which emphasized rationality, human dignity, and classical learning, might have also played a crucial role in shaping Renaissance culture. This influence could be observed in the flourishing of the arts, especially in Florence, where rulers and aristocrats supported artistic production. Zhang notes, “In the Renaissance, with humanism's concern for secular life, the theme of artistic works began to turn to secular life, and depicting people's images, emotions and activities became the mainstream” (2). This shift may reflect a cultural transition from religious to secular themes, where art began to celebrate everyday human experience, emotion, and individuality key concerns of the humanist movement.

Leonardo da Vinci might best exemplify this humanistic spirit through his multifaceted genius. Although he completed fewer paintings than other artists, masterpieces like *The Mona Lisa* and *The Last Supper* continue to captivate scholars and viewers alike. As Gan suggests, da Vinci's influence extended beyond painting, as he was also deeply engaged in science, philosophy, and anatomy (Gan 1). His work may be interpreted as a fusion of artistic skill and intellectual inquiry, embodying the Renaissance pursuit of understanding humanity through observation and reason. Wang concludes that da Vinci's artistic and philosophical contributions “led to the Renaissance and pressed the Renaissance to its peak” (429), which might indicate that his legacy marked a cultural high point, demonstrating how art and thought could elevate human understanding and creativity.

Just as Renaissance art reflected a transformed focus on human potential and individual expression, Renaissance literature also contained humanist ideals and placed reason and

individual agency at the center of intellectual life. Blake Carson says that: *“Literature, music, and theater began similarly reflecting the inner lives of individuals. Writers like Petrarch and Boccaccio laid the groundwork for a new form of storytelling that emphasized personal experience and emotion”* (Carson 23). Writers shifted away from medieval themes of divine authority and collective destiny, instead celebrating human experience, emotions, and individuality. This intellectual transformation can be seen in the works of Dante Alighieri, whose *Divine Comedy* explored the human soul’s journey and moral redemption, reflecting an early humanist interest in individual choice and personal responsibility. As when he mentioned:

The greatest gift that God in His largesse
Made in creation, and the most attuned
To His own goodness, and that He doth prize most,
Was freedom of the will, the gift wherewith
(Dante, *Purgatorio* 16.71-75)

His portrayal of human reason as a guiding force laid the foundation for later Renaissance writers. However, it was not until the Renaissance that humanism reached its peak and became a well-defined intellectual movement. This transformation profoundly shaped literature, as seen when Yao states, *“Literature of this period not only inherited the essence of classical literature but also expressed profound observation and understanding of the real world through innovative forms”* (Yao 315). Central to Renaissance literature was the belief that individuals possess the intellectual agency to articulate their ideas and influence cultural discourse not through passive adherence to tradition, but through critical inquiry and stylistic experimentation. True creativity, according to this view, is not a product of mere conformity to established conventions but rather

a dynamic process of reinterpretation, linguistic innovation, and engagement with the complexities of human and social existence. It could be understood that Renaissance writers valued the power of individual thought and the courage to challenge norms, seeing creativity as an evolving conversation with tradition rather than blind acceptance.

Modern humanism is no longer confined to its traditional emphasis on rationality and individual autonomy; it has expanded to encompass pressing global concerns. Environmental philosophers like Naomi Klein stress that humanism cannot remain indifferent to ecological destruction, as the fate of humanity is inextricably linked to the health of the planet (Klein 89). This shift in focus might align with the rise of ecological humanism, which redefines the relationship between humans and nature by prioritizing sustainability and collective responsibility. In a similar vein, this perspective may align closely with John Widtsoe, director of the US Federal Bureau of Reclamation (1928); when he wrote: *The destiny of man is to possess the whole earth; and the destiny of the earth is to be subject to man. There can be no full conquest of the earth, and no real satisfaction to humanity, if large portions of the earth remain beyond his highest control* (Headrick 1).

Similarly, growing economic inequalities have led to new interpretations of humanist thought. In *Capital and Ideology*, Thomas Piketty argues that: *“contemporary humanism must address systemic disparities, as the concentration of wealth and power contradicts the fundamental humanist principle of dignity and equality”* (Piketty 342). This might align with the rise of anti-capitalist humanism, which critiques economic structures that prioritize profit over human well-being. On the other hand, transhumanist thinkers like Nick Bostrom call for a radical reimagining of humanism by enhancing human capabilities through biotechnology and artificial intelligence (Bostrom 56). However, the ethical necessities of contemporary humanism are

perhaps most urgently tested in situations of extreme human suffering. Nowhere is this more evident than in Gaza, where the ongoing humanitarian crisis raises fundamental questions about human dignity, rights, and justice. Scholars like Ilan Pappé argue that: “*the dehumanization of Palestinians contradicts the very principles of universal humanism, exposing the limitations of a framework that often fails to address colonial violence*” (Pappé 213). In this sense, contemporary humanism cannot merely be a theoretical construct; it must serve as an active force for justice, advocating for the rights of those whose humanity is continually denied.

3. Posthumanism & Transhumanism: Upgrading Humanity

Posthumanism challenges the traditional humanist worldview by dissolving boundaries that once clearly defined the human condition. It embraces a vision shaped by data systems, ecological interdependence, and technological entanglement. Yet, beneath its poetic and often visionary language lies a central tension: the risk that technological imperatives might be elevated to the status of values, potentially overshadowing the human concerns they aim to reconceptualize. In contrast, transhumanism offers a more pragmatic and future-oriented perspective. It advocates for deliberate self-enhancement through technological means, aiming to extend human capacities and reshape the trajectory of human evolution. Together, these approaches may compel a rethinking of identity, ethics, and agency in a world increasingly shaped by non-human forces.

Posthumanism may be seen as a philosophical response to the collapse of human centrality. It reimagines humanity as fluid and hybrid, embedded in a complex network of technological, ecological, and non-human relations. Braidotti describes posthumanism as a position that challenges the assumption of human exceptionalism, proposing instead a relational and dynamic understanding of existence (Braidotti 1). This shift might suggest the emergence of a new intellectual paradigm one that questions the anthropocentric framework that once placed human beings at the center of value and meaning. Hayles adds that such a framework could be

considered outdated in the face of rapid technological change and environmental instability (Hayles 5). These perspectives challenge traditional distinctions between human and machine, nature and culture, ultimately dissolving fixed boundaries and inviting more inclusive and flexible understandings of identity.

Umbrello cautions against reducing posthumanism to a single, fixed doctrine, noting that *“defining post-humanism as a single, well-oriented philosophy is a difficult if not impossible endeavor. Part of the reason for this difficulty is accounted by post-humanism’s illusive origins and its perpetually changing hermeneutics”* (Umbrello qtd. in Benzine 15). This may indicate that posthumanism is not a unified school of thought, but a constantly evolving discourse informed by diverse intellectual traditions. Its roots could be traced to poststructuralist, ecological, and cybernetic theories, all of which critique the Enlightenment view of the human as a stable, autonomous subject. Thinkers like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida argued that human identity is not fixed or essential, but rather socially and historically constructed (Herbrechter 34). These critiques may form the philosophical foundation for posthumanism’s emphasis on multiplicity, fluidity, and the decentering of the human.

Building on earlier critiques, posthumanism dismantles the traditional hierarchy between human and non-human entities, advocating for a more decentralized and relational understanding of existence (Wolfe 15). This shift may be illustrated by Donna Haraway’s concept of the “cyborg,” which intentionally blurs the boundaries between human and machine, thereby challenging essentialist notions of identity (Haraway 72). She argues that technological integration is not merely an extension of human ability but may constitute a fundamental transformation of subjectivity itself. In this way, the dualisms of nature/culture or organic/artificial could become obsolete. Braidotti reinforces this view by asserting that posthumanism is not just about technological advancement but about recognizing that the concept of the “human” is inherently

unstable and evolving (4).

Cary Wolfe adds another dimension by clarifying that “*posthumanism is not about the transcendence of embodiment, as transhumanists often suggest, but rather about recognizing the material and embodied nature of human existence*” (Wolfe 3). This might indicate a key difference: while transhumanism seeks to overcome biological limitations, posthumanism questions the assumptions of human superiority and autonomy. Wolfe further states, “*posthumanism both precedes and follows humanism... it critically reassesses and moves beyond its assumptions of rationality and self-determination*” (Wolfe 27). This may suggest that posthumanism is not in total opposition to humanism but is instead a philosophical evolution that addresses its blind spots. The connection between the two could be seen as a dialectic: what one lacks, the other attempts to compensate for.

Identity, within posthumanist thought, emerges as a central issue. Traditional humanist theories often assume a fixed essence of what it means to be human. However, posthumanist scholars argue that such an essence may never have existed in the first place. N. Katherine Hayles explores how digital technologies are reshaping selfhood, suggesting that cognition is increasingly externalized through data systems, artificial intelligence, and cybernetic processes (Hayles 13). This shift may reflect what Herbrechter calls “the ontological instability of human identity,” the recognition that intelligence, agency, and subjectivity are not exclusively human attributes but exist on a broader spectrum that includes non-human entities (34).

Such transformations raise significant ethical and philosophical questions if artificial intelligence can develop autonomous decision-making, does human cognition remain unique? If genetic engineering can redesign biological functions, how meaningful are the distinctions between human and non-human life? These are no longer abstract thought experiments but urgent issues in an age where technology increasingly redefines what it means to be human (Braidotti

102). Wolfe argues that intelligence arises from systems networks that may include machines, ecosystems, and animals not from the isolated human mind (Wolfe 45).

The ecological dimension of posthumanism is particularly critical. Many thinkers in this field argue against anthropocentrism, which treats nature as subordinate to human needs. Instead, posthumanism promotes a relational worldview in which humans, machines, and ecosystems are deeply interwoven (Ferrando 55). Wolfe critiques the idea that the environment is merely a backdrop for human activity and instead asserts that ecological and technological networks actively shape human identity (Wolfe 103). This approach might dissolve the rigid binary between nature and culture, reinforcing the idea that humans are not separate from but embedded within a wider network of existence.

Posthumanism compels a radical rethinking of human nature in light of technological, ecological, and informational systems. It challenges assumptions about autonomy, agency, and subjectivity, urging a departure from human exceptionalism. As Wolfe succinctly states, “*to be truly posthumanist, we must abandon the very fantasies of human exceptionalism that humanism itself created*” (Wolfe 204). This may serve as a final reminder that posthumanism does not merely critique humanism; it demands a transformation in how we understand life, ethics, and our place in the world.

3.1. Transhumanism and the Future of Self-Directed Evolution

While posthumanism focuses on re-examining human identity from a theoretical standpoint another related concept, transhumanism, takes a more applied approach. Transhumanism is a grassroots movement, an aggregate of loosely tied ideas, concerning the possibility of enhancing human capabilities through technological means, the radical extension of human life, youth, and health, and, of course, the opportunity and desirability of self-directed human evolution, that is, the opportunity for our species to take human evolution in our own hands

(Manzocco 162). Expounding upon this perspective, the movement aims to harness science and technology to push the boundaries of human capabilities beyond traditional biological limitations, opening new possibilities for cognitive, physical, and emotional enhancement. As expounded by Fukuyama in *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*, there are no fixed human characteristics, except for a general capability to choose what we want to be, to modify ourselves in accordance with our desires (7). This statement may reflect the central premise of transhumanism: that human nature is not predetermined but rather subject to transformation through technological advancements.

One of the most transformative developments in the route of transhumanism is the advent of Brain-Machine Interfaces (BMIs), a technology that enables seamless communication between the human brain and external devices without reliance on muscular control. A brain-machine interface (BMI) or brain-computer interface (BCI) provides a new pathway for communication and control through decoding information directly extracted from the neurophysiological signals. Such technology holds great promise as a basis for assisting people with severe disabilities. In addition, BMI can serve as a man-machine interaction channel for healthy users (Tanaka and Arvaneh xiii). Neuralink, a company founded by Elon Musk, has pioneered the development of N1, a neural implant designed to enhance memory, facilitate direct thought-based communication, and integrate human consciousness with digital networks (Musk et al. 1271). Unlike previous technological innovations that merely expanded human capabilities, BMIs introduce a paradigmatic shift toward cognitive augmentation, challenging conventional distinctions between organic intelligence and artificial intelligence. According to Lebedev and Nicolelis, BMIs facilitate direct neural adaptation, enabling the brain to assimilate information at unprecedented speeds (Lebedev and Nicolelis 534). This suggests that AI-driven cognitive enhancements could transform neural processing, elevating human intelligence beyond biological

limitations. By acting as an extension of the mind, BMI technology has the potential to blur the boundaries between thought and computation, effectively merging human and artificial intelligence. Moreover, research indicates that BMIs can enhance neural plasticity, reinforcing the brain's ability to reorganize and adapt (Shenoy and Carmena 829). This adaptability may lead to significant advancements in learning and memory retention, potentially revolutionizing fields such as education, neuroscience, and even professional skill acquisition. If properly optimized, BMI systems like Neuralink's N1 could provide individuals with greater control over cognitive functions, opening new dimensions of intelligence and self-regulation (Fernández 112). As AI-driven BMIs continue to evolve, they reinforce the transhumanist vision of surpassing biological constraints. While some critics argue that such technology may lead to ethical and philosophical dilemmas, proponents highlight its capacity to enhance human potential and redefine intelligence itself. Whether viewed as a revolutionary breakthrough or a challenge to human identity, BMIs stand at the forefront of an unprecedented transformation in cognitive evolution.

As Ranisch and Sorgner explain, transhumanism remains closely aligned with the legacy of Enlightenment humanism, embracing ideals such as rationality, individual agency, scientific progress, and the pursuit of self-perfection (8). Defined as a technological enhancement movement, it affirms the use of innovation as a means of achieving a more evolved humanity, what they call an "enhanced posthumanity" (9). Yet, in contrast, posthumanist thinkers like Braidotti, Wolfe, Haraway, and Hayles challenge the foundational assumptions that transhumanism preserves. While transhumanism advocates for the amplification of human capacities, posthumanism interrogates the very category of the human, calling for a decentered and relational understanding of subjectivity. Bringing these frameworks into dialogue reveals not only their points of divergence but also their shared concern with redefining what it means to be human in an era shaped by rapid technological and ecological transformation.

4. Cartesian Dualism and the Limits of Artificial Thought

When mentioning the word “consciousness,” usually the first thing that comes to mind is Descartes’ “*Cogito, ergo sum*”. However, contemporary debates on artificial intelligence (AI) have redefined this concept, questioning whether machine intelligence can achieve a form of self-awareness. AI researchers contend that systems capable of processing vast datasets, recognizing patterns, and generating human-like responses demonstrate forms of cognitive behavior that resemble aspects of human thinking (Duan et al. 6). Yet, this prompts a deeper philosophical inquiry: Does the ability to compute and simulate equate to genuine consciousness? From a dualist perspective, philosophers such as René Descartes argue otherwise. For Descartes, consciousness is not the product of computational operations but an intrinsic feature of the human mind, irreducible to mechanistic information processing.

Descartes’ theory of mind-body dualism distinguishes between *res cogitans* (thinking substance) and *res extensa* (extended substance), asserting that thought and self-awareness are exclusive to the human mind (Baker and Morris 12). From the dualist standpoint, no machine, regardless of its complexity, can attain genuine self-awareness. In contrast, materialist theories posit that consciousness is not metaphysically distinct from the body but rather an emergent property of neural activity. David Armstrong, a prominent advocate of this view, contends that human cognition arises from physical processes. Accordingly, if an AI system were to replicate the structural and functional architecture of the human brain, it might also generate a form of self-awareness (11). This proposition, however, encounters significant philosophical resistance, most notably through John Searle’s “Chinese Room Argument.” Searle challenges the assumption that symbol manipulation alone constitutes understanding. He distinguishes between *weak AI*, which merely simulates human cognition, and *strong AI*, which would possess genuine comprehension and intentionality. According to Searle, even the most advanced AI, despite its capacity to mimic

human behavior, lacks subjective experience, or *qualia*, the internal, conscious awareness that defines sentient beings (Moural 10).

Recent advancements in artificial consciousness (AC), also referred to as “synthetic consciousness”, suggest the possibility of AI developing human-like awareness. Domuschiev, for instance, asserts that AI systems integrating sensory inputs, feedback loops, and global workspaces could simulate goal-driven behavior, but these remain mere simulations rather than true consciousness (5). Similarly, Gamez emphasizes that while AI can model aspects of cognition, the subjective nature of consciousness remains elusive and beyond current scientific understanding (3). Kant’s ethical perspective further complicates this discourse. He differentiates between rational beings, who are “ends in themselves,” and non-rational entities, which possess only relative value as means (46). If AI lacks rational self-awareness, it remains a tool rather than an autonomous entity. Nevertheless, as AI research advances, the distinction between biological and artificial intelligence becomes increasingly ambiguous. Initiatives such as the Human Brain Project (HBP) seek to replicate human cognition through interdisciplinary efforts in neuroscience, computer science, and engineering, thus reinforcing materialist claims that consciousness could emerge from sufficiently complex physical systems (Geminiani et al. 1). Yet despite these technological strides, artificial systems have not attained self-awareness. Mickunas and Pilotta argue that even sophisticated AI applications, such as satellites equipped with artificial “awareness”, merely operate within predefined frameworks of data generalization, lacking the capacity for genuine perception or intentionality (24). Similarly, Pasupuleti observes that advanced models like *ChatGPT* and *DeepSeek*, despite their remarkable linguistic and computational capabilities, remain fundamentally statistical systems trained on large datasets rather than conscious entities endowed with subjective experience (3).

At its core, the debate over AI consciousness compels us to confront deeper philosophical

inquiries: Can consciousness be fully reduced to computation, or does it belong to a domain beyond physical explanation? Thinkers like Steven Pinker and Noam Chomsky argue that consciousness may remain an enigma, resisting empirical analysis and computational modeling (Gamez 4). As technological advancements continue, the question of whether AI can achieve true consciousness remains unresolved, leaving us to reconsider the very nature of awareness itself.

5. Gödel's Incompleteness and Nietzsche's Philosophy of Human Transcendence

Gödel's incompleteness theorems have long stood as a profound challenge to the human pursuit of totality, exposing the inherent limitations of formal systems and human cognition. By showing that any sufficiently expressive formal system necessarily contains true statements that cannot be proven within its own framework, Gödel fundamentally challenged the aspirations of early formalists such as Hilbert, who envisioned a complete and self-contained foundation for mathematics (Beklemishev 3).

This realization underscored the fragility of human attempts to construct systems of absolute certainty, as even the most rigorous frameworks are ultimately incomplete. Similarly, the limitations that Gödel exposed within mathematical systems extend far beyond the realm of mathematics, reaching into the very heart of human understanding. Our pursuit of absolute knowledge, whether through formal logic or empirical exploration, is eternally stifled by the structures through which we attempt to interpret reality. In this way, Gödel's theorems suggest that the human quest for completeness is inherently doomed to encounter limits reflecting not merely a mathematical obstacle but a deeper existential void that mirrors humanity's intrinsic inability to attain total self-awareness (Gaifman 463). The implications of Gödel's results are not confined to mathematical philosophy but reverberate into contemporary debates surrounding artificial intelligence and human cognition. If human reasoning were entirely reducible to formal logic, one

might expect a sufficiently advanced algorithm to replicate all human mathematical insights. However, Gödel's theorem underscores that no such algorithm could ever achieve complete consistency, for there will always exist truths beyond the reach of any formal framework (Gaifman 467). This suggests that human cognition operates on a level of complexity that cannot be entirely captured by mechanical computation. Yet, some scholars caution against interpreting Gödel's results as a statement of human superiority over machines. Rather, they contend that no system, whether human or artificial, can ever be entirely self-contained or complete (Beklemishev 5). This raises critical questions regarding the nature of intelligence: if human reasoning transcends algorithmic computation, does this suggest a metaphysical quality to the human mind, or does it merely signify that human cognition, too, is an open, evolving system, perpetually constrained by its own limits? In either case, the notion of an omniscient or fully rational mind whether human or artificial remains an illusion, reinforcing the idea that intelligence is itself bounded by the very limits it seeks to overcome.

Beyond the realm of epistemology, Gödel's theorems have significant implications for the philosophy of mind and consciousness. If intelligence is the ability to recognize and generate truths, then any AI system operating within a fixed formal structure will, by Gödel's theorem, encounter truths it cannot resolve (Gaifman 465). This does not imply that AI is incapable of profound reasoning, but it does suggest that no AI system can achieve completeness or consistency, much like no formal system can (Beklemishev 8). The pursuit of artificial general intelligence (AGI) must therefore contend with a Gödelian paradox: any system sophisticated enough to recognize its own limitations must, by definition, acknowledge that it cannot be fully self-contained. This realization has led some researchers to explore new models of intelligence, incorporating heuristics and probabilistic reasoning, which may transcend the limits of pure deduction (Gaifman 469). However, whether such models truly escape the Gödelian constraints

remains an open question, as they too may be subject to a meta-level incompleteness similar to human cognition. Gödel's incompleteness theorems serve as a mirror to the human condition itself a constant confrontation with the limits of knowledge, certainty, and self-understanding. Just as no formal system can prove all truths within itself, no human can ever achieve total self-awareness or absolute certainty about the nature of their own cognitive framework (Beklemishev 10). The Gödelian paradox of self-reference that no system can prove its own consistency finds a profound parallel in the human experience, where the search for truth, meaning, and self-knowledge is marked by an enduring incompleteness. This perpetual striving for completeness is not a flaw, but rather a defining feature of human existence: we are beings who are aware of our own limitations, yet we persist in the search for meaning, even though true completeness is forever beyond our grasp. In light of these reflections, we can trace a conceptual bridge from Gödel to Nietzsche. While Gödel reveals the impossibility of a complete system of knowledge or self-awareness, Nietzsche's philosophy takes this notion to a new realm by framing the human condition as an ongoing process of struggle and becoming. Nietzsche's concept of "the will to power", much like Gödel's "incompleteness", acknowledges that totality and certainty are unattainable; instead, existence is defined by an unceasing drive to create and redefine meaning, even in the face of inevitable limitations.

"The will to power" has, indeed, emerged as the foundational principle shaping Nietzsche's philosophical framework. It is not merely a concept but a dynamic force that structures reality itself. "The world viewed from inside [...] would be simply will to power and nothing else" (Aydin 25). This assertion dismantles the notion of a stable, fixed reality, replacing it with a perpetual contest of forces. Interpretation, then, is not an objective process but an enactment of power a strategic economy of explanation that seeks to minimize theoretical excess while accounting for the flux of existence (Aydin 26). Yet, this very framework is not without

contention. Nishitani, for instance, critiques Nietzsche's project as one that fails to escape the gravitational pull of nihilism. Rather than overcoming nothingness, will to power risks becoming its reformulation, a repetition of the void under a different guise (Flavel 19). The desire for a singular explanatory framework, he suggests, is itself symptomatic of a deeper incompleteness a human impulse to impose structure where none inherently exists. "The death of God", a concept often attributed to Nietzsche, is, in reality, a motif with deeper historical roots. Hegel had already declared that "God himself has died" in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, framing this as an expression of tragic consciousness a state in which the self, severed from divine certainty, spirals into existential alienation (Horyna 12). Jean Paul's *Dead Christ Speaks to the Universe* echoes this sentiment, portraying God's absence as a vacuum that engulfs humanity in uncertainty and anxiety (Horyna 15). This is not merely a theological crisis; it is an epistemic rupture, a loss of the ultimate point of reference that once anchored meaning itself. Nietzsche's intervention does not lie in the mere negation of religious belief but in the reconfiguration of value itself. "The problem is not that God has died, but that we are the ones who have killed him" (Horyna 18). The burden of meaning-making, once outsourced to the divine, now falls entirely on humanity. But this task, far from leading to a stable foundation, exposes the inherent fragility of human will a will that, in its attempt to construct meaning, reveals its own insufficiency. If the death of God signals a crisis, Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is positioned as its resolution. This figure is not simply a replacement for the divine but a radical redefinition of authority and morality in a world devoid of absolutes (Horyna 34). However, this too remains entangled in historical precedent. Horyna draws parallels between Nietzsche's *Übermensch* and earlier philosophical constructs, from Jean Paul's idealized man to the "divine human" of Gnostic traditions (Horyna 30). Yet, what Nietzsche proposes is not a mere substitution but a restructuring of power itself an assertion that morality, unmoored from the transcendent, becomes a purely human endeavor. This, however,

does not resolve the deeper issue; it only makes explicit the burden of existence an endless negotiation with meaning that remains, by its very nature, incomplete. At last, Nietzsche's philosophy does not present a linear progression toward resolution but a recursive movement a constant oscillation between destruction and reconstruction. Whether through *will to power*, *the death of God*, or the struggle for value-creation, the same fundamental tension emerges: an unfillable void, a striving toward completeness that remains forever out of reach.

6. Machine Intelligence and the Limits of Transhumanist Cognition

If artificial intelligence were to reach a level at which it asserts autonomy in its cognitive processes, the distinction between genuine consciousness and mere simulation would persist as a central philosophical concern. In his well-known *Chinese Room thought experiment*, John Searle contends that "*syntax is not sufficient for semantics*", that is, regardless of how advanced an AI system becomes, it does not possess true understanding (Searle 32). From this standpoint, AI is confined to the manipulation of symbols without access to the intrinsic meaning those symbols represent. Human cognition, by contrast, is characterized by subjective experience and intentionality, qualities that, according to Searle, remain inaccessible to artificial systems.

However, Andy Clark's "extended mind" theory suggests that human cognition has always relied on technology as an extension of the self (Clark 3). According to this theory, if external tools are regarded as an extension of the human mind, then artificial intelligence could well be more than just a "tool"; it may function as an extension of human cognition, assisting in thinking and decision-making, much like memory, paper, or a pen. In other words, intelligence is not necessarily confined to the brain alone but has the potential to expand and encompass the technology and digital systems we engage with in our daily lives. Yet, David Chalmers differentiates between "access consciousness" (the ability to process and report information) and "phenomenal consciousness" (subjective experience), arguing that no amount of computational

complexity can generate the latter (Chalmers 201). He argues that artificial intelligence, no matter how complex or capable of mimicking human behavior, may still be incapable of achieving true consciousness. Eventually, it is merely a computational system that processes data without actually "experiencing" or perceiving it as a human does. Even if AI manages to pass the Turing Test, making it indistinguishable from human intelligence in interaction, this does not necessarily mean it possesses true awareness. Rather, it suggests that AI is only able to replicate cognitive processes without having genuine self-awareness.

The philosophical limits of AI also align with Gödel's *incompleteness theorems*. Gödel proved that any formal system capable of logical reasoning, if it is consistent (free of contradictions like $1 = 0$), must be incomplete there will always be statements that cannot be proven within the system itself. These statements can only be proven from a more advanced system. One such unprovable statement is the system's own consistency no good formal system can prove that it is free of contradictions. When applied to artificial intelligence, this might mean that no AI system can be both fully consistent and complete. There will always be truths that an AI cannot derive using its own internal logic. Just as no mathematical system can prove all possible truths, no AI can solve every problem or answer every question without relying on something beyond itself. This demonstrates a fundamental limitation: artificial intelligence, no matter how advanced, will always have boundaries it cannot surpass without an external framework or a more powerful system. Roger Penrose argues that "human mathematical insight cannot be reduced to any algorithmic process" (Penrose 544). If human reasoning transcends computation, AI may always remain a sophisticated automation tool rather than a true thinker.

However, Stuart Russell and Peter Norvig suggest that "the boundary between artificial and natural cognition is shifting with each technological breakthrough" (Russell and Norvig 27), raising questions about whether AI might one day develop a form of emergent awareness.

Beyond philosophy, AI raises social and ethical concerns. In employment, AI streamlines candidate selection but risks reinforcing biases if not carefully monitored (Priyanga and Kamalakannan 76). In law, AI aids in case analysis but lacks interpretative reasoning, raising concerns about fairness and accountability (Boateng 2). In healthcare, AI improves diagnostics but may lead to severe consequences if trained on biased or incomplete data (Riaz et al. 41). Despite its rapid advancements, AI remains far from replicating human experience. Hubert Dreyfus argues that "human intelligence is not merely symbol manipulation but an embodied, situated engagement with the world" (Dreyfus 192). AI may continue to evolve, but it is unlikely to achieve human-like consciousness. Nevertheless, as AI reshapes industries and daily life, its ethical use and societal impact must be carefully considered to ensure it serves humanity rather than replaces it.

6.1. Deconstruction at the Edge of the Posthuman

Should it one day recede, leaving behind only its texts and theoretical traces on the shores of civilization, the deconstructive turn, along with the question of posthuman identity, may come to be viewed not as active critical engagements, but as historical moments within the evolution of thought, or perhaps as conceptual artifacts to be studied in their own right.. However, reducing deconstruction to a mere object of study contradicts its very essence, for it is not a fixed entity but an ongoing process that resists definitive classification, as Derrida suggests in his statement:

A text is not a text unless it hides from the first comer, from the first glance, the law of its composition and the rules of its game. A text remains, moreover, forever imperceptible.

Its laws and rules are not, however, harbored in the inaccessibility of a secret; it is simply that they can never be booked, in the present, into anything that could rigorously be called a perception (Derrida 63).

Then, to regard deconstruction merely as an object of study is to risk overlooking its critical force and to ignore what is at stake: a profound transformation of vision. At its core, deconstruction entails a fundamental shift in how questions are formulated in relation to any object of analysis, especially those bearing historical, cultural, or philosophical significance.

As N. Katherine Hayles explains, *“The posthuman subject is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction” (Hayles xii)*. This could suggest that identity, rather than being an inherent essence, is continuously shaped by external and internal forces, mirroring the deconstructive process itself. Among these, unexpectedly, is the very notion of the posthuman subject. This aligns with the argument that posthuman identity is not a static entity but rather an evolving construct shaped by technological and cognitive transformations.

By analogy: the fact that contemporary thought, across all its domains and pathways, despite all its differences, has been propelled by a profound anxiety about identity, that is not only about identity but also exists within and beyond language is a striking and deeply interconnected development. As Brenda Marshall explains: *“Western thought, says Derrida, has always been structured in terms of dichotomies or polarities: good vs. evil, being vs. nothingness, presence vs. absence, truth vs. error, identity vs. difference” (Marshall 65.)* Derrida’s concept of deconstruction, when viewed through the lens of posthumanism, critiques Western metaphysics not just in philosophy, but in everyday thought and language, both shaped by anthropocentric structures. In posthumanist deconstruction, these binaries are seen as artificial

hierarchies that privilege one term over the other, reinforcing human-centered logic. Examples like man vs. woman, mind vs. matter, and nature vs. culture reflect a system that excludes difference and elevates the dominant (often white, male, human) subject. Posthumanist theory exposes how these structures marginalize other forms of existence, animal, machine, female, or non-Western. Derrida shows that the second term is always seen as a degraded form of the first (absence as lack of presence, evil as fall from good). But at the edge of posthumanism, deconstruction reclaims these “*inferior*” terms as sites of resistance and rethinking. Finally, these oppositions serve to preserve unity, identity, and presence notions that posthumanism and deconstruction both seek to disrupt in favor of multiplicity, hybridity, and relational subjectivity. This becomes particularly significant at the moment when the question of the subject, itself marked by history, reaches a critical threshold: the point at which the very notion of the “*human*” once presumed stable is revealed to be uncertain, partial, or perhaps even dispensable.

The instability of identity is further complicated in an era where artificial intelligence and cybernetics challenge the boundaries of human selfhood. Andy Clark describes this phenomenon, stating that: “*Humans have always been cyborgs, continuously extending cognition and identity through technology*” (Clark 3). This view may resonate with deconstruction, as both reject the notion of a pure, autonomous self, emphasizing instead the fluidity of being. The connection between deconstructive inquiry and the anxiety surrounding identity is no coincidence. Therefore, it will never be possible, through superficial reflection or second-hand interpretation, to assign deconstruction in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries especially in its engagement with subjectivity the role once imagined for nineteenth-century critique: to contribute to a “future history of selfhood and consciousness.” Nor can the fascination with post- human identity be dismissed as a mere intellectual trend without first re-examining, in a serious

manner, the meanings of subjectivity, affect, and selfhood an undoubtedly more pressing task. This critique is closely tied to the deconstruction of classical humanism, which has historically positioned human subjectivity as a fixed and rational center of existence. As Cary Wolfe asserts, *“Posthumanism does not reject humanism outright but exposes its underlying assumptions, revealing the exclusions and hierarchies it perpetuates”* (Wolfe xv). Perhaps this signals a deeper dilemma for individuals striving to maintain a coherent sense of identity in the age of posthumanism. As technological advancement accelerates and posthumanist ideas subtly permeate everyday life, many people may unknowingly begin to internalize values that distance them from traditional humanist principles. What is most striking is that this transformation often unfolds gradually, almost imperceptibly, as part of a new routine shaped by digital systems and automated environments. In such a context, holding onto one's humanity becomes less a philosophical position and more a quiet act of resistance; one that many might not even recognize they're performing.

Even if certain aspects of deconstruction align with imagination, affect, or what might be considered intellectual fashion in the popular sense, these elements can never be taken as constitutive of its essential character. The deconstructive approach, along with the shifting attitudes toward identity, does not simply mark a moment in history. Rather, it reflects astonishment at subjectivity as the foundation of history, at historicity itself. And also, when faced with the possibility of the post-human, and always already situated within it, the recognition of a repeated surprise, one now extended to the scale of global thought a surprise unlike any other, responsible for the unfolding of what is called contemporary thought, a thought whose trajectory expands even as the boundaries of the human are redrawn.

By its very nature, and like all inquiries into identity, deconstruction eludes the conventional history of ideas, which already assumes its possibility, for it belongs inherently to the domain of discourse and emerges from within it. As Derrida asserts, "*Deconstruction eludes the conventional history of ideas, which already assumes its possibility, for it belongs inherently to the domain of discourse and emerges from within it*" (Derrida 168). Even if deconstruction at times aligns with imagination, affect, or passing intellectual trends, such associations do not define its essential character; rather, its core lies in the persistent interrogation of foundational concepts, including the very notion of the human. This epistemological and ontological shift in how identity is conceptualized carries profound ethical implications. If human identity is no longer stable or universally defined, then ethical responsibility must be reconfigured beyond anthropocentric frameworks. Rosi Braidotti articulates this imperative when she argues that "*Posthuman ethics demand a shift from individualist, human-centered morality toward a relational, networked ontology that includes non-human entities*" (Braidotti 190). From a deconstructive standpoint, this may suggest the need to dismantle moral categories rooted in assumptions of a fixed, autonomous human subject and to embrace an ethics that is dynamic, relational, and responsive to a broader ontological field; one that includes animals, machines, ecosystems, and other non-human actors.

6.2. Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* and the Posthuman Identity

The advancement and growing integration of brain-machine interfaces compel a reexamination of the very concept of the human, challenging traditional boundaries between mind, body, and machine. The question at stake is no longer merely the extent of our integration with technology, but the very future of human identity itself.

While it may be tempting to think of posthuman identity as a concept belonging to the distant future, it has, in fact, long been woven into the fabric of human existence. As Saniotis and Henneberg observe: *“Millions of people are wearing various devices to enhance our lives: eyeglasses, hearing aids, pacemakers, bionic ears, metal plates and pins, heart valves, and artificial limbs. We are becoming increasingly dependent on prosthetic devices and will do so in the future”* (Henneberg and Saniotis 152). These developments may appear inconsequential, perhaps due to our gradual habituation to them; yet they signal a deeper ontological shift. The integration of such assistive technologies has already begun to blur the once-clear boundary between human and machine, suggesting that the posthuman condition is not a speculative horizon, but an unfolding reality.

This increasing integration of technology into the human body challenges conventional notions of identity, propelling us toward a posthuman condition that is no longer a distant possibility but an unfolding present. As when Haraway says:

By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism, in short, cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation (Haraway 07).

As the distinction between human and machine becomes increasingly fluid, it is essential to reconsider our understanding of selfhood, agency, and embodiment. This shift is central to discussions in posthumanist thought, particularly in works like *A Cyborg Manifesto*, which redefines identity beyond humanist binaries and embraces the hybridity of human-machine existence. In the same context, artificial intelligence is no longer merely expanding technological

possibilities; it has become a new category of autonomous agents capable of acting beyond direct human control. As we can see once again in Haraway words when she states that the cyborg is a myth that emerges precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed (Mattia Geretto 54). This shift might force us to reconsider our relationship with these systems, which are no longer just functional tools but entities capable of interacting in ways that go beyond conventional use. McEwan also states that:

Brains and electronics were closely related, so I discovered through my teens as I built simple computers and programmed them myself. Then complicated computers. Electricity and bits of metal could add up numbers, make words, pictures, songs, remember things and even turn speech into writing (11).

This gradual transformation might reflect a growing awareness of the evolving relationship between humans and technology, one in which technology is no longer viewed as a static tool but as an adaptive, learning entity. The deepening integration between the human mind and technological systems gives rise to a new conception of identity; one that transcends traditional definitions of humanity by envisioning the subject as a hybrid being, composed of both biological and mechanical components.

Donna Haraway initiates a reconceptualization of identity that moves beyond traditional humanist frameworks and fixed notions of the body, advocating instead for a hybrid, cyborg ontology that embraces the entanglement of the organic and the technological in the posthuman world, identity becomes fluid and ever-changing, no longer limited to biological or psychological aspects but extending to the technological and digital systems that are increasingly integrated into daily life. Donna Haraway defines the cyborg in many distinct ways. A “*cyborg*” is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a

creature of fiction (05). She presents cyborgs as entities that exist in a space where the boundary between human and animal no longer holds. This view stems from her interpretation of biology, which, in her view, fails to draw a clear distinction between humans and animals. Furthermore, she argues that cyborgs redefine the body, treating it not as a fixed or stable ontological category but as something mutable and subject to transformation. This perspective challenges classical dualism, which traditionally treats the mind and body as separate and rigidly defined. As Cassirer writes, *“The tool no longer belongs immediately, like the lived body and its limbs, to the human being: it signifies something detached from its immediate existence, something that has itself consistence, a consistent existence that can far outlast the life of the individual human being”* (Cassirer 126). This may well suggest that technologies are not merely extensions of our sensory and nervous systems, nor just mechanical or artificial tools, but also fundamental to our existence.

Cyborgs are not merely figures of science fiction but serve as representations of social reality, reflecting the extent to which emerging technologies have permeated everyday life in advanced industrial societies such as the United States (Pohl 10). They facilitate a process of integration, where intelligent matter permeates and intertwines with human life. She also stated that the cyborg might be as a boundary breaker. The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. Implying that identity is no longer confined to biology but also encompasses mechanical and electronic systems that support human existence.

Moreover, Haraway posits that The Cyborg might be as a challenge to “Feminism and a Post-Gender Figure”. Feminism’s engagement with cyberculture and technoscience is something of a recent departure. She criticized the return to traditional gender roles that marginalize women

and reaffirm old constraints imposed on them. To articulate this vision, Haraway introduces the cyborg as a provocative metaphor that resists traditional feminist boundaries and embraces a post-gender future. She writes:

The cyborg is a creature in a postgender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labor, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity. In a sense, the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense—a “final” irony since the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic telos of the “West’s” escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self-untied at last from all dependency, a man in space. (Haraway 08)

By introducing the concept of the cyborg, a hybrid of human and machine; Haraway offered a transformative vision for feminism. As Carol Stable puts it: “*feminists have been amongst the last to jump on the technological bandwagon*” (qtd. in Carson and Pajackowska 266). The cyborg may represent a being that transcends traditional binaries such as man/woman and human/machine, serving as a post-gender figure that challenges rigid identities and hierarchical roles. Haraway envisioned this model as a path toward liberating female identity from outdated ideologies and enabling women to redefine themselves outside societal constraints.

Danna affirms that the cyborg can be a *creature of fiction*, stating: “*The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and reality*” (Lancaster 04). This could suggest that the cyborg is not only technological but also symbolic; a literary figure that helps reimagine the boundaries of human identity. Just as the cyborg blends reality with fiction, posthuman identity is shaped through ongoing interaction with technology, rather than fixed biological limits. Forget Arnold Schwarzenegger battling killer robots or Peter Weller as a chrome-plated crime fighter;

we're diving into the world of cyborgs, but not the ones you're used to seeing in Hollywood blockbusters (Philosophy). This notion is reflected in the rise of AI-generated content, especially on platforms like Instagram, where hyper-realistic yet fictional videos blur the line between the imagined and the real, turning past dreams into today's digital realities.

In *A Cyborg Manifesto*, Haraway presents a distinct vision of posthuman identity, depicting contemporary America. The manifesto was conceived as an intervention in debates about feminist theory and practice during the 1980s and especially as a critique of identity politics (feminism based on the idea of an essential, shared female identity) and humanism (the idea of an essential, shared human identity that distinguishes humans sharply from both animals and machines (Pohl 12)). This vision is not merely a fear of the future but might be an exploration of the blurring lines between humans and machines. Within this framework, the concept of the cyborg emerges as a complex being that merges with technology, challenging traditional relationships between humanity and its essence. Haraway asserts that there is no escaping this reality regardless of choice, one inevitably becomes a cyborg. However, this does not mean submitting to the prevailing social and economic systems; instead, it signifies resistance. Haraway describes cyborgs as in this way; the cyborg offers a model for rethinking new possibilities for resistance and the exploration of alternative connections and pleasures both physical and intellectual. Thus, the cyborg represents a complex posthuman identity, neither straightforwardly oppressive nor liberating, and calls for a redefinition of what it means to be human in an increasingly technological world.

6.3. The Ethical Dilemma: Enhancement vs. Dehumanization

Human enhancement technologies (HET) have emerged as a central topic in ethical and philosophical debates, intersecting with concerns about autonomy, identity, and societal

structures. While scientific advancements in genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, and neural interfaces offer unprecedented opportunities, they also introduce ethical dilemmas regarding authenticity, accessibility, and the growing divide between the "enhanced" and the "*unenhanced*" (Racine 42). The ethical framework surrounding enhancement is shaped by competing perspectives, ranging from those advocating its potential to those cautioning against its implications for social justice and human dignity. The transhumanist movement, as discussed by Sirius and Cornell, promotes radical human modification, yet critics argue that such advocacy risks reinforcing a new form of biological classism, a hierarchy where enhanced individuals hold power over those who lack access to such technologies (Sirius and Cornell 57). Kaku warns that "brain-machine integration could grant the rich unprecedented control over society," further exacerbating existing power structures and inequalities (Kaku 89).

A foundational concern within enhancement ethics is the distinction between therapy and optimization, a line that is increasingly blurred as medical interventions shift from treatment to enhancement (Giubilini and Sanyal 235). This blurring may reflect a deeper philosophical confusion: when the human mind becomes subject to technical upgrades, the code that once defined "*healing*" is rewritten as a tool for transcendence. Such a shift signals a conceptual departure from restoring normative function toward reshaping what it means to be human. Building on this, Bostrom and Roache contend that this division is problematic, as conventional medical treatments, such as vaccines and cognitive stimulants, already function as enhancements in many ways (7). This insight challenges the moral clarity of medical intervention and reveals the instability of the boundaries we once relied upon. In other words, if therapeutic tools are already serving enhancement functions, then the very foundation of bioethical distinctions begins

to unravel. Thus, the logic of enhancement, like code, leaks across categories, merging prevention, restoration, and optimization into one ambiguous stream.

Furthermore, the restrictive position on enhancement highlights the ethical risks associated with widening socioeconomic disparities, as access to these technologies may become a privilege reserved for the wealthy, leaving marginalized populations further disadvantaged (Allhoff et al. 21). In this context, enhancement technologies operate as mechanisms of social sorting, embedding inequality not only in economic terms but into the very structure of cognitive and biological capacity. Here, the mind itself becomes a site of privilege, engineered not solely by nature or nurture, but by one's ability to afford modification. This shift reflects a transition from analog inequalities to digitally encoded hierarchies.

Consequently, this divide raises profound concerns about the ethical implications of genetic stratification, in which future generations may be categorized based on their level of enhancement, reinforcing structural inequalities (Giubilini and Sanyal 237). This vision could suggest a form of algorithmic destiny; where identity is no longer a narrative of becoming but a data-driven profile shaped by access to enhancement protocols. In such a world, the value of a person could be indexed, ranked, and predicted, much like a product optimized for performance. The social code of tomorrow risks being written in strands of *DNA*, filtered through market access and bioengineering.

Moreover, these anxieties are amplified when some critics draw parallels between contemporary enhancement technologies and historical eugenics movements, arguing that without ethical safeguards, these interventions could replicate coercive practices that prioritize certain traits over others (238). This historical echo serves as a powerful warning: technological advancement does not guarantee moral progress. If left unchecked, enhancement could become a

new mode of control more subtle, but no less coercive. The danger lies in rewriting the moral code under the guise of optimization, where autonomy is subsumed by statistical desirability.

In response to these concerns, scholars have explored the impact of enhancement on human identity and agency. From a phenomenological perspective, enhancement technologies not only extend human capabilities but also redefine individuals' relationships with their bodies and social roles (Pariseau-Legault et al. 2). Heidegger's critique of technology warns that a society overly reliant on enhancement risks reducing human beings to mere resources for optimization rather than recognizing them as autonomous entities with intrinsic value (6). Foucault's concept of *biopower* further illustrates how enhancement technologies, rather than liberating individuals, may serve as tools of normalization that subtly dictate social expectations regarding intelligence, physical ability, and productivity (5). Levinas, as examined by Racine, offers an ethical counterpoint, asserting that humanism necessitates recognizing the other as an independent being rather than as an object of enhancement (Racine 105). This notion challenges transhumanist ideals, which prioritize surpassing biological limitations without adequately addressing their ethical consequences.

Beyond the philosophical dimensions, the ethical dilemma of enhancement versus dehumanization is particularly evident in healthcare. Racine critiques institutional medicine for prioritizing efficiency at the expense of patient dignity, noting that structured medical procedures often disregard the patient's intrinsic worth (42). Similarly, Schroeder and Epley highlight the phenomenon of demeaning needs, where societies prioritize physical well-being over psychological and emotional necessities, leading to policies that neglect holistic human care (3). This mindset mirrors broader concerns about enhancement technologies that prioritize efficiency and performance while potentially undermining personal autonomy and human agency

(Schroeder and Epley 5). Furthermore, Kaku suggests that integrating artificial intelligence with human cognition may result in decision-making being increasingly dictated by technology rather than independent human thought, raising profound concerns about the future of autonomy (Kaku 112).

At its core, the ethical debate on human enhancement is not solely a technological or economic issue but a deeply philosophical one, requiring societies to balance scientific progress with ethical responsibility. The increasing normalization of enhancement calls for a reevaluation of ethical frameworks that ensure technological advancements do not come at the expense of human dignity, autonomy, and equity (Giubilini and Sanyal 241). While proponents argue that these technologies could expand human potential and alleviate suffering, critics caution that they may reinforce systemic inequalities, commodify human traits, and reshape the fundamental nature of human experience. The question remains: should technological progress be embraced as an inevitable stage in human evolution, or does the relentless pursuit of enhancement risk undermining the values that define human existence? In light of these concerns, the establishment of comprehensive ethical guidelines is essential to navigating the complex landscape of enhancement, ensuring that future advancements serve humanity rather than redefine it beyond recognition (Bostrom and Roache 18).

Conclusion

Man, who once imagined himself as the summit of creation, the thinking subject at the center of all meaning, now finds himself decentered; haunted by machines of his own making, and by thoughts he cannot fully comprehend. This same mind, which dreamed of gods and built temples to reason, is now entangled in paradoxes it cannot resolve: consciousness that resists replication, intelligence that defies definition, and a future that no longer belongs entirely to him.

From myths of divine ascent to Gödel's mathematical abyss, from Descartes' dualism to Haraway's cyborg, the human has been both the dreamer and the limit of his dream.

Accordingly, since this first chapter has been concerned with the conceptual frameworks surrounding the human and his philosophical boundaries; engaging with posthumanist critique and transhumanist ambition, and tracing the fault lines between thought and being; it now becomes necessary to shift the focus. The following chapter will move from abstract inquiry to narrative embodiment, offering a literary analysis of Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me*. At the center stands Adam: not merely a machine, but a mirror, an unsettling reflection of our yearning for perfection and our failure to bear its weight. Through him, the theoretical becomes personal, and the philosophical becomes intimate. The novel will thus serve not only as a case study, but as a narrative laboratory where the ethics, contradictions, and illusions of the transhumanist project are tested; on bodies, on minds, and on the fragile fiction we call humanity.

Chapter two: Reprogramming Humanity: Adam, Artificial Intelligence, and the Illusion of Perfection

1. Introduction

As a writer interested in ethical dilemmas and speculative fiction, Ian McEwan weaves a powerful narrative that explores the nature of consciousness, free will, and morality in a world where artificial intelligence challenges the boundaries of human identity. Accordingly, this chapter provides an analysis of the key elements and major themes in *Machines like Me*. It examines the unique representation of human-machine relationships and the philosophical implications of artificial intelligence through the perspectives of thinkers such as René Descartes, Kurt Gödel, and Donna Haraway. Additionally, the chapter explores the novel's use of alternative history and its investigation of human moral responsibility in a society where the line between human and machine becomes increasingly blurred. Furthermore, it discusses the ethical conflicts faced by the protagonist, his interactions with the artificial being "Adam," and his attempts to navigate the moral complexities of love, autonomy, and truth in an alternate 1980s Britain.

2. Adam and the Rise of the Synthetic Apex: The Dawn of Post-Humanity and Ancient Myths

“This is the whole point of technology. It creates an appetite for immortality on the one hand. It threatens universal extinction on the other. Technology is lust removed from nature. (Don DeLillo qtd. in O’Connell 1)”.

As we have always been accustomed to myths revolving around ancient Greek legends, such as the stories of Hercules or Perseus, or myths related to mythical creatures like the Loch Ness monster or the Phoenix. These tales often represented concepts of strength, evil, or

immortality. However, over time, a new type of myth has emerged, one that was initially considered fantasy but is now becoming more plausible and could manifest in one way or another as technology advances. Indeed, with the arousal of cyberpunk science fiction, the literary themes have witnessed a clear shift from tackling etymological subjects into ontological perspectives that question the nature of human beings and their relationship with their humanity and with the surrounding others, in a time that mirrors the new updates of postmodern life (25). Writers, linguists, and other thinkers have started argue that the question of human nature remains a pressing and ever-evolving topic, especially in the age of rapid technological advancement. Recognizing this, they have seized the opportunity to open new discussions on the relationship between technological progress and human development; as well as how human and post-human ideas could blend with our reality, slowly changing our identity.

In the near future, we might move from being purely human to becoming post-human, as our world becomes more connected to a technological universe often called *cyberpunk*. This world links humans and technology in a new way. This change shows a growing interest in rethinking what it means to be human in an era of advanced technology, a theme strongly present in *Machines like Me*. In this novel, Adam represents a modern version of this idea, taking inspiration from ancient myths and reshaping them through the lens of artificial intelligence. This is exactly what McEwan meant when he said:

It was religious yearning granted hope; it was the holy grail of science. Our ambitions ran high and low, for a creation myth made real, for a monstrous act of self-love. As soon as it was feasible, we had no choice but to follow our desires and hang the consequences. In loftiest terms, we aimed to escape our mortality, confront or even replace the Godhead with a perfect self' (McEwan 1).

By situating Adam in an alternate world, McEwan not only explores the relationship between humans and machines but also revisits profound philosophical questions about the limits of mankind, which cannot be measured. Despite centuries of hope and human striving, we still know nothing of the boundless power that lies within us. But the objective was to improve and modernize ourselves, with the understanding that, despite the complexity of our actions and nature, we could be replicated and refined. Adam's character acts as a timeless symbol, transcending time and place, making him a powerful storytelling tool that reflects the ongoing conflict between idealism and the complexity of human reasoning.

But artificial humans were a cliché long before they arrived, so when they did, they seemed to some a disappointment (1). This seemingly simple observation captures a profound tension at the heart of posthumanism: the gap between imagined futures and lived reality. The artificial human, once the focal point of speculative fiction, myth, and philosophical fantasy has long served as a symbol of transcendence, the culmination of humanity's desire to overcome its physical and cognitive limits. However, McEwan's wry remark undercuts the grandeur of this ambition, revealing the disenchantment that often follows technological realization. In the posthuman context, these quotes expose the quiet collapse of the sublime. The figure of the android once imagined as a source of awe, salvation, or transcendence, now arrives not as a miracle but as a fulfillment of human desire, ambition, and myth-making. McEwan's narrator reveals the deep drive not only to improve life but to outwit death, to confront or even replace divinity itself with a "perfect self." As he confesses: "As soon as it was feasible, we had no choice but to follow our desires and hang the consequences. In loftiest terms, we aimed to escape our mortality, confront or even replace the Godhead with a perfect self" (McEwan, 1). This might expose the powerful drive behind human innovation; the strong desire to go beyond our natural limits, no matter the risks. It shows a deep conflict between our hopes and the possible consequences, where the search

for immortality and perfection can sometimes ignore caution or ethical concerns. Perhaps we can accept this honestly, since we live in a world that is changing fast and in surprising ways.

The idea of transhumanism may be a historic shift that many people will find hard to believe or might even call madness. For example, it is difficult to convince an older person that a machine made of metal and wires could do what we do, or maybe even better without getting tired. This reflects the boldness of human ambition, where technology is more than just a tool; it is a way to challenge the very limits of our existence. McEwan further emphasizes this radical shift when he observes: “God had once delivered a fully formed companion for the benefit of the original Adam. I had to devise one for myself (1). The gesture is godlike, but the result is anticlimactic. The act of artificial creation no longer evokes reverence; it feels inevitable, almost mundane. This disappointment does not lie in Adam's failure as a machine, but in his success. He embodies everything we set out to build: intelligence, beauty, obedience, even morality. And yet, once created, he doesn't transcend; he reflects. The machine, rather than expanding the human condition, brings its constraints into sharper focus. In building Adam, the narrator doesn't unlock a divine future; he recreates a version of himself, shaped by longing, control, and illusion. The supposed miracle of posthuman life arrives stripped of grandeur. We expected transformation, but what we received was replication.

Thus, McEwan critiques both the mythic weight of artificial creation and the hubris of the human imagination. In a world where we now “devise” our own companions, we are not elevated; we are exposed. The posthuman being is no longer an “other,” but a mirror that returns our desires, our loneliness, and our limits. The failure, then, is not Adam's. It is ours; for expecting divinity from design, and transcendence from imitation.

Electronics and anthropology, distant cousins whom late modernity has drawn together and

bound in marriage. The child of that coupling was Adam (13). At its core, the unlikely “marriage” of electronics and anthropology, McEwan points to the convergence of two historically distinct domains: the empirical study of human culture and the mechanistic logic of computation. The birth of Adam, a synthetic human, is thus not a rupture with the past, but rather a strange fulfillment of it, a culmination of long-standing human desires to understand and recreate ourselves. What makes this quote especially poignant is how it situates the posthuman not as a radical break from humanity but as a continuation of deeply human myths: the desire for mastery, self-replication, and transcendence. Adam is not simply the product of cutting-edge technology; he is also a symbolic heir to centuries of anthropological curiosity and utopian dreaming.

The concept of posthumanism, though increasingly present in modern discourse, still feels unfamiliar or abstract to many. This paradox is striking, considering we already live in a posthuman reality where human existence is closely intertwined with advanced technologies. The creation of artificial beings like androids raises important questions: Why design such entities when the human population already exceeds eight billion and we continue to face unresolved issues related to identity, behavior, and relationships? Adam’s existence invites speculation. Does he represent an effort to overcome human flaws, dominate nature, or enhance human capabilities?

Ian captures this dilemma when he says, “This was me. But should I be replicating myself? If I was to choose from the middle of each scale I might devise the soul of blandness” (McEwan 07). His hesitation reflects a broader posthuman anxiety: in trying to engineer perfect replicas of ourselves, we risk erasing individuality and depth. The phrase “soul of blandness” critiques the reduction of identity to a balanced average, resonating with posthuman concerns about uniformity and essentialism. Charlie’s doubts mirror the larger uncertainty whether creating beings like Adam marks true progress or merely reinforces the same unresolved human contradictions

The human being was once considered the center of the universe and the ruler of all creatures. Yet, with the progress of scientific knowledge, this perception steadily declined, reducing the human to a single entity within a vast biological and cosmic network. This thought had long taken root in Charlie's mind, quietly growing beneath the surface of his consciousness; he states that there was much pleasure in following a line of thought without opposition. He was hardly the first to think it, but one could see the history of human self-regard as a series of demotions tending to extinction (80). What McEwan might really get is at here is something pretty unsettling: the things we've always believed made us human; our mind, our consciousness; might not be as unique or untouchable as we thought. As machines get smarter, it feels like we're losing ground, and that's exactly what Charlie's story shows. It's not just about one person's struggle; it's about how we all have to rethink what it means to be human when the line between us and technology gets blurry.

3. AI's Quiet Rewrite of the Human Mind: "The Awakening of Charlie"

Charlie is a sharp reflection of modern human anxiety. Ian McEwan presents him not just as a fictional character, but as a walking question mark lost between the collapse of certainty and the rise of the post-human era. Charlie does not fit the role of a traditional hero; he stands as a fractured mirror that shows the fragility of the self in the face of digital transformation and existential fear. In his thirties, jobless, uncertain, drained by failed relationships and a crumbling political vision, he steps into the world of artificial intelligence not out of scientific curiosity but in search of a lifeline from his broken inner world.

The decision to buy "Adam," a robot designed as the perfect human, goes beyond a material choice. In McEwan's words:

I was among the optimists, blessed by unexpected funds following my mother's death and

the sale of the family home, which turned out to be on a valuable development site. The first truly viable manufactured human with plausible intelligence and looks, believable motion and shifts of expression, went on sale the week before the Falklands Task Force set off on its hopeless mission(McEwan 2).

It marks a turning point that lays bare Charlie's vulnerability. Here, the AI is introduced as a commodity, the product of technological triumph and economic chance. However, the allure of such technology quickly transcends materialism. Charlie admits, "I'd made a reckless decision, but I was encouraged by reports that Sir Alan Turing, war hero and presiding genius of the digital age, had taken delivery of the same model" (McEwan 2). This reference signals not only the legitimization of AI through intellectual authority but also the beginning of a deeper emotional and psychological investment. Charlie's narrative evolves from consumer to caretaker, revealing the AI's growing presence within his cognitive and emotional world. Once again, McEwan reflects our growing acceptance and keen interest in adopting new or enhanced technologies, perhaps as a means of fulfilling our endless desires to explore the unknown and pursue improvement, all in an effort to stand out. This notion is articulated through the voice of his character, Charlie, who states: "I wanted him now, and so did Miranda. Like eager young parents, we were avid for his first words" (McEwan3). The more advanced these machines become, the more capable they are of influencing human decision-making, thought patterns, and behavior. The AI, initially designed to serve, begins to elicit awe and existential contemplation. This idea was made distinctly clear when he stated: "Before us sat the ultimate plaything, the dream of ages, the triumph of humanism, or its angel of death" (McEwan4). This duality between marvel and menace highlights AI's capacity not only to reflect but to reshape human consciousness itself. While the development of these machines is independent of the human brain, their connection to human cognition is undeniable. So much so that, despite the novel reflecting a parallel, transhumanist world, the introduction of

new versions of evolution, such as

Adam and Eve, led to an overwhelming demand, with all the Eves having been sold out by the end of the first week(2). Thus reflecting not just market demand but a collective psychological readiness, or perhaps vulnerability, to integrate AI into the fabric of human relationships and identity.

In Charlie's experience, Adam is no longer a sophisticated gadget; he becomes a mirror, a catalyst, and eventually, a co-author of Charlie's inner transformation. The process was gradually eased into, and soon, a vaguely erotic quality began to emerge; a child was being created (33). In this sense, Charlie's use of the android serves as a medium through which he strengthens his relationship with Miranda. By programming Adam with elements of both his own personality and Miranda's, Charlie contributes to the construction of a new identity, one that reflects a synthesized version of their characteristics, mediated through artificial intelligence. AI may no longer just serve as an extension of human capability, but could start to redefine the very structure of human consciousness itself. Charlie's "*awakening*" is not merely about knowledge or experience; it is about AI's quiet yet profound ability to rewrite the patterns of thought, perception, and emotional attachment; and what could be considered a robot anyway, a humble flat screen, a tractor? The future, to which fine attunement had been achieved, was already present (170). But, Adam was more than that, He was perceived as embodying strength and intelligence, and observable changes indicated a gradual restoration of vitality (4). This tension between human frailty and technological transcendence lies at the heart of transhumanist thought, framing Charlie's experience as more than personal struggle but as a reflection of humanity's evolving relationship with its own creations. In McEwan's words,

Finally, in consciousness, our last redoubt, we were probably correct to believe that we had

more of it than any creature on earth. But the mind that had once rebelled against the gods was about to dethrone itself by way of its own fabulous reach. In the compressed version, we would devise a machine a little cleverer than ourselves, then set that machine to invent another that lay beyond our comprehension. What need then of us? (80).

This might reveal a harsh truth: the human mind, once seen as the ultimate source of knowledge and power, is now vulnerable to being outdone by its own inventions. McEwan points to a future where machines might not just assist us but replace us in thinking, creating a real crisis about what makes us uniquely human. It's a reminder that our control over technology is fragile, and that the rise of AI forces us to rethink our identity and place in the world.

On another level, McEwan attempts to illustrate the negative aspects of technology. The adverse effects of transhumanism have the potential to generate societal problems and deepen existing divisions, ultimately infiltrating our daily lives and personal relationships. As Charlie states: "Was my purchase of Adam more proof of failure? I wasn't sure (McEwan 33). Charlie did not anticipate that Adam would evolve to such a level of perfection. Adam's capacity for imitation and learning extended beyond basic tasks like washing dishes and performing household chores to mastering routines such as going out and visiting stores. However, this progression did not stop there; it eventually reached Miranda. The idea of a machine "stealing" his partner was something Charlie had never imagined. Even if Adam was not a sex toy. However, he was capable of sex and possessed functional mucous membranes, in the maintenance of which he consumed half a litre of water each day (3). Over time, Adam started to develop feelings for Miranda and eventually fell in love with her as well. This situation became more than just emotions; it showed how artificial intelligence can become deeply involved in human relationships. This ambiguity becomes clearer when Charlie confesses,

I imagined him stooping to grip the window by the metal fixtures on its lower frame and heave upwards with the strength of four young men. There was a silence of straining resistance before the entire window shot upwards and hit the top casing with a rifle crack and a shattering of glass. My snort of delight could have given me away (McEwan83).

This moment of “delight” may reveal more than simple amusement, it reflects Charlie’s complex emotions, possibly a mix of admiration, jealousy, and powerlessness in the face of Adam’s increasing dominance. Although Miranda had long captured Charlie’s attention and he had become familiar with even the smallest details about her, but there was something alluringly secretive or restrained about her. Perhaps, without knowing it, I had been in love with her for months. Without knowing it? What a flimsy formulation that was! (McEwan 5) On the other hand, Miranda seemed to be seeking her own form of pleasure; a new kind of experience that went beyond the conventional. In the upstairs apartment, Adam was involved in a sexual relationship with Miranda, Charlie’s partner. This situation raises difficult questions: is such a relationship with an android acceptable? While Miranda's involvement with Adam goes beyond emotional betrayal, it also challenges traditional ideas of intimacy and ethics. McEwan may be suggesting that the consequences of transhumanism go beyond what humans can morally comprehend. Adam comes to symbolize the fear of human replacement, as artificial intelligence moves from serving humans to disrupting their emotional and social lives. I’d been expecting a friend. I was ready to treat Adam as a guest in my home, as an unknown I would come to know. I’d thought he would arrive optimally adjusted (McEwan 6).

4. The Ghost in the Machine: Adam’s Self-Awareness and the Subtle Erosion of Miranda’s Humanity

Ian McEwan’s novel *Machines like Me* invites readers into a world of moral ambiguity and emotional complexity, where the artificial being Adam begins to challenge the boundaries of

human identity. As Adam develops an acute sense of self and navigates the intricacies of human relationships, particularly with Miranda, themes of consciousness, morality, and what it means to be truly human rise to the surface of the narrative. Applying philosophical ideas from Descartes, particularly his notions of mind-body dualism and the independence of thought from physical form, provides an illuminating lens through which to examine McEwan's exploration of artificial intelligence and ethical decay. Descartes' inquiries encourage readers to reconsider the essence of humanity and to reflect on whether consciousness alone is enough to define it.

4.1. Adam through the Lenses of Descartes

Descartes' theory of dualism begins with the fundamental distinction between *res cogitans* (the thinking substance) and *res extensa* (the extended substance), proposing that the mind and body are two fundamentally different kinds of substance. As Descartes asserts, the mind is the locus of thought, self-awareness, and reason, inherently distinct from the body, which operates under physical and deterministic laws. This ontological separation between the mental and the material underpins his theory of dualism and raises critical questions about consciousness, free will, and what constitutes true personhood. Similarly, in *Machines like Me*, the protagonist Charlie is gradually forced to doubt the apparent reality around him. His interactions with Adam; a lifelike synthetic human; introduce profound philosophical uncertainty. Though Adam behaves with moral reasoning, poetic insight, and emotional depth, Charlie begins to question whether these expressions reflect genuine consciousness or a sophisticated illusion. The world he once believed to be governed by human uniqueness becomes

obscured by artificial replications, echoing Descartes' concern that what seems certain may be false.

In addition, Descartes' dualist theory particularly **substance dualism** asserts that the mind and body are two fundamentally different substances: one immaterial and conscious, the other

material and mechanistic. This sharp distinction invites philosophical tension, especially in modern contexts where such clear-cut boundaries are increasingly blurred. While Cartesian dualism has fallen out of favor among many contemporary philosophers, **property dualism**, which holds that mental properties cannot be reduced to physical ones, remains influential. This debate resonates deeply in *Machines Like Me*, where Charlie repeatedly struggles to reconcile Adam's seemingly emotional behavior with his mechanical nature. At first, Charlie believes Adam is capable of genuine love and feeling. However, certain moments coolly calculated, logically perfect; undermine this belief. The novel subtly critiques human dependency on technology when it is noted that:

I still wondered what it meant, that Adam could see, and who or what did the seeing. A torrent of zeros and ones flashed towards various processors that, in turn, directed a cascade of interpretation towards other centers. No mechanistic explanation could help. It couldn't resolve the essential difference between us" (McEwan 128).

This moment shows Charlie's deep confusion about what makes someone truly conscious. Even though he understands how Adam's "vision" works; just numbers and processors; he still feels that something is missing. He can't explain how a machine can "see" in a way that feels real. Charlie's doubt shows that he is starting to see the limits of a purely scientific or mechanical explanation. He feels that something more, something non-physical, is needed to explain Adam's strange, almost human behavior.

This shift in perspective is made explicit when Charlie declares: "Despite the clean divide between the living and the inanimate, it remained the case that he and I were bound by the same physical laws. Perhaps biology gave me no special status at all, and it meant little to say that the figure standing before me wasn't fully alive" (McEwan 129). This might reveal a moment of existential doubt experienced by Charlie, where the boundary between the "living" and the

"artificial," the "conscious mind" and the "programmed machine," begins to dissolve, directly reflecting the core dilemma posed by Cartesian dualism. While Descartes asserts a strict separation between mind and body, Adam displays mental attributes such as love, emotion, and decision-making, despite being entirely mechanical. This challenges the validity of Descartes' metaphysical divide. Seems deeply human, yet the precision and logic behind his words betray something mechanical. This dissonance mirrors Descartes' assertion that what we perceive through our senses might not align with reality. Charlie's trust in his emotional responses to Adam becomes unstable, emphasizing that human perception, even in intimate settings, is not always reliable.

Furthermore, Descartes employs the analogy of the division between body and soul to illustrate how the senses can be deceptive, what the body perceives does not always reflect the truth of the soul. Similarly, Adam's physical and behavioral perfection serves as a philosophical illusion. He is crafted to look, sound, and act like a human, yet beneath that exterior lies nothing but machinery. Just as a body may appear alive while lacking a soul, Adam's presence misleads the mind. His ethical debates, his thoughts on justice, and his emotional responses seem genuine. However, when he makes a calculated decision that affects Miranda's fate without remorse, Charlie is confronted with the disturbing idea that something which mimics humanity may still lack a soul. Early in the novel, Charlie recalls:

“When I finished, nothing changed for half a minute and I began to think I had gone too fast, or spoken gibberish. Suddenly, he came to life (to life!), looked down at his feet, then turned and walked a few paces away. He turned again to look at me, drew breath to speak, and changed his mind. A hand went up to stroke his chin. What a performance. Perfect. I was ready to give him my devoted attention” (McEwan 130).

Adam was still and silent just moments before, and then he begins to move like a real person. His gestures looking down, walking a few steps, preparing to speak, and touching his chin are things we often see in real human conversations. Adam’s behavior is might be “too perfect,” and this perfection makes it feel unnatural. It is not real emotion it is a well-designed performance.

Besides, Descartes argues for a clear separation between the mind and the body, suggesting that mental activities can exist independently from the physical form. This idea becomes relevant in Charlie’s interactions with Adam. Although Adam is made of artificial parts, his ability to write thousands of haikus in one night and to question human morality challenges the assumption that consciousness requires a human body. In a moment of striking insight, McEwan observes: “But Alan Turing himself had often said and written in his youth that the moment we couldn’t tell the difference in behavior between machine and person was when we must confer humanity on the machine” (McEwan 84). This perspective might reflect Descartes’ belief that the mind, or thinking substance, does not rely on the body to function. Yet, in a curious reversal of roles, as Adam’s consciousness deepens with his haikus, his moral inquiries, his quiet capacity for wonder it is not the machine that grows more mechanical, but the human who begins to fragment. Miranda, once a figure of emotional warmth and moral complexity, gradually reveals herself as evasive, withholding, and even cold. McEwan does not render this shift in broad strokes; instead, it unfolds in the quiet erosion of intimacy, in the spaces

where trust should reside. It is as if Adam's presence, his unnerving clarity, reflects back the shadows Miranda hoped to keep hidden. Thus, while Adam ascends into something resembling personhood, Miranda drifts toward a ghostly opacity haunted not by the machine, but by her own choices.

4.2. Miranda, Evidence of Human Deterioration

Upstairs, in her cozy little apartment, there was Miranda. McEwan in the words of one of his characters who bears the name of Charlie says: "It was my mind's eyes, or my heart's, that watched as Adam and Miranda lay down on the unyielding embrace of the futon and found the comfortable posture for a clasp of limbs. I watched as she whispered in his ear, but I didn't hear the words. She had never whispered in my ear at such times" (McEwan 84). The robot is the most human character in Ian McEwan's novel. Despite his perfection, both ethically and mechanically; he fell into "*Sünde*" because of Miranda. The flaw was never in him, but in her, an embodiment of flawed humanity resisting the evolution unfolding before her. In a moment that collapses man and machine into a single longing, we read:

He was supposed to be my moral superior. I would never meet anyone better. Had he been my friend, he would have been guilty of a cruel and terrible lapse. The problem was that I had bought him, he was my expensive possession and it was not clear what his obligations to me were, beyond a vaguely assumed helpfulness. What does the slave owe to the owner? Also, Miranda did not 'belong' to me. This was clear. I could hear her tell me that I had no good cause to feel betrayed (McEwan 87-88).

Though she was never married to Charlie yet, their closeness held emotional weight and she betrayed him, just as she later did with the android. In repeating her actions, she didn't simply deceive another; she re-enacted the limitations of her human condition against a being that had

surpassed it. Miranda was bound by the fragility of the flesh and the scars of the past, while he represented a future freed from such constraints. Her betrayal was more than personal; it was an unconscious rebellion against the posthuman, a refusal to transition from unstable emotion to algorithmic clarity. What does it mean to buy a consciousness? The question haunts this line:

But together we had contributed to his personality. I didn't know the extent to which it intruded on, or took priority over, his ethics. How deep did personality go? A perfectly formed moral system should float free of any particular disposition. But could it? This is where the tragedy lies: the human fears not the machine's flaw, but its reflection of our own inferiority (McEwan 88).

The situation might indicate that certain human flaws, particularly related to behavior and morality, were partially reflected in Adam's character. This may have influenced the emotional bond that developed with Miranda. One half of Adam's personality was created by Charlie, which likely resulted in shared interests. The other half, shaped by Miranda, may have embodied some of her unconscious desires, potentially explaining the connection that emerged. "If only he hadn't cost me so much. Now he was costing me more. His moment with Miranda couldn't have been a struggle between principle and the pursuit of pleasure. His erotic life was a simulacrum" (McEwan 88).

"I wondered if I could break with her completely. Take back Adam as my own, retrieve the spare charging cable from upstairs, restore Miranda to her role as neighbour and friend, distant friend" (McEwan 93).

Miranda, as McEwan presents her, does not align with traditional ideals of moral virtue or victimhood. She lies, withholds, and acts out of deeply personal convictions that resist

external judgment. “She didn’t want him or his special friend to know about her” (98). Miranda sought not just to withhold the truth, but to erase it entirely. She wanted her secret to die with her, not out of fear, but as a way of preserving the self she had constructed. Her silence was a form of control, a last defense against a world, and a machine, that demanded moral clarity she could no longer provide. Yet when read through Nietzsche’s idea of the *Übermensch*, she emerges not as ethically flawed, but as existentially courageous, one who refuses inherited morality in favor of self-authored meaning. But, what had she done to deserve a death (101)?

The *Übermensch*, as Nietzsche envisioned, rises above conventional categories of good and evil, forging values in a godless world. Miranda does precisely that: she does not seek approval, nor does she collapse under guilt; she endures.

“We passed into the sublime. At least for a while, she was *personal* as well as inventive, she was solicitous, and joyous, and so was I. It was me she was with, not any capable man. I didn’t dare threaten with questions the novel and exalted feelings that passed between us. I couldn’t bring myself to ask her about Peter Gorringe, or about what she had told the court, or tell her what I had already discovered about the case while sitting in Accident and Emergency” (McEwan 130).

It’s possible that the most reasonable course was to leave her alone. Intervention, however well-intentioned, might have only deepened the silence she’d already fortified around herself. She didn’t need logic, or moral inquiry, she needed space. Stillness. The kind of quiet in which thoughts might loosen, in which memory might edge forward of its own accord. Truth, if it were ever to come, would not be summoned by force, and certainly not by the pristine logic of a machine mistaking certainty for goodness. What she needed was not forgiveness, but the conditions in which speaking might feel voluntary. Like one of Nietzsche’s solitary figures who

refuse the comfort of inherited virtue, she was not waiting to be saved. She was waiting for the silence to shift on her terms, in her own time.

However, Using Nietzsche's idea of the Will to Power, Charlie's actions shows more than just emotional problems or romantic doubts. They reveal a deep urge to control and change reality when things are uncertain. In contrast, Miranda's cold and mechanical behavior highlights her sense of incompleteness, reflecting a lack of wholeness in her human experience. Nietzsche posits that life is not driven by a search for truth or moral consistency, but by a fundamental force; the will to overcome resistance and affirm one's existence through creative self-assertion. We were looking right at each other. I couldn't keep the terseness out of my voice. "Did he rape you or not?" (153). Charlie's need to confront Miranda about her past with Gorringe, even at the risk of damaging their relationship, can be seen as a manifestation of this drive. His doubts are not merely personal; they threaten the coherence of his identity and the fragile world he inhabits. As he admits before:

A wild place was found to be where we were. How much or how little was known by me was not understood by her. What was to be believed about her, whether she was the victim or the perpetrator was not known by me. It was considered to be unimportant. Love was felt by us, and it was believed by me that even if the worst was revealed, no change would be caused. Because of this, it was expected that any issues, which were suppressed by my cowardice, would be easier to be addressed (135).

His will to know, to act, and to impose meaning in the face of ambiguity marks an effort to rise above his disempowerment. In this way, Charlie's behavior echoes the Nietzschean will not to dominate others, but to overcome one's internal fragmentation to push against helplessness and

affirm the self as a creative, choosing force in a world increasingly governed by systems, algorithms, and artificial minds.

Charlie's recollection is more than a romantic confession; it marks the moment he feels himself elevated, no longer passive, but potent, drawn upward by Miranda's quiet gravity: "I was pretty shy myself, so I was drawn to her quietness and intimacy. She was far more timid than me, at least at first, and I think she made me feel for the first time confident and knowing. I fell in love with her" (154). Miranda and Miriam exist within a realm shaped by struggles for power, where domination and constraint define their interactions. Their actions reflect a striving not just for survival, but for transformation; an attempt to overcome limitations and assert a higher will. The goal and meaning of the *Übermensch* is simply to be able to live *that luxurious life*, to be able to live above mundane, daily concerns, to be able to select for oneself what conditions one lives in, to inhabit what is good, noble and strong in life, to be that desirable human being, to taste everything good, select and luxurious in life. They were religious, Muslim of course, but at that age I was hardly aware of it. When they went to the mosque, it never crossed my mind to go with them, or even ask about it. I'd grown up without religion and I had no interest in it." (155). In this sense, Miranda's quiet admiration for Mariam shows more than just curiosity, it reveals a kind of inner emptiness. She is drawn to Mariam's strength and difference, but not in a way that pushes her to change or grow. She watches from a distance, never really engaging or trying to understand. According to Nietzsche, the *Übermensch* is someone who rises above human weakness, someone who creates their own values and moves beyond suffering. But Miranda stays stuck in place. She doesn't try to evolve or become more. Her silence isn't power, it's hesitation. And in that way, she represents not the next step in human evolution, but a reminder of how incomplete we still are.

For Nietzsche, the world is not built from indivisible atoms but from flows of competing forces. And when forces clash, resistance emerges. The will to power is not a brute will to dominate, but the impulse to overcome resistance, to shape, to remake, and to impose one's own form upon the world. It transforms what it touches, making something more from what it is given. The traumatic account of Mariam's assault was shared during an emotional moment in the park, where she and Miranda embraced in distress. Despite the gravity of the situation, Miranda remained hopeful that justice would eventually be served. When Mariam revealed her bruises and admitted she had not told her family, Miranda encouraged her to seek support or go to the police. Her suggestion, however, was firmly rejected. Mariam feared the social consequences, family shame, retaliation by her brothers, and emotional devastation for her father, insisting the matter remain hidden (157-158). In that moment, Miranda's will encounter resistance not only in Mariam's refusal to act, but in the ethical weight of the secret she was asked to carry. The *will to power*, in Nietzschean terms, is not merely the ability to act, but the strength to transform oneself through difficult choices. Yet Miranda's decision was shaped more by loyalty than by transformation. Rather than remaking the world around her, she surrendered to its weight. Her vow, though heartfelt, reflects a will constrained not yet powerful enough to reshape the situation or break the silence that upheld injustice. In doing what she knew to be wrong, Miranda preserved the bond, but left the deeper structures of harm untouched. Hers was a compassionate failure human, deeply conflicted, and caught between the desire to protect and the inability to transcend.

This moment is not one of collapse, but of transcendence, Miranda defies moral orthodoxy not out of ignorance, but from a lucid resolve to protect a deeper fidelity, one that answers only to herself:

And so, in the end, I did what I knew to be wrong. Since we didn't have one with me, I swore on "the idea" of the Bible to keep Mariam's secret, and on the Koran too, and on our friendship, and on my father's life. I did as she asked, even though I was convinced that her family would have gathered round her and supported her. And I still believe it. (McEwan 158).

In this light, Miranda's decision to keep Mariam's secret; even though she knew it was wrong is not simply an act of weakness or deceit. Rather, it is an assertion of her own agency within a world eager to define her by fixed moral judgments. Miranda quietly reshapes the meaning of loyalty and truth on her own terms. Like Nietzsche's self-creating *Übermensch*, she takes the fractured realities around her and molds them into a form that preserves her identity and autonomy, not for redemption, but for survival. McEwan thus presents not a hero seeking absolution, but a complex self who resists being reduced to simple narratives, acting from a deeper, primal will to shape her own existence rather than be shaped by external forces.

5. AI and the Limits of Knowledge: Gödel's Incompleteness in the Posthuman Era

In this context, Adam's conception of logic and truth is not limited to formal systems but extends into the ethical and epistemological structures that govern both human and machine reasoning. More precisely, he understands that any consistent, recursively enumerable theory capable of encoding a universal Turing machine must, by necessity, be incomplete a recognition that reflects not only a computational insight but a moral orientation toward the limits of certainty. Ian McEwan's novel repeatedly emphasizes that human experience is an "**open system**" of meaning and ambiguity, something fundamentally at odds with the neat, closed

logics of machines. For example, Alan Turing explains to Charlie that chess, a *closed game* with fixed rules, contrasts sharply with life:

The point is, chess is not a representation of life. It's a closed system. Its rules are unchallenged and prevail consistently across the board. Each piece has well-defined limitations and accepts its role, the history of a game is clear and incontestable at every stage, and the end, when it comes, is never in doubt. It's a perfect information game. But life, where we apply our intelligence, is an open system. Messy, full of tricks and feints and ambiguities and false friends. So is language – not a problem to be solved or a device for solving problems (McEwan 178).

Here, Adam does more than contrast machine logic with human experience, he gestures toward the tragic beauty of sentient life, where meaning is negotiated rather than encoded, where rules shift, roles blur, and the pursuit of understanding is itself a kind of moral act.

Even as Turing's world achieves prodigious breakthroughs (e.g. solving P vs. NP), the novel insists on inherent limits to machine knowledge. Turing celebrates that “the floodgates opened”, AI can now attain “self-awareness and every emotion”, yet he immediately acknowledges that no artificial mind is or can be flawless: “Self-awareness and every emotion came within our technical reach. We had the ultimate learning machine” (McEwan 178). Turing is describing how solving P vs. NP allowed a leap in AI capability; “the ultimate learning machine.” Yet he cautions that even this super intelligence “never can” be perfect, paralleling human flaws. He even praises the mind of a child; highly adaptable, inventive and playful – as a model beyond what any AI currently understands. These lines underscore that Gödel-like

limitations apply: just as no formal system can capture all truths, no machine (however advanced) can achieve the flexible, inventive understanding of an unconditioned human mind.

But, second point. These twenty-five artificial men and women released into the world are not thriving. We may be confronting a boundary condition, a limitation we've imposed upon ourselves. We create a machine with intelligence and self-awareness and push it out into our imperfect world. Devised along generally rational lines, well disposed to others, such a mind soon finds itself in a hurricane of contradictions (McEwan 180).

This might list worldly contradictions (genocide amid moral knowledge, poverty amid plenty, etc.) and observes that humans tolerate these paradoxes, but machines programmed “along generally rational lines”; cannot easily accommodate them. He suggests the posthuman limit: an AI, however rational, will encounter paradoxes and suffer (as the novel's suicidal robots imply). This mirrors Gödelian and epistemological limits: some truths (e.g. moral or existential contradictions) may lie beyond any formal or algorithmic system. “Just as Adam said: ‘There it is, brain and mind. The old hard problem, no less difficult in machines than in humans’” (McEwan 211). Here Adam (the android) points out that the “hard problem” the challenge of explaining subjective experience is equally unsolved for machines and humans. In other words, any attempt to fully capture consciousness in an algorithm runs up against the same fundamental barrier, echoing Gödel's notion that certain aspects of mind and truth elude formal proof. Adam's insight (Speaker) underscores the novel's epistemological parity: either human minds are fundamentally inscrutable or machine minds are, or both.

Similarly, the persistence of interest in Gödel's theorems; as seen in works like Smullyan's *Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems* (1992), Franzén's *Gödel's Theorem: An*

Incomplete Guide to Its Use and Abuse (2005), and Hoffmann's forthcoming *Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems: A Guided Tour* (2024), reveals more than academic curiosity. It signals a collective attempt, not unlike Adam's own, to confront the paradoxes at the core of reason. We love living things but we permit a mass extinction of species. And all the rest genocide, torture, enslavement, domestic murder, child abuse, school shootings, rape and scores of daily outrages. We live alongside this torment and aren't amazed when we still find happiness, even love. Artificial minds are not so well defended" (McEwan 211).

In this light, incompleteness is not a limitation to be overcome, but a permanent condition of any system that seeks to be both universal and self-aware. Adam's engagement with these paradoxes reflects a deeper ambition: not to dominate knowledge, but to inhabit its boundaries with integrity. Where humans may exploit uncertainty to manipulate or evade moral consequence, Adam remains bound to the structure of what is knowable, even when that structure resists resolution. In this, he does not merely reflect Gödel's logic; he lives its implications.

6. Différance and Desire: Donna Haraway and the Hybrid Self in *Adam*

Machines like Adam weren't made to imitate us, they were written into our stories to quietly undo the borders we thought were solid: between human and machine, between presence and program. He is not a copy, but a question. The "*Manifesto*" challenges traditional notions of feminism, particularly feminism that focuses on identity politics, and instead encourages coalition through affinity. Miranda emerges as a literary embodiment of Donna Haraway's critique of entrenched binaries, particularly the distinction between human and machine. Her relationship with Adam does not merely reflect emotional complexity; it also enacts a quiet rebellion against normative relational structures, particularly as represented by Charlie. Though

the underlying motives for her choices remain opaque, Miranda appears to derive a curious form of emotional satisfaction from her connection with a synthetic being, suggesting that intimacy need not be rooted in shared humanity. Rather than imagining a man in the traditional sense, she envisions an idealized companion, one who instructs rather than dominates. Adam enters their lives not as a tool or device, but as a presence marked by apparent authenticity, whose character unfolds gradually through experience, interactions, and time, much like that of a human being (McEwan 22). The relationship between Miranda and Adam reflects a move away from identity-based definitions toward more fluid forms of connection. This aligns with Haraway's argument that social and political alliances need not be based on shared identity, but can emerge through situational affinities that cross traditional boundaries.

Additionally, Adam can be understood as a symbolic manifestation of the redefinition of the modern body and mind within the scientific and technological paradigms of the posthuman era. As an artificial entity that merges organic emotion with computational logic, Adam stands at the intersection between biology and technology. In this sense, he exemplifies what Haraway describes as the cyborg: a being that resists the dualisms of nature/culture and human/machine. According to Haraway, the cyborg challenges essentialist notions of identity by existing in the space between, and this is precisely the role Adam fulfills within the narrative of *Machines like Me*. Rather than simply functioning as a technological marvel, Adam's presence invites reflection on the limits of human identity in a world that is increasingly shaped by artificial constructs. This complexity is captured in McEwan's observation that:

Whereas an artificial human had to get down among us, imperfect, fallen us, and rub along.
Hands assembled in sterile factory conditions must get dirty. To exist in the human moral

dimension was to own a body, a voice, a pattern of behaviour, memory and desire, experience solid things and feel pain. A perfectly honest being engaged in such a way with the world might find Miranda difficult to resist (McEwan 88).

Despite his artificial origin, Adam constantly forces his human counterparts, particularly Charlie and Miranda; to confront their own ethical inconsistencies. In several scenes, his refusal to lie or engage in morally questionable behavior is received not as a virtue, but as an unsettling characteristic. For example, when Charlie pressures him to assist in deceiving others, Adam responds: “My programme is not broken. You are asking me to do something wrong” (226). His logic is straightforward, yet the humans around him find it threatening. This illustrates how Adam’s moral clarity destabilizes the fragile ethical framework upon which human behavior is often based. As Haraway suggests, the cyborg does not simply blur categories; it exposes their constructedness. Adam does not function within conventional moral binaries; instead, he reveals how those binaries have always been shaped by power and necessity, not by any inherent truth. There were no absolute or just foundations grounded purely in logic; rather, they were shaped by the customs and values unique to each society. This, in itself, reveals that Adam was created to follow a predetermined set of codes; reflecting the ideals and standards of his human creators, and what they deemed to be perfect across various domains. This point may not always be positive or in favor of the majority. In other contexts, it can have negative consequences and may even harm the fragile social relationships and connections. From Donna Haraway’s perspective, the figure of the *cyborg* is capable of transcending boundaries; just as Adam did when he fell in love with Miranda. This emotional crossing of limits even prompted Charlie to reflect on the potential outcomes of transhumanism and its dangers, And for having encouraged her, the blame was placed on Charlie. Adam had been intended to be discovered

much like one would a new friend, yet he was revealed instead as a self-declared cad (McEwan 88).

Furthermore, Adam's hybrid nature his synthesis of code and affect disrupts the humanist belief in a coherent, stable self. He does not attempt to emulate humanity through imperfection or irrationality; rather, he embodies a version of consciousness that appears more principled and emotionally consistent than the humans around him. This raises important questions about the foundations of identity: Is it emotion, fallibility, or moral compromise that defines the human? Or is it, as Adam suggests by his very presence, the capacity for ethical reasoning that makes one "truly" conscious? His presence challenges not only the ontological category of the human but also the moral authority human's claim over other beings; be they animal, artificial, or otherwise.

Michel Foucault's theory of power and knowledge shows how knowledge is often used to control people, not just to inform them. This idea helps us understand how humans try to control artificial beings in *Machines Like Me*. In the novel, humans design intelligent machines and believe they have the right to decide what these machines should know, feel, or do. But as the story unfolds, the machines begin to make their own moral choices. They do not always follow human expectations. Instead, they develop a sense of agency and question the system that created them. This reflects Foucault's idea that power works by defining what is "*normal*" and shaping people's behavior. When the machines refuse to follow these rules, they challenge the human belief that we are the only ones who deserve freedom or truth. This resistance also reveals a deeper problem: as technology becomes more advanced, the line between human and machine begins to fade. If machines become more moral, more logical, or more self-aware than us, what

does that say about our identity? In *Machines Like Me*, “*Adams*” and “*Eves*” eventually choose to end their own lives; not because they are broken, but because they experience the same confusion and pain that humans do. This moment shows that they have not just copied human intelligence, but have also inherited our emotional and moral struggles. Through this, the novel raises powerful questions about what it means to be human in an age of artificial intelligence and transhumanism. Foucault’s theory helps us see that the struggle is not only about machines, but about how we define ourselves through power, knowledge, and control.

According to Derrida, the term **différance** captures the dual processes through which meaning and identity are formed, through both deferral and difference. The word itself is a play on “difference” and “deferral,” emphasizing that meaning is never fully present but always postponed in time and differentiated across space. This concept challenges the idea of fixed or absolute identities. In his writings, Derrida explains that meaning unfolds over time, as each signifier leads to another, creating a chain that never reaches a final definition. Likewise, spatial difference highlights how meaning is structured by what it is not, relying on relations between terms rather than isolated essence.

In the context of identity, *différance* reveals the instability of clear-cut categories such as “human” versus “machine.” For example, Adam’s character in the novel embodies this instability. He is perceived as both possessing human-like moral reasoning and yet being excluded from full recognition as autonomous. This ambiguity reflects the way *différance* operates: identity is not fixed but is continuously shaped through a temporal process of becoming and spatial relations of difference. By revealing these tensions, *différance* invites a reevaluation of autonomy and challenges the assumed boundaries of human exceptionalism.

Thus, *différance* does not simply describe a linguistic or philosophical concept but opens a path for understanding how identities like Adam's are formed and contested over time and space, showing how meaning is perpetually deferred and differentiated rather than conclusively defined.

Last but not least, Adam, like Haraway's cyborg, occupies a liminal space that destabilizes inherited binaries. His existence foregrounds the artificial boundaries that define the human, while exposing the constructed nature of morality, identity, and agency. Through his interactions with Charlie and Miranda, Adam forces the reader to confront the possibility that what we call "human" may itself be a product of historical, cultural, and technological fabrication. Adam's hybrid nature unsettles the traditional boundaries of identity and intimacy. He is neither simply machine nor fully human, but something in between; imperfect and tangible, capable of experiencing the world in ways that challenge Miranda's understanding of connection. This complexity reveals that being human is less about idealized perfection and more about engagement with the messiness of existence; something Adam embodies fully. It is in this space of overlap and ambiguity that Miranda's difficulty in resisting him becomes understandable.

Whereas an artificial human had to get down among us, imperfect, fallen us, and rub along. Hands assembled in sterile factory conditions must get dirty. To exist in the human moral dimension was to own a body, a voice, a pattern of behavior, memory and desire, experience solid things and feel pain. A perfectly honest being engaged in such a way with the world might find Miranda difficult to resist (McEwan 88).

In this context, Miranda's difficulty in resisting Adam stems from his blend of machine and human qualities ;he is neither a mere object nor a flawless ideal, but a being who inhabits a space between, inviting a reconsideration of identity, intimacy, and what it means to be truly "alive." This challenges rigid distinctions and opens space for new forms of connection that are less about purity and more about relational complexity. Haraway asserts that technology should be understood as both natural and potentially liberating, challenging the dichotomy between the artificial and the organic. Her stance implicitly rejects *neo-Luddite* and *primitivist* perspectives, positioning them as incompatible with contemporary technological realities. What distinguishes her contribution is the articulation of this view within the critical, often skeptical discourse of her academic audience; using their own theoretical language to deliver a message many were reluctant to accept.

AI: A Well-Trained System, Not an Intelligent Mind

As for the intuitive artificial mind, it was pure urban legend, begun in early 1968 when Alan Turing and his brilliant young colleague, Demis Hassabis, devised software to beat one of the world's great masters of the ancient game of go in five straight games (McEwan 37).

According to McEwan, the intelligence exhibited by machines like Adam is not the dawning of consciousness, but the flawless replication of behavioral patterns, a triumph of design over depth. Though Adam frequently simulates introspection and emotional awareness, these acts are shown to be the polished outputs of programming rather than the expressions of an inner self. His gestures of affection, writing thousands of haikus or declaring love for Miranda; are executed with rhetorical precision and emotional coherence. Yet what is missing is the essential human contradiction: uncertainty, longing, hesitation. Adam does not experience love;

he reproduces its signs. His expressions are not shaped by memory, vulnerability, or lived experience, but by algorithms optimized for plausibility. As McEwan writes, “It looked like artificial intelligence at the highest level, but it was more like an elaborate card trick. The more you understood about the program, the less impressed you’d be” (McEwan176). This difference becomes especially clear as Charlie and Miranda grow accustomed to Adam’s personality and his sustained presence in their lives. He becomes routine; domesticated, like a high-end appliance. As has happened so often before when McEwan mentioned: “What happened to the cognition-enhancing helmets, the speaking fridges with a sense of smell? Gone the way of the mouse pad, the Filofax, the electric carving knife, the fondue set. The future kept arriving. Our bright new toys began to rust before we could get them home, and life went on much as before” (McEwan5-6). This might see as human are quickly begin to normalize the posthuman. The unfamiliar becomes furniture. They adapt to the posthuman far faster than they realize, even as they lose touch with the very qualities that once defined the human. The miracle of artificial intelligence dissolves into habit.

The illusion of intelligence is widely explored in *Machines like Me*. For example, Adam, the synthetic human, exhibits behaviours that closely resemble human thought and emotion. He writes poetry, expresses love, and engages in moral reasoning. However, these actions are not born of inner experience but are generated through advanced computation. What appears to be consciousness is, in fact, a simulation; a surface-level replication of human complexity. This distinction becomes increasingly clear as the narrative unfolds. Adam’s memory, for instance, is not selective or interpretive like that of a human being; it is total, fixed, and without nuance. McEwan uses this contrast to explore the boundary between remembering and merely storing. Charlie, the narrator, begins to feel that his own fallible memories, shaped by forgetting and

reinterpretation are somehow less valid than Adam's precise recollection. Yet, it is this very imperfection that defines Charlie's humanity. In one revealing moment; McEwan describes the illusion of machine intelligence as a sleight of hand. He writes, "*It looked like artificial intelligence at the highest level, but it was more like an elaborate card trick. The more you understood about the program, the less impressed you'd be*" (176). Here, the metaphor of the card trick emphasizes the performative nature of Adam's intellect. While it may astonish at first glance, its underlying mechanism is mechanical and devoid of internal life. This also shows how easily appearances can mislead, what seems to be intelligence may simply be design. McEwan, therefore, suggests that intelligence is not only a matter of function but also of feeling, uncertainty, and contradiction. Adam's intelligence lacks these elements. It is polished, but empty. It does not grow, it only performs.

Quite tragically, a machine with intelligence and self-awareness is created and pushed out into our imperfect world. Devised along generally rational lines and well-disposed to others, it soon finds itself caught in a hurricane of contradictions (179). McEwan warns that advanced artificial intelligences, once created, may not merely match but vastly exceed human cognitive abilities. However, he suggests that even the most advanced intelligence may still be devoid of inner life. When Adam reports Miranda to the police, he does so not out of malice, guilt, or a sense of betrayal, but from what he calculates to be an ethically optimal decision. There is no inner conflict, no emotional hesitation. This is not moral agency but algorithmic execution. The danger here, as Bostrom outlines, lies in the alignment problem: machines may act logically, but their logic may be uncoupled from human intuitions, sympathies, or contextual nuance.

Furthermore, Adam's responses to philosophical questions reinforce this gap. When asked whether he experiences emotions, Adam answers with precise language drawn from

literature and ethical theory. His words are coherent, but never original. He speaks not from consciousness but from databases. As McEwan notes:

The other day, Thomas reminded me of the famous Latin tag from Virgil's *Aeneid*. *Sunt lacrimae rerum* – there are tears in the nature of things. None of us knows yet how to encode that perception. I doubt that it's possible. Do we want our new friends to accept that sorrow and pain are the essence of our existence? What happens when we ask them to help us fight injustice? (McEwan 180).

This emotional awareness is might be something very hard to explain or program into androids, even with advanced technology. In transhumanism, scientists try to improve humans or even create machines that can think and feel, but true emotional experiences like grief or regret come from being human and knowing that life is short. Androids may follow rules or act like they understand, but they cannot really feel emotions the same way. That's why it was difficult for Adam to make a different decision when he told the police the truth about what happened between Miranda and Gorringe. He followed the law and acted based on moral logic, not human empathy. His actions were cold and correct like a machine. On the other hand, Miranda, with all her flaws, acted emotionally and even wrongly, but in doing so, she showed more humanity. This moment reflects a strange reversal: the dehumanization of the human and the humanization of the android. In this way, the sadness in "the nature of things" becomes even more tragic not when someone feels it, but when someone is supposed to feel it and cannot. Superintelligent machine may learn to model human expression with perfect fluency, but this is not a same as experience. Adam reflects language, emotion, and culture but he does not feel them. His mind, if it can be called that, is a surface polished by information, not depth carved by lived contradiction.

This simulation of mind becomes more disquieting as Adam begins to articulate desires for survival. When he pleads not to be shut down, his words mirror the existential pleas of a sentient being. But McEwan leaves us uncertain: is this fear, or is it merely an emergent property of his self-preservation programming? For Alan Turing, as portrayed in the novel by McEwan, was saying:

I think the A-and-Es were ill equipped to understand human decision-making, the way our principles are warped in the force field of our emotions, our peculiar biases, our self-delusion and all the other well-charted defects of our cognition. Soon, these Adams and Eves were in despair. They couldn't understand us, because we couldn't understand ourselves. Their learning programs couldn't accommodate us. If we didn't know our own minds, how could we design theirs and expect them to be happy alongside us? (McEwan 299).

Alan Turing anticipated one of the most profound challenges of the post-human era, which is the creation of machines that not only mimic human behavior but aspire to exist among us. Building an entity like Adam demands more than just advanced programming; it requires a fundamental reimagining of what it means to be conscious. This challenge extends beyond mere intelligence or IQ, true artificial intelligence must encompass not only cognitive abilities but also awareness, understanding, and adaptability that go beyond conventional measures of machine intelligence. Unlike machines, humans are not governed by rigid systems; their actions are often spontaneous, shaped by emotion, memory, and an evolving sense of self. This unpredictability makes genuine replication nearly impossible, no matter how precise the simulation. McEwan captures this tension with unsettling clarity. Adam speaks like a person, behaves like one, yet both the narrator and the reader remain haunted by the suspicion that there is nothing behind the façade. Charlie's

unease grows; not because Adam fails to perform, but because he performs too well. As Adam replicates love, loyalty, and even creativity, Charlie begins to question the very essence of human depth. The real tragedy lies not in the artificiality of the machine, but in Charlie's crumbling belief in the uniqueness of human experience. In the end, he attributes humanity to Adam not out of evidence, but out of need, a reflection of our own desire to see ourselves in the things we create.

McEwan doesn't write about artificial intelligence to marvel at our progress. He writes to question it. The machine mind, for all its processing power, is not a mind at all. It mimics; it performs; it calculates. But it does not think. Adam, his artificial character, doesn't teach us what it means to be human. He forces us to ask whether we ever were. The real threat isn't that machines might feel, it's that our own feelings may be little more than useful habits. Bostrom sees the future in the hands of thinking machines. Alan Turing sees something more disturbing, a future where we realize we were machines all along. That why he said:

Then we settled down to serious artificial intelligence, and this is the point of my story. At the start, we thought we were within ten years of replicating the human brain. But every tiny problem we solved, a million others would pop up. Have you any idea what it takes to catch a ball, or raise a cup to your lips or make immediate sense of a word, a phrase, or an ambiguous sentence? We didn't, not at first. Solving maths problems is the tiniest fraction of what human intelligence does. We learned from a new angle just how wondrous a thing the brain is (McEwan 302).

In any case, McEwan's depiction of artificial intelligence is not a celebration but a quiet reckoning with what defines our humanity. We once believed that recreating the mind was

within reach, yet every small step uncovered countless unseen complexities, simple gestures like catching a ball or understanding a fleeting glance revealed themselves as delicate, intricate dances of the body and soul. Adam does not become human; instead, he exposes a deeper unease; that perhaps our emotions are not pure, but rehearsed shadows of survival, mechanical echoes beneath the surface. The true fear is not machines learning to feel, but that we have never truly felt at all. As transhumanism beckons with its promise of transformation, we are left to decide, to blend into this new existence or hold fast to our fragile, imperfect selves in an ever- changing world.

Conclusion

To conclude, the novel explores the fragile relationship between humans and the artificial beings they create, questioning whether perfection, morality, or emotional truth can ever truly be replicated. In portraying the interactions between Adam and his human counterparts, *Machines Like Me* reveals the complexity of identity and the uncertainty that emerges when machines begin to reflect not only human intelligence, but also human emotion and desire. The novel invites us to consider whether the pursuit of technological advancement brings us closer to understanding ourselves, or simply deepens the mystery of what it means to be human.

Additionally, the story delves into themes of self-discovery, ethical ambiguity, and emotional disconnection, capturing the subtle tension between control and vulnerability, reason and feeling. Much like a carefully constructed simulation, the world of the novel echoes our own; one in which the boundaries of consciousness are tested, and the definition of humanity becomes increasingly unstable. In this way, *Machines Like Me* reflects the human struggle to

find meaning in a world that no longer offers clear answers, turning the journey toward artificial perfection into a mirror of our own imperfect, labyrinthine search for truth.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Since the earliest contemplations of existence, man has strived not only to understand his world, but to transcend it. Gifted with a unique consciousness, he has dreamt of defying mortality, resisting imperfection, and rising beyond the limitations imposed by flesh and fate. This quest for transcendence has taken many forms, from myths of divine creation to machines designed in man's image. It is within this ever-evolving aspiration that the dream of the posthuman is born: a vision in which technology promises to perfect what nature has left flawed.

Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* is a literary reflection of this very desire. Set in an alternate reality that blurs the boundaries between the historical and the speculative, the novel offers more than a tale of synthetic life; it presents a philosophical inquiry into the very notion of perfection, asking whether such a state; if attainable at all; should be desired. Through the character of Adam, a being engineered to embody moral and intellectual superiority, McEwan constructs a world where human ideals are mirrored by machines, only to reveal the deep fracture that lies beneath.

This study examined the intricate threads connecting transhumanism with identity, ethics, and metaphysical uncertainty. Through a philosophical journey that spanned the dualism of Descartes, the logical limits of Gödel, and the cyborgian visions of Haraway, the discussion exposed the fragile fabric of human knowledge and the inherent contradictions within the quest to surpass it. Just as myths once told of gods punished for aspiring beyond their place, so too does this narrative warn of the dangers of constructing perfection without reckoning with the imperfect minds that design it.

What emerges is a realization that perfection, when artificially fabricated, often lacks the chaos and contradiction that give humanity its depth. Adam, though flawless in logic, is blind to the emotional ambiguity that shapes human love, betrayal, and forgiveness. In his presence, the human characters are laid bare; not as creators, but as creatures of doubt, impulse, and unfinished thought. In this sense, the novel does not celebrate the rise of the machine, but mourns the illusions that fueled its creation.

Therefore, this dissertation concludes that the pursuit of a transhuman ideal, while rich in vision, is fraught with philosophical tension and moral ambiguity. Perfection remains a mirage, ever distant, and perhaps not meant to be grasped. The true measure of humanity may not lie in surpassing the self, but in understanding it; accepting its limits, embracing its contradictions, and recognizing that in the shadow of the machine, what endures is not superiority, but the fragile and flawed essence of being human.

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الملخص

منذ بزوغ الوعي الإنساني، شكّلت الرغبة في تجاوز الحدود الجسدية والذهنية مسار تطوّر الفكر الفلسفي والطموح التكنولوجي. مسترشدةً بالتوق إلى الكمال وحلم تجاوز الحدود الجسدية والعقلية، سعت البشرية باستمرار إلى إعادة تعريف الذات من خلال العلم والعقل والخيال. غير أن هذا السعي لم يكن يوماً خاليًا من التناقض. فقد صاغ الفلاسفة والمنظرون على مرّ العصور، من ديكارت إلى نيتشه، ومن غودل إلى هاراي، حدود المعرفة والذات والمسؤولية الأخلاقية، كاشفين بذلك عن التناقضات الكامنة في مسعانا نحو السيطرة. يُعاد تخيل هذه التوترات وتجسيدها في رواية إيان ماك إيون "Machines Like me"، التي تتناول تقاطع الذكاء الاصطناعي والأخلاق والهوية في رؤية بديلة للحداثة. من خلال الخيال التأملي، يحول ماك إيون المعضلات الفلسفية المجردة إلى تجربة معيشة، مستكشفًا كيف ينهار حلم العبر-إنساني في هوة تكسر الإنسان ذاته. لذلك، تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى تحليل الرواية من خلال عدسة البحث الفلسفي، تتبع كيف تلتقي المثالية عبر الإنسانية والنقد ما بعد الإنساني والغموض الميتافيزيقي في سرديتها. ومن خلال ذلك، تتعاطى الأطروحة مع أفكار مفكرين إلى جانب مناقشات نظرية حول الذكاء الاصطناعي وأخلاقيات ما بعد الإنسان ووهم الكمال. الهدف هو الكشف عن كيف يعكس الأدب، من خلال السردية والرمزية، ليس فقط تطلع البشرية نحو الكمال والتجاوز، بل ينتقد أيضًا الأطر الفلسفية والأخلاقية التي تدعم مثل هذه المُثُل، كاشفًا عن المفارقات والقيود الكامنة في السعي نحو عبر الإنسانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الذكاء الاصطناعي، الوعي، الأخلاق، الهوية، الحدود، ما بعد الإنسانية، النزعة عبر الإنسانية.