

Postmodernism and Postcolonialism

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Posthumanism, Technology, and Postcolonial Futures

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and networked communication systems has fundamentally transformed contemporary understandings of identity, agency, and human existence. These developments have given rise to posthumanist thought, a critical paradigm that challenges the anthropocentric assumptions of classical humanism and reimagines the relationship between humans, machines, animals, and environments. At the same time, the expansion of technological infrastructures across the globe has raised important questions concerning power, representation, inequality, and cultural domination, issues that have long been central to postcolonial studies. This chapter explores the intersections of posthumanism, technology, and postcolonial theory to examine how historical and contemporary structures of power shape emerging technological futures.

Drawing on the works of Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, Rosi Braidotti, Cary Wolfe, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha, the chapter examines how technological innovation simultaneously enables new forms of connectivity and reproduces existing hierarchies. It argues that

contemporary digital cultures cannot be understood solely through the lens of technological progress; rather, they must be examined in relation to the enduring legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and global inequality. Concepts such as digital colonialism, algorithmic bias, data extraction, cyborg identity, hybridity, and decolonial futures provide critical frameworks for understanding the complex relationship between technology and power.

The chapter further contends that posthumanism and postcolonialism, despite their distinct intellectual origins, share a common concern with challenging dominant narratives and destabilizing fixed categories of identity and knowledge. By bringing these perspectives into dialogue, the chapter proposes a critical postcolonial posthumanism capable of addressing the ethical, cultural, and political challenges posed by artificial intelligence, digital governance, and global technological transformations. Ultimately, it argues that equitable technological futures require the incorporation of diverse epistemologies, inclusive design practices, and decolonial approaches to innovation and knowledge production.

Keywords

Posthumanism, Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Postcolonialism, Digital Colonialism, Data Colonialism, Cyborg Identity, Hybridity, Global South, Decolonization, Algorithmic Bias, Posthuman Futures.

Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed technological transformations on an unprecedented scale. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, biotechnology, robotics, big data analytics, virtual reality, and digital communication platforms have become

deeply integrated into everyday life. These developments have altered not only the ways individuals communicate, work, learn, and interact but also the very conceptualization of what it means to be human. As technological systems increasingly participate in decision-making processes, shape social relationships, and influence cultural production, traditional distinctions between human and machine, natural and artificial, physical and virtual have become increasingly unstable. Such transformations have generated significant scholarly interest across disciplines, giving rise to new theoretical frameworks that seek to understand the implications of technological change. Among these frameworks, posthumanism has emerged as one of the most influential intellectual paradigms of the contemporary era. Posthumanism challenges the human-centered assumptions that have dominated Western philosophical thought since the Enlightenment and questions the notion of the autonomous, rational, and self-contained human subject. Instead, it emphasizes the interconnectedness of humans, technologies, animals, and environments, proposing new ways of understanding identity, agency, and existence in an increasingly networked world.

The emergence of posthumanist thought reflects broader intellectual shifts associated with postmodernism. Just as postmodern theorists questioned universal truths, stable identities, and grand narratives, posthumanist scholars challenge the privileged position traditionally accorded to the human subject. Rosi Braidotti argues that posthumanism represents “the historical moment that marks the end of the opposition between Humanism and anti-humanism and traces a different discursive framework” (37). Rather than simply rejecting humanism, posthumanism seeks to reconfigure understandings of humanity to acknowledge complexity, diversity, and interdependence. One of the most

influential texts in posthumanist theory is Donna Haraway's seminal essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto." Haraway's concept of the cyborg, a hybrid entity that transcends the boundaries between human and machine, has become a powerful metaphor for contemporary identity. She famously declares that "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (149), highlighting the extent to which technological systems have become inseparable from human experience. The cyborg challenges essentialist notions of identity and opens possibilities for new forms of social and political organization.

Similarly, N. Katherine Hayles argues that contemporary technological developments require a rethinking of the human subject. In *How We Became Posthuman*, she examines the increasing integration of information technologies into human life and questions traditional assumptions regarding embodiment, consciousness, and agency. According to Hayles, the posthuman condition does not signify the disappearance of humanity but rather a transformation in how humanity is understood within technologically mediated environments. While posthumanism offers valuable insights into the changing nature of human existence, it has also been criticized for emerging predominantly from Western theoretical traditions. Many posthumanist discussions focus on technological innovation without adequately addressing the historical and political contexts in which technologies develop and operate. This limitation becomes particularly significant when considering the experiences of societies shaped by colonial histories and contemporary global inequalities. It is here that postcolonial theory provides a crucial intervention. Emerging from the experiences of colonialism, anti-colonial resistance, and decolonization, postcolonial studies examine the enduring effects of imperial power on culture,

identity, language, knowledge, and representation. Postcolonial scholars have consistently demonstrated that systems of knowledge and technology are never neutral; they are embedded within structures of power that privilege certain perspectives while marginalizing others.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* fundamentally transformed understandings of the relationship between knowledge and power. Said argues that representations of the Orient were not objective descriptions but ideological constructions that served imperial interests. He famously observes that “the Orient was almost a European invention” (1). This insight remains highly relevant in contemporary discussions of technology, where digital platforms, algorithms, and artificial intelligence systems frequently reproduce cultural hierarchies and inequalities inherited from colonial histories. Similarly, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's influential question, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (271), acquires renewed significance in the digital age. As technological systems increasingly mediate communication and knowledge production, questions concerning whose voices are heard, whose knowledge is valued, and whose experiences are represented become ever more pressing. The expansion of artificial intelligence and data-driven technologies raises important concerns regarding linguistic exclusion, algorithmic bias, and the underrepresentation of marginalized communities. Contemporary technological infrastructures have also given rise to what scholars describe as digital colonialism or data colonialism. While colonialism historically involved the extraction of land, labour, and resources, contemporary forms of domination increasingly operate through the extraction of data, information, and digital labour. Global technology corporations exercise significant influence over communication networks, information flows, and digital

economies, often concentrating power within a limited number of institutions primarily located in the Global North. Such developments raise important questions regarding technological sovereignty, cultural autonomy, and digital justice.

The relationship between posthumanism and postcolonialism is therefore both productive and necessary. Although these theoretical traditions emerged from different intellectual contexts, they share a common commitment to challenging dominant narratives and destabilizing fixed categories of identity and knowledge. Both question assumptions regarding universality and expose the power relations embedded within systems of representation. However, postcolonial theory also reminds posthumanist scholarship that technological futures cannot be separated from historical inequalities and geopolitical realities.

The convergence of these perspectives is particularly relevant in the contemporary world, where technological innovation increasingly shapes social, political, and cultural life. Artificial intelligence systems influence employment, education, healthcare, governance, and creative production. Biotechnologies challenge traditional understandings of the body and identity. Digital platforms facilitate global communication while simultaneously generating new forms of surveillance and control. In such contexts, critical engagement with both posthumanist and postcolonial perspectives becomes essential. This chapter examines the intersections of posthumanism, technology, and postcolonial theory to explore how emerging technological futures are imagined, constructed, and contested. It investigates how technologies reshape human identities while also reproducing or challenging existing structures of power. By

bringing posthumanism into dialogue with postcolonial thought, the chapter seeks to develop a critical framework capable of addressing the ethical, cultural, and political implications of technological transformation in the twenty-first century.

The discussion begins with an examination of the theoretical foundations of posthumanism, followed by an exploration of the historical relationship between colonialism and technology. It then investigates contemporary issues such as digital colonialism, artificial intelligence, algorithmic bias, cyborg identities, and technological futures in postcolonial societies. Ultimately, the chapter argues for the development of a critical postcolonial posthumanism that promotes inclusive, ethical, and socially responsible approaches to technological innovation and global development.

Understanding Posthumanism: Theoretical Foundations From Humanism to Posthumanism

To understand posthumanism, it is essential first to examine the intellectual tradition against which it defines itself, humanism. Humanism emerged during the European Renaissance and gained prominence during the Enlightenment. It placed the human being at the center of philosophical, political, and cultural inquiry, emphasizing reason, autonomy, individuality, and self-determination. Humanist thought celebrated humanity's unique intellectual abilities and regarded rationality as the defining characteristic of human existence.

The Enlightenment further strengthened these assumptions by promoting faith in scientific progress, universal knowledge, and rational governance. Thinkers such as René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, and John Locke contributed to a worldview in which the human subject was conceived as autonomous, self-

aware, and capable of mastering both nature and society through reason. This conception of the human became foundational to modern Western philosophy and significantly influenced political institutions, educational systems, and scientific practices. However, the humanist subject was neither universal nor neutral. Scholars have increasingly demonstrated that the category of the "human" often excludes large sections of humanity. Colonial subjects, women, indigenous peoples, enslaved populations, and other marginalized groups were frequently denied full participation in the humanist project. As Sylvia Wynter argues, the supposedly universal human was historically modeled on a specific European, male, and bourgeois ideal, rendering other forms of existence invisible or inferior (260). The twentieth century witnessed growing challenges to these assumptions. The devastation of two World Wars, the Holocaust, decolonization movements, feminist critiques, and developments in structuralist and poststructuralist theory all contributed to questioning the stability and universality of the humanist subject. Intellectuals increasingly recognized that identities are socially constructed, historically contingent, and deeply embedded within systems of power.

Posthumanism emerges from this critical context. Rather than accepting the human as a fixed and self-evident category, posthumanism interrogates its historical formation and explores alternative ways of conceptualizing subjectivity. According to Cary Wolfe, posthumanism involves a fundamental rethinking of "what it means to be human in a world increasingly shaped by technological, biological, and ecological interdependencies" (xv). Unlike transhumanism, which often celebrates technological enhancement and the possibility of surpassing biological limitations, posthumanism adopts a more critical perspective. It is

less concerned with creating a technologically superior human and more interested in questioning the assumptions that have historically defined humanity itself. Posthumanism thus represents not the end of humanity but a transformation in how humanity is understood. As Rosi Braidotti explains: “The posthuman subject is a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity” (49). This relational understanding challenges individualistic conceptions of identity and emphasizes interconnectedness among humans, technologies, animals, and environments.

Postmodern Roots of Posthumanism

Posthumanism owes much of its intellectual foundation to postmodern theory. Postmodern thinkers had already questioned many of the assumptions that posthumanism challenged during the latter half of the twentieth century. Postmodernism rejected grand narratives, universal truths, and stable identities. Jean-François Lyotard's famous characterization of postmodernism as an “incredulity toward metanarratives” (xxiv) reflects a broader skepticism toward claims of universality and objectivity. This skepticism created space for alternative understandings of identity and subjectivity.

Similarly, Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction demonstrated that meaning is never fixed but always subject to interpretation. By exposing the instability of language and the hierarchical structures embedded in binary oppositions, Derrida challenged the philosophical foundations of humanism. Michel Foucault further undermined traditional conceptions of the autonomous subject by demonstrating how identities are produced through discourse and power relations. For Foucault, individuals do not exist independently of social structures; rather, they are constituted through institutional practices and systems of

knowledge. These postmodern critiques prepared the ground for posthumanist thought. If identity is fragmented, contingent, and socially constructed, then the distinction between human and non-human also becomes open to question. Posthumanism extends postmodern critiques by examining how technological developments further complicate traditional understandings of subjectivity.

N. Katherine Hayles observes that contemporary technologies challenge assumptions regarding embodiment, consciousness, and agency. She argues that the posthuman condition emerges when information becomes privileged over material embodiment, transforming traditional understandings of what constitutes a human being. Consequently, posthumanism can be understood as both an extension and a transformation of postmodern thought. While postmodernism destabilizes the human subject, posthumanism explores what forms of subjectivity become possible after that destabilization.

Donna Haraway and the Cyborg Manifesto

Among the foundational texts of posthumanist theory, Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* occupies a particularly influential position. First published in 1985, the essay introduced the concept of the cyborg as a powerful metaphor for contemporary identity and social relations. Haraway defines the cyborg as a hybrid entity composed of both organism and machine. The cyborg transcends traditional boundaries separating the human and the non-human, the natural and the artificial, the physical and the technological. For Haraway, these boundaries have become increasingly unstable in technologically mediated societies. She writes: "A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (149). This statement encapsulates

one of the central insights of posthumanism: technology is no longer external to human existence but has become deeply integrated into everyday life. Haraway identifies three major boundaries that contemporary technological developments have eroded:

1. The boundary between humans and animals.
2. The boundary between organisms and machines.
3. The boundary between physical and non-physical realities.

The cyborg symbolizes the collapse of these distinctions and challenges essentialist notions of identity, rather than viewing identity as natural, fixed, or biologically determined. Haraway emphasizes hybridity, multiplicity, and transformation. Her work also carries important political implications. The cyborg represents possibilities for resisting oppressive structures based on race, gender, class, and nationality. By rejecting fixed identities, cyborg subjectivity opens the way for new forms of coalition and solidarity. Haraway's theory has proven particularly valuable for postcolonial scholars because it resonates with concepts such as hybridity and cultural negotiation. Both frameworks challenge rigid categories and emphasize the fluid nature of identity formation.

N. Katherine Hayles and the Posthuman Condition

While Haraway focuses on hybridity and boundary transgressions, N. Katherine Hayles examines the relationship between information technologies and human embodiment. Her influential work *How We Became Posthuman* investigates the cultural and scientific developments that have transformed understandings of the human subject. Hayles identifies a growing tendency within contemporary technological culture to privilege information over material embodiment. Advances in computing, cybernetics, and artificial intelligence have encouraged

conceptions of consciousness as a form of information processing independent of the physical body. She explains: “The posthuman view privileges informational pattern over material instantiation” (2). This shift has profound implications for concepts of identity and agency. If consciousness can be understood as information, then traditional distinctions between human minds and computational systems become increasingly blurred. However, Hayles cautions against viewing the body as irrelevant. Unlike some technological enthusiasts who imagine consciousness being uploaded into machines, Hayles emphasizes the continuing importance of embodiment. Human experience remains shaped by material, biological, and cultural contexts. Her work provides a nuanced understanding of posthumanism that avoids simplistic celebrations of technological progress while acknowledging the transformative impact of digital technologies.

Rosi Braidotti and the Posthuman Subject

Rosi Braidotti has emerged as one of the most influential contemporary theorists of posthumanism. Her work seeks to develop an affirmative vision of posthuman subjectivity capable of addressing contemporary social, technological, and environmental challenges. Braidotti argues that the traditional humanist subject is no longer adequate for understanding contemporary realities. Globalization, migration, technological innovation, and ecological crises require new conceptual frameworks that emphasize relationality and interconnectedness. According to Braidotti: “The posthuman predicament consists in rethinking the basic unit of common reference for our species, our polity and our relationship to the other inhabitants of this planet” (13). This perspective extends posthumanism beyond technology to encompass broader ethical and ecological concerns. For Braidotti, the posthuman subject is characterized by:

- Relationality
- Multiplicity
- Embodiment
- Interdependence
- Ethical responsibility

Rather than celebrating technological mastery, she advocates a posthuman ethics grounded in recognition of human interdependence with animals, environments, and technological systems. Her approach is particularly relevant to postcolonial contexts because it challenges Eurocentric assumptions regarding identity and knowledge while promoting more inclusive understandings of global interconnectedness.

2.7 Key Characteristics of Posthumanism

The theoretical perspectives discussed above reveal several defining characteristics of posthumanist thought:

- **Decentering the Human:** Posthumanism rejects the assumption that humans occupy the center of existence and instead emphasizes interconnectedness with non-human entities.
- **Hybrid Subjectivity:** Identity is understood as fluid, relational, and shaped by interactions among biological, technological, cultural, and environmental factors.
- **Technological Mediation:** Human experience is increasingly mediated through technological systems that influence perception, communication, and social interaction.
- **Relational Ethics:** Posthumanism promotes ethical frameworks based on interdependence rather than individual autonomy.
- **Critique of Human Exceptionalism:** The distinction between humans and non-humans is questioned, opening

the way for more inclusive forms of knowledge and coexistence.

While posthumanism provides powerful tools for understanding technological transformations, it is important to recognize that technologies do not emerge in a political vacuum. The development and deployment of technological systems have historically been intertwined with structures of power, domination, and inequality. To understand contemporary technological futures, it is therefore necessary to examine the historical relationship between technology and colonialism. The next section explores how technological knowledge functioned within colonial projects and how these historical patterns continue to shape digital cultures today.

Colonialism, Technology, and Knowledge Systems

Technology as an Instrument of Empire

Discussions of technology often emphasize innovation, progress, and modernization. However, postcolonial scholars remind us that technology has historically functioned not only as a tool of development but also as an instrument of domination. The expansion of European colonial empires from the fifteenth century onward was facilitated by technological advancements in navigation, cartography, military science, transportation, communication, and information management. Colonialism was not merely a political or economic project; it was also a technological enterprise that relied upon systems of knowledge production and control. The relationship between technology and colonialism demonstrates that technological systems are never neutral. Rather, they are embedded within social, political, and ideological structures that shape their development and application. Technologies often reflect the interests of those who

possess power and resources, reinforcing existing hierarchies while presenting themselves as objective or universal.

Colonial administrations utilized various technologies to survey territories, classify populations, extract resources, and maintain control over vast geographical regions. Railways, telegraph networks, mapping systems, census operations, and scientific institutions played crucial roles in consolidating imperial authority. These technologies facilitated communication between colonial centers and peripheral territories while enabling more efficient forms of governance and exploitation. As postcolonial scholars have argued, colonial power was sustained not only through military force but also through the production of knowledge. Understanding colonized societies became a prerequisite for governing them. Consequently, technological systems of observation, documentation, and classification emerged as essential components of imperial rule.

The historical relationship between technology and colonialism remains significant today because many contemporary technological infrastructures continue to reflect patterns established during the colonial period. To understand digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and global information networks, it is therefore necessary to examine their historical antecedents within colonial systems of power.

Foucault's Power/Knowledge and Colonial Governance

One of the most influential frameworks for understanding the relationship between knowledge and power is Michel Foucault's. Although Foucault did not focus extensively on colonialism, his analyses of discourse, surveillance, and institutional power have profoundly influenced postcolonial scholarship. Foucault argues that knowledge and power are inseparable. Rather than viewing knowledge as objective and

independent, he demonstrates that systems of knowledge are produced within networks of power that shape what can be known, said, and believed. He famously observes: “Power and knowledge directly imply one another” (*Discipline and Punish* 27). This insight is particularly relevant to colonial contexts. Colonial authorities sought to govern populations by producing detailed knowledge about their cultures, languages, religions, customs, and social structures. Such knowledge enabled more effective administration while simultaneously legitimizing colonial rule.

Colonial institutions, including schools, museums, archives, census offices, and research centers, participated in the production of knowledge about colonized societies. These institutions did not simply record reality; they actively shaped perceptions of colonized peoples and territories. Foucault's concept of discourse is equally important. Discourses are systems of knowledge that define what is considered true, normal, and legitimate within a particular society. Colonial discourses constructed colonized populations as inferior, irrational, and incapable of self-government. These representations justified imperial intervention while reinforcing European claims to superiority. Postcolonial theorists have extended Foucault's insights by examining how colonial knowledge systems functioned as technologies of governance. Knowledge became a mechanism for categorizing, monitoring, and controlling colonial subjects.

Edward Said and the Politics of Representation

Edward Said's *Orientalism* remains one of the foundational texts for understanding the relationship between knowledge, representation, and imperial power. Drawing extensively on Foucault's theories, Said demonstrates how

Western scholarship, literature, art, and political discourse collectively produced a particular image of the Orient. According to Said: “The Orient was almost a European invention” (1). This statement highlights the constructed nature of colonial knowledge. The Orient did not exist simply as a geographical reality; it was produced through a network of representations that served specific political and ideological purposes. Orientalist discourse portrayed Eastern societies as exotic, irrational, backward, feminine, and passive.

In contrast, the West was represented as rational, modern, masculine, and progressive. These binary oppositions reinforced European cultural superiority and legitimized colonial intervention. Importantly, Said demonstrates that representation itself functions as a technology of power. The ability to define and describe another culture confers authority upon the observer while limiting the agency of the observed. Colonial knowledge systems, therefore, played a crucial role in sustaining imperial domination.

The implications of Said's work extend beyond traditional colonialism. Contemporary digital technologies continue to shape representations of cultures, identities, and communities. Search engines, social media platforms, recommendation algorithms, and artificial intelligence systems all participate in producing and circulating knowledge. Consequently, the politics of representation remains highly relevant in the digital age.

Scientific Colonialism and the Classification of Difference

Science occupied a central position within colonial projects. European colonial powers frequently presented scientific knowledge as objective, universal, and value-neutral. However, postcolonial scholars have demonstrated that scientific practices often legitimized colonial domination. Scientific expeditions

accompanied colonial expansion, collecting information about geography, flora, fauna, languages, and human populations. This knowledge facilitated resource extraction, territorial control, and administrative governance. Colonized territories were transformed into objects of scientific investigation, measured and categorized according to European epistemological frameworks. One of the most troubling aspects of scientific colonialism involved the classification of human difference. Nineteenth-century racial theories employed pseudo-scientific methods to rank populations according to supposedly biological characteristics. Such classifications provided intellectual justification for slavery, segregation, and imperial rule. Frantz Fanon later exposed the psychological consequences of these racialized systems of knowledge. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he demonstrates how colonial discourse internalizes feelings of inferiority among colonized populations, shaping identities and self-perceptions. Scientific colonialism also marginalized indigenous knowledge systems. Traditional ecological knowledge, medical practices, and cultural understandings were often dismissed as primitive or irrational. European scientific frameworks were positioned as universally valid, while alternative epistemologies were excluded from legitimate knowledge production. This legacy continues to influence contemporary debates regarding knowledge, expertise, and innovation. Questions concerning whose knowledge counts and whose perspectives are recognized remain central to postcolonial critiques of technology and science.

Surveillance, Discipline, and Colonial Power

Surveillance occupies a central position within both colonial and contemporary technological systems. Foucault's concept of the panopticon illustrates how visibility functions as a

mechanism of discipline. Individuals who know they may be observed are more likely to regulate their own behavior. Colonial administrations employed various surveillance technologies to monitor populations and suppress resistance. Police networks, intelligence systems, identification documents, and communication monitoring all contributed to maintaining imperial control. The logic of surveillance has become even more significant in the digital era. Unprecedented levels of data collection and monitoring characterize contemporary societies. Governments and corporations increasingly rely on digital technologies to track behaviors, preferences, movements, and interactions. Postcolonial scholars argue that surveillance technologies often disproportionately affect marginalized communities. Consequently, contemporary surveillance systems must be examined not only as technological innovations but also as extensions of historical power structures.

Colonial Legacies and Contemporary Technologies

The historical relationship between colonialism and technology demonstrates that technological systems are inseparable from questions of power, representation, and governance. Technologies have long functioned as instruments for organizing populations, producing knowledge, and maintaining authority. Understanding these historical dynamics is essential for analyzing contemporary digital cultures. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, social media platforms, and data infrastructures do not emerge in isolation from history. Rather, they inherit and sometimes reproduce patterns established during earlier forms of colonial domination. As scholars increasingly argue, the transition from colonialism to globalization has not eliminated unequal power relations. Instead, many forms of domination have been reconfigured through digital technologies

and information networks. These developments have given rise to new concepts such as digital colonialism, algorithmic governance, and data colonialism, which seek to explain how technological systems continue to shape global inequalities.

Digital Colonialism and Artificial Intelligence

From Colonial Extraction to Data Extraction

The transition from colonialism to globalization has often been described as a movement toward greater interconnectedness, economic integration, and technological progress. However, many postcolonial scholars argue that contemporary forms of power continue to reproduce patterns established during the colonial era. While traditional colonialism relied upon the extraction of land, labor, minerals, and agricultural resources, contemporary digital economies increasingly depend upon the extraction of data. This transformation has led scholars to develop concepts such as *digital colonialism* and *data colonialism* to describe emerging structures of domination in the information age.

Historically, colonial powers accumulated wealth by appropriating resources from colonized territories. Colonized populations were frequently denied control over their own economic and political futures, while imperial powers benefited from systems of extraction and exploitation. Although formal colonial empires have largely disappeared, similar dynamics persist in contemporary digital ecosystems. Data generated by billions of users worldwide has become a valuable economic resource, often collected, processed, and monetized by a small number of multinational technology corporations.

Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias argue that contemporary societies are witnessing the emergence of a new phase of colonialism centered on data extraction. According to

them: “Data colonialism opens a new frontier in capitalism's drive for profit” (336). This perspective suggests that digital technologies have created new mechanisms for appropriating human experiences, behaviors, and interactions. Everyday activities such as browsing websites, using mobile applications, posting on social media, and conducting online transactions generate vast quantities of data that are collected and analyzed by corporate entities.

Unlike earlier forms of colonial extraction, data colonialism often operates invisibly. Individuals may not fully understand how their information is collected, stored, shared, and utilized. However, these processes significantly influence economic opportunities, political participation, cultural representation, and social interactions. The concept of data colonialism, therefore, underscores the importance of examining technological systems through historical and political lenses. Technologies do not merely facilitate communication; they also participate in the production and distribution of power.

Digital Colonialism and Global Power Structures

Digital colonialism refers to the concentration of technological power within a limited number of corporations and nations that dominate global digital infrastructures. Much like colonial empires controlled trade routes, communication networks, and administrative systems, contemporary technology companies exercise considerable influence over information flows, digital economies, and online interactions. Major technology corporations headquartered primarily in North America and Western Europe shape users' digital experiences worldwide. Search engines, social media platforms, cloud computing services, operating systems, and artificial intelligence technologies increasingly function as global infrastructures.

While these technologies offer numerous benefits, they also raise concerns regarding dependency, sovereignty, and inequality.

Michael Kwet describes digital colonialism as a system in which technological infrastructures developed by powerful nations create forms of dependence among countries in the Global South. He argues that technological dominance enables corporations to influence communication, education, commerce, and governance beyond national borders. The implications of digital colonialism are particularly significant for postcolonial societies. Many countries rely heavily on technologies developed elsewhere, often with limited opportunities to shape their design or governance. This dependence can reinforce existing inequalities while restricting local innovation and technological autonomy.

Furthermore, technological infrastructures frequently reflect cultural assumptions embedded within their design. Interfaces, algorithms, and datasets often prioritize Western languages, values, and experiences, marginalizing alternative perspectives. Consequently, digital colonialism involves not only economic power but also cultural and epistemological influence. Postcolonial scholars emphasize that genuine technological development must involve greater participation from diverse communities and regions. Without such inclusion, digital technologies risk reproducing historical patterns of domination under new forms.

Artificial Intelligence and the Politics of Knowledge

Artificial intelligence has become one of the defining technologies of the twenty-first century. AI systems increasingly influence decision-making across healthcare, education, employment, finance, transportation, security, and governance. These technologies are often presented as objective, efficient, and

neutral tools that can improve human life. However, critical scholars caution against accepting such claims uncritically. AI systems are created by human beings and trained on data generated within specific social, cultural, and historical contexts. As a result, they inevitably reflect existing assumptions, values, and biases.

Postcolonial theory offers valuable insights for examining AI because it highlights the relationship between knowledge production and power. Edward Said demonstrated that knowledge systems are never neutral but are shaped by institutional interests and ideological frameworks. Similar concerns apply to contemporary AI systems, which rely on vast datasets that determine how algorithms interpret and respond to information.

The question, therefore, arises: whose knowledge is represented within AI systems, and whose knowledge is excluded? Many AI models are trained predominantly on data produced in English and other widely used global languages. This linguistic imbalance can result in unequal representation of cultures, histories, and perspectives from the Global South. Languages spoken by smaller populations often receive limited attention in technological development, contributing to digital marginalization. From a postcolonial perspective, AI technologies must be understood not only as computational systems but also as sites of cultural and political negotiation. Decisions regarding data collection, model training, and algorithmic design have significant implications for representation, inclusion, and justice.

Can the Subaltern Speak in the Digital Age?

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's famous question, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" continues to resonate within contemporary technological contexts. Spivak argues that marginalized groups often struggle to achieve representation within dominant systems

of knowledge and communication. The rise of digital technologies initially appeared to offer new opportunities for marginalized voices. Social media platforms, blogs, online forums, and digital archives have enabled individuals and communities to share experiences beyond traditional institutional channels.

However, digital participation does not automatically guarantee visibility or influence. Algorithmic systems determine which content receives attention and which remains hidden. Platform policies, recommendation systems, and commercial priorities shape the circulation of information. Consequently, the question becomes not only whether subaltern voices can speak but also whether they can be heard within digital environments structured by corporate and algorithmic power. Postcolonial scholars argue that digital inclusion requires more than access to technology. It also requires equitable participation in the design, governance, and regulation of technological systems. Without such participation, digital spaces may reproduce rather than challenge existing inequalities.

Toward Decolonial Artificial Intelligence

The growing recognition of algorithmic bias, data colonialism, and digital inequality has led scholars to advocate for decolonial approaches to technology. Decolonial AI seeks to challenge the concentration of technological power while promoting diversity, inclusion, and social justice.

Such approaches involve:

- Diversifying datasets and training materials.
- Supporting underrepresented languages.
- Incorporating indigenous and local knowledge systems.
- Ensuring transparency in algorithmic decision-making.
- Expanding participation in technological design.

- Promoting equitable access to digital infrastructures.

Decolonial AI does not reject technological innovation; rather, it seeks to align innovation with principles of justice, equity, and cultural plurality. It recognizes that technological futures should be shaped by diverse communities rather than a limited number of institutions or corporations. In this sense, decolonial AI represents a crucial meeting point between posthumanist and postcolonial thought. Both traditions challenge dominant assumptions and advocate more inclusive ways of imagining the future.

Cyborg Identities, Hybridity, and Postcolonial Subjectivities Rethinking Identity in the Technological Age

Questions of identity have occupied a central position in both posthumanist and postcolonial scholarship. While posthumanism investigates how technological developments transform understandings of the human subject, postcolonial theory examines how colonial histories shape cultural identities, social relations, and political consciousness. Despite their distinct intellectual origins, both theoretical traditions challenge essentialist notions of identity and emphasize fluidity, hybridity, and transformation. Traditional humanist thought viewed identity as stable, coherent, and unified. Individuals were assumed to possess a fixed essence that defined their humanity. However, twentieth-century developments in philosophy, cultural studies, feminism, and postcolonial theory increasingly questioned these assumptions. Identity came to be understood as a dynamic process shaped by historical, social, political, and technological forces.

In contemporary digital societies, technological systems have become deeply integrated into everyday life. Smartphones, social media platforms, wearable devices, virtual environments, and artificial intelligence increasingly mediate personal

experiences and social interactions. These developments complicate traditional distinctions between human and machine, self and other, physical and virtual. As a result, identity cannot be understood solely in biological or cultural terms; it must also be examined in relation to technological networks and digital infrastructures.

Posthumanist and postcolonial theories offer complementary frameworks for understanding these transformations. Both reject fixed categories and highlight the complex processes through which identities are negotiated and reconstructed. Their intersection provides valuable insights into the emergence of new forms of subjectivity in a technologically interconnected world.

Donna Haraway's Cyborg and the Politics of Hybrid Identity

Donna Haraway's concept of the cyborg remains one of the most influential contributions to posthumanist thought. The cyborg—a hybrid of organism and machine—serves as a metaphor for contemporary identities that transcend traditional boundaries and classifications. Haraway writes: “The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world” (150). Although this statement emerges from feminist concerns, its implications extend far beyond gender. The cyborg challenges all forms of essentialism by rejecting fixed distinctions between human and machine, nature and culture, body and technology. For Haraway, technological integration is not merely a future possibility; it is already a reality. Modern individuals rely upon technological systems for communication, memory, transportation, healthcare, education, and social interaction. Human existence has become inseparable from technological mediation. The cyborg, therefore, represents a new form of subjectivity characterized by hybridity and multiplicity. Rather than possessing a single, unified identity,

cyborg subjects exist within networks of relationships involving humans, machines, institutions, and information systems. This understanding of identity resonates strongly with postcolonial critiques of essentialism. Just as Haraway rejects fixed categories of humanity, postcolonial theorists challenge rigid notions of culture, race, nation, and ethnicity. Both perspectives emphasize the fluid and negotiated nature of identity formation. Furthermore, the cyborg offers possibilities for resistance against dominant systems of power. By disrupting traditional binaries and classifications, cyborg identities create spaces for alternative forms of belonging and political engagement.

Homi Bhabha and the Theory of Hybridity

Among postcolonial theorists, Homi K. Bhabha has been particularly influential in developing the concept of hybridity. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that colonial encounters produce cultural identities that cannot be understood in terms of pure or original traditions. Colonialism creates complex interactions between colonizer and colonized, resulting in new cultural forms that combine elements from multiple traditions. These hybrid identities challenge simplistic oppositions between self and other, colonizer and colonized, East and West. Bhabha explains: “It is the ‘in-between’ space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (56). This “in-between” condition is central to his understanding of hybridity. Cultural identities are not fixed entities but ongoing processes of negotiation and transformation. Hybridity destabilizes colonial authority by undermining claims to cultural purity and superiority. Colonial discourse often depends upon clear distinctions between ruler and ruled. Hybrid identities blur these boundaries, exposing the instability of colonial categories. The concept of hybridity has become increasingly relevant in an era characterized by

globalization, migration, and digital communication. Contemporary identities are shaped by multiple influences, reflecting diverse cultural, linguistic, and technological experiences.

Cyborgs and Hybrids: A Comparative Framework

Although Haraway and Bhabha emerge from different intellectual traditions, their theories share significant similarities. Both challenge essentialist understandings of identity and emphasize the transformative potential of hybridity.

Similarities Between Cyborg and Hybrid Subjectivities

Cyborg Theory (Haraway)	Hybridity Theory (Bhabha)
Human-machine fusion	Cultural fusion
Challenges to biological essentialism	Challenges to cultural essentialism
Blurs human/non-human boundaries	Blurs colonizer/colonized boundaries
Emphasizes technological mediation	Emphasizes cultural negotiation
Creates new forms of identity	Creates new cultural subjectivities

Both theories reject notions of purity and authenticity. Instead, they celebrate complexity, multiplicity, and transformation. Importantly, these frameworks demonstrate that identity is not something individuals possess but something they continuously construct through interactions with social, cultural, and technological environments. The convergence of cyborg and hybrid theories provides a productive foundation for analyzing contemporary digital cultures, where technological and cultural boundaries increasingly overlap.

Mimicry, Technology, and Digital Subjectivities

Another important concept developed by Bhabha is mimicry. Colonial authorities often encouraged colonized populations to adopt aspects of European culture, language, and behavior. However, this process produced unintended consequences. Bhabha famously describes mimicry as “Almost the same, but not quite” (86). Colonial subjects who imitate the colonizer never become identical to the colonizer. Instead, mimicry creates ambivalence and instability within colonial power structures.

This concept remains highly relevant in contemporary technological contexts. Digital technologies often originate within specific cultural and economic environments, yet are adopted and adapted by diverse communities worldwide. Users in postcolonial societies frequently engage with technologies developed elsewhere while simultaneously transforming them according to local needs and cultural practices. Social media platforms, digital communication tools, and AI applications are often reinterpreted in ways that exceed their original intentions.

Technological mimicry, therefore, does not necessarily result in passive imitation. Rather, it can generate new forms of creativity, resistance, and cultural innovation. This perspective challenges narratives that portray technological adoption as a one-way process. Postcolonial users actively reshape technologies, producing localized digital cultures that reflect unique historical and social experiences.

The Third Space and Digital Cultures

One of Bhabha's most influential concepts is the Third Space, a site of cultural negotiation where new meanings and identities emerge. The Third Space exists between established categories and provides opportunities for alternative forms of

expression and interaction. According to Bhabha: “The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process” (37).

Digital environments can be understood as contemporary manifestations of the Third Space. Online platforms bring together individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, facilitating interactions that transcend traditional geographical boundaries. Social media networks, virtual communities, and digital forums create spaces where identities are continuously negotiated and redefined. These environments enable users to experiment with multiple forms of self-representation while participating in transnational conversations. However, digital Third Spaces are not inherently liberatory. They remain shaped by algorithmic systems, corporate interests, and unequal access to technological resources. Nevertheless, they provide important opportunities for cultural exchange and identity formation. For postcolonial communities, digital spaces can facilitate the preservation of cultural traditions, the circulation of alternative narratives, and the development of new forms of collective identity.

Diaspora, Mobility, and Networked Identities

Contemporary technological systems have significantly transformed experiences of migration and diaspora. Digital communication enables individuals to maintain connections across geographical distances, creating transnational networks that challenge traditional understandings of place and belonging. Stuart Hall argues that cultural identity should be understood not as a fixed essence but as a process of becoming. This perspective aligns closely with both posthumanist and postcolonial approaches to identity. Diasporic communities increasingly rely on digital technologies to sustain cultural practices, maintain

family relationships, and participate in political activities. Social media platforms, messaging applications, and online communities facilitate forms of belonging that transcend national borders. These developments contribute to the emergence of what Manuel Castells describes as networked societies, where social relations are organized through digital infrastructures.

From a posthuman perspective, such identities are not solely cultural but also technological. Individuals navigate complex networks involving people, platforms, algorithms, and information systems. Identity becomes distributed across multiple spaces and interactions. The experiences of diaspora, therefore, illustrate how technological and cultural transformations intersect in the production of contemporary subjectivities.

Digital Selves and Posthuman Subjectivity

The rise of digital technologies has generated new forms of selfhood that challenge traditional distinctions between physical and virtual existence. Individuals increasingly maintain online identities through social media profiles, avatars, digital archives, and virtual communities. These digital selves are not merely representations of pre-existing identities; they actively shape how individuals understand themselves and others. Personal experiences are increasingly mediated through technological systems that influence communication, memory, and social recognition.

Posthuman theorists argue that identity must therefore be understood as distributed across human and technological networks. Human agency operates alongside algorithms, platforms, databases, and communication infrastructures. At the same time, postcolonial scholars remind us that access to digital identity is unevenly distributed. Questions of language, representation, infrastructure, and technological literacy continue

to shape participation in digital environments. Consequently, digital subjectivity must be analyzed in relation to both technological innovation and historical inequalities.

Toward Postcolonial Posthuman Subjectivities

The convergence of posthumanism and postcolonialism reveals important possibilities for reimagining identity in the twenty-first century. Both theoretical traditions challenge fixed categories and emphasize relationality, hybridity, and transformation. Posthumanism demonstrates that technological systems and non-human actors increasingly shape human identities. Postcolonialism highlights the historical and political forces that influence these processes. Together, they encourage a more inclusive understanding of subjectivity that acknowledges cultural diversity, technological mediation, and historical complexity. Such a perspective is particularly valuable in an era characterized by artificial intelligence, digital globalization, and increasing interconnectedness. Future identities are likely to emerge through interactions among cultural traditions, technological innovations, and evolving social structures. The challenge is to ensure that these transformations promote justice, inclusion, and plurality rather than reproducing existing inequalities.

Posthuman Ecologies and Environmental Futures

The Ecological Turn in Contemporary Theory

The twenty-first century has witnessed growing concern regarding environmental degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, pollution, and resource depletion. These crises have prompted scholars across disciplines to reconsider humanity's relationship with the natural world. Traditional human-centered approaches have increasingly been criticized for contributing to ecological destruction by treating

nature as a passive resource to be exploited. In response, posthumanist thinkers have developed alternative frameworks that emphasize interdependence, relationality, and ecological responsibility. The ecological turn within posthumanism challenges the anthropocentric assumptions inherited from Enlightenment humanism. Anthropocentrism places human beings at the center of existence and often assumes that non-human entities possess value only insofar as they serve human interests. Posthumanism rejects this hierarchy and argues that humans exist within complex networks involving animals, plants, ecosystems, technologies, and material environments.

Rosi Braidotti argues that contemporary environmental crises reveal the limitations of human exceptionalism. She contends that humanity can no longer be understood as separate from nature because ecological systems fundamentally shape human survival and well-being. According to Braidotti: “The posthuman condition urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are becoming in a world marked by ecological interdependence” (92). This perspective shifts attention from domination to coexistence. Rather than viewing nature as an object to be controlled, posthumanism encourages recognition of the mutual relationships connecting all forms of life. The ecological dimension of posthumanism is particularly significant because it expands debates about technology and identity beyond human concerns. Questions of environmental sustainability, climate justice, and ecological ethics become central to discussions of future societies.

Colonialism and Environmental Exploitation

Environmental degradation cannot be separated from colonial history. Colonial empires transformed landscapes across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific through resource

extraction, plantation agriculture, mining operations, and infrastructure development. Colonial administrations frequently viewed colonized territories primarily as sources of economic wealth. Forests were cleared for commercial agriculture, rivers were redirected for irrigation projects, and mineral resources were extracted to support industrial development in Europe. Indigenous ecological practices were often disregarded in favor of exploitative economic models.

Alfred Crosby's concept of *ecological imperialism* highlights the environmental dimensions of colonial expansion. Colonialism involved not only political domination but also the transformation of ecosystems through the introduction of new plants, animals, diseases, and agricultural systems. These environmental transformations frequently disrupted local communities and traditional ways of life. Indigenous populations often experienced displacement, food insecurity, and ecological degradation as a result of colonial policies.

Postcolonial ecocriticism examines these historical relationships between environmental exploitation and imperial power. Scholars argue that contemporary ecological crises cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the colonial histories that shaped global patterns of resource extraction and environmental inequality. The environmental consequences of colonialism continue to influence many postcolonial societies today, making ecological justice an important component of decolonization efforts.

Indigenous Knowledge and Ecological Wisdom

One limitation of traditional Western approaches to environmental management has been the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems. Colonial administrations frequently dismissed indigenous ecological practices as primitive

or unscientific, despite their sophisticated understanding of local environments. Contemporary scholars increasingly recognize the value of indigenous knowledge for addressing environmental challenges. Indigenous communities often possess detailed understandings of biodiversity, climate patterns, water management, and sustainable resource use developed over generations.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that decolonization requires recognizing alternative epistemologies and challenging the dominance of Western knowledge systems. Environmental sustainability cannot be achieved solely through technological innovation; it also requires respect for diverse cultural perspectives and ecological traditions. Many indigenous worldviews emphasize relationality rather than domination. Humans are understood as participants within broader ecological networks rather than masters of nature. This perspective aligns closely with posthumanist critiques of anthropocentrism.

The integration of indigenous knowledge into environmental policy and technological development represents an important step toward more inclusive and sustainable futures.

Technology, Ecology, and Sustainable Futures

Technology occupies an ambiguous position within environmental debates. On one hand, technological development has contributed significantly to ecological degradation through industrialization, resource extraction, and pollution. On the other hand, technological innovation also offers potential solutions to environmental challenges. Renewable energy systems, environmental monitoring technologies, sustainable agricultural practices, and climate modeling tools demonstrate how technology can support ecological sustainability. Artificial intelligence is increasingly being used to monitor biodiversity,

predict climate patterns, optimize resource management, and support conservation efforts.

However, posthumanist and postcolonial scholars emphasize that technological solutions must be approached critically. Technological innovation alone cannot resolve environmental problems without addressing underlying social and political inequalities. Questions concerning access, ownership, governance, and participation remain crucial. Sustainable technologies should not reinforce existing forms of domination or create new dependencies. Instead, they must be developed in ways that promote equity, inclusion, and ecological responsibility. A posthuman perspective encourages viewing technology as part of broader socio-ecological systems rather than as an independent force capable of solving complex problems in isolation.

Reimagining Ecological Futures

Posthumanism and postcolonialism converge in their insistence that alternative futures are possible. Both traditions challenge dominant narratives and encourage critical reflection on existing systems of power. Ecological futures cannot be built solely upon technological innovation or economic growth. They require new forms of thinking that recognize interdependence among humans, technologies, and environments. Such futures must also address historical injustices and promote equitable participation in environmental decision-making.

The concept of sustainability, therefore, extends beyond environmental protection. It encompasses cultural diversity, social justice, technological responsibility, and ecological resilience. By bringing posthumanist and postcolonial perspectives into dialogue, scholars can develop more comprehensive approaches to the environmental challenges facing the twenty-first century.

Reimagining the Human in a Technological World

One of the most profound contributions of posthumanism is its invitation to rethink what it means to be human. Technological innovations increasingly blur traditional distinctions between biological and technological existence. Artificial intelligence, biotechnology, neural interfaces, virtual reality, and robotics challenge conventional assumptions regarding embodiment, consciousness, and agency. However, postcolonial theory reminds us that definitions of humanity have always been political. Colonialism frequently denied full humanity to colonized populations, constructing hierarchies that justified domination and exclusion.

Consequently, discussions of posthuman futures must remain attentive to historical inequalities. The goal should not simply be to transcend humanity through technological enhancement but to create more inclusive understandings of humanity itself. Rosi Braidotti argues that the posthuman condition requires a new ethical framework grounded in relationality and shared vulnerability. Such a framework recognizes diversity without reducing individuals to fixed identities.

The future human subject is increasingly understood as:

- Relational rather than autonomous.
- Networked rather than isolated.
- Hybrid rather than pure.
- Dynamic rather than fixed.
- Ecologically embedded rather than separate from nature.

This vision aligns with both posthumanist and postcolonial commitments to plurality, interconnectedness, and social justice.

Conclusion: Toward Postcolonial Posthuman Futures

The intersection of posthumanism and postcolonialism offers a powerful framework for understanding the complex realities of the twenty-first century. While posthumanism challenges traditional notions of human exceptionalism and explores the growing entanglement of humans, technology, and the environment, postcolonialism exposes the historical inequalities and power structures that continue to shape contemporary societies. Together, these perspectives encourage a more critical and inclusive understanding of technological and social transformation.

This chapter has examined how colonial histories continue to influence modern technological systems through phenomena such as digital colonialism, data extraction, algorithmic bias, and unequal access to technological resources. At the same time, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence create new opportunities for innovation, communication, and development. The challenge lies in ensuring that these technologies promote justice, diversity, and inclusion rather than reproducing existing inequalities.

The discussion of cyborg identities, hybridity, and digital subjectivities demonstrates that identity in the contemporary world is increasingly fluid, relational, and technologically mediated. Similarly, ecological concerns highlight the need to move beyond anthropocentric models and recognize the interconnectedness of humans, non-humans, technologies, and environments. Ultimately, the dialogue between posthumanism and postcolonialism points toward the possibility of more equitable and sustainable futures. By embracing epistemic diversity, technological justice, ecological responsibility, and democratic participation, societies can foster innovation that

respects cultural plurality and social equity. Technological futures are not predetermined; human choices, ethical commitments, and collective action shape them. A postcolonial posthuman perspective, therefore, provides not only a critique of present challenges but also a vision for creating more inclusive, responsible, and sustainable futures in an increasingly interconnected world.

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