

Getting Over the Human with Friedrich Nietzsche: Twilight of the Transhuman Idols

Márk Horváth  

Dr. Ádám Lovász  

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64959/enjp.vol.1.issue1.1.w.002>

Abstract:

Stefan Lorenz Sorgner has argued against Nick Bostrom that the “Overhuman” (*Übermensch*) of Friedrich Nietzsche counts as a genuine predecessor of both posthumanism and transhumanism. In a reply article, Michael Hauskeller argues that the transhumanist vision does not accord with the Nietzschean Overhuman. While the two share similarities, they are distinct, for Nietzsche did not believe in Enlightenment ideas of liberalism, progress and scientism. Futurologically-informed transhumanist ideas relating to human “enhancement” are too modern and progressive to be Nietzschean. Babette Babich claims that transhumanism constitutes an “all-too-human” position. We conclude that Nietzsche was not a transhumanist, because, on the whole, the overhuman is more a tragic hero who affirms eternal recurrence and deifies Nature, and is not a technocratic denier of nature. It is high time we got over the “human” element altogether.

Keywords: Humanism, Nietzsche, Posthumanism, Speculative Posthumanism, Transhumanism

Human being is something that must be overcome.

— Friedrich Nietzsche

All human works are brief and fleeting; they take up no part whatever of infinite time. Tried by the standard of the universe, we regard this earth of ours (...) as a mere point: our life occupies less than a point when compared with all time, the measure of which exceeds that of the world, for indeed the world is contained many times in it. Of what importance, then, can it be to lengthen that which, however much you add to it, will never be much more than nothing?

— Seneca

This paper explores the contested relationship between the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche and transhumanism. In this first section of this paper, we provide a brief outline of transhumanism, and its potential links with the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. In the



second section of our essay, we summarize the main points of Stefan Lorenz Sorgner's proposed synthesis of Nietzscheanism and transhumanism. In the third section of the paper, we delve deeper into what a Nietzschean transhumanism could look like. In the fourth section, we take into account

Nietzschean critiques of transhumanism. In our Conclusion, we return to Nietzsche's philosophy and present our own reading of what Nietzsche was aiming for with the idea of the "Overhuman."

A Few Words on Transhumanism

Posthumanist philosopher Cary Wolfe has characterized transhumanism as "an intensification of humanism" (xv). Before we discuss the current debate surrounding Nietzsche and transhumanism, it is worth elaborating upon what transhumanism is. Transhumanism is more than a philosophy, being "a broad intellectual movement" (Blackford 193). It can be viewed as a "popcultural" elaboration of posthumanism, in which the term "posthuman" denotes an improved, enhanced and technicized being that has evolved out of *homo sapiens*.ⁱ Transhumanists affirm "interventions" which "aim to improve the state of an organism beyond its normal healthy state" (Bostromand 120). The term "posthuman" in such discourses refers most frequently to superhuman modes of being that transcend the limits of the human condition (Abrams 248). Max More, founder of the Extropian Institute, defines transhumanism as a movement inherently committed to both "perpetual progress" and "intelligent technology, self-direction, or rational thinking" ("The Philosophy of Transhumanism" 5). As Stefan Lorenz Sorgner underlines, "progress is closely linked to the belief that the general conditions of human life can be enhanced" (*On Transhumanism* 47). The term "transhumanism" was first coined by biologist Julian Huxley, summarized as "the idea of humanity attempting to overcome its limitation and to arrive at a fuller fruition; it is the realization that both individual and social development are processes of self-transformation." (139)

The emphasis on human self-determination, a naturalistic outlook, and the desire for subjugating natural processes for human goals, are essential features of transhumanism. Transhumanists believe in the perfectibility of humans, and see the biological limitations of the human condition as something to be transcended via technology. They also generally believe in progress and are proponents of scientism, the belief in the redemptive capacity of science to solve all problems associable with the human condition (Tirosh-Samuelson). Evolution must be redirected, planned and changed, so as to enhance humans and build up our capabilities.ⁱⁱ Even immortality is conceived of as a utopian state, a posthuman condition. For pro-transhumanist biologist Michael R. Rose there is no *a priori* reason why we as humans should accept the prospect of death.ⁱⁱⁱ Humanity for transhumanists is only a transitory step along the path towards transcendence of the human condition. The achievement of "posthumanity" disrupts human evolutionary history. A leap in human development will create a new species. In itself "posthumanity' is a value-neutral term" (Birnbacher 95). However, transhumanists are optimistic in relation to the posthuman condition, and hope to progressively replace humans with a superhuman species, a next step in a linear evolutionary process. Even though teleology or purpose disappeared from scientific concepts of evolution by the early 20th century at the latest (cf. Mayr), transhumanists hope to make human evolution purposeful once more. Hence, in our view it is warranted to describe transhumanism as a progressive and scientific movement, essentially modern and optimistic, even messianistic (Leung), in its broad outlook.

Transhumanism is a breeding programme for perfecting humanity. What is presently contingent (reproduction and associated sexual selection mechanisms) ought to be rationalized and optimized, to create better humans. As Ronald Bailey emphasizes, “Our ancestors, too – through their mating and breeding choices – determined for us the complement of genes that we all bear today. [...] Fortunately, our descendants will have at their disposal new technologies [...] to guide them in their future reproductive and enhancement decisions. [...] Of course, there is one case in which future generations would be prisoners of our decisions now, and that’s if we fearfully elect to deny them access to the benefits of biotechnology and safe genetic engineering.” (Bailey 336)

The futurist belief in technological progress is explicit, as is the belief in human perfectibility. In fact, Bailey sees no ethical problem with positive eugenics, and even accuses opponents of eugenics (and transhumanism) of restricting the possibilities of future generations. There are no limits to such ambitions. Philosopher Nick Bostrom forecasts the emergence of “superintelligence” which could potentially transcend human control altogether (*Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*). Historian Yuval Noah Harari, an advocate of transhumanism, claims that the movement, conceivable as a “new human agenda,” is about “attaining divinity” (47). Skepticism regarding the posthuman condition and the promises of transhumanism also abounds. Historian Francis Fukuyama mentions a key risk that may be associated with human transformation:

What is ultimately at stake with biotechnology is [...] the very grounding of the human moral sense, which has been a constant ever since there were human beings. It may be the case that, as Nietzsche predicted, we are fated to move beyond this moral sense. But if so, we need to accept the consequences of the abandonment of natural standards for right and wrong forthrightly and recognize, as Nietzsche did, that this may lead us into territory that many of us don't want to visit. (102)

It is particularly noteworthy that Nietzsche’s name crops up often in relation to transhumanist discourses. Are engineers of human nature working on a secularized, demythologized and literalized version of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*? And what does being an “overhuman” even mean? Not long after Fukuyama’s book was published, German philosopher Jürgen Habermas wrote an essay (*The Future of Human Nature*) against what he perceived as the return of eugenicism. Similarly to Fukuyama, Habermas observes that “the revolution of breeding practices by genetic engineering is itself no longer governed by the clinical mode of adjustment to the inherent dynamic of nature. What it suggests, rather, is the dedifferentiation of a fundamental distinction which is also constitutive of our self-understanding as species members” (46). Key to Habermas’ critique is the contingency of human preferences. Even if we were to succeed in mastering our own genetic programming, what is to guarantee that our preferences are not themselves merely contingent products of our spontaneous, previously undirected evolution? The very framework of our thinking is not a rational product, claims Habermas (correctly). (72). There is absolutely no guarantee that we know *what* we should change within human nature and our reasons for supposing this to be the case could be wrong. Much more critical however is Habermas’ rhetorical attack on transhumanism, which he associates, almost as a matter of course, with Nietzsche and/or Nietzscheanism:

A handful of freaked-out intellectuals is busy reading the tea leaves of a naturalistic version of posthumanism [...] Fortunately, the elitist dismissals of ‘the illusion of egalitarianism’ and the

discourse of justice still lack the power for large-scale infection. Self-styled Nietzscheans, indulging in fantasies of the 'battle between large-scale and small-scale man-breeders' as 'the fundamental conflict of all future,' and encouraging the 'main cultural factions' to 'exercise the power of selection which they have actually gained,' have, so far, succeeded only in staging a media spectacle. (22).

What Habermas claims is that transhumanists (those who advocate positively for a posthuman condition) are Nietzscheans, eugenicists and, by extension, adherents of "a German ideology" of human breeding that one may associate with National Socialism.

For Bostrom, the "posthuman" is an anthropomorphic entity, albeit enhanced beyond the limits of what is presently recognizably human: "by a posthuman capacity, I mean a general central capacity greatly exceeding the maximum attainable by any current human being without recourse to new technological means" ("Why I Want to Be a Posthuman When I Grow Up." 219). Such a being would be bred selectively or genetically manipulated, until superhuman capabilities appear. Some transhumanists would replace the organic body altogether with superintelligent computers, robotic organs, implants, and prostheses (Nayar 8). Transhumanists also advocate for mind-uploading, often ignoring the problematic dualistic implications of this prospect (Hauskeller, *Mythologies of Transhumanism*). With the help of modern technologies, transhumanists seek to expand the toolbox of traditional humanism. The human condition may be reconceptualized as an "engineering problem" to be resolved through the application of technologies.^{iv} Hence, transhumanists commit the engineering fallacy, applying engineering principles to areas of reality where they possibly do not apply. The transformation of both mind and body will supposedly give individuals control over their human nature, increasing bodily autonomy. The popularity of liberalism among transhumanists is not surprising, although one could also view their scientific emphasis upon technological evolution as collectivist.^v Transhumanism retains humanism's conception of the human as an unfinished project to be cultivated, seeking to enhance, (or even supplant) human characteristics and capabilities through technological innovation, while leaving Enlightenment-era ideas about human self-mastery, rationality and scientism intact. Transhumanism is a "religion of science," guided by a belief in progress (Burdett). Similarly, Yunus Tuncel notes the inseparability of transhumanism and Enlightenment rationalism.^{vi} Transhumanism generally is committed to the normative goals of humanism, whilst adhering to a teleological and progressive interpretation of evolution. Therefore, we hold that transhumanism is merely an updated version of humanism and old liberal individualism.

Sorgner on the Transhumanism-Nietzsche Connection

At this juncture, we turn to the debate surrounding the Nietzsche-transhumanism connection (or lack thereof) which has been raging for two decades. The controversy was ignited by transhumanist philosopher Nick Bostrom's 2005 article, "A history of transhumanist thought." We shall concentrate upon Bostrom's specific mentions of Nietzsche. In the article, Bostrom associates transhumanism with the rationalist Enlightenment. The former is essentially a continuation of the latter. Despite the similarity of the transhumanist vision of posthumanity with Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, Bostrom believes the two are distinct and should be treated accordingly:

What Nietzsche had in mind [...] was not technological transformation but a kind of soaring personal growth and cultural refinement in exceptional individuals. [...] Despite some surface-

level similarities with the Nietzschean vision, transhumanism – with its Enlightenment roots, its emphasis on individual liberties, and its humanistic concern for the welfare of all humans (and other sentient beings) – probably has as much or more in common with Nietzsche’s contemporary the English liberal thinker and utilitarian John Stuart Mill. (4)

Transhumanism is rationalist and utilitarian, and Nietzsche famously despised both. Furthermore, the Nietzschean vision is more pedagogical than eugenic. But does this apparent separation do justice to Nietzsche’s outlook? In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes of “new philosophers” of the future who will “make use of religion for [...] breeding and education work” (54). Breeding and education seem interlinked. Indeed, the main goal of future philosophers will be to eradicate chance from human reproduction: “to teach humanity its future as its will, as dependent on a human will, to prepare for the great risk and wholesale attempt at breeding and cultivation and so to put an end to the gruesome rule of chance and nonsense that has passed for ‘history’ so far” (91). While one must be careful to avoid anachronism, it is also genuinely difficult to avoid the transhumanist and eugenicist implications of these sentences within Nietzsche’s texts.^{vii}

Stefan Lorenz Sorgner’s article, “Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism,” is a direct response to Bostrom. Sorgner lists a number of commonalities among transhumanists and Nietzsche. Both hold a processual view of reality and human nature: “there is nothing which is eternally fixed,” writes Sorgner, and both Nietzscheans and transhumanists would agree with such an assertion (30). Furthermore, as a consequence, “there are no absolute and unchanging values” (32). The dynamism of reality precludes objective, ahistorical value systems, and this necessitates open-endedness when it comes to constructing our values and ourselves. As Bostrom emphasizes, “a willingness to revise one’s beliefs and assumptions” is a key component of his liberal individualist transhumanism (“Transhumanist values”). For Sorgner, Nietzsche believed in science and critical thinking. Even the most speculative ontological concept of Nietzsche’s philosophy, the idea of eternal recurrence, was grounded in the best science of the era (33). Similarly, transhumanists are also highly supportive of the natural sciences, and hope to achieve enhancement of the human condition via technological means. Sorgner concedes that, when writing of the *Übermensch* (Sorgner’s preferred English translation is “overhuman”),^{viii} “Nietzsche does not refer to technological means of improvement [...] However, Nietzsche does not exclude the additional possibility of technological enhancement either” (Sorgner, “Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism” 38). This is unconvincing, for it is counterintuitive to infer the presence of implicit content from the absence of explicit references. Sorgner attempts to circumvent this criticism with a radical equation: *what if breeding and education are one and the same?* To support this contention, Sorgner mentions Nietzsche’s high esteem for Goethe. In Nietzsche’s eyes, the latter is something of an exemplar of the overhuman, at the very least a proto-overhuman. In *Twilight of the Idols*, among Goethe’s characteristics Nietzsche lists several which *can* be read in a transhumanist light. For example, while Goethe “made use of [...] natural science,” he “did not divorce himself from life but immersed himself in it,” he “fought against the disjunction of reason, sensuality, feeling, will” and, most importantly, “he disciplined himself into a whole, *he created himself*” (73-4). Goethe is both strong and highly educated, that is, well-bred.

Nietzsche’s hagiographic image of Goethe as a quasi/proto-overhuman “Dionysus” supposedly demonstrates that education is a form of breeding. Against Habermas, Sorgner asserts that “it might be the case that many qualities one develops on the basis of one’s education are embedded so deeply in one’s personality that they cannot get altered significantly,” leading to the conclusion that there is

no real difference between breeding and pedagogy.^{ix} The latter is not more empowering than the latter: parents selecting genes for their children are no worse than parents who choose a school. Sorgner also asserts that both are forms of enhancement: “if genetic engineering, or liberal eugenics, can actually be seen as a special type of education, which is what transhumanists seem to hold, then it is possible that this position would have been held by Nietzsche, too, as education played a significant role in his ethics” (35). If Goethe is a highly cultivated and well-bred exemplar of the proto-overhuman, as Sorgner claims, then transhumanists ought to be Nietzscheans and Nietzscheans ought to be transhumanists, for “the overhuman comes about via an evolutionary step which originates from the group of higher humans,” such as Goethe (38). Furthermore, if “it is in the interest of higher humans to permanently overcome themselves,” then all those who commits themselves to such permanent self-overcoming can be regarded “as an ancestor of the overhuman” (40). If “the world is will to power,” as Sorgner maintains in a later article, then we have no reason not to will our own self-enhancement. Beyond humanism: Reflections on trans-and posthumanism (Sorgner, “Beyond humanism: Reflections on trans-and posthumanism” 2). Nietzsche’s mythology of the overhuman provides a source of meaning for transhumanists, who, like Nietzsche, reject traditional religiously-grounded values.

In our opinion Sorgner’s reading suffers from a certain selectivity. While Nietzsche’s depiction of Goethe does contain an imperative to improve one’s self, it also references “nature-idolatry” and “a reverence for everything actual” that culminates in a fatalistic, albeit joyful acceptance of reality, the tragic sense of life: “such a liberated spirit stands in the midst of the universe with a joyful and trusting fatalism, with faith in the fact that only what is individual is reprehensible, that everything is redeemed and affirmed in the whole—he no longer denies” (Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, or How to Philosophize with a Hammer* 73-4). Sorgner does not refer to this paragraph, and rightly so: nothing is more alien to the spirit of transhumanism than fatalism, a Spinozistic idolization of nature’s spontaneous evolution, or acquiescence to changes we cannot ever hope to rationally control. In his defense of transhumanism, Sorgner never once references the tragic idea of life as explicated by Nietzsche, hence we reject the idea that Nietzsche could have been a transhumanist, for optimism, progressivism, scientism, liberalism, and a belief in the perfectibility of human nature seem essential components of transhumanism. Nietzsche believed in none of these modern values, precisely because the Nietzschean overhuman, while a self-improver, is at bottom, characterized by a fatalistic yet heroic attitude regarding nature. Even if transhumanists occasionally believe that they are not doing modernity or somehow going “beyond” it, at heart their project is still fundamentally modern, insofar as it is predicated upon a belief in the improvability of human nature, an idea utterly alien to premodern worldviews.

Nietzschean Transhumanism?

In this section of our paper, we summarize the main points of Nietzschean readings of transhumanism. Sorgner is not alone in supposing a connection between transhumanism and Nietzsche’s philosophy. Max More and Paul S. Loeb support Sorgner’s claims. More is one of the founders of the transhumanist movement. He claims that “transhumanist ideas were directly influenced by Nietzsche,” albeit “very selectively” (More, “The Overhuman in the Transhuman” 1). On this view, some of the more speculative elements of Nietzsche’s philosophy, such as eternal recurrence, have played a limited role, whereas More emphasizes the overhuman, presented in Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as an inspiration for transhumanists such as himself: “such an

influence does indeed exist,” asserts More, because “his [Nietzsche’s] ideas influenced my own thinking” (28). The implication is that transhumanism is an applied Nietzscheanism, a practical realization of Nietzsche’s ideas relating to the overhuman. Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* asserts that “human being is something that must be overcome” (41). Furthermore, “life must overcome itself again and again! [...] Life itself wants to build itself into the heights with pillars and steps; it wants to gaze into vast distances and out upon halcyon beauties – therefore it needs height!” (78). Overcoming is an ascending movement. Following Sorgner, More states that the concept of self-overcoming is consonant with transhumanist ideals of “Self-Transformation” and “Self-Direction” (More, “The Overhuman in the Transhuman” 3). On such a reading, the interpreter may pick and choose among Nietzsche’s concepts, selecting those most in harmony with one’s own views. But is such selectivity truly helpful or “Nietzschean?” What is to prevent us from selecting other passages from Nietzsche that undermine transhumanism, such as references to Romanticism, nature-idolatry and Nietzsche’s love for natural beauty?^x Nietzsche was an admirer of life as it is, a thinker of immanence, and this in our view puts him at odds with any idea of transcendence, including secularized eschatologies such as transhumanism. Nature worship seems incompatible with transhumanist rationalist constructivism and scientism.

If we accept that Nietzsche’s philosophy is a coherent whole, as Sorgner himself shows in an important monograph on Nietzsche, then selectivity becomes highly suspect in regard to Nietzsche’s key concepts.^{xi} Against More’s reading, Paul Loeb follows a different strategy. While sympathetic to transhumanism, Loeb is far more ambitious than More, attempting to reconcile the entirety of Nietzsche’s philosophy with transhumanism. In Loeb’s view, the two fundamental Nietzschean concepts are eternal recurrence and the overhuman (Loeb prefers the term “superhuman”).^{xii} For Loeb, the two are inseparable. The overhuman refers to “a future descendant species that will be stronger, healthier and more beautiful than the human species” (Loeb 85). Like transhumanists, Nietzsche is very vague about the possible characteristics of such a posthuman entity. Against More, Loeb claims that Nietzsche’s idea of eternal return is not a speculative metaphysics. Rather, it functions as a *scientifically true* ontological and cosmological statement.^{xiii} We agree with such an assessment. As Loeb notes, “Nietzsche’s ideal of affirming the eternal recurrence of reality and life only makes sense if these do in fact eternally recur (and, indeed, as he says, necessarily so)” (87). Hence, this ontological presupposition must be taken literally: everything repeats infinitely, and we must accept this as an unchanging fact of the world. Such a cyclical view of time is fundamentally opposed to a linear concept of time. One could easily view Nietzsche as an enemy of progress. Yet Loeb highlights that “[...] nothing in eternal recurrence that precludes the possibility of complete progress and success within every cycle of repetition. All that is precluded is some kind of trans-cyclical progress. But this is not a problem, since [...] the end of each cycle also brings with it the end of any consciousness that could witness the devolution of any attained intra cyclical progress” (89-90). In this manner, Loeb proposes to bridge progress and cyclicity, although on the whole we are left with a circular philosophy of time. We may take comfort from the idea of eternal recurrence, because all our achievements are eternal (although the same could also be said of our failures). Anybody with the strength to accept change can qualify as an “overhuman” or transhuman, the latter being somebody who has mastered the secret of time and learned “how to will backward in time” (92). Loeb essentially temporalizes the concept of “transhumanism,” both backwards and forwards. The “trans” in “transhumanism” refers to the transgression of barriers separating past, present, and future, achieved through limitless, affirmative will-power. The transhuman is capable of ascending *and* descending time’s spiral.

Another transhumanist defense of Nietzsche has been penned by Brett Carollo. As distinct from Bostrom, Carollo is quite open and unapologetic: “the same transgressive celebration of radical experimentation and human refashioning in Nietzsche that inspired National Socialism also links his thought to transhumanism” (71). Carollo does not ignore the fact that Nietzsche’s transvaluation of values strove to go beyond Judeo-Christian values. Enhancement constitutes a meta-value that links to a higher vision of the good life. The overhuman as a new species is for Nietzsche “the meaning of the earth” (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* 6). Indeed, overhumans are destined to “create for themselves a higher body” (22). For Carollo this implies that Nietzsche, like transhumanists, is not committed to an eternal, ahistorical view of human nature. Nietzsche’s processual worldview paves the way for the transformation of human nature (Carollo 72). Despite its anti-rationalism and anti-universalism, Nietzsche’s philosophy, through its “denial of any human essence or fixed human nature undercuts the bioconservative position and licenses untrammelled modification of the human organism in the name of ‘enhancement’” (73). Like Sorgner, Carollo recognizes the need for a mobilizing mythology for any truly powerful political and social movement. Transhumanism can only be legitimated by “a literal belief in our own capacities for apotheosis” (Fuller and Veronika, *The Proactionary Imperative: A Foundation for Transhumanism* 45). On the “proactionary” view advocated for by transhumanists, “can” equals “ought.” The transhuman option is a pathway for making humans into gods. Fuller is even more explicit in his wording: “in contemporary transhumanist terms, Prometheus and Satan are purveyors of an extreme version of ‘ableism,’ the ideology of the indefinite expansion of particular human capacities, even if that entails exploding the integrity of the person” (Fuller, *Nietzschean Meditations: Untimely Thoughts at the Dawn of the Transhuman Era* 46).^{xiv} Transhumanism is *Promethean shamelessness*. A Nietzschean affirms everything, including failed experiments and evolutionary dead-ends. In Carollo’s evaluation, “both the Nietzschean superman and the transhumanist posthuman reflect a perennial impulse toward self-divinization that I refer to as apotheosis” (Carollo 78). This reveals transhumanism as a mysticism and titanism. But we believe Nietzsche had nothing but disdain for mysticism, as the latter is animated by an ascetic rejection of the world and nature. Hence, while of interest, Carollo is unconvincing when it comes to *equating* Nietzsche with transhumanism and not merely using the former’s philosophy for legitimating the transhuman eschatological project. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche affirms that even our inner character is an object of fate: “at our foundation, ‘at the very bottom,’ there is clearly something that will not learn, a brick wall of spiritual *fatum*, of predetermined decisions and answers to selected, predetermined questions” (123). Human beings are not entirely malleable on such a view. Nietzscheans accept nature, including human nature and the law of eternal recurrence, while transhumanists rebel against nature.

Nietzschean Criticisms of Transhumanism

In this concluding section, we shall summarize some of the main Nietzschean criticisms of perceived transhumanist adaptations and/or appropriations of Nietzsche’s philosophy. For reasons of brevity, we must restrict ourselves to three authors who are exemplary in this regard. The first is Babette Babich’s response to Sorgner. Babich argues that on the one hand, we are always already “transhuman,” in the sense that our lives are inherently inseparable from the many technologies we use (102). Transhumanism is redundant: technological development follows its own trajectory, with or without transhumanists promoting this process. On the other hand, transhumanists are uncritical regarding these technologies. Because of their optimism, transhumanists refuse to account for the unintended effects or existential risks of technological evolution (although Babich does mention

Bostrom's work on the existential risks of "superintelligent" Artificial Intelligence systems) (124). Babich agrees with Sorgner, insofar as "whatever Nietzsche was, he was no traditional humanist" (105). However she takes issue with Sorgner's equation of education with genetic engineering, and, furthermore, how this would supposedly prove the possibility of a Nietzschean transhumanism (108). While we are always already transhuman cyborgs, in its more utopian forms (such as the advocacy of immortality) transhumanism denies reality. Instead of accepting change, in the mode of the Nietzschean overhuman, the (prospective) transhuman seeks escape from reality and its imperfections: transhumanism "is all about not becoming the one you are but [...] becoming the one you wish you were, the one you 'should have' been all along" (110). In essence, transhumanism is an all-too-human resentment against evolution and organic life, and a hatred for the body. While Babich uses the "f-word" rather too liberally when berating transhumanists^{xv} and many of her rhetorical moves are wide of the mark,^{xvi} her train of thought is convincing. The Nietzschean overhuman does seem to be more about "personal and intellectual cultivation" rather than explicitly technological enhancement. (113)

Babich concludes that not only does transhumanism have nothing to do with Nietzsche's philosophy, but also, and more radically, they are *antithetical* to one another: "Nietzsche excludes the kind of a transhumanism Sorgner speaks of, because and qua 'enhancement,' transhumanism is not at all about self-overcoming but is very much about self-preservation, self-assertion, self-advancement" (116). The overhuman is generous and heroic. As Nietzsche writes, "love and gratitude" are, prior to their solidification into moral obligations, the highest of virtues, the sources of "something sanctified and suprahuman" (Nietzsche 358). Transhumanists by comparison are concerned with preserving their individual lives: instead of being grateful to nature and striving to become what they are, accepting eternal recurrence, transhumanists seek to step outside history through the realization of immortality and self-deification. Simply put, for Babich "transhumanism is about not dying," symptomatic of a narcissistic failure to face mortality (120). Because of its utopian denial of reality, transhumanism is nothing more than "the latest and maybe not even the best [...] instantiation of the ascetic ideal" (123). At its core, Nietzscheanism is an affirmative or "active" nihilism, centering on generosity of spirit and sharing (or loss) of one's self. The overhuman spends and does not seek to save their life: "for Nietzsche, joy is not in saving, keeping, or preserving life. Joy is dispensation" (125). Becoming what one is differs from wishing away the corporeal and material limitations of one's human condition altogether.^{xvii}

Michael Hauskeller's response to Sorgner is more radical than Babich's. Transhumanists suppose that we have a moral duty towards future generations to make decisions that benefit them – the "principle of procreative beneficence." This includes the optimal choice of genes. However, a Nietzschean cannot believe in any universally valid moral imperative. If we accept a Nietzschean worldview, then "there are no moral facts and nothing that is truly better or worse than anything else" (Hauskeller 5). As Nietzsche writes in *Ecce Homo*, "the last thing I would promise would be to 'improve' humanity. I do not set up any new idols; let the old ones learn what it means to have legs of clay" (Nietzsche 4). This differs markedly from the insistence of transhumanists upon human enhancement. Hauskeller's main issue is that transhumanists do not take the transvaluation of values seriously enough. Nietzsche advocated for "the revaluation of all present values," while transhumanists "see themselves as defenders of the Enlightenment's legacy against its modern (bioconservative) enemies" (Hauskeller 6). Although technoscience is about gaining power over reality, the will to power itself cannot be rationalized, being "preconscious and non-rational although it has its own, superior, reason" (ibid). Another important ontological problem with enhancement is

that, as Nicholas Rescher pointed out, “there just is no real prospect of local tinkering with the world without wider ramifications. In this world—and indeed in any possible world—states of affairs are interconnected and local changes always have pervasive consequences” (Rescher 494). Even if human enhancement were possible, there is no guarantee that the wider unintended consequences would be deleterious. Furthermore, there being no fixed, essential boundaries between entities (including humans and nonhumans), one cannot ever know exactly what one is improving even if one were to be sure that one had implemented an actual improvement.

Sorgner does accept many of the points mentioned above in his own transhumanist interpretation of Nietzsche. In a later article, Sorgner mentions two forms of nihilism that may be extrapolated from Nietzsche’s philosophy: “alethic” and “ethical” nihilism. The former “affirms that all philosophical perspectives can be false,” while the latter “affirms that all non-formal concepts of the good are bound to be implausible” (Sorgner 255). Sorgner agrees with both forms of nihilism, but maintains that one can nonetheless assent to transhumanism while accepting nihilism.^{xviii} What Hauskeller finds most objectionable within transhumanism is the emphasis on life extension and immortality. As he notes, “most of us are far too insignificant and worthless to deserve immortality” (Hauskeller 7). Exceptional heroic individuals such as Goethe, Napoleon Cesare Borgia and Zoroaster attain individuality through their embrace of change. He is correct in pointing out how “non-selective affirmation by the overhuman” is something antithetical to “transhumanism’s morally toned selectivity” (8). Transhumanists desire to pick and choose from reality, whereas the overhuman affirms the eternal recurrence of everything and all experiences.

Finally, we shall reflect briefly upon Ciano Aydin’s critique of transhumanist Nietzsche-interpretations. Transhumanists seek enhancement of the human in the context of a program of “technological self-transformation” (Aydin 309). What makes transhumanism suspect for Aydin is its affirmation of humanist values. A self-interested liberal subject attempts to enhance its abilities, without any alteration in the structures of its subjectivity. Transhumanists attempt to preserve basic values of Enlightenment liberalism, such as self-determination, autonomy and private property. Yet all this can hardly accord with Nietzsche’s views. As Aydin observes correctly, “for Nietzsche, democracy, liberalism, and also humanism are, among many other modern ideologies, all guises of the tendency of the modern human being to canonize and eternalize his present state after the death of God” (312). Believers in the projects of modernity such as the transhumanists construct abstractions and work upon the perfectibility of Humanity, without realizing that the very idea of a universal humanity is a specific product made by modern, progressive ideologies. The demystifications of modernity become the sources of a new, narcissistic self-mystification: in the transhumanist vision “human being has no other objective and destiny outside himself. The modern, Western individual imprisons himself in the self-glorification and self-deification of his present state. Other possible life forms are, hence, excluded” (Aydin 313). Because of their inveterate anthropocentrism, transhumanists are unimaginative. All they can conceive of is a better human, a Human 2.0 whose values are nevertheless those of liberal democracy.^{xix} Nietzsche’s radical nonmodernism, his love of fate and nature, his dual affirmation of both tradition and the eternal return of change, all these aspects are lost upon transhumanists, with their optimistic belief in scientism.

According to David Roden, transhumanism is a form of humanism: “transhumanists [...] sign up to” [...] an “ethical view of humans as uniquely autonomous or self-fashioning animals. Like their humanist forebears, transhumanists think that human-distinctive capacities like rationality,

compassion and aesthetic appreciation are intrinsically valuable and should be cultivated and protected” (Roden, *Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the Edge of the Human* 15) It is only their adherence to technological methods in which transhumanists diverge from previous manifestations of humanism. Against transhumanists, Roden’s speculative posthumanism advocates for disconnectionism, the idea that any truly posthuman superintelligent entity cannot be conceived of along the lines of any human values whatsoever. The disconnection thesis “renders any reference to essential human characteristics unnecessary. The fact that some wide human descendant no longer belongs to the Wide Human implies nothing about its intrinsic properties or the process that brought about its disconnection” from human modes of being or cognition (Roden, “The Disconnection Thesis” 290). By leaving things vague, Nietzsche preserves the possibility of complete alterity between humans and overhumans/superhumans. As Aydin states correctly, “the gap between all the types of humans that we can imagine and the Overhuman” is “ultimately unbridgeable” (Aydin 314). Even a Cesare Borgia or Goethe are mere premonitions of the Overhuman. Transhumanists seek to preserve the humanist values of the Enlightenment, albeit in a naturalist mode. As long as they maintain a belief in the merits of rationalism, human self-determination and mastery over nature, transhumanists remain trapped within an anthropocentric mode of thought. They desire to change human nature “without changing or jeopardizing their humanist values and goals” (Aydin 315). Aydin maintains that “not self-overcoming but rather self-preservation seems to be the transhumanist’s goal” (319). Transhumanism on such a view is too humanist, modern and progressive to count as authentically Nietzschean.

A final issue, one perhaps fatal to any attempt to synthesize Nietzsche’s philosophy with transhumanism, is the former’s emphasis upon human finitude. We are limited beings, who must accept the fact of their embodiment. According to Martin Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche’s philosophy, “chaos is the name for bodying life, life as bodying writ large” (Heidegger 80). Commenting upon this observation, Nietzschean thinker Rafael Winkler observes that “the body in that precise sense must be made the basis and guideline for the interpretation of the world” (Winkler 90). If this is the case, a Nietzschean must accept the body as it is, in all its fragility and finitude. We can perhaps extend this body through time – who would not want more health or a few more years of creativity? But we are also limited and mortal beings. According to Robert C. Solomon, self-creation and fatalism are not mutually contradictory on a Nietzschean view. Rather, “we are more like the oarsmen of our fate, capable of heroic self-movement but also swept along in a sometimes cruel but open sea” (Solomon 424). If this is the case though, Nietzsche would never claim that we can take evolution into our own hands via technological or other means, as most transhumanists would like to believe.

Conclusion

What are we to make of the relationship between Nietzsche’s philosophy and transhumanism? *Can* one be a transhumanist and a Nietzschean simultaneously? Riccardo Campa suggests that essentializing Nietzscheanism and transhumanism into distinct schools of thought is not the way to go. Instead of passing final judgement, Campa proposes a typological approach, dividing transhumanism into four categories: “quasi-Nietzschean, Nietzschean, a-Nietzschean, and anti-Nietzschean” (Campa 17). In our view transhumanism is, at most, quasi-Nietzschean. But what was Nietzsche aiming for with the overhuman concept? Nietzsche was highly influenced by Zoroastrianism.^{xx} In that tradition God is embodied within specific, godlike influential individuals, overhumans (Hultgård 115). Zoroastrianism did not deny or negate the body, nor nature as a whole.

For Nietzsche the appeal of this religion lay in its immanentism, as well as its emphasis on permanent struggle *within* this world (Aiken). The will-to-power and self-overcoming are Zoroastrian concepts, even if the history of morality also commences with Zoroaster (Hassan 653). For Nietzsche, Zoroaster represents “the self-overcoming of morality, out of truthfulness; the self-overcoming of the moralist, into his opposite” (Nietzsche 90). Heroic individuals had, for Nietzsche, nothing to do with dreams of technological omnipotence or the Gnostic transcendence of nature, but were rather manifestations of a traditional idea of heroism as self-overcoming. In our view, the will to power of the Nietzschean overhuman differs fundamentally from the will to knowledge of the transhumanist. One is a linear, modern willing, while the other is a nonmodern mode of willing, a limitless assent to the inhuman nature of reality’s eternally recurrent flux. One is rational, progressively self-preservative; the other loses itself within time’s spiral. Transhumanists are incapable of assenting to imperfections such as death, illness and suffering. They are too weak for unlimited affirmation. Transhumanists seem to ignore that Nietzsche’s overhuman says “yes” to reality the way it is, affirming a heroic and tragic view of life, accepting all of its imperfection, whereas transhumanists strive to negate the undirected nature of evolution, rejecting what they see as the “unfairness of nature” (Hauskeller 2016). Because of the techno-Gnostic rejection of nature-worship on the part of transhumanists, it strikes us as erroneous to equate Nietzsche with transhumanism.

Notes

ⁱ Nayar, 2013, 5. There are of course important differences among transhumanists regarding the extent of such an evolutionary process.

ⁱⁱ More does reference the idea of “spontaneous order”: “extropians have a specific conception of transhumanism, involving certain values and goals such as boundless expansion, self-transcendence, dynamic optimism, intelligent technology, and spontaneous order.” More, 1996. These concepts – engineering evolution along the lines of rational principles vs spontaneous order – appear to be at odds with one another.

ⁱⁱⁱ Rose, 2013. Of course, not all transhumanists share the emphasis upon immortality or even life extension. Sorgner for example states that “I prefer to speak of extending the healthspan since most people are not interested in just living longer, but in staying healthy longer, which could be realized by means of biotechnology, cryonics (cryogenic freezing of organisms in the hope that life can be continued in the future), or by mind uploading. Many recent events in human history make it clear that the healthspan is not a fixed quantity but a dynamic one.” Sorgner, 2020, 2. The question of whether there are hard limits to the human lifespan is dogged by controversy. A 2016 paper ventured the claim that there does exist an inherent biological limitation to individual human life, although its conclusions were – perhaps understandably – hotly contested. Dong, Milholland and Vijg, 2016.; for a critique of Dong et. al.’s paper see: Brown, Albers and Ritchie, 2017.

^{iv} Canton, 2004; O’Brien, 2022.

^v Baggot, 2022,. Transhumanism can also be read as a collectivist and holistic shift away from Enlightenment-era liberal individualism though. Hellsten, 2012. It remains an open question whether a liberal democratic framework could handle the emergence of enhanced humans/posthumans, especially because of the normative commitment of liberal democracies to the principle of equality. See: Arnaldi, 2016.; Izquierdo, 2021.

^{vi} Tuncel, 2017, 227. To be fair, not all transhumanists are unaware of these issues and not all are committed to every one of these values. Bioethicist James Hughes, a supporter of transhumanism, has mapped the inner contradictions of mainstream transhumanism, highlighting how Enlightenment beliefs in progress and rationalism are inherently self-contradictory, and ought to be addressed if transhumanism is to become coherent and realistic. Hughes, 2010.

vii Nietzsche's philosophy had a demonstrable impact upon the early 20th century eugenics movement even prior to the advent of National Socialism in Germany. Stone, 2002.

viii In his response to Sorgner, Nietzsche scholar Paul S. Loeb prefers the term "superhuman" to "overhuman," as there is no English language equivalent for *Übermensch* and the latter does not make much sense, whereas the emphasis upon the transcendent nature of this posthuman being makes the "super-" prefix more than adequate. Loeb, 2017, 84. While we are etymologically in agreement with Loeb, for the sake of simplicity in this paper we shall restrict ourselves to Sorgner's usage.

ix Sorgner, 2009, 34. In this regard, Sorgner is not alone in the philosophy of pedagogy. John Dewey, the great American pragmatist philosopher, held that "habit" is the foundation of human subjectivity. Our habits are limitations which can only be changed very gradually over a lengthy period of time. There is therefore no inherent distinction between breeding and education.

x Under this we understand not an uncritical Romantic anthropomorphization of Nature (which Nietzsche rejected), but rather a recognition of the chaotic and inhuman character of Nature as in itself beautiful and worthy of respect, without attempting to force our human ideas of beauty upon it.

xi see: Sorgner, 2007.

xii Loeb does not explicitly mention several other crucial Nietzschean concepts, such as *amor fati* (love of fate) or the will to power.

xiii See Aphorism 109 of Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*.

xiv Fuller, 2020, 46. Max More, in an act of ostensible transgression which cannot but strike the cynical reader as overuse of a somewhat tired theological topos, has declared himself a "Luciferian," claiming that Lucifer symbolizes the critical and self-emancipative potential of humanity. However *outré* this pose may seem, it is far less original than it may appear. In fact, French writer (and Communist) Anatole France's 1914 novel, *The Revolt of the Angels* (*La Révolte des Anges*) presents Satan as a progressive revolutionary figure. However France's use of the Satan metaphor is somewhat more reflexive than More's. To quote the novel, "God, conquered, will become Satan; Satan, conquering, will become God. May the fates spare me this terrible lot."

xv In a subsequent response article, Sorgner highlights that "I do not think that fascism is the appropriate word to use here, as fascism implies both authoritarianism and nationalism. Transhumanism clearly is no movement that could be in favor of nationalism" Sorgner, 2017, 141.

xvi Babich claims that transhumanism, with its associated optimistic long termism, distracts from more pressing issues such as climate change. This is a valid point, but a defender of transhumanism could conceivably counter that they in no way mean to distract from the ecological problematic, and share these concerns, as Sorgner himself underlines. Furthermore, economies are not zero-sum games or fixed pies, but rather variable productive flows.

xvii In response to Babich, Sorgner states that it is better for us to live with technologies than without them. Sorgner 2017, 147. Later on, he writes, "without innovations, all citizens equally do not benefit. What I suggest is that it is much better to promote technological innovations, even though initially only a small group might benefit from the outcomes of the innovations." 2017, 155. But this misses the mark: Babich does not reject technology altogether. Rather, what Babich is taking exception to are the exaggerated messianic hopes transhumanists attach to future technologies.

xviii One possibility Sorgner does not account for is *ontological* nihilism, the possibility that nothing whatsoever could exist in either a positive or negative sense, and ontological statements refer to nothing, not even the possibility of anything being anything other than nothing.

^{xix} As Riccardo Campa points out, “there is no way to find a liberal-democratic Nietzsche in the labyrinth of Nietzsche’s writings. Nietzsche is, indeed, an enemy of democracy, which he sees as a sublimation of Christianity, as the new weapon that the weak may use to curb the strong” Campa, 2019, 24.

^{xx} Even if we read Nietzsche’s Zarathustra as a parody of the historical Zoroaster, we must nevertheless note that the object of parody always retrospectively affects the one who engages in parody.

Works Cited

- Abrams, Jerold J. “Pragmatism, Artificial Intelligence, and Posthuman Bioethics: Shusterman, Rorty, Foucault.” *Human Studies* 27 2004, pp. 241–258.
- Aiken, David. “Nietzsche and his Zarathustra: A western poet's transformation of an eastern priest and prophet.” *Zeitschrift für Religions-und Geistesgeschichte* 55.4 2003, pp. 335–353.
- Arnaldi, Simone. “The end of history and the search for perfection. Conflicting teleologies of transhumanism and (neo) liberal democracy.” In: Ylönen, Marja and Pellizzoni, Luigi (eds.) *Neoliberalism and Technoscience. Critical Assessments*. Routledge, 2016, pp. 93–116.
- Aydin, Ciano. “The posthuman as hollow idol: A Nietzschean critique of human enhancement.” *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 42.3 2017: pp. 304–327.
- Babich, Babette. “Nietzsche’s Post-Human Imperative. On the ‘All-Too-Human’ Dream of Transhumanism.” In: Tuncel, Yunus ed. *Nietzsche and Transhumanism*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, pp. 101–133.
- Baggot, Michael. “A Thomistic assessment of contemporary transhumanism as a postmodern, secular, liberal movement.” In: Baggot, Michael; Gómez, Alberto García; Carrara, Alberto, and Tham, Joseph (eds.). *Enhancement Fit for Humanity. Perspectives on Emerging Technologies*. Routledge, 2022, pp. 129–176.
- Bailey, Ronald. “For Enhancing People.” In: More, Max and Vita-More, Natasha. eds. *The Transhumanist Reader*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013 pp. 327–345.
- Birnbacher, Dieter. “Posthumanity, Transhumanism and Human Nature.” In: Gordijn, Bert and Chadwick, Ruth. eds. *Medical Enhancement and Posthumanity*. Springer, 2009, pp. 95–106.
- Blackford, Russell. “Nietzsche, the *Übermensch*, and Transhumanism: Philosophical Reflections.” In: Tuncel, Yunus. ed. *Nietzsche and Transhumanism*. 2017, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 191–204.
- Bostrom, Nick. *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Bostrom, Nick. “Why I Want to Be a Posthuman When I Grow Up.” In: More, Max and Vita-More, Natasha. eds. *The Transhumanist Reader*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, pp. 218–235.
- Bostrom, Nick. “A history of transhumanist thought.” *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2005, pp. 1–25.
- Bostrom, Nick. “Transhumanist values.” (2001) <http://www.nickbostrom.com/tra/values.html>
- Bostrom, Nick and Roache, Rebecca. “Ethical issues in human enhancement.” In: Ryberg, Jesper; Peterson, Thomas S. and Wolf, Clark. eds. *New Waves In Applied Ethics*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 120–152.

- Brown, Nicholas J. L.; Casper J. Albers and Stuart J. Ritchie. "Contesting the evidence for limited human lifespan." *Nature* 546 2017, pp. E6–E7.
- Burdett, Michael S. "The religion of technology: Transhumanism and the myth of progress." Mercer, Calvin and Trothen, Tracy J. eds. *Religion and transhumanism: The unknown future of human enhancement*. Praeger, 2014, pp. 131–147.
- Campa, Ricardo. "Nietzsche and Transhumanism: A Meta-Analytical Perspective." *Studia Humana* 8.4. 2019, pp. 10–26.
- Carollo, Brett. "Nietzsche and Transhumanism: A Reassessment." *The Agonist* 16.2. 2022, pp. 67–81.
- Dong, Xiao; Brandon Milholland and Jan Vijg. "Evidence for a limit to human lifespan." *Nature* 538. 2016, pp. 257–259.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *Our Posthuman Future. Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002.
- Fuller, Steve. *Nietzschean Meditations. Untimely Thoughts at the Dawn of the Transhuman Era*. Schwabe Verlag, 2020.
- Fuller, Steve and Lipińska, Veronika. *The Proactionary Imperative. A Foundation for Transhumanism*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Future of Human Nature*. Polity, 2003.
- Harari, Yuval Noah. *Homo Deus. A Brief History of Tomorrow*. Signal, 2016.
- Hassan, Patrick. "Nietzsche's Genealogical Critique of Morality & the Historical Zarathustra", *Ergo* 7. 2021: pp. 626–658.
- Hauskeller, Michael. *Mythologies of Transhumanism*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Hauskeller, Michael. "My brain, my mind, and I: some philosophical assumptions of mind-uploading." *International journal of machine consciousness* 4.1. 2012, pp. 187–200.
- Hauskeller, Michael. "Nietzsche, the Overhuman and the Posthuman: A Reply to Stefan Sorgner." *Journal of Evolution and Technology*. 21.1. 2010, pp. 5–8.
- Hellsten, Sirkku K. "'The meaning of life' during a transition from modernity to Transhumanism and Posthumanity." *Journal of Anthropology* 2012.1. 2012, pp. 1–7.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche. Volumes 3 and 4*. ed. and tr. David Farrell Krell. HarperCollins, 1991.
- Hughes, James. "Contradictions from the enlightenment roots of transhumanism." *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 35(6). 2010: pp. 622–640.
- Hultgård, Anders. "Man as symbol of God." *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 10. 1979, pp. 110–116.
- Huxley, Julian. "Knowledge, Morality, and Destiny." *The William Alanson White Memorial Lectures, third series. Psychiatry* 14.2. 1951, pp. 127–151.
- Izquierdo, Pedro José. "The Inequality of the Enhanced Man: The Transhumanist Challenge to the Liberal Juridical Order." *Persona & Derecho* 84. 2021, pp. 347–368.

- Leung, King-Ho. "The technologisation of Grace and Theology: Meta-theological insights from transhumanism." *Studies in Christian Ethics* 33.4. 2020, pp. 479-495.
- Loeb, Paul S. "Nietzsche's Transhumanism." In: Tuncel, Yunus. ed. *Nietzsche and Transhumanism*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, pp. 83-101.
- Mayr, Ernst. "The idea of teleology." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 53, no. 1. 1992, pp. 117-135.
- More, Max. "The Philosophy of Transhumanism". In: More, Max and Vita-More, Natasha (eds.). *The Transhumanist Reader*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, pp. 5-18.
- More, Max. "The Overhuman in the Transhuman." *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, vol. 21, no. 1 2010, pp. 1-4.
- More, Max. "Transhumanism. Towards a Futurist Philosophy." 1996. <https://www.ildodopensiero.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/max-more-transhumanism-towards-a-futurist-philosophy.pdf>
- Nayar, Pramod K. *Posthumanism*. Polity, 2013.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Ecce Homo. How To Become What You Are*. tr. Duncan Large. Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. tr. Adrian Del Caro. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil. Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. tr. Judith Norman. Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Twilight of the Idols, or How to Philosophize with a Hammer*. tr. Duncan Large. Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Human, All Too Human. A Book for free Spirits*. tr. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- O'Brien, David. "The human being as an engineering problem: Post-biological evolution, transhumanism and philosophical anthropology." *Technoetic Arts: A Journal of Speculative Research*, vol. 20, no. 1-2. 2022, pp. 79-94.
- Rescher, Nicholas. "On the Improvability of the World." *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 64, no. 3, 2011, pp. 489-514.
- Roden, David. *Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the Edge of the Human*. Routledge, 2015.
- Roden, David. "The Disconnection Thesis." In: Eden, Amnon H.; Moore, James H.; Søraaker, J. H. and Steinhart, Eric. eds. *Singularity Hypotheses. A Scientific and Philosophical Assessment*. Springer, 2012, pp. 281-301.
- Rose, Michael R. "Immortalist fictions and strategies." In: More, Max and Vita-More, Natasha (eds.) *The Transhumanist Reader*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, pp. 196-204.
- Solomon, Robert C. "Nietzsche's Fatalism." in: Ansell-Pearson, Keith (ed.) *A Companion to Nietzsche*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2006, pp. 419-435.
- Sorgner, Stefan Lorenz. *On Transhumanism*. tr. Spencer Hawkins. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020.

- Sorgner, Stefan Lorenz. "Zarathustra 2.0 and Beyond: Further Remarks on the Complex Relationship between Nietzsche and Transhumanism." In: Tuncel, Yunus. ed. *Nietzsche and Transhumanism*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, pp. 133-172.
- Sorgner, Stefan Lorenz. "Immortality as Utopia and the Relevance of Nihilism." In: Tuncel, Yunus. ed. *Nietzsche and Transhumanism*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, pp. 248-262.
- Sorgner, Stefan Lorenz. "Beyond humanism: Reflections on trans-and posthumanism." *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, vol. 21, no. 2. 2010, pp. 1-19.
- Sorgner, Stefan Lorenz. "Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism." *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, vol. 20, no. 1. 2009, pp. 29-42.
- Sorgner, Stefan Lorenz. *Metaphysics Without Truth. On the Importance of Consistency within Nietzsche's Philosophy*. Marquette University Press, 2007.
- Stone, Dan. *Breeding Superman. Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain*. Liverpool University Press, 2002.
- Tirosh-Samuelson, Hava. "In Pursuit of Perfection. The Misguided Transhumanist Vision." *Theology and Science*, vol. 16, no. 2. 2018, pp. 200-222.
- Tuncel, Yunus. "The Question of Pain and Suffering in Nietzsche and Transhumanism." In: Tuncel, Yunus. ed. *Nietzsche and Transhumanism*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, pp. 220-231.
- Winkler, Rafael. *Philosophy of Finitude. Heidegger, Levinas and Nietzsche*. Bloomsbury, 2018.
- Wolfe, Cary. *What is Posthumanism?* University of Minnesota Press, 2010.