TRANSHUMANISM AND LIMITS OF ENHANCEMENT

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Abstract
Transhumanism with its notion of evolutionary humanism questions the more traditional understanding of human nature as a constant and fixed reality. Transhumanism maintains that the frontiers of human condition can always be expanded for a posthuman to emerge. This implies a movement from what has been described as humanity 1.0 to humanity 2.0. In this movement, propelled by the idea of morphological freedom, made possible by burgeoning technological advancements, humans can be progressively and comprehensively enhanced to surpass human finitude and contingencies. This position can be philosophically disquieting as it grapples with what the dire consequences of unmitigated enhancement in the light of evolutionary humanism wrought by technology would amount to for both the individual, the society and humanity at large. The present work, using the method of hermeneutics, while acknowledging that human nature could be amorphous or at best slippery in its conceptualization, and recognizing the difficulty in determining at what point human nature is essentially altered, argues for a limit in the degree of enhancement as it raises objection to the idea of unmitigated morphological freedom. The basic argument is that while human condition can be enhanced, it must be moderated by the idea of an essence lest man tows the path of self-destruct. To enhance without limit is to enhance without end and such has a destructive consequence for the notions of equality and morality which are the bedrock of the society. The work concludes by maintaining that at every point in time the idea of man as a moral being and the value of human condition must always be considered in determining what constitutes a genuine human life.
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Introduction

The emergence of transhumanist school of thought brings to the fore argument about the nature of human nature. The idea of evolutionary humanism found in transhumanism questions the more traditional idea that human nature is constant and fixed reality. The latter essentialist position purports to show that human nature embodies a fundamental reality, essence which can be grasped. The notion of a constant human nature has been challenged by an evolutionary perspective that denies any rational necessity of human nature which it considers an unchanging essence. Transhumanism is rooted in the understanding that human nature is a changing reality. It maintains that the frontiers of human condition can always be pushed for a posthuman to emerge. This implies a movement from what has been described as humanity 1.0 to humanity 2.0. In this and armed by the idea of morphological freedom, made possible by burgeoning technological advancements, humans can be

progressively and comprehensively enhanced to surpass human finitude and contingencies. Not a few have been disturbed by the implications of a view of humanity that denies a constant human nature while it holds that human nature can be brazenly altered as a technological reality. Francis Fukuyama could not but entitle his work as, "transhumanism: an Ontology of world Most Dangerous idea" to show his disdain for transhumanist's view of humanity. The present work while it acknowledges that human nature could be amorphous or at best slippery in its conceptualization, and recognizing as well about the difficulty in determining at what point human nature is essentially altered argues for a limit in the degree of enhancement as it raises objection to the idea of unmitigated morphological freedom. The basic argument is that while human condition can be enhanced, it must be moderated by the idea of an essence lest man tows the path of self-destruct. To enhance without limit is to enhance without end and such has a destructive consequence for the notions of equality and morality which are the bedrock of the society. The work concludes by maintaining that at every point in time the idea of man as a moral being and the value of human condition must always be considered in determining what constitutes a genuine human life.

In dealing with the topic, the work in the first section gives the general outlines of transhumanist philosophy. The second section specifically deals with the conceptualization of human nature as a fluid reality that encourages unmitigated enhancement. It does not however fail to match it with opposing arguments mainly from the stand point of an essentialist conception of the human nature though some arguments while they appear to defend the essentialist position are really non-essentialist and pragmatic. The last beams its light on the idea of morphological freedom that engineers the possibility of unmitigated enhancement. It evaluates its consistent application based on its consequences for the individual and humanity at large. The arguments for and against enhancement continue to be evaluated in which the conclusion reached is that the givenness of the human nature and the enhancement of the same must be kept in a breadth of balance for a genuine human life.

Understanding Transhumanism

Julian Huxley (1957, 17) seems to have set the tone of transhumanism earlier in his work, *New Bottles for New Wine* wherein he projects a vision of evolutionary humanism, an audacious vision of humanity transcending itself "by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature." Huxley,(Harrison & Wolyniak, 2015, 465-467) known for significantly popularizing transhumanism advocates for the utilization of all available knowledge in giving guidance and encouragement to the continuing adventure of human development. This advocacy taken by itself may not seem as disruptive until Huxley (1992, 287) maintains pointedly that humanity is at an early stage of evolution and by means of technology, it will evolve to a better state. Humanity as evolving is the key point of departure of transhumanism and has been the nourishing factor of that thought which has since become a movement. According to Huxley (1957, 17), humanity will be "consciously fulfilling its real destiny" by taking charge of the evolutionary process. Thus, in this evolution, it is humanity that would be the pilot, not nature. Advances in technology are cap in hand to realize this dream:

nanotechnology, biotechnology, robotics etc. Max More, a leading transhumanist scholar, opines that transhumanists take Humanism further by challenging human limits by means of science and technology in league with critical and creative thinking. Newton Lee, the chairman of the California Transhumanist Party shares the same view in regarding Transhumanism as the next logical step in the evolution of humankind, and as the existential solution to the long-term question of survival of the human race. (Carvus, 2021) Nick Bostrom, a key proponent of transhumanism writes that humanity as we know it, is not the end point of evolution but a rather earlier stage to be surpassed. It is just one point along the spectrum of the evolutionary pathway. Through technological application in a thoughtful and bold manner, humans become posthumans, which exceed or overcome what the transhumanists consider less desirable and aching aspects of the human condition such as aging disease, death and imbued with more outstanding cognitive capabilities which may manifest in more refined emotions such as experiencing less anger and more joy. (More, 2013, 4) The ultimate desire of the transhumanists is a transition to post humanity. This is what fuels their dream to overcome and supersede the current human condition, which for them is limiting and obstructing. Once these limitations on the quality and length of human life have been surpassed, humans will be able to exist as posthumans, having willfully transcended the biological constraints through self-directed evolution. Steve Fuller (2011, 20) characterizes the movement from the humans of today to the re-engineered beings of the future as the transition from Humanity 1.0 to a new Humanity 2.0 where the former is defined by our biological limits and the latter is defined by better-than-human technological enhancements. This distinction obviously reflects a vision of the human body and the human condition as extrinsic to our humanity. Transhumanists' aspiration is towards the dawn of a posthuman goal of infinity: an engineered being who no longer experiences suffering, possesses super intelligence, and ultimately *athanatos*. This goal corresponds to what Benjamin D. Ross (2019) considers the three defining limiting structures of the human being which are intended to void, namely suffering, ignorance and mortality.

The mention of post human here should not be confused with Posthumanism as a current of thought. It may be important to clarify briefly. Posthumanism and transhumansim are one in their reacting against what they perceive as the limitation of humanism. They are also one in denying the essentialist view of humanity. However their agenda are different. Posthumanism while relying on the humanist values such as reason, individual autonomy etc. seeks to break the boundary that traditional humanism places between the human and natural world which humanism casts as an object of manipulation. Relying on the doctrine of evolution, posthumanism seeks to blur the boundaries between human beings and nature, as affirmation of evolution is an affirmation of human beings as a natural process of the earth, the reason that posthumanism is considered anti- creationism and so a religious threat. While Transhumanism works with man, his natural limitations and potential options for his removal, to improve and change human characteristics by biological and cognitive modifications through technology, Posthumanism expands the very space of agency by including nonhuman objects and rejecting the binary oppositions of human-nonhuman, culture-nature or humanism-antihumanism. Posthumanism is therefore a

rejection of anthropocentricism. Transhumanism on the other hand, either retains the central position for man or does not problematize man's position among other objects. However, its functionalist and physicalist outlook can be seen among traditionalists as devaluing man. (See Merzlykov, 2022, 475-482) While Posthumanism hinging on what it perceives as crisis of humanism spells the end of human exceptionalism, transhumanism hinging on the end of this exceptionalism and arrogant superiority, becomes the harbinger of technological humanism that unfolds in the posthuman.

The posthuman has been described as the individual who has surpassed biological determinism, with its being shown to be embodied in an extended technological world. The post human condition involves therefore, "gradual overturning of a human centered world, demolishing old categories and giving room to new forms of technological being such as corrective genetic therapies, experimentation with bodily manipulation or implants and memory enhancements or even disembodied states of being such as brain downloading." (Campbell, 2006) The posthuman is therefore, the *telos* of transhumanism which is a philosophy that continually pushes the frontier of humanity that must be transcended for the posthuman to emerge. Transhumanism emerges as a philosophy and as movement whose agenda lies in what it considers ethical duty of enhancing the human capacities aimed at overcoming the physical and cognitive limitations of human life; eliminating pain and suffering associated with human finitude as experienced through ignorance, disease, ageing, and ultimately death. In doing this, it draws upon, while trying to overcome, the long existing debate about the nature of human existence which came to be reinforced in the Humanist philosophical tradition since the Enlightenment.

Human Nature as a Fluid Reality in Transhumanism

In the history of philosophy, the vast majority of philosophical concepts in the history of thought are based on the paradigm of human nature as a fixed reality. Hauskeller (2013, 64) however, notes that for the transhumanists, the true human is still to be created and this is by humans. Transhumanism therefore rejects the assumption that human nature is constant. There is nothing sacrosanct about nature in general and human nature in particular. Hauskeller distinguishes between two contrasting views about human nature in transhumanist thought, the first which "understands nature as that which confines us, setting limits to what we can do and be (…in form of our own bodies…), while the second "understands nature as that which allows and indeed urges us to overcome all limits and boundaries." With regard to the first view, what we call nature is determined by our lack of certain abilities, what we cannot do rather than what we can do. Thus "We encounter our nature primarily in the form of boundaries, when we simply cannot get what we want, not because the external world puts obstacles in our way, but because of ourselves, our own inability." (Hauskeller, 2013, 65) This understanding of human nature makes it compelling that any improvement in human condition would require a change in human nature: "more precisely a restriction and curtailment of human nature, and ultimately its dissolution." (Hauskeller, 2013, 65) Thus the enhanced human will be completely different from ours for it will be "natureless," an "un-nature" The second view is a promethean concept of human nature whose task is simply to surpass the former, that is the limiting nature with the Nietzschean (Nietzsche, 1966, 66) understanding of man "as

yet undetermined animal" possessing possibilities never been realized. This while it is a fact of human existence is an essential possibility which itself is not merely a possibility but also a mission. The transhumanists, anchoring on the latter's liberating character seek as a mission, to overcome the constraints of the first view, with humans as the executor. Thus transhumanist enhancement technologies are geared towards transcending the "natural, but harmful, confining qualities derived from our biological heritage culture and environment." (More, 2013, 4-5) These limits are simply seen as technical problems that can be solved. According to Hauskeller (2013, 64-66), transhumanist project proceeds on the assumption that "The true human is still to be created. And it is to be created by us, as progress-oriented beings." Thus pushing beyond the frontiers of the human nature in a creative engagement is the true goal of rational faculties that humans possess. With 'no nature' thesis, it seems that there is no definite improvement being sought, for "the main object seems to be freedom itself, and not necessarily the freedom to reach certain goals that we have identified as desirable… ." (Hauskeller, 2013, 67) It is in fact ceaseless transcendence to be anything whatever. The challenge, however, is about what remains of the person in question when continuously saying more is itself a cornerstone to one's identity? Does the culmination of the unending projection not entail one's own cancellation as one gives way to the emergence of the posthuman. Every concrete end becomes a means to greater freedom. This statement immediately captures the secular and atheistic basis of transhumanism which in being this-worldly is secular without metaphysical reference, pointing once again to its enlightenment roots.

The human person in this ambience is seen as fundamentally and thoroughly subject to natural and physical laws. Thus, it can be manipulated like other objects. This shows a deconstructionist view of the human person which lacks any metaphysical underpinning and non-essentialist interpretation, for it is a reality constantly subject to change without any permanent/constant referent. This is indicative that the prefix 'trans' in transhumanism is an immanent, secular going beyond. It is however, an evolutionary movement not left to the dynamics of nature but has man and his technology as the architect of the process. Technological angle is the distinguishing point between humanism and transhumanism which goes beyond the former. According to More, while humanism tends to rely on improving human nature through cultural and educational refinement, transhumanism turns to technology to improve human condition. (Bäckström, 2020) Perhaps these metaphysical dangers and more may be part of the reasons Francis Fukuyama (2004, 42-43) refers to transhumanism as "the world's most dangerous idea." Hannah Arendt (1998, 2-3) in this light worries that "the future man" is "possessed by a rebellion against human existence as it has been given, a free gift from nowhere…which he wishes to exchange, as it were, for something he has made himself." Put in clearer terms, the worry is about the transhumanists seeking to end the era of human beings as we know them.

The first and major casualty in this projection is the body which is perceived as a great impeding factor to the realization of the awesome dream. The attempt to overcome human nature is practically realized "as the attempt to reduce and ultimately eliminate our corporality." (Hauskeller, 2013, 65) There is among the transhumanists, the shared

understanding of the insufficiency of the biological body. Ingrid Bäckström (2020) observes that the motivation as to how and why of the insufficiency varies within the transhumanist community. The body's biggest flaw ranges from its vulnerability that makes it prone to disease, ageing and illness, decomposing process. For others, the human body has evolved through the course of thousands of years to succeed in the environment that we are in now and so the insufficiency lies in its inability to strive to survive in other environments. In all, the underlining thought is that there is something about the human body that needs to be modified, altered, improved, if not entirely superseded. This precisely entails machine-body liaison, the replacing of the organic parts with less easily destructible artificial devices and finally surpassing the organic body through mind uploading to enable digital existence. Hauskeller (2013, 66) refers to the nature of enhanced human as ideally "a bodiless nature," and *ipso facto* an unnature, for according to him, "it is the absence of a body which shows most clearly the absence of nature, or rather our liberation from it." It may be important to point out that such transhumanists like Nick Bostrom (2006, 48) still entertain embodiment in their presentation while aligning with the general view of transhumanism when he maintains that "a first priority is to abandon the unquestioning assumption that human nature and the human condition will remain fundamentally unchanged throughout the current century." He argues that our biological capacities are bound to be radically different when he opines that "We still eat, sleep, defecate, fornicate, see, hear, feel, think and age in pretty much the same ways as the contemporaries of Sophocles did. But we may now be approaching a time when this will no longer be so." (Bostrom, 2006, 48) This shows enhancement that radically affects biological capacities and relevance.

Robert Manzocco (2019, 183) thinks in terms of the "Flesh of the Future" which in the real sense is absence of the flesh in which sex is decoupled from reproduction, precipitating a post gender society where embodiment is strictly under human control with the final destination being a real telepathic civilization where flesh becomes dispensable. As if assuring that it is near in sight, Manzocco (2019, 184) claims a certain feat to the effect that "We have eliminated the heart, lungs, red and white blood cells, platelets, pancreas, thyroid and all of the organs that produce hormones, kidneys, bladder, liver, the lower part of the esophagus, stomach and intestines." Eduardor Cruz (2021) considers these claims as exaggerated and so considers them as "a likely scenario for proposals of enhancement." They however, according to Cruz, point to the transhumanist's reductionist interpretation of human nature which among others give preeminence to reason, and devalue the biological.

Katherine Hayles (1999, 3) gives a summary of the four basic characteristic transhuman-posthuman assumptions: First is that material instantiation and embodiment is an accident of history rather than an inevitability of life; Second consciousness is an epiphenomenon and there is no immaterial soul; Third the body is simply a prosthesis and so replacing them or enhancing human function with other prostheses is only a natural extension of our fundamental relationship with our begotten bodies; Lastly, human being can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machine since there are no essential difference or absolute demarcations between

bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot technology and human goals." What obtains in this scenario is movement from "a decentering of the human as the central point of agency" to a "mechanic, augmented, and distributable agency." (O'Riordan, 2011, 295) In this perspective, the human body is conceived as "a controllable and customizable vessel designed to allow humanity to reach a more complete and lasting existence…" (Fletcher,2012, 17)

Hauskeller (2013, 63-75) in his "Messy Bodies: From Cosmetic Surgery to Mind-Uploading" traces how we attempt to become machine-like in order to become free to shape our destiny. The four stages include illusionism, fortification, replacement and displacement. Illusionism describes the practice of changing one's appearance to align with a commonly accepted standard of beauty. Fortification "is the attempt to make the human body less vulnerable and more capable." Replacement refers to "the practice of replacing human body parts with artificial ones," while displacement "is the practice of replacing the whole body by something more durable or altogether immaterial." For some transhumanists like Aubrey de Grey the answer lies in tweaking and re-engineering our biological bodies.

Among the most debated are the genetic enhancement technologies which aim towards improving genetically based traits and capabilities in normal and healthy individuals. Genetic mechanism through mutation and recombination which play key role in evolution could be open to modifications by genetic engineering. For instance, emerging genome editing technologies such as CRISPR-Cas9 can delete and replace existing genetic materials and allow the insertion of new genes in any living organism. Genetic changes effected through germline interventions have great scale of impact that overtime significantly affect human evolution. (See Rueda, 2022) Genetic enhancement influencing the germline of future generations irrevocably modifies and enhances positively non-pathological traits for improved health and optimal performance though it must be pointed out that the parameters for marking what constitutes "optimum performance" "species-normal" levels are not neat venture. This among others raises ethical concerns such as the future generation being altered drastically without their consent, though this is not within the precincts of the present research. For others it is more radical solution of mind uploading or technological replacement of our current biological bodies. (See Danaher, 2013) Sorgner's (2021) work "Transhumanism without Mind Uploading and Immortality", without making a case against the possibility of mind uploading, considers gene or cyborg technologies as far more likely possibility of fulfilling the transhumanist desire of surpassing the current limitations of our existence in the near future. He considers both of these types of technologies as progressing rapidly fast "due to the central relevance they have for promoting a widely shared human goal, the prolonging of our health-spans."

Philip Hefner (2009, 158-167) distinguishes between what he terms Upper case Transhumanism and Lower Case Transhumanism. The Upper case transhumanist project the hypothetical scenario in which the human condition is completely transcended thanks to technological advancements. For these, such as Victor Vinge, Ray Kurzweil, the futurist singularity in which the acceleration of technological

development would be driven beyond the human control represents a point where "our old models must be discarded and a new reality rules." (Vigne, 2013, 366) This is what fuels the transhumanist ambition of Mind Uploading or Whole Brain Emulation as Anders Sandberg and Nick Bostrom (2008, 7) prefer to refer to it. Kurzweil (2005) in *The Singularity is Near* argues that as the development of information technologies accelerates, we will become cyborgs and upload ourselves, in this way transcending biology. The idea as John Harris (2007) puts it is to enhance evolution. With this, "enhancement evolution" replaces Darwinian evolution. The Lower case transhumanists adopting a milder tone focus on the enhancement of the human nature. Aubrey De Grey (2007) who is one of the key proponents is more concerned with developing rejuvenation biotechnologies, new biomedicines and biomedical therapies that are capable of repairing cellular damage caused by biological ageing processes. The aim is, without upholding a strong notion of physical immortality of the Upper Case Transhumanism, to maintain a state of negligible senescence by "altering and significantly delaying the ageing processes of the human body." This is not a mere theory or a fringe concern. As a matter of fact, opportunities to invest in radical life extension abound. In Silicon Valley for instance there are numerous attempts. Google was an early investor in the secretive biotech start-up Calico which aims at interventions that slow aging; there has also been investment in parabiosis running in millions of dollars by billionaire venture capitalist Peter Thiel. Parabiosis is the process of "curing aging with transfusions of young people's blood; United Therapeutics, a biotech firm plans to grow fresh organs from DNA such that the firm's founder on using technology "to make death optional." (Ross, 2019) While the Upper Case Transhumanism is radical, the Lower Case operates on the assumption that "it is good to enhance human physical and mental capacities and override any undesirable traits by utilizing various therapies," (Leidenhag, 2020) as well as on the assumption that the current biological make up given that it is not our can be and even must be enhanced and this entails "not merely fixing something that is wrong (therapy) but designing our human nature in a manner in accordance with our ideals (enhancing)." (Ross, 2019)

What this means is that the Upper Case is different from the Lower Case merely in scope of the enhancement technology they allow. The Upper Case is radical while the lower case is moderate and more mundane. They are distinguished by how we should enhance. Yet, fundamentally they adopt similar stance with regard to changing human physicality through modern technology. It seems that both do not draw any line between therapy and enhancement which they consider as arbitrary. This has been dubbed "line-drawing objection" which states that "it is impossible to draw a strict line between therapy and enhancement given that curing S of some disease entails enhancing the life experience of S." (Murray, 2007, 491-515) John Harris (2007, 102) follows this line of argument in his casuistic reasoning in which he redefines the therapeutic treatment of diseases of old age. He presents the familiar of scenario of elderly person receiving some sort of medicine or cure to combat the effects of an illness to prolong and improve life. Harris does not see the reason why the same acceptance would not be given to a scenario where the ageing process is regenerated or altogether switched off. According to him both practice have the same end result of

improved existence through prolonged life even if by medical definition. He concludes thus, "We do not die of old age but of diseases of old age. It is species typical of us to die of these as we normally do, but it is not necessarily necessary that we do." Mark Coeckelbergh (2017) in his submission, argues that the existence of mundane enhancement technologies blurs the distinction and makes problematic the distinction between therapy and enhancement. These have always been entertained and it is not about therapy but about making ourselves better than normal: cosmetic surgery, life extension thanks to medical science, stimulants such as nicotine and caffeine that improve attention, diets and dietary supplements, prostheses that are better for running, digital information technologies, etc.

Both camps have also argued that the realms of humanity and technology are fast being ontologically indistinguishable and so resistance is an effort in futility. This spells of certain orientation towards technological determinism which obviously is fallacious by ignoring the human interests and values (technological voluntarism) at the root of technological advancements. With this technological determinism, both camps hold the view that the genie has been let out of the bottle and so it is too late to rewind the clock of technological progress, the only choice being an embrace of posthuman future.

Transhumanism and the Idea of Morphological Freedom

The idea of morphological freedom is the cornerstone of the transhumanist project and for Anders Sandberg, this freedom is essential not just to transhumanism but also to any future democratic society. This again shows the transhumanism's historical roots with enlightenment which is marked by fierce libertarianism, which basically spells out that each individual is the final arbiter of what is right and appropriate for his or her life. The term, morphological freedom, may have been coined by the philosopher Max More in his 1993 article, "Technological Self-Transformation: Expanding Personal Extropy." In this work, More (1993) defines morphological freedom as "the ability to alter bodily form at will through technologies such as surgery, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, uploading." According to Sandberg (2001), morphological freedom is not just about "an extension of one's right to one's body, not just self-ownership but also the right to modify oneself according to one's desires." Sandberg argues that the absolute ownership of one's body implies the right to undergo bodily, genetic, or prosthetic modifications. This idea is mentioned in the transhumanist Bill of Rights which uphold that human beings in whatever forms could do as they please with their physical and cognitive attributes provided no harm is done to another.

In his argument, Sandberg (2013, 57) posits that human rights are derivative of other human rights. Accordingly the right to one's body is implicated in the right to life and freedom. He argues that "If we have a right to live and be free, but our bodies are not free, then other rights become irrelevant." Again, from the right of ownership of the body derives the right of modification of one's body. Thus the right to freedom must include morphological freedom and this according to Sandberg is not just concerned about passive preservation of the body and exploration of the inherent potential but

also freedom to change and enhance the inherent corporal potential. Continuing, Sandberg notes that technology enables new forms of self-expression, creating thereby a demand for the freedom to exercise them as a means towards self-actualization, in this case becoming posthuman.

Ross (2019) raises the question of how self-actualization is meaningful in the face of commitment to the principle of perpetual progress which transhumanism is committed to. The further question is how when immortality is achieved with the experience of continuous well-being, the idea of perpetual progress could apply. What state could be beyond immortality? Or do we have qualities or levels of immortality? The immortal digital human for instance envisioned by some transhumanists may be said to be fully and completely made, in this way one could say that the underlying metaphysics at play is the Unary and the Fixed, the Parmenidian Being dedicated to the repetition of the same. And such a life without any transcendental reference could be so boring as it would simply involve a repetition. If one removes the Heideggerian mood and perhaps holds that the repetition is not boring, then one risks simply saying that it is devoid of conscious subjectivity. One wonders what such a life would amount to both ontologically and existentially. But the transhumanist's idea of morphological freedom and perpetual progress is indicative of an unending process. This situation must be an existential burden for the techno-being that has no supernatural reference. A process that continues unending must itself be a burden such as a stagnation of being would be boring. Besides, such perpetual progress spells the fact of the presence of desire. This in itself shows that the digital man is not in any way immune to the natural limits which have always marked man. Desire implies time, incompleteness, separation. And all these indicate that he has not escaped the finitude which he saw as albatross, a fatal impediment to the wellbeing of man. Besides the idea that morphological freedom would lead to indefinite prolongation of life immediately affects the human creativity that have been the onto-existential engineering of many feats of history including the transhumanist agenda. According to McKibbon (2003, 160) when existence becomes immortal, it spells an irrevocable change. Within this new mode of existence, human desire and urge would be greatly affected such that the urge to complete great tasks would vanish with the knowledge that one could always try another day. Thus, the ambition that is the driver of the current greatness vanishes, struggling to achieve a goal or sacrificing everything for a cause disappears because according to McKibbon (2003, 160), "all the harmonies that make human life wonderful and special depend on the approximate shape of a human life," and this shape would be eclipsed by immortality. In any case immortality is not possible given the limited nature of the entire cosmos in the light of the second law of thermodynamics. The universe is limited and so cannot infinitely exist. This is true of its constituents including the digital man.

Sandberg (2013, 57) adds that morphological freedom is a negative right in the sense that the right to modify one's body is not morally obligatory for the other to support though they may not prevent the person from the modification. He submits, "If I want green skin, it is my own problem—nobody has the moral right to prevent me, but they do not have to support my ambition." It is also negative in the sense that it implies that people cannot force other people into changing in a way that the individual does not

desire. Morphological freedom is therefore a maximizing of personal autonomy and fundamental right. This, for Sandberg (2013, 57), is a safeguard against coercive of high tech companies. He however acknowledges that there are cases where morphological freedom becomes problematic such as cases of people with cognitive or physical conditions among others. Yet this cannot be a sufficient argument to undo morphological freedom or even any other freedom since according to him all ethical systems have messy bother lines and limits.

The idea of morphological freedom to modify *ad libitum* raises the question of the end product of such modification: can such end product of modulation be human or other reality? This question may be problematic for the bio-conservatives and traditionalists, but certainly not for the transhumanist who rejects the essentialist conception of human nature. Besides, not only do they desire and think in terms of a human being free from current biological limitations, but also they admit the possibility of new, different being that would transcend the human being himself. It is not just about improvement but about re-creation, or re-design based on the human being and realized by the human being himself. (Miguel, 2014, 335-350) This shows the roots of transhumanism on the modernity's "forgetting of the complex reality of human nature" a reductionism which transhumanism exacerbates. Modernism's anthropology is reductionistic in that it reduces human essence to pure culture, history, economics or biology and these do not do justice to the complex reality that is the human person. Transhumanism within the scope of postmodernity and proceeding with this deconstruction "seeks to rebuild the human being as an ateleological reality where the outlines of the human evaporate completely." This leads to the abolition or negation of the human at the end of the process which is the result of irrational mode of acting that has abdicated its responsibility to understand the human person.

J. Ballesteros (2007) argues that we do not have any criteria for distinguishing a non-contingent part of ourselves, called person or subjectivity from another part that is contingent and hence available for capricious reconstruction. Contingency is part and parcel of human nature and so no consciously planned reconstruction of human nature would eliminate its contingency. What would be is further intensification of the reconstruction until it becomes unbearable. There is no doubt that the thrilling of transhumanism is its promise of ending the human finitude. This is what the idea of perpetual progress which for the proponents climaxes in digital immortality. There is no doubt that it is within the inherent propensity of man to transcend the given. For Kojeve, being and acting human meant progressing beyond the given—surpassing nature, achieving control over it and appropriating it for human needs. Hegel writes correctly that it is human nature to constitute "an antithesis to the natural world" and this entails a rebellion against human existence as it has been given." Yet this appears to be living in denial of the facticity that would always surround even the artificial and digital man. The digital man, for instance, does not seem to escape from the thrownness of the Heideggerian Dasein. No doubt the organic encapsulated minds could be limited in a number of ways and so when the body is transcended, the present ills of human kind could be side-stepped. Diseases, medical problems and consequent death for instance could no longer be a concern for the non-biological. But it must be noted that this biological thrownness is replaced immediately with digital thrownness

for the human person does not sufficiently deal with human finitude whose surpassing was the motive of the transhumanism in first place. Digital thrownness like the dasein thrownness is both positive and negative. The digital person is dramatically caught into unpredictable environment which renders it vulnerable in countless ways. This ranges from "unwanted trolls to anonymous death threats, revenge porn, ransomware attacks, or collective catastrophes such as fake new, mass surveillance and multiple forms of cyberterrorism and cyberwarfare. These threaten the security of everyday existence and this makes his limits as vulnerable and ultimately mortal being more palpable. Supposing as the transhumanists claim such a life is immortal, that must be an excruciating existence. This is in addition to the utter dependence on the high tech companies and digital steps that must necessarily leave behind their traces in the sand of digital history, a situation that threatens the interiority that is existentially man's.

One of the central concerns deriving in some cases from religious or crypto religious sentiments on the one hand and from secular grounds as found in Fukuyama (2002) is the negative effects of unbridled enhancement on human dignity. This worry found also among the bioconservatives points to the dehumanizing effect of unbridled freedom to manipulate the body. Fukuyama points to the challenge it poses to democracy, human rights and what it means to be human. According to him, what grounds dignity and equality is the undefined shared human essence which he refers to as "Factor X" that remains undefined but is not made but given. This is the reason that bioconservatives continue to make a case for global legal constraints "to forestall a slide down a slippery slope towards an ultimately debased, posthuman state." Accordingly, Fukuyama (2002) calls for the precautionary principle which consists in the idea of limiting the development of certain technologies that pose existential risks. Technological rationality must be matched with evaluative rationality. For Heidegger (1977), technological rationality was an expression of nihilism. This is the reason that for him, threat of technology rather than being technical problem requiring technical solution is rather an ontological threat. According to him, it is an eclipse of meaning. Meaning is beyond the realm of technology and so should the question of reality and humanity be reduced to technology, the question bears no meaning. Besides, if technology understood as tool is a means, the age of total technical solutions is an age without ends. Steve Fuller and Veronika Lipinska (2014, 24) note that the primary risk that the precautionary approach is meant to protect against is a change in the transcendent order, nature or God, that places limits on what humans can do or become. Leo Kass (2003, 9-28) has been shown by Benjamin Ross to be one of the most prominent bio-conservatives who express the precautionary approach in the way mentioned by Fuller. His position against radical technological enhancement is predicated on appeal to nature. According to him, our natural endowments are in accordance with species-specified natures. Thus we need a particular regard and respect for the special gift that is our own given nature." Kass (2003, 9-28) refers to what he calls repugnance or yuck factor as reason to suspect that radical posthuman technologies are wrong. This is about the feeling of repugnance which is felt for such technological manipulation and for him though feeling is not argument, the gut feeling deserves to be acknowledged. Max More's proactionary principle is put forward to counter the precautionary principle. In More's proactionary principle, risks are

reinterpreted as opportunities while being concerned that "a precautionary approach hampers the process of learning through experimentation by emphasizing the perception of risk, rather than the reality of risk." (See Ross, 2019)

For Kass, (2003, 9-28) radical enhancement is simply playing God as he opposes fiddling with what nature has produced. Michael Sandel (2004) refers to unmitigated morphological freedom as "a kind of hyper-agency, a Promothean aspiration to remake nature, including human nature…." The proponents are accused of a drive to mastery in defiance of the belief as Michael J. Sandel (2004) puts it that "not everything in the world is open to any use we may desire or devise" The desire to perfect our nature, an age-long dream, according to Sandel (2004) "misses and may even destroy…an appreciation of the gifted character of human powers and achievements." Sandel (2007, 85) points to two kinds of relationship to human nature, namely, an accepting relationship that recognizes nature as a gift and a perfectionist relationship that seeks to improve nature. According to Sandel, these two relationships must be kept in their tension. He observes that enhancement appear to emphasize 'willfulness over giftedness'; 'dominion over reverence', 'molding over beholding'. An eclipse of the ethic of giftedness, according to him, would undermine "three key features of our moral landscape—humility, responsibility and solidarity." Paul Laurtzen (2005, 2533) proposes a non-essentialist, pragmatic approach. He argues that the concept of stable human nature is key to the stability of human society. For instance, the most persuasive account of human rights is premised on the idea of a stable human nature. If biotechnology which impact significantly on human capabilities and life trajectories is unchecked, it can impede our common sense of humanity and then the capacity for human sympathy. Hauskeller (2013) adds that by losing the sense of giftedness we become impoverished, we lose something that is important for a good human life. The enhancer, that is the humanity, loses the sense of humility which for Sandel is a virtue. This immediately leads the discourse into the field of ethics which is not the provenance of this research. The debate here is that transhumanist's project of perfection is destructive of virtuous perfection which ensures human flourishing. For the transhumanists, virtuous perfection impedes on the first project of perfecting traits and human nature. Habermas' line of argument is that our sense of autonomy and equality with other members of a moral community is largely dependent on the idea of contingency. This refers to the sense that our being and embodiment are products of fate or nature rather than of members of the community. Genetic engineering of children for instance, risks depriving them of their own voice and jeorpadizes a precondition for moral self-understanding of autonomous actors. Bostrom counters by noting that "even the most radical expressions of morphological freedom are beneficial, and allow for the retention of identity and meaning—including potentially self-destructive choices such as replacing one's neurons with simulacra. He states that no matter what the radical technological change, certain conditions, if satisfied, allow a positive expression of transhumanism that preserves autonomy and meaning. These conditions are the following: if old capacities can exist alongside new capacities, if those changes can be implemented over an extended period of time, if each step of the transformation process is freely and competently chosen by the subject, and if the transformation fits into the life

narrative and self-conception of the subject, then the technological change as a result of morphological freedom can be considered positive for the person who undergoes it." Bostrom by this appear to take exception to genetic engineering involving children for the reason that it is a choice they have not made for themselves.

As Fukuyama rightly observes, the transhumanists' claim to understanding what constitutes good human being while transcending what they consider the limited, mortal, natural beings in favour of something better, is mistaken not just because they hold a false idea of what is good and what is bad but that they fail to see how the good and the bad interlace in constituting our identity as humans. Fukuyama as illustration notes that if we were not violent and aggressive, we would not be able to defend ourselves. Again we could be loyal to those close to us because of the feelings of exclusivity; we feel love because we have felt jealousy. Our mortality according to him plays a critical function in allowing our species as a whole to survive and to adapt. Fukuyama's point of argument is that the flaws which the transhumanists would rather want to be eliminated constitute being human and to radically get rid of it would entail losing our humanity something that is valuable being sacrifice on the altar of technological progress. The problem is made more with the idea of morphological freedom which without defining what the better than human entails, simply encourages enhancement. There is no doubt that such would ultimately set man on the path of self-destruct with no setting of boundary. Thus the transhumanist would either set boundary or be ready for self-destruct. If it sets boundary, then the question of rejection of the boundary already set by nature becomes an arching question. This entails that at every point in time the idea of man as a moral being and the value of human condition must always be considered in determining what constitutes a genuine human life.

Conclusion

The work has been able to examine the basic statement of transhumanism on human nature. The idea of human nature as fluid reality found in transhumanist philosophy supports the view of unmitigated enhancement. The consequences of such radical and unending enhancement, the work finds out, may be impoverishing to humanity even with its promises of making better human condition. Besides, the idea of a constant human nature even if the essence may be elusive in conceptualizing, makes for a more stable human society.

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