

# Transcending Humanity: Nietzsche's Notion of the Overman and Transhumanism Ethos

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## Abstract

This paper examines Nietzsche's concept of the overman (Übermensch) and its implications for transhumanism ethos. Nietzsche's overman is characterized by self-overcoming. For Nietzsche, humanity is something that must be overcome and transcended. Nietzsche's call for self-overcoming and transcending humanity's limitations, finds resonance in transhumanist ethos and aspirations, which seeks to enhance human abilities through biotechnology. However, a critical examination of Nietzsche's concept of the overman uncovers some contradictions between his views and transhumanism ethos and aspirations. Central to his thought is the principle of 'Amor Fati' (love of fate), emphasizing the embrace of life's challenges and suffering. This contrast with transhumanist inclination to eradicate suffering through technological advancement. His idea that struggle and suffering improves strength is contrary to transhumanist's goal of eliminating suffering and obstacles through technology. This paper argues that while Nietzsche's concept of the overman bears some resemblance to transhumanist ideals, his philosophy underpinned by 'Amor Fati' and embracing suffering and overcoming obstacles for growth, would likely not advocate for the total adoption of technological means to overcome humanity. The paper adopts qualitative method and philosophical analysis. Comparing Nietzsche's notion of the overman and the aspirations of transhumanism uncovers certain level of relationship in their shared ideals of transcending human limitations and fundamentally different philosophical foundations.

**Keywords:** Humanity, Overman, Transhumanism, Ethos.

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## Introduction

The quest to transcend human limitations and achieve greater potentials has been the goal of both philosophy and technology. Nietzsche's concept of Übermensch, often translated as the overman, presents a wonderful vision of self-overcoming and transcendence of conventional human values and limitations. This paper examines Nietzsche's idea of overman and the contemporary issue of transhumanism, which aims at enhancing human abilities and qualities through technological means. Since the emergence of the transhumanist movement, a discussion has started over the similarities and differences between the transhumanist idea of 'enhanced human' (or 'transhuman') and Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of 'Übermensch.' Can Nietzsche be seen as a forerunner of contemporary transhumanism? (Campa, 2019.) This paper argues that though Nietzsche's idea of the overman have some semblance to that of transhumanist ideals in their shared goal of transcending human limitations, there is a fundamental difference in their approach to achieving this transcendence. While the transhumanist approach human transcendence from a physical, biological and technological means, Nietzsche's approach centers on self-overcoming of conventional morality.

The relationship between Nietzsche's concept of overman and the contemporary phenomenon of transhumanism presents a complex problem and ethical issues. As the world encounters technological advancements that challenge human limitations and redefine the boundaries of human potentials, there are questions whether Nietzsche's idea of overman and the ideals of the transhumanist movement are compatible. The central problem of this paper is how does the pursuit of self-transcendence through technological means align with Nietzsche's philosophy of the overman. And, how does the application of technology in the pursuit of self-transcendence impact on the essence of human experience in light of Nietzsche's philosophy. There is also the problem of the long term existential implications of using technology to transcend human limitations.

Nietzsche's overman embodies the desire to rise above established norms, achieve personal growth through struggle and attain elevated state of being. The overman represents the highest principle of development of humanity. It designates the affirmation of man's full potentiality and creativity. It is the affirmation of one's fate whether pleasurable or painful (Ojimba and Ikuli, 2019). Central to the concept of overman is the idea of *Amor Fati*-love of fate-which underscores the acceptance of life's challenges and suffering as essential part of human development. The overman is Nietzsche's attempt to overcome conventional morality. The overman, therefore is a philosophical transformation rather than a pursuit of physical augmentation through technology.

The overman is the central figure in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where Nietzsche through the mouth of Zarathustra plays the role of a prophetic sage, a teacher or a preacher who has discovered an authentic fact about the world. At the beginning of the book, when Zarathustra was thirty years old he went to live in the mountains

for ten years and there he enjoyed his spirit and solitude, and did not tire of it. But at last his heart was transformed and he saw the need to share his wisdom about life with humans. Behold! I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey. I need hands that reach out. (Nietzsche, 2006, p.3). When he climbed down, he revealed to others a meaningful "truth": "I teach you the overman." Human being is something that must be overcome. What have you done to overcome him? (Nietzsche, 2006, P.6). From this statement, we can decipher that Nietzsche maintain that human being in this current state is something to overcome, surpassed or transcended. For Nietzsche, humans can achieve greatness by overcoming some norms and values that he considers limiting.

The term "transhumanism" was first coined by Julian Huxley in his 1957 book "*New Bottles for New Wine*," marking the beginning of an interesting intellectual and philosophical movement that has since captured the attention of scholars, scientists, ethicists and philosophers. For Julian Huxley (1957, P.17), transhumanism is the belief that human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself- not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety as humanity. (Huxley, 1957, P.17) conceives transhumanism is man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature.

Transhumanism is the bold view that humans should exploit technological inventions that improve, lengthen and yes, possibly change the lives of human kind. (Bostrom, 2005). At its core, transhumanism is a profound and multidisciplinary exploration of the human nature, driven by the conviction that humanity can transcend its current limitations through the application of technology, science, and rational thought. This ambitious worldview beckons us to envision a future where the boundaries of human existence are not just pushed but reshaped, where human potential extends far beyond our current capabilities, and where the very essence of what it means to be human evolves in unprecedented ways.

Nietzsche conceived the overman as the expression of man's creativity and affirmation of his full potentialities. (Ojimba and Ikuli, 2019). For him, the overman is the essence of human being and representation of highest ideal of human greatness and excellence. There are other thinkers who have reflected on similar idea. In *The Republic*, Plato (2013) argues that the philosopher king represents the highest expression of human excellence, knowledge, creativity and the right qualities to govern the state. For Plato, the philosopher king is a ruler who is not only knowledgeable but also possesses wisdom. The philosopher king has an understanding of the form of the good, which is the ultimate reality and the source of all knowledge. Plato argues that this type of ruler is essential for creating a just and egalitarian society. The philosopher king is fit to rule because he have absolute knowledge of good...He has now arrived at which they must raise the eye of the soul to the universal light which lightens all things and behold the absolute good; for that is the pattern according to which they are to order the state and lives of individuals, and remainder of their own lives also; making philosophy their chief pursuit...and ruling for public good.(Plato, 2013, p.273).

In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (2000) maintained that the ideal form of human being is someone who cultivates virtues and lives a life of moral excellence. In his view, virtues are habits of character that enable individuals to act in accordance with reason, and to achieve a sense of well-being and flourishing. He argues that for one to really be virtuous the person needs to perform good action and not just having knowledge of the good. "As in the Olympic Games it is not the most attractive and the strongest who are crowned, but those who compete (since it is from this group that winners come), so in life it is those who act rightly who will attain what is noble and good"(p.14)

In *The City of God*, Augustine (2000) of Hippo, believed that the ideal human is an individual who is in a state of union with God, and that this state can be attained through a life of virtue and faith. He argued that man cannot be happy except through the gift of God. For him, It is established that the complete attainment of all we desire is that which constitutes felicity, which is no goddess but a gift of God, and therefore man can worship no god save Him who is able to make him happy.(p.186). However, In the *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes (1651), argued that the greatest of human powers, is that which is compounded of the powers of most men, united by consent, in one person, natural or civil, that has use of their powers depending on his will; such as is the power of common-wealth.(p.66) Hobbes' idea of ideal human or ultimate good is based on his social and political theory, where he analyzes human nature and the conditions necessary for the progress and development of society. According to Hobbes, the ideal human being is motivated by self-interest, driven by a desire for self-preservation and personal gain. He maintain that human being have a natural, perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death.(p.75).

### **The Concept of Overman**

Nietzsche's philosophy of power culminates in the dual vision of the overman and the eternal recurrence. (Kaufman, 1974, p.307). Nietzsche's overman is not a product of historical progress or evolution but, rather, a product of individual self-overcoming and sublimation of one's instincts. (Burzynska, 2015). According to Firestone (2017), The overman is Nietzsche's ideal person-the person who represents the best or most well-

lived-life. Nietzsche used his concept of overman to challenge the predominant traditional religious and metaphysical beliefs of his time that teach that the meaning of life should be sought in afterlife, heavenly hopes or supernatural world. He notes that “even the philosophical man have a presentiment that under this reality in which we live and have our being lies hidden a second, totally different reality and that thus the former is an illusion” (Nietzsche, 2008, p.12) Nietzsche admonished his audience not to listen to teachers of heavenly or extraterrestrial hopes because they are mixers of poison.

He urged his followers to remain faithful to the earth and find meaning within it and not outside it. And the meaning of earth for Nietzsche, is overman. This shows that Nietzsche envisaged a new form of relationship between humans and earth, and between humans and nature. This rejection of other worldly hopes is in terms with Nietzsche’s criticism of religious and transcendental philosophies, which he believes is self-denying, self-sacrificing and self-limiting.

Nietzsche notes that the preaching of other worldly hopes have denigrated the earth and the body as such teachings emphasizes or prioritize the soul over the body and the transcendental over the physical. Traditionally, the soul has been considered to be superior to the body, with the body seen as an obstacle or a filthy prison for the soul. Nietzsche reversed this hierarchy, arguing that such contempt for the body was as a result of the desire to escape the realities and limitations of the physical world.

Once the soul gazed contemptuously at the body, and then such contempt was the highest thing: it wanted the body gaunt, ghastly and starved. Thus it intended to escape the body and the earth. Oh this soul was gaunt, ghastly and starved, and cruelty was the lust of this soul! But you, too, my brothers, tell me: what does your body proclaim about your soul? Is your soul not poverty and filth and a pitiful contentment? Truly, mankind is a polluted stream. One has to be a sea to take in a polluted stream without becoming unclean. Behold, I teach you the overman: he is this sea, in him your great contempt can go under. (Nietzsche, 2006, p.6)

From the above, it is clear that Nietzsche believe that humanity and human society is inherently flawed and corrupted. He notes that humanity is being influenced and controlled by negative and destructive teachings, like religious doctrines and conventional moral norms and values. These teachings and influences hinders and stifle individuality, creativity and pursuit of higher values. The overman is like a sea that can take the polluted stream of mankind without being corrupted by it. Nietzsche is of the view that for one to rise above the pollution of mankind and the leveling force of herd morality (slave morality), one must become an overman. There are basically three stages that one must pass through to become an overman.

### **The Three Transformation of the Overman**

Nietzsche presents the three stages in the transformation of the spirit: the camel, the lion and the child. These three stages can be seen as three stage of self-overcoming because at every stage the spirit through its will to power overcome values and norms that hitherto has been accepted as sacrosanct. The three transformative stage is a journey to spiritual development. The overman is not biological and it is not gender based. The overman is self-development, self-mastery and a change of spirit not body. Each of these three transformative stage represent different attitude toward life.

#### **The Camel Stage**

The first transformation of the spirit is the camel, which carries heavy loads. According to Nietzsche (2006), at the camel stage, there are many heavy things for the spirit, things that weigh upon spirit.(false beliefs and doctrine, religiosity, conventional morality and uncritical attitude to life). (p.16). A camel requires us to be greater than ourselves, and that requires some sacrifice – the strength longs for the heavy.

To the spirit there is much that is heavy; to the strong, carrying spirit imbued with reverence. Its strength demands what is heavy and heaviest. What is heavy? Thus asks the carrying spirit. It kneels down like a camel and wants to be well loaded. (Nietzsche, 2006, p.16)

The camel carrying a heavy load represents the tradition and culture that we have to bear. It is the burdens and challenges that human beings face in life. These burdens can be existential questions, religious dogmas, moral dilemmas, or the difficulties involved in living. Nietzsche maintain that the strong and determined spirit, who are willing to take on these heavy burdens, do so with a sense of reverence. They embrace life's challenges and responsibilities with open mind and carry on without unnecessary complain.

The "carrying spirit" refers to the one who willingly carries the burdens of existence, and the overman takes on these burdens willingly and with enthusiasm, much like a camel that kneels to be loaded with its cargo. The overman embraces the challenges and difficulties of life with a sense of purpose and desire to confront the heaviest questions and problems. What is heaviest, you heroes? thus asks the carrying spirit, so that I might take it upon myself and rejoice in my strength.(Nietzsche, 2006, p.16). The camel show a pivotal aspect of the

transformative stage of the overman. The overman is not daunted by the heavy burdens and challenges of existence but, rather, embraces them with strength, reverence, and a willingness to be loaded with life's most profound questions and responsibilities. By doing so, the overman transcends the limitations of ordinary human existence, achieving a higher state of being.

### **The Lion Stage**

The carrying spirit carries all heavy burdens and move into the desert but in the loneliness of the desert the second transformation occurs. In this stage the spirit becomes lion, the lion spirit does not like loads, here the spirit wants to hunt down its freedom and be master in his own desert. The lion spirit desire for freedom would lead it into a mortal combat with the dragon which is a metaphor for all decadence values and conventional morality.

Here it seeks its last master, and wants to fight him and its last god. For victory it wants to battle the great dragon. Who is the great dragon whom the spirit no longer wants to call master and god? "Thou shalt" is the name of the great dragon. But the spirit of the lion says "I will." "Thou shalt" stands in its way, gleaming golden, a scaly animal, and upon every scale "thou shalt!" gleams like gold. The values of millennia gleam on these scales, and thus speaks the most powerful of all dragons: "the value of all things – it gleams in me. All value has already been created, and the value of all created things – that am I. Indeed, there shall be no more 'I will!'" Thus speaks the dragon. (Nietzsche, 2006, p.17)

From the above statement we can see the transition from a slave morality (symbolized by the spirit of the camel) to the pursuit of individual strength and self-assertion (symbolized by the spirit of the lion), ultimately leading to the emergence of the Overman.

In the above statement, the "great dragon" (Nietzsche, 2006), is a metaphor for old values and moralities that have been imposed on humanity throughout history. The dragon embodies the traditional beliefs, dogmas, and societal norms that have dominated human thinking for ages, often under the guise of divine commandments, duties, or obligations ("Thou shalt").

The dragon's scales gleaming with "Thou shalt" represent the weight of these inherited values that have become deeply ingrained in the human psyche over millennia.(Nietzsche, 2006) These values, which include religious and moral precepts, dictate what is considered good and evil, right and wrong, and have been accepted without question for generations.

However, the spirit of the lion arises, and it declares "I will." This marks the rebellion against the old values and the rejection of the external authorities that have dictated human behavior. The lion represents the individual's assertion of their own will, their desire to assert their independence and personal power. It reflects the spirit's yearning for freedom from the chains of tradition and the courage to destroy all values that are not life-enhancing.

The lion spirit symbolizes the struggle of the individual to break free from the constraints of traditional values and embrace a more self-affirming and powerful way of living. The lion is necessary not because it can create new values but rather because it can create freedom for the emergence of the creator of value which is the child. It is only the spirit of the lion that can say a sacred no to duty. The lion is needed for wrestling freedom from all dragons because for Nietzsche, whoever must be a creator in good and evil – truly, he must first be an annihilator and break values. (Nietzsche, 2006, p.90).

### **The Child Stage**

The third stage is the stage where the spirit becomes a child. To the question why did the lion need to transform into a child? Nietzsche answered, the child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a wheel rolling out of itself, a first movement, a sacred yes-saying. Yes, for the game of creation. My brothers a sacred yes-saying is required. The spirit wants its will, the one lost to the world now wins its own world. (Nietzsche, 2006, p.17).

Nietzsche associated childhood with innocence and a sense of forgetfulness. The child is conceived as unstained by the burdens of the past, not burdened by guilt or regret, and possessing a fresh perspective on life.it is a phase of life where everything is new and full of potential. It symbolizes the possibility of starting afresh without the weight of past experiences. The child approaches life with a playful, creative, imaginative and carefree attitude.

Nietzsche's description of the child as "a wheel rolling out of itself" (Nietzsche, 2006, p.17), may represent the self-generating and self-sustaining nature of life and creativity. The child's innocent and playful nature leads to a continuous cycle of growth and development.

Nietzsche's statement evokes a celebration of childhood innocence and creativity, the importance of a playful and affirmative attitude towards life, and the idea of embracing one's will to power to create a

meaningful and self-determined existence. This eventually will lead to the emergence of the overman. All three stages are incredibly important for achieving ultimate spiritual growth. Completion of all stages can lead to an increase in self-realization and understanding of one's true spiritual potential.

### **The Overman and Self-Overcoming.**

Self-overcoming is an important concept in the philosophy of Nietzsche. It involves an individual's ability to surpass their current limitations and striving for self-improvement and personal growth. In other words, it is the individual's ability and willingness to confront and defeat all values and norms that limit his growth and development as an individual. Nietzsche conceives the self as something that ought to be overcome, the overcoming of the self is very essential for the emergence of the overman. The secret of life for Nietzsche can be summarized this way- "And this secret life itself spoke to me: "Behold," it said, I am that which must always overcome itself" (Nietzsche, 2006, p.89)

One could say that what makes the "overman" genuinely self-transcending is that he can over-come himself, accomplish when necessary this self-transcending. He thereby has gained power "over" himself and so realized his will to power. The overman is characterized by his constant overcoming of obstacles, resistance and values and norms that limit man from achieving his full potentials. Self-overcoming is about overcoming the moral framework of the individual. For Nietzsche, overcoming obstacles and resistance is essential for self-growth, self-development and flourishing. The importance of self-overcoming cannot be overemphasized in Nietzsche's philosophy as he described himself in these terms: "my humanity is a constant self-overcoming. (Nietzsche, 1911, p.11).

Nietzsche's idea of constant self-overcoming shows the importance of accepting change, challenging one's beliefs, and constantly seeking personal growth, self-mastery and self-improvement. By continually striving to become better versions of themselves, individuals can approach the ideal of the overman and find a sense of meaning and fulfillment in life. Nietzsche believed that human beings do not have a fixed essence or absolute value rather they are dynamic and evolving creatures. Nietzsche's formula for the greatness of a human being is amor fati: that one wants nothing to be different—not forward, not backward, not in all eternity.—(Nietzsche, 1911, p.10).

### **The Notion of Transhumanism**

According to Bostrom transhumanist maintain that we should strive to overcome human limitations and weaknesses and maybe most importantly, transhumanists believe that we should develop a new set of values that are beyond human values and that will make lives better the world over. (better than we have been able to do with our current human values alone) (Bostrom, 2005)

Transhumanism is not a mere fiction of science, it is a rigorous and thought-provoking movement rooted in the belief that human nature is not a fixed endpoint but an ongoing project that can be improved, modified, and refined. In support of this, More asserts that humans are but "transitional stage standing between our animal heritage and our posthuman future"(More, 2011)

Transhumanism is the thesis that we can and ought to use technology to alter and improve human biology. Some likely targets for the technological makeover of human nature include making ourselves smarter, happier, longer-living, and more virtuous. The operative assumption here of course is that intelligence, moods, longevity, and virtues each have deep roots in our biology. By altering biology, transhumanists propose to improve human nature to the point of creating a new genus: posthumans.(Walker, 2011).

From the above statement by Mark Walker, many profound questions arises: Can we actually transcend our biological limitations? Should we merge with machines to augment our cognitive abilities? Does improving our biology make us happier considering that happiness is activity of the soul? Can improving our biology make us virtuous? What are the ethical, religious and political cum economic implications of transhumanism? What ethical considerations should guide the development of technologies that could redefine our very essence?

### **Transhumanist Aspirations**

Having briefly conceptualized transhumanism, it is pertinent to briefly examine the goals and aspirations of transhumanism. We will explore the diverse array of technologies that transhumanism envisions, from radical life extension and the merging of humans with machines to transhumanist conception of human nature. Through this brief exploration, we will have a better understanding of the promises and peril that transhumanism presents for humanity, ultimately encouraging us rethink the boundaries of our human nature and the ethical considerations that must guide us as we venture into this uncharted territory. (Garreau, 2004. P.11).

### **Human Lifespan and Radical Life Extension**

From earliest history, humans have always wished to attain immortality world over and have made many efforts to attain immortality. Such wish and efforts is not lacking in Igbo folklores. In Igbo folklores many kings and native doctors have embarked on expedition to attain immortality or to resuscitate a dead loved one. Many stories have it that some kings and native doctors have embarked on journey to evil forest and spirit world to see how to end death all to no avail. This desire to end death and attain immortality points to the fact that humans believe that our lifespan is short and paltry. There is also the belief that human development is cut short by aging and death. In support of this view Nick Bostrom (2005) notes that:

Because of the precarious conditions in which our Pleistocene ancestors lived, the human lifespan has evolved to be a paltry seven or eight decades. This is, from many perspectives, a rather short period of time. Even tortoises do better than that. We do not have to use geological or cosmological comparisons to highlight the meagerness of our allotted time budgets. To get a sense that we might be missing out on something important by our tendency to die early, we only have to bring to mind some of the worthwhile things that we could have done or attempted to do if we had had more time. For gardeners, educators, scholars, artists, city planners, and those who simply relish observing and participating in the cultural or political variety shows of life, three scores and ten is often insufficient for seeing even one major project through to completion, let alone for undertaking many such projects in sequence.

Radical life extension is one of the major aspiration of transhumanism. This concept envisions extending human lifespans far beyond what is currently possible and possibly achieving immortality.

Extending human life and postponing death is a prominent goal of the transhumanist movement. Anti-aging medicine is now the fastest-growing medical specialty in the United States.(Tirosh-Samuels, 2011). There is no scientific agreement on the feasibility of radical life extension. For Callahan, life extension technology seems to meet a deeply rooted desire to push back the boundaries of aging and death.(Callahn, 2009). Transhumanists believe that if the proper efforts are made that human life can radically be extended and that this extension of human life will help humanity to develop and enjoy life more than they do now. Part of this radical extension of life involves total eradication of disease.

### **Merging of Humans with Machine**

Merging humans with machines is often referred to as cyborgization or cyborg enhancement. It is one of the major goal of transhumanism. Cyborgization is the process of replacing human body with cybernetic implants (Grinin, & Grinin, 2022). Transhumanists advocates for the use of technology to augment human physical capabilities. This include the use of implantable devices, brain-computer interfaces (BCIs), development of exoskeletons, prosthetic limbs and neural interfaces.

Implantable devices and nanotechnology can be used to monitor human health in real time and used to detect, repair or replace damaged human cells thereby enhancing human health. Recent developments have also made it possible that an individual with visual impairments can gain improved vision through retinal implant. Some transhumanist believe that a time will come when human being will not have only biological make up but also artificial technological materials that will help man to lead a better life. Some scholars have predicted the possibility of total merging of machine mind or brain with complex mechanism and technologies. At present, technology serves almost every aspect of our lives, but in the near future, more serious transformations are possible, when complex mechanisms and technologies can merge with the human body and mind. (Grinin & Grinin, 2020).

### **Nietzsche's Notion of Overman and Transhumanism Ethos and Aspirations.**

We have explored Nietzsche's philosophy, especially his notion of the Overman and its relationship with transhumanism ethos and aspirations. In this segment, we will explore the implications of transhumanism and its aspiration to transcend the limits of human existence and the ideals embodied by Nietzsche's Overman. Nick Bostrom, a prominent transhumanist, have articulated a perspective that there are values beyond our comprehension and posthuman experience is one of such value. And as such we are not in a better position or disposed to discuss its implications until we are very much acquainted with it. Quoting David Lewis (1989), Nick Bostrom (2005) asserts that:

According to Lewis's theory, something is a value for you if and only if you would want to want it, if you were perfectly acquainted with it and you were thinking and deliberating as clearly as possible about it. On this view, there may be values that we do not currently want, and that we do not even

currently want to want, because we may not be perfectly acquainted with them or because we are not ideal deliberators. Some values pertaining to certain forms of posthuman existence may well be of this sort; they may be values for us now, and they may be so in virtue of our current dispositions, and yet we may not be able to fully appreciate them with our current limited deliberative capacities and our lack of the receptive faculties required for full acquaintance with them.

Bostrom's assertion above, calls us to contemplate profound questions: could transhumanist quest lead us towards a higher state of being, a manifestation of Nietzsche's Overman? Does our inability to be perfectly acquainted with posthuman existence mean that we can't point out some of its negative implications from our limited perspective?

Fukuyama (2004) sees transhumanism as "the most dangerous idea in the world" Benjamin Ross (2019, p.5) notes that this danger can be divided into social-political and metaphysical. For example, in terms of social-political it is uncertain whether radical technologies can be equally distributed. The metaphysical dangers concern the effect of transhumanists technologies on question of human identity and meaning.

### **Transhumanism and its Religious, Social and Political Implications Through the Lens of Nietzsche's Notion of Overman.**

Transhumanist goal of radical life extension and making death optional raises a lot of philosophical problems. Their aspiration to make human being into posthumans who possess radical extended lifespan is still problematic and raises lots of questions: can human being have a relationship with posthumans? Is there any possibility that one day posthumans will wage war against humans? If there is possibility of war between posthumans and humans, then there is possibility of human extinction considering that posthumans are enhanced being and they have more capacity than humans, hence they will definitely win humans in such war. So if transhumanism can lead to the extinction of human being as we know today, what then is the benefit of such idea?

There is also the question of the availability of such technologies to all people. Can such technologies be accessible to everybody including third world countries? Can a posthuman, if he eventually die, can he/she make it to the great beyond of ancestorhood, heaven or Al-jannah?

Through the mouth of Zarathustra Nietzsche notes that once Zarathustra cast his delusion beyond humans, like all hinterworldly. At that time the world seem to me the work of a suffering and a tortured god...the creator wanted to look away from himself and so he created the world (Nietzsche,2006, p.20) From this observation by Nietzsche, it is clear that transhumanism is just like any other hinterworldly hopes that came as a result of human weakness and inability to face the chaos and suffering of life head on. Transhumanist wants to dodge the delusion of life by creating posthumans.

Nietzsche celebrates the imperfect and suffering nature of humanity. He suggests that our limitations and suffering are intrinsic part of our existence and have played a vital role in shaping our values and development. Transhumanists aspiration to radically extend life and eliminate suffering through technological means will potentially diminish the significance of suffering and for Nietzsche, it is drunken joy for the suffering one to look away from one's suffering and to lose oneself.(Nietzsche, 2006, p.20) From this, we can infer that we will lose an essential part of being human if we follow transhumanists aspiration of eliminating suffering through technological means.it will lead us to self-alienation and we will lose ourselves.

Nietzsche notes that he once cast his delusion beyond human just like every other hinterworldly hopes and aspiration. He once thought like transhumanists that "beyond human is truth" .(Nietzsche, 2006, p.20), but he later observed that the truth is in human experience and being faithful to our body and the earth. He categorically said

I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth and do not believe those who speak to you of extraterrestrial hopes! They are mixers of poisons whether they know it or not. They are despisers of life, dying off and self-poisoned, of whom the earth is weary: so let them fade away! Once the sacrilege against God was the greatest sacrilege, but God died, and then all these desecrators died. Now to desecrate the earth is the most terrible thing, and to esteem the bowels of the unfathomable higher than the meaning of the earth! .(Nietzsche, 2006, p.6)

Transhumanism just like every hinterworldly hopes is created by suffering and weakness of the people to engage and face the meaninglessness of life creatively. It was suffering and incapacity that created all hinterworlds, and that brief madness of happiness that only the most suffering person experience. .(Nietzsche, 2006, p.21) Transhumanism can be seen as a form of "weariness that wants its ultimate with one great leap (technological augmentation); a poor unknowing weariness that no longer wants to will..."(Nietzsche, 2006, p.21)

Nietzsche encourages us to embrace our body the way it is because “the body still speak most honestly about its being; this creating, willing, valuing ego which is the measure and value of things. (Nietzsche, 2006, p.21) He further notes that this most honest being, this ego-it speaks of love and still wants the body, even when it poetizes and fantasizes and flutters with broken wings. (Nietzsche, 2006, p.21)

Transhumanists aspiration to transcend human body and its biological limitation is nihilistic because they do not understand the truth about human existence. Nietzsche notes that the more the ego learns about the truth about human existence, the more it learns to speak more honestly and praise the human body as it is and the earth. Nietzsche affirm that

My ego taught me a new pride, I teach it to mankind: no longer bury your head in the sand of heavenly things, but bear it freely instead, an earthly head that creates a meaning for the earth.(Nietzsche, 2006, p.21)

Nietzsche wants humanity to embrace their body and live their life as proud humans and not like the sick and the dying-out.(Nietzsche, 2006, p.21) For Nietzsche, anyone who despise the body is sick and dying-out. We can see that transhumanists aspiration to transcend human body and its biological limitations through technological means is a form of despising the human body and it is only “the sick and dying-out who despised the body and earth and invented the heavenly (posthuman hopes) and its redeeming drops of blood.(Nietzsche, 2006, p.21)

Transhumanism is just an escapist movement that tries to sneak away from the reality of human existence, limitations and suffering through technological means because they lack the positive will to power to confront life and inculcate the values of the Overman. For Nietzsche,

They wanted to escape their misery and the stars were too distant for them. So they sighed “Oh if only there were heavenly paths on which to sneak into another being and happiness” Then they invented their scheme and bloody little drinks.(Nietzsche, 2006, p.21)

### **Transhumanism and Nihilism in Nietzsche’s Philosophy**

Nihilism is the belief that life has no inherent meaning, value or purpose. It shows that there is no universal truth or objective principles that can guide human actions. Nietzsche saw nihilism as a result of the decline of traditional religious and moral values in the Europe of his time. Nietzsche saw nihilism as the negation of traditional values and beliefs, leading a sense of meaninglessness. He argue that the repudiation of religious, moral values and metaphysical frameworks in modern society has left a void, which make people to be disoriented and question the meaning of life.

Transhumanism can be seen as an attempt to provide solution to nihilism and meaninglessness of life through enhancing human capabilities through technological means and possibly achieve a form of posthuman existence. Transhumanists argue that this can lead to a more meaningful and fulfilling life by overcoming human body and its biological constraints. Transhumanism is a form of nihilism because it represents a rejection of human nature and an attempt to escape the inherent suffering and limitations involved in human life through mere technological means.

Nietzsche pointed out that nihilism can be seen in two ways namely active nihilism and passive nihilism. Active nihilism for Nietzsche, is a sign of spiritual strength while passive nihilism is a sign of collapse and decline of spiritual strength, transhumanism is a type of passive nihilism.

Nietzsche notes that all attempts to escape nihilism proves abortive because people do not have the courage to re-evaluate the values they hold so dear to heart. He is of the view that all attempts made to escape nihilism, which do not consist in transvaluing the values that have prevailed hitherto, only make the matter worse; they complicate the problem.(Nietzsche, 1914, p.24)

One can argue that transhumanist aspiration to escape suffering by means of technology is reactive and a form of *ressentiment*. Leiter (2002, p.202) defines *ressentiment* as a particular instance of a more general “psychological”condition i.e a person whole way of being or mode of orientation towards the world that Nietzsche calls “reactive” Leiter (2002), notes that framing of *ressentiment* within a more general condition is particularly illuminating since it draws attention to the important fact that *ressentiment* is reactive state, a state that, according to some commentators, Nietzsche sees as being associated with an entire way of conceiving and relating to the world

Nietzsche notes that people often try to escape the feelings of emptiness and meaninglessness associated with nihilism. They seek alternative beliefs, ideologies, or distractions to fill the void. Transhumanism is one of such ideologies that want to escape nihilism without addressing the root cause of nihilism. However, Nietzsche believes that most of these attempts are not successful because they do not address the root cause of nihilism. The root cause of nihilism is in the values that people believe in and cherish. These values are often passed down from generation to generation as inherited traditions, religious doctrines, or societal norms and values. To overcome nihilism, Nietzsche argues that individuals need the courage to critically re-evaluate and challenge



these cherished values.

Nietzsche argues that the only way to confront nihilism effectively is through "transvaluation" (Umwertung) of values. This is process of re-examining and re-evaluating the traditional moral and cultural values that have prevailed in society. By doing so, individuals can find new meanings and create a new framework for living a purposeful life that is more better than just taking up an alternative belief system just to escape nihilism. Nietzsche warns that any attempt to escape nihilism, without transvaluing values will only worsen the problem. Superficially adopting new beliefs or distractions may temporarily alleviate the feelings of meaninglessness, but they do not address the underlying issue. Instead, they complicate the problem, perpetuating the struggle with nihilism.

Nietzsche argues that escaping nihilism requires a deep introspection and re-evaluation of all values. Only through the process of transvaluation of values can individuals hope to confront nihilism and find new meanings and purposes in life. Merely seeking alternatives without addressing the core issue will lead to further complications and perpetuate the sense of emptiness, purposelessness. Transhumanism is just merely an alternative means that does not address the root cause of nihilism and totally accepting it will complicate the issue and perpetuate the sense of purposelessness and emptiness.

## CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, comparing Nietzsche's idea of the overman and the aspirations of transhumanism unveils a certain level of relationship and shared ideals of transcending human limitations and fundamentally different philosophical foundations. While both perspectives converge on the pursuit of overcoming limitations inherent in human nature, Nietzsche's overman is intrinsically connected with the acknowledgement of suffering and struggle as essential components of human experience. In contrast, Transhumanism, with its technological ethos, often leans towards mitigation or elimination of suffering and struggle. This distinction underscores a crucial challenge in pursuit of transcending humanity- whether through embracing life's inherent difficulties or through technological augmentation of our existence. As we navigate the trajectory of human evolution, it is paramount that we acknowledge and embrace suffering and challenges as inherent part of what make us human. We must affirm life with all its absurdities.s

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