
Nietzsche and Transhumanism: is Artificial Enhancement a Nietzschean Option?

Michael James Sonne

Abstract

This paper will look at what Nietzsche's metamorphoses of the spirit can tell us about being human in light of artificial enhancement. It will argue that advancements in science including but not limited to: designer babies, immortality movements such as cryonics, and artificial intelligence, are veiled attempts to modify the human condition. Such attempts to modify the human condition can be viewed through the last metamorphose Nietzsche speaks of in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The metamorphose of the child who for Nietzsche is a *new beginning, a game, a self-rolling wheel, a first movement, a holy yea* is the driving force behind advances in artificial enhancement. This paper will argue that this is so by drawing parallels between the language of actors behind the artificial enhancement movement, and Nietzsche's thought behind what the metamorphose of the child would mean for the human condition. The paper will argue that Nietzsche's metamorphose of the child is a positive vision of the potential of human endeavours. The paper will conclude that artificial enhancement can be viewed through this metamorphose of spirit, insofar as its enhancements are taken to be advancements for humans; enhancement should enhance the human condition as opposed to overcoming the human condition.

Keywords: Transhumanism, eternal return, dignity, metamorphose.

The question of whether Nietzsche qualifies as a transhumanist is not the primary purpose of this paper. Debates as to whether Nietzsche is a transhumanist have been discussed in the literature ¹, resulting in different conclusions. In terms of where this paper sits in this debate, I claim Nietzsche can qualify as a transhumanist, however, this labelling is subject to qualification. A qualification which looks at the role of dignity, and the nature of enhancement. This issue will be discussed later in this paper. The layout of this paper will be as follows. Firstly, the transhumanist ideal will be outlined. Secondly, the transhumanist ideal will be viewed through three examples: Cryonics, designer babies, and artificial intelligence. It will then be analysed as to the extent that Nietzsche could be viewed as being in support of such prospects. I will then proceed to show how the child metamorphose in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is a textual example of how Nietzsche's philosophy can support transhumanism. Thirdly, the extent to which Nietzsche could be characterised as a transhumanist will be discussed in regards to the qualification I believe he has (dignity, and enhancement). The conclusion will reiterate this qualification in the hope of offering a new perspective on the debate surrounding transhumanism, and Nietzsche.

The Transhumanism Project

As Bostrom correctly states, 'The human desire to acquire new capacities is as ancient as our species itself'.² One may say the following, that such a statement is obvious. Whilst this position is undoubtedly correct, it is how transhumanism arises from humanism that is most relevant to our question. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486) speaks of the ability of the individual to shape themselves: "We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to raise again

¹See: Nick Bostrom, "Transhumanist Values", *Ethical Issues for the Twenty-First Century*, (www.nickbostrom.com, 2005); Max More, "The Overhuman in the Transhumanism", *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 21, 2010), 1-4; Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, "Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism", *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, Vol.20 Issue 1, March 2009), 29-42.

²Nick Bostrom, "A History of Transhumanist Thought", *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, vol.14, 2005), 1.

to the superior orders whose life is divine.”³ Presented here, is a traditional humanist picture in which freedom is paramount to the creative will of the individual. In other words, a standard humanist picture of the individual is displayed through the exploration of man’s creative will. It is with the advent of science however that we start to delve into the possible transhumanist picture.

Science offers up an avenue in which the individual can modify their nature. Condorcet describes the general feeling, “would it be absurd now to suppose that the improvement of the human race should be regarded as capable of unlimited progress? That a time will come when death would result only from extraordinary accidents or the more and more gradual wearing out of vitality, and that, finally, the duration of the average interval between birth and wearing out has itself no specific time limit whatsoever?”⁴ Two things are mentioned here. The first is the advancement of science which transhumanists want to take advantage of. The second is the realisation that there are aspects of our nature we would like to overcome (in this case – death), and this is where Nietzsche enters the picture.

Thus, the transhumanist project is described as follows, “transhumanists hope that by responsible use of science, technology, and other rational means we shall eventually manage to become post-human, beings with vastly greater capacities than present human beings have.”⁵ This hope shows that transhumanists view “human nature as a work-in-progress.”⁶ We can see this line of thought in Huxley, to whom it is attributed the term transhumanism arose. To the question of the human species transforming itself, in its entirety, as humanity, he argued “perhaps *transhumanism* will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself. By realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature.”⁷

A similar feeling as to the work-in-progress aspect of humanity is given by Nietzsche: “I teach you the Superman. Man is something that

³Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (Chicago: Gateway Editions, 1956).

⁴Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, Marquis of Condorcet, *Sketch For a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1979).

⁵Nick Bostrom, “Human Genetic Enhancements: A Transhumanist Perspective”, *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 37, 2003, 493.

⁶*Ibid.*, 493.

⁷Julian Huxley, *Religion Without Revelation* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1927)

shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him? All creatures hitherto have created something beyond themselves: and do you want to be the ebb of this great tide and return to the animals rather than overcome man?"⁸ This similarity or the extent to which similarity exists, between Nietzsche and transhumanists has led Habermas to characterize transhumanists as "self-styled Nietzscheans"⁹.

In opposition to this view, Bostrom argues that there is only "some surface level similarities with the Nietzschean vision."¹⁰ An example of this similarity is that Nietzsche also fails to have human nature as fixed, "Man is a rope, fastened between animal and Superman – a rope over an abyss . . . What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal."¹¹ A reasonable conclusion can summarily be drawn, such as Max More who agrees with Stefan Sorgner in seeing "fundamental similarities" between the transhumanist picture, and Nietzsche.¹² As stated at the outset this paper is taking the position that Nietzsche can be viewed as a transhumanist with qualification. This shall be discussed later on in this paper. In order to do so, I believe it is important to qualify firstly how Nietzsche's child metamorphose of spirit can be seen to support the transhumanist ideal. Nietzsche outlines the child as follows, "The child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes."¹³

The notion of a "new beginning" can be seen in light of Nietzsche's death of God proclamation in *The Gay Science*, that "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him."¹⁴ In terms of the ramifications of the death of God, I take the following to be a fair summarisation: 1) The notion of human beings as being made *Imago Dei*, has now been lost with the death of God. 2) We are summarily free to create a new sense of being for ourselves. This creation of a new being or essence for ourselves is what I would argue the child metamorphose is hinting at, hence the allusion to "new beginning." One way in which we are able to do create this essence for ourselves is in true Nietzschean

⁸Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (London: Penguin, 2003), 41.

⁹Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 22.

¹⁰Bostrom, *History of Transhumanist Thought*, 4.

¹¹Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 43-44.

¹²More, *Overhuman in the Transhumanism*, 1.

¹³Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 55.

¹⁴Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, (New York: Random House, 1974), §125.

spirit by “overcoming.” We see this in the following description of transhumanism: “The core of transhumanism is to encourage the use of biotransformative technologies in order to “enhance” the human organism, with the ultimate aim being to modify the human organism so radically as to “overcome fundamental human limitations,”¹⁵ and thereby the “human” as such. In other words, to use transhumanist terminology, their fundamental goal is to become “posthuman.””^{16 17}

Max More can be seen to be following Porter in characterising transhumanism as “a class of philosophies that seek to guide us towards a posthuman condition.”¹⁸ Continuing he writes, “by thoughtfully, carefully, and yet boldly applying technology to ourselves, we can become something no longer accurately described as human – we can become posthuman.”¹⁹ I will now seek to look to analyse the transhumanist examples of cryonics, designer babies, and artificial intelligence. It will be argued that those who are in favour of such methods can be seen to be articulating the child spirit outlined by Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. I will then argue that Nietzsche would qualify these movements to the extent they qualify as an enhancement, and how they affect the notion of dignity.

Transhumanism: Cryonics

To understand Cryonics’ appeal is to understand the reality that human beings as it stands are destined to die. However, as we develop as a society our life expectancy increases. Evidence for example can be seen ‘over the past 150 years, “best-practice” life expectancy (i.e. life expectancy in the country with the longest life expectancy) has increased at a remarkably steady rate of 2.5 years per decade. If this trend were to continue, record life expectancy (for women) would reach 100 in six decades’.²⁰ Nevertheless, it may appear as an unnecessary truism to

¹⁵World Transhumanist Association, *Transhumanist FAQ* (World Transhumanist Association, 2016).

¹⁶The question of similarity here is to what extent Nietzsche’s overman can be seen to be the transhumanist notion of posthuman.

¹⁷Allen Porter, “Bioethics and Transhumanism”, *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 42, (2017), 238.

¹⁸Max More, “Transhumanism: Toward a futurist Philosophy”, *Extropy* 6, (1990), 1.

¹⁹Max More, *The philosophy of transhumanism* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley Sons Inc, 2013), 4.

²⁰Jim Oeppen, James W. Vaupel, “Broken Limits to Life Expectancy,” *Science*

state, "the aging process itself is ultimately the cause of most death in industrialized nations, and, increasingly, in the developed world."²¹ However, to state this is to point out 'were it not for aging, our risk of dying in any given year might be like that of somebody in their late teens or early twenties. Life expectancy would then be around 1,000 years."²² Transhumanism takes it as a given that to live longer than our biological clock will allow is a good thing. Hence, the appeal of cryonics.

The appeal of cryonics can be seen in the appeal of Benjamin Franklin's wish for suspended animation: "I wish it were possible . . . to invent a method of embalming drowned persons, in such a manner that they might be recalled to life at any period. . . But . . . in all probability, we live in a century too little advanced, and too near the infancy of science, to see such an art brought in our time to its perfection."²³ Science is now in a position to fulfil the wish of those who support the idea of cryonics. It was Robert Ettinger's book, *The Prospect of Immortality* (1964), which launched the idea of cryonic suspension. Bostrom outlines Ettinger's idea as follows: "as medical technology seems to be constantly progressing, and science has discovered that chemical activity comes to a complete halt at low-enough temperatures, it should be possible to freeze a person today (in liquid nitrogen) and preserve the body until a time when technology is advanced enough to repair the freezing damage and reverse the original cause of deanimation." The possibility of this technology led Ettinger to believe that cryonics "offered a ticket to the future."²⁴

The natural response to such a picture is to question whether the re-animated person would be the same person. Bostrom acknowledges this difficulty when he writes "if the mode of being of a post-human being is radically different from that of a human being, then we may doubt whether a post-human being could be the same person as a human being, even if the post-human being originated from a human being."²⁵ However, Bostrom would claim such an objection is too pes-

296 (2002), 1029 -1031.

²¹Nick Bostrom, Rebecca Roache, *Ethical Issues in Human Enhancement* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 4.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Benjamin Franklin et al, *Mr. Franklin: A Selection from his Personal Letters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956) 27-29.

²⁴Bostrom, *History of Transhumanist Thought*, 10.

²⁵Bostrom, *Human Genetic Enhancements*, 496.

simistic, as “we can envision many enhancements that would not make it impossible for the post-transformation someone to be the same person as the pre-transformation person.” Life extension in the form of cryonics is such an example. Furthermore, we must consider that we “may favour future people being posthuman rather than human, if the posthuman beings would lead lives more worthwhile than the alternative humans would lead.” Concluding, he argues “Transhumanism promotes the quest to develop further so that we can explore hitherto inaccessible realms of value. Technological enhancement of human organisms is a means that we ought to pursue to this end.”²⁶

To what extent can this response be seen through the metamorphosis of the child? We have the following from Nietzsche, “. . . a sacred Yes. Yes, a sacred Yes is needed my brothers, for the sport of creation: the spirit now wills *its own* will, the spirit sundered from the world now wins *its own* world.”²⁷ The notion of will exemplified by the child metamorphosis links to Nietzsche’s notion of the *will to power*. As portrayed in *The Antichrist*: “What is good? — Whatever augments the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself, in man.”²⁸ In other words, the notion of will is a good thing for Nietzsche, to the extent that this will heightens the feeling of power. It will be shown how the will to power can be shown through the perspective of enhancement, which in turn would favour the view that Nietzsche would approve of transhumanism in the form of cryonics. However, in order to show this, it is first necessary to look at values for Nietzsche.

In *The Antichrist* we have the following summation: “The most basic laws of preservation and growth require the opposite: that everyone should invent his *own* virtues, his *own* categorical imperatives.”²⁹ This questioning of value, and of making value one’s own coheres with the picture of transhumanism presented here: “Transhumanism is a dynamic philosophy, intended to evolve as new information becomes available or challenges emerge, one transhumanist value is therefore to cultivate a questioning attitude and a willingness to revise one’s beliefs and assumptions.”³⁰ To this quote, Sorgner also points out that

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 55.

²⁸Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* (Project Gutenberg EBook, 2006), §2, 43.

²⁹Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), § II.

³⁰Nick Bostrom, “Transhumanist Values,” April 2001, www.nickbostrom.com.

"Nietzsche agrees that values have undergone many changes"³¹ which further supports the link between transhumanism and Nietzsche.

It is Nietzsche's nuanced approach to the theory of Darwinism that brings out the link between the will to power, and enhancement. Despite this nuance, it is the facts of the matter that "Nietzsche values scientific inquiry immensely."³² This high regard for the science has been recognized by most leading Nietzschean scholars.³³ In relation to Darwin's theory of evolution, Nietzsche agrees that "human beings strive for power. However, the struggle for existence represents only a marginal type of expression of the fundamental will-to-power."³⁴ This nuance of Nietzsche's theory can be read in two ways: one which supports transhumanism, the other which seeks to qualify any argument that seeks to link Nietzsche and transhumanism. In terms of the reading this quote in support of transhumanism one merely needs to point out that "if you will power, then it is in your interest to enhance yourself. Enhancement, however, is just what transhumanists aim for."³⁵ The other way is by pointing out that "Nietzsche argues that a deficiency or degeneration can prove to be of the highest utility insofar as it acts as a stimulant to other organs."³⁶ Nietzsche in fact "goes so far as to estimate the evolution of strength, the "maximal feeling of power", in terms of its intensity, not its extensity (that is, the feeling of becoming stronger does not have to depend on one's comparative advantage over others, as in the Darwinian struggle for existence)."³⁷ It is this acknowledgment of the occasional usefulness of deficiencies that signals the need for the qualification of Nietzsche's apparent link to transhumanism.

The point about deficiencies highlights what Porter calls "the value(s) problem for transhumanism."³⁸ Porter defines the problem as follows: "contrary to the implications of transhumanist discourse, there is no

³¹Sorgner, *The Overhuman and Transhumanism*, 32.

³²Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, *Metaphysics Without Truth. On the Importance of Consistency Within Nietzsche's Philosophy* (Milwaukee, WI: University of Marquette Press, 2007), 140-45.

³³Sorgner, *The Overhuman and Transhumanism*, 33.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Random House, 1968) §647.

³⁷Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Viroid Life. Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition* (London: Routledge, 1997), 97.

³⁸Porter, *Bioethics and Transhumanism*, 249.

current consensus on what criteria should be used to determine values such as “enhancement” and “health”³⁹. The problem that is highlighted in other words is that transhumanism relies on the belief that all enhancements of the human conditions are by their very nature a good thing. This is liable to criticism. As shown by Babich who argues “transhumanists want life, but they cannot cope with life as it is, with all its trouble, mess, banality and limitations. They want a “body”, but they cannot cope with a body that might suffer, get ill, or die.”⁴⁰ The transhumanist removal of the negative features of life appears to shy away from the doctrine of the eternal return. The eternal return is presented as follows: ⁴¹

“The greatest weight. – What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: “This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence . . . Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: “You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.””

For Nietzsche the concept of overhuman is he who wills the eternal return. The eternal return includes a life filled with all the things which transhumanism will seek to enhance. In other words, “Nietzsche’s response to this tendency to deny and escape “real life” is a radical, all-encompassing Yes-saying to life, which finds its completion in the willing of the eternal recurrence of the same.” ⁴²

Aydin summarises the above discussion succinctly arguing that “From a Nietzschean point of view, “overcoming limitations” does not mean finding new (technological) ways to improve capacities that could contribute to realizing certain values set by a particular (in this case: hu-

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Babette Babich, “Nietzsche’s Post-Human Imperative: On the “All-Too-Human” Dream of Transhumanism,” *The Agonist*(2012), www.nietzschecircle.com, 35.

⁴¹Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, §341.

⁴²Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, *Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of His Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 248f.

manist) value system." The concept of the overhuman can be construed as a critique of transhumanism as opposed to be seen to be endorsing transhumanism as shown already in this essay. As a critique, the overman challenges the 'inevitably "limiting scope" of every particular worldview and value system and their *criteria* for establishing what is an (ideal) human being."⁴³

Designer Babies

How does the child metamorphosis and Nietzsche's overall philosophy address the issue of genetic engineering in terms of the progeny we wish to have? Firstly, it is important to state this question arises as on transhumanism, as the technology "could help ensure that future generations are genetically disposed to be smarter, healthier, and happier than those who have come before."⁴⁴ One way in which this is achieved is by manipulating "the genetic quality . . . to manipulate the genetic material of the embryo to attempt to ensure the presence or absence of certain traits in the resulting child. . . This sort of intervention is permitted in the UK ⁴⁵ only to treat children or adults with life-threatening diseases or disorders, and by intervening in their somatic cells (so-called "gene therapy")."⁴⁶

The distinction between editing genes for what are perceived to be necessary reasons in comparison to trivial reasons has persisted. A study detailed in the scientific journal *Nature*, "detailed the use of CRISPR to modify human embryos for the first time in 2015, and in 2016, oncologists injected a person with cells containing CRISPR-edited genes for the first time, in an attempt to combat the patient's aggressive lung cancer."⁴⁷ One consequence of this action was in 2015, when "a group of leading biologists called for a global moratorium on the use of CRISPR to make heritable changes in a person's genome."⁴⁸ Why this moratorium and above distinction? It seems that there is a widely held concern about such technologies which affect the genetic composition

⁴³Ciano Aydin, "The Posthuman as Hollow Idol: A Nietzschean Critique of Human Enhancement," *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 42 (2017), 321.

⁴⁴Bostrom and Roache, *Ethical Issues*, 18.

⁴⁵The law which allows "gene therapy" is UK Clinical Trials Regulations 2004.

⁴⁶Bostrom and Roache, *Ethical Issues*, 20.

⁴⁷David Cryanoski, "CRISPR gene-editing tested in a person for the first time," *Nature* 539: 479 (2016), 1.

⁴⁸Nicholas Wade, "Scientists seek ban on method of editing the human genome," *New York Times* (March 2015), 1.

of the human individual. I will now explore the arguments from transhumanists that seek to defend such enhancements, and the arguments from bioconservatives⁴⁹ who air on the side of caution in respect to such technology. In addition to this, I will consider the extent to which the child metamorphosis would lend support to such forms of transhumanism. As with the conclusion that was drawn from the segment concerning cryonics, it will be shown how Nietzsche can be seen to align to transhumanism. However, this is stipulated with the concern as to what enhancement consists of, and the role of dignity.

The transhumanist position is that “enhancement represents the moral obligation.”⁵⁰ This is applied not to just the apparent evidential case of diseases but to enhancement in general. A proponent of “liberal eugenics,” Agar argues that “parents should be empowered to use available technologies to choose some of their children’s characteristics.”⁵¹ The rationale behind this position is that ‘parents ranking of life plans, their ranking of what is valuable in life, provides the definition of enhancement for them: a gene therapy will enhance their child if it improves the child’s chances of successfully pursuing life plans they rank highly.’⁵² Agar’s reasoning can be further seen in *The Transhumanist Declaration* “(4) Transhumanists advocate the moral right for those wish to use technology to extend their mental and physical (including reproductive) capacities and to improve their control over their own lives. We seek personal growth beyond our current biological limitations.”⁵³

This positivism towards the transhumanist position on designer babies is based on a view of our nature which is malleable, and ergo subject to change or revision. Bostrom outlines the position of transhumanism: “transhumanists see human and posthuman dignity as compatible and complementary. They insist that dignity, in its modern sense, consists in what we are and what we have the potential to become, not in our pedigree or our causal origin.”⁵⁴ Continuing with the transhumanist perspective, the view is that “what we are is not a function solely

⁴⁹“Bioconservative” is the term given to individuals who are against the transhumanist position on genetic engineering technologies.

⁵⁰Julian Savulescu, *Genetic Interventions and Ethics of Enhancement of Human Beings* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), 517.

⁵¹Nicholas Agar, *Liberal Eugenics: In Defence of Human Enhancement* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2004) 2.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Bostrom, *History of Transhumanist Thought*, 21.

⁵⁴Nick Bostrom, “In Defense of Posthuman Dignity,” *Bioethics* 19:3 (2005), 213.

of our DNA but also of our technological and social context. Human nature in this broader sense is dynamic, partially human-made, and improvable."⁵⁵ Concluding, on the transhumanist position "there is no need to behave as if there were a deep moral difference between technological and other means of enhancing human lives."⁵⁶ On the positive view of transhumanism and designer babies we can see how the metamorphosis of the child is applied with the notion of the "sacred Yes."⁵⁷ We have the possibility of enhancing our children's ability, and there is no *a priori* reason why we cannot adapt our nature. In union with Agar, other individuals such as Glover and Walker defend the positive view of designer babies. Mark Walker has argued the perfectionist standpoint that we have a duty to use technology to improve ourselves.⁵⁸ Jonathan Glover perspective on the issue echoes Bostrom that "not just any aspect of present human nature . . . is worth preserving. Rather it is especially those features which contribute to self-development and self-expression, to certain kinds of relationships, and to the development of consciousness and understanding. And some of these features may be extended rather than threatened by technology."⁵⁹

However, bioconservatives would argue the contrary to this positive interpretation of the proposed benefits of design babies in the form of genetic engineering. They argue against the transhumanist picture that our nature is malleable. They would look at Nietzsche's metamorphosis of the child, and argue that the "a sacred Yes" should still be tied to the nature that is able to articulate it. Whilst it is true, we have these technologies it does not necessarily follow that we ought to use them. Kass argues in regard to nature that "we need more than generalized appreciation for nature's gifts. We need a particular regard and respect for the special gift that is our given nature."⁶⁰ Fukuyama goes further in identifying transhumanism as "the world's most dangerous idea".⁶¹

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 55.

⁵⁸Mark Allan Walker, "Prolegomena to Any Future Philosophy", *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 10, (March 2002), 17.

⁵⁹Jonathan Glover, *What Sort of People Should There Be?* (London: Pelican, 1984).

⁶⁰Leon Richard Kass, *Ageless Bodies, Happy Souls: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Perfection*, (The New Atlantis, 2003), 1.

⁶¹Francis Fukuyama, "Transhumanism", *Foreign Policy* no.144, Slate Group, September-October 2004).

He argues "that liberal democracy depends on the fact that all humans share an undefined "Factor X", which grounds their equal dignity and rights. The use of enhancing technologies, he fears, could destroy Factor X."⁶² The improvement can have a negative impact of both the parent and the child. In terms of the parent, Kass argues that "the ability to select the genes of our children and to create so-called designer babies will, it is claimed, corrupt parents, who will come to view their children as mere products."⁶³ In terms of the child, "a child whose genetic traits have been selected by his parents is denied the opportunity of being "the undivided author or his own life."⁶⁴

The conclusion from the discussion on cryonics and designer babies as a form of genetic engineering is the extent to which these tools count as enhancements. It is also important to look at the notion of dignity for Nietzsche. It is this paper's argument that the extent to which Nietzsche is a transhumanist, and the subsequent qualification I outlined above is best understood through the notion of "dignity as a quality." Kolnai writes of dignity as a quality that "dignity means worth or worthiness in some "absolute", autonomized and objectivized, as it were "featural" sense."⁶⁵ The benefit of Kolnai's qualification is that it accounts for "un-dignity," and in doing so helps one to understand the qualification I believe Nietzsche would hold in terms of whether he is a transhumanist. Kolnai argues the following:

It might be argued that the feature sometimes described as the "meretricious" embodies the culmination of Un-Dignity . . . What characterizes the meretricious attitude is the intimate unity of abstract self-seeking and qualitative self-effacement. . . and places himself at the disposal of alien wants and interests without organically (which implies selectively) espousing any of them . . .⁶⁶

Central to my argument about qualification that is attached to Nietzsche, in terms of to what extent he can be labelled as a transhumanist

⁶²Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 149.

⁶³Leon Richard Kass, *Life, Liberty, and Defence of Dignity: The Challenge for Bioethic*, (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002), 48.

⁶⁴Habermas, *Future of Human Nature*, 63.

⁶⁵Aurel Kolnai, "Dignity," *Philosophy* 51:197 (1976), 253f.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 256f.

is the response to the following question: "When is the activity of self-transformation dignity-increasing and when is it dignity-reducing?"⁶⁷ The answer is the following: "when self-transformation is motivated by a combination of "abstract self-seeking and qualitative self-effacement" . . . when it represents a surrender to mere convenience rather than the autonomous realization of a content-full personal ideal, then the act of enhancement is not dignified and may be positively undignified."⁶⁸ It is this qualification of dignity which looks at the question as to what extent is this transhumanist technology edifying. Nietzsche's metamorphosis of the child, and general philosophy allows for this double pronged response. In one sense he can be labelled as a transhumanist in the sense that his philosophy allows for creative endeavour of which transhumanist technologies are an expression. However, what is also present is the question as to whether these technologies are edifying to the spirit or to use Kolnai's term, to what extent they have "dignity as a quality."

Artificial Intelligence

Last to consider is the question of enhancement to our intelligence. Bostrom outlines the steps that such a technology would proceed through for the individual who would wish to take advantage of such a technology:

1. 'Create a sufficiently detailed scan of a particular human brain, perhaps by deconstructing it with nanobots or by feeding thin slices of brain tissues into powerful microscope for automatic image analysis.
2. Second, from this scan, reconstruct the neuronal network that the brain implemented, and combine this with computational models of the different types of neurons.
3. Third, emulate the whole computational structure on a powerful supercomputer.

If successful, the procedure would result in the original mind, with memory and personality intact, being transferred to the computer where it would then exist as software; and it could either inhabit a robot body or live in a virtual reality.⁶⁹ This technology can similarly be anal-

⁶⁷Nick Bostrom, *Dignity and Enhancement*, 2007, www.nickbostrom.com, 14.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁹Bostrom, *History of Transhumanist Thought*, 9.

used through the aforementioned criteria. Specifically, Nietzsche would not necessarily be against a technology such as this. However, it is paramount that the question as to whether this technology has dignity as a quality is considered.

Conclusion

Overall, this paper's claim is distinct from the literature which either seeks to attribute Nietzsche as a transhumanist or in opposition to transhumanism. The aim has been to show that in one sense Nietzsche can be viewed as a transhumanist as his philosophy, specifically the metamorphosis of the child can be read as a favourable interpretation of the underlying rationale behind transhumanism. On the other hand, however, I do not think that Nietzsche would offer total support to transhumanism as an endeavour. The reasons behind this claim are those outlined in this paper: that for Nietzsche the concept of the overhuman which was viewed as a parallel to the posthuman of transhumanism is tied to the doctrine of the eternal return. Part of this doctrine is the willingness to accept life in its entirety with all the perceived deficiencies. It is for this reason that the question of whether transhumanist technologies have dignity as a quality attached to them needs to be considered for Nietzsche.

Bibliography

Agar, Nicholas, *Liberal Eugenics: In Defence of Human Enhancement*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

Aydin, Ciano, "The Posthuman As Hollow Idol: A Nietzschean Critique of Human Enhancement." *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 42 (2017): 304-27.

Babich, Babette, "Nietzsche's Post-Human Imperative: On the "All-Too-Human" Dream of Transhumanism." *The Agonist*, www.neitzschecircle.com, 2012.

Bostrom, Nicholas Roache, Rebecca, *Ethical Issues in Human Enhancement*, London: Pelgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Bostrom, Nicholas, *Transhumanist Values*, www.nickbostrom.com, April 2001.

Bostrom, Nicholas, "Human Genetic Enhancements: A Transhumanist Perspective." *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 37 (2003): 493-506.

Bostrom, Nicholas, "Transhumanist Values", *Ethical Issues for the Twenty-First Century*, www.nickbostrom.com, 2005.

Bostrom, Nicholas, "A History of Transhumanist Thought." *Journal of Evolution and Technology* (April 2005): 1-30.

Bostrom, Nicholas, "In Defence of Posthuman Dignity." *Bioethics* 19:3 (2005): 202-14.

Bostrom, Nicholas, *Dignity and Enhancement*, www.nickbostrom.com, 2007.

Condorcet, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, *Sketch For a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979.

Cryanoski, David, "CRISPR Gene-Editing Tested in a Person for the First Time." *Nature* 539 (2016): 479.

Ettinger, Robert, *The Prospect of Immortality*. New York: Doubleday, 1964.

Franklin, Benjamin, et al., *Mr. Franklin: A Selection from his Personal Letters*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956.

Fukuyama, Francis, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.

Fukuyama, Francis, "Transhumanism", *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2004.

Glover, Jonathan, *What Sort of People Should There Be?*. London: Pelican, 1984.

Habermas, Jürgen, *The Future of Human Nature*. Cambridge: Polity, 2003.

Huxley, Julien, *Religion without Revelation*. London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1927.

Kass, Richard Leon, *Life, Liberty and Defense of Dignity: The Challenge for Bioethics*. San Francisco. Encounter Books, 2002.

Kass, Richard Leon, "Ageless Bodies, Happy Souls: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Perfection." *The New Atlantis* 1 (2003): 9-28.

Kolnai, Aurel, "Dignity." *Philosophy* 51 (1976): 251-271.

Mirandola, Giovanni Pico della , *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, Chicago: Gateway Editions, 1956.

More, Max, "Transhumanism: Toward a Futurist Philosophy." *Ex-tropy* 6 (1990): 6-12.

More, Max, "The Overhuman in the Transhumanism." *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 21 (2010): 1-4.

More, Max, *The Philosophy of Transhumanism*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley Sons, Inc, 2013.

Müller-Lauter, Wolfgang, *Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of his Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Will to Power*. New York, Random House,

1968.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science*. New York: Random House, 1974.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. London: Penguin, 2003.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Antichrist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Antichrist*. Gutenberg EBook, 2006.

Oeppen, Jim Vaupel, W. James, "Broken Limits to Life Expectancy." *Science* 296 (2002): 1029-1031.

Pearson, Ansell Keith, *Viroid Life. Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Porter, Allen, "Bioethics and Transhumanism." *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 42 (2017): 237-260.

Savulescu, Julian, *Genetic Interventions and Ethics of Enhancement of Human Beings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Sorgner, Lorenz Stefan, *Metaphysics Without Truth. On the Importance of Consistency within Nietzsche's Philosophy*. Milwaukee: University of Marquette Press, 2007.

Sorgner, Lorenz Stefan, "Nietzsche, The Overhuman, and Transhumanism." *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 20:1 (March 2009): 29-42.

World Transhumanist Association, *Transhumanist FAQ*, World Transhumanist Association, 2016.

Wade, N., "Scientists seek ban on method of editing the human genome." *The New York Times*. Accessed November 14, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/20/science/biologists-call-for-halt-to-gene-editing-technique-in-humans.html>.

Walker, Mark, "Prolegomena to Any Future Philosophy." *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 10 (March 2002).