Editor's Note

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I am thrilled to be the editor of the special inaugurating issue of the journal *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*, published by West University Press, Timișoara—a journal which wants to address cutting-edge topics in philosophical research. Entitled *Living the Posthuman Paradigm-Shift? A Symposium on Sorgner's "On Transhumanism"*, the first issue of the journal prominently focuses on philosophical, societal, cultural, and political issues, which transhumanism particularly is opening for discussion, by touching at the same time the core themes that have shaped its philosophical outlook. The present volume is the result of a round table entitled: *Living the Posthuman Paradigm-Shift? A Symposium on Sorgner's "On Transhumanism"*, hosted by the Institute of Social and Political Research (ICSP) of West University, Timișoara, Romania, on May 27, 2021. For those who are more, or less, familiar with posthuman theories, the volume is initiating a philosophical inquiry—by gathering together many researchers from all over the world—regarding the leading philosopher Stefan Lorenz Sorgner's book *On Transhumanism: The Most Dangerous Idea in the World?!*. In the following papers the readers may discover many intriguing questions related to the paradigm shift that the posthuman may bring to the present/future life of the individual. The papers cover a wide range of what transhumanism, as a philosophical/cultural movement or a thinking approach, represents nowadays. The volume encompasses both a Nietzschean approach to transhumanism—in which we may discover both the convergences and the divergences that Nietzsche's concept of the *Overhuman* (and not only this) brings to transhumanist discussions—as well as a cartography regarding the multiple scenarios that transhumanism reveals, in close connection to the present/future technological developments and human enhancements such as bio-nanotechnology, AI technology, climate change, moral enhancements, education, gene editing, mind uploading etc.

The volume is not only an invitation to reflect on the paradigm shifts that the posthuman dimension brings into discussion, but also an introduction to the multiple concepts, philosophical theories and movements related to this field (e.g., transhumanism, transhuman, posthumanism, post-human, metahumanism/weak transhumanism, weak posthumanism). That's why, in these pages, the reader may discover that, in Sorgner's view, transhumanism, as a philosophy is linked to Nietzsche's perspectivism and non-dualist philosophy, being also grounded in the Anglo-American bioethical tradition and analytical philosophy. Another important aspect to consider is that for other transhumanist philosophers such as Nick Bostrom, transhumanism seems to be closely connected to the Enlightenment heritage in terms of its goal of achieving human perfection (Bostrom, 2005)—being thus an intensification of humanism. Furthermore, in Max More's view, transhumanism seeks the perpetual progress and evolution of human life by going beyond the current natural-biological human limitations, embracing scientific and technological developments and innovations, 'morphological freedom' and 'proactive attitude', in order to

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prolong lifespan and to enhance human capabilities—physical, psychological, neurological etc. (More, 2013, pp. 3-18).

However, beyond the excessive technological enthusiasm and paternalism that may be identified in many of the transhumanist discourses (especially in those of the silicon-based transhumanist ones), I prefer to believe that opting for a more balanced, relational, mindful and critical attitude towards the present/future technologies and agencies, would be a much more promising start for achieving a proper well-being with regard to all human/non-human agents, toward a non-binary, non-hierarchical, non-dualistic way of existence. In order to emphasize this aspect, I am offering a brief analysis in the chapter entitled, *An Incursion into 'Weak Transhumanism'*, concerning this issue, along with an argument regarding why we should choose Stefan Lorenz Sorgner's 'weak transhumanism' approach, when we think about the implementation of future emerging technologies—rather than the 'strong transhumanism' one— in order to achieve a multi-perspectival way of co-existing with technology in an open and shared world.

Another aspect to consider in the present volume is that regarding transhumanism and Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical thinking. Such a syncretic approach results from the following big open question—Did Nietzsche's philosophy influence transhumanist thinking?— that has enlisted many transhumanists in various philosophical debates. For instance, the transhumanist philosopher Max More sees a strong connection in terms of evidence between Nietzsche's philosophy and transhumanism. Nick Bostrom, on the other hand, sees only peripheral similarities between Nietzschean thinking and modern transhumanist philosophy. Such an intellectual debate is very well rendered in Elise Bohan's chapter *Nietzsche and Transhumanism: Much Ado About Nothing?*. As a historian, Bohan, is seeking to emphasize both the similarities and the differences between Nietzsche's core concepts such as the 'Overhuman' or the 'eternal recurrence' and modern transhumanism. For that reason, in her quest to highlight a possible critical-historical convergence—in what she defines as being a "normative view of Nietzsche's place in transhumanist history"—Bohan is bringing together several arguments from Sorgner's philosophical thinking, which come to support her position regarding Nietzsche as a 'weak proto-transhumanist', rather than a 'strong proto-transhumanist'.

In the same paradigm of thinking—that of understanding Nietzsche as a precursor of transhumanism—Manuel Knoll, draws a red line between Sorgners's own interpretation regarding Nietzsche's concept of the Overhuman, and the way that Nietzsche conceives the Overhuman in his main works; starting from *Zarathustra,* moving through *Ecce Homo* and *The Anti-Christ* (that is, not necessarily as a new/higher species, but rather as the improved version of *Homo sapiens*, in a continuous process of becoming, through science, education, art and leisure). Consequently Knoll realizes in his chapter *Nietzsche and Transhumanism: The Case of the Overhuman (Übermensch)*, not only a cartography of the flourishing of the Nietzschean concept of the Overhuman (starting with the evolutionary perspective, moving to that of a non-dualist anthropology, then toward human beings enhancement), but brings also a counter argument with regard to Nick Bostrom's position regarding the superficial similarities between the Nietzschean vision of the Overhuman and transhumanist thinking.

By considering himself a 'weak transhumanist', Sorgner find the convergence/"structural analogies" between Nietzsche's philosophy and transhumanism (Sorgner, 2016/2020), in what Mariano Rodríguez González's emphasizes as being a "weak Nietzscheanism"; that is a "soft" way of re-reading Nietzsche in the limits of an open perspectivism and ethical nihilism related to Gianni Vattimo's "weak thinking". As is evident in Mariano Rodríguez's chapter, *The Problematic Coherence of a Nietzschean Transhumanism*, technological immortality is put under the spotlight in-between 'weak transhumanism' and strong functionalism. In this vein, Mariano Rodríguez appears to be critical, especially with regard to the way that the Nietzschean concept of the Overhuman is taken for granted by some strong transhumanists (i.e., the silicon-based

transhumanists), in their understanding of the posthuman (as a silicon embodiment, in the cloud). Moreover, in his outlook the transhumanist radical approach of human self-overcoming (on his way to the posthuman) by means of future advanced technologies such as digital immortality via mind-uploading, short-circuits the Nietzschean discourse of the Overhuman.

The moral debates constructed around the "precautionary principle" and that of the "pro-actionary principle" are still present in the philosophical, ethical and political realm. Here, one of the core questions is the following: Should bio-enhancements be morally acceptable or become a moral or maybe even legal obligations? Maurizio Balistreri's chapter—*Transhumanism According to Stefan Lorenz Sorgner: why the Posthuman Project Requires Responsibility and Empathy*—analyzes the well-known polemics between liberal eugenicists (i.e., Ingmar Persson and Julian Savulescu's arguments, in favor of moral enhancements) and bio-conservatives (i.e., Francis Fukuyama who is defending the idea of the "essence" of human nature). Balistreri brings several arguments in favor of human enhancement and genetic modification, by questioning, at the same time, the issues regarding genome editing and children's genetic makeup. Within these limits, the problem of moral responsibility, regarding various (bio)enhancements, comes to complete and not to undermine, the centrality of negative freedom—the aspect that Sorgner is defending when he is reflecting on genetic alterations, in the paradigms of weak transhumanism.

The environmental approach to the transhuman agenda is not limited to the anthropocentric bias of Western cultures. Mirko Garasic's questions regarding the environmental crisis of today, as a consequence of a "savage consumerism", as he is pointing out, brings together not only the main issues concerning human exceptionalism (and the seeking for 'immortality'), but also that of the tradition of the western metaphysical legacy, grounded in Judeo-Christian morality. The way that these issues are linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, lifespan prolongation, compulsory Moral Enhancement or Parabiosis, are revealed in Garasic's critical position on Sorgner's weak transhumanist thinking, in the chapter entitled *Some of the Critical Aspects of Sorgner's "On Transhumanism"*. If it "…is possible to reconcile seeking immortality with a non-anthropocentric stand" remains an open question and a challenge which Garasic lets us reflect on, from both a transhumanist and posthumanist perspective.

Without necessarily considering himself a transhumanist, but agreeing with some core transhumanist ideas (e.g., constant self-overcoming, scientific research etc.), Sven Nyholm criticizes in his chapter *The World's Most Dangerous Idea? Transhumanism in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, Climate Change, and Existential Risk: Some Comments on Stefan,* the technological-optimism position that is taken for granted (in his opinion) by many transhumanists, even by Sorgner, when it comes to robots, advanced AI and other powerful modern technologies, any of which may threaten the existential dimension of human beings. By this Nyholm in not adopting a bio-conservative position. On the contrary, he is challenging us to reflect upon the various threats which include, but are not limited to, advanced technological systems (such as AI), which are about to devour the world's resources and to pollute the environment, aspects that may accelerate the current climate crisis to an even greater extent.

However, if we get out of the western cocoon of transhumanism and head towards the thinking emerging in less-developed countries, we may observe, as Leo Igwe's mindful critique emphasizes, the fact that nowadays transhumanist agenda if far from taking into consideration the situation found in African countries, when it is about human enhancement. In his chapter *Transhumanism and Emerging Technologies: Exploring Ethics and Human Enhancement in Africa*, Leo Igwe points out, not only the current humanitarian crisis from Africa, but also the emergence of many ethical, cultural (African humanism), philosophical (the philosophy of Ubuntu), bio-political and techno-political questions when it comes to human improvements and the future of human beings, that transhumanism is supporting. A mindful perspective here, concerning an ethical application of emerging technologies in the African context should have, as a starting point, not only the transhumanist agenda, but also that of the Western geo-political

and technological one (by moving away from any conservative and necro-political approach), in order to make more effort initially in bringing Africa to a level of technological development and living conditions similar to those of the West.

Throughout its varied historical contexts, education has always brought into discussion the importance of educational virtues and cultural values, particularly in an instrumentalist paradigm. Natasha Brie Beranek's chapter *The Metahumanities*, shows how the non-dualistic anthropological approach—the core element of critical posthumanism and as well as of metahumanism—applied in the higher educational system, may be one of the keys regarding the dissolution of the old power-relations grounded in the tradition of the majority of neoliberal universities. In addition, as is manifestly demonstrated by Sorgner's metahumanist theories—which is moving towards a (multi-perspective and dynamic nature of values—our times require the consideration, once again, of the importance of Nietzschean 'perspectivism', 'self-mastery', 'courage' and '*agon*', regarding the practicing and understanding of educational enhancement, alongside the flourishing of human creativity, leisure and intelligence, toward a convergent and fluid process of becoming of the human, in all its differences and materialism embodied and embedded relationality.

We hope that this volume will provide a useful analysis and reflection with regard to the posthuman realm, along with a consideration of the full range of challenges that transhumanism, posthumanism and metahumanism raise in this ever-changing world, found under the auspices of scientific and technological development, and of that of the numerous fluctuations and challenges in the philosophical, historical, ethical, cultural, educational, medical, political, economic or environmental areas. The diversified range of topics addressed by the authors who have contributed to this volume, emphasizes once again that a critical, multi-perspectival, fluid and rational cartography of our human and post-/transhuman condition is one of the ways we can understand both our past and present, along with that of our future possible becomings.

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