

Entering the Intellectual Discourses on “On Transhumanism”

Stefan Lorenz Sorgner *

Abstract

In the article “Entering the Intellectual Discourses on “On Transhumanism” I engage with a selection of intellectual reflections put forward by scholars in a special issue on “On Transhumanism” of the journal *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*. I have written short responses dedicated to the following topics: 1: Anthropocentrism; 2. Moral Status of Future Persons; 3. The Ethics of Life Extension; 4. The Relationship between Transhumanism and Neo-Nietzschean Thinking; 5. Fictionalism; 6. Existential Risks; 7. Global Justice; 8. Metahumanities.

Keywords: posthumanism, transhumanism, metahumanism, posthuman, posthuman studies, anthropocentrism, logocentrism, essentialism, Nietzsche.

1. Introduction

I am extremely grateful to Florin Lobonț and Aura Schussler for organizing an amazing symposium and for editing this wonderful special issue of the journal *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*, dedicated to my monograph “On Transhumanism”. Many thanks also to each individual intellectual for contributing your just, engaged, and challenging reflections. It is a great sign of scholarly virtue to avoid polemics, to be philosophically dedicated to the core issues at hand, and to be intellectually innovative when addressing the central topics which demand further clarifications. All contributions manifest this scholarly virtuous attitude, for which I am extremely grateful. It is an honour as well as a pleasure to be able to respond to your critical reflections.

2. Aura Schussler, Maurizio Balistreri and Anthropocentrism

In various passages of her contribution, Schussler addresses the topic of the “humancentric bias”, which is indeed an issue which demands further clarification, as there does not seem to be sufficient agreement on the meaning of moving beyond and avoiding anthropocentrism within the scholarly debates on the posthuman. Schussler is correct when she highlights the following judgements of various critical posthumanists concerning transhumanism:

“For instance, posthumanist thinkers such as Rosi Braidotti (2013), Cary Wolfe (2010) and Francesca Ferrando (2019) view transhumanism as anthropocentric, a shadow of the Renaissance and Enlightenment humanism.” (Schussler, 2021, p. 11).

Is transhumanism actually anthropocentric? If transhumanism at its core was anthropocentric, all transhumanists would have to subscribe to it. This is not the case. Hence, transhumanism is

* John Cabot University Rome, Via della Lungara, 233, 00165 Roma RM. E-mail: ssorgner@johncabot.edu

not anthropocentric at its core. Transhumanism is about the use of technologies to break beyond the boundaries of our current limitations to increase the likelihood of personal flourishing. However, personal flourishing is not identical with human flourishing. Pearce (2021, pp. 57-64), Hughes (2004), as well as I demand personhood for non-human animals, which usually implies that there are some human beings who are no persons, and others who are persons. However, personhood would not be a category that is identical in scope to that of human beings. There would also be non-human animals which are persons and maybe even embodied AI's which would receive the moral status of being a person. If this is the case, then it would apply that these transhumanists affirm a person-centred-approach, but it would not be a human-centred-approach. There are other transhumanists, like Steve Fuller (2014, pp. 201-212), who regard rationality as morally relevant whose approach can be classified as anthropocentric. This judgement does not apply to most leading transhumanists, and it is not being affirmed by my stance. The need to reflect upon the meaning of rationality from a transhumanist background has also been highlighted by Balistreri:

However, it is legitimate to ask whether, in assigning a central role to reason in explaining morality, Sorgner does not remain linked to a conception of humanism that he considers no longer acceptable. If—as Sorgner writes—it is true that the philosophies going beyond humanism put forward a more modest conception of human beings, in that they no longer consider human beings ontologically different from, nor better to other living beings (Sorgner, 2016/2020, p. 32), then the role of reason should also be questioned. (Balistreri, 2021, p. 64)

I agree with Balistreri, and it is a central aspect of my transhumanist approach that the traditional role of reason of the Platonic-Kantian-traditions gets questioned. This does not mean that reason is irrelevant. Yet, the concept and moral relevance of reason needs to be rethought. Firstly, it needs to be highlighted that a unified concept of reason can no longer be plausibly upheld on the basis of an evolutionary and dynamic ontology of permanent becoming. It is more appropriate to claim that each entity has its own reason. This does not mean that that what we call reason is not sufficiently similar in all the entities such that it undermines the possibility of communication. This is not the case. If I order a piece of apple pie in a restaurant, I usually get one. However, reason has merely a pragmatic function. It usually enables us to effectively communicate what we wish to communicate. This does not mean that sender and receiver identify identical concepts with the words which are used for the purpose of communication. However, the concepts are usually sufficiently similar so that pragmatic goals can be realized. Secondly, it needs to be noted that my philosophical stance does not imply that reason does not exist. Various reasons exist. We can talk, we can make inferences, and we can communicate. It is the ontologically unified concept of reason which gets conceptually undermined. Plato's, Descartes' and Kant's concepts of reason are no longer plausible, but an evolutionary philosophical concept of reason is still meaningful. This, however, does not lead us to a unified concept of reason. Thirdly, such a revised concept of reason has consequences for the moral meaning of reason. Reason used to be identified with the divine spark in us, and consequently, with the quality due to which we deserve to be treated with respect. It was believed that we participate in God's image by means of possessing reason. Hence, we ought to be treated with respect. This is the foundation for an anthropocentric philosophy. However, given an evolutionary reformulation of reason, reason is no longer a quality which has any normative implications, and from which an anthropocentric philosophy can be inferred. This also makes clear that anthropocentrism does not belong to the core elements of transhumanism.

However, the philosophical issue which is being raised in this context is an important one, as many, if not most critical posthumanists also criticize a person-centred approach, as they regard a person-centred ethics as dualist—either one is a person or one is not a person. Firstly, this does not have to be the case either. Personhood could be a continuity—a hierarchical concept with

various levels of personhood. Secondly, a dualist distinction does not have to be morally problematic. Non-essentialist and/or fictive dualities can be pragmatically useful. In this case, it could easily be a pragmatic distinction—a contingent nodal point which was created as a useful fiction—but not one which claims to make any judgement on ontological conditions.

In my most recent book *We have always been cyborgs* (2022), I sketch a theory of various levels of personhood, whereby personhood is a non-anthropocentric normative concept. At the same time, I stress that it is a fiction, a useful concept for avoiding totalitarian and paternalistic structures, as my central philosophical worry concerning various relational ethics is that such approaches demand totalitarian and/or paternalistic structures. The central reason for this claim is that a relational ethics analyses an entity in its relational context, which implies the need to morally consider that someone is the daughter, friend and sister of someone. If the relations of a person are morally relevant, then the misbehaviour of one's close ties is morally relevant for how one is evaluated oneself. This is the element that bears paternalistic implications. If my friends consume illegal drugs, this should be of no moral relevance at all for how I am judged, as I wish to be judged on the basis of what I have been doing and am responsible for. If one's close ties are morally relevant for how one is evaluated oneself, we have a moral system with paternalistic structures. I regard paternalism as morally problematic and regard any system which avoids paternalism as much as possible as preferable, as thereby the greatest plurality of human flourishing can best be realized. This stance has a great amount of significant moral implications. It becomes particularly challenging when the moral consideration of persons, who are not born yet, need to be dealt with. It is this issue which was addressed by Garasic.

3. Mirko Garasic and Future Persons

Garasic raised the enormously important philosophical issue of the moral relevance of future persons by means of the following statement:

Sorgner's position seems very sympathetic towards non-human animals (in theory potential beneficiaries of transhumanism as well), yet I find it hard to see where there is room for this reconciliation between the life extension of human animal individuals and the care of the environment in Sorgner's account. (Garasic, 2021, p. 74)

Suffering is morally relevant. Entities do not normally wish to suffer, in particular if it is a meaningless suffering. The higher an entity's capacity of suffering, the more respect ought to be attributed to an entity. However, a reliable empirical manner of establishing an entities capacity of suffering still needs to be realized. I think this foundation also enables the consideration of sufficiently developed embodied AI's, as I have shown in *We have always been cyborgs* (2022). However, this approach does not allow me to seriously discuss the planet's health, as the planet earth is not a unified organism, and thus the qualifications of the planet being healthy or not are meaningless. This does not mean that care for the environment is absent on the basis of such a philosophical perspective. If an entity can suffer, it deserves some kind of moral recognition and respect. If this is not the case, it has consequences, too, i.e., Michelangelo's *David* does not deserve moral respect, however, it deserves cultural respect. There is nothing morally wrong concerning selling the marble from the mountains around Carrara, as marble or a mountain cannot suffer. Furthermore, this person-centred stance has implications concerning how future or unborn people ought to be considered. As a future person does not yet have the capacity to suffer, they cannot be harmed as long as they do not possess the capacity to suffer. However, interests are being connected to future people. Parents usually, but not always have an interest in the well-being of their children. People who do not intend to have offspring do not have an obvious interest in the well-being of future people. Political institutions have an interest in their

continued existence for which humans are needed. Hence, on an individual level, there is no necessary moral motivation in caring for future people. The situation is different from the suffering of the poor at the moment, as suffering is morally relevant. Singer's drowning child example provides solid moral reasons for why people should care more for other people who suffer than for spending money on luxury goods¹. Future people cannot suffer yet. In order for them to be harmed, they need to be in existence first. Someone who does not exist cannot be harmed.

Considering the well-being of future generations is not a necessary moral challenge for the individual. Individuals have a radical plurality of concepts of goodness. It is a wonderful achievement that persons have the freedom not to be told by institutions on how to live their lives. This is amazingly precious achievement. Hence, I cherish a liberal pluralistic and democratic political system enormously. This is not an argument in favour of libertarianism, however, as the sole focus on freedom undermines itself. The norm of freedom is central. However, if one focusses only on the norm of freedom, freedom undermines itself, as a certain amount of equality, and solidarity are also needed for realizing the norm of freedom. Without any money, you cannot be free. Freedom is an enormously precious achievement which needs to be cherished. This stance implies the freedom to act irresponsibly, egoistically, and without any care for future people.

The care for future people comes in on a political level, as political organizations have an interest in their future existence, and without people, political systems cannot continue to exist. This is the reason, why political systems ought to promote that children come into existence, and that the external and environmental conditions are such that they are in the interest of future people. Political decisions are needed to regulate and balance the achievement of freedom with the responsibility for future people. How this should be done best, depends on the special circumstances of each specific nation.

From an individual perspective, it is more challenging to argue in favour of the moral relevance of future people, as you cannot harm someone who is not even born yet, and if you do not plan to have offspring you do not need to have a personal interest in caring for future people.

If you, on the other hand, regard climate change as the most challenging moral issue, then this ought to have consequences for your personal behaviour, i.e., you should refrain from having children, as each new person significantly increases the speed of warming up the climate. It is this insight which will lead to the most relevant political challenges. A political system is interested in its own continued existence for which more people are needed. However, the existence of more people increases the likelihood of speeding up the heating process of the climate which again decreases the quality of life of future people.

Concerning my own stance on this issue, I draw upon the reflections by Max Roser², who has found out that by increasing the quality of life which goes along with a prolonged lifespan, more hygiene, better education, an improved healthcare system etc., the reproduction rate decreases significantly. Given that the personal quality of life can be increased similarly to what has happened in the past two hundred years, it can be expected that the 12th billion person will never be born. This means that we need to draw upon technological means for increasing the worldwide quality of life, so that the reproduction rate declines, which will automatically have implications for the issue of climate change, too. In this way, we can cherish a liberal system in which humans can live according to their own idiosyncratic understanding of a good life, while

¹ The Drowning Child. *Philosophy Experiments*. <https://www.philosophyexperiments.com/singer/>. Accessed 6.01.2022.

² Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell. (2016, December 22). *Overpopulation – The Human Explosion Explained*. [Video file]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QsBT5EQt348&t=25s>. Accessed 6.01.2022.

the environmental consequences do not have to be devastating one's which would be the case with a radically altered overpopulation.

Technological innovations are needed for dealing with climate change, and they are also needed for increasing the quality of life. By means of both developments, it will be possible to deal with environmental challenges. Environmental issues are political challenges, which need to be dealt with from the perspectives of political institutions. In this way, the aforementioned challenge highlighted by Garasic does not have to be a crucial one. Persons can live longer, the reproduction rate decreases, and the heating process of the climate can be stopped and, maybe even, reversed, if needed. This also leads me to the topic of life-extensions which was highlighted by Elise Bohan, and Manuel Knoll.

4. Elise Bohan, Manuel Knoll, and Life-Extension

Bohan focussed on the question concerning the relationship between Nietzsche and transhumanism, whereby she stresses the challenging issue of life-extension which is central for most transhumanists: "Again, this reasoning saddles Sorgner with a burden of proof (to show that Nietzsche would have advocated for a transhumanist brand of life-extension) that he does not satisfy." (Bohan, 2021, p. 27)

Bohan claims that I ought to prove that Nietzsche was in favour of life-extension in order to support my claim that there is a structural analogy between Nietzsche's philosophy and transhumanist' thinking. It is not my intention for attempting such proof. In the contrary, Nietzsche was not in favour of life-extension. He distinguished between higher human beings and the last human being whereby he clearly affirms the former and rejects the latter. The last human being or the last man, as the concept is normally but inappropriately translated, is a characterization of the majority of human beings, who long for little pleasures and for a longer lifespan. Nietzsche is right with his analysis. The majority of human beings identify that a prolonged lifespan, or to be precise, a prolonged healthspan increases the likelihood of people living good lives. This is exactly what transhumanists claim. Nietzsche and transhumanists agree on this analysis. In contrast to transhumanists, he personally affirms a different concept of the good life, namely the risky life which attempts to realize a special goal by means of which someone can justify their entire existence and have a meaning in life, a special moment which is so fulfilling that the suffering all people must go through can be justified. It is this element of Nietzsche's thinking which is also being covered by the transhumanist claim of the right of morphological freedom. Morphological freedom affirms and embraces the radical plurality of concepts of the good. Both elements are being covered by Nietzsche's reflections. The last human, or as it is commonly translated the "Last Man" identifies an increased healthspan with a better quality of life. The higher human being, who is commonly translated as "higher man", focusses on following his or her own idiosyncratic drives, which can be realized by means of the transhumanist claim to the right of morphological freedom. By introducing the aforementioned qualifications, the philosophical goal which was recommended in the following passage by Manuel Knoll was realized:

In contrast to most transhumanists, however, Nietzsche focuses not only on the fullest realization of man's possibilities but also on forms of human decay and degeneration such as the "last man" (Z I, Prologue 4, cf. BGE 203).⁶ Nietzsche's dual perspective on the future of the human being could serve as an inspiration for contemporary transhumanists to include also the less optimistic scenarios in their considerations about the future of humanity. (Knoll, 2021, p. 36)

Knoll is right. The right of morphological freedom supports Nietzsche's understanding that higher men should realize their fullest potential. The insight that an increased healthspan

promotes the likelihood of most persons living a good life corresponds to Nietzsche's reflections on the "last man". It is the challenge for a political system that both elements can be considered appropriately. This way of dealing with the higher and the last men also explains some issue which González highlights.

5. Mariano Rodríguez González and Neo-Nietzschean Thinking

González pointed out the following: "So, we can conclude by affirming that the values of transhumanism, at least insofar as they are based on this deep negative hedonism, have not gone through the transvaluation that Nietzsche encourages in his work." (González, 2021, pp. 49). He is right in pointing out that there is a tension between a negative utilitarianism which is being affirmed by some transhumanists and Nietzsche's new fictive values. However, I disagree that there is the need to choose between these two moral systems. A great amount of people alive today have sympathies for a negative utilitarianism, which is also being represented by Nietzsche's last man. Some people might be able to follow their own idiosyncratic drives, the higher men. A social-democratic liberal system can accommodate a great diversity of different lifestyles. There is no need to choose between them. In this way, I transgress from Nietzsche's philosophy. González is right when he stresses that this take of mine is not fully Nietzschean. It is not:

Along the same lines, Sorgner would be in favour of an absolute nihilism, both alethic and ethical, with which he will obviously oppose the more strictly Nietzschean position (Sorgner, 2017, p. 255). In any case, he assumes a weak Nietzscheanism, which is easier to integrate into the framework of a liberal and democratic society such as ours. (González, 2021, p. 50)

There are many elements of Nietzschean thinking which are morally highly problematic, in particular his reflections on political systems. However, Nietzsche's thoughts have been the intellectual starting for my endeavour to reflect upon and to develop a philosophically informed transhumanism, and this unfolding process has taken place in all of my writings. Thereby, a non-dualist, a non-essentialist, and a non-anthropocentric process of transhumanist thinking has been initialized which is hopefully generative in bringing about a non-totalitarian, and non-paternalist social structures. Values, and norms are merely human-made fictions. It is this claim which is central when it comes to some worries, as they were presented by Nyholm.

6. Sven Nyholm and Fictionalism

Nyholm presents the following worry, when reflecting upon my defence of the norm of negative freedom, absence of constraint.

If Sorgner can celebrate the norm of negative freedom as a "great achievement" without committing himself to Platonic forms, why could he—or others— not also appeal to other substantive values or ethical principles and treat them as generally valid without committing to Platonic forms or other metaphysically extravagant ideas? That was a question that I was left with after reading Sorgner's discussion of values. (Nyholm, 2021, p. 83)

Nyholm is correct in pointing out that I cherish the norm of negative freedom, but he is wrong in claiming that affirming a norm has to imply the claim of their general validity. Affirming a norm merely means that it is a norm which appeals to me, and that it is a norm whose dominance I am attempting to promote. There is no epistemological or ontological superiority in the norm of negative freedom besides it being affirmed by me. Luckily, the norm of negative freedom is also being regarded as highly relevant by many people today. Thus, a norm can become dominant and

superior, but there is no superior ontological or epistemological validity attached to the norm of negative freedom. Norms are human-made fictions that become dominant if they are being shared by a sufficient amount of people, or at least a sufficient amount of powerful enough people. I am very happy that this is the case, when it comes to the norm of negative freedom. However, negative freedom is not the only plausible norm. This becomes particularly clear when global ethical challenges need to be dealt with.

7. Sven Nyholm and Existential Risks

Nyholm raises a very important additional thought in his reflections:

But it would be very interesting to hear from Sorgner what he would say about the kinds of risks and indeed existential risks that are also part of what we need to deal with as we continually develop increasingly powerful technologies— including more advanced forms of AI—that might potentially slip out of our control. (Nyholm, 2021, p. 85)

In 1982, Sepkowski and Raup (1982) characterized five mass extinction events. All of them took place before the coming about of human beings. The Permian-Triassic extinction event which lead to the death of up to 96% of all species was the worst of all of them. Such events have happened in the past without any human influence, and they will happen again in the future. They can be caused by humans but they could also come about due to processes generated without any human influence. A potential reason for an existential crisis, which was also highlighted by Nyholm could be a sufficiently developed AI. It is a worry which several philosophers of technology have dealt.

Bostrom's paper clip example is particularly striking (2003, pp. 12-17). Hereby, the consequences of a strong AI which fulfils the task of producing paper clips get considered. Such an AI would fight with human beings for resources, and energy for the sake of producing paperclips, and it would be successful in doing so, as its capacity realizing goals would be more efficient than the human capacity for doing so. It is a scary thought. However, we are still far away from a strong AI. Singularity is not near. So far, we have managed to create weak AI's which are capable of realizing simple tasks like winning against humans in chess (Deep Blue, IBM, 1997), Jeopardy (Watson, IBM 2011), or Go (AlphaGo, Google, 2015/2016). All of these achievements are impressive. However, what would a strong AI be capable of doing. Would it have to be able to play tennis, realize calligraphy, and give intimate massages? Intelligence is whatever an IQ test can test. Normally, numerical, spatial, and literary versions of intelligence are being distinguished. Is there a sensual, an emotional, a bodily and a manual intelligence? Would a strong AI also have to cover these types of intelligence?

There are several versions of how the singularity can come about. The most promising options are the establishment of a successful brain-computer interface by means of which an intelligence explosion as well as the process of mind-uploading takes place. Another option is that an algorithm gets created, which manages to unfold its own evolutionary dynamics such that it can become independent of any human intervention. Both options seem far away still. Transhumanists who claim that they are nearer than one normally thinks often refer to Moore's law, according to which the number of transistors in an integrated circuit doubles every two years, which leads to an exponential growth of the speed of computer processing. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we all have gotten a glimpse of what exponential growth means and implies. If this thought applies to AI's, then singularity might be near. Given what we have managed to realize in the past, I doubt that this is the case. This does not mean that we must underestimate AI's. This attitude would definitely be wrong. From a global perspective, the development from the public use of the internet which was established in 1990 to the invention

of the smartphone in 2007 to the integration of digital technologies in the lifeworld merely lasted the blink of an eye. However, we are still mostly confronted with very specialized AI's which are excellent in fulfilling one specific task, like the playing of the game GO.

This does not mean that specialized AI's cannot represent a threat to humans. They can and do so. A clear example would be a stock trading algorithm which is specialized in maximising the financial gain. It might decide to buy wheat in Ethiopia, which causes the prizes to increase so much that it leads to a famine in the country with people dying of hunger. However, this specialized AI does not yet represent an existential threat, as it is not yet capable of causing the death of the majority of a species.

A genetically engineered virus might be more efficient in realizing this goal. An airborne virus which is as infectious as the omicron variant of the corona virus, but which is as deadly as Ebola. Given genome editing, it is not so difficult creating such a virus.

Political institutions need to investigate the options of a human induced as well as non-human induced existential threats. However, the consideration always needs to be balanced out with the wonderful cultural achievement of negative freedom, equality, and solidarity. These reflections should not lead us to the creation of a totalitarian and paternalistic political structure whose prime goal is to avoid the coming about of existential threats. There is so much suffering in the world already, which could and should be dealt with at the moment. It is this issue which Igwe rightly stresses, and which has strongly been neglected by many transhumanists.

8. Leo Igwe and Global Justice

Igwe highlighted the following extremely important insight: "The transhumanist literature overwhelmingly speaks and draws from the technological life situation in the western society (Sorgner, 2016/2020, p. 10)." (Igwe, 2021, p. 89)

This is a central concern, and it demands the need to also address the relevance of technologically dealing with health issues. In some academic circles there is the worry that by applying new technological solutions for promoting health and increasing the healthspan, one is destroying the established local solutions for curing diseases, and that Western pharmaceutical companies in this way are taking over lesser developed countries, whereby a neo-colonial process gets promoted further.

I disagree with this stance. Pharmacies get developed in a long and costly process, and until they get approved, they must pass a great amount of difficult tests. It is costly, difficult, and risky for a pharmaceutical company to create a new drug, and to realize its approval. New drugs must pass an enormous number of empirical tests before they get officially approved, and they usually work, i.e., if you wish to be cured from a disease, then it is more advisable to rely on a drug created by a pharmaceutical company rather than by praying to a specific goddess. Is it a morally problematic procedure to offer approved drugs produced by big pharmaceutical companies to people within a non-western cultural structure for dealing with a specific disease?

Human beings have a radical diversity of different concepts of the good life. However, most human beings regard an increased healthspan as beneficial for their quality of life. If a drug manages to successfully treat the disease in question, it is advisable to offer the people who suffer from the disease the drug in question, and to make sure that the drug can be offered on a financially accessible basis. There are challenges connected with both issues, which need to be addressed. Yet, relying on drugs developed by pharmaceutical companies, and relying on scientific insights is not a neo-colonial move. We have empirical evidence that these drugs work, and the only insight which is being conveyed to members of another culture is the following one: If you wish to get cured from disease *x*, then it is advisable to take drug *y*, as there is a sufficient amount of reliable evidence, that disease *y* can be cured by means of drug *x* without a there being a worrying number of unwanted side-effects.

The issue of functioning drugs must clearly be separated from the question of eschatological issues. Whether Ubuntu or Catholicism provides a more plausible explanation for what happens after we will have died is an open question. There is no empirical test concerning the question which religion provides a more reliable explanation concerning the question what will happen to someone after death. To make people convert away from Ubuntu would be a paternalistic and morally problematic neo-colonial move, as there is no ultimate claim of superiority concerning the issue which religion is more in tune with the world. However, there is an empirical basis for regarding scientific insights as better for curing a disease than judgments based on faith or intuition. Here, we merely have a hypothetical imperative. If you wish to be cured from disease *x*, then it is advisable to use method *y* or drug *z*, as both options have worked reliably without any significant side-effects in many prior circumstances.

In any case, all the issues mentioned here deserve much more academic attention than they have received in the past. This also applies to the more general implications of the posthuman paradigm-shift which have to do with the consequences for the future of education, with which Beranek has been concerned.

9. Natasha Beranek and the Metahumanities

Beranek has given an excellent summary of key factors concerning the metahumanities:

The metahumanities third component, the academic posthumanities, represents the importance Sorgner (2016/2020) places on continuing theoretical conversations about the (post)human and directing these discourses into the public domain through the inclusion of non-dualistic insights in curriculum and pedagogy. Examples include bioart, epigenetics, avoidance of speciesism, evolutionary epistemology, and embodied theories of the mind. As with educational enhancement, the posthumanities are not meant to “disrupt” current modes of thinking by replacing the traditional humanities with a non-dualistic regime. The idea is that through supplementation of existing criteria with posthumanities lessons, the increasing prevalence of these ideals may come into focus. For instance, curriculum discussing an avoidance of speciesism and anthropocentrism draws attention to emerging observable practices, such as boycotting brands that perform animal testing, adherence to plant-based diets, and following various other “earth friendly” habits. Sorgner’s approach intersects with Jonas and Yacek’s (2019) suggestion to incorporate Nietzsche’s doctrines in the classroom: perspectivism (a “pedagogy of perspectival empathy”), self-mastery (“embodied rational self-ordering”), courage (avoiding guaranteed learning outcomes), and the agon (“inspirational emulation”). Overall, the metahumanities will be hastened by shifts in mainstream perceptions about how biotechnologies and posthumanist theories often amplify rather than contravene common ideals and values. However, it is on the institutional level that the success of the metahumanities may be contingent upon a more definitive break with “long prevailing cultural structures, which are still strongly anchored but have lost their plausibility” (Sorgner, 2016/2020, p. 101). For example, del Val (2021) explains that while the focus of critical posthumanism on power matrices is necessary, it will also be insufficient for “the upcoming world of autonomous algorithms. Is the university also an institution that will need to be jettisoned? If the academic posthumanities, which the metahumanities encompass, undo the liberal human subject upon which university learning has historically relied, does it entail the end of [higher] education” (Herbrechter, 2018)? To what extent has dualistic thinking guided both the organization and the structure of the University within which posthumanist curriculum and pedagogies are likely to be most immediately situated? Can the metahumanities proceed within this environment? (Beranek 2021, p. 101)

Beranek particularly stressed the relevance of the following virtues: “Braidotti is upfront that this next epoch in higher education will require “conceptual creativity and intellectual courage to rise to the occasion” as well as pragmatism—three virtues that Nietzsche and transhumanists advance (Sorgner, 2009)”. (Beranek, 2021, p. 104).

I agree with Beranek's comments and will address the issue of the future of education in much more detail in future publications. Besides the inclusion of a revised curriculum in a revised version of the humanities, the metahumanities, it is particularly noteworthy that specific virtues can still be affirmed after the posthuman paradigm-shift. Creativity, self-mastery, and, I would add, truthfulness are particularly important in this respect. Hereby, it needs to be noted that truthfulness does not presume the existence of a real, unchanging self, concerning which one could be truthful. Truthfulness is supposed to help one distinguish between the drives which are more central concerning one's bundle of affects and the one's which have been created by encrusted external circumstances, like advertisements or current cultural modes. External affects can be extremely strong, and it can be difficult not to give in to them. Refusing to take up a better paid, and more prestigious job can be difficult, yet, it might be a decision which promotes one's own quality of life, if the circumstances of the job one has are more in tune with one's own needs, e.g. concerning climate, diet, or speed of life. Truthfulness is particularly important when it comes to seemingly unimportant issues, like where one lives, what one eats, and how one relaxes. Instead of trying to grasp the idea of the good by means of a rational inquiry to gain wisdom, which was the central leisurely activity in the Platonic humanistic tradition, it becomes relevant to truthfully analyse one's idiosyncratic needs, desires, and affects. In many life-world situations, it becomes central for one's own wellbeing to overcome that one ought to do to realize one's most central longings. To distinguish between more central drives and encrusted external structures which have been turned into a second nature can be one of the most difficult challenges each one of us can be confronted with. The metahumanities should also be concerned with the great variety of different virtues which can be embraced, so that each person can realize their own full idiosyncratic potential.

10. Conclusion

It is clear that the great variety of my responses to the excellent issues which have been highlighted by the various contributors to this special issue merely represent some initial sparks for future heated debates. I am already looking forward to continue being engaged in the emerging discourses on the posthuman paradigm-shift.

References

- Balistreri, M. (2021). Transhumanism According to Stefan Lorenz Sorgner: *Why the Posthuman Project Requires Responsibility and Empathy*. *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*, West University Press, 1(1), 57–66.
- Beranek, N. (2021). The Metahumanities. *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*, West University Press, 1(1), 97–108.
- Bohan, E. (2021). Nietzsche and Transhumanism: Much Ado About Nothing?. *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*, West University Press, 1(1), 19–31.
- Bostrom, N. (2003). Ethical Issues in Advanced Artificial Intelligence. In Lasker, G. E., Wallach, W., Smit, I. (Eds.), *Cognitive, Emotive and Ethical Aspects of Decision Making in Humans and in Artificial Intelligence*, Vol. 2. (pp. 12–17). Institute of Advanced Studies in Systems Research and Cybernetics.
- Fuller, S. (2014). Evolution. In Ranisch, R. & Sorgner, S. L. (Eds.), *Post- and Transhumanism. An Introduction* (pp. 201–212). Peter Lang.
- Garasic, M. (2021). Some of the Critical Aspects of Sorgner's "On Transhumanism". *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*, West University Press, 1(1), 67–75.
- González, M. R. (2021). The Problematic Coherence of a Nietzschean Transhumanism. *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*, West University Press, 1(1), 45–55.
- Hughes, J. (2004). *Citizen Cyborg*. Westview Press.
- Igwe, L. (2021). Transhumanism and Emerging Technologies: Exploring Ethics and Human Enhancement in Africa. *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*, West University Press, 1(1), 87–95.

- Knoll, M. (2021). Nietzsche and Transhumanism: The Case of the Overhuman (Übermensch). *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*, West University Press, 1(1), 33–44.
- Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell. (2016, December 22). *Overpopulation – The Human Explosion Explained*. [Video file]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QsBT5EQt348&t=25s>.
- Nyholm, S. (2021). The World's Most Dangerous Idea? Transhumanism in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, Climate Change, and Existential Risk: Some Comments on Stefan Lorenz Sorgner's On Transhumanism. *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*, West University Press, 1(1), 77–86.
- Pearce, D. (2021). Hedonistic Imperative. In Sampanikou, E. D. & Stasienko, J. (Eds.), *Posthuman Studies Reader. Core Readings on Transhumanism, Posthumanism, Metahumanism* (pp. 57–64). Schwabe.
- Schussler, A. E. (2021). An Incursion into 'Weak Transhumanism'. *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*, West University Press. 1(1), 7–18.
- Sepkowski, J. & Raup, D. M. (1982). Mass Extinctions in the Marine Fossil Record. *Science*. 215, (4539), 1501–1503. DOI: 10.1126/science.215.4539.1501.
- Sorgner, S. L. (2022). *We have always been cyborgs: Digital Data, Gene Technologies, and an Ethics of Transhumanism*. Bristol University Press.
- The Drowning Child. *Philosophy Experiments*. <https://www.philosophyexperiments.com/singer/>.