TRANSHUMANISM AS A PHILOSOPHY OF MATERIAL TRANSFIGURATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This paper is a critical expository analysis of the   controversial philosophy of transhumanism. The method adopted in this philosophical paper is the expository analytic method. The analysis established that transhumanism is both a biotechnological aspiration as well as a philosophical vision of a material t   ransfiguration of human condition and experience which ultimate culmination is the man -technology singularity or convergence. This paper concludes that notwithstanding contending voices and the pertinent questions raised regarding the moral standing of tra nshumanist philosophy and their radical dreams for humanity; one fact remains incontestable- the fact that their promises are relishing, enticing and impressive. With regard to whether or not humanity can attain the height envisioned by transhumanist, we c   onfidently hold that the unprecedented legacies and achievements of science and technology overwhelmingly affirm the high probability of the realization of the material transfiguration of humanity.

Keywords: Enhancement, Nanotechnology, Posthuman, Transfiguration and Transhumanism.

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INTRODUCTION

In furtherance of the relentless quest of humanity to technologically improve human condition through genetic modification and manipulation resulting to eugenics, with the reality of death seen as the most fundamental problem of man, transhumanism has been envisioned. Philosopher and scientists have extended their quest to information technology in nanotechnologies and robotics, for a possible antidote to death. If there is any thing one knows with absolute certainty, it is the indubitable fact that no right thinking human being loves the present nature and predicament of man. The greatest problem of man that has made human existence and endeavor a bunch of folly is the enigma of death. Little wonder then, the fear of death is the beginning of philosophy and the summit of religion. Amongst other factor, the most attractive dimension of religion that has made it not only **ab initio**, part of the constituting element of all known human society but a perennial institution is the fact that it promises eternal life. However, not in this life, but in the afterlife. Technology today is promising man not just a good life, but an immortal life in this planet earth. This they argue is possible through the synergization of information accruable from human genome and genetic engineering with nanotechnology. This philosophy is known as transhumanism.

The thrust of this paper is an expository critical analysis of the meaning and basic assumption that undercuts the philosophy of transhumanism. It is not the intention of the researchers to consider the moral arguments in favour and against transhumanism. The expository analysis demonstrates that the most enticing, relishing and impressive the philosophy of transhumanism is the promise of a qualitative, impressive and transcendental experience. It anticipates a world of material abundance devoid of every known human material scarcity.

Biotechnology and Eugenics: the Root of Transhumanism

Research in human genome is considered by scientists, geneticists, eugenicists and transhumanists as the 'Holy Grail of Medicine" because of the fundamental fact that the human genes are the black box of human existence and essence, biologically speaking. They are the fundamental setoff of the nature, structure, dynamism and activities of the human body. Molecular medicine anchored on human genome is not just a preventive and curative medicine but more essentially, a regenerative medicine that seeks to obliterate genetic illnesses from their very root. An attempt to transfigure imperfect nature of man must begin from the human genes.

Biotechnology and its underpinning eugenic and transhumanist philosophy have made human genetic engineering possible. It has made the possibility of effecting substantial changes in the human embryo a reality. The actualization of this hope and expectation is, no doubt, without challenges (Idachaba and Omale, 2017, pp. 2). Human enhancement technologies are new, emerging, or do not exist yet. In this sense, it is a new problem, raised by relatively recent technological developments and the visions and fantasies they kindle (Coeckelbergh 2013, pp. 24). Transhumanism is an eschatological vision of a material transcendence of human experience (Campbell & Walker, 2005). It is a material Armageddon here on earth. It may be seen as an envisioned new phase of human existence and experience that would phase out this present pernicious and parlous human condition. It is a state and condition of existence of transfigured, transformed, redeemed and improved human beings. This "Ideal World" designated as the age of artificial intelligence is realizable through the incredible knowledge accruing from human genome and nanotechnology (Kidzu & Ncha 2018; Ncha 2018). The transfigured and improved human race

in this era would transcend all known human existential problems like: human suffering, disease, aging, degeneration and death. Other human contingencies and vicissitudes that belong to the old order that would be alien in this millennium of transcendence include scarcity of all sort, limitedness and paucity of information.

These transhumanist projections and aspirations are firmly rooted on the foundational believe that human nature is dynamic. It is subject to both internal mutation (sudden and gradual genetic change) and external influences by technology. A diligent study of the history of human civilization vis-à-vis the development of technologies abundantly and unequivocally speaks to the fact that human nature has always been cultured by technology, amongst other potent factors.

In a word, the philosophies of eugenics and transhumanism emphasize that with the increasing knowledge accruing from human genome (as a result of gene mapping and sequencing), coupled with nanotechnology; the capacities and capabilities of humans to create a new order of humans. This new order in anticipation is an order of super abundance, a new human race that is superhuman, posthuman, and improved human race. This makes eugenism and transhumanism humanistic philosophies (Cannon 2015). Posthumans or transhumans are hybrids of the old human qualities and capacities and nanotechnology. In other words, posthuman are a blend of the old human qualities and capabilities (now transformed from their root under the impulses of eugenism via human germ-line and somatic genetic engineering) and artificial intelligence made possible by nanotechnologies. Incredible! This is fascinating and at the same time baffling.

Transhumanism

The concept 'Transhumanism' embodies the following posthuman conditions: beyond humanism, meta-humanism, advanced-humanism, improved humanism, transcendental-humanism, superlative-humanity and post-humanism. It can also imply transfigured and redeemed human condition. In other words, these terms can be properly used interchangeably with transhumanism.

Transhumanism is a dynamic philosophy, intended to evolve as new information becomes available or enabling challenges emerge. One Transhumanist value is therefore to cultivate a questioning attitude and a willingness to revise one's beliefs and assumptions. (Bostrom cited in Sorgner 2009, pp. 32). It is a humanistic philosophy which aspires to consolidate genomic information with information technology to metamorphose into a new human condition referred to as posthuman condition. Bostrom, (2003) emphasized this humanist root of Transhumanism as he noted that "Transhumanism imports from secular humanism the ideal of the fully-developed and well-rounded personality. We can't all be renaissance geniuses, but we can strive to constantly refine ourselves and to broaden our intellectual horizons" (cited in Sorgner, 2009, pp. 35). Worthy of note here is the fact that Transhumanism is higher than humanism. It is an intellectual and cultural movement, whose proponents declare themselves to be heirs of humanism and Enlightenment philosophy (Bostrom 2005, pp. 203). The goal of transhumanism is to create ideal humans with improve posthuman capacities and qualities in an ideal world of material abundance that promises stability and full life.

Transhumanism (H+ or *h*+) as a cultural and intellectual movement aims at fundamentally transforming the human condition by developing and making available, in a wide fashion, technologies that can greatly enhance the human capacities; be they psychological, social, intellectual and even physical (Bostrom, cited in Idachaba and Omale,

2017, pp. 6). The common thesis mostly circulated by this movement is that "human beings may eventually be able to transform themselves into beings with such greatly expanded abilities as to merit the label posthuman" (Julian Huxley, cited in Idachaba and Omale, 2017, pp. 6). Some also refer to the label as 'ultrahuman' and describe themselves (i.e. holders of this view) as technotopian or extropians (Idachaba and Omale, 2017, pp. 6). They are technology technofrisks and technoenthusiasts; those who adorers and idolize technology. And their motivation is the unprecedented antecedents of technology that is everywhere indubitable. For transhumanists, science in technology commands god-like attributes expedient for interrogating existential human conditions.

Specifically, transhumanism encompasses but not limited to:

i. The intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate aging and to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities.

ii. The study of the ramifications, promises, and potential dangers of technologies that will enable us to overcome fundamental human limitations, and the related study of the ethical matters involved in developing and using such technologies (Bostrom, 2003: 2).

Transhumanism is the philosophy of biotechnology that holds that humans are beings unto perpetual and infinite progress (Persson & Savulescu, 2010). As such, human nature and existential conditions can be technologically improved to engineer the human species into a posthuman or ultrahuman age. In this age, the defects of the human species as we know it will be a thing of the past.

No longer shall we fear death or illness for we shall live healthier lives and can even live forever. This technology also suggests that the genetic makeup of even offspring can be substantially enhanced in order to produce characteristics so desired by parents in their offspring (Idachaba and Omale, 2017, pp. 1). For instance, the genetic makeup of offspring will never be left to the blind chance of natural selection that takes place when the billions of sperm deposited in the body of the woman jostle for a chance to be the one and only to fertilized an ovum. Rather, parents may choose not just the genetic composition of their would-be children but in addition they now can determine their sexes. The goal of transhumanists is to make designer babies that are beyond the natural limitations of an average human person. Jeffrey P. Bishop, (2009) in *Transhumanism, Metaphysics, and the Posthuman God,* succinctly explained the implicit logic that underpins Transhumanist aspiration thus:

> Transhumanist philosophies seek to transcend human frailties, not by relieving the human condition of its frailties, but by relieving us of the human condition itself. It takes the human as its origin and the posthuman as its telos even while it is an ill-defined telos. And its rationality is the logic of technology, to move us from human frailty into the realm of posthuman goods. Its logic however is not new. It is as old as the Enlightenment, and it deploys the metaphysics of efficient causation to bring into Being, a new being (Bishop 2010, pp. 701-702).

This implies that the logic behind transhumanism is not the destruction of present human nature, rather to work on the existing genetic composition of the human species in order to improve already existing capacities and qualities.

Of course the telos of human genetic engineering is for both therapeutic as well as enhancement. Through therapeutic cloning, human frailties and infirmities are threated from their genetic root. Through genetic manipulation, human genes are enhanced beyond the normal natural state. Be that as it may, the transhumanists conceived human nature as dynamic and flexible to mutation. In the words of Sorgner (2009, pp. 31), "Transhumanists view human nature as a work-in-progress". In affirmation of the dynamic nature of human nature, Bostrom (2005), points out that, "A common understanding is that it would be naive to think that the human condition and human nature will remain pretty much the same for very much longer". On his part, Bishop (2009), did not mince words in establishing that "A transhumanist perceives the current state of humans in an evolutionary transition, on a transitory journey from ape to human to posthuman, and thus, its philosophy is called transhumanism. The goal of transhumanism then is the posthuman. The posthuman is a future being, a person who constructs himself/herself out of various technologies. The posthuman, although a speculative projection into the future, will be very different from current humans" (2009, pp. 701). The main point of emphasis in these allusions is the fact that the transitory nature of the human person is not self-motivated or animated, rather, it is influenced from both within and without. Hence, the journey towards posthumanism is animated and determined by technology. Such that the ultrahuman or the transcendent human would not be a new human being altogether, rather a technological construct out of the old dynamic human nature. This construct out of technology would not only boast of the best and amplified human capacities, but in addition and most importantly, it would glory in an existence that is devoid of mortality. Moreover, having been freed from every known human infirmities and having conquered death, the posthumans would live lavishly in a world of super abundance.

This transhumanist view that the posthuman world order would be a world of great abundance is associated to singularitarians. The central thesis of this school of thought is encapsulated by one of its principal exponents, Kurzweil (2005), (2006). A succinct summary of his view is as articulated below:

> We're approaching a world where everything is abundant, where we all live forever, and where a super-intelligent, super-benevolent entity looks after us all. What's more, this is all going to happen in our lifetimes. We've heard this story before, of course (Jones 2016, pp. 10).

Reading in-between the lines of the above assertion reveals that the transhumanists' aspiration share some semblance with the Christian theology of the afterlife and the coming of the kingdom of God. This impression is not only discernible from Kurzweil's singularitarian philosophy, but a position also shared by others in the singularitarian shed of thinking. According to Jones (2016, pp. 10), "The connection between singularitarian ideas and religious eschatology is brilliantly captured in the phrase attributed to SF writer Ken MacLeod - the singularity is the *"Rapture of the Nerds"*. Therefore, in the philosophy of singularitarinism, to arrive at the posthuman realm of existence, the present human nature must be raptured by technology. Furthermore, expatiating on what the condition of this raptured posthuman, who, in this paper is referred to as a technological construct Bostrom (2003, 5), an outstanding defender of transhumanism observed that transhumanists yearn to:

Reach intellectual heights as far above any current human genius as humans are above other primates; to be resistant to disease and impervious to aging; to have unlimited youth and vigor; to exercise control over their own desires, moods, and mental states; to be able to avoid feeling tired, hateful, or irritated about petty things; to have an increased capacity for pleasure, love, artistic appreciation, and serenity; to experience novel states of consciousness that current human brains cannot access.

This of course is a very elevated height, a height that surpasses every known human qualities and even that of primates. For instance, horses are more energetic and stronger than even the strongest man that ever live; some wild animals are so massive and fierce to the extent that they prey on humans; etc. However, the raptured posthuman is expected to transcend these heights to higher heights that are unchallengeable and insoluble. The posthuman would be beneficent and have more humanity in him than the present crop of humans. The posthuman in the configuration of transhumanism would be wiser than the wisest humans ever, more brilliant, more audacious, creative, innovative, articulate and improved used of human intelligence. In sequel, Bostrom (2003) (5-6), suggests that "The posthuman being may not look human at all and could be "completely synthetic artificial intelligences" or could be "the result of many smaller but cumulatively profound augmentations of a biological human". Based on this, he maintained that the biological human may require complete redesign of the human organism through "genetic engineering, psychopharmacology, anti-aging therapies, neural interfaces, advanced information management tools, memory enhancing drugs, wearable computers, and cognitive techniques" (Bostrom,

2005, pp. 6). These enhancement remedies will result to the total transfiguration of the oldhuman condition to an ultrahuman condition.

Moreover, Bostrom (2005), speculated that posthumans "may have experiences and concerns that we cannot fathom, thoughts that cannot fit into the three-pound lumps of neural tissue that we use for thinking" (Ibid). Some may even abandon the human body altogether and "live as information patterns on vast super-fast computer networks" (Ibid). Worthy of critical comment here is Bostrom's (2003) insinuation that posthumans may live as information patterns on a vast super-fast computer network. As we shall see shortly, this is the zenith of singularitarians' philosophy wherein they hold that in the transhumanist era, human mind and consciousness may be uploaded into super-computers assembling a mass of artificial intelligences on a speed of sound (supersonic speed). This marks the dynamic intercourse between human intelligence and nanotechnology intelligences.

For a great deal of scholars, transhumanist philosophy is a wishful thinking, an aspiration for the resourceful use of genomic information and nanotechnology to create a new order of ultrahumanity. This new era of transfigured humanism is tagged "The age of spiritual machines". Bishop gave credence to the fact that transhumanists are futurist enthusiasts when he argued that "the transhumanist is a technological optimist, they operate in the spirit of Bacon's statement that the purpose of knowledge (and its technological fruits) is to relieve the human estate" (2000, pp. 701). These technology optimists (technofricks), inspired by this spirit, advocate that humanity must strategically harness and synergize the knowledge emanating from human genome and that abundantly flowing from information technologies to drastically refashion human nature

which is believed to be work-in-progress for an improved human hybrid.

Antecedence of Transhumanism

Every thought pattern or worldview does not exist in isolation. Definitely they may be totally or partially traced to real or imagined origin. Knowledge as a progressive and dynamic human intellectual endeavor consists of a plenum and continuum. It consists of a progressive dialectics from age to age. Philosophy as an academic discipline is itself a continuum. Owing to this fact, no single era in philosophy and scholars who engaged in philosophical reflections may claim absolute originality of knowledge and thought. Rather, each era and each scholar is inevitably either overtly or covertly inspired by previous era(s) or scholar(s). This implies that any supposed new work is either a modification, or appraisal, or critic or a refutation of existing work(s). The only thing new, if at all in recent works may be innovations, extensions, improvements or new insights arising from prevailing currents, interests and improvement in human understanding. This general principle applies to all bodies of disciplines-the sciences, arts, humanities etc.

Moreover, even when new problems surface, extant scholars either rely totally on old methodologies or modifies them to tackle the novelty. What this implies in essence is that, new corpus of knowledge and thoughts build on primordial ideas and thoughts; recent scholars apply their epistemic infiltration on primordial ideas of the past to arrive at the level of development and epistemic sophistication that their works command. The dynamic history of philosophy gives abundant evidential support to this truism. For instance, even the Ionian philosophers who were the 'pioneers' of philosophy cannot claim absolute originality of thought in most of the issues they philosophized on. This is as a result of the fact that already existing belief systems derived from the traditional and religious explanations (mythologies) of the physical universe and all forces immanent in the universe inspired their reflection. And if at all they claim originality of anything, it is only with respect to methodology. They introduced reasoned or critical analysis, as opposed to mythological explanations of the aforementioned traditional and religious worldviews. These first philosophers adopted some of these mythological ideals and made them more credible through reasoned philosophical speculation.

Furthermore, the veracity of this dynamic nature of knowledge is phenomenally reflected in philosophy. Reading in between the lines of philosophical works (especially Western philosophy), strongly reveals a rich dynamic philosophical influences sustained from the ancient era to the present day philosophical enquiry. So, to understand a recent progress in philosophy, one unavoidably is required to have a retrospective adventure back into the bowels of philosophical history.

Same is applicable to the philosophy of transhumanism. In philosophical reading, Plato could be seen as the ancient precursor of the philosophy of transhumanism. As established earlier, he in his natural eugenic philosophy encouraged the propagation of the best breeds of human species. However, the origin of the coinage *"transhumanism"* itself, has been attributed to the British biologist Julian Huxley, the brother of the author of the dystopian novel, *"Brave New World"*, Aldous Huxley. It originated in 1957 with the publication of Julian Huxley's article. In this article, he describes the transhumanist's ambition thus:

> Up till now human life has generally been as Hobbes describes it: nasty, brutish and short; the great majority of human beings (if they have not already died young) have been afflicted with misery… we can justifiably

hold the belief that *these lands of possibilities* exist, and that the present limitations and miserable frustrations of our existence could be in large measure surmounted ... the human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself-not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety, as humanity (cited in Idachaba and Omale, 6).

Two salient facts are implicit and explicit in the excerpt above: the fact that human existence and experience in the universe has been characterized by strives and mortal assailants; the second is that these vicissitudes that has made human life nasty, brutish and short can not only be surmounted gradually, but most importantly they are entirely surmountable. The latter is the foundational believe that underpins the philosophy and attitude of transhumanism.

Apart from Huxley, the origin and development of transhumanism could also be associated to the British scientists. According to Jones (2005), it was among the British scientists left between the (first and second Word) Wars that many of the themes of transhumanism were first developed. In a remarkable 1929 essay *The World, The Flesh and the Devil* the Marxist scientist Desmond Bernal gives a slogan for transhumanism "*Men will not be content to manufacture life: they will want to improve on it.*" Borchert imagines a process of continuous human enhancement, until we arrive at his version of the Singularity (2006, pp. 10). For instance, men must not be satisfied with the reproduction of live as in In Vitro Fertilization and therapeutic cloning; but men must go the extra miles in concerted effort to diligently improve upon this life, so manufacture through techniques and procedures of enhancement as amply provided by biotechnologies and information

technology. In other words, man's expiration for a better life must be religiously and vigorously built on the principles of continual and continuous enhancement. To attain this aspiration, man must be armed with astute due diligence.

This aspiration to qualitatively transform humanity as a whole has motivated numerous experiments both in science fiction and in science itself. But the most remarkable was the publication of the first issue of the *Extropy Magazine*. It was published jointly by Max Moore and Tom Marrow. But in 1990, Max Moore developed his own distinctive transhumanist doctrine in the form of *The Principles of Extropy* which eventually laid the foundation for modern transhumanism (Idachaba and Omale, 2007, pp. 7).

Somehow, some scholars in transhumanism have likened the emergence of transhumanist philosophy to Fredrick Nietzsche's famous concept of the "superman". For instance, Bostrom (2005) opined that "I think that significant similarities between the posthuman and the overhuman can be found on a fundamental level. In addition, it seems to me that Nietzsche explained the relevance of the overhuman by referring to a dimension which seems to be lacking in transhumanism (Sorgner, 2009, pp. 29). However, this consideration of Nietzsche as one of the precursors of transhumanism has been highly contentious and one of those who maintained a disparaging disposition is Bostrom (2005, pp. 14); albeit, he conceded that there were merely some "surface-level similarities between transhumanism and the Nietzschean vision".

Be that as it may, it must be asserted that, apart from tracing the origin and development of transhumanism to these individual scholars and thought systems, the concept of transhumanism has also been

leveraged on three predicted technological advances. These include:

> The first is a vision of a radical nanotechnology as sketched by K. Eric Drexler, in which matter is effectively digitised, with *"matter compilers"* or *"molecular assemblers"* able to build any object with atomic fidelity. This will be the route to the end of scarcity, and complete control over the material world. The second is a conviction - most vocally expounded by Aubrey de Grey that it will shortly be possible to radically extend human lifespans, in effect eliminating ageing and death. The third is the belief that the exponential growth in computer power implied by Moore's law, to be continued and accelerated through the arrival of advanced nanotechnology, makes the arrival of super-human level artificial intelligence both inevitable and imminent (Jones, 2005, pp. 9).

In the prediction above, one fundamental fact remains unequivocally expressed- the fact that transhumanist philosophy and aspiration is graciously built on the progressive stance of technology. These three advances of technology highlighted above have the incredible prospect of metamorphosing a new posthuman estate where humanity may enjoy a fascinating, sensational and magical posthuman experience.

TRANSHUMANISM VIS-A-VIS NANOTECHNOLOGY

> Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it (Heidegger M., 1977: no p.).

A corollary to Heidegger's assertion above is the fact that we were born biologically free, but in everywhere in technological chains. Life in the contemporary world today is in everywhere inexorably laden with technological interference and infiltrations. In every passing day, new technologies are devised and accordingly human life more and more increasingly becomes profoundly engrossed in the ever increasing sea of technology. This inescapable romance of technology by humanity has gotten to the monumental height that life today without technology is considered solitary and un-civilization. A study of human civilization reveals that the civilizations of nations are leveraged by their technological development. For instance, before the comity of nations, industrialization and urbanization are the measuring rods of development. And these variables considered as key index of development are fruits of advancement in technology. In this post contemporary times, technology is the linchpin of social engineering and the catalyst of socialization. This insinuation is adequately captured in the slogan that is common to telecommunications' jingles "data is life". Bio and data technologies today are the second, if not the first life of the contemporary man. Against this backdrop, one may plausibly argue, with specific reference to issue under discussion that, we are at the threshold of the genomic age: biotechnology, nanotechnology and robotics. Given the sustained unparalleled advances in science and technology we are not just in the age of information technology, but in the threshold of the age of artificial intelligence.

The philosophical questions that ensue from the foregoing are: what is the place of man under this prevailing circumstance? Can man tap into this development for his propagation and self-determination? In other words, can technological advances be employed as a positive tool to change human conditions? Transhumanists disposition to technological advancement is positive. They unanimously and staunchly too, hold that the incredible tool for the

alteration of the bad conditions of man imposed by both biology and inexorable environmental forces. It is incumbent on the post contemporary man to sinuously appropriate these wonder technologies for a qualitative change of human conditions and fortunes. In other words, change is the most expedient duty required of humanity at this material time. As Karl Marx (M. Coeckelbergh, 2013: 19) would have it:

> Philosophers have only interpreted human being, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it. This parody of Marx could well be a slogan of the transhumanist movement, which advocates radical ways of human enhancement.

Transhumanism is a tendency towards change. It is the philosophy of change of human nature and existential conditions powered by genomic information and information technology. As Jones (2016, pp. 40), has argued, "Transhumanists have a particular tendency to reify technology, since for them it is technology that is the vehicle for redemption and transfiguration". He further maintained that "Transhumanism is an ideology, a movement, or a belief system, which predicts and looks forward to a future in which an increasing integration of technology with human beings leads to a qualitative and positive change in human nature (9). It may interest you to know that this enthusiastic prediction of a future positive integration of technology with human nature is not based on mere wishful thinking but validated by facts replete in the history of the development of science and technology. For instance, Jones (2005, pp. 4), revealed that:

> Transhumanists regard the technological progress of the modern world as the harbinger of much greater change to come. An industrial revolution has led to an information technology revolution, and this, in their view, has begun to change the very essence of what it means to be human. Our destiny, then, is for the technology we create to transform not just our way of life, but the essence of our existence. Perhaps and possibly within the lifetimes of those already alive, we will see new forms of human beings in which the biological and technological seamlessly merge. Maybe we will be able to leave our biological forms behind entirely to take up an entirely new form of post-human existence.

The point of emphasis here is not just the use of technological advances to improve human existence and experience but it is essentially a longing for a seamless or harmonious integration of technology and human nature. It is a yearning for a state whereby man may totally abandon the handicapped nature biology has imposed on him for a raptured state of affairs made possible by his intercourse with technology. Seamless integration, as used above may be interpreted to imply technology and human nature maintaining a hypostatic union or unity. One can infer from the undertone of Jones' (2016) assertion above that transhumanist is akin to existentialism. Man can positively and substantively employ technology to determine and shape his essence. Man has the impeccable privilege to transfigure his imperfect nature through alliance with technology.

The most enticing and impressive thing about this purported assimilation or amalgamation of technology with human nature according to the speculations of transhumanists is the promise of a qualitative, impressive and transcendental experience. Consequently:

> Transhumanism is an ideology, a movement, or a belief system,

which predicts and looks forward to a future in which an increasing integration of technology with human beings leads to a qualitative, and positive, change in human nature. It sees a trajectory from a current situation in which certain human disabilities and defects can be corrected, through an increasing tendency to use these technologies to enhance the capabilities of humans, to world in which human and machine are integrated to a cyborg existence. Finally, we may leave all traces of our biological past behind, as humans "upload" their intelligence into powerful computers. These ideas are intimately connected with the idea of a "Singularity", a moment at which accelerating technological change becomes so fast that we pass through an "event horizon" to a radically unknowable future. According to Ray Kurzweil, transhumanism's most visible and well known spokesman, this event will take place in or around 2045 (Jones, 2005, pp. 9).

The excerpt above stresses the place of nanotechnology and artificial intelligence in this anticipated merger of technology and human nature. Transhumanists look forward to a time when human intellect will not only be improved with the aid of neutro-sciences, but more essentially when artificial intelligence of nanotechnologies and robotics would be harness to augment human intelligence. As it stands today, scientists are working real hard through nanotechnology and robotics to fabricate artificial intelligence that far surpasses even the most improved human intelligence. Equally, they are looking forth towards producing microcomputers that accelerate on supersonic speed. This is with the hope that someday, human augmented intelligence like cyborg may be

configured into microchips that can be uploaded into a computer system. Consequently, this would form a cobweb of integrated network of intelligences whose combine abilities are greater the abilities of normal humans. According Jones (2005, pp. 5), "The acceleration of computing power implied by Moore's law will come through artificial intelligence, an intelligence which surpasses human intelligence, and perhaps will subsume it". The human mind, now a cyborg and now uploaded into a cobweb of integrated artificial intelligences will now form a cosmic sea of consciousness. This phenomenon they argue is only powered or made possible via nanotechnology.

Meanwhile, they say, the realization of a radical vision of nanotechnology will grant us complete control of the material world, effectively eroding the distinction between software and hardware. This, they anticipate, will end scarcity in all forms, leading to a world of material superabundance, and will lead to medical technologies of such power as to render death essentially voluntary (Jones, 2005, pp. 5). This resolution of hardware and software or the tangible and intangible or the material and immaterial that would eventually and ultimately vanquish the inevitability of death is considered within transhumanists circles as the reign of technological singularity. According to Jones (2005, pp. 5):

Transhumanists look forward to a technological singularity, which we should expect to take place on or around 2045, if Ray Kurzweil is to be relied on. The technological singularity is described as something akin to an event horizon, a date at which technological growth becomes so rapid that to look beyond it becomes quite unknowable to mere cis-humans. In some versions, this is correlated with the time when, due to the

inexorable advance of Moore's Law, machine intelligence surpasses human intelligence and goes into a recursive cycle of self-improvement.

This implies that this technological cosmic cobweb of intelligences accelerated by supersonic computers even when now it has been amplified to a level that far surpasses normal human intelligence, will never remain static but would continuously be involved in a sequence of self-transformation. It beats one's imagination to predict the far-reaching extent of this continues self-transformation. Perhaps, it may get to the point of absolute intelligence, the recess of all intelligence. It must come to an insoluble point, because simple logic dictates that these series of improvement of techno-human intelligence cannot continue ad infinitum (Edor 2017).

In what follows, Jones (2005) explained that transhumanists' aspirations for an astute annexation of technology by humans is well founded on existing track records. According to him (2005: pp. 9):

Transhumanists are surely futurists, if they are nothing else. Excited by the latest developments in nanotechnology, robotics and computer science, they fearlessly look ahead, projecting consequences from technology that are more transformative, more far-reaching, than the pedestrian imaginations of the mainstream. And yet, their ideas, their motivations, do not come from nowhere. They have deep roots, perhaps surprising roots, and following those intellectual trails can give us some important insights into the nature of transhumanism now. From antecedents in the views of the early 20th century British scientific leftwing, and in the early Russian ideologues of space

exploration, we're led back, not to rationalism, but to a particular strand of religious apocalyptic thinking that's been a persistent feature of Western thought since the Middle Ages.

It is plausible to critically comment that transhumanists represents a synergetic confluence between rationalists of the early 20th century rationalists and the apocalyptic theo-philosophies of the medieval scholasticism. Transhumanists astutely employs rationalism as a thinking tool to give a materialistic interpretation of apocalyptic projection by replacing the role of the cosmic mind (God) with the visible and enhancing hands of technology. Hence, it would be logically valid to argue that the philosophy of transhumanism is a synthetic apocalyticism. Philosophy, transhumanism, as an upgraded humanistic it may be argued is apparently atheistic. This conclusion is premised on the fact that it tacitly expunges God as the principle behind man's future rapturing as prophesied by the Abrahamic Religion. And in the place of God, transhumanism makes technology the genius god.

Transhumanist aspiration for the advancement of human nature and essence has pertinent prospects for the improvement of life and health of humanity.

Moreover, one can imagine a situation in which more and more of the body is replaced by more durable and functional synthetic replacements. If a neural prosthesis is possible, why not use implants to give the brain access to computers able to carry out complex calculations for it and to look up data in vast databases? If damaged senses can be repaired, to cure blindness and deafness, why not add additional senses, allowing us to see in the infrared or directly detect radio waves? In this way, we can imagine replacing more and more of our frail bodies and brains by robustly

engineered replacements of vastly more power. (Jones, 2005, pp. 17). In other words, the goal of eugenics via therapeutic cloning in stem cell research and therapy is to produce spare parts for every tissues, cells and organs of the human body so as to serve as handy replacements for every diseased, worn out part. The unique novelty which transhumanist are advocating for is a step forward. That is, instead of having all of these curative, regenerative and preventive molecular medicine in hardware stem cell bank, their software could be graphically created and uploaded into a computer programming to replicate the same even in trillion times. These replicated software copies would be stored in a software databank. And this software will be configured into microchips and inserted in human bodies to mechanically checkmate these infirmities whenever they raise their ugly heads.

NANOTECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

Apparently, the advanced stage of humanity's merger with nanotechnology is at the point when human minds and consciousness may be uploaded to a computer. In this regard, Jones (2016, pp. 17), questioned, "What is to stop us leaving our bodies entirely? Only the need to preserve the contents of our memories and consciousness, our mental identities and maybe those nanobots will be able to swim through the capillaries of our brains to make that final readout". Moreover, he (Jones, , pp. 5), observed that:

> "Uploading" a human consciousness to a computer remains both a central aspiration of transhumanists, and a source of queasy fascination to the rest of us. The idea is that someone's mind is simply a computer programme, that in the future could be run on a much more powerful computer than a brain,

just as one might run an old arcade game on a modern PC in emulation mode. *"Mind uploading"* has a clear appeal for people who wish to escape the constraints of our flesh and blood existence, notably the constraint of our inevitable mortality.

Ultimately, consciousness itself may end or vanish in a humanity that has become completely etherealized, losing the close-knit organism, becoming masses of atoms in space communicating by radiation, and ultimately perhaps resolving itself entirely into light. That may be an end or a beginning, but from here, it is out of sight" (Jones, pp. 10). This may be dubbed a techno-human cosmic consciousness. Techno-human cosmic consciousness realizes the synopsis of all intelligence (knowledge). It represents an expressive manifestation of the singularity or oneness of all things.

This tenet of transhumanism in a way reflects Plato's metaphysical and epistemological framework (Asuquo 2019; Mendie, 2020). Plato was the first western philosopher to consider the nature of knowledge and the way it is obtained. His explication of knowledge is quite spectacular, grand and compact. He described how the human mind achieves knowledge, and indicated what knowledge consists of, by means of: his allegory of the cave; his metaphor of the divide line, and, his doctrine of the Forms. His thought can be summarized thus: the highest form of consciousness or intelligence is the synoptic view of knowledge. Hence, the merging of human consciousness and artificial intelligence dialectically gives rise to techno-human cosmic consciousness which entails the synoptic view of all things. One of the most fundamental prospects humanity is to gain from this is that forgetfulness would be totally obliterated from human psycho-cognitive experience. There shall be no limit or restraint to human memory as every bit of human experience would be securely restored

and retrieved in the speed of sound when the need arises.

In its radical version, the application of new technologies aims at moving us beyond human being towards new posthuman modes of experience and existence. For no longer will individual human beings' limited consciousness exist as individuals, rather, they will conglomerate with artificial consciousness in techno-human cosmic consciousness. Overwhelmed by these laudable projections. Coeckelbergh cynically observed: "We are asked to welcome the possibility of enhanced memory, improved sensory capacities, and extended lifespans or even immortality" (2013, pp. 19). The synergic marriage of genomic information and eugenic with nanotechnology would strategically eliminate deficient capacities and vulnerabilities/frailties in present human condition. Human vulnerability as an existential condition of human existence and experience include; disease, human suffering, ageing, and mortality. Transhumanists want to surmount these seemingly insurmountable conditions of human existence. They abhor traditional conservative rules that advocates for the rules of comforting and caring to the radical approach of tackling these odious and repugnant facts of human existence from their very root. If this transhumanist project is successfully executed, man in technology would have successfully redefined human nature and essence in line with the basic creed of existentialism. The resulting human being from this qualitative alteration of human nature and essence would be a transcendental human being. Ultimately, the germ-line modification of human essence would give rise to invulnerability and immortality. When the vulnerability of human nature is overcome, the ensuing humans would be transhuman , posthuman, utrahuman and transfigured human, unto perpetuity.

Transhumanists propose to use technology to reach this strategic teleology through biotechnology (genetic enhancement) and information technology (nanotechnology). Kurzweil (2005) gave credence to this in his *The Singularity is Near*. Herein, he indicated that we will become cyborgs, upload ourselves, have nanobots in our bloodstream, and enjoy nonbiological experience whatever that means (2005, pp. 22). In this ultra-upgraded existence:

> Rather than being vulnerable mortals, we could become strong, invulnerable cyborgs or immortal minds living in an eternal, virtual world (Coeckelbergh, 2013, pp. 23).

A period believed to be imminent, when mankind would enjoy a sin-free existence of abundance, not on any spiritual plane, but in this world. (Jones, 2016, pp. 10). The hybrids of humans constituted by improved human qualities and capacities unarguably would be properly referred to as **human technologies** or **techno-human beings.** They would be plausibly so referred because they have being technologized. One may wonder if this dynamic fusion and intermingling of humans and technologies would represent a hypostatic union-a union that is seamless and devoid of any imagined or real conflicting disharmony that may constitute a malaise. As it were, one may asked, is there no possibility that this intercourse of man and technology in the worst case scenario might likely create irreversible monsters?

OBSERVATION

The prospects and promises this brave new world envisages are mouth-watering and irresistibly alluring. Overwhlmed by this intoxicating prospects and promises, Coeckelbergh impugned critics of transhumanist aspiration, as he asked "If we had the means to bring this about, why would we refuse to kill the dragon of human vulnerability? Why would we refuse to

become the gods we always feared and worshipped?" (2013, pp. 23). It may be instructively interesting to note that transhumanists consider themselves as ultra-rational, skeptical atheists. Besides, intoxicated by the sustained and rapid progress continually made by science and technology right from the dawn of industrial revolution till this moment, transhumanists are technology-hopefuls and frisks. From the dawn of science and technology, science and technology continues to do things that were hitherto considered impossible. Hence, transhumanists are unapologetically technology optimists and enthusiasts who see the future rapture of humanity in the bosom of technology.

It is the considered view of transhumanist philosophers and scientists that contrary to religious creeds, the salvation, redemption and transfiguration of the human person is incumbent on technology. The fallen and deplorable conditions of man can be effectively redeemed by technology via genetic engineering and information technology. This synergetic interplay would begin with genetic engineering both at the level of therapy and at the level of enhancement, then the aftermath would be consolidated with nanotechnology.

Habermas considers transhumanist philosophy as absurd and refers to transhumanists as a bunch of mad intellectuals who luckily have not managed to establish support for their elitist views from a bigger group of supporters (Habermas 2001, pp. 43). For Gidley (2019), transhumanism distorts the way we think about technology, it contaminates the way we consider possible futures, and rather than being radical, it is actually profoundly conservative in the way in which it buttresses existing power structures (2019, pp. 40). However, Jones (2016) on the contrary noted that, "To many observers with some sort of scientific background, even those who share some of my scepticism of the specifics, the

worst one might say about transhumanism is that it is mostly harmless, perhaps over-exuberant in its claims and ambitions, but beneficial in that it promotes a positive image of science and technology (2019, pp. 40). Albeit, he maintained that "Transhumanism is wrong about many things, but there's one thing it gets right the human condition has been qualitatively and irreversibly changed by the technologies we have developed up to now" (Jones, pp. 2016, pp. 46). In the same vein, Bostrom and Ord argued that laypersons and others who oppose transhumanism suffer from *status quo bias* (2005). Meaning that those who are negatively disposed to genetic engineering both at the therapeutic and enhancement levels are conservatives who have aversion for novelty.

CONCLUSION

Transhumanism is promising humanity a fascinating, sensational and magical posthuman experience. This sends the thinking being into a profound brainstorming on what would be the nature of human existence in this idealized technology orientated existential realm. The object of thought that constitute the food for thought is, in this new world, would man still retain his full rational nature in the midst of the immanent interference of the technological force of artificial intelligence? What is the possibility that the techno-human cosmic consciousness will be ethically conscious? What happens to the moral responsibilities and categorical duties incumbent on as a moral agent? All of these amounts to one single question, is this envisaged posthuman order susceptible to ethical governance?

This paper concludes that notwithstanding contending voices and the pertinent questions raised regarding the moral standing of transhumanist philosophy and their radical dreams for humanity; one fact remains

incontestable- the fact that their promises are relishing, enticing and impressive. With regard to whether or not humanity can attain the height envisioned by transhumanist, we confidently hold that the unprecedented legacies and achievements of science and technology overwhelmingly affirm the high probability of the realization of the material transfiguration of humanity.

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