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# Ressentiment and Overman in the Posthuman Age

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## 1. Introduction

Who is posthuman and what will be the posthuman society? There are two prospects for posthuman society: the pessimistic view and the optimistic view. According to the pessimistic view, as the fourth industrial revolution progresses a new species (transhuman and posthuman) will emerge. The new species called as posthuman will have super intelligence, highly enhanced physical power, and extremely long lives will dominate humans (*Homo sapiens*) who do not have them. On the other hand, according to the optimistic view, which is especially noticeable in transhumanism, the development of science and technology benefits humans and, as a result, human evolve into posthuman with smart machines. There are complex issues tangled together in the dispute between the views, especially such as the natural vs. artificial beings, human dignity and equality, and meaning of life.

The aim of this paper is to examine the subject of ressentiment and overman in the posthuman age, which is related to the nature of transhuman and posthuman and their society. My starting point is that Nietzsche's philosophy can help us to deal with the subject. Nietzsche's ideas have affected the rise of posthumanism, as can be seen from direct or indirect confessions of the pioneers of transhumanism and posthumanism, though there are debates about whether it is real or superficial and how much Nietzsche's ideas affected transhumanism and posthumanism. By paying particular attention to Nietzsche's ideas of Master and Slave, ressentiment, and Overman (*Übermensch*), I contend that (i) new classes will emerge in posthuman society, which correspond to Master and the Slave, (ii) there will be a new type of ressentiment for different reason from Nietzsche's, and (iii) the Overman as a new value creator will be required in order to solve posthuman problems.

## 2. Transhuman

In this paper, I mean 'future' is not a 'vague future' that will come after present, but the period where posthuman live his life. In other words, the future is a world in which new beings defined by

posthumanism. Before discussing transhumanism and posthumanism, it would be better to define humanism as their antitheses. Humanism is based on the following basic principles:

- a. Dignity: Humans have inherent dignity that distinguishes them from other organisms and artificial life forms.
- b. Rationality: Humans are rational beings who think, reason, and judge according to reason.
- c. Autonomy: Human beings are autonomous beings who can make moral judgments, conduct actions with free will, and take responsibility for their actions.

As will be seen soon, transhumanism and posthumanism originate from repulsion and criticism of one or more of the principles.

## 2.2 Transhumanism: From human to T-posthuman

Transhumanism is a collection of loosely connected ideas that have progressively developed over the last two centuries and its primary goal is human enhancement, symbolized by “H+”. According to Max More (1990), who first introduced the term 'transhumanism' in a modern sense, “Transhumanism is a class of philosophies of life that seek the continuation and acceleration of the evolution of intelligent life beyond its currently human form and human limitations by means of science and technology, guided by life-promoting principles and values.”

The spirit of transhumanism is evident in the Transhumanist Declaration of the World Transhumanist Association (WTA).<sup>1</sup>

- a. Humanity stands to be profoundly affected by science and technology in the future. We envision the possibility of broadening human potential by overcoming aging, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering, and our confinement to planet Earth.
- b. We believe that humanity’s potential is still mostly unrealized. There are possible scenarios that lead to wonderful and exceedingly worthwhile enhanced human conditions.
- c. We recognize that humanity faces serious risks, especially from the misuse of new technologies. There are possible realistic scenarios that lead to the loss of most, or even all, of what we hold valuable. Some of these scenarios are drastic, others are subtle. Although all progress is change, not all change is progress.
- d. Research effort needs to be invested in understanding these prospects. We need to carefully deliberate how best to reduce risks and expedite beneficial applications. We also need forums where people can constructively discuss what should be done, and a social order where responsible decisions can be implemented.

1. <https://humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-declaration>.

- e. Reduction of existential risks, and development of means for the preservation of life and health, the alleviation of grave suffering, and the improvement of human foresight and wisdom should be pursued as urgent priorities, and heavily funded.
- f. Policymaking ought to be guided by responsible and inclusive moral vision, taking seriously both opportunities and risks, respecting autonomy and individual rights, and showing solidarity with and concern for the interests and dignity of all people around the globe. We must also consider our moral responsibilities towards generations that will exist in the future.
- g. We advocate the well-being of all sentience, including humans, non-human animals, and any future artificial intellects, modified life forms, or other intelligences to which technological and scientific advance may give rise.
- h. We favor allowing individuals wide personal choice over how they enable their lives. This includes use of techniques that may be developed to assist memory, concentration, and mental energy; life extension therapies; reproductive choice technologies; cryonics procedures; and many other possible human modification and enhancement technologies.

More's definition and the declaration of the WTA reveal the utopian and idealistic characteristic of transhumanism as well as its ambiguous duality. Transhumanism, on one hand, takes science and technology very seriously as a means of transforming human nature through cognitive, emotional, and physical enhancements such as health promotion, extension of lifespan, improvement of intellectual ability and emotional control ability. It is anti-humanism in that it permits de-humanization such as cyborg or mind uploading. On the other hand, transhumanism inherits humanism by accepting enlightenment based on human reason and rationality. Hence, transnationalism is wandering between naturalism and humanism. It is after two rabbits by embracing humanistic values such as health, longevity, and talent and adhering the purpose of human improvement through science and technology while by encouraging humans to regard them as candidates of transhuman or posthuman to be constructed technically.

The double nature of transhumance leads the double nature of transhuman. Transhuman is an 'intermediary transition' in that they overcome the biological conditions given to them as *Homo sapiens* and the boundaries of life based on it, but still respects humanistic ideals and values. From Nietzsche's point of view, transhuman is a middle between human and Overman. How can transhuman as enhanced human accept and respect humanistic values such as dignity and equality? The standard response to this question is that human evolves through transhuman to posthuman who is thought of as ideal being such as Overman, and as a result, the double nature of transhuman disappears.

But this answer is not sufficient to ensure that posthuman will be Overman in the sense of Nietzsche. In transhumanism posthuman is future being whose basic capacities so radically exceed those of present humans as to be no longer unambiguously human by our current standards. From now on, I adopt the term of T-posthuman in order refer posthuman evolved from transhuman.

What is the relation between transhumanism and Nietzsche's philosophy? There has been a debate between Nick Bostrom and Stefan Sorgner on this issue, mainly in the *Journal of Evolution & Technology*. Bostrom (2005) denies the positive relation between transhumanism and Nietzsche's ideas.

What Nietzsche had in mind, however, was not technological transformation but rather a kind of soaring personal growth and cultural refinement in exceptional individuals (who he thought would have to overcome the life-sapping "slave-morality" of Christianity). Despite some surface-level similarities with the Nietzschean vision, transhumanism – with its Enlightenment roots, its emphasis on individual liberties, and its humanistic concern for the welfare of all humans (and other sentient beings) – probably has as much or more in common with Nietzsche's contemporary J.S. Mill, the English liberal thinker and utilitarian.

Sorgner (2009), contrary to Bostrom, emphasizes that there are many fundamental similarities between transhumanism and Nietzsche's philosophy at a fundamental level, especially concerning posthuman and Nietzsche's overman. For example, he proposes a counter-argument against the technological transformation.

Courage is a significant virtue within Nietzsche's favored morality. In addition, he stresses the importance of science for the forthcoming centuries, and does not reject that development. Given these two premises, I cannot exclude the possibility that Nietzsche would have been in favor of genetic engineering, even though he mainly stresses the importance of education for the occurrence of the evolutionary step towards the overhuman. If genetic engineering, or liberal eugenics, can actually be seen as a special type of education, which is what transhumanists seem to hold, then it is possible that this position would have been held by Nietzsche, too, as education played a significant role in his ethics. He affirmed science, and he was in favor of enhancement, and the bringing about of the overhuman.

In this debate, I support the position of Sorgner without adding extra arguments and discuss my subject, resentment, and overman in the posthuman age.

### 3. Posthumanism: From human to posthuman

I pointed out that transhuman has a double nature through transhumanism and T-posthuman, who is supposed to evolve from transhuman, will have such nature too. Posthuman is a totally different being with characteristic distinct from the T-posthuman, which is defined by posthumanism. Posthumanism is distinct from transhumanism and T-posthumanism in that it is oriented towards overcoming humanism. Katherine Hayles offers the following characteristics of post-humanism.<sup>2</sup>

- a. The posthuman view privileges informational pattern over material instantiation, so that embodiment in a biological substrate is seen as an accident of history rather than an inevitability of life.
- b. The posthuman view considers consciousness, regarded as the seat of human identity in the Western tradition long before Descartes thought he was a mind thinking, as an epiphenomenon, as an evolutionary upstart trying to claim that it is the whole show when in actuality it is only a minor sideshow.
- c. The posthuman view thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born.
- d. By these and other means, the posthuman view configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology, and human goals.

From the above, we can see the nature of posthumanism. (i) Posthumanism criticizes humanism which has the humanistic tenets: *human* dignity, *human* rationality, and *human* autonomy, which are accepted as enlightenment goals in transhumanism. Posthumanism denies specifically those goals that have been regarded as inherent attributes of human beings and aims to overcome the limits of human-centered humanism. (ii) Posthumanism denies strongly the dichotomy between humans and other beings. As Hales emphasizes, it does not recognize the distinction between humans and animals, between humans and machines. In particular, it advocates co-evolution of human and machine by contending that humans evolve into cyborgs. However, it should be noted that posthumanism does not claim de-humanization or de-embodiment as opposed to transhumanism. It acknowledges the bodily basis of existence because it is based on reductive physicalism in the sense of strongly denying the existence of mind independent of matter. (iii) Posthumanism adopts a less teleological stance than transhumanism. In other words, it does not stick to the goal of scientific human enhancement and seeks various ways in which humans can reach a true posthuman.

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2. K. Hayles (1999), pp. 2-3.

Finally, (iv) posthumanism differs from transhumanism through its diagnosis on the present age. According to transhumanism, the twentieth century 21, where present humans live, is the entrance to the transhuman age, which T-posthuman age follows. On the other hand, according to posthumanism, the posthuman age is independent of a chronological division. In other words, the posthuman age can be implemented at any time in human history. For example, the ancient people who did not recognize the distinction between humans and animals and thought that machines could think was posthuman in a sense. Wolfgang von Kempelen (1734-1804), who invented a chess-playing automaton called 'The Turk' and surprised the world at the time and said that "machines can be thought of as human beings", was a posthuman. Hales emphasizes that humans have already entered the posthuman age and that we are already posthuman.

As is shown, the basic tenets of posthumanism are to overcome humanism and to deny the various dichotomies drawn by humanism such as dichotomy between humans and animals, between humans and machines, between man and women, between the white and the black, between the rich and the poor, etc.

#### 4. Dignity and Personality

Let's now examine the matters with the notion of dignity of new beings (transhuman, T-posthuman, posthuman) examined above. Should they all be dignified as owners of dignity? The reason these questions are important is that maintenance or deterioration of dignity is the most fundamental problem in case of humans. Is it so in the case of new beings? First of all, according to humanism defined above, dignity has the following characteristics.

- a. Uniqueness: Dignity is owned solely by humans.
- b. Intrinsic property: Dignity is an intrinsic property given to humans.
- c. Equality: Dignity is equally given to all humans.

The notion of dignity as defined above has been criticized as anthropocentrism for from the beginning it blocks the possibility that non-human being can be an owner of dignity. Posthumanists, in particular, argue that uniqueness and equality should be open to non-human beings even though we acknowledge the intrinsic property of dignity. If such a posthuman view is accepted, the new notion of dignity will be established as follows.

- d. Universality: Dignity is owned by a being of a *specific nature*.
- e. Intrinsic property: Dignity is an intrinsic property given to a being of a *specific nature*.
- f. Equality (in a broad sense): Dignity is equally given to all beings with a *specific nature*.

If the above notion of dignity is embraced in the transhuman or posthuman age, beings possessing

such specific nature should be treated as *dignified beings*. The content of the specific nature can be defined in various ways. For example, it can be ownership of self-consciousness. In the case, beings with self-consciousness such as dogs and dolphins should be recognized as the dignified. Transhuman, T-posthuman, and posthuman, which are supposed to be conscious of themselves, should be recognized as dignified beings. But here is a problem. Someone can say that it is meaningless to give the status of dignity to new humans supposed to be totally different from humans. If humans are dignified, animals are dignified, robots are dignified, and new humans are dignified, the connotation of dignity is likely to be empty or with no special meaning. Therefore, there is no reason to apply the notion already sufficiently contaminated by humanism to new humans.

Taking this into account, it is necessary to establish a new standard or notion that replace the notion of dignity. In doing this we can get help from Peter Singer's theory. In *Practical Ethics* (1979) Singer argues persuasively that we should not distinguish humans from other beings and humans and animals should be treated on the same basis. Singer first distinguishes between human and *person* in order to discard the human-centered notion of dignity. The character of a person is rationality and self-consciousness.<sup>3</sup> A person is rational and self-conscious. The marks of personhood for determining whether an animal is rational and self-conscious is as follows.<sup>4</sup>

- a. A rational and self-conscious being is aware of itself as an extended body existing over an extended period of time.
- b. It is a desiring and plan-making being.
- c. It contains as a necessary condition for the right to life that it desires to continue living.
- d. It is an autonomous being.

According to Singer, a being with those marks is a person, so deserves moral consideration. By linking singer's argument with the previous discussion of dignity, it follows that person is dignified. According to the principle that a person has dignity, not only humans but also chimpanzees or dolphins should be treated as a moral agent. On the other hand, a fish that does not possess self-consciousness is not a person and a human embryo lacking sensory power is not a person. To summarize the above discussion we have the following table.

<b>person</b>	sensible and self-conscious	human, chimpanzee, dolphin transhuman, posthuman
<b>Non-person</b>	sensible but not self-conscious	fish, human in a persistent vegetative state
	neither sensible nor self-conscious	human embryo

3. P. Singer (1979), p. 87.

4. Ibid, pp. 78-84.

According to the singer's notion of person, there is no need to take any moral considerations into the use of non-person such as human in a persistent vegetative state or human embryo as a test. On the other hand, new humans such as transhuman, T-posthuman, and posthuman with sensibility and self-consciousness are subject to moral considerations. Singer's theory of person has been criticized because it leads radical judgments that are hard to be acceptable from a humanistic point of view in the very sensitive issues such as abortion and euthanasia.<sup>5</sup> However, Singer's theory is important in that it provides us with a basis for judging the dignity of transhuman and posthuman.

## 5. New resentment

Now let's focus on the lives of transhuman, T-posthuman, and posthuman. First, let's approach the issue from the transhuman perspective. Will transhuman and T-posthuman have ideal lives as transhumanists dream? As discussed above, according to transhumanism, the evolution of human beings is moving from human via transhuman to T-posthuman, Transhuman and T-posthuman are enhanced beings cognitively, emotionally and physically. A real difference between them is that T-posthuman is no longer classified as humans as *Homo sapiens* because it transcends human conditions and elements in all respects. On the other hand, transhuman is still human in that it shares human values despite their statuses of improvements.

In a transhuman society, there will be a problem of inequality. Citizens of transhuman and T-posthuman societies are distinguished as the enhanced and the unenhanced so it is expected that there will be serious inequality between them. Even if the inequality can be dissolved by policies which are based on the good will of the enhanced, resentment of the unenhanced toward the enhanced will be more serious in that it is *artificial inequality* caused by science and technology, unlike the primitive inequality given to humans by birth. Of course, this kind of artificial inequality may not occur in the situation that benefits of developments in science and technology are distributed evenly among all citizens. However, as can be seen in human history, the problem of inequality seems inevitable in that many utopian attempts to realize perfect equality in human society have never been successful. Again, transhuman can be moral agents as a result of moral enhancement by moral Engineering and T-posthuman too for other reasons. However, it is an unbelievable story in the case of transhuman because they are human. Why should the enhanced care about the unenhanced? The inequality can be solved by moral intervention, which cannot be realized in humans. It may be solved by T-posthuman, but

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5. For example, S. Sorgner (2013) points out that the notion of Singer's person ignores accomplishments and successes associated with the notion of dignity.

in considering they are no longer humans it seems that non-humans do not need to respect the humanistic moral values and to take care of humans as the unenhanced.

Even if the inequality, artificial as well as primitive, is solved, it does not the end because the real problem of inequality still remains to be unsolved. The various distinctions that correspond to that between the enhanced and the unenhanced in the T-posthuman society (although there are semantic differences a little) are presented.

The enhanced = the strong = the wired = lonely eagle = master

The unenhanced = the weak = the disconnected = sitting duck = slave

The distinction between master and slave is Nietzsche's. In *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), Nietzsche describes the origin of master morality and slave morality. A minor but superior group and a majority but inferior group are disputed, and the superior group conquers the inferior group and, as a result, the former became masters and the latter became slaves. The two classes have different moral system respectively. The criteria of master morality are 'good and bad' (*Gut und Schlecht*). The good comes from the attitude of a master that proudly affirming himself, whereas the bad is derived from the attitude of slaves. On the other hand, the standard of slave morality is '*Gut und Böse*'. Here, the good is revealed in the attitude of slaves, and the evil is derived from the attitude of the master. In sum, the good and the bad are distinguished in master moral, and the good and the evil are distributed in slave morality.<sup>6</sup> Slaves have deep-seated resentment, frustration, and hostility accompanied by a sense of their being powerless to express these feelings directly envy and hate toward their masters. Nietzsche uses the notion of *ressentiment* in order to refer to feelings of slaves with their masters.<sup>7</sup> However, slaves succeeded in evangelizing the values system through a mental revolt to construct a world dominated by their morality, and, as a result, everything related to their weaknesses, which were judged to be 'bad', were classified as 'good', and everything related to 'good' is classified as 'evil'. This slave revolt is a value evangelism driven by resentment.

In posthuman age, there will be a class differentiation corresponding to the Nietzschean class of master-slave. T-posthuman become the new master and humans become the new slaves. As Nietzsche grasps, the virtue of master is composed of affirmation stemming from superior power, while the virtue of slaves is negativity of resentment, which is derived from their inferior abilities. The new slaves, who have not improved cognitively, emotionally, physically, and morally in the T-posthuman age, will have resentment to new masters. The slave revolt was possible in the Nietzschean society of master-slave, but it is unlikely to be in T-posthuman

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6. F. Nietzsche (2006 / 1887), §I, 11.

7. F. Nietzsche (2006), §I, 10, §I, 13-15, §III, 19, §III, 26-27.

society. According to Nietzsche, slave revolt reversed the value standards and, as a result, the overall level of humans has been equalized downwardly and humans gradually began to fall. From the Nietzschean point of view, new masters do not have any moral responsibility to care about or heal the resentment of slaves and slave revolt is not necessary. Since humans and T-posthuman are totally different, they will be given different moral status, so they will have different moralities, like master and slave of Nietzsche. What is important is that in T-posthuman society, equality is possible only between humans or between T-posthuman, not possible between human and T-posthuman. If slave revolt is impossible in the T-posthuman society, who will care about the resentment of slaves?

## 6. Overman

So far, I examined the nature of transhuman and T-transhuman that are defined in transhumanism, and resentment of slaves that is supposed to occur in T-posthuman society. How about the posthuman society that is defined by posthumanism? As already mentioned before, humans are already living in a posthuman society. However, in order for a particular society to be called a posthuman society, at least one of the following conditions must be met. (i) The majority of citizens live in posthuman life and (ii) there are few posthuman as a central force of the society. Contemporary society does not satisfy them and even if we live in a posthuman society, it should be regarded as a very early stage of posthuman society. In posthuman societies, in the sense of (i) and (ii), two groups will occur as in T-posthuman society, but there will be considerable differences in detail between them. It is because it is difficult to think that such a distinction will necessarily lead to the division of the strong and the weak, given the fact that the motto of posthumanism is to overcome humanism and its dichotomy, though there will be the distinction between humans and posthuman. Here, the problem occurs about how to understand posthuman.

What is posthuman? For me the question is not about posthuman's enhanced cognitive, emotive, physical, and moral abilities, but about their values and moral orientation. Is posthuman a good super-human or a bad super-human? Often there are people who identify posthuman with Nietzschean Overman (*Übermensch*). This is wrong because even if posthuman is super-human with good will, other conditions must be met for the super-human to be Overman. According to Nietzsche, Overman is a being that is required as a creator of a new value system to correct the value evangelism brought about by the slave revolt. Likewise, posthuman must have the ability to create new values for posthuman age in order to be Overman.

When Nietzsche declared that "God is dead" (*Gott ist tot*), what he really meant was that the metaphysical dichotomy that distinguished between God and humans, which had been taken for granted so far, was over. Nietzsche saw that such a dichotomy posed a tragedy

that affirmed only the world of existence and denied the world of life. Overman is the creator of the value system for a new world in which God is not present. In this sense, Nietzsche's idea of Overman is consistent with the basic spirit of posthumanism. When we approach Nietzsche's philosophy centering on notions of resentment and Overman, it looks like a powerful hammer that breaks ramparts surrounding humanism and, in this sense, we can see Nietzsche as a posthumanist. On the other hand, Nietzsche is still a supporter of enlightenment in that he is aroused by an awakening of immature humans, an unfounded taboo, and the shackles of unjust repression. In that sense, Nietzsche's Overman is basically closer to T-posthuman than posthuman.

What will be new values for posthuman age? I guess it will be *openness*. The more humans approach to posthuman society, the more they will be connected to humans, transhuman, T-posthuman, and posthuman as well as smart machines and inanimate objects. The interconnectivity between humans and objects requires its components to have an openness to others and, as result, all kinds of dichotomy will be collapsed. The dramatic reduction in difference such as personality, uniqueness, heterogeneity, and unfamiliarity will result in openness. Life in posthuman age will be classified into two types as follows.

CD-Life; Creative and dynamic life

CM-Life: Comfortable and monotonous life

In posthuman age, a large number of humans will live a comfortable but monotonous lives (CD-Life), and a few will pursue creative and dynamic lives with novelty and openness (CM-Life), and only a few actually live creative and dynamic lives.

How can Overman heal humans in CM-Life? What is required in the posthuman age is virtue or strength that challenges or pursue new things. Socrates reminded us that life to be pursued is not a 'comfortable life' but a 'good life'. The good life in posthuman age becomes synonymous with creative life. Costs will be required to pursue and achieve it. This suggests that in posthuman age, the difference of creativity and richness work still as fundamental obstacles for pursuing a good life. Here, we find another request for Overman. In posthuman society, there is a need for Overman who can eliminate such obstacles and liberate human from the network of resentment. Overman can heal posthuman society by real openness necessary to transform the society into a world in which both humans and posthuman can live good lives.

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