

## INTRODUCTION

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The *posthuman paradigm shift* is no longer a hot issue only in academic debates; it has come to reflect a phenomenon that has slowly begun to shape the face of current societies, as indicated by the Fourth Industrial Revolution's twilight. The posthuman, as an umbrella term (with roots in various philosophical and cultural theories, discourses, and movements), highlights the core potentiality of science and technology, as well as that of philosophy (to name a few of the fields it covers), in order to draw a red line between the past, present, and future of both human and non-human co-evolution and co-existence.

The essay collection *Metahumanism, Euro-Transhumanism and Sorgner's Philosophy—Technology, Ethics, Art* is the result of putting together 28 selected articles, in which well-known scholars in the fields of Post-, Trans-, and Metahumanism analyze the philosophical, theoretical, and aesthetical aspects and challenges that technology, ethics, and art bring to light in the ongoing posthuman paradigm shift as approached by Stefan Lorenz Sorgner in his writings: *On Transhumanism: The Most Dangerous Idea in the World?!* (2016/2020); *We Have Always Been Cyborgs. Digital Data, Gene Technologies, and an Ethics of Transhumanism* (2022a); and *Philosophy of Posthuman Art* (2022b).

The volume is structured in three parts. Essays in Part I (“Philosophical, Theoretical and Critical Aspects on Sorgner’s *On Transhumanism*”) and Part III (“Metahumanism Dances the Twist during Posthuman Paradigm Shift in the *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*”) are selected from the journal *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges*—a journal of the West University of Timisoara, Romania, dedicated to cutting-edge topics in philosophical research, while the essays in Part II (“Euro-Transhumanism—and why *We Have Always Been Cyborgs*”) are selected from the journal *Ethics & Politics*—a journal of the University of Trieste, Italy dedicated to moral and political philosophy research.

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## Part I. “Philosophical, Theoretical and Critical Aspects on Sorgner’s *On Transhumanism*”

The first part is based on Stefan Lorenz Sorgner’s (2016/2020) book *On Transhumanism*. In this part, ten scholars reflect on the main challenges/concerns that transhumanism brings to the forefront of academic and public debate including anthropocentrism, emerging technologies, (bio)enhancements, life extension, climate change, artificial intelligence.

Aura Elena Schussler’s essay “An Incursion into ‘Weak Transhumanism’” provides a critical cartography of Transhumanism, Posthumanism, and Metahumanism by studying the fundamental concepts and theories that bring together and separate the three aforementioned philosophical/cultural movements. Her arguments in support of Sorgner’s *weak transhumanism* (i.e., Euro-Transhumanism) adopt a critical stance towards both the American agenda of *strong transhumanism* (i.e., hyper-humanism) and bio-conservatives’ dualistic ontology of thinking and paternalistic prejudice.

The following three essays address the numerous scholarly criticisms and arguments over the philosophical influence of Friedrich Nietzsche’s writings on current transhumanist ideas. In “Nietzsche and Transhumanism: Much Ado About Nothing,” Elise Bohan portrays Nietzsche as a “weak proto-transhumanist” owing to poor evidence with regard to a succession of clear connections between Nietzsche’s writings/ideas and transhumanism. Sorgner, on the other hand, sees structural analogies/similarities between Nietzsche’s theories (such as the concept of the *Overhuman*) and the transhumanist concept of the posthuman. Her analytical views are similar to those of Nick Bostrom and Russell Blackford, who believe that there are superficial parallels between Nietzsche’s works and those of transhumanists. Unlike Bohan, in “Nietzsche and Transhumanism: The Case of the Overhuman (Übermensch),” Manuel Knoll rejects Bostrom’s arguments regarding the presence of some superficial similarities between the Nietzschean concept of the *Overhuman* and transhumanist thinking. Therefore, he regards Nietzsche as a “precursor of transhumanism,” but at the same time he is critical of Sorgner who claims (according to Knoll) that Nietzsche conceived the Overhuman as a new species. Continuing with the debate on Nietzsche and Transhumanism, Mariano Rodríguez González argues in “The Problematic Coherence of a Nietzschean Transhumanism,” that there is a lack of coherence between the Nietzschean concepts of the Overhuman and the *will to power*, and digital immortality one. In his opinion, the naturalistic Nietzschean-Dionysian view of life and death—where the idea of the will to power is achieved in its evolutionary parameters (i.e., “organic and anthropological level”)—contradicts the strong transhumanist agenda, while the idea of immortality was taken for granted by being reduced to an empty dualistic-ontological approach of existence, defined by the technology of mind-uploading.

The biotechnological revolution has sparked various bio-ethical questions regarding (bio)enhancements and genetic alteration procedures on humans. In “Transhumanism According to Stefan Lorenz Sorgner: Why the Posthuman Project

Requires Responsibility and Empathy,” Maurizio Balistreri criticizes both the transhumanists’ bio-enhancement agenda and bio-conservatives’ paternalism. Balistreri contends that when it comes to human enhancement and well-being, *responsibility* and *empathy* should not be overlooked. Even though he agrees with Sorgner who believes that “it is right to question the type of enhancement we should promote and the type of responsibility at stake,” he is skeptical of Sorgner’s defensive arguments on negative freedom ideals.

Mirko Daniel Garasic approaches many sensitive topics such as the COVID-19 pandemic, immortality, compulsory moral enhancement, Parabirosis, and so on, in “Some of the Critical Aspects of Sorgner’s “On Transhumanism”,” to illustrate some of the fundamental challenges with transhumanist initiatives. His multifaceted critical analysis (philosophical, political, social, religious) on the problem of lifespan prolongation, considers not only the current Anthropocene Era and its environmental consequences, but also some radical posthumanist ideas that see “human-centered supremacy” as the one who “really threatens life, nature, and the meaning of our endeavors”. Sven Nyholm, like Garasic, is critical of the transhumanist techno-optimistic approach towards technological progress. In “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”,” Nyholm reminds us that potential risks of new technologies such as current artificial intelligence (or the super-intelligent AI technologies predicted by Bostrom) should not be ignored, neither at the human existential level nor at the environmental one. In this paradigm, the ethical challenges raised by the norm of negative freedom as cherished by Sorgner, should be approached within the limits of a meta-axiological understanding—that is, the universal validity of negative freedom (in Nyholm’s view) vs. the non-universal (personal) validity of negative freedom (in Sorgner’s perspective).

African humanism, the philosophy of Ubuntu, and the bio-political, techno-political, and necro-political practices in Africa are the few issues raised by Leo Igwe in “Transhumanism and Emerging Technologies: Exploring Ethics and Human Enhancement in Africa.” The topic of “human improvement in Africa” raises the sensitive issue of African regions, and populations who are deprived of the multiple advantages (medical, technological, political, etc.) that Western countries enjoy. Not only should the humanitarian challenges that underpin many African nations be on the transhumanist agenda, but so should those concerning access to progress.

Knowledge and education become the new capital in a cognitive capitalist world because of their (imposed) instrumentalist nature. However, access to a high-quality education system may create a gap between those who can afford it and those who cannot. In “The Metahumanities,” Natasha Brie Beranek discusses the fundamental challenge that higher education in the United States is facing. Her criticisms are directed towards the structural organization of the neoliberal university, influenced by dualistic thinking. As a non-dualist approach to the idea of education, she considers Sorgner’s metahumanist perspective, which brings together pedagogical curricula, and educational, and genetic enhancement.

Entering the Intellectual Discourses on “On Transhumanism,” by Stefan Lorenz Sorgner is a response essay to the nine writers featured in this part, that addresses some of the hot topics of transhumanism, such as Anthropocentrism, life extension, Nietzschean inheritance with regard to transhumanism, The Sixth Extension, and so on. In this article, Sorgner also presents the first conceptual and theoretical hints with regard to what would take the form of European transhumanism—in his philosophical approach from the book, *We Have Always Been Cyborgs* (2022a)—and American transhumanism.

What is the relationship between *humanity* and technology? Where does our humanity end and the world of technology begin? Is it possible to establish precise limits, or is technology a constitutive part of our humanity? Moreover, what is the place of human beings in the world? Can we consider them something exceptional, or is there nothing we do that could be done with the same effectiveness by intelligent machines? Transhumanism does not consider human beings as ontologically different from other living beings, but still affirms that we have a duty to use new technologies to try to go beyond humanity. What, however, is the ideal of enhancement (or perfection) of humans to which we should refer? Should we limit ourselves to using new technologies (not only genome editing techniques, but also new digital technologies based on artificial intelligence) to improve our natural dispositions or capabilities, or do we have the right, and perhaps even the duty, to completely redesign the lives of future generations? In the debate, alongside *carbon-based transhumanism*, we find *silicon-based transhumanism* that emphasizes the possibility that the overcoming of the human will be realized through a cyberspace entity. What is the most coherent or probable version of transhumanism with respect to human development possibilities? Finally, the development of artificial intelligence opens up new scenarios and possibilities with which we must reckon: what is the most appropriate use of these new technologies and how can we avoid having the use of these technologies progressively lead to forms of control incompatible with our liberal-democratic societies? These are just some of the issues that Stefan Lorenz Sorgner (2022a) addresses in his book *We Have Always Been Cyborgs. Digital Data, Gene Technologies, and an Ethics of Transhumanism*.

## **Part II. “Euro-Transhumanism—and why We Have Always Been Cyborgs”**

The essays collected in the second part of this volume critically consider Sorgner’s position and discuss the validity, on the one hand, of the theoretical assumptions and, on the other hand, of the practical implications of a conception of transhumanism that presents itself as relativistic, pessimistic, and anti-utopian. In “Should Posthuman be (Human)-Enhancement Based? The Meaning of Posthuman Project in the Age of Climate Change and Space Travelling,” Maurizio Balistreri questions whether it is right to connect the redesign of humanity to a mere form of bioenhancement. Sorgner asserts that we have a duty to go beyond our humanity and, therefore, create the conditions for the full realization of the *posthuman*. In any case, Sorgner seems to assume as evident that the posthuman can only be realized as

an enhancement (or improvement) of the human, in the version and capacities that it currently presents. Even though Balistreri agrees with Sorgner that plans for human (bio)enhancement cannot be considered intrinsically immoral, he intends to demonstrate that (bio)enhancing human skills is not the only reason that can justify a program to replan human nature and promote the idea of the posthuman. In his opinion, a more coherent posthuman plan should take into account the possibility of overcoming the traditional conception of the human more radically than we have thus far done.

In his book, Sorgner (2022) strongly defends the value of negative freedom and asserts that the use of new technologies should not result in interference with people's right to self-determination. In "Sorgner on Freedom, Violence, and Privacy," Russell Blackford asserts that the concept of negative liberty alone cannot be enough to define the boundaries of freedom in a liberal society. Moreover, Blackford argues that the concepts of *violence* and *privacy* should be defined more precisely, and that Sorgner appears too casual in describing positions that he does not share or consider morally acceptable as forms of violence. However, this risks excluding from the boundaries of tolerance ideas and conduct that are entirely legitimate. However, this risks pushing the boundaries of tolerance towards ideas and conduct that are entirely legitimate.

In his article "In Praise of Objectivism, Optimism, and Utopianism: a Counterpoint to Sorgner," John Danaher wonders whether Sorgner's attempt to construct his conception of transhumanism on a kind of empirical and ethical non-cognitivism (nihilism) can work. Sorgner claims that our statements about the world are nothing more than interpretations and, consequently, it is not possible to present any stable metaphysical foundation for our *discourses*. Similarly, our moral judgments are not (and cannot be) *true* or *false*: we have certain values but there is no conclusive reason that can somehow justify them. According to Danaher, no form of nihilism can be coherently sustained, as to defend nihilism one must be a realist or objectivist (not a nihilist!). Furthermore, Danaher claims that if there is no deeper truth behind nihilism (they are simply the author's values and preferences), it is not possible to persuade others or present arguments that can convince other people to embrace my same conclusions. Finally, according to Danaher, Sorgner would not only have reasons to be techno-optimistic, but he should not even be afraid to defend a utopian model (of society and humanity), since utopia does not necessarily presuppose closure to diversity and pluralism.

While Danaher, therefore, believes that Sorgner is too relativistic, pessimistic, and anti-utopian, Steve Fuller, on the other hand, accuses Sorgner of remaining too attached to a bioconservative conception of humanity. In "How to be a Bioconservative Transhumanist," Fuller argues that Sorgner assumes that one can only be (or continue to be) human by maintaining a human biology, and therefore, cyborgs cannot leave the human species once they *enhance* themselves. Enhancement is permitted, but it can only be an enhancement of the human. Yet, according to Fuller, we must overcome a conception of humanity that restricts the possibility of calling or defining oneself as human to particular biological conditions that characterize humanity ("cishumanity"). Therefore, anyone who surpasses the Turing

Test should be considered human. In these terms, says Fuller, we could extend humanity to animals and machines as well.

Finally, in his article “Sociotechnical Infrastructures of Dominion in Stefan L. Sorgner’s *We Have Always Been Cyborgs*,” Steven Umbrello focuses on Sorgner’s conception of technology. According to Umbrello, Sorgner defends an instrumentalist conception of technology and therefore does not take into account that technologies can incorporate the values of their creators. For example, the Long Island underpasses were intentionally designed low so as to limit access to beaches to public transportation mainly used by African Americans. Furthermore, Umbrello asserts that an instrumentalist conception of technology, such as Sorgner’s, overestimates our ability to control technologies (since they are mere tools) and is unable to recognize that technologies, once introduced, become increasingly pervasive and, consequently—even when they have negative consequences—it is difficult to remove them.

Sorgner responds to the criticisms—“Smear Gel Paper for a Contingent Marble Sculpture. A Reply to Some Critics”—by further clarifying some challenging intellectual issues and explaining why this debate on transhumanist reflections encompasses a great variety of philosophical, anthropological, political and ethical challenges. Sorgner emphasizes that this topic is becoming increasingly relevant for scholars. Moreover, the current debate highlights that transhumanist thought is nuanced and can only grow through confrontation and discussion.

### **Part III. Metahumanism Dances the Twist during Posthuman Paradigm Shift in the *Philosophy of Posthuman Art***

The third part of this book contains the most recent discussions on Sorgner’s (2022b) *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*. The “aesthetic of monsters,” the “aesthetic of hybridity,” the “aesthetic of amorphous,” the “aesthetics of becoming,” or the “aesthetics of twisting,” represent the main aesthetic concepts of posthuman artworks addressed by Sorgner in his book. “What is art?”; “What is the role of art and aesthetics in the posthuman paradigm shift?”; “What is the impact of technology in art?”; “Is it moral to use human embryos for merely aesthetic or artistic purposes?”; “Can technology replace humans in the creative process?”—are just a few of the questions addressed by the authors featured in this part of the book.

Yunus Tuncel discusses various types of posthuman artworks such as *bioart*, *cryptoart*, and Helbig’s inclusive musical drama, in “Arts in the Age of Posthumanism: Reflections on Stefan Lorenz Sorgner’s *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*,” while, at the same time, offering a critique of Sorgner’s position regarding the *non-totalitarian* dimension of posthuman total works of art. Tuncel wonders how Sorgner’s Dionysian all-inclusive form of posthuman total artworks fits in today’s art and culture when it comes to a non-dualistic understanding of the notion of *leisure*. Franc Mali’s essay also addresses the topic of non-dualism. According to him, the spread of non-dualistic ontological thinking in bioarts, cryptoarts, and cyborg technologies, along with the recognition of the concept of “permanent becoming” as the epistemological boomerang that is twisting western ontological dualisms, do not imply that

transhumanism is abandoning all philosophical traditions. He criticizes not only Sorgner's concepts of *good life* and *negative freedom* in relation to moral entrepreneurship and ableism in his article "The Way Transhumanism is Leading to the Convergence of all Spheres of Creative Human Thought," but also the ideological conflict between supporters of the precautionary and proactionary principles.

According to Kerstin Borchhardt, the actualization of Greek, Roman, and other forgotten mythological characters, monsters, and topics illustrates the new entanglements provided by posthuman philosophy and art, whereas diverse (*neo*)*mythical figures* such as the Selkie (the mythological creature from Scandinavian folklore resurrected by Gary Markle in his Project *Selkie Skin*), are meant to access the sensuous and the emotional amid the fear of contemporary ecological catastrophe. "Of Plastic Selkies and Hybrid Puppies: Posthuman Mythopoesia in Times of the Ecological Crisis," addresses the need for such *mythopoetical structures* in our current world, which must slow the acceleration of *ratiocentrism* in order to discover new methods for creating and co-creating more sustainable forms of co-existence with all human/non-human, and more than human, agents.

The so-called *new aesthetics*, which rely on and depend on technology, represent a porous threshold between the future of technological singularity and the twisting phenomenon of the categorical system of metaphysics to which art and aesthetics were formerly linked. In his article "Singularity, Aisthesis and Artwork Postscript on Stefan Lorenz Sorgner's *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*," Žarko Paić creates the concept of the *technosphere* in order to illustrate the futuristic scenario of the posthuman paradigm shift, in which machine and aesthetics (the animate and the inanimate, nature and technology) will merge and stratify, creating new architectures of life and existence within the limits of an immanent transcendence.

Evi Sampanikou's essay "Art Has Always Been the Product of a Philosophizing Cyborg. Looking Inside "Philosophy of Posthuman Art" by Stefan Lorenz Sorgner," is a meticulous cartography of Sorgner's *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*. She begins her article with Heraclitus' well-known phrase, "You cannot step into the same river twice," not only to emphasize Sorgner's philosophical attachment to this idea—which is both related to metahumanism and to his notion of *twisting*—but also for building her text as a fluid flow of concepts, ideas, emotions, and critiques; a playful and continuous process of becoming in which art and philosophy intertwine into a frenetic dance of changes and intellectual challenges.

Even in the posthuman paradigm shift, to talk about art, we need a medium through which it can be transmitted, preserved, and enjoyed. In "Adorno, Beckett...Wagner, Artaud: Reflections on Stefan Sorgner's *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*," Russell Kilbourn examines both the nature and purpose of art today, and "what art continues to tell us about ourselves". Russell analyzes posthuman art within the framework of a critical posthumanist approach by deconstructing the notion of human (as subjectivity, consciousness, and self), taken for granted by Euro-centric Humanism. Adorno, Beckett, Wagner and Artaud are the key figures whose works are used by Russell to emphasize that art in general, and posthuman art in particular, represents the sum of the unspeakable, incomprehensible, and unimaginable missing links which forged our existence.

The manipulation of various biological materials stands at the foundation of bioart. But what if the work of art has, as its basis, the manipulation of biological material of human origin? Furthermore, what if the artist employs human embryos in his artwork? At Yale University, the artist Aliza Shvarts created such a piece of art as an *Untitled (Senior Thesis)*. But is this morally justified or not? In “The Use of Human Embryos for Artistic Applications. Bioethical Considerations on Stefan Lorenz Sorgner’s *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*,” Maurizio Balistreri is approaching this hot ethical dilemma regarding the use of human embryos for artistic purposes. Human embryos, on the other hand, are frequently used for medicinal research by scientists. Thus, one of the primary questions put by the author is: why is such research morally justified, yet using human embryos for creating a work of art is not?

In its openness to the world, and to its tremendous cultural variety, posthuman art may be seen as an entanglement of eclectic approaches, a consequence of the fluidification of the boundaries of these vast cultural environments. In “Posthumanism’s Western Localization and non-Western Posthumanism in Anime. On Stefan Lorenz Sorgner’s *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*,” Malte Frey expands on Sorgner’s Eastern aesthetic approaches to *smoothness* and *kawaii*, his focus being on what he refers to as the “anime’s posthuman aesthetics” of the Japanese cultural environment. Relying on a non-essentialist perspective in order to emphasize the non-dualist ontological thinking of non-Western cultures, Frey is opening an aesthetic dialogue to bring together the East and the West under the umbrella of posthuman art. In doing this, he is making a vast philosophical, aesthetical, and religious journey, starting with Mamoru Oshii’s cyberpunk anime *Ghost in the Shell* and continuing with Buddhist and Shinto traditions regarding the idea of *interrelatedness*.

However, AI-driven robot artists such as Ai-Da are likely to become increasingly prevalent in future art exhibitions. It is debatable how comfortable our human-centered worldview and claimed ontological supremacy are with this. That is why the question of whether robots can *create* art is still an open one. Perhaps it will stay so until we realize that the concept of *creativity* must be expanded in order to recognize varying degrees of creativity in different kinds of entities. Still, according to Marius Markuckas in his essay “On the Question of the Possibility to Replace the Human with Technology in the Creative Process,” the fundamental problem is not whether robots can deliver art or not, but rather whether or not human creativity (artistic creativity in particular) could be replaced by such sophisticated technologies.

Are emerging technologies providing the main characteristics of posthuman art? And what is the relationship between posthuman aesthetics and emerging technologies? Is Pablo Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger (O. J. R. M.)* a work of posthuman art? What are the relationships between posthuman art and traditional forms of art? These are some of the issues raised in Ferén David Barrios Pérez’s essay “Towards a Posthuman Philosophy of Art: A Response to Stefan Sorgner’s *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*”. Ferén’s critical approach is directed to what Sorgner defines as the philosophy of posthuman art. According to Ferén, any entry into the philosophy of posthuman art requires first and foremost research dedicated to the features that constitute a

posthuman artwork, i.e., an exploration of a posthuman philosophy of art in order to be able to re-evaluate all previous art forms in light of the posthuman worldview.

Dario Giugliano discusses a hermeneutic interpretation of posthuman art in the light of aesthetics and poetics in “A Poetics of Contemporary Art to Understand the Meaning of Our Age,” while also identifying the roots of posthumanist philosophy in Pico della Mirandola’s writings. Contemporary art, for him, is a hybrid, unique, and fluid manifestation of our relationality with the experience of art and our dependency on it. Similarly, to Sorgner, Giugliano believes that art in our time supports the presence of widely varied, even competing styles—a characteristic that is closely related to the idea of the non-totalitarian dimension of posthuman total works of art.

Stefan Lorenz Sorgner’s essay “On Constructive and Destructive Interferences in the Life and in Art Worlds: A Reply,” provides additional clarifications with regard to how a philosophy of posthuman artworks affects not only the way we relate to art in general (and to posthuman artworks in particular), but also the way we interact with, and experience, the ongoing posthuman paradigm shift. Posthuman aesthetics is twisting the categorical ontological dualities, accelerating the frenetic dance of the continuous process of becoming, together with the operation of epistemological perspectivism, in art worlds. It is not about “the end of art” or “a new beginning,” but about a more open and deeper understanding, creation, and experience of it—a continuous, unique, and never-ending flow of intense aesthetic encounters.

The editors and contributors hope that this book—which brings together a number of intriguing themes in order to bring together readers from various backgrounds who are interested in thinking through current and future posthuman challenges—will serve as an auspicious framework and a venue for ongoing and future discussions on Metahumanism, Euro-Transhumanism, and Posthuman art.

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