

CLASSIC AND EURO-TRANSHUMANIST APPROACHES TO DUKKHA AND SUFFERING

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Abstract: *Suffering is one of the central existential challenges faced by humanity, acknowledged as such by both Buddhism and transhumanism. In the former, it is referred to as dukkha. It continues to be a topic of debate in terms of philosophical, scientific, and religious frameworks. Nowadays, within the broad varieties of transhumanist philosophies, and in light of rapid technological and scientific developments, suffering is not only an existential condition, but also a problem that can, and perhaps should be, solved or overcome, as some classic transhumanism suggests. The general aim of this paper is to explore the theme of suffering within both Euro-Transhumanist and classic transhumanist paradigms, drawing on the Buddhist notion of dukkha and Nietzsche's philosophy. The theoretical objective is to offer a critical analysis of the classic transhumanist aspiration to abolish suffering—particularly as envisioned in David Pearce's "abolitionist project"—from a Euro-Transhumanist perspective. In contrast to this position, a Euro-Transhumanist approach embraces a weak Nietzschean perspective on suffering—by using the notion of dukkha, interpreted as a pervasive feature of our contingent condition—allowing for creative forms of engagement rather than liberation from suffering as such.*

Keywords: *Euro-Transhumanism, classic transhumanism, dukkha, suffering, Buddhism.*

I. Introduction

In its various forms, as a cultural, intellectual, and philosophical movement, transhumanism emphasizes the importance of scientific and technological innovations as means of improving human life and well-being, regarding both the prolongation of life and the expansion of human healthspan. While both classic

transhumanism and Euro-Transhumanism embrace technology, they do so with slightly different approaches. Thus, one of classic transhumanism's universalist goals aims to accelerate human evolution toward a future posthuman condition, often focusing on long-term scenarios involving the ensuring of humanity's potential to flourish and survive. This suggests that human enhancement is integrated into an ongoing process of continuous transformation, and the overcoming of existential limitations and biological boundaries, considering that in classic transhumanist terms the human is a "work in progress" (Bostrom, 2005, p. 4).

On the other hand, Euro-Transhumanism relates to the current issues humanity is facing, seeking an "as-good-as-it-gets solution" (Sorgner, 2022a) based on current scientific and technological developments. It does not view the posthuman as a new species emerging in the future, but rather as a re-composition of the human as the species exists at present. Moreover, it rejects long-termist ideologies and conceives of human evolution as a contingent mode of existence, as a continuous flow of becomings—one that incorporates the past in such a way as to reconfigure and reinscribe it in the present.

In this paradigm, Stefan Sorgner's Euro-Transhumanism interprets suffering as an existential and contingent condition understood in a non-essentialist, processual sense. He uses the notion of *dukkha* within a naturalistic, hermeneutical, non-soteriological, and non-Buddhist lens. In Euro-Transhumanism, *dukkha* does not represent a flaw we should overcome in order to achieve a good life, as in Buddhist tradition. Rather, Euro-Transhumanism emphasizes the importance of each individual creating their own interpretive, contextual, and contingent response to *dukkha* in the process of continuous becoming, while recognizing the relational and social dimensions in which meaning emerges. Since *dukkha* is the fundamental condition in which we exist, Euro-Transhumanism supports a non-universal and perspectival way of responding to it in order to affirm life, while emphasizing the relevance of relational, contingent, and interpretative practices as places where meaning is generated. In this framework, Euro-Transhumanism articulates a critical position in terms of both long-termism and the negative and classical forms of utilitarianism that are often supported by classic transhumanism. The latter follows a largely techno-optimistic and techno-utopian agenda shaped by Nick Bostrom's long-termism and David Pearce's (2007) abolitionist project.

When addressing suffering in transhumanist discourses, these visions are sometimes complemented by Buddhist influences, as seen in James Hughes's Buddhist transhumanism (Hughes, 2019; Latorra, 2015). Additionally, classic transhumanism actively investigates the possibility of abolishing suffering through radical human enhancement, drawing on science, technology, and a Western-secular interpretation of Buddhist practices, and often neglecting the ontological significance of *dukkha*. Sorgner's Euro-Transhumanism follows a non-utopian, non-Buddhist, non-soteriological, and continental approach to the contingency of

dukkha. In a weak Nietzschean approach, it integrates both the idea of eternal recurrence—understood in a non-metaphysical sense—and *amor fati*, interpreting suffering as structurally bound to contingency within the process of permanent becoming. By doing so, it offers a critical perspective on both classic transhumanism and traditional Buddhism.

II. Suffering and Dukkha—A Short Philosophical Exploration

Suffering is one of the fundamental aspects and existential challenges of human life, which in Buddhist terms is understood as dukkha. At a personal level, throughout our lives, each of us has experienced at least one of the different facets of suffering, whether through physical pain or psychological distress. Over time, philosophers, theologians, scientists, and ordinary people have constantly striven to understand not only what suffering is, but also its causes and meaning in human existence. These endeavors have given birth to different perspectives and interpretations with regard to suffering. Interpreted as an undesirable condition, humanity has consistently striven to avoid or overcome suffering, or to alleviate it.

In Western philosophy, suffering is approached in metaphysical, dualistic, and ethical terms. However, similarly to Buddhism, the Western tradition also acknowledges suffering as a form of existential unsatisfactoriness, by bringing different perspectives of interpretation to bear. Thus, in ancient Greek philosophy, suffering was often tied to fate. Plato viewed suffering through a dualistic ontological lens, associating it with the immaterial soul, with the material body being tied to pain—considered the destruction of balance and harmony in a living being (Plato, 1972, 2004). Thus, for Plato, suffering arises when the soul is attached to the sensible world, bodily cravings, and uncontrolled emotions, and not to the realm of *Forms*, to reason, and to truth. This is a position that bears a slight resemblance to the Buddhist interpretation of dukkha (even if Buddhism is non-dualistic), which links suffering to impermanence and craving—or, in a Platonic interpretation, attachment to the realm of the sensible. Distancing himself from Plato's dualistic approach, Aristotle (1999) connected suffering to both the body and the soul. In this paradigm, he stressed that both physical pain and negative emotions can short-circuit *eudaimonia*. However, he suggested that a virtuous and ethical life can help individuals better understand, approach, and handle suffering and flourish. In this case, we can find a similarity between the Buddhist Eightfold Path and Aristotle's ethics, even though the metaphysical grounding of Aristotle's philosophy is human essence, whereas Buddhism is rather non-essentialist (Keown, 1992, pp. 193–227). For the Stoics, suffering was an unavoidable aspect of human existence, a position with a close connection to the Buddhist conception of dukkha. However, the Stoics believed that humans could reduce or transform suffering through the cultivation of rationality, awareness, virtue, and self-discipline as a

means of achieving human flourishing, whereas the ultimate goal in Buddhism is to reach Nirvana.

In modern and existential philosophy, life is interpreted as suffering. Schopenhauer's (2010, 1966) pessimism positions suffering as the essence of existence rooted in the force of the "will" that represents the metaphysical ground of our agony and makes life meaningless. Which is why, according to him, the will must be negated on the basis of ascetic and aesthetic contemplation as a means of reducing suffering. This position closely aligns Schopenhauer's philosophy with that of the Buddhist principles, which see the entirety of human existence as *dukkha*. On the other hand, Nietzsche develops a different approach. He does not negate the will, nor does he reject suffering. In Nietzsche's philosophy, suffering is a necessary and desirable aspect of a meaningful life. This idea is revealed by his central theme of the transvaluation of suffering. He emphasizes that suffering is necessary for the realization of greatness in life, grounding suffering in his philosophy of the will to power and *amor fati*. Thus, since life inherently involves *dukkha*, Nietzsche advocates for the embrace of suffering in order to create new values, and live a fulfilling and meaningful life. His approach overcomes pessimism and affirms life's hardships as generative forces in the process of permanent becoming (Nietzsche, 1999).

Regarding *dukkha*, every Buddhist school and philosophical approach depends on the Buddha's primary and essential teachings (Dhamma). These principles encompass the following teachings, which shape Buddhist soteriology and ways of living. The Four Truths represent Buddha's first teaching. They are the noble truths of *dukkha* (understood as suffering, frustration, and unsatisfactoriness), *samudaya* (the cause of suffering), *nirodha* (the end of suffering) and *Magga* (the path to the end of suffering). These truths represent better ways of understanding the nature of suffering in human existence. The Three Marks of Existence are *anicca* (impermanence), *anatta* (not-self-ness), and *dukkha* (suffering or the inherent unsatisfactoriness of existence). Together they emphasize the impermanence of life and existence, alongside the need to eliminate the personality and the self to escape suffering. The Eightfold Path—right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation (Bodhi, 1998, pp. 10–25; Bartley, 2015; LaTorra, 2015)—represents a guide to proper living, thinking, and being in order to overcome *dukkha* and reach Nirvana.

But how can one understand suffering in terms of *dukkha*? First of all, *dukkha* is an umbrella concept, rich in meaning, that embodies the many facets of suffering that are linked to the natural laws of the universe, from the physical and biological forms of suffering, which in Buddhism are called "the suffering of suffering" (*dukkha-dukkha*), to the dynamic form of suffering, which is "the suffering of change" (*Viparinama-dukkha*), which ultimately leads to the existential dimension of suffering (for the unenlightened), known as "the suffering of conditioning"

(Sankhara-dukkha) (XIV Dalai Lama, 1997, pp. 50–54). The “suffering of suffering” is linked to “the sufferings of birth, sickness, ageing, and death” (XIV Dalai Lama, 1997, p. 50). “The suffering of change” reveals the paradox of happiness as suffering because of change and impermanence (XIV Dalai Lama, 1997, p. 50)—everything that may bring happiness in an X moment will turn to frustration, sorrow, and pain in a Y moment as a result of the transient nature of all phenomena. “The suffering of conditioning” is linked to ignorance, which ultimately leads to an existential crisis. For Buddhists, as long as humans remain in an unenlightened state of “not knowing”, suffering will continue to be an unavoidable part of their present and future lives due to negative karma that fuels samsara (XIV Dalai Lama, 1997, pp. 50–54).

Thus, by bringing together the Western and Eastern perspectives on suffering and dukkha, we may identify, in general terms, the fact that as much as these perspectives find some similarities in their various philosophies, they differ in method. Both perspectives acknowledge the fact that there is suffering in the world, that suffering is an existential condition (dukkha), and that this is a consequence of the process of permanent becoming and changing. However, their methods of approaching suffering differ. In Buddhism, dukkha is a given, a challenge that must be approached with a spiritual response which involves a path-oriented journey to let it go; in Western philosophy, suffering is generally approached with the aid of metaphysical tools, with reason, ethical virtues, and living, to find an explanation or a ‘cure’ for suffering.

III. Buddhism, Classic Transhumanism, and Buddhist Transhumanism

As has already been emphasized, classic transhumanism seeks to improve or overcome the limits of the human condition through science and technology in pursuit of a posthuman future. Among its objectives is either the alleviation of suffering or, as we observe in Pearce’s classic transhumanist agenda, abolishing suffering through the use of advanced technologies. In traditional Buddhism, suffering (as dukkha) is an existential condition that cannot be overcome through technological means, but through proper spiritual practice. This is in contrast with the position of certain classic transhumanists, who defend a silicon-based transhumanism and who seek to escape suffering not through liberation, but through technological transcendence. In this paradigm, Ray Kurzweil’s mind-uploading theory portrays a future in which this could be achieved by living eternally in a blissful, disembodied, and digital realm. At first glance, we can say that both classic transhumanism and Buddhism share some common goals—to find the cause of suffering, and reduce it, eliminate it or liberate from it, and increase happiness (Latorra, 2015). However, their approaches differ. While classic transhumanism relies on reason, science, and technology, traditional Buddhism

(like its religious practitioners) relies on spiritual practices, meditation, and asceticism regarding these goals (Thompson, 2020). In addition, classic transhumanism views suffering primarily as a biological and evolutionary condition, rather than as an existential one. That is why, for Pearce, suffering does not fall under the umbrella of *dukkha*, because suffering is a burden that should/can be eliminated through biotechnological intervention. In addition, while classic transhumanism privileges the autonomous self, traditional Buddhism tries to “get rid” of the self, as it is viewed as an illusion in Buddhist teachings, which means liberation can only come once its illusory nature is acknowledged, and not by preserving or enhancing the self. This Buddhist perspective also challenges one of the classic transhumanist goals, that of mind-uploading and digital immortality, as such a goal—from a traditional Buddhist standpoint—detaches from the spiritual dimension of achieving Nirvana, short-circuiting and delaying enlightenment by perpetuating attachment, craving, and the dissatisfaction and unfulfillment of existence (*dukkha*).

However, Buddhist transhumanism can be viewed as a middle path between traditional Buddhism and classic transhumanism, closer to what are called ‘Buddhist modernists’ (Thompson, 2020). It builds its position on the idea that, since the 19th century, many Buddhists—including the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso—have embraced the compatibility of science and technology with Buddhist philosophy (Hughes, 2019; Dalai Lama, 2006). This openness has fostered dialogue in institutions such as the Stanford University School of Medicine and the Mind & Life Institute (MLI) between the 14th Dalai Lama and many scholars (Borrmann, 2023). At the same time, according to Hughes (2019), Buddhist practitioners acknowledge the importance of medicine for a longer, healthier life, and do not see such practices as incompatible with Buddhist teachings and spirituality. Thus, Buddhist transhumanism is rather a Western-secular, technologically-mediated approach to traditional Buddhist practices and principles. It combines such practices as meditation and mindfulness with scientific and technological tools in order to reduce suffering and enhance well-being. For Buddhist transhumanists such as Hughes (2019), it may also include technologies such as brain implants, genetic engineering, mood-altering drugs, and emerging neurotechnologies. In terms of happiness, and increasing morality and virtues, they advocate mixing Buddhist meditation practices with neurotechnologies in such a way as to enhance self-control, compassion, and empathy (Hughes, 2019). According to Hughes, neurotechnologies can also be embraced by Buddhists as they may serve as complementary tools that support individuals in line with the Buddha’s teachings: “neurotechnologies may be seen as temporary spiritual training wheels, helping to create a solid foundation of moral behavior, concentration, and mental clarity” (Hughes, 2019, p. 660). Nowadays, emerging technologies are starting, carefully, to be accepted by many Buddhist modernists, with the condition that these be

integrated into a broader moral, ethical, practical, and spiritual Buddhist framework.

When it comes to mind uploading, the concepts of the self and personal identity are often framed in terms of ontological dualism and patternism by many classic transhumanists. In this paradigm, Buddhist transhumanists, such as Hughes, emphasize the importance of accepting the permanence of self as an illusion—as acknowledged in the Buddhist doctrine of *anatman*. Such perspectives try to overcome the refined norms of “patternism” as advocated by Kurzweil (2005). In its classical framework, patternism supports the idea that a person’s memories, values, and psychological configuration can be transferred to an electronic medium by preserving that person’s patterns after scanning the synaptic structure of the brain (Schneider, 2008; Kurzweil, 2005). Buddhist transhumanism, by reinterpreting the Buddhist teaching of *anatman*—which involves overcoming the permanent singular, unique self—challenges the assumptions of patternism and opens up more expansive and diverse possibilities for mind-uploading. These possibilities, according to Hughes, will include not only copied versions of our minds, but also “edited, distributed, and merged minds” (Hughes, 2019, p. 659). Such a position emphasizes once more the fact that Buddhist transhumanism rests on a fluid ontological framework that challenges both secular materialism and traditional Buddhist spirituality. Thus, in Buddhist transhumanist terms, a non-essentialist understanding of the self is necessary when it comes to mind-uploading, in order to move beyond the traditional conceptions of digital consciousness. It involves understanding identity as a dynamic process marked by impermanence and interdependence—one that leads toward a hybrid, collective, technologically-mediated consciousness, rather than toward the preservation of a permanent, unchanging self in digital form, which, in traditional Buddhist terms, perpetuates dukkha.

On the other hand, Pearce’s abolitionist project does not rely on Buddhist teachings and practices, but is grounded in the principles of negative utilitarianism, which, in contrast to classical utilitarian principles, prioritizes the reduction of suffering over the promotion of happiness. This is also an approach that allows Pearce to conceptualize suffering in evolutionary and naturalistic terms, rather than in existential or spiritual ones, as traditional Buddhism does. He describes his agenda as an ethical project—one that does not rest on dark-nihilistic assumptions that view life as meaningless, but rather on an awareness of deep compassion for all beings and a commitment to minimizing or eliminating suffering through a long-term biologically-engineered program (Pearce, 2015). In this respect, while Buddhism understands suffering as dukkha, attributing it to craving and desire, Pearce (2007) argues that emerging technologies could allow us to eliminate suffering, which is nothing more than an evolutionary by-product, without having to give up our desires which are part of our psychological construct. In this

paradigm, Pearce's project supports the re-engineering of our biology—rooted in the Darwinian legacy—through biotechnological means, which, in this context, seek to redesign the neurological substrates of experience in such a way that desire escapes suffering. However, in Buddhist terms, desires and cravings are fundamentally linked to existential conditions marked by the cycles of rebirth. They are not solely linked to our current mental or psychological states. That is why, in Buddhist terms, desires and cravings are not simply the result of evolutionary heritage, but have significant ontological implications tied to our multiple existences. For Buddhists, the path to overcoming dukkha involves embracing an ascetic, spiritual, and ethical life through the practice of meditation, discipline, mindfulness, and right action, and not through biotechnological means, as supported by Pearce through the idea of a moral obligation to eliminate the biological causes of suffering. In this way, Pearce challenges the existential understanding of dukkha embraced by Buddhists as an inevitable fact. His position, grounded in biological reductionism—which seeks to engineer the well-being of humans—is in opposition to traditional Buddhism, which focuses on addressing the spiritual and existential causes of dukkha.

For Pearce, suffering is rooted in our genetic makeup. This is why, in his view, genetic engineering—rather than spiritual practice—is a feasible means to eliminate suffering and unsatisfactoriness. However, even if some Buddhists accept emerging technologies for human enhancement, for them, such technologies alone are insufficient when it comes to fully addressing or transcending dukkha. This is because, from a Buddhist perspective, even if present and future emerging technologies will be able to alleviate suffering in terms of “the suffering of suffering”, they do not address the existential dimension of dukkha, which is embedded in a chain of causal conditions such as ignorance, impermanence (*anicca*) and attachment/craving. This means that, in the Buddhist framework, the classic transhumanist approach to suffering is seen as limited, because it focuses only on the biological causes of suffering, neglecting the ontological groundings of dukkha which stand as the basis for the “suffering of change” and “the suffering of conditioning”. Thus, even if, on the surface, both classic transhumanism and some Buddhist traditions seek to eliminate suffering, their methods, approaches, and understanding of suffering differ in many aspects. First of all, this is because classic transhumanists focus on one dimension of what suffering encompasses—namely, the biological, physical and psychological aspects of it. In this respect, Pearce treats suffering as something located in the biological body. To this end, he envisions a future in which technologies—such as wireheading, designer drugs, and genetic engineering—could be used to recalibrate the hedonic treadmill, enhance intelligence, increase empathy and spiritual well-being, and eliminate the undesirable genetic traits that contribute to aging, premature death, and the various physical and psychological diseases which cause suffering. However, in Buddhism,

suffering as dukkha is the result of interdependence, impermanence, and conditioning. Moreover, the dualistic and functionalist understanding of human existence among some classic transhumanists who follow Kurzweil's (2005) silicon-based model of existence seeks escape from suffering through mind uploading into a digital realm, while in Buddhism, the path to escaping dukkha is an existential journey that aims neither to preserve the self nor to enhance or transcend the body, but rather to cultivate mastery over one's past and present existence in order to overcome Samsara and attain Nirvana.

IV. Euro-Transhumanism, Suffering, and Dukkha—A Critical Approach to Classic Transhumanism and Buddhism

In Sorgner's Euro-Transhumanism, suffering is interpreted through the lens of dukkha, a notion he uses in non-Buddhist and non-soteriological terms (Sorgner, 2024)—i.e., in a non-religious framework and through an anti-metaphysical understanding. In this paradigm, Euro-Transhumanism takes the notion of dukkha as one that describes the "basic condition in which we exist" (Sorgner, 2024, p. 26)—approached in hermeneutical and non-essentialist terms. This approach diverges from traditional Buddhist teachings and religiosity, as it reinterprets dukkha within the framework of continental philosophy, Nietzsche's legacy, and Vattimo's hermeneutics (Vattimo, 2012), in order to provide a philosophical perspective on how to interpret dukkha as a basic condition to be navigated in the pursuit of a meaningful life. Such a perspective, in Vattimo's terms, implies the need to distance oneself from metaphysical certainty and to embrace contingent and contextual perspectives of interpretation with regard to suffering. It implies a critical position with regard to searching for absolute truth, or for a permanent escape or liberation from suffering (dukkha), as certain strands of classic transhumanism and Buddhist teachings suggest. Within this framework, Euro-Transhumanism 'twists' dukkha, not by seeking its transcendence, as Buddhism proposes, but by interpreting suffering as a transformative dynamic in the process of becoming. The concept of "twist" is central to Sorgner's Euro-Transhumanist philosophy. As he asserts, the "twist" does not entail overcoming the past (Sorgner, 2022b). Overcoming represents a process that "leaves behind and separates itself categorically from the past, whereas a twist develops the past further in an inclusive manner...by spinning several strands of yarn into a thread" (Sorgner, 2022b, p. 52; p. 11). The twist implies acknowledging the past and not recycling it; reinterpreting the meanings it carries, and building new ones on its basis, while fostering multiple perspectives of interpretation. In terms of dukkha, the twist means reinterpreting it by acknowledging both the inevitability of suffering and its transformative role in the process of permanent becoming. Euro-Transhumanism reinterprets dukkha not as something to be overcome or eradicated, but as a contingent dimension of existence

that can, under specific circumstances, become a source of strength, creativity, and self-overcoming. It suggests that suffering, when acknowledged as a basic condition in which we exist, affirms life without implying metaphysical consolation—a perspective that embodies a reinterpretation of Nietzsche’s will to power perspective and *amor fati*, where the latter means finding new meanings to suffering on the basis of rare moments that are so fulfilling that they are “worth all the Dukkha” (Sorgner, 2024, p. 26). This suggests a non-foundational way of integrating suffering, rather than denying it in the process of permanent becoming. It is a perspective that reinterprets Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence by emphasizing that, once such rare fulfilling moments are lived, all the suffering becomes meaningful, as you are so fulfilled that you will want to live it again and again (Sorgner, 2024). Thus, in a weak Nietzschean paradigm, the will to power is not interpreted as a biological or physical drive, but rather as a contingent, creative, and transformative dynamic that shapes becoming. It plays an important role in guiding the transvaluation of suffering by enabling reinterpretations of resistance and pessimism, while reaffirming nihilism by opening the space for contingent meaning-making rather than grounding existence in ultimate metaphysical foundations. In this paradigm, nihilism is an interpretation that resists universal truth and paternalistic and authoritarian principles, as well as anarchism. It becomes a perspectival way of refining ourselves by creating new values that make our lives meaningful in non-foundational terms; that is, without claiming universal validity. Thus, by reaffirming nihilism, Euro-Transhumanism seeks to offer a non-foundational and non-essentialist interpretation of dukkha, understood not merely as the unsatisfactoriness of existence but reinterpreted as a contingent dynamic that shapes, transforms, and generates new idiosyncratic meanings within the continuous flow of becoming, a process that relies on the dance with the various forms of suffering. Such a perspective is in opposition to both classic transhumanism and traditional Buddhism, which often tend to preserve a universally-valid approach to suffering and dukkha. Euro-Transhumanism rejects the idea that there is a singular, objective, and fixed way to approach suffering in order to achieve a good life. The twist plays a central role in this equation. It relies on multiple and open perspectives of interpretation, which implies pluralistic, contingent, and context-oriented approaches to suffering. Such a non-foundational reinterpretation of nihilism allows for both the preservation and the reinterpretation of diverse meanings of suffering, spinning the several strands of suffering into a thread while integrating it into the broader horizon of one’s becoming (Sorgner, 2022a).

However, this does not mean that the suffering associated with birth, sickness, aging, and death do not remain a challenge in Euro-Transhumanist philosophy. By understanding dukkha as an existential contingency (without adopting Buddhist soteriology)—as reflected in the First Noble Truth of the “suffering of suffering/dukkha-dukkha”—Euro-Transhumanism does not seek the liberation

from suffering, but rather as-good-as-it-gets solutions to the various forms of suffering. It does so by turning to philosophy, art, science, and technologies to address these challenges. This is a critical position with regard to both the utopian promises of classic transhumanism, which seeks to abolish all forms of biological suffering through technological intervention, and Buddhism, which strives to liberate from dukkha and transcend the wheel of existence through spiritual transformation. For instance, regulated emerging technologies—such as gene editing, neurotechnologies, or brain–computer interfaces—are viewed within the Euro-Transhumanist framework in a pragmatic, anti-utopian, non-deterministic, and non-Buddhist manner. Rather than being seen as magical solutions ensuring humanity’s long-term potential, bringing to life the techno-Vitruvian human, promising digital immortality, or a paradise-engineered world—as proposed by some classic transhumanist long-termist visions in their striving for ultimate control or human perfectibility—they are considered practical tools aimed at improving current human well-being by reducing suffering where possible. For certain classic transhumanists, such as Peirce, the human condition is seen as an unsatisfactory state primarily due to biological limitations and the Darwinian legacy, which are understood as the direct causes of human suffering. Yet, suffering from various diseases that affect the body and one’s flourishing are central to Euro-Transhumanism. If there are means to alleviate such suffering, then it is both compassionate and ethical to apply them. In this framework, both classic transhumanism and Euro-Transhumanism acknowledge the importance of emerging biotechnologies as a means of increasing healthspan, and reducing pain and suffering. However, in Euro-Transhumanist terms, this requires cherishing both morphological and negative freedom—in the framework of a “liberal ethics of fictive autonomy” (Sorgner, 2022a, p. 6)—to ensure that individuals are free to choose how to approach and transform their suffering, while also considering the ethical implications of using technologies that may serve to cure or mitigate various forms of pain and suffering. It is about a non-foundational ethics—in terms of “as-good-as-it-gets” solutions (Sorgner, 2022a, p. 47)—with regard the potential for human enhancement and the ethical dimensions of technological intervention, whilst avoiding a slip towards a utopian scenario, or paternalistic and authoritarian norms. Classic transhumanism often embraces such tendencies, frequently promoting visions such as Kurzweil’s silicon-based model of existence, Pearce’s hyper-humanist perfectibility, or Bostrom’s long-termist ideology. In a Euro-Transhumanist paradigm, such utopian goals are highly problematic, as they risk short-circuiting pluralistic human values. For instance, Pearce’s vision of a reproductive revolution involving “designer babies” risks undermining reproductive freedom and jeopardizes individuals’ negative freedom. Abolishing suffering through genetically-preprogrammed well-being could lead to the rise of a totalitarian and homogenized world where the complexity of human life is reduced

to biochemical and biotechnological optimizations, and measured through technological enhancements. This also represents an instrumentalized view of life based on a universally-valid agenda of what a good life is and should look like. Furthermore, Bostrom's long-termist goal—which seeks to avoid existential risks for the sake of a utopian post-human future, and relies on maximizing flawed, universalized notions of the good aimed at fulfilling humanity's potential as a species—is another example that hinders present human pluralism. Mind-uploading technologies that promise a future in a digital realm amount to an unrealistic fairytale for now, one that diminishes the importance of embodiment and of our carbon-based existence, and promotes a dualistic understanding of the human for the sake of transcending the suffering of death and finitude. Through a Euro-Transhumanist naturalistic lens, human experiences, perceptions, emotions, drives, etc. are both embodied and contingent, which means that we are bodies because we are psychophysiological entities that live in this material world. This is why such classic transhumanist pursuits are regarded as dangerous: not simply because they disregard the actual challenges humans are facing today, or preserve a dualistic way of thinking, but also because they promote a technological salvation mantra whose utopian vision risks erasing many of the values that have shaped humanity, culturally, historically, and individually.

In addition, relying only on spiritual practices and ethical living to alleviate suffering, as emphasized in some traditional Buddhist teachings, is not considered a realistic option in Euro-Transhumanist terms. However, Euro-Transhumanism does not reject practices such as mindfulness and meditation. If they prove effective, as already suggested by Buddhist transhumanists, they are regarded as valuable tools for managing psychological distress or softer forms of physical pain. Nevertheless, when it comes to serious illnesses—such as cancer, for instance—science and emerging technologies are not only plausible, but vital tools for addressing suffering and prolonging life.

Furthermore, in Euro-Transhumanist terms which support a naturalistic and non-dualist understanding of humans, we are “psychophysiological” organisms, which implies that we are “permanently changing in all respects at all moments” (Sorgner, 2022b, p. 130), an aspect that reinterprets the Buddhist perspective on “the suffering of change”. While both perspectives recognize impermanence in the process of permanent becoming, Euro-Transhumanism does not deny either the self or the will, as Buddhism and Schopenhauer do. Euro-Transhumanism follows a Heraclitean–Nietzschean approach to change, one which mirrors in an anti-metaphysical way the process of continual becoming. It emphasizes an affirmative becoming that distances itself from the passive nihilism characteristic of traditional metaphysics. In this paradigm, impermanence becomes a site of open and contingent possibilities for human beings. It distances itself from metaphysical certainties and universal truths, through interpretation, context-oriented and

situational recomposition, articulating a non-foundational ethics. This makes the suffering of change a contingent dimension of becoming that may be approached through creative, artistic, and affirmative means. It is not understood as a metaphysical condition that requires the negation of the self or the elimination of all desire, as certain Buddhist teachings emphasize, by articulating detachment from craving as a path to overcoming suffering.

Schopenhauer already saw art as a way to approach suffering, but he regarded it primarily as a means to short-circuit or ultimately eliminate the will. However, the will, desires, longings, and drives are part of our psychophysiological and evolutionary architecture in the Euro-Transhumanist framework. And the suffering that accompanies the will is not interpreted as meaningless, but rather as a means for self-mastery and continuous transformation. In this paradigm, engaging in artistic, creative, and philosophical activities represents more than forms of expression, leisure, or an antidote for the will. In a weak Nietzschean paradigm, they represent the dance of the will to power in terms of creativity that affirms life. They represent dynamic, transformative practices that reshape and open the self toward further becoming. These activities also represent alternative ways to engage with the various existential challenges, to confront and better understand them, while affirming the contingent nature of the self and suffering. This perspective reveals the creative potential of the will to power—beyond good and evil—not as a drive that requires getting rid of the will or of all desires and longings, as Schopenhauer proposed, but as a force that embraces and transforms them. Thus, in a Euro-Transhumanist framework, these creative dynamics of the will to power represent contingent nodal points for existential navigation, where suffering is understood as a transformative process to be engaged with creatively.

In this paradigm, Euro-Transhumanism also takes a critical position regarding the classic transhumanist immortality dream that seeks to preserve human existence in a digital realm through mind-uploading technologies. At present, these are not considered feasible options in the Euro-Transhumanist non-foundational ethical framework, which tends to focus instead on realistic strategies for increasing the human healthspan, such as regulated biotechnology, gene editing, and related advancements (Sorgner, 2022a). In addition, Pearce's "super happiness" project that envisions a future of "drug-assisted Eden" bubbles and "molecular hedonic engineering" procedures as a means of eradicating suffering (Pearce, 2015) may, paradoxically, hinder many possibilities for human flourishing. In a Euro-Transhumanist critical paradigm, getting rid of all forms of suffering for the sake of a paradise-engineered world, or preserving human contingent existence in a silicon-based digital environment, risks removing many of the carbon-based life's contingent meanings and further becomings. At the same time, understanding suffering solely in negative terms risks devaluing many human potentialities, such as artistic creations that were frequently born out of deep suffering. Throughout

history, art has often emerged from various forms of pain and suffering, whether physical or psychological, giving birth to remarkable artworks. Artists such as Ludwig van Beethoven, who created remarkable music despite his deafness; Vincent van Gogh, who endured psychological distress; Frida Kahlo, who battled polio; Fiodor Dostoevsky, who suffered from epilepsy; and Claude Monet, continued painting despite deteriorating vision in his later years, are just a few of the remarkable examples which suggests that creative expression has often emerged in contexts marked by suffering. Euro-Transhumanism does not romanticize suffering, nor does it deny the ethical importance of alleviating unnecessary pain. Rather, within a non-foundational ethical framework, it emphasizes morphological freedom as essential for preserving human pluralism and negative freedom. Within this framework, Euro-Transhumanism does not claim that suffering is intrinsically valuable, but that a total abolition of all forms of suffering could narrow the spectrum of human existential contingency through which meaning, depth, and artistic transformation have historically been articulated. It does not affirm the preservation of suffering as such, but the preservation of interpretive, contingent, and context-sensitive meaning within the continuous process of becoming. Its critical position suggests that abolishing all forms of suffering, as the abolitionist project proposes, might risk creating a kind of scarcity of meaning in the realm of art. According to Pearce (2007; 2015), this will not be the case, as he argues that gene-edited posthumans will, in the future, possess a more enriched capacity for creativity and a deeper understanding of existence. However, suffering is not merely a biological legacy, but a contingent existential condition. Classic transhumanism's technocentric and reductionist approaches tend to treat suffering as a biological malfunction to be eradicated. In a Euro-Transhumanist paradigm, suffering is a structural yet contingent dimension of finite existence that participates alongside finitude in the process of life-affirmation. It takes a contingent dimension that, historically and culturally speaking, has shaped human existence and given rise to profound artistic expression and existential depth. Thus, the eradication of all forms of suffering may carry the risk of producing, for instance, forms of art that are automated, sterile, and ultimately devoid of existential meaning. This is because "Artworks alter us as well as the rest of the complex, and do not exist as separate entities in a specific art world" (Sorgner, 2022b, p. 132). This means that each piece of art carries within it an entire emotional and existential universe, one that reflects and intertwines with a complex web of contingent nodal points that are subjected to the process of continual becoming in both the artist and the weaver. Each encounter with an artwork reveals a plurality of emotions, desires, and existential struggles that form a contingent relational unity within the encounter. Such a unity, interwoven with the multiplicity of contingent nodal points, cannot emerge from existential flattening based on a pre-designed and pre-programmed life. All contingent nodal points are both interpretations and processes—contingent

entanglements in the process of becoming—that often emerge through suffering, which frequently makes creativity flourish because of suffering and not in its absence. Here, the “suffering of conditioning” is twisted in Euro-Transhumanist views within a fluid and weak form of *amor fati* by reinterpreting this type of suffering in non-Buddhist and non-soteriological frameworks. It becomes an affirmation of the contingency of the self and of one’s own fate—a dance repeated again and again with suffering as a transformative dynamic, from which the self is reborn stronger each time through its contingent existential wounds. It also implies acknowledging the variety of “contingent nodal points” that shape us (Sorgner, 2022b); that is, the interpretations, encounters, and interactions that leave their traces on each of us. None of us is an independent entity, nor are our actions independent; rather, we are the result of intertwining relationships that leave their mark on the continuous flow of becoming. Within this paradigm, Euro-Transhumanism criticizes classic transhumanism for its tendency to instrumentalize suffering within the human condition by trapping it in the illusion of a techno-utopian pursuit of human perfection, often fueled by aggressive forms of negative and classical utilitarianism that idealize humanity’s future potential. For instance, Bostrom’s long-termist ideology prioritizes the long-term survival of humanity, while overlooking the urgent challenges humans face today. Moreover, his total utilitarian tendencies promote a moral obligation to treat humanity’s long-term potential to flourish—alongside its survival—as an intrinsic value that must be globally maximized (Torres, 2021). Euro-Transhumanism stands against such a moral obligation for existential security aimed at safeguarding human potential as a species, as it risks devaluing current human plurality and well-being. The point is that long-termism is an ideology that might take a dangerous trajectory—one that can take the form of a perverse technocratic necropolitical schema, in which present human lives are taken for granted in favor of hypothetical future benefits for a posthuman elite. This reduces human contingent existence to narrow abstractions, numerical calculus, and discrimination, overlooking the complexity and diversity of each individual and existing generations. With a slightly different approach, Pearce’s abolitionist project focuses not only on human well-being, but also on that of non-human animals. Even though his emphasis is not on humanity’s survival—as it is in Bostrom’s case—but rather on human technological optimization, it still preserves the same maxim of redefining the human species for a paradise-engineered future. This, however, raises ethical concerns regarding negative freedom and the affirmation of human plurality.

In contrast with these positions, Euro-Transhumanism brings alternative perspectives on how one can actively refine oneself within a world shaped by dukkha, through awareness, creativity, and meaningful transformation. In this framework, twisting Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence emphasizes the context-oriented dynamic of the entire web of contingent nodal points that give meaning to suffering.

Each nodal point participates in the dance of our lived condition, forming—each time—a new “contingent relational unity” (Sorgner, 2022b) which shapes and opens our existence towards further becoming. It is not about transcending the cycle of existence, as in some Buddhist teachings, nor about a homogenized utopian well-being driven by techno-utopian dreams that feed the imperative to safeguard (post)human potential, as in certain classic transhumanist strands. Euro-Transhumanism emphasizes a contextual and non-foundational engagement with dukkha. It interprets dukkha as a pervasive feature of our contingent condition—biologically grounded yet always interpretively mediated. However, in Euro-Transhumanism, suffering is not a problem to be solved by simply embracing or letting it go, but a way of affirming life by learning to navigate between these tensions in the process of continuous becoming. This perspective integrates eternal recurrence in an anti-metaphysical way, while reinterpreting the notion of dukkha in a hermeneutical and non-Buddhist manner. Suffering is neither an ontological necessity nor merely a reducible evolutionary mechanism to be eradicated. Also, it is neither glorified and romanticized, nor eliminated in Euro-Transhumanism. Rather, it is seen as part of contingent human existence, that can be approached and negotiated through artistic, cultural, and philosophical engagement, as well as through the scientific and technological means that the present offers, in order to affirm life in a meaningful way in the process of becoming.

V. Conclusion

Euro-Transhumanism offers an open perspective on the interpretation of suffering that, in this article, is examined through the notion of dukkha—interpreted as a basic condition in which humans exist that shapes the process of permanent becoming—within a hermeneutical, anti-metaphysical, and non-soteriological framework. Rather than trying to escape or transcend suffering, Sorgner’s Euro-Transhumanism seeks to offer a perspectival, contingent, and context-oriented engagement with it. In this paradigm, suffering is understood not as a problem to be definitively solved, but as a condition to be navigated contextually. This perspective implies a need to engage ethically with the challenges humanity faces today concerning emerging technologies and their role in human life. Euro-Transhumanism articulates an idiosyncratic and perspectival understanding of co-existing and co-evolving with suffering, framed in non-foundational and anti-utopian terms. In this paradigm, Euro-Transhumanism adopts a critical position toward both classic transhumanism and Buddhism, which seek either to eliminate suffering or to achieve liberation from dukkha.

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The author used AI tools for language editing and stylistic refinement for the preparation of this chapter. All ideas, conceptual content, arguments, and interpretations are the author's own.

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