

Nietzsche's Post-Human Imperative:

On the “All-too-Human” Dream of Transhumanism

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To the extent that we are always ahead of ourselves, always beyond ourselves, the human being is almost inherently metaphysical. And when Nietzsche characterizes the human being as the not-as-yet-determined, the unfinished, the all-too-vague animal—“Er ist das *noch nicht festgestellte Thier*” (KSA 11, 25 [428], 125)—he plays on this being ahead of ourselves, being beyond ourselves quality as our specific quality. We can call this adaptability, many call it intelligence, and it is also what makes us the religious animal par excellence: the animal that, unlike other animals, not only has beliefs but can hang on to them blindly and until its dying day, no less. It is also what we could call our human *exceptionalism*: our conviction that we are other, higher, better than other animals, a belief that the ancient Greeks, as Nietzsche also noted, were able to advance to the insight that allowed them a kind of moral superiority to the gods. More than the Judaeo-Christian ideal of creation in the image of the divine but, and much rather in some inchoate and above all invisible fashion (key elements of the metaphysical realm) ‘better’ than the gods, the human being was entitled to sit in judgment of his gods, denouncing their petty vanities and the cupidity that tended to turn out so badly for the human. And all peoples rate their gods in one way or another—our god is higher, your divinities are lower still: indeed your divinities are false gods, empty fantasies, mere and only idols. Thus the human being, as Nietzsche also argued, invented truth and used it to prop up the furniture of the beyond, contra the immediate, sensible, real, all and always to his own advantage, and for at least as long as he could hold what he thus called the truth as truth.

And as human beings, we also have our fads. Once upon a time there was the belief in the Jewish god, the god of pride of the Old Testament, who required that his people hold to him above all other gods, a people to be singularized by any manner of suffering and exile as proof of his glory and his inscrutability. Then there was the Christian god who, as Nietzsche writes, presented perhaps the sorriest spectacle of all the gods, needing not honor or devotion or glorification like any god whether of the Old Testament or like the pharaohs and animal-headed gods of Egypt or the gods and giants of Greece, but a god of love, a god desperate for love and thus and like anyone who needs love, a god of destitution, abjection, pity.

Today we have science but even more than that we have our belief in science which has long since as Nietzsche also argued replaced the ascetic ideal that was the divine compact that drove the old and new testaments. Now we ourselves, as “machinists and bridge builders of the future” (BGE §14), expect to fabricate ourselves as gods, or just about. And with all the practice we have in the invisible, in the virtual appearances that play on our computer and tablet screens and cell-phone displays, we see ourselves as no longer merely the human beings we just happen to be but “as” our machines, our internet radios, our iPads, our cell-phones. On Facebook, on Twitter, texting our location automatically, triangulating our lives with and above all into the web, we are already transhuman and we imagine that with an implant, be it of a chip, a lens, a titanium joint, or even with new curved blades as legs,¹ or with new ears, or some such thing there will be no limit at all to what we can be and, given the vistas of cyberspace, or at least given the cartographical conceits of a range of gaming domains (seemingly going back no further

¹ See Michael Sokolove’s cover article “The Fast Life of Oscar Pistorius” in the *Sunday Times Magazine*, January 29, 2012.

than Robert E. Howard or maybe J.R. Tolkein),² it is argued that there will be no limits to where we can travel or set up shop, and ‘love’ and ‘live.’ Thus tethered to a keyboard, we tell ourselves that we are limitless: scholars tell one another and any popular ear inclined to listen that human beings are (already) transhuman, (already) humanity 2.0.³ Welcome to the online, connected, networked, virtual, digital realm. Welcome to your finger on a keyboard, tapping a screen or traced in the air. And we might wonder about the relationship between *Minority Report*’s air tracing gestures and the voice commands favored on *Star Trek*, yet some already murmur that with Siri, the “new” iPhone already—there’s that ‘already’ word again—does this.

In his essay “Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism,”⁴ Stefan Sorgner challenges those who seek to keep a distance between the transhumanist movement and any connection with Nietzsche’s thought. For Sorgner the danger that is anticipated here is an already foregone conclusion. And as he muses, had Nietzsche known of transhumanism, he would have been, because he could only have been, sympathetic with the ideal. The only dissonance is a sheerly mechanical one, rather to the extent that transhumanism was once named via cybernetics, and hence associated with Donna Haraway’s ‘cyborgs,’ but this dissonance seems to vanish with Ray Kurzweil’s projection of the ‘technological singularity,’ as an automatic *human machine mind-meld*, a becoming-machine. More exigent writers will note that Kurzweil himself simply takes over or “borrows” the language and the science fantasy

² I am well aware that enthusiasts will tell me that I am wrong and that their maps only “look” like they have such an inspiration.

³ This is the name of at least one essay, a documentary film project, a short and formulaic science fiction novel, and a scholarly study. Thus, more critically, see Daniel Kennelly, “Humanity 2.0 The Singularity and Science Fiction,” *The American Interest* (July/August 2007) as well, less critically, Sarah Chan, “Humanity 2.0? Enhancement, Evolution and the Possible Futures of Humanity” *EMBO Reports*, 9 (2008): S70-S74 and not uncritically but with just enough ambiguity to encourage the powers that be, see Steven Fuller’s *Humanity 2.0: What it Means to be Human Past, Present and Future* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁴ Stefan Sorgner, “Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism,” in: *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, Vol. 20 / Issue 1 (March 2009): 29-42. Cited here from <http://jetpress.org/v20/sorgner.htm>. Cited in the notes to follow as Sorgner 2009.

assumptions of the San Diego computer scientist and science fiction writer, Vernor Vinge.⁵ Rather more gingerly than Kurzweil (and this is true in almost every respect), Vinge contextualizes the language of what he called “the technological singularity” as a techno-theoretical trump card, explained by the cyberneticist Vinge with reference to John von Neumann (where it should be noted that the reference to von Neumann exemplifies a fairly ecstatic conventionality that is a staple in the science fiction world, as Vinge celebrates von Neumann in his fiction as a “Dawn Age genius.”)⁶

The reference to a new dawn is significant and it should be noted that founding fathers, this is what I meant by calling this a sci-fi staple, from Ray Bradbury to Clark and Asimov (and it doesn’t get more staple than that), are permitted any number of limitations because one needs them, just like a real father, for legitimacy’s sake. Here the abstract of Vinge’s 1993 lecture on the technological singularity is worth citing and it has a certain punchy quality, as abstracts go:

Within thirty years, we will have the technological means to create superhuman intelligence. Shortly after, the human era will be ended.⁷

Vinge cites Stanisław Ulam as reporting von Neumann in conversation on

the ever accelerating progress of technology and changes in the mode of human life, which gives the appearance of approaching some essential singularity in the history of the race beyond which human affairs, as we know them, could not continue.⁸

⁵ Vernor Vinge, “The Coming Technological Singularity: How to Survive in the Post-Human Era,” lecture presented to the *VISION-21 Symposium*, NASA Lewis Research Center and the Ohio Aerospace Institute, Mar. 30-31, 1993. See too, *Whole Earth Review*, Winter 1993. The text of Vinge’s talk is accessible online at the following address: <http://www.aleph.se/Trans/Global/Singularity/sing.html>.

⁶ Vinge, *A Deepness in the Sky* (New York: Tor, 1999), p. 571.

⁷ Vinge, “The Coming Technological Singularity.”

⁸ Vinge, “The Coming Technological Singularity.” Ulam’s retrospective review of von Neumann’s mathematical contributions cites von Neumann on the imminent transience of our human interest in science, here using the term singularity to characterize the prospect of life-altering change. See Stanisław Ulam, “John von Neumann, 1903-1957,” *American Mathematic Society*, Vol. 64, 3/2/654 (MAY, 1958): 1-49, here p. 5.

As Vinge points out in a parentheses drawn from Günther Stent, von Neumann himself

even uses the term singularity, though it appears he is thinking of normal progress, not the creation of superhuman intellect. (For me, the superhumanity is the essence of the Singularity. Without that we would get a glut of technical riches, never properly absorbed ...⁹

In the context of the technological singularity, including, as if for good measure, a reference to superhumanity, Vinge's contextualization requires—as all in-comments require—a context. There are a lot of such references on the theme of the human-superhuman continuum and I would recommend unpacking them with the help of Günther Anders or Peter Sloterdijk or even, to be more esoteric, Jean Baudrillard or Paul Virilio, on one side of the tale, and of any number of more or less triumphalist futurists on the other, I like to think of Vannevar Bush and Hermann Kahn but it is more conventional to think of Marshall McLuhan (it was his 'year' last year) or Alvin Toffler and Vinge himself cites Erik Drexler and the seemingly out of touch nuclear power enthusiast (damn the radiation and all the other details), Freeman Dyson, in addition to Marvin Minsky and others.¹⁰

Although it is my point in what follows that Nietzsche offers us a good deal of help, philosophically it is hard to come to terms with triumphalist futurists without going all Frankfurt school on them and the rhetoric of Vinge's abstract illustrates why. First you posit, as Vinge does, the inevitable and "imminent creation by technology of entities with greater than human

⁹ Ibid. Vinge's reference here is to Gunther S. Stent, *The Coming of the Golden Age: A View of the End of Progress* (New York: The Natural History Press, 1969).

¹⁰ Vinge lists among others: K. Eric Drexler, *Engines of Creation*, (New York: Anchor Press, 1986); Freeman Dyson, *Infinite in All Directions* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), Marvin Minsky, *Society of Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985); Hans Moravec, *Mind Children* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), and so on.

intelligence.”¹¹ Having said that this is done by some technology, Vinge, a computer scientist is vague here, you then go on to talk about the consequences. This is a sales pitch: having invented “superhuman intelligence” (never mind the details) the pitch continue with the declaration that “the human era will be ended”¹² and thus one must plan accordingly. The rest is science fiction and it is a lot of fun.

Here what interests me is the rhetorical gambit and it depends on authority for its functioning. Paul Feyerabend has recalled the mechanism of such authoritative, which is what I mean by trump-card type, references. Referring to the debates of the 1930s, Feyerabend explained that for decades, during

meetings up to the Fifties the discussion usually went like this. First the defenders of the second interpretation presented their arguments. Then the opponents raised objections. The objections were occasionally quite formidable and could not be easily answered. Then somebody said “but von Neumann has shown ...” and with that the opposition was silenced.¹³

Continuing in this spirit, one might well suppose that Stefan Sorgner’s own arguments would support a claim for Nietzsche’s sympathies for or affinities with cybernetics or cyborgs as indeed for the technological singularity to come, now articulated as simply another way of parsing eternal recurrence.

But Sorgner does not do this and he also opts to defer engaging with the specific reasons articulated by other transhumanists who vigorously attempt to maintain a distance from Nietzsche. Instead (and it should be noted that this is characteristic of a certain kind of philosophical formation), Sorgner proceeds to tell us what Nietzsche would have “liked.” Thus

¹¹ Vinge, “The Coming Technological Singularity.”

¹² Vinge, “The Coming Technological Singularity.”

¹³ Paul Feyerabend, *Science in a Free Society* (London: Verso, 1978), p. 90.

we are informed that Nietzsche *would have been* an advocate of transhumanism. If I myself do not find this claim likely, this does not mean that I do not understand Sorgner's reasons for making such a claim. And I agree that whatever Nietzsche was, he was no traditional humanist, not at least of the garden-variety sort (unless we take that garden, as some do, to have been an Epicurean garden, just as Nietzsche heard this garden reference, all meteorological expression/comprehension,¹⁴ including allusions to Lucretius¹⁵ as well as Diogenes Laertius and not less to what Nietzsche apotheosizes as "personality," which last term turns out to matter a great deal for today's transhumanism—avatars and bots anyone?), as his thinking on the human, all-too-human includes all the complexities that were masks for Descartes. And in the spirit of internet cloaking devices,¹⁶ we should add that if Nietzsche appreciated one thing about Descartes, it was the mask. "*Everything profound loves a mask.*" (BGE §40)

Sorgner's work is not masked and one of the great strengths of Sorgner's work is this very straightforward quality. Hence and from the start, Sorgner reminds us that

When I first became familiar with the transhumanist movement, I immediately thought that there were many fundamental similarities between transhumanism and Nietzsche's philosophy, especially concerning the concept of the posthuman and that of Nietzsche's overhuman.¹⁷

¹⁴ See Howard Caygill's luminous essay: "Under the Epicurean Skies," *Angelaki*, 11/3 (2006): 107-115 which Caygill himself situates via Usener but especially with reference to A.-J. Festugière, *Epicure et ses dieux* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1946) as well as to be sure the indispensable Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

¹⁵ A useful discussion for those who favor, as most Anglophone readers do, Foucault, Agamben, Badiou, etc., is Jonathan Goldberg's, "Turning toward the World: Lucretius, in Theory," chapter two of his *The Seeds of Things: Theorizing Sexuality and Materiality in Renaissance Representations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), pp. 31-63.

¹⁶ Anonymity or what today's lingo calls net-privacy which these days turns out to be less about surfing porn sites than it is about the venality of Microsoft and Sony and Apple who wish to be sure as they already know everything you look at, at being able to charge you for it, thus getting their cut from anything you look at, download, or share online, each and every time you look at it, download, share it.

¹⁷ Sorgner 2009, p. 29.

But, as Sorgner reflects, apparently with some surprise: a good many transhumanists seem anxious to refuse this coordination. At the same time, Jürgen Habermas, opposing the transhumanist movement concurs with Sorgner's reading, in an inverse direction,¹⁸ such that Habermas refuses in his own account what Sorgner embraces in his. Now, it seems to me, that one can hardly be surprised at this, for Habermas had long opposed Nietzsche in several other respects.¹⁹ Thus, and this has changed the landscape and indeed the intrinsically *critical* force of critical theory, Habermas differs from the perspective of either an Adorno or a Horkheimer or even a Marcuse, all of whom had more specifically *critical* tolerance for Nietzsche's own brand of critical thinking. It should, but it does not, go without saying that what Anglo-American philosophers (analytic, broadly conceived, that is: mainstream philosophy) call "critical thinking" (meaning thinking that takes an avowedly pro-science perspective) has nothing in common with either Nietzsche or classical critical theory though it does have some elements in common with Habermas.

Sorgner seeks to coordinate Nietzsche and transhumanism point for point, in part by citing Nick Boström's contention that just as transhumanists tend to "view human nature as a work-in-progress,"²⁰ Nietzsche similarly adheres to "a dynamic will-to-power metaphysics

¹⁸ Sorgner's own reference here is to Habermas, *Die Zukunft der menschlichen Natur. Auf dem Weg zu einer liberalen Eugenik?* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), p. 43.

¹⁹ For Habermas's anxiety concerning the danger of Nietzsche's thinking, alternately characterized as "infectious" or contagious, see the contributions (including a translation of Habermas's own 1968 essay on Nietzsche's epistemology), to Babich, ed., *Nietzsche, Habermas, and Critical Theory* (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 2004).

²⁰ Sorgner cites Nicklas Boström, "Transhumanist Values," in: *Review of Contemporary Philosophy*, 4: (2005), here p. 1. Boström teaches philosophy at Oxford University and is the Director of the Future of Humanity Institute. He is also editor with Julian Savulescu of a book on *Human Enhancement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and takes the notion of the "post-human" condition about as literally as one might wish. For one overview of transhumanism as a concept see Nicholas Agar, "Whereto Transhumanism? The Literature Reaches a Critical Mass," *Hastings Center Report*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (May-June 2007): 12-17 as well as Boström, "Human Genetic Enhancements: A Transhumanist Perspective," *Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2003): 493-506. Note that discussion continues to be heavily influenced by N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (Chicago:

which applies to human and all other beings, and which implies that all things are permanently undergoing some change.”²¹ So far, so good, one might say. Yet the argumentative parallel in its further projection turns out to cause trouble for Sorgner. Hence and beyond what he calls “ontological dynamics,”²² Sorgner locates additional parallels on the level of values, the same level that is important for Boström as for his own part, Boström argues for a normative appreciation of the transhuman. For Boström, this is related to the demarcation of risk analysis that appeals to the speculative projections critical for research of this kind quite independently of anything so trivially ontic as actual research about actual options. Too empirical, one imagines and this, so it may be argued, is the nature of futurology. In his own discussion, Sorgner begins, rightly I believe, by emphasizing both Nietzsche’s critique of religion and morality in addition to underscoring Nietzsche’s regard for science and scientific thinking.

As Sorgner argues, Nietzsche can be aligned with those who favor what transhumanists call “human enhancements” to the extent that “human beings strive for power” and, so Sorgner continues to make what turns out to be his crucial argumentative point: “If you will power, then it is in your interest to enhance yourself.”²³ For Sorgner, this point can be taken as supporting the case that Nietzsche could well have been said to

have been in favour 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 favour of enhancement, and the bringing about of the overhuman.²⁴

University of Chicago Press, 1999) as well as and in addition to Turkle’s early work, Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

²¹ Sorgner, 2009, p. 30.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²³ Sorgner, 2009, p. 33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Thus we may reconstruct Sorgner's (and not only Sorgner's) chained conventionality here: education = evolution = genetic engineering, noting to be sure that both education and genetic evolution are here regarded as kinds of proactive evolution. Hence and just as Boström argues that we should seek to broaden ourselves, Sorgner similarly seeks to argue that this same broadening corresponds to just what Nietzsche meant by self-overcoming. For Sorgner,

Higher humans wish to permanently overcome themselves, to become stronger in the various aspects which can get developed in a human being, so that finally the overhuman can come into existence. In transhumanist thought, Nietzsche's overhuman is being referred to as "posthuman."²⁵

Patently, Sorgner distinguishes Nietzsche's post-human from other transhumanist definitions of the posthuman in order to demonstrate that Nietzsche's *Übermensch* or overhuman is the posthuman.²⁶ In every case, so Sorgner contends, Nietzsche would have been in favor of enhancement and Sorgner thinks it plausible to suppose that (and at this would be at the very least) Nietzsche believed in a certain transhumanist possibility corresponding in turn to his teaching of the overhuman.

Sorgner goes further in this regard by noting that where the transhumanists fail to provide a basis for their teaching of the transhuman, Nietzsche does provide such a basis, with the consequence that on Sorgner's reading just this fundament explains the "relevance of the overhuman for his philosophy. The overhuman may even be the ultimate foundation for his

²⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

²⁶ I hardly oppose the metonymic rather than literalist rendering of the language of posthumanism and I myself use this terminology in a related context and with reference to both Umberto Eco in Babich, "Nietzsche and the Condition of Post-Modern Thought: Post-Nietzschean Post-Modernism" in: Clayton Koelb, ed., *Nietzsche as Postmodernist: Essays Pro and Contra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 249-266 but also and directly to render the nuances of the concept of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* in *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science: Reflecting Science on the Ground of Art and Life* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 12ff.

worldview.”²⁷ This foundational and systematic advantage permits Sorgner to offer the coordinate argument that to the extent that the “overhuman represents the meaning of the earth,” it can only be “in the interest of higher humans to permanently overcome themselves.”²⁸ Key for Sorgner is the focus *not* on the afterlife, which Sorgner here conceives in a fairly traditionally enlightened parallel or coordination with a focus on science rather than and by contrast with traditional religion, but on meaning instead.

And yet, as we have noted, Sorgner chooses not to take his point of departure by inquiring into the reasons Boström and Habermas in addition to others including, albeit for different reasons, the musically and creatively concerned Jaron Lanier²⁹ — all of whom do tend to seek to keep Nietzsche at a distance. Indeed: many in the current context of cybernetics/cyborg lifestyle exclude any and all references to Nietzsche, not least perhaps because such references inevitably involve a number of historical and historicist issues. These are observations on his opponents not eternal truths and one might think that Sorgner would first offer at least a preliminary reflection, if not on Boström (whom he does consider) or Jaron Lanier (whom Sorgner does not consider, just as Sorgner also excludes reflection on Sloterdijk and Anders, both of whom I already mentioned and to whom I return below) then perhaps, at the very least, on the reasons Habermas has for finding it necessary to argue contra the transhumanist movement and indeed regarding Habermas’s reasons for assimilating Nietzsche to the same movement.

²⁷ Sorgner, 2009, p. 39.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁹ See Jaron Lanier’s *You Are Not A Gadget: A Manifesto* (New York: Knopf, 2010). It is relevant to the present context that in response to an email inquiry I sent regarding the argument I seek to develop here, Lanier’s first response was the exclamation, “Yikes, Nietzsche studies!” And “Yikes” is the sort of comment that speaks for itself. Elegantly so.

I am not here advocating the Habermasian side per se. But I am suggesting that it is essential to advert to Habermas's constellation of arguments here as these are also specific to a set of concerns that had already in another more controversial and related context pitted Habermas contra Sloterdijk's infamous Elmau lecture, *Rules for the Human Zoo*.³⁰ Here the obvious merits attention, and not just because what one takes to be "obvious" is often less well known than one supposes. For Habermas's opposition to Nietzsche and a range of other thinkers in a broad swath tends to include Martin Heidegger but also Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jacques Derrida, and latterly Sloterdijk, and if Sorgner is not careful here, Sorgner himself (not that this is not a great set of companions in thought).

For his own part, Sloterdijk³¹ seems concordant with Sorgner, to the extent that Sloterdijk recommends that we read otherwise esoteric cybernetic theorists like Gotthard Günther, notably his 1963 book, *The Consciousness of Machines: A Metaphysics of Cybernetics*.³² Günther himself, a German-American systems thinker,³³ echoes an audaciously technological optimism

³⁰ See Sloterdijk, *Regeln für den Menschenpark. Ein Antwortschreiben zu Heideggers Brief über den Humanismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999) but see too his interview with Erik Alliez, "Living Hot, Thinking Coldly: An Interview with Peter Sloterdijk," *Cultural Politics*, Vol. 3, Iss. 3 (2007): 307-326.

³¹ See for a discussion of Sloterdijk related to the points I make here, Babich, "Sloterdijk's Cynicism: Diogenes in the Marketplace" in Stuart Elden, ed., *Sloterdijk Now* (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 17-36; 186-189.

³² In Alliez, "Living Hot, Thinking Coldly," p. 319. Note that and inasmuch as Günther was employed by several US government agencies, Günther's *Das Bewusstsein der Maschinen* (Krefeld-Baden Baden: Agis Verlag, 1957) is at least accessible in part in English, e.g.—and note the science fiction locus—"Can Mechanical Consciousness Exist," *Startling Stories*, Vol. 29, No.1 (1953): 110-116). Contemporary scholars may find this reference of interest more because of a hoped for resonance, say with Simondon rather than anything else or else owing to an interest in Ray Kurzweil's mystical vision of technology in his *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (Hassocks: Penguin, 2006). A product in a consummate fashion of the last century, born in the same year's but dying in the Orwellian year of 1984, Günther, an enthusiastically pro-American German could not have been less Orwellian is worth our attention in any case as a useful guide to what might have been hoped for as a result of possible logics in the wake of Gödel's challenge to the same and Gödel was interested in Günther's *Idee und Grundriss einer nicht-Aristotelischen Logik* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1959). But see too Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *The Mechanization of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

³³ Thus it is worth noting that Sloterdijk also discusses thinking on the philosophy of technology in the today more esoteric than not philosophic writers on technology, such as Rathaues, Freyer, Turel, Jünger, Dessauer, etc., in the latter pages of his *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. Michael Eldred (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

which we may recognize as sympathetic to Sorgner's transhumanism. As Sloterdijk explains it, we find in Günther's work

the concept of a "formless matter" [that] embodies ... all that's been thought between Hegel and Turing on the relation of "things" to "mind." It tests out a trivalent—or *multivalent*—logic that's so potent it could rid us of the impotent, brutal binarism of the mind/thing, subject/object, idea/matter type...³⁴

I should add that it matters here that Sloterdijk also recommends the cybernetician, in today's terms, the *theoretical neuroscientist*, Warren McCulloch, who was "junior," as Sloterdijk reminds us, helping us keep our time consciousness here, to Norbert Wiener.³⁵ Indeed, there is nothing like cybernetics and systems theory and its allure has animated the military industrial world, especially but not only in the United States.

Sorgner could do worse than to turn to Sloterdijk's *Critique of Cynical Reason*, especially the bits at the end, where Sloterdijk is able to argue that futurists like Toffler and McLuhan

³⁴ Sloterdijk with Alliez, "Living Hot, Thinking Coldly," p. 318.

³⁵ McCulloch is the author of *Embodiments of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965). See for an astonishing reading idealizing cybernetics, here qua proto-cognitive science, and psychoanalysis, including a passing swipe at psychiatry (the latter as much for its circularity as its cupidity), McCulloch's *The Past of a Delusion* (Chicago: Chicago Literary Club, 1953). McCulloch trained as a physician and studied psychoanalysis with Ferenczi, challenges Freud's unconscious in economic terms, rather as Adolf Grünbaum has sought to do in related ventures in the Pittsburgh tradition of the philosophy of science. Where McCulloch supposed that one needed to integrate new understandings into the account of the mind, suggesting that one "contrast Freud's delusion with the sad humility of Sherrington, who though he knows more physiology of brains than any other Englishman, admitted that for him in this world, Mind goes more ghostly than a ghost." (21-22), his real objection turned upon the foundation of what he called Freud's delusion (and thus the title of McCulloch's essay), i.e., psychoanalysis: "One of the cornerstones of Freud's delusions is that we forget no single jot or tittle of what at any time has happened to us. By calculations that began naïvely with the senior Oliver Wendell Holmes and are today best handled by the physicist von Förster, man's head would have to be about the size of a small elephant to hold that much. His body could not eat enough to energize its mere retention even if we suppose a single molecule of structuring protein would serve as trace. Actually the mean half-life of a trace in human memory, and of a molecule of protein, is only half a day. Some few per cent of engrams do survive, presumably because we recreate the traces in our heads, but that is all fate leaves us of our youth. Where written words remain to check our senile recollections they often prove us wrong. We rewrite history, inventing the past so it conforms to present needs. We forget, as our machines forget, because entropic processes incessantly corrupt retention and transmission of all records and all signals. Partly because all men, when pushed, fill in the gaps of memory, partly because hysterics and neurotics generally are most suggestible, Freud's so-called findings of repressed unconscious stuff rest on confabulation, perhaps his patients; but where the free associations and the dreams are both his own, there cannot be a question but that Freud did the confabulating." (23)

(again, not unlike Kurzweil as noted above),³⁶ are for their own futuristic part surprisingly dependent upon an earlier generation of thinkers, not so much cold war but pre-World War (II & I) thinkers, like Friedrich Dessauer, but also Walter Rathaus, and Adrien Turel in a decidedly uncanny context that was the crucible for the particular fascism that grew out of the Weimar Republic on Sloterdijk's account.

If we add these bits of context to the transhumanist debate, Habermas and his opposition to Nietzsche comes into rather better focus.

Hence it is not too surprising that some will find it hard not to think of Kurzweil's (or should one not say, at least to respect the interest of copyright, Vinge's?) "technological singularity" or what I above have already opted to name, via Star Trek, the machine-human mind-meld, when Sloterdijk reflects upon his *Rules for the Human Zoo* noting that

its strong epistemological linkage between concepts like 'Dionysian materialism' and 'vitalism, a linkage made even more interesting by the fact that the *life sciences* and *life technics* have just passed into a new phase of their development.³⁷

Beyond the debate internal to the politics of German public intellectuals, the theme for Sloterdijk is *anthropotechnics*: the technique of the manufacture of humanity, and it is not a German but a global concern:

Nietzsche and Plato have invited themselves to the 'symposium' to comment on the ideas of Heidegger, to put forward their opinions on the drama played out in the clearing. The title of this drama? Anthropotechnics or: How human beings produce themselves. And suddenly everyone wants to be invited, everyone — dramatically — wants to be part of the debate, to take part in it.³⁸

³⁶ Vinge, "The Coming Technological Singularity.

³⁷ Sloterdijk with Alliez, "Living Hot, Thinking Coldly," p. 318.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

Sloterdijk's point is increasingly relevant and the message of Kurzweil's vision of the 'technological singularity' as it has been embraced by (at least some elements of) popular culture, when it is not the message of the genome project or stem cells, is indeed anthropotechnics, which is all about not becoming the one you are but, and to be sure becoming the one you wish you were, the one you 'should have' been all along.

Call this the Harry Potter effect, or everyone is a boy wizard, quidditch player, best in sports, all secret greatness and unfair discrimination, at least, in the germ, at least until after the singularity. Just as we have been transhuman all the time that we have, in Bruno Latour's words "never been modern,"³⁹ it can and has repeatedly been claimed that everything will be perfect after the revolution. For Marx, this was the revolution he famously failed to locate rightly, not in his industrial England or even in his Germany but and however disastrously and unsustainably where it did change the world in Russia and (still ongoing) in a China that is today increasingly indistinguishable from a capitalist regime, just ask the international financier Maurice Strong, or for the same answer from a different source, ask Žižek. Apart from Marx, and closer to home, the "revolution" that was promised to change everything, at least when I was eleven going on twelve, was a socio-cultural, leftist revolution, that was the revolution of the 1968 generation as it played itself into nothing but the idols of the market, lots of music, drugs, distractions of sex and the need to announce one's erotic orientation to the world. So we ask, which revolution? The technological one, of course. And who announces this but those who market the same? The technological singularity is suspiciously not unlike a Coke commercial. *We are the world.*

Technology, qua transhumanist conventionality, has an ever growing appeal, more than the vision of the robotics of the Asimovian past, and this may be, perhaps, traced to certain

³⁹ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

persistent limitations in cognate fields. Practically minded as I am, I like to suppose that this may be because the biological business of genetic engineering, retro fitting genes, and such like, has not been going as well as anticipated, perhaps owing to the pesky detail that genes work badly on the model of add-a-gene-and-stir varieties of genetic engineering but also that cloning adult organisms seems to produce young organisms that senesce and die markedly faster than young organisms usually do, be they sheep or mice or Korean puppies for the clone-your-Shi-Tzu market (with all the future woe this betides for the ethically catastrophic dog cloning commercial enterprise, speaking not of whether one should but of the consequences for those who do, quite apart from the dozens and dozens of dogs killed to ‘manufacture’ this one quasi-identical dog—but what is identity? the philosophers ask). Hence with all the troubles facing hard science, soft science, the science of clouds and apps that is the stuff of the coming technological rapture, vague as it is, may promise more success. Can’t get Apple and IBM to play right? Make a virtual machine, dual boot it (at least for the minority still capable of doing that these days). Apple and IBM still won’t play right but you won’t know it.⁴⁰ Or maybe, owing to our own contouring of our own consciousness to the limits and constraints of the digital interface, be it that of email or of gaming or of the increasingly ubiquitous social networking (Facebook now appeals to the young, *and* the old *and* everyone in between, despite the social horror that it is for teens to ‘friend’ their parents), we increasingly find the flatness of computer enhanced experience exactly as charming as its purveyors claim.

⁴⁰ And Linux operating systems are not the answer because Word, which is arguably *the* touchstone (no one can handle WordPerfect, which has given up and become a Word impersonator as a consequence) is not the same as Open Office. In fact, Word on a Mac and Word on a PC (I bristle at this because what are Macs if they are PCs, Toasters? Jetpacks?) does not give one identical results, although you need to look at the print results to note the difference (so make a PDF and minimize it, it’ll still be there, but coherent unto the file you crafted without the changes introduced by the new platform: WTSIWTG). So let’s all go blame Microsoft but the problem is that hardware makes a difference. Your screen makes a difference, your computer and software settings make a difference (whether known to you or not) and now Google and Facebook and other bubble protocols to go with your television programming also makes a difference.

Here we note the very specific (and very popularly Nietzschean) “faith” in science and especially industrial, corporate, capitalist technology that has, if we read Sloterdijk aright, been with us since the interregnum between the two wars. But this is again and also to say that such a vision is fascist through and through. All this gives us is another reason to prepare for the coming singularity. And as with other raptures, one does not expect to have a choice. And one thinks this no matter how underwhelming the experience turns out to be in fact.

Like Conrad,⁴¹ the object of girl-fan affection in a bygone musical, we “love” our iPhones—*O yes we do*. Here what matters is not affect as much as brand loyalty—*O Conrad, we’ll be true*. Even with all its limitations, we are happy to say: *O iPhone, we love you*.⁴²

Along with the idealized expectation of technological rapture goes a vision of technological oversimplification that is not quite a result of our being closer and closer to a future we once imagined. In other words, it is significant that talk of 2045 was once upon a time talk of unimaginably distant era, as was talk of 2012. Or 1998—which was indeed and to be sure, and this matters immensely, the projected future for the 1968 American television series *Lost in Space*.

To see this it is worth thinking a bit about Aubrey de Grey, a software developer or programmer who, having learnt sufficient biology for the purpose,⁴³ has been arguing that we can resist aging if we avoid its causes, to wit the oxidation of cells and the build-up of waste-

⁴¹ I owe this reference to Tracy B. Strong who persisted in singing this for no apparent reason day and night while I was writing this essay. And repetition, any repetition affords the same propaganda effect as a commercial.

⁴² There is a lot published on this, but see Jonathan Franzen’s op-ed piece, “Liking Is for Cowards. Go for What Hurts,” *New York Times*, May 28, 2011.

⁴³ Although de Grey does not have a post at Cambridge University and there was a certain understated scandal associated with the implication that he did have one, he does hold a doctorate from Cambridge for his *The Mitochondrial Free Radical Theory of Aging* (Austin: Landes Publishing, 1999). See also Denham Harman, “Aging: A Theory Based on Free Radical and Radiation Chemistry,” *Journal of Gerontology*, 11 (3) (1956): 298-300.

products in those same cells. Having determined that it is the mitochondria that develop problems or ‘damage’ by getting gunked-up (or losing ‘efficiency’), de Grey proposes that we send in little nanobots to clean them out (or indeed, as de Grey also imagines, as so many mechanical replacements). What de Grey has in mind is close to the miniaturized spaceships of *Fantastic Voyage*,⁴⁴ the 1966 film of Raquel Welch’s travels on a microscopic level, which film title just happens to accord with one of Kurzweil’s first books for his ventures into technological rapture.

De Grey not only runs an anti-aging foundation (and one supposes that he has all manner of highly motivated and well-heeled investors backing him) but also has an appointment on the faculty of Kurzweil’s Singularity University), straddling as he does both sides of the biotech and computer tech industry.⁴⁵ For it turns out that it is less about biology than technology and marketing, precisely in the way we relate to technology as those who have, as fully vested heirs of a cargo cult, grown up with devices we know how to use from electric appliances, toilets (to be Illichian here),⁴⁶ televisions and computers, cell-phones and coffee-makers, automobiles and airplane travel, but could not ourselves fabricate if our lives depended on it (this is the ominous subtext of the future-as-desert film genre, like *Road Warrior* or *Mad Max*). Assuming as we do that someone else makes the tool, or writes the code for our app idea, i.e., assuming that some factory actually deploys the technology, the gadgets are what it is all about.

⁴⁴ The scenario should also be familiar to those who might have been watching *Star Trek* which also began as a television series in the same year, or to those who had been watching the science fiction films of the 1950s or reading *Fantastic Stories*.

⁴⁵ But for a critical overview that also applies to Kurzweil’s prediction of the coming ‘technological singularity,’ see Richard A. L. Jones, who is a professor of physics at Sheffield University, “Rupturing The Nanotech Rapture,” *IEEE Spectrum* (June 2008): 64-67 and see further Jones’s earlier, *Soft Machines: Nanotechnology and Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴⁶ See Ivan Illich, *H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness: Reflections on the Historicity of Stuff* (Dallas: Institute Humanities & Culture; 1985).

Thus critics object that, like Kurzweil, de Grey does not seem to mind too much that the technology supposed by the theorizing (this would be de Grey's theorizing) or futuristic speculation (this would be Kurzweil picking up after Walt Disney left off and telling us what life will be like in 2025 or 2045) does not 'exist' as yet. But these are cheap ontic objections. All that, like space flight and jetpacks will come. And as if on cue, Virgin Airlines is currently selling tickets for the former. As iPhone commercials insist on proclaiming, always without needing to ask what we might have in mind (doesn't matter): there's an app for that (or we just know there will be).

Sorgner as Educator: Transhumanism as the New Future of our Educational Institutions

Sorgner seems to assume this same chirpily upbeat, technological focus: the transhuman is the human plus (whatever) technological enhancement. As a specific, Sorger attends to the issue of Nietzsche and evolution, an issue that is itself far from straightforward (most readings of Nietzsche and evolution depend upon a fairly limited understanding of both Darwin and not less a fairly limited understanding of Nietzsche's own understanding of Darwin).

We can hardly raise all the relevant questions that remain to be explored on the (very, very) complicated theme of Nietzsche and Darwin, but the key issue seems to be the (may we say mildly Lamarckian?) parallel Sorgner constructs between education and genetic enhancement.

As Sorgner contends, education and genetic enhancement are “structurally analogous procedures.”⁴⁷

But, Lamarck to one side, it is worth asking what Sorgner means by “education”? Does Sorgner understand this in the traditional sense of *Bildung* or as what counts for the French as *formation* and where we may speak of either in terms of what Nietzsche also called getting oneself a culture, that is: personal and intellectual cultivation?

Or and now apart from these traditional meanings, will an “education” correspond to nothing more than the business (emphasis on the economic or cost-based affair) of acquiring and conferring, i.e., obtaining and selling degrees and certificates—indeed and just as Sorgner suggests, all like such modules, courses, degrees, parallel to many add-ons and upgrades, like iPhone or android apps and the enormous market that there is for cell-phone accessories which same pale in comparison to the market for iPad accessories, Apple and otherwise? And yet, it may be that this surface parallel calls for a bit more reflection, especially with regard to Nietzsche who himself reflected quite a bit on educational institutions as well as the idea of education—even if we begin with his very paradoxical, very provocative claim: “*There are no educators*” [Es gibt keine Erzieher] (HH II, *The Wanderer and his Shadow* § 267). What is certain is that many of us even within the academy do tend to suppose that education is just and only the acquisition of such degrees, especially at the graduate but also at the undergraduate level, and especially as evident in the current debate in England and mainland Europe on the virtues of the privatization of the university—a debate which manages to overlook any review of

⁴⁷ Sorgner, “Beyond Humanism: Reflections on Trans- and Posthumanism,” *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, Vol. 21, Issue 2 (October 2010):1-19. Here cited from: <http://jetpress.org/v21/sorgner.htm>

the actual practice of the same as this can be found in the US.⁴⁸ No need for factual feedback to sully our models, as Orrin Pilkey, a very practical or applied or hands-on coastal scientist has argued with stunning consequentiality when it comes to beach erosion and the public costs of “maintaining” the same and with very specific meteorological applicability to the debates on global warming.⁴⁹ I.e., no empiricism, please: we’re idealists.

Nietzsche’s own reflections on what is needed for an “education” as such are quite formidable—even as his own education was an extraordinary one. Thus we betray something of the limitations of our own formation whenever we as scholars or commentators find ourselves insisting that Nietzsche took or borrowed his ideas from other thinkers—ranging from Pascal and Spinoza or else Spir and Lange or Emerson, or Gerber, or Stirner or ultimately and of course, from Wagner himself (especially for the Wagnerians for whom no limit to the master’s own cultural prowess can be imagined). I am not saying that Nietzsche was not familiar with these thinkers, far from it. I am saying that an education *is* this familiarity *and much, much more*. Thus although it is amusing to note that the identity of the supposed origination of (the so-called ‘sources’ for) Nietzsche’s ideas just happens to change in the scholarly literature over time (and

⁴⁸ European advocates focus on Princeton, or Yale, or Harvard, somehow missing the hundreds of thousands and even millions of tuition-driven, for-pay or profit institutions as these abound at every level of post-secondary education in the United States. As for me, I’d compare CUNY or SUNY or the University of California system to private schools, even top tier schools, any day—if not of course when it comes to prestige as that is a market and class affair, but indeed and when it comes to education. Nor would I be the only one. The more critical point however is indeed that European fantasies about private schools tend to suppose that all private schools work like top tier schools. For a discussion, see Babich, “Education and Exemplars: Learning to Doubt the Overman” (but I also recommend the other contributions in) Paul Fairfield, ed., *Education, Dialogue and Hermeneutics* (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 125-149 as well as my essay, ““Become the One You Are: On Commandments and Praise — Among Friends” in addition to the range of contributions in Thomas Hart, ed., *Nietzsche, Culture, and Education* (London: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 13-38.

⁴⁹ See Orrin H. Pilkey and Linda Pilkey-Jarvis, *Useless Arithmetic: Why Environmental Scientists Can’t Predict the Future* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) as well as Pilkey’s new *Global Climate Change: A Primer*. And see his very practical, timely editorial: “[The road ahead on the Outer Banks](#),” *Newsobserver.com*, Sat., Oct 08, 2011. I discuss Pilkey’s analysis of modeling further in Babich, “Towards a Critical Philosophy of Science: Continental Beginnings and Bugbears, Whigs and Waterbears,” *International Journal of the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (December 2010): 343-391.

not less with the mood and, *nota bene!*, educational formation of his commentators), it is also noteworthy that the very same set of assumptions applies (negatively speaking) for those who are fond of insisting that Nietzsche could never have read Kant (just to pick one contentious example, contentious given the influence of Kant on the 19th century, an influence we fail to see in the 20th as in the 21st century, at least so far).

The idea that an education, the getting of or the having of one, is a simple affair, and thus that the parallel idea of an upgrade to the more-than-human, that is now: the trans-human would simply be like taking a course, signing up for an instructive module, supposes that one pretend, (as transhumanists do like to pretend) that one can/should set aside questions of cultural inequalities, differences in wealth, “class” differences and so on. In this (*an sich* inherently optimistic when it is not calculating when it is not deliberately mendacious) regard, the transhumanist movement may be revealed as a humanism, here using the term as Sartre once spoke of *Existentialism as a Humanism*.⁵⁰ Hence and at least in principle, human enhancement may be regarded, if only for the sake of argument, as corresponding to “enhancement for all,” like “micro-chips for all,” or “airport security searches for all.”

Ultimately, as Leibniz might help to remind us, such a broad extension would lead to a society not of “enhanced” but and much rather of *leveled* or flattened out humanity. Nor is this all-too surprising where the ideal of humanism in question mirrors contemporary consumer society, viewed from the corporate side of the equation. In the commercial world view of the corporate mindset, *everyone* ought to have (that means ought to buy) an iPhone, iPad, Mac computer/laptop/airbook, heck everyone should have *ALL* the stuff in the Apple store, etc.

⁵⁰ By contrast Heidegger’s “Humanismusbrief” is written against such a presupposition. See Sartre’s *L’existentialisme est un humanisme* and compare both with Sloterdijk’s controversial Elmau lecture: *Regeln für den Menschenpark*. Some of this discussion draws upon points I make in Babich, “Sloterdijk’s Cynicism.”

Beyond iPads or iPhones (and for the sake of argument, android smart phones running android or related programs may be counted as iPhones) we can also add in other desirable items or array of items (flat screen tv, luxury car, new kitchen appliances, ‘smart’ houses—although these last, long insisted upon by technology enthusiasts for the last half century under a variety of names, have yet to catch on... and so on).

Sorgner argues that Nietzsche would back this enhanced or “accessory” life, as the transhumanist life for all and sundry. But, and this is why Nietzsche gives us food for thought, at the same time, I think it is plain that Nietzsche also sidesteps such advocacy. Hence although I believe that we may read Nietzsche as advocating Sorgner’s transhumanism when Nietzsche writes of a lesson that Nietzsche argues is one that may be drawn from the mirror of nature—“the only thing that matters is the superior individual exemplar, the more unusual, more powerful, more complex, more fruitful exemplar,” (SE §6)—as this is a point that Nietzsche seems to intensify, as virtually transhumanist as Sorgner or anyone pleases, Nietzsche also continues to emphasize that “the goal of any species’ evolution is the point at which it reaches its limit and begins the transition to a higher species.” (Ibid.) The problem here is the problem with any of Nietzsche’s texts: like Proteus, Nietzsche’s words turn in our hands. Thus Nietzsche turns, emphasizing with respect to that same evolution that “its goal is precisely those seemingly scattered and random existences that arise here and there under favorable conditions.” (Ibid.) The point to be taken is posed against, as Nietzsche puts it at this juncture: “Mr. Commonman.” (Ibid.)

What is at issue for what we might regard as Nietzsche’s own brand of transhumanism, if we may so speak of the self-overcoming that is the transition to the overhuman, the post-human, is not only that it is no kind of utilitarianism but also that it is also no kind of humanism, other

than that served, this would be nothing other than Nietzsche's "future humaneness" (GS §337), by what I have elsewhere described and analyzed as the "bravest democratic fugue"⁵¹ ever written, by Nietzsche or anyone else (forgive me, Wagnerians of the world). Thus I argue that Nietzsche's "genius of the heart" (BGE §295) communicates an uncanny, a shattering, an ultimately unsettling, disquieting and quieting "fanfare" for the common man: the genius Nietzsche's pied piper comes to teach is not the transmogrified, new and improved humanism of transhumanism but a post-humanism of the kind that always turns out to be all about going beyond oneself and that anti-self-satisfied dimension is the heart of acquiring nothing less than a culture in place of the ego, the dear little self. But this is to say that it is not a religious or Christian altruism, redeemable for infinity in trade, and it is not a humanism. Hence Nietzsche excludes the kind of transhumanism Sorgner speaks of, because and qua "enhancement," transhumanism is not at all about self-overcoming but is very much about self-preservation, self-assertion, self-advancement.

As an overcoming of rather than an enhancing of the human (or perhaps better said, of the all-too-human), the meaning of Nietzsche's over-human turns out to be the meaning not of the human but of the earth. In part, this is the essence of, this is the meaning of Pindar's word to the seldom encountered, to the rare as Nietzsche quotes this throughout his own life: *become the one you are*. In Nietzsche's early meditation on *Schopenhauer as Educator*, as we already referred to it above, Nietzsche explains the point to our Mr. Commonman by asking him to reflect on how his life can have meaning or value at all only to answer in what seems to be Sorgner's spirit, appealing to a perfectly upgradable, trans-humanist project: "Surely only by

⁵¹ Babich, *Words in Blood, Like Flowers: Poetry and Philosophy, Music and Eros in Nietzsche, Hölderlin, Heidegger* (New York; State University of New York Press, 2006), pp. 166 ff as well as Babich, "'Adorno on Science and Nihilism, Animals, and Jews,'" *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy/Revue canadienne de philosophie continentale*, Vol. 14, No. 1, (2011): 110-145, pp. 124ff.

living for the benefit of the rarest and most valuable exemplars, not for the benefit of the majority, that is, for the benefit of those who, taken as individuals, are the least valuable species.” (SE §6)

The implicit elitism here cannot but alienate many of Nietzsche’s readers. Nor is this particular kind of elitism incidental: for Nietzsche insists on it again and again. Indeed his project from the start to the end of his creative life was nothing other than the production of a higher culture in broad terms and on the individual level of genius, whereby Nietzsche supposed the first to require the second, i.e., that the restoration on the level of culture of a once and yet higher culture called for that same rare genius. And Nietzsche took care to emphasize and to reflect upon the significance of that same rarity. For Nietzsche, and this is perhaps his greatest distance from the transhumanist movement, this particular rarity will not because it cannot turn out to be an upgrade money can buy. The object of such design, on Nietzsche’s account, will be the values popularly regarded, and Nietzsche regarded such values, empirically enough, as middle-rank values, what he called mediocrity.

Here related to elitism would seem to be the ‘spectre’ which we may also and very politely call “the” problem of eugenics.⁵² But, as Sorgner emphasizes, and as Boström also argues,⁵³ it won’t be *Nazi* eugenics, but and much rather (notice how different this is?) a *liberal* eugenics that one might support. The difference is that Boström is anxious to limit associations with Nietzsche in order to lend coherence to a rhetorical assertion that value judgments, as such, would not necessarily go along with the spectacle of such posthumans considered side by side with humans, and hence that negative scenarios are very rare speculations that need not be

⁵² See for a current overview and discussion, Rob Sparrow, “A Not-So-New Eugenics: Harris and Savulescu on Human Enhancement, *Hastings Center Report*, 41 (1) (Jan-Feb 2011): 32-42.

⁵³ See, for example, Bostrom, “Human Genetic Enhancements: A Transhumanist Perspective.”

unduly feared. Thus Sorgner could say that there is nothing quite problematic in comparing your masters from Cambridge with his masters from Durham, or your Oxford PhD with his PhD from Jena. Except of course for an employer, but how bad is that? It's just what Bourdieu called cultural capital and surely such differences make no real difference (this assumption which was what Bourdieu began with was not vindicated by Bourdieu's research as it turned out).⁵⁴ Nor is it an accident that the right kind of educational pedigree confers what Bourdieu calls "cultural nobility."

Thus the conviction that it would not matter too much if some had transhuman upgrades and some did not, is like the conviction that it does not matter that one person has a degree from wherever university and another person has a degree from the same Harvard that was certainly if perhaps only serendipitously happy to publish Bourdieu's *Distinction*. Thus the distinction between Nazi eugenics and liberal eugenics surely matters in some sense but how would that difference make a difference to those who might be considered 'merely' human as opposed to the new *transhuman*, and assuming the progress we already know from consumer models for such things, those considered no more than the original transhuman versus the latest model of the same. I am talking about the putative subhuman, say, by comparison with the putative overhuman. This is the original iPhone vs. the currently current model, iPhone 4S or and indeed and this would be my pointL vs. the awaited iPhone 5 or the X version, etc.

Here it is relevant to note that in the literature, rather like the not-quite-really-there-yet qualities of post-op transmen and transwomen, the transhuman is the transitional human: on the way to a perfect model that the marketing department, again very like the iPhone, Kurzweil's favorite example for being (already) technologically enhanced, already has in planning, but has

⁵⁴ Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1984).

yet to “release.” The tension this produces is fantastic because it is of a piece with marketing. One wants the newest iPhone, with just those features it happens to have; at the same time one wants to wait for the next iPhone, because there is no way to know, for sure, for sure, if the newest gadget has all the promised qualities advertised as desirable, qualities the one around the corner might have. There are upgrades and then there are upgrades and the consumer has learned that there is no difference in cost only in release time: all new phone versions are the same, cost-wise, on balance, what differs is the quality of the upgrade between differing instaurations.⁵⁵

Withal, it takes Sorgner nine good steps in order to pose the financial (in a Marxian framework this is also a “class”) question. I have already observed that this question always attends the supposed coming technological singularity. Indeed, while one may argue that if the supposed ideal behind the transhumanist movement is to create a better world for all,⁵⁶ *anything* that involves technology also involves not randomness, not chance, not luck, but just and only money.

This is, of course, the old story of those who have and those who have not. This too would fit, rather nicely, Sorgner’s point with respect to the structural analogies to be had between education and genetic enhancement. And in every version of the world as we know it, present and past, only those with class privilege (call this money, call this being part of the right group of people) have access to the ultimate advantages of education. Thus it is not for nothing that the late (and not accidently saintly) Ivan Illich took care to remind us of what most

⁵⁵ Think iPhone 3GS, or buy one now for less than \$50 (and, of course, a contract). Gotcha. And that is a gotcha when the decidedly desirable 4S is the current model...

⁵⁶ Many commentators have explored the question of what Nietzsche thinks to animate the conventional dream of such a better world, at least on the surface of it, in his discussion of the same in *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and *Twilight of the Idols*.

academics never point out: school educates us to have very specific, i.e., very elite tastes for music, food, travel, consumption.⁵⁷ Hence, following Sorgner's parallel between education and transhumanism for the sake of argument here, in the transhumanist world as Sorgner envisions it along with Kurzweil and de Grey as the world to come (this would be the post BP old-spill world to go with the ongoing [but not reported], new spills in the Gulf of Mexico, post earthquake world in Japan, here with the same caveats, and the same lack of news reports on the same ongoing consequences of radiation fallout), in this new world, only those with ample resources (financial and otherwise) will have access to transhuman enhancements, just as only those with access to advanced medical care can afford the implants that can keep a failing heart going—and this is true today as well and on any level of technology, be it a heart transplant, a pacemaker or even a shunt. Add to that the cost of those life-style changes (drugs, foodstuffs, leisure or care) required in order to provide the necessary supports needed for life with a heart transplant, pacemaker, etc.

Here it is popular to advert to the most empirically (if one wishes to consider the facts) *disproven* vision of economics, the economic ideal that nevertheless and still dominates most markets, namely the idea that capitalism advances culture, that enhancing the wealth of the wealthy, that enhancing the well-being of the wealthy is 'somehow' in the interest of everyone. Wait and see. But as Nietzsche points out of the fantasy of an eternal reward, you'll have to wait a long time for this. Call it trickle-down economics, or call it whatever you like, this is the economics of the scratch-card lottery and it is a fantasy.

⁵⁷ See, again, for context and further references here, my discussion of Illich's *Deschooling Society* in Babich, "Education and Exemplars."

Nevertheless and beyond such phantasms as palliative stories favored by the wealthy and by those who wish to be like them, there is a key difference between the ideal of education Sorgner adduces and access to the kind of thing that has investors speculating on ‘leadership’ (always another word for corporate interests) in Kurzweil’s Singularity University.⁵⁸

For education can be had, education exists, and there are better and worse articulations and it is also true that some people have a better education than others not just because of their own aptness, their intrinsic ability but and just because their training was itself the result of greater reflection, care, design, *paidea*.⁵⁹ As Nietzsche also reminds us at the start of his *Schopenhauer as Educator*, ultimately the individual is responsible. But what Nietzsche means by an education is not what the university educator means by it and it is not is on offer at the Singularity University or indeed at Harvard.⁶⁰

As Al Lingis has argued that the sick individual must eschew the position of patient, that there is a moral imperative to health, and that one must take responsibility for the same, one can also, one *must* also choose or select, elect or design one’s own education, one’s educators.⁶¹ And it is this that Nietzsche means when he says as already cited: “there are no educators.”

In every case, as Nietzsche already saw in his own reflections on what he called very specifically “The Future of our Educational Institutions,” the task of getting oneself an education, of getting oneself an educator, falls to the individual. Thus if we cannot answer

⁵⁸ See, for example, <http://singularityu.org/>.

⁵⁹ See the initial sections of Babich, “Nietzsche’s Philology and Nietzsche’s Science: On The ‘Problem of Science’ and ‘fröhliche Wissenschaft’” in: Pascale Hummel, ed., *Metaphilology: Histories and Languages of Philology* (Paris: Philologicum, 2009), pp. 155-201 and Babich, “»Une promesse de bonheur« — Von Plastik zu Poesie” in: Stefan Wilke, ed., *Die Glücklichen sind neugierig* (Weimar: Bauhaus Universitätsverlag, 2009). pp. 7-43.

⁶⁰ In a recent interview, I noted that university level philosophers rarely give significant thought to decisions of curriculum (in my own department it is relegated to committee) and that this is regrettable. See Babich, “An Impoverishment of Philosophy,” *Purlieu* (Fall 2011): 37-71.

⁶¹ This was the theme of Al Lingis’ plenary address at the conclusion of the 50th Anniversary meeting of SPEP in Philadelphia, Oct. 22, 2011.

Illich's charges that our ideal of education so far from 'enhancing' society and so far from "enhancing" the individual within that society (this is Sorgner's model) instead perpetuates a particular and not accidentally capitalist structure, inculcating (as Illich emphasized and as Adorno would emphasize and as Marcuse would emphasize) the very same point Nietzsche had in mind with his own utterly non-socialist challenge to Mr. Commonman, what we can note is that so very far from culture, we find only identical consumer tastes for what are only identical consumer goods in a world of limited resources, a world already set to serve the mindless profit of increasingly few. Education, to paraphrase Nietzsche, likewise.

But this more critical point, though I think it needs to be made, is less significant than the one I share, I think, with Illich and with Sorgner: there is the formation of skill or training and this can, as Sorgner rightly argues, avail us nothing less remarkable than what Nietzsche calls a second nature. Thereby the individual is empowered to climb, as Nietzsche argues, up to his or her higher, second self by means of these, one's educators.⁶²

This second self might count as the transhuman but this is not usually what we mean by it. And Kurzweil, like most rich men, simply would rather not give up the riches of his life, not now, not ever. The technological singularity is about not dying. Transhumanism is about not dying. Hence when we argue on behalf of transhumanism we argue as very dedicated devotees of a cargo cult that has yet to deliver the goods—which is why it is a cult. Just because, as the old New York City cum Eastern European Jewish joke argues on behalf of the neurosis of a relative who thinks he is a chicken: "we need the eggs." We need, we want what transhumanism promises, and surely it will soon come to pass and inasmuch as we are persuaded that the only

⁶² Here I recommend the wide range of essays contributed to Paul Fairfield, ed., *Education, Dialogue and Hermeneutics* already cited above.

thing that holds science back from this windfall of technological add-ons and upgrades is some ethical aversion to, say, stem cell research, we argue for the “value” of transhumanism, just to quell such objections.⁶³

And yet and at the current time, the vaunted enhancements of transhumanism are still so many notes in the eye of a technological demon yet to be born. And by fixing our sights on these *possibilities*, these *potential* benefits, these *promised* promises, we overlook the more urgent problems all around us and we pass over the experience that is or should be common to us, the experience of technologies gone wrong, of unanticipated side-effects of the kind one can never anticipate apart from the instruction of practice.

What fascinates us here is pure promise, sheer potential. Although at the moment of this writing, we can do none of this, not at all, at all, we are obsessed with or preoccupied with the sheer idea. In truth, we have been taken with the idea of creating ourselves, always in our own image, for centuries, for millennia, if we recall the idea of Talos, the man of bronze, or else the Golem, the being made from clay, as the Hebrew bible tells us we are made in the image of deity, or else and as we confidently read Plato’s noble lie, we imagine ourselves secretly formed in our core on the basis of essence of gold of silver of brass. Today, perhaps we think of a combination of plastic and metal, and thus we opt for the simulacrum of the human, or we dispense with all of that for the dream consciousness that would be digitally enhanced humanity, now reduced to nothing but digital reverberations: coded humanity, the program, the circuit, the network.

⁶³ As if there were not advanced research cultures already extant that had no such ‘ethical’ restrictions at all. As if the only values in the world were Western values.

For as long as we have been a conversation on this question of being human, our thoughts are there in being ourselves our own originators. So what, we say, that we are not nearly so near to this consummation as all our intellectual efforts on this theme might make us suppose? Are we not already transhuman because, after all, some of us see by means of contact lenses? Are we not, all of us, already transhuman because a chip embedded in one paralyzed woman's brain functions to allow the most minimal of effects? Intriguingly we argue this one-way influence. Do such achievements count as an evolution to a 'higher' (because techno-enhanced) species? Are we not already transhuman because of pacemakers, wheelchairs, artificial limbs and joints, crutches?

For we do make such claims, note only the way we talk about the wounded American soldiers and contractors back from Iraq and back from Afghanistan. Beyond these our ongoing US wars, each one of which we may hope is only temporary but each one of which has since proven itself to be astonishingly durable, we also have long practice making trans-animals and we do this for every peaceful or market-driven reason—which does not mean that it is not, as Nietzsche would say, thoroughly soaked in blood, and for long time. We breed and raise animals in order to sell them more efficiently but also in order to experiment on them trying out medical, therapeutic uses for animal parts (this will also be a kind of transhumanism) all already in place for diabetics and heart surgery, all with little written about this, all with as little supervision as possible (and biological scientists treat the concerns of the public as so much interference, as anti-science, and thus devote pages of peer-reviewed articles to reviewing means that might be deployed to 'educate' the public such that it would not oppose their expert sanctioned policies of

exploiting animal parts, sacrificed to join flesh and machine).⁶⁴ And then there is the fact that we are already transhuman inasmuch as we eat cloned beef in addition to beef laced with antibiotics and steroids to permit quick growth, for a quick sale and the abysmal everyday holocaust that is the path to industrial scale slaughter. We are what we eat. With regard to bodyparts—organic transplants or technological replacements—we note that obstacles seem to remain, but the technology seems likely to be solved, and in case not, we hope to overcome the immune limitations we currently face by sidestepping the same: this is the allure of stem-cell technology just in that such technology promises to allow us to do the straightforward transplants that we currently cannot manage without staggering requirements for immune-suppressors. So too, the point of cloning: not to reproduce Fluffy (once again, the cloned Fluffy II *never* looks like the original Fluffy save by the old fashioned breeder’s means of taking the best of a horrifying number of clones [multiple pregnancies/whelps] coupled with desire and a pet owner’s memory deficits)⁶⁵ and much rather to “grow” bio-identical body parts that might not look the same, but

⁶⁴ See for one example and there are many others, Nico Dauphiné and Robert J. Cooper, “Impacts of Free-Ranging Domestic Cats (*Felis Catus*) on Birds in the United States: A Review of Recent Research with Conservation and Management Recommendations,” *Proceedings of the Fourth International Partners in Flight Conference: Tundra to Tropics* 205–219. The authors reflect that “lethal control methods are increasingly the targets of negative campaigns by many animal rights and welfare groups and special interest groups, often with disastrous results for the conservation of native wildlife” p. 211. By “lethal control” is meant the killing of cats, which of course has ‘disastrous results’ for those feral groups. One species for the sake of a preferred other. Because, of course, “we” (that would be whatever group is in power and thereby can claim to speak on our behalf. In addition there is the artifice of the construct of what counts as wildlife, as native, and so on. The debate is part of a larger one on conservation in general and “managed care” of the environment which of course turns the environment only and solely into what we, or zoo or wildlife ‘management’ experts say that it is. And in turn this is part of the complex issue of public vs. expert authority in policy matters. See for a discussion, Daniel Kleinman’s *Impure Cultures: University Science and the World of Commerce* (2003) as well as his *Science, Technology, and Democracy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) in addition to Steven P. Vallas and Daniel Lee Kleinman, “Contradiction, Convergence, and the Knowledge Economy: The Co-Evolution of Academic and Commercial Biotechnology,” *Socio-Economic Review*, 6: 2 (2008.): 283-311.

⁶⁵ The problem which cloning enthusiasts seeking to promote their research endeavors seem to have overlooked when talking to journalists about likely perks of the procedure is that the expression of genetic traits is already determined by the cortex of the ovum. Without the specific egg, the one and only one that led to you all your physical traits, your clone will not look like you. And Fluffy’s clone will not even have the same markings. For those who mourn their lost pet, look for a similar looking kitten or puppy or adult dog or cat or give a brand new pet, with a whole other appearance, a chance to live. It is no accident that the strategy for managing domestic animals

should, if we are lucky, permit us to switch out body parts. (And only science fiction horror enthusiasts, in fiction and film, bother to reflect on the life of the clone that happens to bear those replacement parts for us.)

We need the transhuman just because the transhuman would have, so we imagine, *replaceable*, up-gradeable parts. This is our cargo-cult of life and death and we need, we want the eggs. What we want is to be anything but human. Thus we want, as Anders argued, to be like our precisely manufactured objects, we too wish to be such objects with exchangeable parts, upgradable for the new version, from time to time as science fiction robot stories have long explored these possibilities. Bad heart? Get a replacement. Bad eyes, replace them with optical sensors, see the way Robocop sees—i.e., in the dark, through walls, complete with grids and autofocus—upgrade to Cyborg vision. Bad spirit, that is to say, afflicted with the ‘disease’ du jour, namely “depression”?⁶⁶ There are a bunch of pills to help with that. But what we want, at least we think this, is to live forever.

Nietzsche and Humanism

Nietzsche’s philosophy is not a humanism and it is not for nothing that he writes that humanity is something that should be overcome. Thus Nietzsche argues that the human being is the ‘skin-disease’ of the earth not because humanity is somehow an awful mistake of creation but and

involves shelters which exist not to shelter, to care, to feed, to protect the lives of animals but as holding institutions for the purpose of killing them.

⁶⁶ No one to date has answered the critical challenges of Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) or his *The Myth of Psychotherapy: Mental Healing as Religion, Rhetoric, and Repression* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1978) and his *Cruel Compassion: Psychiatric Control of Society’s Unwanted*. Syracuse (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994). See too his study of *Karl Kraus and the Soul-Doctors: A Pioneer Critic and His Criticism of Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976.)

much rather because in the human everything base tends to thrive while everything higher tends to perish. This we may call Nietzsche's Schopenhauerianism. And as Nietzsche observes contra Hegel and Darwin, this is the point of his reflection on evolution as noted above: it is not the strong who survive or have dominion but and much rather the mediocre, the incurably, perpetually mediocre. And what dominates in the run of the mill is the slavely moral, which is in turn the only morality that remains in any conflict. This is *Ressentiment* as Nietzsche famously characterizes as the ascetic ideal. And the ideal of the ascetic is fundamentally anti-life. The ascetic ideal, let us recall, is anti-life in that it opposes everything that life involves and seeks an improvement on that, even if, until now, it has supposed that it would need to live, these are Nietzsche's words, "a very long time" in order to attain just that compensation, which has until now been promised after death and in eternity.

Transhumanism turns out to be the latest and maybe not even the best (we should probably wait for the next model) instantiation of the ascetic ideal. One wants life, but one does not want life as it is, with all its trouble and mess, with all its banality and its limitations. Instead one wants video-game or gaming life, one wants movie or television life: without suffering, without illness, without death (save of the redeemable, corrigible kind), and although one wants sex, one might well be inclined to exclude birth, generating children on demand. Maybe.

If we become the machine we do not, as in the Christian promise of reincarnation get our obsolescence-prone bodies back? Much rather, have we not thereby perfected the body, so say the last men, and, as Nietzsche tells us, blink as they say so. One might have taken that to mean that the last men do not mean what they say, that they do not understand or guess at what they say. Maybe their blinking indicates only a temporary loss of power in the electrical grid. What is certain is that one motivation for the transhuman ideal would be found in its capacity to take us

beyond the need to recharge our devices, the need to ensure that the power supply remains unbroken. And so we need Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Iran, etc.

In all this, the ethical question takes a back seat to the practical. Because we cannot quite effect the transhuman beyond the cheaper and fairly ontic details of contact lenses and of replacement hips, we nonetheless spend an inordinate amount of time debating the value of doing so at those higher levels that are well beyond our actual technical grasp. What matters is that and in our mind's eye, we are already there. In fact, we have been there in this mind's eye since before I was born.

Not a problem say those who argue, with Kurzweil at the forefront, that the technological singularity is one that accelerates exponentially, taking Moore's Law not as a statistical generalization thus far and as applied to chips but as if it were a cosmic law of nature applicable to everything technological,⁶⁷ whereby the apparent absence of signs of such consummate final evolution is utterly consistent with the process.

But some worry that such transhuman elements as there will be will not be likely to be the legacy of all. And with Nietzsche or more likely with Ayn Rand rather than Nietzsche we might here ask why such elements should be enhancements for all? If humans will power, they will advancement, but if they will advancement, they will advancement as an advantage over all others.

⁶⁷ Moore's law was formulated by Gordon Moore, cofounder of Intel, and predicts that the number of transistors that can be placed on chip will double every two years. With modifications and extensions, the "law" has been extended fairly globally. Intriguingly, Paolo Gargini, director of technology strategy at Intel had already pointed to likely limits (and it is not possible that this is not something about which Kurzweil's people would not know), citing, V.V. Zhirnov, R. K. Cavin, J. A. Hutchby, and G. I. Bourianoff, "Limits to binary Logic Switch Scaling—A Gedanken Model", *Proc. IEEE*, Vol. 91, No. 11 (2003): 1934-1939 and see too by Schirnov, Cavin, and, Bourianoff, "New State Variable Device Opportunities for Beyond CMOS: A System Perspective," *IEEE*, (2008). I note that for his part, Moore does not share Kurzweil's optimism, and predicts that the "rapture" will take place: "Never." see sidebar on the last page of Jones' article, "Rupturing The Nanotech Rapture" cited above.

What is the point of being transhuman if you are not thereby advanced to a position closer to the superior individual by contrast with others and for the sake of which, as Nietzsche suggests, everything in you should be directed?

As with education, transhumanism is only for those of us who have the means to assure our personal evolution, qua transhuman, and it is here that the parallel to education as we know it, in terms of human excellences, as in exemplars, as in habit, comes to an end. For this is a departure from youth and learning not so much because there will likely be a financial bar to accessibility but far more because it is also to be a departure from the lived, flesh and blood body. But as Nietzsche once remarked, overcoming the true world, we find we have also surpassed the apparent. Here Sorgner might do well to return to his initial engagement with Nick Boström. For Boström's concerns, mapped out with all the care that befits someone who took his degree at the London School of Economics (ah, a cultural noble!) is what he calls, on the most physically metaphysical level one might suppose, existential risk.⁶⁸ And risk is the heart of the point of existentialism as it mattered in its origins, not in Denmark but in Germany and above all in France, with the thought of death and not only of god's abandonment all around one. I am speaking of Jaspers, of Bataille, Sartre, Camus.

Thus we overcome both body *and* soul.

But this is evidence of the animus philosophy (and this includes science) seems to have contra life. Hence we can recall Nietzsche's arguments on philosophy as anti-life. And here and for my own part, I find myself agreeing once again with Günther Anders, the very heretical

⁶⁸ See for a discussion of our tendency to get in the way of any estimation of future risks Milan M. Ćirković, Anders Sandberg, and Nick Bostrom, "Anthropic Shadow: Observation Selection Effects and Human Extinction Risks," *Society for Risk Analysis* (2010): 1495-1506 as well as Boström's "The Future of Humanity" in: Jan Kyrre Berg Olsen, Evan Selinger, and Sören Riis, eds. *New Waves in Philosophy of Technology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 186-216.

critical theorist who was also at the same time that he was anti-Adorno, also an anti-Heideggerian (but to be anti-anything always also includes what is opposed).

Anders argued that if we are ashamed, appalled, by our humanity it is because we find it deficient, and so we intend to go beyond it. Thus transhumanism would only be the latest word for what Anders diagnosed: a precipitate conviction of a consumerist capitalist world-ethos. The obsolescence of the human is part and parcel of the obsolescence of everything else from music and film in the culture industry to the media we ‘consume’ rather than ‘enjoy.’

For my part, I still hear Nietzsche’s reflection at the end of *The Gay Science* section entitled, *The Thought of Death*. “It makes me happy that men do not want at all to think the thought of death! I should like very much to do something that would make the thought of life even a hundred times more appealing to them.” (GS §278)

I read this as bespeaking certain critical problems for conjoining Nietzsche’s thought with the transhumanist ethos, here and just *musically* speaking. The idea is not that of an infinite melody, but *da capo*, the same, again, and again. Thus when we later read (towards the end of this the first edition of the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche will take until 1887 to finish the second and final edition) of what Nietzsche speaks of as the “‘humaneness’ of the future,” I take the idea of humaneness here very much as I believe Sorgner would, as the happiness of a single feeling, not an immortality (the entire passage is shot through with the need to think mortality somehow, like the sun at evening) as such but exactly as one “whose horizon encompasses thousands of years past and future,” all contained “in a single soul and a single feeling, the happiness of a god, full of power and love, full of tears and laughter.” (GS §337)

Shall we call this “enhancement”?

Is this single soul with its singular single feeling, denominated by Nietzsche as the “happiness of a god,” the transhuman? I do not think that Sorgner would find it difficult to argue this. And why not? Can we not imagine such a being as an avatar in any of the computer games one can play for fun (one’s own pleasure) and profit (of course and always and even when the game has our own players’ input, someone else’s profit).⁶⁹

For me, just as I continue to think the meaning of joy, it is not preserving, keeping, or holding on to life—but dispensation. Joy is the blessing of happiness as gift. The question is not so much then how to overcome humanity and thus to live as a god lives, deathless, but, and this is the melancholy insight that gods too die, to affirm recurrence: “Do you desire this, once more and innumerable times more?” (GS §341) And if one might argue still that this is compatible with the transhuman as eternal circuit, eternal loop — it also leaves us where we started.

⁶⁹ Games are not played for free, computers are not free, nor is access to the internet free and so on, multiply that anyway one likes if one cares to “upgrade.” And the newer models for licensing software take such costs still further (plus costs across platforms, ‘cloud’ computing, the need to have a desktop and a laptop or at least a laptop, an iPad and a cell phone entail proliferation of gadgets to do the same thing, differently, with payments to different entities). Cheap, ontic details that turn out to be less than ‘cheap.’ I have shown that the concern here is far beyond matters of access or supposed affordability.