

## TRANSHUMANISM: HISTORICO-CULTURAL SHADOWS AND SCIENCE FICTION

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### **Abstract**

Transhumanism seeks to augment human evolution. It is particular aimed at eradicating disease, eliminating suffering, improving intellectual and physical capacities, and expanding one's health span, allowing man, if he so desires to achieve immortality. This ambition has been given impetus to with the burgeoning development of exotic and radical technologies in such fields as nanotechnology, implantable technology, gene editing, cell regeneration, intelligence, brain imaging, mind-computer interfaces. While these methods are more contemporary, the constant themes in transhumanism, namely constant development of mankind, perfection of humans by technology, increase in well-being and happiness, longevity and immortality are found not to be exclusive to transhumanism; these cast their long roots in human history. The question of the relationship between mankind and technology, human enhancement, the relations between the natural and artificial, the perfection of nature and the desire to find the elixir of life have been a key concern in the human history. These themes found in transhumanism find their precursors in the historical past and socio-cultural presents. The three of such have been dealt with subsequently, namely the enlightenment, the mythological and science fiction. The present work using the methods of hermeneutics is geared towards evaluating these to show how their basic tenets compare with the transhumanist ideals. It finds that a materialistic and technological understanding of the human person which transhumanism leverages has already its predecessor in the enlightenment. It shows in particular that science fiction has helped immensely in steering the imaginative of transhumanists, while noting that both science fiction and transhumanism have both influenced each other.

### **Introduction**

Transhumanism has in many ways sought to augment human evolution by means of technology, a move which lifting mankind to a new developmental stage is geared towards the emergence of posthumans. Transhumanist strategies transverse across information technology, merging of humans and technological devices in what has been termed cyborg, genetic engineering, mental enhancement, mind uploading. Propelled by the idea of continued progress and morphological freedom anchored on physicalism and functionalism, the underlying motif is to surpass human finitude in all spheres. While the more moderate transhumanists are satisfied with limited enhancement and prolongation of human life, the more radical ones pushes for not just prolongation of life but also for immortality. While these methods are more contemporary, the constant themes in transhumanism, namely constant development of mankind, perfection of humans by technology, increase in well-being and happiness, longevity and immortality are found not to be exclusive to transhumanism; these cast their long roots in human history. The question of the relationship between mankind and technology, human enhancement, the relations between the natural and artificial, the perfection of nature and the desire to find the elixir of life have been a key concern in the human history. These themes found in transhumanism find their precursors in the historical past and socio-cultural presents. The three of such have been dealt with subsequently, namely the enlightenment, the mythological and science fiction, to show how these have provided cultural and conceptual roots for the ideals of transhumanism.

### **Transhumanism in Brief**

Generally speaking, transhumanism is an intentional process aimed at eradicating disease, eliminating suffering, improving intellectual and physical capacities, and expanding one's health span, allowing man, if he so desired, to achieve immortality (Bostrom, 2003, p.2). This ambition has been given impetus to with the burgeoning development of exotic and radical technologies in such fields as nanotechnology, implantable technology, gene editing, cell regeneration, super-intelligence, brain imaging, mind-computer interfaces which in their singularity or combination appear to make human augmentation and expansion as visualized by the transhumanist community alarmingly near on the horizon (Ross, 2020). The basic assumption of transhumanism is an understanding of the human person as a sciento-technological reality in which issues surrounding the human person is reconceived in terms of a technical problem. Transhumanism sees the human biology as messy, disorderly and dirty and so constitutes a limitation that must be continually surpassed if human were to enjoy complete freedom, autonomy and wellbeing.

The nature of the transcendence is such without any metaphysical reference but is immanent and secular. One already witnesses it in the process of unbridled cyborgization which vision goes beyond therapeutics like one found in prosthetic limbs, artificial cardiac peace makers, cochlear implants etc. to real time technologization of

the human body and person which is understood as a technological reality and its problems to be solved through technological means. The human body for the transhumanists is not just dispensable, it is also an obstacle, an enemy to be fought and conquered. The human body ages and make us age and eventually annihilates us. Thus, while the gradual replacement of human body and messy organic body is a milestone in the enhancement regimen, the physical body for many radical transhumanists, should altogether be discarded and our existence relocated and transformed synthetically. Today the ambition has become audacious, namely desire for immortality which is the goal of the unmitigated cyborgization whose climax is what has been termed mind uploading which for the transhumanist proponents is way of achieving the holy grail of immortality albeit digitally.

### **Transhumanist Shadows in Enlightenment**

Bostrom, captures the transhumanist historical connect with the Enlightenment and its modern ideals when he writes that transhumanism is an outgrowth of secular humanism and the Enlightenment. For transhumanism, the current human nature is improvable through the use of applied science and other rational methods. These may make it possible to increase human health-span, extend our intellectual and physical capacities, and give us increased control over mental states and moods. The transhumanist dream is heavily and ultimately anchored on the technological potentialities founded on human reason and so may have enlightenment roots in its deference to reason, science, progress, preference for secular, human agency over divine revelation and overcoming of superstition. Enlightenment thought is intricately connected with the unfettered idea of progress linked with science and technology as forces of emancipation especially from the restrictive chains of traditions. The view here, according to Mikael Leidenhag, (2020) is that “history/society/humanity has advanced, is continuing to advance, and will advance in the future.” Mikael Leidenhag (2020) in his overview of transhumanism, outlines its historical roots especially in enlightenment. For instance, Francis Bacon is presented as a proto-transhumanist thinker who in his *The Advancement of Human Learning* and *Novum Organum* calls for a departure from metaphysical reasoning towards methodological empiricism (More, 2013, p. 9). In his *The New Atlantis*, Bacon offers a utopic vision of a flourishing humanity redeemed by means of practical reasoning. While acknowledging the epistemic cost of the biblical fall, Bacon aims in his *Novum Organum* at an inductive approach for acquisition of reliable knowledge about the natural world, which according to him should be used in the construction of new technologies which could reposition man towards having dominion over nature. (Burdett, 2011, p. 21) Technology, for Bacon, is not merely a tool, but more importantly constitutes emancipatory force for humans to “access the book of Creation.” (Burdett, 2011) Descartes must have been inspired by Bacon who speaks in terms of making “ourselves like masters and possessors of nature,” while visibly optimistic about the power of technology to liberate humanity. Descartes (2007) compares the working of mechanics to the functioning of human and non-human bodies which it presents as machine-like objects subject to knowable physical laws. Some scholars like Ansell-Pearson (1997), Sorgner (2009) Tuncel (2017) have seen similarity between Transhumanist idea of overcoming human nature and Nietzsche’s conception of overhuman, *ubermensche*. In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche (1997, p.6) holds the view that “man is something to be overcome.” The aforementioned scholars, among others, see in Nietzsche, an important precursor to the contemporary transhumanist ideals. Other scholars such as Bostrom (2005, pp.1-25), consider such connection as simply superficial and exaggerated. Buben observes that the arguments for the connection stem from a selective reading of the elements of Nietzsche’s thought that seem most compatible with transhumanist ideas as well as intentional de-emphasis or radical reinterpretation of less compatible elements. Critics argue against Sorgner’s position by noting that though desiring to transcend ordinary human biological limitations indicate an interest in being a superhuman in the cape and tights sense, it does not coincide with Nietzsche’s view on the creation of new life-affirming values. (Buben, 2020, pp. 66-84)

Furthermore, Marquis de Condorcet, a French Enlightenment philosopher has been pointed to be a transhumanist precursor. For instance, Condorcet (1795) writes that “no bounds have been fixed to the improvement of faculties...the perfectibility of man is unlimited.” Condorcet (1795) brandishes the idea of technological perpetual progress, a view that is transhumanist, when he highlights that the accelerating state of the human technological progress noting the dawn of a day when life would present no assignable limit. (See More, 2013, p.10) Condorcet imagined that science would lead to humans transcending their bodies and, in the process, attaining immortality. William Godwin in his own was convinced that science would lead to human perfectibility. Godwin, a political radical of the enlightenment times and sympathetic to French revolutionaries like Condorcet shares the vision that an expansion in knowledge would lead to improvements in our understanding and thereby increase our control over matter. In his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness*, Godwin projects a vision of a future when “human passions and desires would become extinct along with disease, anguish, melancholy and resentment.” It would be a future without sex or reproduction as “The Earth instead would be populated by disembodied humans who have achieved immortality.” In this future, “there will be no war, no crimes, no administration of justice as it is called, and no government”. (Meiring, 2021) This is based on the assumption that scientific progress would translate also to ridding the society of its ailments just as the physical

bodies. Though critics view this to more of fiction and fantasies than real, there is no doubt that this mirrors the central points of transhumanism.

Thomas Hobbes had anticipated the strong AI in the introduction to his book *Leviathan* published in 1651 of the possibility of building an “artificial animal,”

For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within, why may we not say that all automata (engines that move themselves by springs and wheels as doth a watch) have an artificial life? For what is the heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joints, but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body... (Hobbes, 1651, 2004)

This and more must have influenced Kelvin Warwick (2002)’s declaration that “I was born human. But this was an accident of fate—a condition merely of time and place. I believe it’s something we have the power to change.” In a recent writing of transhumanist Bart Kosko (1999, p. 256)’s *The Fuzzy Future*, he proclaims “Biology is not destiny. It was never more than tendency. It was just nature’s first quick and dirty way to compute with meat. Chips are destiny.” There is no doubt that the rise of scientific physicalism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century could have helped the belief that technology could improve the human body. The human being has been variously dubbed machine. Julien Offray de la Mettrie in *L’Homme Machine* argue that “man is a machine so complex that it is impossible to make a clear idea about it and subsequently, as a result, to define him.” (Kyslan, 2009, pp.71-80) La Mettrie projects the possibility of the right craftsman creating of a new Prometheus, a machine with human traits not subject to the laws of human nature.

Charles Darwin has been considered a proto-transhumanist. His evolutionary theory in *The Origin of Species* besides excluding any explicit postulation of a divine artist, effectively negates the notion of what had been termed fixed human species. The evolutionary theory has encouraged science and philosophy to ask whether a human being is just another level, another link in the chain of evolution, bringing into question as to whether man is the endpoint of evolution at all (Kyslan, 2019, pp. 71-80). The possibility that the evolutionary process could have been the outcome of a self-organizing process leaves the nature of humanity ambiguous, a situation which created an opportunity for the transhumanists to advance their view of a humanity enhanced by technology. Towards the end of the 19th century, a Russian Orthodox Christian philosopher, Nikolai Federov (2014, pp. 85-87) armed by the idea of evolution as a knowable process upon which one can intervene and direct, and making a combination of modern philosophical ideals centered on rationality and evolutionary perspective, holds the view that evolution has brought humans this far in order to allow us to take over through shaping further evolution. This reshaping of evolution entails overcoming mortality. The immortal humans would then commence a utopian program of resurrecting the dead and colonizing both outer space and oceans.

The British geneticist and evolutionary biologist, J.B.S. Haldane (2002) arguing from the perspective of the benefit of human-directed evolution holds that human-directed humanity, a programmable society, engineered to exacting specifications would ensure increased wealth, clean energy and peaceful coexistence. Haldane (2002) speaks from the background as a soldier of World War I who became disillusioned with humanity and in his research on population genetics argues for a eugenics program in order to create a superior species so as to cure the world of ignorance which leads to conflict to avoid catastrophic wars. In his essay, *Daedalus; or, Science and the Future*, he proposes ectogenesis, a radical technology aimed at gestation in artificial wombs. (See Hughes, 2004, pp.55-56)

Leidenhag goes even more to suggest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s connect with transhumanism. According to Leidenhag, de Chardin displays crypto-transhumanists beliefs in his technological optimism in respect to shaping the future. Michael Burdett (2011, 29) explains de Chardin’s technological optimism in his eschatology in three ways: First, Teilhard envisages a future of social unification due to paucity of space on account of increasing population, a situation which entails further technological development and dependency on such developments; the second is the world speeding towards further mechanization of society. Teilhard explains technology as representing “external counterpart which consciousness relies upon for its own propagation.” (Burdett, 2011, 29) Through technology the world interacts more effectively with human consciousness. Burdett points to Teilhard’s belief of the world being in a state of unification and convergence towards an Omega Point. Burdett (2011, 31) reasons that the way in which this process results in a Trans-Human or Ultra-Human bears striking resemblance to transhumanist understanding of technological progress. Leidenhag (2020) following Grummet (2011) is quick to point out that difference between the two thoughts remains, especially with regard to death, immortality, embodiment and ethical ends of humanity and so the similarity should not be exaggerated. As a matter of fact the contemporary transhumanism is immanent transcendence through technology.

### Mythological Roots

In spite of the fact that transhumanists emphasize reason and objectivity, not a few have continued to point to mythological roots of the transhumanism particularly, the myth of Prometheus. There is no gainsaying the antiquity of the aspiration for human improvement. The surpassing of human finitude has been an inherent quest of human species. According to Bostrom (2011) the human desire to acquire new capacities is as ancient as our species itself. Man has always sought to expand its boundaries in all domains on the path to his life and happiness. This includes the ultimate finitude of death. The search for the elixir of life has been the concern of man. This is in spite of the belief in the world beyond. For instance, in the Summerian Epic of Gilgamesh a king moved by the quest to surpass mortality embarks on a journey into the bottom of the sea for an immortality herb. He was not successful as a snake steals it from him before he could eat it. Explorers in later times had sought for the fountain of youth; alchemists labored to concoct the elixir of life; various schools of esoteric Taoism in China sought physical immortality by way of control over or harmony with the forces of nature.

It is however with the myth of Prometheus that transhumanism has been more closely rooted. It is usually presented as symbolic of the transhumanist agenda of taking control of nature and transcending natural boundaries. Trijsje Franssen (2014) observes that several advocates of enhancement with transhumanist leanings refer to mythology in their arguments. She refers particularly to the ancient Greek myth of Prometheus. The biophysicist Gregory Stock (2002), for instance, in his insistence on the inevitability of further development writes that “when we imagine Prometheus stealing fire from the gods, we are not incredulous or shocked by his act. It is too characteristically human.” From here, Franssen extrapolates that myth encloses some of the main themes of transhumanism and even reveals its major ontological and ethical claims. Franssen moves to show that there is something inherently mythological to transhumanists pleas and perhaps even to their thinking as such. The oldest and best version of the myth of Prometheus belongs to Hesiod, Aeschylus and Plato.

Prometheus was a Titan, belonging to the generation of gods before the Olympians. In Aeschylus version, in *Prometheus Bound*, Zeus was said to have expelled all of its members after his victory in the Clash of the Titans. Zeus however spared Prometheus, because of his cunning and also given that his good advice had helped Zeus to win the battle. When Olympus became the new ruler, he became a ruthless despot. When he hatched a plan to destroy humanity, Prometheus came to the rescue of humanity. He stole fire from the Olympus and gave to mortals, offered them wisdom and taught them many arts and technologies. He was however punished by being chained to the peak of Mount Caucasus where the ever regenerating liver would be fed upon by a vulture. It seems that many centuries later he would be liberated by Hercules. Hesiod also adds the punishment to humanity thanks to unwitty Prometheus brother, Epimetheus who against the warning of Prometheus, accepted Zeus gift: the box which Pandora took the lid off the big jar with her hands and scattered all the miseries that spell sorrow for man who had lived untroubled. Plato’s version is more positive. In the *Protagoras*, Prometheus took part in the creation of human beings. Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus were given the task to equip the moulded mortal races with powers, abilities and qualities. Epimetheus was said to have used up all these on non-reasoning animals with nothing left for humanity. Prometheus steps in by stealing fire, wisdom, practical arts and technologies for the survival of mankind.

Franssen (2014) draws from these themes which according to him match with transhumanist agenda. One of the themes in the myth of Prometheus is control and mastery. This is evidenced in Prometheus’ affirmation in Aeschylus (1975)’ *Prometheus Bound*, namely, “Hear, what wretched lives people used to lead, how babyish they were-until I gave them intelligence, I made them masters of their own thought.” Thus the gift is not just about survival but that of mastering and control of thought and the intentionality of thought means that this stretches to the manipulation and control of the world by means of knowledge, science and technology. This theme is seen for instance in Simon Young’s Transhumanist Manifesto “Humanity will take evolution out of the hands of butterfingere nature into its own transhuman hands.” (Umbrello & Lombard, 2016) This theme is reinforced with the involvement with creation that is found in Plato’s the *Protagoras*. Thus, Prometheus steals fire to finish the rather incomplete and unequipped human beings who were “naked, unshod, unbedded, and unarmed...” (Plato, 1997, 757) This is a way of transcending the boundaries in defiance to the divinity. This theme appears in the poem by Goethe (1964) dedicated to the Titan and perhaps addressed to Zeus in which humans appear to be depicted as acting like Prometheus. “Here I sit, making man in my own image, a race that shall resemble me, a race that shall suffer and weep, and know joy and delight, and be heedless of you as I am.” This immediately resonates with transhumanist agenda of taking control of the evolution, or what Young (2006) describes as “Designer evolution,” aimed redesigning the human condition, and making of better people. The last of the theme is (semi-)divine status of man and bringing man closer to Godhood. This is captured by man’s ability to develop himself by means of originally Olympic wisdom and technology. This divinity is made more palpable when Prometheus, a Greek god and who according Plato played a role in the creation of humanity, becomes identified with the human. Pico della Mirandola (1998) in *On the Dignity of Man* ascribes to Asclepius the Athenian the

view that “man was symbolized by Prometheus.” While the current human being is not un-divine the Prometheus’ goal is about seeking to bring human beings closer to Godhood. Steven Umbrello and Jessica Lombard (2016) however object to the appropriateness of Promethean symbolism though they write with respect to posthumanism. Among other things, they argue that the Prometheus myth is marked by the underlying desire for penance. Reference to Prometheus becomes therefore a call to humility and abandonment both of the desire for violence against nature and of the shame associated with the current state of human kind. Prometheus is a moral objection because his hubris was punished. More importantly the analogy crumbles given that Prometheus is not human but a Titan (Umbrello & Lombard, 2016). While the myth could stand for transhumanist, it does not for posthumanism because the classical humanist dichotomies are highlighted, namely gods/man, heaven/earth etc. The notion of enhancement present in transhumanism betrays these dichotomies given that the transhumanists sometimes accept the means of enhancement with an understanding that such enhancements are integrally linked to humanist dichotomies where in “the (human) subject manipulates the object; science takes control over nature; the mind engineers the body-which is nothing but an instrument” (Franssen, 2014, 79). It does not seem to the present researcher that the transhumanists care about the humanist dichotomies especially with regard to machine and humans. In fact the physicalist basis of their agenda is indicative of such. The idea of Artificial Super Intelligence Singularity, mind uploading among others shows that at the extreme, the transhumanists do not care if the lines are blurred.

For Haldane (2002) however, Daedalus is the first modern man in that he pursued his experiment neglecting and forgetting the gods. Daedalus was an Athenian craftsman and an artist, whose myth is famous for the creation of the Labyrinth on Crete on one hand and the crafting of wings for himself and his son Icarus on the other hand. Thus he best represents the human adventure of the mastery of nature through science and technology. Besides his technical skill does not lead to any punishment even if it produces horrors. Here in, it is the inconsiderate use of technique that is negative and not the technique in essence as found in Prometheus myth where in the simple act of allowing the fire is punished. In the myth Sisyphus, the foreshadowing of the desire to evade death appears to be highlighted. Sisyphus, first king of Corinth was known to be perhaps the craftiest of all monarchs. Believing himself to above gods he showed contempt of divine law and hubris. He was able to chain Zeus’ hitman *Thanatos* (death) through his wit and with this the universe’s divine laws instituted by the gods ceased to function. Sisyphus was however punished with into eternity of meaninglessness by eternally being forced to carry a boulder up a hill only to have it fall down to the roots upon reaching the precipice (Umbrello & Lombard, 2016). It seems therefore that this quest to transcend natural boundaries has always been reined in by the concept of hubris, namely the view that some ambitions are off-limits and will backfire if pursued. Thus the quest for immortality has always even in myths been approached by some ambivalence. By and large what has been the aim of this section is to show the mythological roots of transhumanism without being out to examine which of the myths is symbolically more apt in providing a basis for transhumanism.

### **Science Fiction: Engineering and Reinforcing Transhumanist Agenda**

For the purposes of clarification, Science fiction is a literary genre of technological changes in human life. It is full of imaginative and futuristic concepts and ideas aimed at human transformation. The term was used for the first time by Luxembourgish-American Hugo Gernsback in 1926 to present a pioneering new fiction which features an interesting romance genre intertwined with different scientific facts and predictive views (Mirenayat et al., 2017, p. 264). Included under the broad category of Speculative fiction, science fiction deals with different scientific and visionary terms such as time travel, extraterrestrial life, space colonization, singularity, virtual reality, robotic life, transformation, superhumanization etc. It is therefore based on different possibilities of future and worlds. It may be couched in mythical language which plays a key role in building the future through utopian and dystopian stories (Mirenayat et al., 264). In its ability to constitute new meanings for reality by distancing itself from the real world and at the same time maintaining plausibility, science fiction is both transitional and translational. Situated on the boundaries of what is seemingly technologically possible, science fiction avoids classification as mere fantasy and preserves its translational potency. By being at the very least, marginally accurate, science fiction preserves its legitimacy for disseminating scientific information and criticism (Fletcher, 2012, p. 23).

Science fiction through creation of images, greatly influences cultural imaginations which are key to the transformation of the world, as the contents of the imagination become actualized. Creations of writers become inspirations towards limitless possibilities of the future which progressively lead to the science fiction becoming a reality. The field of science fiction is itself an imaginative arena with its power of overcoming all boundaries of common sense and contemporary possibilities. Gaut and Kieran write of imagination in this light thus:

Imagination as an active, productive faculty is geared toward entertaining possibilities or alternate appearances. As such, imagination, unlike mechanisms straightforwardly geared toward belief and knowledge is not tied to attempting to

track how the world is. Hence, in entertaining what is or might be possible, how things could appear, or even the seemingly impossible, imagining something is variously freed from the constraints of belief. (Gaut and Kieran, 2018, p.8)

Gaut and Kieran therefore consider imagination as the mental faculty or a suite of mechanisms involved in the underlying process of creativity: “From calling to mind alternate courses of action and entertaining hypotheses to the construction of perceptual imaginings, the imagination seems fundamental to the creative process” (Gaut and Kieran, 2018, p.7).

Many of the high techs have been birthed thanks to the imaginative excitement from science fiction. For instance, Martin Cooper in 1973 relays that his inspiration for creating the world’s first portable phone was indeed the ‘communicator device’ used in the *Star Trek* episodes in 1966. Google Earth was directly inspired by an idea from *Snow Crash*. The words “robot” and robotics”, “cyberspace”, “zero gravity”, “gas giant”, “avatar”, “genetic engineering” and “computer virus” were all coined by science fiction writers. At the core of Science fiction is a projection of new realities and new worlds in the imagination. In the recent times science fiction writings and movies have furnished fantastic ideas such as simulated worlds using radical technologies which fuel transhumanist ideas and provide medium for the transmission and reproduction of transhumanist ideas. These have created fictions about transformation with different angles of technology in human life. *Altered Carbon* (2018-2020) projects a future where human consciousness can be downloaded onto devices called “cortical stacks”. Physical bodies are in this technology reduced to temporary vehicles for these storage devices which are implanted and swapped between various bodies (Meiring, 2021). *The Matrix* (1999, 2003) depicts humans living in a digital simulation while their bodies remain inactive in liquid-filled pods (Meiring, 2021). Whether seen as fantasy pure and simple, utopia or dystopia, science fiction has a way of taking its audience on a journey of exploration, discovery and wonder. Serving as beacon of possibility to a future, it projects a world which may soon become our reality. American writer, A.E. Vogt in his novel, *Slan* shows a future where humans aggressively subdue higher-than-human mutants. In the story, human evolves into mutants which are higher than humans. *I, Robot* is another work from Russian-American writer, Isaac Asimov. It depicts the idea of self-aware robots and their legal equality with humans. In 1953, British writer, Arthur C. Clarke in his *Childhood’s End* shows the possibility of human evolution to superhuman. That it could have fuelled with transhumanist ideals and agenda is therefore not far-fetched. Of course it cannot be said that it is only one way influence. By no means, it is a two way influence with science fiction and transhumanism, each reinforcing each other. Martin Caidin’s work, *Cyborg* influenced the birthing of many science fiction stories and movies and the work is about Steve Austin who was technologically perfected in an apocalyptic kind of transformation. Here the shattered body is assembled and then he turns into a higher than human who is a fatal unstoppable weapon without human emotion. *Man Plus* is another work by American writer Frederick Pohl. The work depicts Roger, the main character as transformed thanks to advanced biological engineering into a machine-like weaponized monster to survive on the planet Mars. Again *The Bohr Maker* by Linda Nagata shows a man who wants to survive through a nanotech device to illegally rewrite his genetic code and turn into a posthuman to gain immortality. What has simply been highlighted here is influence from science fiction in birthing and sustaining transhumanist ideals.

By and large, science fiction given its rhetorical character has helped to elevate transhumanist discourse “in a more constructive, dialogical direction through improved public understanding. As the genre incorporates new technologies into its established themes, a normalization process happens and so the new technologies become public knowledge. Little wonder *Brave New World* for instance is continually mentioned in essays, books, and media stories on genetic engineering and to a lesser extent transhumanism (Fletcher, 2012, 23). The normalization effect of science fiction solidifies the genre’s robust production of compelling rhetorical artifacts.

### Conclusion

The present work limits itself to only three historical-cultural precursors. There are many more. For instance, not a few have made connections between Christian eschatology and transhumanism, though the latter is considered a secular religion. Also it has been shown that transhumanism has distant roots in the European Medieval alchemy. Transhumanism has been considered the continuation of the alchemic project and its perfection. For instance Roger Bacon, an alchemist harped on the possibility of prolongation of life given his hermeneutics of Genesis 5 where human beings were said to have lived a thousand years. From this reading, he deduces that man is naturally immortal. According to him the abbreviation of life was caused by a want of regiment of health and so was accidental. He holds that it could either be wholly repaired or at least in part. He recommends an alchemical elixir as key to life prolongation. By and large, the piece serves to highlight that transhumanism and its enhancement goal as well as search for elixir of life cast their shadows in human history. Human beings have never lived without the search for well-being and the desire to escape from the natural finitude even the ultimate finitude that is death. Unfortunately man has never succeeded. Whether or not transhumanism would succeed is yet to be seen.

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