

## **TRANHUMANISM: Inhumane ideology or enhanced humanism?**

Master: Philosophy Now

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### **Syllabus & Literature:**

#### **1) Proud shapers of our own being - Humanism, Enlightenment, Transhumanism (2 December 2020)**

Literature:

- Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1956). *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. Translated by A. Robert Caponigri. Introduction by Russell Kirk. Chicago 1956. 1-13.
- Marquis de Condorcet (1796). *Outlines of an historical view of the progress of the human mind*, 10th Episode, Philadelphia. 250-293.
- Max More, The Philosophy of Transhumanism, in: More, M. & Vita-More, N., eds. (2013). *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future*. Wiley-Blackwell. 3-17.

#### **2) Do you want to be transhuman when you grow up? - From Übermensch to Superman (4 December 2020)**

Literature:

- Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, [https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1998/1998-h/1998-h.htm#link2H\\_4\\_0081](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1998/1998-h/1998-h.htm#link2H_4_0081), *Zarathustra's Prologue & LXXIII The Highest Man*
- Transhumanist Declaration, 2012, in: More, M. & Vita-More, N., eds. (2013). *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future*. Wiley-Blackwell. 54f.
- Nick Bostrom, Why I want to be a Posthuman when I grow up, in: More, M. & Vita-More, N., eds. (2013). *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future*. Wiley-Blackwell. 28-53.

#### **3) Make yourself more perfect? (9 December 2020)**

Literature

- Immanuel Kant (1996), *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Cambridge 1996. (6:385-394; 6: 417-420; Duties to Oneself, Book II, 6: 444-447)

- Tom Koch (2020). Transhumanism, Moral Perfection, and Those 76 Trombones. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 45 (2):179-192.
- Hava Tirosh-Samuels, (2018). In Pursuit of Perfection: The Misguided Transhumanist Vision, *Theology and Science*, 16:2, 200-222.

#### 4) Cyborgarts and Cyberpunks - Technological and artistic (self-)creation (11 December 2020)

Literature:

- Natasha Vita-More, Aesthetics: Bringing the Arts and Design into the Discussion on Transhumanism, in: More, M. & Vita-More, N., eds. (2013). *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future*. Wiley-Blackwell. 18-27.
- Philip Elmer-Dewitt: Cyberpunks!  
<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,160935,00.html>
- Erik Parens (2014), Creativity and Gratitude, in: *Shaping Our Selves: On Technology, Flourishing, and a Habit of Thinking*. New York. 45-70.

#### 5) Group Presentations: The Perfect Human Enhancement Lab (16 December 2020)

You will design an imaginative laboratory where participants have a wide range of imaginable NBIC technologies (or other tools) at their disposal, offering a broad variety of options for modifying different capacities of human beings without unmanageable side effects. *Imagine that you could create perfect human beings – how would they look like according to different existing ideals (of humanism, enlightenment, transhumanism, posthumanism...)? Which alternative ideals would you like to integrate?*

In small group you will develop and present an outline for the design of such a “collective thought experiment”: *Specify the purpose and the desired outcomes of your experiment. How would you present it to the participants [e.g. in form of a game setting]? Which tools would you include, which questions would you ask? How would you stimulate a discussion between the participants? Which information would you give them? With which groups of participants would you work? How would you assess and evaluate the results?*

#### 6) A (post-trans-)humanist future? (18 December 2020)

Literature:

- Rosi Braidotti (2013), Posthuman Humanities, *European Educational Research Journal* 12 (1): 1-19.
- Lawson Reagan, (2017), A Humanist Future Is Technoprogressive, *The Australian Humanist*, 125 (125): 2–4.

- Irina Bokova, A New Humanism for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/a\\_new\\_humanism\\_for\\_the\\_21st\\_century/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/a_new_humanism_for_the_21st_century/)
- Roy Scranton, Is Ecohumanism Possible? <https://s-usih.org/2020/08/is-ecohumanism-possible-roundtable-on-the-ecocentrists-pt-1/>

**7) Monsters and Super-Heroes: (Pop-)Cultural Imaginaries of the Post- and Transhuman (6 January 2021)**

- Margarita Carretero González (2016), The Posthuman That Could Have Been: Mary Shelley's Creature. *Relations* 4 (1): 53–64.
- Hassler-Forest D. (2015), Of Iron Men and Green Monsters: Superheroes and Posthumanism. In: Hauskeller M., Philbeck T.D., Carbonell C.D. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Posthumanism in Film and Television*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

**8) Creating the Perfect Human? (8 January 2021)**

We will use and apply (a selection of) the designs of “The Perfect Human Lab” that have been presented on December 16<sup>th</sup>. If you would take part in the thought experiment, how would the result of your ‘ideal (super-)humans’ look like? How do they correspond to or differ from the ideals that we have discussed in the course? Based on the results of the thought experiments we will debate about the pros and cons of Trans- and Posthumanism in relation to Humanism and Enlightenment.