

The Relationship Between Transhumanism and Eugenics: A Philosophical Inquiry

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Abstract

Transhumanism is an intellectual movement that advocates transcending human biological and cognitive limitations using technology. Eugenics, on the other hand, is a historical movement that sought to “improve” the human species through selective reproduction and genetic interventions. This article examines the relationship between transhumanism and eugenics from both historical and philosophical perspectives. First, the historical background of each approach will be discussed; subsequently, the eugenic legacy of transhumanism will be evaluated. It will be argued that while transhumanism rejects coercive state policies in favor of individual freedom and technological progress, it nevertheless converges with a “new eugenics” in its pursuit of enhancing human genetic and physical capacities. Finally, the philosophical and ethical dimensions of both approaches will be explored, particularly focusing on the moral consequences of altering human nature and their implications for human dignity and the principle of equality. This analysis aims to develop an awareness of how transhumanism, as a philosophical movement, diverges from and inherits aspects of eugenics.

Keywords: Transhumanism, Eugenics, Human Dignity, Equality, Enhancement.

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Transhümanizm ve Öjenik Arasındaki İlişki: Felsefi Bir Araştırma

Öz

Transhümanizm, insanın biyolojik ve bilişsel sınırlarını teknoloji aracılığıyla aşma idealini savunan bir düşünce akımıdır. Öjenik ise insan türünü "iyileştirme" amacıyla seçici üreme ve genetik müdahaleler öneren tarihsel bir harekettir. Bu makalede, transhümanizm ile öjenik arasındaki ilişki tarihsel ve felsefi boyutlarıyla incelenecektir. Öncelikle, her iki yaklaşımın tarihsel arka planı ele alınacak; ardından transhümanizmin öjenik mirası değerlendirilecektir. Transhümanizmin zorlayıcı devlet politikalarını reddederek bireysel özgürlük ve teknolojik ilerlemeyi önemseydiği, ancak insanın genetik ve fiziksel yetilerini geliştirme hedefi bakımından "yeni bir öjenik" anlayışıyla keşisebileceği ortaya konulacaktır. Son olarak felsefi ve etik açıdan her iki yaklaşımın ilişkisi irdelenecek ve insan doğasının değiştirilmesinin ablaki sonuçları, insan onuru ve eşitlik ilkesi üzerindeki etkileri ele alınacaktır. Bu değerlendirme, transhümanizmin bir felsefi akım olarak öjenikten hangi yönleriyle ayrıldığı ve hangi yönleriyle onun mirasını taşıdığı konusunda bir bilinç oluşturmaya amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Transhümanizm, Öjenik, İnsan Onuru, Eşitlik, İyileştirme.

Introduction

Throughout history, human beings have consistently sought various means to consciously improve their own future. This aspiration for improvement encompasses the development of one's own nature, the rectification of deficiencies, and the maximization of potential. In Ancient Greece, mythologies and philosophical perspectives frequently depict human beings as stronger, wiser, and even immortal compared to other creatures. For instance, in his dialogue Republic, Plato introduces one of the earliest notions of eugenics by arguing that marriages should take place between individuals of a certain level to produce an ideal generation (Platon, 459d-461e). During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, alchemists and philosophers engaged in various studies concerning the possibility of prolonging human life (Bostrom, 2005b, 2).

With the emergence of the theory of evolution in the nineteenth century, science entered the discourse on the improvement of the human species. In particular, the idea that the human race could be enhanced through artificial selection became a significant topic in science. The transition from natural selection to artificial selection allowed eugenic thought to develop rapidly in the modern era. Toward the end of this period, Francis Galton defined eugenics as the science of improving the human stock. The very term, in fact, derives from the Greek words

for “good” and “birth,” thus literally signifying “good birth.” Galton’s aim was to demonstrate that evolution is applicable to human beings as well, that hereditary traits such as intelligence and talent could improve over time, while defective or problematic characteristics could be weakened (Galton, 1883, p.24). Supporting the reproduction of suitable individuals was identified as positive eugenics, whereas preventing the reproduction of unsuitable individuals was identified as negative eugenics. Galton’s ideas spread widely until the first quarter of the twentieth century, with many scientists acknowledging that hereditary problems underpinned social progress and therefore necessitated scientific improvement.

This idea of “improvement,” which brought with it numerous moral and scientific debates, was transformed into concrete policies in many countries, particularly in the United States, through various methods of implementation. For example, compulsory sterilization laws have been enacted in the United States and several European countries. In the first half of the twentieth century, approximately 65,000 individuals in the United States were sterilized on the grounds of being mentally disabled. In addition, people with physical, visual, and hearing impairments, those suffering from epilepsy, as well as orphans and the poor were indirectly affected by sterilization practices. However, the country in which eugenic policies were ruthlessly implemented was undoubtedly Nazi Germany. The Nazi conception of the superior Aryan race served as a justification for the extermination of Jews, as well as Roma, individuals with disabilities, homosexuals, and political dissidents (Bostrom, 2005b, 6). Considering that laws supporting eugenic thought continued to exist until the last quarter of the twentieth century, the extent of its influence in this era can be understood.

From the beginning of this era, however, there were thinkers who raised serious criticisms of eugenic thought. Chesterton, who sought to expose the dangers of eugenics as early as the 1920s, argued in his work *Eugenics and Other Evils* (1922) that eugenics could become a form of scientific tyranny in which elites might even decide who deserved to live. Such a situation, he explained, could allow eugenics to receive state support under the guise of a pseudo-religion cloaked in scientific authority. In this way, elites could subject the aforementioned groups to oppression under the rhetoric of “improvement” (Chesterton 1922, pp. 54–56). It is well known that these ideas were soon put into practice by the Nazis.

When the horrific events perpetrated by the Nazis came to light after the war, a worldwide reaction against eugenics began to emerge. By the mid-twentieth century, eugenic thought had reached the point of collapsed, both morally and intellectually. This worldview, which aimed to improve humanity in every respect,

provided the theoretical basis for numerous human rights violations. The experience offered a significant indication of the extent to which state intervention in the pursuit of human perfection could go. However, these indications did not eliminate the desire to enhance humanity; rather, they redirected it into different domains. The biomedical sciences, space research, and advances in computer technology are undoubtedly at the forefront of these domains. In these fields, instead of the eugenic discourse of “racial improvement,” the idea of improving conditions came to the fore (Bostrom, 2005b, p. 6).

In this process, eugenic thought is not merely relegated to the dusty shelves of history; rather, it is reshaped in accordance with modern conditions. Coercive, state-driven eugenic policies are replaced by a more individual-oriented, voluntary, and technologically mediated approach to human enhancement. With the advancement of biotechnology, genetic engineering, and information technologies, the notion that the boundaries of human nature can be transcended has gained increasing support. This has led to the resurgence of eugenic ideals in a new guise, albeit grounded in a different ethical framework. At this point, the historical continuity and transformative relationship between eugenics and transhumanism becomes increasingly apparent.

Alongside the transformation of its methods, the shift in discourse facilitated a transition from eugenics to human enhancement. The term transhumanism was first introduced by Julian Huxley in a 1957 essay, in which he defined it as the decision of human beings, through their free will, to transcend themselves (Huxley, 1957, p.17). More explicitly, transhumanism can be described as enabling new possibilities for surpassing oneself while remaining human, thus allowing humanity to transcend its essence (Bostrom, 2005b, 6). Huxley’s definition suggests that the evolutionary process of humanity can be consciously directed. Considering that Huxley also served as the president of the British Eugenics Society, a certain connection between transhumanism and eugenics can be discerned. However, it must be noted that this connection evolved from compulsory state policies into an understanding centered on free will.

In parallel with technological advancements, the concept of transhumanism transformed into an intellectual movement in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Max More and Natasha Vita-More established an organization called the Extropy Institute, turning transhumanism into a philosophical program. In a 1990 essay, More (1990) defined transhumanism as a conscious evolutionary process that preserves humanity’s intellectual legacy (p.6). It should not be overlooked that this process bears a futurist philosophical character. This perspective regards hu-

man nature not as a fixed and immutable structure but rather as a project capable of development and transformation through the support of science and technology. As a continuation of humanist approaches, transhumanism may be considered a radical movement for human enhancement (Bostrom, 2005a, pp. 202–203).

A closer look at both approaches reveals that they share a common ideal—namely, “the transcendence of the human self” and the pursuit of “a more perfected state.” However, the methods chosen and the guiding values differ entirely. Eugenics sought to attain these ideals through state intervention, thereby mortgaging individual autonomy, whereas transhumanism represents an approach that respects free will and personal choice while maintaining an organic connection with technological progress. Highlighting this distinction, Bostrom identifies the most important principle of human enhancement as the non-imposition of individual choices on others (Bostrom, 2005b, 5).

This study examines in detail the convergences and divergences between the concepts of eugenics and transhumanism. It addresses the influence of eugenic ideologies on the emergence of transhumanism, as well as the ways in which transhumanist thinkers approached eugenics, and discusses the existence of new eugenic tendencies today. Attention will also be given to biotechnological and genetic methods that allow parents to select certain traits for their children. Finally, the relationship between eugenics and transhumanism will be evaluated in terms of human rights, dignity, equality, and freedom, with an emphasis on the ethical dimensions.

1. From Compulsory Improvement to Selective Enhancement

The transformation of eugenics into a discredited concept in the eyes of humanity redirected the idea of intervening in human genetics into a different trajectory. Especially after World War II, a series of innovations emerged in the field of genetics. Among the most important of these are prenatal diagnosis, in vitro fertilization, and the identification of genetic diseases. Although embryo selection and gene-editing tools (such as CRISPR) have entered the agenda during this period, their development remains insufficient. As these technologies began to affect human life, they provided significant medical benefits by preventing many hereditary diseases. Yet, at the same time, they revived concerns that eugenics might once again find a place for itself, while also raising pressing ethical issues. For instance, should a pregnancy be terminated because of the prenatal detection of a hereditary disease? Can certain traits of healthy babies be altered? In the face of technological advances, the ethical dilemmas confronting humanity blur the sharp line between treatment and enhancement.

As is well known, treatment is defined as the correction of medical conditions such as illness or disability, whereas enhancement refers to pushing the capacity of a healthy individual beyond the normal. For example, the treatment of conditions such as diabetes or depression aims to restore the individual to a state of normality and thus constitutes treatment, whereas memory-enhancing drugs or performance-boosting neurotechnologies target the supranormal and therefore fall under enhancement. From a philosophical standpoint, it becomes clear that while there is a general consensus regarding treatment, a significant divergence exists concerning enhancement. Within this divergence, philosophers such as Sandel view humanity's aspiration for perfection as conflicting with the virtue of humility (Sandel, 2004).

In this ambiguous context, bioethicist Agar reconsiders eugenic practices in relation to liberalism. In his essay *Liberal Eugenics*, Agar argues that it is morally legitimate for parents to select certain traits for their children, such as intelligence. According to him, the eugenics movement, by renouncing its earlier errors, could contribute to improving human genetics. The critical issue at this point, he insists, is that there must be no state coercion, that choices should be left to individuals, and that such practices must occur strictly within an ethical framework (Agar, 1998, pp. 137–138). Sharing similar concerns, Harris, in his work *Enhancing Evolution: The Ethical Case for Making Better People* (2007), regards the use of technology to extend human life, prevent diseases, and enhance human capacities as a moral responsibility. For him, since the very nature of enhancement is to provide benefit to human beings, it is not possible to describe as “enhancement” something that brings no benefit. Therefore, technological developments that achieve safe and beneficial enhancement in human life should not be considered morally wrong; on the contrary, such changes ought to be viewed as an ethical obligation (Harris, 2007, pp. 36–37).

Harris's approach suggests that if an intervention improves human life, then all possible consequences—including side effects—should be taken into account in order to find a viable solution. This perspective implies that conscious intervention has always been a part of humanity's evolutionary process; thus, the “new eugenics” is not fundamentally different from the treatment of diseases. This new understanding leads transhumanists to avoid imposing any universal program for genetic improvement and instead emphasize respect for individual differences (Bostrom, 2005a, p.203).

In the framework of the new eugenics, which has assumed a more liberal character, certain practices—though influencing transhumanists—have not been

entirely eradicated from the legacy of the old eugenics. For example, in many countries, terminating a pregnancy following certain diagnoses is common. The detection and, if possible, elimination of severe hereditary diseases during pregnancy represents the structure of the old eugenics. However, because this structure is presented under the guise of medical ethics, it is deemed legitimate. Regarding the elimination of embryos with serious genetic disorders, Habermas adopts a cautiously positive stance within certain limits. More specifically, he is not opposed to genetic interventions, provided that they serve therapeutic purposes. For him, the critical point lies in ensuring that parents do not experience regret in the future and that such decisions prevent significant harm (Habermas, 2003, p.21).

Today, in many countries, terminating a pregnancy is legally and morally accepted when a fatal or severe illness is detected in the fetus. In Turkey, however, termination is permitted after the tenth week only if the mother's life is at risk or if the child to be born would severely affect future generations; otherwise, termination entails legal penalties (Uyumaz and Avci, 2016, p.604). If such conditions are not present and the pregnancy progresses normally, making human nature itself the object of a project for enhancement remains open to criticism. In particular, the genetic design of children may undermine both ethical foundations and the basis for self-consciousness. The relationship between parent and child risks shifting from one rooted in what is given to one constructed. As a result, a child who has no say in their own being and who is "designed" becomes an object of parental goals. Such a child, reduced to an object, may lose self-respect and consequently fail to establish a normal relationship of love with their parents. Hence, whether eugenics occurs coercively or voluntarily, it can negatively affect not only the moral order but also the integrity of individual identity (Sandel, 2004).

Viewing genetic selection or enhancement attempts as dangerous, Sandel explains the parent-child relationship through the concept of the gift. According to him, parents are expected to recognize that their children are gifts. If the genetic traits of children are selected, a perfectionist mentality replaces the notion of a gift. Sandel criticizes parents who attempt to perfect their children in ordinary life. If the belief that children are gifts remains central, parental communication with them will inevitably be grounded in love. This perspective does not imply that sick or disabled children should be left untreated. Rather, it emphasizes that within the parent-child relationship, the focus should rest on acceptance rather than design (Sandel, 2007, p.27). Otherwise, what emerges is a form of biological domination, an approach that displaces many moral concepts, such as humility and gratitude, thereby leading to ethical desolation.

It must be recognized that the foregoing debates are directly related to human nature and human dignity. Whenever a significant intervention in human life is at stake, discussions concerning the limits of human nature inevitably arise. In these debates, bioconservative thinkers oppose every aspiration to alter human nature beyond therapy, while transhumanists draw attention to the beneficial aspects of the technological age. Among bioconservatives, Kass argues that the transhumanist approach embraces the idea of a perfect society, a vision he regards as leading down an inhumane path. In a world where human nature is under control, neither free will nor genuine purpose can exist. Kass characterizes each member of such a world as an “empty happy zombie” or a “contented cow.” For him, the fundamental rule of being human lies precisely in our imperfection (Kass, 2003, pp. 48–49). The continuous attempt to eliminate these flaws for the sake of perpetual happiness may, in fact, bring our story to an end.

In contrast, Bostrom regards Kass’s position as “an excessively pessimistic and unfounded prophecy” (Bostrom, 2005a, p.206). While technological enhancement does not currently threaten human nature or dignity, the ground remains precarious enough that the concerns voiced by Kass and others must be taken seriously. For instance, in a world without natural aging, where everyone is ultra-intelligent, how social norms and balances would function remains an enigma.

Fukuyama, who has advanced various predictions on this matter, contends that the first thing to vanish in a transhumanist world would be human equality. According to him, transhumanism aims to modify or enhance the shared human essence underpinning modern liberal democracies. If such a goal were to be realized, the status of the “normal” human being would become uncertain. Moreover, altering the being to which the concept of “human” refers would bring numerous political and ethical problems. The foremost among these would be a reexamination of the scope of human rights. For example, an ultra-intelligent human might perceive themselves as distinct from normally intelligent individuals and demand privileges from society. Conversely, ordinary humans might harbor resentment or hatred toward ultra-intelligent humans (Fukuyama, 2004, pp. 42–43). All of these possibilities demonstrate that, contrary to what is often assumed, the transhumanist age is fraught with potential problems.

Viewing these possibilities as dangerous, Annas goes a step further and advocates for the prohibition of biotechnological practices that threaten human nature. He categorizes such endeavors as crimes against humanity (Annas et al., 2002, p.162). Indeed, given that uncontrolled transhumanist developments harbor

the risks of eugenic dictatorships and biological caste systems, it is crucial to take each of these concerns into account.

In response to these dark scenarios, transhumanists argue that the problems of the past stem not so much from technological developments themselves as from the human use of such technologies as instruments of oppression. When one examines modern and peaceful societies, it becomes clear that, despite differences in mental and physical conditions, every individual enjoys equal legal and social rights in these societies. At this point, the real issue is not the coexistence of ultra-intelligent and normally intelligent individuals in society but rather the preservation of the rule of law and universal human rights (Bostrom, 2005a, pp. 203–204). As long as equal rights are granted to all, it becomes possible for people with diverse abilities to live together in the same society. The essential matter, then, is to ensure that power is not handed over to authoritarian regimes. Opposing technological progress and blocking alternative solutions may be interpreted as attempts at authoritarianism. Therefore, transhumanism can continue to exist only if it charts a path that respects diversity and individual decisions, thereby navigating the tension between the imposition of eugenic practices and the prohibition of technological development.

Such a path inevitably raises further questions regarding the definition of eugenics. Topics such as sex selection and the prevention of births involving disabled children blur the line between transhumanism and eugenics. At this point, redefining the concept of eugenics becomes crucial for clarifying ongoing debates. If eugenics is defined as “any attempt to improve the human gene pool,” then it encompasses a wide range of practices, from compulsory sterilization to sex selection. Such a definition inevitably brings many distinctions (e.g., liberal eugenics, preventive eugenics), requiring that each case be evaluated on its own terms. In this way, no practice can be deemed immoral or wrong merely because it falls within the boundaries of eugenics. Instead, the moral status of such practices becomes dependent on their aims, conditions, and consequences. Thus, while preventing the birth of a disabled child and selecting a child’s sex are both eugenic practices, they must be assessed from different perspectives (Wilkinson & Garrard, 2013, pp. 3–4).

Such an approach not only liberates eugenics from its historical burden but also opens the way for evaluating each practice in its proper context in the future. This new path allows eugenics to be reconceptualized, enabling scientific research to move beyond ethical apprehensions and facilitating the implementation of a range of practices designed to improve human life.

2. Philosophical and Ethical Debates: Commonalities and Differences

The relationship between transhumanism and eugenics, while marked by certain distinctions in terms of historical development and methodology, nevertheless displays a unifying structure with respect to human enhancement. Both perspectives can be characterized as sharing a common aim and ideal, although they differ in their methods and applications. In terms of aim and ideal, both approaches regard the present condition of humanity as inadequate and seek to improve it. Eugenics pursues this goal by attempting to refine the gene pool and disseminate hereditary traits, whereas transhumanism seeks to achieve this through the use of technology. The ideal of eugenics is the production of physically and mentally superior humans, while the ideal of transhumanism is to attain a being beyond the human—namely, the posthuman.¹ Owing to this shared aim and ideal, transhumanism can be interpreted as a technologically supported and broader version of eugenics. Indeed, both perspectives, which share an intertwined genealogy, have found a place within authoritarian structures and liberal policies. Bostrom's views support this interpretation. He argues that there is currently an inverse correlation between intelligence and fertility, a development that may pose a long-term threat to humanity; therefore, transhumanist approaches should be adopted by individuals (Bostrom, 2002, p.12). This argument reveals that eugenics continues to exist latently even within liberal social policies. The essential difference here lies in the fact that eugenics sought to increase the reproduction of intelligent individuals through social engineering, whereas transhumanism does so through genetic engineering and biotechnology.

The unity of aim and ideal between the two approaches transforms into a critical divergence once the question of method and practice arises. Eugenics typically relies on coercive state-led practices. For instance, forced sterilization, compulsory marriages, and immigration quotas were consistently implemented by the central authorities. In contrast, transhumanism appears, at first glance, to emphasize individual freedom and choice. The state's role is to provide the necessary

1 At this point, it is important to note the fundamental difference between the transhumanist conception of the “posthuman” and that of posthumanist thinkers. In the transhumanist perspective, the posthuman represents an enhanced state of existence in which human cognitive, physical, and psychological limitations are transcended; this view is progress-oriented, individual-centered, and affirms technological intervention. In contrast, posthumanism offers a critique of the anthropocentric foundations of Western thought; in this context, the posthuman figure signifies a departure from human-centeredness and a questioning of the boundaries between humans, animals, machines, and nature. Thus, while the transhumanist posthuman envisions a more powerful “beyond-human” being, the posthumanist posthuman calls for an ontological transformation that dismantles the privileged status of the human subject.

conditions for individuals who wish to enhance themselves without imposing any form of obligation. For example, in cases of genetic enhancement during pregnancy, what matters is not state imposition but rather the consent and preferences of the parents. This constitutes the most significant moral distinction between transhumanism and eugenic practices. Stressing this distinction, transhumanists declare their opposition to compulsory eugenics by placing respect for fundamental principles—such as bodily integrity and reproductive rights—at the center of their perspective (Agar, 2004, pp. 137–138). This opposition becomes even more evident in the preference for terms such as human enhancement and reprognetics in place of “genetic selection.”

Although transhumanists make considerable efforts to avoid being associated with eugenics, it must be acknowledged that this is far from easy. Whenever genetic enhancement is involved—even if on a voluntary basis—distinctions inevitably arise between traits deemed socially desirable and undesirable. Such distinctions may contribute to the resurgence of the eugenic mindset. Moreover, genetic enhancements could deepen social inequality by creating a new biological class. Drawing attention to this concern, Fukuyama argues that the first concept threatened by transhumanism is equality. According to him, humans endowed with superior capacities may distinguish themselves from others and demand privileges (Fukuyama, 2004, p. 42).

In contrast, Bailey maintains that political and biological equality are separate categories, emphasizing that although differences in actual abilities already exist, individuals remain politically and legally equal. Throughout history, people have often been regarded as equal before the law despite clear inequalities in talent, intelligence, and health. Achieving such equality in the context of genetic enhancement may require time, as these rights would initially be accessible primarily to elites but would gradually diffuse throughout society. In the end, the inequality predicted by Fukuyama may be minimized (Bailey, 2004, p.25). Bailey’s approach demonstrates that transhumanists aim not to restrict genetic enhancement but rather to expand access to it.

The relationship between transhumanism and eugenics becomes evident when the question of human nature is raised. Both approaches conceive of human nature not as a fixed and immutable structure but as a potential subject for development. Eugenics claims that humans are not born with equal rights and, therefore, do not deserve equal treatment. From this perspective, religious traditions that defend the ideals of equality and individual rights constitute an obstacle to genetic enhancement; instead, it is argued that the progress of humanity may

require the sacrifice of certain individuals (Dürr, 2023). In contrast, transhumanism does not wholly reject individual rights and freedoms; however, like eugenics, it challenges the notion of human nature. Consequently, any alteration of human nature prompted by either approach risks undermining moral autonomy. In such a scenario, the moral agency of a child whose genes have been predetermined becomes questionable (Habermas, 2003, p. 40–41). The existence of transhumanists who aim to eliminate emotions such as aggression, jealousy, and pain within the framework of genetic enhancement demonstrates that intervention in human nature may lead to a profound rupture.

In contrast, Fukuyama contends that positive and negative traits in human beings are interrelated, and that one who has never experienced anger would be incapable of knowing how to defend themselves. For him, what fundamentally constitutes humanity is precisely the wholeness of its existence, including its darker dimensions (Fukuyama, 2003, p. 42–43). By contrast, Bostrom, who regards present human nature as only a stage of development, argues that the posthuman condition would not destroy human dignity but rather enhance the value of human life. He maintains that the enhanced human would continue to be a member of the moral community, remaining capable of complying with legal and ethical norms. Thus, the task at hand is not to retreat from technology, but to construct a new ethical and legal framework that takes these risks into account (Bostrom, 2005a, p. 210).

From these considerations, it can be said that transhumanism and eugenics are closely interconnected. While transhumanism inherits from eugenics the ideal of human improvement, it diverges in its emphasis on respect for individual rights, the prioritization of technology, and a pluralistic outlook. To underscore this distinction, it consistently highlights the concepts of freedom, diversity and voluntarism. Nevertheless, because it regards the biological perfection of human beings as morally desirable, transhumanism remains aligned with eugenics on the same axis. Therefore, transhumanism may be viewed as a more sophisticated continuation of eugenics. However, it must be reiterated that transhumanism centers on voluntarism rather than coercion, universalism rather than racism, and long-term scientific solutions rather than short-term interventions. Beyond these commonalities and differences, both approaches have been subject to significant criticism, providing fertile ground for strong opposing views.

The coercive and racially oriented aspects of eugenics have provoked ethical and religious concerns. For example, Chesterton (1922) describes the state's restriction of human freedom as a moral collapse. He characterizes such an ap-

proach as “scientific bureaucratism carried to the point of madness” (Chesterton, 1922, p. 4–5). From a Kantian perspective, arrogantly interfering with the mystery of life in the name of the common good results in the instrumentalization of human beings for an end. The elimination of some individuals’ rights and happiness in the pursuit of perfection cannot be reconciled with Kant’s moral principle that humanity must always be treated as an end in itself. Indeed, human life, however flawed and incomplete, cannot be deemed worthless or eradicated. Should this understanding be abandoned and eugenic motivations placed at the center, a moral collapse in society would seem inevitable (Mendz & Cook, 2021, pp. 117–118). In a society where moral boundaries become blurred, it becomes uncertain where one should stop or how far one should proceed. Thus, a process that begins with the elimination of hereditary diseases may extend into more commonplace matters, such as altering sex, hair color, or intelligence. As it becomes increasingly difficult to set boundaries for such matters, opponents of eugenics argue that such practices should not be initiated.

In contrast to eugenics, the expressivist argument and disability perspective play a significant role. The systematic elimination of disabled fetuses through various tests risks fostering the belief that disabled people are less valuable to society. However, in truth, all individuals—disabled or not—possess equal rights and worth. This recognition, which is already internalized within society, must not be reversed. If the routine prevention of the birth of disabled children were normalized as a preferable outcome, it might implicitly convey to existing disabled individuals the message: “it would have been better had you never been born.” Still, this problem is not merely rational; it is also profoundly emotional and social in nature. Particularly pressing are the questions of how social diversity might be undermined and to what extent uniformity might prevail in the future. The focus of eugenics on perfection rather than diversity, together with transhumanism’s aspiration to eradicate suffering, illness, and aging, heightens these concerns. The pursuit of perfection may ultimately lead to the loss of a conception of humanity that values the flawed and imperfect condition of human existence.

Similar to eugenics, transhumanism has been subject to religious and ethical criticisms. For instance, the Catholic Church interprets all efforts to alter human genetics as interference in the work of God. Within the Islamic world, there are perspectives that regard transhumanism as an intervention in *fitra* (human nature). The core motivation behind both viewpoints is the belief that the limits inherent in human creation possess a certain wisdom and that by removing these boundaries, humanity risks being driven into spiritual and physical ruin.

In contrast, philosophical critiques are generally concerned with questions of purpose and meaning. If the human lifespan were extended to infinity and suffering eradicated, the fundamental elements that render life meaningful could be weakened. Loss of motivation, identity crises, the dissolution of generational continuity, and other conditions affecting human psychology and value systems may give rise to unpredictable problems. In response to these critiques, transhumanists argue that meaning and value are not tied to duration or suffering but rather to the quality of the lived experience. However, such claims do not conclusively resolve the debate.

Conclusion

The relationship between transhumanism and eugenics reveals the historical continuity of modern humanity's desire to understand and transform itself into a superior species. Historically, transhumanism did not emerge from a wholly separate source; rather, it was shaped by the evolution of eugenic ideals. Although eugenics was initially presented in the early twentieth century as a progressive promise of science and social engineering, it resulted in irreparable violations of human rights. Transhumanism, which articulates a similar promise, has appeared in the twenty-first century—an era of technological supremacy—with more liberal and individual-centered rhetoric. This study argues that the two approaches share important commonalities. These include the presupposition that the current condition of humanity is inadequate and the belief that scientific intervention is permissible for the sake of a better humanity. While both rely on the idea of conscious evolution, eugenics centers on genetic selection, and transhumanism emphasizes genetic engineering, cybernetics, and artificial intelligence. Since both conceptions regard the human body and mind as projects, it may be claimed that transhumanism is the twenty-first-century heir of eugenics.

Despite these common foundations, significant differences must be acknowledged in terms of methods, ethics, and politics. While eugenics is coercive, discriminatory, and collectivist in nature, transhumanism espouses a libertarian ethos that values diversity and individuality. To avoid the racist and classist errors of eugenics, transhumanism does not impose technological enhancement as an obligation. Advocating for freedom in bodily and mental decisions, transhumanism distances itself from the authoritarian stance of eugenics and adopts a more flexible and nuanced approach. However, it must be recognized that transhumanism carries risks that could undermine human equality and dignity. The elimination or reconfiguration of human traits, such as mortality and the natural distribution

of abilities, could directly affect a wide range of domains, from law and ethics to religion and art. Indeed, the potential for transhumanism to contain dangers such as genetic caste systems, conflicts between “new” and “old” humans, or mechanisms of totalitarian control raises the possibility of a dystopia. Even if it is argued that such scenarios can be contained, the course of human history compels us to exercise caution.

In light of all this, it must be emphasized that the relationship between transhumanism and eugenics cannot be defined simply in terms of identity or complete opposition. With respect to human enhancement and the guidance of evolution, there is continuity; however, in terms of method and ethical orientation, there is a rupture. Particularly in the domain of human improvement, transhumanism will either avoid the pitfalls into which eugenics once fell and serve the benefit of humanity, or it will succumb to similar traps and become an advocate of inequality and injustice. This study has shown that, in the case of transhumanism, both possibilities remain within the realm of possibility.

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