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Nietzsche and Transhumanism: Incompatible Readings, Irreconcilable Futures

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Abstract: This article critically examines the complex and contested relationship between Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy and the transhumanist movement. Two primary theses guide the inquiry: first, that transhumanist thinkers who claim close links between the philosopher of Röcken and transhumanism interpret Nietzsche in strikingly different and, at times, mutually incompatible ways; second, that Nietzsche should not be regarded as a coherent philosophical progenitor of transhumanism. The argument first deconstructs the meta-analytical framework proposed by Riccardo Campa (2019), exposing the methodological and categorical limitations of his taxonomy. It then distinguishes two divergent hermeneutic strategies within Campa's "Nietzschean transhumanists" category: a "soft" reading that sanitizes Nietzsche to fit liberal and democratic ideals at substantial cost to textual fidelity; and a "hard" reading that, while descriptively far more faithful, recovers him as the philosopher of a radical organicist, hierarchical, and caste-based worldview. A systematic analysis of master morality, the Übermensch, and Nietzsche's explicit political vision argues that this second reading, however prescriptively troubling, is interpretively warranted, and that the core of Nietzschean thought is therefore fundamentally incompatible with the ideals of mainstream transhumanism—an incompatibility articulated here primarily on the socio-political plane, within the broader opposition between Nietzsche's radical ethical naturalism and the transhumanist project's ethical anti-naturalism. An anthropological excursus advances a conjectural genealogy that situates Nietzsche's Übermensch ideal closer to archaic dominance patterns than to a progressive vision of human evolution. The article concludes that the decisive problem for transhumanism is not appropriation but equivocation: readings that share Nietzsche's name while pointing toward opposed futures. It therefore underscores the necessity for transhumanism to critically and consciously choose its philosophical roots if it aspires to an ethically grounded project of self-directed evolution.

Citation: Stile, Giovanni C. 2026. Nietzsche and Transhumanism: Incompatible Readings, Irreconcilable Futures. *Journal of Ethics and Emerging Technologies* 36: 2. <https://doi.org/10.55613/jeet.v36i2.236>

Received: 17/05/2026

Accepted: 04/08/2026

Published: 11/08/2026

Keywords: Nietzsche, transhumanism, Übermensch, master morality, self-directed evolution, suprahumanism, posthumanism, ethical naturalism

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1. Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche remains one of the most influential and contentious philosophers in the Western intellectual tradition, and his ideas continue to generate profoundly divergent interpretations. This is especially true regarding his relationship to transhumanism, an intellectual and cultural movement that seeks to transcend human biological limitations through technology, and whose central idea may be characterized as "self-directed evolution"—the proposition that humans should actively take control of their own evolutionary trajectory (Campa, 2009; Stile, 2015b). The question of whether Nietzsche can or should be regarded as a philosophical forerunner of this movement is neither merely academic nor inconsequential.

As Riccardo Campa has perceptively observed, "to a large extent, the discussion on Nietzsche and transhumanism is not so much an attempt to understand reality as an

attempt to forge it. To ‘choose’ the roots of transhumanism is a way to give this philosophy a direction in the future” (Campa, 2019, p. 25). This insight frames the stakes of the present inquiry: the philosophical genealogy a movement adopts shapes its ethical commitments, its political orientation, and its vision for the future of humanity. If transhumanism embraces Nietzsche as an intellectual ancestor, the question of *which* Nietzsche it embraces becomes crucial, for the philosopher’s legacy can lead in radically different—and in some cases, troubling—directions.

Two primary theses structure this article. The first is that transhumanist thinkers who claim close links between Nietzsche and transhumanism frequently interpret the philosopher in ways that are quite different and, at critical junctures, mutually incompatible (cf. §3). The second thesis is that Nietzsche should not be seen as a coherent philosophical progenitor of transhumanism, given the fundamental incompatibilities between the core of his philosophical project—particularly his radical anti-egalitarianism, his “master morality,” and his conception of the *Übermensch*—and the ideals of universal enhancement, rational progress, and egalitarian ethics that animate mainstream transhumanist thought (cf. §6).

The analysis that follows concentrates primarily on the socio-political and ethical dimension of Nietzsche’s philosophy and its relationship to transhumanism. This focus is motivated by two considerations. First, it is on the socio-political plane—encompassing ethics, political vision, and the question of what kind of society the “enhanced” human would inhabit—that the most consequential and least examined tensions between Nietzsche and transhumanism reside. Second, these tensions can be articulated with particular clarity through the lens of a fundamental opposition that, while implicit in much of the existing literature, has not been adequately thematized: the opposition between Nietzsche’s radical ethical naturalism—his insistence that value is to be read off natural hierarchies, biological inheritance, and the immutable “order of rank”—and the ethical anti-naturalism that characterizes the transhumanist project, which proceeds from the premise that nature, including human nature, constitutes a contingent given to be transcended, redesigned, and redirected according to rationally and responsibly determined values. This opposition extends to the very conception of progress and of the future: if transhumanism is substantially equivalent to self-directed evolution, then Nietzsche’s doctrines of eternal recurrence and *amor fati*—which deny the legitimacy of the aspiration to a future different from the past—represent not a marginal philosophical curiosity but a direct and radical negation of the transhumanist project at its foundations. While other dimensions of incompatibility—notably those concerning the body, mortality, and the metaphysics of personal identity—are worthy of analysis in their own right, the present article addresses them only insofar as they illuminate the central socio-political and ethical divergence.

In support of these theses, the article proceeds in stages. It first examines the meta-analytical framework proposed in *Nietzsche and Transhumanism: A Meta-Analytical Perspective* by Riccardo Campa (2019), highlighting its methodological weaknesses and categorical limitations (§2). It then exposes the philosophical genealogy of the position advanced by Stefano Vaj, tracing it back to Giorgio Locchi’s suprahumanism—a radical organicist, hierarchical, and ethno-identitarian worldview that explicitly identifies the essence of fascism with a Nietzschean anti-egalitarian project—and contrasts this “hard” reading with the “soft,” sanitizing one through which Max More and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner recast Nietzsche to fit liberal and democratic ideals (§3). The article subsequently turns to an analysis of the *Übermensch* as the apotheosis of master morality rather than a progressive ideal (§4). An anthropological excursus situates the discussion within the broader framework of human socio-cultural evolution, arguing that master morality may be read as a regression to archaic dominance patterns (§5). These strands are drawn together in a systematic account of the fundamental incompatibilities between Nietzsche and transhumanism (§6). The conclusion then synthesizes the analyses to argue that

transhumanism, if it aspires to an ethically sound project of self-directed evolution, must disentangle itself from Nietzschean philosophical foundations (§7).

With the argument's focus and structure thus defined, three final clarifications delimit the scope of these theses. First, the second thesis concerns philosophical progenitorship, not historical influence. That Nietzsche has influenced transhumanist authors—as he has influenced movements of the most disparate orientations—is not here in question; what is contested is the further claim that such influence can be converted into philosophical warrant, that is, that Nietzsche's thought can coherently ground the normative core of the transhumanist project. Influence and compatibility are distinct categories, and the argument that follows operates deliberately within the second. Indeed, it is precisely because influence can flow despite incompatibility that the question matters: an incompatible genealogy can still reshape the movement that adopts it. Second, the incompatibility claim as such is not new: it has been advanced, in different forms, in earlier rounds of this debate. It is defended here, however, through a systematic engagement with Campa's meta-analysis and, above all, through the contrast between "soft" and "hard" transhumanist readings of Nietzsche, whereby the philologically most faithful reading proves to be the one that reveals the deepest incompatibility. Whatever one ultimately concludes about the legitimacy of claiming Nietzsche as a precursor, the coexistence within transhumanist reflection of mutually antithetical readings of him—and of the opposed futures they underwrite—is itself a datum to be reckoned with. Third, "transhumanism" is understood throughout in terms of the normative self-understanding of the mainstream movement, as codified in the Transhumanist Declaration (World Transhumanist Association, 1998/2009) and in the movement's programmatic self-descriptions: universal enhancement, equal access to it, individual liberty, and—centrally for what follows—the ideal of self-directed evolution, the emancipation of the individual from the yoke of unwanted biological constraint.¹ Bostrom's own characterization is congruent: in his "A History of Transhumanist Thought," transhumanism is described in terms of "its Enlightenment roots, its emphasis on individual liberties, and its humanistic concern for the welfare of all humans (and other sentient beings)" (Bostrom, 2005, p. 4). This is a stipulation about the argument's reference point, not a thesis about the historical purity of the movement's sources: heterodox currents exist, and their existence is part of what makes the question of genealogy a pressing one.

2. Deconstructing Campa's Meta-Analysis

In his attempt to map the connections between Nietzsche's philosophy and transhumanism, Riccardo Campa (2019) divides his analysis into two main sections. The first, "A Preliminary Scientometric Analysis," provides a quantitative overview of how Nietzsche's ideas are referenced in contemporary academic literature on transhumanism, revealing a steady increase in scientific publications addressing transhumanism from 1998 onwards—a growth that parallels the rise of transhumanist organizations such as the Extropy Institute and the World Transhumanist Association. Campa highlights that approximately a third of transhumanist publications also reference Nietzsche, indicating significant scholarly interest in the nexus between the two (Campa, 2019).

The second section analyzes the philosophical alignment between Nietzschean and transhumanist ideas, adopting what Campa calls a "phenomenal" perspective—observing how different interpretations shape ideas in practice rather than attempting to

¹ The normative weight of the notion is worth making explicit, since the argument of this article turns on it. If what qualifies the transhumanist project ethically is precisely its refusal of the "tyranny" exercised by the unchosen course of biological evolution over the individual—its insistence that the direction of one's own becoming be a matter of self-determination rather than of inherited fate—then, a fortiori, any socio-political order that institutes or perpetuates the tyranny of a self-proclaimed exceptional part over the mass is incompatible with it. The transhumanist objection to the despotism of nature over the individual cannot consistently be paired with acquiescence in the despotism of man over man; and it is exactly such an order that the Nietzschean and suprahumanist visions examined below prescribe.

identify the “real” Nietzsche or the “real” transhumanism. The paper then categorizes transhumanists into four types relative to Nietzsche: (1) quasi-Nietzschean transhumanists, who appreciate some aspects of Nietzsche’s philosophy but diverge in crucial ways (Teilhard de Chardin, Robert Ettinger, FM-2030); (2) Nietzschean transhumanists, who ostensibly embrace Nietzsche’s philosophy fully (Max More, Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, Stefano Vaj); (3) a-Nietzschean transhumanists, who do not reference Nietzsche but whose work aligns with transhumanist principles (Aubrey de Grey, Gregory Stock); and (4) anti-Nietzschean transhumanists, who explicitly reject Nietzsche’s ideas (Nick Bostrom).

While this taxonomy provides an initial structuring framework, it exhibits significant weaknesses in both its categorical logic and its overall coherence, which substantially undermine its analytical utility.

2.1 Critique of the “Nietzschean” Category

The most consequential flaw in Campa’s framework is the decision to group Max More, Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, and Stefano Vaj together under the single label “Nietzschean transhumanists.” This categorization obscures ideological differences so vast as to render the label analytically vacuous. Max More, the founder of Extropianism, advocates for an “open society” grounded in principles that explicitly echo Karl Popper’s *anti-totalitarian* ethos, including perpetual progress, rational self-direction, and the rejection of coercion even for the “good of the whole” (More, 1998). Sorgner develops an ethical posthumanism rooted in *liberal* values, identifying morality with “freedom, equality, and solidarity” (Sorgner, 2016, p. 21) and explicitly separating the *Übermensch* from any coercive political ideology (Sorgner, 2009). Stefano Vaj, by stark contrast, emphasizes Nietzsche’s ideas on hierarchy and anti-egalitarianism, adopting the suprahumanist perspective of his intellectual mentor Giorgio Locchi, which aligns with ethno-identitarian ideals and lends his vision a distinctly *totalitarian* character (Locchi, 1981/2002; Vaj, 2005).

The chasm between these positions is not one of degree but of kind. More’s Nietzsche is a champion of rational individual progress within a non-coercive libertarian framework; Sorgner’s is a precursor to technologically enabled self-overcoming within a non-coercive liberal/social-democratic framework; Vaj’s is the philosophical source of a radical organicist political project where an elite caste of posthumans will be able to domesticate and subjugate the majority. To subsume these radically divergent readings under a single category is to drain the taxonomy of explanatory power and to create a misleading impression of ideological coherence where none exists.

2.2 Critique of the Remaining Categories

The quasi-Nietzschean category appears overly broad and insufficiently justified. Including thinkers such as Teilhard de Chardin, whose integration of evolutionary theory with Catholic theology bears minimal philosophical resemblance to Nietzsche’s project, or FM-2030, whose utopian futurism diverges fundamentally from Nietzschean thought, creates a misleading impression of philosophical “quasi-alignment.” The criteria for inclusion seem to rest on sporadic and superficial appreciations rather than genuine philosophical affinity, and the category may consequently create a misleading impression of the scope of Nietzsche’s influence.

The “a-Nietzschean” category assumes that the absence of explicit references to Nietzsche implies a neutral stance. This is an oversimplification: if asked directly, some of these thinkers might well reveal strongly anti-Nietzschean views or ideological objections. Silence does not equate to neutrality, and the assumption that it does risks misrepresenting the actual distribution of philosophical attitudes within the movement. A relevant example in this regard is Mark Walker and his “Genetic Virtue Project” (Walker, 2009). Although Walker does not explicitly engage with Nietzsche, his proposal

to biotechnologically enhance pro-social traits such as caring, justice, and truthfulness² positions his project as the systematic bioengineering of dispositions that Nietzsche assigned to “slave morality” and vehemently opposed (cf. §§4–5). The case suggests that the absence of explicit citations may mask a structural and substantive incompatibility with Nietzschean thought.

The anti-Nietzschean category, limited to Nick Bostrom alone, is the most conspicuously incomplete. David Pearce, one of the co-founders of the World Transhumanist Association (WTA), has openly criticized Nietzschean ideals in his public communications. In a recorded discussion (Pearce, 2014), he explicitly argues against using a Nietzschean framework to define what it means to be transhuman or posthuman. He points out that Nietzsche glorified struggle and suffering while showing contempt for the meek and humble, an approach that shares troubling affinities with social Darwinism and which Pearce regards as profoundly unethical.

For Pearce, a truly advanced conception of becoming posthuman involves transcending this primitive Darwinian struggle by enriching our capacity for empathetic understanding, rather than oppressing the vulnerable. Consequently, his advocacy for the abolition of suffering through “hedonic engineering” (Pearce, 1995) diverges fundamentally from Nietzsche’s acceptance of suffering as integral to personal growth and self-overcoming. Directly challenging the Nietzschean notion that suffering builds resilience, Pearce turns this concept on its head: it is actually low mood that is associated with weakness, despair, and learned helplessness. Elevating an individual’s hedonic set point makes them not only happier but functionally stronger, more motivated, and more capable of overcoming obstacles. Ultimately, Pearce’s emphasis on maximizing well-being and minimizing suffering aligns with utilitarian principles, which Nietzsche explicitly opposed, leading Pearce to conclude that Nietzsche’s work is entirely inadequate for forming a coherent philosophy of life or ethic.

James Hughes traces the intellectual genealogy of transhumanism back to the Enlightenment’s focus on reason and social progress, characterizing it as “part of the family of Enlightenment philosophies” (Hughes, 2010, Abstract) and as “a modern form of Enlightenment techno-utopianism” (Hughes, 2012, Abstract), and viewing the movement as an extension of humanism rather than a Nietzschean break from it (Hughes, 2004). Hughes has advocated for a “democratic transhumanism” that integrates egalitarian social policies with technological progress—a vision fundamentally incompatible with Nietzsche’s political ideal of “aristocratic radicalism.” While Nietzsche envisioned a society structured around a small class of creators supported by the masses, Hughes warns that an unregulated, elitist approach to enhancement would result in a “genetic divide”—a biological two-class system that mirrors the very hierarchy Nietzsche championed. Consequently, Hughes emphasizes universal access to technology, ensuring that the posthuman future is a collective achievement of the citizenry rather than the solitary triumph of a “master” species. From a more directly polemical standpoint, in a 2023 essay Hughes rejects reactionary claims that pharmacologically assisted weight loss is somehow undeserved, and that individuals must discipline their uncooperative bodies through a Nietzschean will to power (Hughes, 2023). In general, Hughes’s work reveals a consistent, multi-decade effort to decouple the technological project of transhumanism from aristocratic and anti-egalitarian philosophical and socio-political frameworks.

² Nietzsche’s treatment of truthfulness is double-coded. On one side, truthfulness (*Wahrhaftigkeit*) is a noble virtue: in the *Genealogy* the nobles designate themselves the “truthful” in contradistinction to the common man and his lies (Nietzsche, 1887/1913, I:5); honesty is claimed as “our virtue,” the virtue of the free spirits (Nietzsche, 1886/1966, §227); and, significantly, this noble truthfulness is owed *inter pares* rather than universally. On the other side, Nietzsche traces the moralized, unconditional “will to truth”—truth demanded of everyone, at any price—to the ascetic ideal and its Christian-Platonic lineage (Nietzsche, 1882/1974, §§344, 357; 1887/1913, III:24–27). On this double coding, see Queloz (2021), Jenkins (2016), and Reginster (2013). Walker’s project, which would anchor truthfulness biologically as a universally distributed cooperative disposition, corresponds to the second form, not the first.

Both Pearce and Hughes played foundational roles in shaping the WTA, emphasizing personhood rights, democratic governance, and well-being over elitist ideals. Their shared vision—particularly regarding ethics, governance, and the value of suffering—marks a definitive incompatibility with Nietzschean ethics and politics. By not including these figures in the anti-Nietzschean category, Campa misses an opportunity to highlight the anti-Nietzschean orientation of foundational currents within the transhumanist movement, thereby creating an incomplete and unbalanced picture.

2.3 Structural Coherence and Author Selection

In addition to the categorical weaknesses examined above, Campa's meta-analysis suffers from a structural disconnect between its two constitutive parts. The scientometric section—which documents the rising frequency of co-occurrence of “Nietzsche” and “transhumanism” in academic literature—provides useful contextual data, but its logical connection to the subsequent theoretical analysis remains tenuous. The quantitative assessment of publication trends does not organically generate or justify the qualitative categorization of individual thinkers that follows, resulting in a disjointed paper structure.

This structural gap is compounded by an opaque author-selection process. The criteria for choosing which thinkers to include in the theoretical portion are not explicitly justified and appear to reflect personal familiarity rather than systematic methodological principles. The inclusion of Stefano Vaj and his *Biopolitica* (Vaj, 2005)—published in Italian by Società Editrice Barbarossa, a small neo-fascist publisher in Milan, largely disconnected from academic and institutional circuits—while simultaneously excluding David Pearce and James Hughes, whose anti-Nietzschean stances are clear, well-articulated, and foundational to the movement, reveals an inconsistency that undermines the analysis's claim to comprehensiveness.

Despite these shortcomings, Campa's central insight remains highly valuable. The recognition that the debate over Nietzsche is not merely a retrospective exercise in intellectual history but a prospective endeavor to shape transhumanism's future trajectory provides the essential rationale for the analyses that follow. It is precisely because choosing roots means forging futures that the distinctions within the “Nietzschean transhumanists” category demand far greater analytical precision than Campa's framework provides.

3. The “Nietzschean Transhumanists”: Divergent and Incompatible Interpretations

Having established the limitations of Campa's taxonomy, it is necessary to examine in detail the interpretations of Nietzsche offered by the thinkers he groups together as “Nietzschean transhumanists.” Nietzsche's philosophy, rich with themes of power, morality, and human evolution, may be interpreted through various lenses within transhumanist thought. Some thinkers emphasize Nietzsche's socio-political ideas—hierarchical organicism, aristocratic radicalism, anti-egalitarianism—and consequently his “master morality” becomes pivotal, proposing a moral framework that prioritizes strength, excellence, and governance by a superior class as a natural, desirable order. In contrast, others entirely overlook Nietzsche's socio-political suggestions, focusing instead on his existential insights: the concept of the *Übermensch* as a symbol of self-transcendence, the challenge to the “herd mentality,” and a profound individualism where the self is perpetually reshaped beyond societal constraints. The analysis that follows reveals that these are not merely differences of emphasis but fundamental

incompatibilities that carry profoundly different implications for the future of transhumanism.³

3.1 Vaj and Locchi's Suprahumanism: Fascism as Posthuman Vision

Stefano Vaj's interpretation of Nietzsche diverges radically from those of More and Sorgner and requires extended analysis due to its deep and explicitly acknowledged connections with fascist ideology, mediated through the figure of Giorgio Locchi. Vaj, who in his essay *Per l'autodifesa etnica totale* ("For Total Ethnic Self-Defense") refers to Locchi as his "personal guru and maître à penser" (Vaj, 2001)⁴ and describes all his own works as strictly Locchian exercises, constructs a version of transhumanism that is inseparable from Locchi's suprahumanist framework.

In his essay *Espressione politica e repressione del principio sovrumanista* ("Political Expression and Repression of the Suprahumanist Principle")—originally published in 1981 as *L'essenza del fascismo* ("The Essence of Fascism")—Giorgio Locchi explores the philosophical and cultural foundations of fascism, positioning it as a direct political expression of suprahumanism—a "new historical tendency whose founding myth appeared almost simultaneously in Wagner's dramas and Nietzsche's philosophy" (Locchi, 1981/2002). In this framework, suprahumanism is effectively synonymous with "Nietzscheanism": an anti-egalitarian worldview aimed at countering the pervasive influence of what Locchi, following Nietzsche, terms the "Judeo-Christian principle"—the egalitarian moral framework that, in his view, has led to the spiritual and material decadence of Europe by promoting ideas of equality and freedom alien to its pre-Christian hierarchical and organic societal structures. The "Suprahumanist principle," Locchi writes, "becomes an absolute rejection of the opposing 'egalitarian principle' shaping that world. Fascist movements identified the 'enemy,' spiritual before being political, in democratic ideologies—classical liberalism, parliamentarism, socialism, communism, anarcho-communism—because, in the historical perspective established by the Suprahumanist principle, these ideologies all appear as manifestations of the opposing egalitarian principle" (Locchi, 1981/2002).

Locchi argues that the suprahumanist principle found its most paradigmatic political expression in the historical fascisms of the first half of the twentieth century. Italian Fascism and German National Socialism, in his interpretation, were not political anomalies but the embodiment of a deeper cultural and philosophical current that sought to transcend the modern values of equality and democracy derived from Judeo-Christian ethics and from the related cosmo-anthropological vision. These fascist movements attempted to synthesize various elements of European cultural heritage—the reverence for authority, community bonds, and a recognition of natural hierarchies—into a coherent political and cultural force. Locchi arrives at the explicit assertion that "every society (or more exactly: community), when it wants to be 'healthy,' is totalitarian" (Locchi, 1981/2002).

The defeat of fascism at the end of World War II is interpreted by Locchi not merely in military and political terms but as an ideological suppression of the suprahumanist principle by a broad alliance among all the various components of the "egalitarian principle"—"liberals, democrats, socialists, communists"—all of which, according to Locchi, represent secularized versions of Christianity. This alliance succeeded in overpowering the suprahumanist principle embodied by fascism, forcing it to retreat into the "catacombs" of culture and political thought. Crucially, however, Locchi discerns in

³ Other thinkers not included in Campa's meta-analysis have also proposed readings of Nietzsche whose detailed examination falls outside the scope of the present work, but that further illustrate the remarkable heterogeneity of Nietzschean appropriations within the transhumanist discourse. Among them, Steve Fuller (2019) has attempted a theologically inflected reading that imposes onto Nietzsche's philosophy goals fundamentally alien to his anti-Christian project.

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, translations from non-English-language sources are the author's own.

this retreat a potential historical parallel with early Christianity, which, after its own period of catacomb existence during Roman persecutions, eventually emerged to become a dominant cultural and political force in the Roman Empire and across the Western world. The suprahumanist principle, in this reading, might similarly await its moment of historical resurgence (Locchi, 1981/2002).

Vaj's project, understood against this background, becomes transparent in its strategic intent. It consists of a deliberate attempt to bring the suprahumanist principle—which Locchi explicitly characterizes as the ideological matrix of fascism—"out of the catacombs" by harnessing the appeal and momentum of transhumanist ideals, effectively technologically updating it for the contemporary era. The underlying strategic logic is that of exploiting the socio-political upheavals generated by a major technological revolution—in this case, the anticipated "transhumanist" or "biopolitical" revolution—to engineer the re-emergence of the hierarchical and suprahumanist principle, much as the Neolithic Revolution, with its transition from egalitarian hunter-gatherer bands to complex stratified societies, once enabled the resurgence of dominance hierarchies and the consolidation of elite rule (Stile, 2015a; Vaj, 1985b). This technophilic approach, it should be noted, is often poorly received by the extreme, radical, and antagonistic right-wingers who resist engagement with technological modernity. Vaj's efforts over the past two decades to reinterpret the transhumanist message to make it compatible with the suprahumanist perspective are aimed at attracting those "in the catacombs" who risk extinction if they fail to recognize that, in Vaj's vision, the so-called "Third Man"—destined to lead the "biopolitical revolution" (Vaj, 2008a) and shape the future—is the "fascist New Man," which in turn corresponds to Nietzsche's *Übermensch* and to the posthuman (Vaj, 2008b). This explicit equation is articulated in Vaj's editorial notes to Locchi's text, where the "Third Man" is defined as "none other than the 'fascist New Man,' or the Nietzschean 'Superman,' called to take full charge of the world and his own destiny and to give them meaning" (Vaj, as cited in Locchi, 1981/2002, note 18).

The socio-political vision that emerges from this synthesis is one of a society structured according to a caste-like system reminiscent of the ancient Indo-European model aimed at preserving a hierarchical and cohesive ethnic identity. Vaj explicitly invokes the example of the Indo-Europeans in India, who "conquered a continent" and sought to "resist assimilation through a great cultural and social organization," most notably the caste system, which he regards as "a message and an example" to be embraced: "the attempt to organize social structure according to the tripartite functional division—priests, rulers/warriors, and the productive class—is a way to interpret the world and give meaning and structure to society" (Vaj, 2008b, p. 32). The broader goal involves leveraging bioengineering to revitalize the "Suprahumanist dream"—a continuation of Locchi's vision that presents a form of transhumanism deeply rooted in suprahumanism.

The suprahumanist framework was subsequently introduced into the Anglophone world by Daniel S. Forrest (2014) in *Suprahumanism: European Man and the Regeneration of History*, which draws heavily from Locchi and Vaj's framework, advocating for a hierarchical and organicist societal structure fundamentally antithetical to modern democratic and egalitarian principles. In this work, Forrest describes Stefano Vaj as a "suprahumanist extraordinaire," thereby acknowledging his central role in the development and dissemination of this ideological current. The book played a significant role in making the Locchian-Vajian synthesis accessible to an English-speaking audience, effectively bridging a set of ideas that had previously circulated almost exclusively within Continental European far-right intellectual networks.

The publication of Forrest's *Suprahumanism* is significant in this respect, since it may help bring into clearer view, within the Anglophone transhumanist debate, a dimension that has often remained insufficiently scrutinized: the fact that some of the most politically coherent Nietzschean readings linked to transhumanism emerge not from libertarian or ultra-capitalist currents, but from a broader radical and antagonistic far-right milieu

marked by organicism, hierarchy, anti-egalitarianism, anti-capitalism, anti-democratic thought, and illiberal conceptions of collective order. Indeed, the metapolitical implications of this genealogy have often remained in the background, allowing such positions to pass too easily as simply one more speculative strand within transhumanist pluralism.

Vaj's project also resonates with the kindred intellectual current of "Archeofuturism" theorized by Guillaume Faye (1998), which programmatically advocates the fusion of archaic—that is, pre-egalitarian, hierarchical—social structures with cutting-edge technology. The close intellectual affinity between Vaj and Faye is indeed well documented: for instance, the aforementioned Vaj's essay *Per l'autodifesa etnica totale* ("For Total Ethnic Self-Defense," 2001) bears the subtitle *Riflessioni su "La colonisation de l'Europe" di Guillaume Faye* ("Reflections on Guillaume Faye's *The Colonisation of Europe*"). This convergence further illuminates the strategic logic underlying the attempt to harness transhumanism for suprahumanist ends.

Yet the suprahumanist project is not merely a strategic operation—it rests on a specific hermeneutic claim about the meaning of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Locchi's own essay *Nietzsche e i suoi "recuperatori"* ("Nietzsche and His 'Rescuers,'" 1972) further illuminates the interpretive stakes. In it, he argues that contemporary attempts to "rescue" Nietzsche—that is, to render him compatible with democratic, socialist, or liberal frameworks by severing the connection between his thought and National Socialism—are "simply ridiculous and speak to either blinding philosophical stupidity or blatant intellectual dishonesty" (Locchi, 1972/2006, p. 88). For Locchi, "In its fundamental lines, Nietzsche's project—what is sometimes called his 'Grosse Politik'—is perfectly clear and leaves no room for equivocation. Nietzsche repeatedly clarifies what he opposes and what he desires. He declares open war on egalitarianism in all its historical forms" (Locchi, 1972/2006, p. 92). This position stands in the sharpest possible contrast with the "soft" or "benign" reinterpretations offered by More and Sorgner, asserting instead a direct and consistent genealogical link between Nietzsche's thought and historical fascism.

3.2 More and Sorgner: The Sanitized Nietzsche

In the contemporary transhumanist discourse, Max More and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner have most prominently invoked Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch* to underpin their respective visions of humanity's technological evolution. Both interpretations diverge significantly from Nietzsche's original ideas and reveal a fundamental tension between the rational, ethical aspirations of their transhumanism and the philosophical substance of the Nietzschean project. They certainly emphasize Nietzsche's philosophical legacy in ways fundamentally opposed to Vaj's hierarchical suprahumanism, but their readings present problems of a different kind: problems of philosophical fidelity.

Max More, as a prominent transhumanist intellectual and author of the Extropian principles, acknowledges Nietzsche's influence on his thinking and views the *Übermensch* as an aspirational figure symbolizing the human drive for perpetual progress and transcendence through self-direction, rationality, and creative potential (More, 1998). However, More's claim that Nietzsche's influence on him directly links transhumanism to Nietzsche rests on a problematic syllogism: (1) Nietzsche influenced More; (2) More was a foundational figure in the establishment of transhumanism; therefore (3) transhumanism is connected to Nietzsche (More, 2010). This argument is logically fragile and substantively weak for two reasons. First, it assumes that More was one of the primary "inventors" of transhumanism, oversimplifying its broader historical development. Julian Huxley and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin can reasonably be viewed as genuine foundational figures—both as progenitors of the idea of self-directed evolution and as advocates for an organized movement to implement it (Campa, 2009, 2017; Stile, 2019). Second, and more importantly, the fundamental incompatibilities between many of

More's Extropian principles and Nietzschean philosophy call into question whether More truly understood the philosopher he claims as an inspiration. The notion of "perpetual progress" contradicts Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence and *amor fati* (Nietzsche, 1882/1974, §§276, 341; 1908/1911, "Why I Am So Clever," §10; cf. §6; see also Losurdo, 2002/2019; Löwith, 1935/1997); the concept of an "open society" as defined by Popper clashes with the closed, oligarchic communitarianism characteristic of Nietzsche's socio-political vision (Nietzsche, 1886/1966, §§257–258; 1895/1918, §57; see also Appel, 1999; Detwiler, 1990); the principle of "self-direction" that rejects coercion even for the "good of the whole" opposes the organicist, hierarchical socio-political organization typical of Nietzsche's "Indo-European" matrix (Nietzsche, 1895/1918, §57; cf. §4.3; see also Losurdo, 2002/2019); and the reliance on "rational thought" contradicts Nietzsche's irrationalism and his valorization of instinct over reason (Nietzsche, 1889/1954, "The Problem of Socrates," §§10–11; see also Lukács, 1954/1980). In More's hands, the *Übermensch* becomes a rational actor striving for technological betterment (More, 2010)—a figure fundamentally softened, indeed almost unrecognizable, from Nietzsche's original vision.

Stefan Lorenz Sorgner interprets Nietzsche through the lens of posthumanism, arguing for "significant" and "fundamental" similarities between the *Übermensch* and the transhumanist posthuman (Sorgner, 2009), contrary to Nick Bostrom's assessment of only "surface-level" resemblances (Bostrom, 2005, p. 4). Sorgner identifies three key points of contact: a shared view of human nature as dynamic and evolving; a common respect for science and human enhancement; and a perspectival view of values supporting individual self-determination. Yet Sorgner's interpretation stands in stark contrast to Nietzsche's explicit rejection of egalitarian values. While Nietzsche, in the *Twilight of the Idols*, vehemently denounces equality—the most "poisonous poison"—as "the termination of justice" (Nietzsche, 1889/1954, "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," §48), Sorgner declares: "I identify morality with freedom, equality and solidarity" (Sorgner, 2016, p. 21)—the values of the French Revolution, which, as Carney (2021) observes, Nietzsche held must be experienced "with nausea" (Nietzsche, 1889/1954, "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," §48), as well as central values of slave morality. The tension becomes even more apparent in Sorgner's own systematic formulation of his thought: several of the "Twelve Pillars of Transhumanist Discourse" outlined in his monograph (Sorgner, 2022)—most notably Social Equality, Overcoming Suffering, Global Health and Moral Enhancement—appear scarcely compatible, if not radically incompatible, with Nietzsche's philosophy, which explicitly celebrates inequality, regards suffering as indispensable to greatness, and dismisses moral improvement of the masses as an expression of the despised "slave morality."

These incompatibilities come into sharper focus in his earlier programmatic essay "Beyond Humanism: Reflections on Trans- and Posthumanism" (Sorgner, 2010), where he attempts to dissociate the *Übermensch* from coercive political ideologies by refuting the National Socialist appropriation and arguing that Nietzsche's concept fundamentally aligns with liberal individualism. However, his specific arguments, examined against Nietzsche's own texts and the broader interpretive framework established in the preceding and following sections, prove far from convincing on several crucial points.

First, Sorgner addresses Nietzsche's antisemitic passages by explaining that "you can find some nasty remarks concerning Jews in Nietzsche's writings" but that "these, however, concern the Jews who developed the Jewish religion," which he regarded, together with Christianity, as "life denying and dangerous" (Sorgner, 2010, p. 15). This is precisely the point: as Locchi and Vaj correctly identify (cf. §3.1), Nietzsche regards Judaism and Christianity as "dangerous" not because they repressed individual freedom and equality, but because they *produced* these very concepts, which dismantled the organic, hierarchical, anti-egalitarian pre-Judeo-Christian European socio-political structure (Nietzsche, 1886/1966, §195; 1887/1913, I:7–8; 1895/1918, §§24–27, 43, 62). What Sorgner presents as a limited theological objection is, in fact, the cornerstone of Nietzsche's entire civilizational critique.

Second, Sorgner claims that “the aristocracy he affirms is connected to the capacity to be a great creator of culture” and that “Nietzsche regards it as possible to achieve by means of education” (Sorgner, 2010, pp. 2, 15). This assertion stands in direct contradiction with Nietzsche’s explicit statements in §264 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, where—as analyzed in §4.3—he declares that it is “simply not possible that a human being should not have the qualities and preferences of his parents and ancestors in his body” and that education and culture can only succeed in “deceiving” about one’s hereditary plebeian nature. For Nietzsche, aristocratic capacity is inscribed in blood and lineage, not achieved through education or self-cultivation.

Third, Sorgner professes to be “very happy living in a Western liberal democracy” and expresses general satisfaction with “liberal and social versions of democracy” (Sorgner, 2010, p. 8). Yet for Nietzsche, as the analysis of Locchi’s and Vaj’s interpretive framework in §3.1 has shown, liberalism and socialism are precisely the diseased, secularized fruits of the Judeo-Christian “egalitarian principle”—the radical antagonist of the suprahumanist principle of which Nietzsche is the supreme exponent. As already pointed out, Nietzsche opposes Christianity precisely *because*, from his perspective, it *created* the dysfunctional concepts of the autonomous “individual” (freedom, hence classical liberalism) and universal “humanity” (equality, hence socialism) that gave rise to the liberal/social-democratic order (Vaj, 1985a) that Sorgner so appreciates.

Fourth, Sorgner argues that “most other types of political organization so far have led to paternalistic systems in which the leaders exploited the citizens in the name of the common good” and that “any system that does not sufficiently stress the norm of negative freedom brings about structures which are strongly paternalistic” (Sorgner, 2010, p. 8). Yet this is exactly the type of hierarchical, organic, anti-egalitarian society that Nietzsche explicitly advocates: a society in which “the sacrifice of untold human beings” is accepted as ontologically necessary, in which exploitation is a “basic organic function” of life, and in which the aristocratic caste rules not by consent but by nature (cf. §4.3). His critique of paternalism thus ends up condemning precisely the kind of hierarchical order Nietzsche most forcefully defends.

Finally, regarding ethical perspectivism, Sorgner invokes Nietzsche’s view that “there are no universally valid virtues” (Sorgner, 2010, p. 9) to argue for a pluralistic ethical framework. Yet Nietzsche, despite his formal perspectivism,⁵ unmistakably opts for master morality: his entire genealogical enterprise is oriented toward exposing slave morality as the product of *ressentiment* and celebrating the aristocratic morality of strength, rank, and distance as the authentic expression of ascending life. Ironically, transhumanism—even in the judgment of its self-proclaimed “Nietzschean” representatives—embraces not just one among many possible moralities, but precisely the one Nietzsche most despised: the morality of compassion, equality, and universal well-being—that is to say, the morality of the “slaves”—and therefore the diametrical opposite of the morality of the *Übermensch* (cf. §4.2).

It is important to acknowledge that Sorgner frequently frames his thought within the paradigm of “metahumanism” or “posthumanism” rather than classical transhumanism (Sorgner, 2022), drawing on the continental posthumanist critique of anthropocentrism and Enlightenment hyper-rationalism while nonetheless anchoring his ethics in liberal-democratic values. This hybrid positioning differentiates him sharply from Vaj’s anti-egalitarian organicism in the political domain, but it does not resolve the underlying philosophical tension: however one labels the enterprise, Sorgner’s normative commitments remain those that Nietzsche systematically opposed, and his reading of the

⁵ The apparent tension between Nietzsche’s perspectivism and the ethical naturalism examined in §6 is real but tractable: perspectivism is a formal epistemological doctrine, while Nietzsche’s evaluative commitments operate through a physiological-vital criterion—the rank-ordering of perspectives according to ascending or descending life—rather than through claims to universal validity (cf. Clark, 1990; Reginster, 2001, 2006). His naturalism functions at the level of this criterion, not at the level of universally binding norms; hence he can consistently deny “universally valid virtues” while unmistakably ranking master morality above slave morality.

Übermensch can only be sustained by stripping away the intrinsically anti-egalitarian and hierarchical core of the concept.

Ultimately, both More's and Sorgner's interpretations, in different ways, appear to project the interpreter's own values onto Nietzsche rather than engaging with his actual philosophical commitments. As Hauskeller (2016, p. 78) has observed, despite Max More's acknowledgment that Nietzsche influenced the very name and genesis of transhumanism, "there is in fact little that mainstream transhumanism shares with Nietzsche's philosophy other than a few key terms." Bohan (2021, p. 29) advances a complementary, more specifically philological observation: despite the recurrent attempts to read Nietzsche as a proto-transhumanist, "no such evidence has, to date, been unearthed" that he championed the use of technology to overcome human limitations. The Nietzschean genealogy of transhumanism, in this light, rests less on textual evidence than on a posteriori philosophical reconstruction. In the final analysis, Nick Bostrom's (2005, p. 4) early assessment proved correct: the similarities between Nietzsche and transhumanism are merely "surface-level."

4. The Übermensch: Apotheosis of Master Morality, Not Posthuman Ideal

Before turning to a close analysis of the relevant texts, it is useful to outline the interpretive framework provided by Domenico Losurdo's monumental intellectual biography *Nietzsche, il ribelle aristocratico* ("Nietzsche, the Aristocratic Rebel"), published in 2002. Losurdo rejects the widespread post-war tendency to depoliticize Nietzsche and to read his philosophy as a purely existential or aesthetic project. He argues instead that Nietzsche's thought constitutes a coherent and deliberate political program: a sustained defense of aristocratic privilege, slavery, and hierarchical social organization against the rising tide of democratic and egalitarian movements of his time. Central to Losurdo's reading is the concept of a "transversal racialization of the subaltern classes" (Losurdo, 2002/2019, Chapter 26, Section 7)—the idea that Nietzsche does not merely draw racial distinctions between ethnic groups but systematically divides humanity as a whole into a natural aristocracy and a servile mass, naturalizing social hierarchy as an inescapable biological fact. In this framework, Nietzsche's critique of Christianity, socialism, democracy, and feminism all converge on a single target: the "slave revolt in morality" and its progressive secularization into the egalitarian movements that, in his time, were eroding the foundations of aristocratic privilege. Losurdo's interpretation has the considerable merit of taking Nietzsche's explicit political statements at face value rather than explaining them away as rhetorical excess or ironic provocation—an approach that, as the following textual analysis will demonstrate, yields a remarkably consistent picture.

It is worth noting the remarkable descriptive convergence between Losurdo's reading and that of Locchi examined in §3.1: both interpret Nietzsche as a philosopher *totus politicus* whose entire project is unified by a systematic opposition to egalitarianism in all its historical manifestations. The two interpreters arrive at this shared diagnosis from radically different—indeed, antithetical—intellectual traditions: Losurdo from the Marxist left, Locchi from the milieu of post-war Italian and European neo-fascism. And they draw diametrically opposed prescriptive conclusions: what Locchi celebrates as the founding myth of a suprahumanist renewal, Losurdo denounces as the ideological legitimization of aristocratic privilege and social domination. Yet their convergence on the descriptive plane lends considerable weight to the political reading of Nietzsche adopted in this article, precisely because it emerges independently from two opposed perspectives that have no interest in corroborating each other.

Both readings, of course, occupy a determinate position within a broader and divided scholarly landscape, and it is well to make that position explicit. One tradition takes Nietzsche's aristocratism to be a genuinely political and normative commitment—"aristocratic radicalism," in Georg Brandes's contemporary formula, which Nietzsche himself praised as the cleverest characterization he had read of himself. This line of interpretation is neither recent nor idiosyncratic. Inaugurated by Brandes (1889/1914)

while the philosopher was still alive, it was taken up polemically in the Marxist tradition by Lukács (1954/1980), articulated in Anglophone political theory by Detwiler (1990), Appel (1999), and Dombowsky (2004), and systematized most comprehensively by Losurdo. Its implications have more recently been extended by Landa (2007) to the ideological functions of the *Übermensch* in popular culture, and situated by Robin (2017) and Beiner (2018) within broader histories of reactionary thought and of Nietzsche's contemporary far-right reception. The central claim that Nietzsche's politics cannot be bracketed is independently confirmed, in a primarily reconstructive rather than condemnatory register, by Drochon (2016).

Other influential reconstructions, deflationary in character, shift the center of gravity away from a direct political program: Clark (1990) toward truth and perspectivism; Leiter (2002) toward a naturalistic critique of morality and genealogy; Reginster (2006) toward nihilism and the affirmation of life; Prescott-Couch (2024) toward genealogy's deconstructive critical function; and Lemm (2009) toward culture, animality, and affirmative biopolitics. Ansell-Pearson (1994), for his part, recognizes the mature Nietzsche's forward-looking aristocratic radicalism rather than reducing it to a program of historical restoration. That orientation, however, does not dissolve the difficulties at issue here; at most it would render such a reading compatible with suprahumanism and archeofuturism (cf. §3.1), not with mainstream transhumanism. Others again, sanitizing in effect, recast Nietzsche's valuations in rehabilitative, humanizing, or emancipatory terms—Kaufmann's (1950) classic depoliticizing portrait, Hollingdale's (1965) kindred humanizing reconstruction, Vattimo's (1974) emancipatory and post-metaphysical *oltreuomo*, and, among transhumanists, Sorgner (2009). A third and separate poststructuralist line reworks Nietzsche's genealogy against metaphysical origins and the stable human subject: Deleuze (1962/1983) through difference, becoming, and the hierarchy of active and reactive forces; Foucault (1971/1977) through the critique of origin, identity, and historical continuity.

This article does not accord that spectrum of readings—deflationary, sanitizing, or poststructuralist—the presumption of correctness. The reading it defends—stated here plainly and borne out in what follows—is the political one systematized by Losurdo, which appears decidedly the more convincing. The interval between the deflationary and the sanitizing readings is one of degree, not of principle: each secures a more congenial Nietzsche at some cost in fidelity, and none is owed the deference of a default to be disproved.

What follows is accordingly not a defensive rebuttal but a positive case—advanced within the interpretive framework consciously adopted and avowed here—showing how consistently, and with what institutional specificity, Nietzsche ranks, and how little that ranking yields to reclassification as metaphor.

With this interpretive framework in place, it is possible to turn to the texts themselves and analyze the *Übermensch* not as a vague symbol of self-transcendence—as it often appears in transhumanist appropriations (Vaj's reading being, as seen, the exception)—but in its intrinsic connection to Nietzsche's exposition of master morality (*Herrenmoral*) as opposed to slave morality (*Sklavenmoral*). The aim here is not to exhaust Nietzsche scholarship as a whole, but to test whether the normative and political core that emerges most clearly from Nietzsche's texts can plausibly ground mainstream transhumanist ethics.

4.1 Master Morality and Slave Morality

In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), Nietzsche delineates two fundamental types of morality arising from different socio-psychological sources.⁶

⁶ On the methodological function of Nietzschean genealogy there is a rich current debate: genealogical narratives can serve subversive or debunking purposes, but also vindictory ones (Queloz, 2021), and it has been argued that their critical force need not derive from any revelation of contingency (Prescott-Couch, 2024). The claim

Master morality is characterized by values stemming from strength, authority, and a claimed nobility. Its primary socio-psychological traits include egoism, hardness, and, at times, cruelty. Those who uphold this morality value power, pride, and excellence, defining “good” as what benefits the strong and powerful and “bad” as what is weak and base.

Slave morality, by contrast, arises among the lower classes and the oppressed. Central to Nietzsche’s genealogical account of its emergence is the concept of *ressentiment*: the psychological mechanism whereby, in his interpretation, those who are unable to act upon or overcome their oppressors sublimate their impotence into a creative moral inversion. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche contends that slave morality does not arise from an autonomous affirmation of values but from a reactive negation of master morality: the slave defines “good” only by first designating the powerful as “evil.” From this reactive origin, the values characteristic of slave morality emerge: pity, humility, compassion, and the valorization of kindness, empathy, and community as responses to oppression—with “good” defined as what alleviates suffering and promotes egalitarianism, and “evil” associated with the exercise of power and the assertion of rank (Nietzsche, 1886/1966, §260; 1887/1913, I:10–11).⁷

It is this genealogical narrative that grounds Nietzsche’s contempt for egalitarian values: they are not, in his view, the fruit of moral progress but the rationalization of an incapacity for greatness. Whether or not one accepts this account—and the anthropological analysis presented in §5 will offer substantial reasons to challenge it—understanding it is essential, for it reveals that Nietzsche’s rejection of equality and compassion is not incidental but architectonic: the very foundation upon which the edifice of master morality, and with it the *Übermensch*, is constructed.

4.2 The *Übermensch* Does Not Transcend Master Morality—He Intensifies It

Some interpreters—classically Kaufmann (1950), who rendered *Übermensch* as “overman” precisely to displace the “superman” of physical and comic-book supremacy and who read the figure as a depoliticized ideal of self-perfection; Vattimo (1974), whose emancipatory reading gives the Italian *oltreuomo* (“beyond-man”) a parallel office, detaching the figure from domination; Deleuze (1962/1983) within the affirmative French reception—have suggested that the *Übermensch*, as conceptualized in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, transcends the master-slave dichotomy altogether, establishing an entirely new value system rooted in self-overcoming and the creation of meaning through individual will. These readings, however, find insufficient support in Nietzsche’s texts. In chapters such as “The Tarantulas,” the *Übermensch* directly confronts those who preach equality: his response is not empathetic but scornful, showcasing a characteristic disdain for those who, according to master morality, are “low” or “base.” “Men are not equal,” Zarathustra insists, “and neither shall they become so! What would be my love to the Superman, if I spake otherwise?” This interaction reaffirms the *Übermensch*’s alignment with master morality (Nietzsche, 1883–1885/1909, “The Tarantulas”). Read systematically, the figure overcomes none of the distinctions on which master morality rests: neither the ranking of higher and lower types, nor the hierarchy of values, nor the pathos of distance,

advanced here concerns not the method in the abstract but Nietzsche’s evaluative deployment of it: by his own avowal, the genealogy of morals is undertaken in the service of the question of “the value of these values” (Nietzsche, 1887/1913, Preface, §6), and its verdict on slave morality—whatever other uses the method may admit—is unambiguous.

⁷ Nietzsche’s assessment of this formation is not one of undifferentiated disparagement: it is on the soil of the priestly form of valuation that man first becomes “an interesting animal” and the human soul acquires depth (Nietzsche, 1887/1913, I:6); human history, he remarks, would have been an altogether stupid affair without the spirit that the powerless brought into it (I:7); and the man of *ressentiment* ends by being cleverer than any noble race (I:10). Yet these acknowledgments leave the axiological ranking untouched: the slave revolt remains, for Nietzsche, an expression of descending life, and its products—however profound—symptoms to be overcome.

nor the conviction that the few of higher worth outweigh the many, nor the opposition between value-creating masters and the herd, nor the disdain for a universalized compassion and the happiness of the greatest number; it repudiates, rather than transcends, the demand for universal moral and juridical equality. This alignment is evident through his “virtues” of egoism and elitism, which Nietzsche portrays not negatively but as necessary for the creation of values and the affirmation of life, while advocating for a society that recognizes natural hierarchies and the inherent inequality among individuals. He exhibits cruelty and ruthlessness as part of his indifference to the norms and moralities that govern ordinary human society; his actions are not bound by empathy or compassion, which are seen as manifestations of the herd instinct. In transcending the human, the *Übermensch* does not discard the fundamental aspects of master morality but embodies them to an intensified degree, carrying its most distinguished traits—its aristocratic values—to their highest expression.

Testimony from the earliest reception history corroborates this reading with remarkable clarity. Writing in 1900—not as a Nietzsche scholar, but as a contemporary witness to the philosopher’s first appropriations, whose value here is documentary rather than exegetical—Leon Trotsky observes in “On the Philosophy of the Superman” that “the master’s morality serves as the basis for the conduct of the superman” and that “for the masters and for them alone, the morality of the superman was created.” Trotsky argues that Nietzsche’s superman functions not merely as an encouragement for individual transcendence but as a justification for the dominance of an aristocratic elite, inherently supporting a social hierarchy where a select few control and exploit the majority, perpetuating systemic inequality and subjugation. “For humanity as a whole,” Trotsky observes, “it is demanded of the ordinary people, the non-supermen, that they ‘fulfill the common labors in serried ranks,’ obedient to those born for a superior life. To want the inferior castes to find moral satisfaction in service to the great is not, as you can see, particularly new” (Trotsky, 1900). Trotsky further identifies a telling paradox: “Even though he revaluated all values, this revolutionary of morality considers the traditions of the privileged classes with much respect and takes pride in descending from a Count Nietzsche, a pedigree which is in any case highly doubtful. This famous individualist nourishes the most tender sympathy for the French *Ancien Régime* in which individuality had little place. The aristocrat, the representative of quite precise social sympathies, always dominated in him over the individualist” (Trotsky, 1900).

4.3 Nietzsche’s Explicit Political Vision

Nietzsche himself left little room for ambiguity regarding the political implications of his vision. The aristocratic and anti-egalitarian orientation permeates his work far more deeply than the passages most commonly cited in transhumanist discourse, and a close reading reveals a consistent and explicit political program.

In *The Gay Science* (1882), Nietzsche advances what may be termed a naturalistic ethics of dominance, presenting traits such as hate, rapacity, and ambition as conditions of species preservation and flourishing. In §1, he argues that “hatred, the mischievous delight in the misfortunes of others, the lust to rob and dominate, and whatever else is called evil belongs to the most amazing economy of the preservation of the species.” In §4, he similarly contends that “the strongest and most evil spirits have so far done the most to advance humanity” (Nietzsche, 1882/1974). His framework rationalizes the traits he labels “evil” as necessary components of the “most amazing economy” of species preservation, thereby naturalizing and moralizing dominance as a form of social fatalism that rejects the very possibility of egalitarian progress.

It is, however, in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) that this orientation receives its most systematic philosophical articulation. In §257, Nietzsche asserts that “every enhancement of the type ‘man’ has so far been the work of an aristocratic society—and it will be so again and again—a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences

in value between man and man, and that needs slavery in some sense or other.” In §258, he declares that the “essential characteristic of a good and healthy aristocracy” is that it accepts “the sacrifice of untold human beings who, for its sake, must be reduced and lowered to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments.” And in §259, he concludes: “‘Exploitation’ does not belong to a corrupt or imperfect and primitive society; it belongs to the essence of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is a consequence of the will to power, which is after all the will to life” (Nietzsche, 1886/1966, §§257–259). These passages reveal an explicit political vision of hierarchical organicism in which exploitation is not a regrettable contingency but an ontological necessity, and in which the aristocratic elite guides—and uses—the “herd” of followers as instruments for the cultivation of its greatness (Losurdo, 2002/2019).

In §264 of the same work, Nietzsche explicitly grounds this hierarchical vision in hereditary determinism: “It is simply not possible that a human being should not have the qualities and preferences of his parents and ancestors in his body, whatever appearances may suggest to the contrary”; and “with the help of the best education and culture, one will only succeed in deceiving with regard to such heredity.” Education and culture, in this view, are merely instruments of illusion that mask an ineradicable plebeian nature: “in our very democratic, or rather, very plebeian age, ‘education’ and ‘culture’ must be essentially the art of deceiving—deceiving with regard to origin, with regard to the inherited plebeianism in body and soul” (Nietzsche, 1886/1966). This passage is devastating to any transhumanist reading that presents the *Übermensch* as a universally attainable ideal: for Nietzsche, the capacity for greatness is inscribed in the blood, not achieved through self-cultivation or technological progress.

The evolutionist and eugenic themes that lie on the surface of Nietzsche’s writings—and that loomed large in his early reception (Moore, 2002; Richardson, 2004; Stone, 2002)—confirm this orientation rather than softening it. Nietzsche’s language of breeding and selection (*Zucht und Züchtung*) is explicit: in the *Twilight of the Idols* the invalid is described as a parasite of society and degenerating life is denied solidarity (Nietzsche, 1889/1954, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” §36); in *The Antichrist*, “the weak and the botched shall perish: first principle of our charity. And one should help them to it” (Nietzsche, 1895/1918, §2); in *Beyond Good and Evil*, religion itself is valued as an instrument of breeding and discipline in the hands of philosophical legislators (Nietzsche, 1886/1966, §§61–62). This is a selective, aristocratic eugenics of rank—and, far from anticipating transhumanist enhancement, it is its antithesis: enhancement in the mainstream program is universal in aspiration, voluntary, and egalitarian in access, whereas Nietzschean *Züchtung* presupposes and reproduces hierarchy. It is telling, finally, that these are precisely the themes that the philologically faithful reading examined in §3.1 registers and the sanitized readings omit.

The political implications of this biologicistic vision reach their most explicit formulation in *The Antichrist* (1895), where Nietzsche endorses the caste system as the ratification of an order of nature: “The order of castes, the highest, the dominating law, is merely the ratification of an order of nature, of a natural law of the first rank, over which no arbitrary fiat, no ‘modern idea,’ can exert any influence.” Nature, not social convention, separates “those who are chiefly intellectual” from “those who are marked by muscular strength and temperament” and from those who “show only mediocrity”—the last constituting “the great majority.” The superior caste, which Nietzsche calls “the fewest,” has, “as the most perfect, the privileges of the few: it stands for happiness, for beauty, for everything good upon earth.” He then explicitly condemns the egalitarian aspiration itself: “Wrong never lies in unequal rights; it lies in the assertion of ‘equal’ rights” (Nietzsche, 1895/1918, §57). The alignment of this passage with the program of Vaj and Locchi’s suprahumanism—which, as we have seen, takes the Indian caste system as an explicit model—is not a mere curiosity but a further tessera in the cumulative case for this article’s first thesis: the “hard” reading tracks Nietzsche’s text precisely where the “soft” readings must look away. What the passage sanctions is a stark naturalization of

dominance that leaves no room for the egalitarian, compassion-centered ethics embraced by the mainstream transhumanist movement.

The chronology is itself instructive, indeed arguably probative: all the works just cited, with the sole exception of *The Gay Science*, were composed after *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The naturalization of dominance is not a stance the Übermensch's advent was meant to supersede, but one Nietzsche continued to assert after giving the figure its canonical formulation.

It is worth noting that Nietzsche's ethical naturalism extends even to the question of mortality, which he treats not as a metaphysical problem but as a socio-political one. The promise of immortality "granted to every Peter and Paul" is, in his view, "the biggest, most vicious attack against noble humanity to date" precisely because it "pretends that we are all equal" and "denies difference and rank" (Hauskeller, 2010, p. 7). Even death, in this framework, serves the aristocratic order: the Übermensch must "practise the difficult art of—going at the right time" (Nietzsche, 1883–1885/1909, "Voluntary Death"), freely embracing mortality rather than fleeing it. The transhumanist aspiration to radical life extension for all is thus, from Nietzsche's perspective, yet another manifestation of the despised egalitarian principle—a further confirmation that his opposition to egalitarianism is not confined to the political sphere but pervades every dimension of his thought, including those that might superficially appear to be purely existential.

5. Anthropological Excursus: Dominance, Counter-Dominance, and Master Morality as Archaic Anachronism

Nietzsche's most celebrated methodological innovation is the genealogical analysis of morality: the attempt to trace the historical and psychological origins of moral values in order to reveal what lies beneath their claim to universality. In the *Genealogy*, he applies this method to slave morality, constructing the narrative of *ressentiment* examined in §4.1. Yet the genealogical method is a double-edged sword: if slave morality can be genealogically deconstructed, so too can master morality—and with it, the Übermensch ideal that represents its highest expression. The excursus that follows undertakes precisely this task—a genealogy of Nietzschean morality itself—drawing on anthropological and evolutionary research that has identified two fundamental and opposing tendencies shaping human social organization throughout the species' history: the hierarchical (dominance) tendency and the egalitarian (counter-dominance) tendency.

The stakes of this exercise for the article's central question should be stated at the outset—together with its epistemic status. What follows is a conjectural genealogy: a hypothesis advanced for its explanatory economy, not a body of established fact, and no more (but also no less) demonstrable than Nietzsche's own conjectural genealogy of slave morality. Its upshot, if sound, is that the value-complex the Übermensch radicalizes corresponds to an ancient dominance pattern with deep phylogenetic roots rather than to an emergent condition of self-directed evolutionary advance.

On the reconstruction proposed by a substantial body of anthropological and evolutionary research (Boehm, 1999; de Waal, 1996; Tomasello, 2016), early human groups initially organized themselves into hierarchical structures led by dominant alpha males, exhibiting social patterns similar to those observed in common chimpanzees and gorillas. Subsequently, with the advent of cooperative big-game hunting in the Late Paleolithic, egalitarianism emerged within human bands, driven by the imperative of equitable resource distribution. The typical alpha-male behavior became a "deviant" behavior, to be stigmatized and ostracized; it is probable that this was indeed the first behavior to be collectively sanctioned as such (Stile, 2014, 2015a). This transition marked the rise of social controls through what anthropologists have termed "leveling-down mechanisms"—strategies aimed specifically at suppressing alpha-male behavior—with the alpha male typically claiming priority over food and mates—and preserving cooperation (Boehm, 1999). The subsequent birth of agriculture and pastoralism during the Neolithic Revolution allowed the development of civilization, but the increasing social

complexity—from small bands to chiefdoms, kingdoms, and empires—also led to the re-emergence of the hierarchical tendency in the form of elite systems (kings, warriors, priests, bureaucrats) which often began to distort social controls, turning them to their own advantage (Stile, 2015a): the passage from egalitarianism to what Diamond (1997) calls “kleptocracy.”

Nevertheless, the egalitarian counter-dominance tendency persisted. After several seminal democratic experiments and the watershed of the French Revolution, contemporary liberal and social democracies represent its resurgence, adapted to the complexities of modern societies. A dynamic equilibrium exists between these two tendencies. The persistence of dominance instincts leads to recurrent attempts by high-status individuals and groups to concentrate power. In immediate-return economies, attempts to breach egalitarian distribution are readily detected and countered; conversely, in complex, delayed-return economies, social controls can more easily be distorted and exploited to maintain elite privileges (Stile, 2015a; Woodburn, 1982).

Within this evolutionary framework—if the conjecture is granted—Nietzsche’s moral categories acquire a striking clarity. Master morality would correspond to the hierarchical dominance tendency (or, if preferred, the “suprahumanist principle”)—the assertion of will, the celebration of strength, the naturalization of exploitation and inequality. Slave morality, which Nietzsche despises, would correspond to the egalitarian counter-dominance tendency that emerged to suppress alpha-male behavior and preserve the cooperation essential to human survival and flourishing. The *Übermensch*, far from representing a progressive evolutionary ideal, appears, on this reading, as a regression to archaic alpha-male dominance patterns: a figure who celebrates the aggressive and acquisitive behavioral strategies—dominance, hoarding, short-term gain, lack of empathy and self-control—that were functional in pre-civilizational societies but have since become socially dysfunctional. From an evolutionary standpoint, then, the Nietzschean *Übermensch* appears as an anachronistic figure whose “virtues” no longer align with contemporary social structures.⁸

This anthropological perspective also illuminates the peculiar capacity of Nietzsche’s philosophy to attract, as Trotsky (1900) observed, “completely opposed social elements” under its banner. Both radical individualists (such as Ayn Rand) and radical organicist communitarians (such as Locchi and the fascist movements) have claimed Nietzschean inspiration. The apparent contradiction resolves itself when one recognizes that, as in ancient Sparta, a hierarchical and organic social structure can coexist with a cadre of elite individuals—substantially equal among themselves—at its apex. The ruling Spartiates, who significantly referred to themselves as *Homoioi* (“the similars”), upheld an organic, hierarchical society while subjugating the majority—the Helots, a population of autochthonous, pre-Dorian origin, reduced to serfdom following the Indo-European Dorian invasion, in an arrangement functionally analogous to the Indian caste system, where the Indo-Aryan conquerors similarly imposed a rigid hierarchical order upon the indigenous populations. This dynamic is also observable, more broadly, in the structures influenced by the Indo-European tripartite ideology described by Georges Dumézil, which organized society along three functional lines (Dumézil, 1958). Nietzsche’s vision

⁸ A paradigmatic illustration is the aforementioned transhumanist “Genetic Virtue Project” (Walker, 2009), which proposes to harness biotechnology to attenuate predispositions toward antisocial and dominance-oriented behaviors while strengthening motivational orientations toward pro-social virtues such as altruism and empathy. Whatever the merits of such a program on its own terms, it is striking that, viewed through the lens of the dominance/counter-dominance dynamic outlined here, it could be regarded as the most ambitious extension of the egalitarian counter-dominance tendency: an attempt to consolidate, at the biological level, the pro-social orientations that cultural evolution and social control mechanisms have progressively reinforced over millennia—though always within a dialectical equilibrium with the opposing dominance tendency, which has never been definitively suppressed and continues to reassert itself in new forms. From a Nietzschean standpoint, such a project would constitute the biopolitical apex of what was denounced as “slave morality”—the systematic genetic anchoring of those very pro-social dispositions whose ascent the philosopher of Röcken traced to *ressentiment* and against which his entire philosophy is mobilized.

similarly entertains both the radical freedom of the elite and the strict subordination of the majority—a combination fundamentally incompatible with any transhumanist project aspiring to universal enhancement and democratic governance.

Yet Nietzsche's stark dichotomy of master and slave moralities, and the presumed superiority of the former, was already challenged at the turn of the twentieth century. The Italian writer Federico De Roberto, in *Il colore del tempo* ("The Color of Time," 1900), offered a penetrating counter-argument: if the slaves, the vanquished, are capable of imposing their own morality on the victors, this means that their moral framework possesses a virtue and a strength that even those whom it harms recognize, accept, and embrace. "In the world, not only material force operates, but also moral force—of the heart, of the soul, of the spirit—and the force of the heart is capable of overcoming the very force of the arm. Victors and vanquished, yes, but the vanquished are not as defeated as it seems, if they achieve this triumph: to impose their morality on the world" (De Roberto, 1900, p. 54). The two seemingly opposing tables of values, De Roberto argues, both depend on an imposition, on a victory; and in conclusion, we do not see two distinct and separate tables of values but a balance that continually tends toward equilibrium. This insight anticipates the anthropological framework outlined above: the dynamic equilibrium between dominance and counter-dominance is not an aberration but a fundamental feature of human social evolution.

A comparable tension can be registered within Nietzsche's own text. In the second essay of the *Genealogy*, the founding of the "state" is the work of "a herd of blonde beasts of prey, a race of conquerors and masters" (Nietzsche, 1887/1913, II:17)—masters by nature, in whom, Nietzsche insists, bad conscience did not grow (II:16–18): the link Nietzsche draws between state-founding and bad conscience is causal and external rather than attributive, for bad conscience develops in those subjected to the founders' form-giving violence, not in the founders themselves. Yet the same account concedes that what issues from that founding act is civilizationally decisive: it is the internalization of the instincts denied outward discharge under the new coercive order that gives the human soul its depth (II:16)—the same movement by which, as noted in §4.1, man first becomes an "interesting animal" (I:6). Read within the framework adopted here, bad conscience is intelligible as the psychological sedimentation of social controls oriented to the preservation of cooperation—the very function for which counter-dominance mechanisms had emerged in the preceding egalitarian phase—now operating alongside, and against, the distorted controls by which aristocratic societies preserved domination. On this reading, the moral emotions in which bad conscience issues—guilt, shame, empathic concern for the other—are the internalized form of the collective expectations that counter-dominant coalitions had historically transmitted to individuals; and it is through them that the egalitarian tendency, initially repressed by increasing social complexity, re-emerges and eventually perpetuates itself as what Nietzsche calls slave morality. Nietzsche thus comes close to conceding the central point of this excursus—that the civilizing process, and with it the very depth that makes the human animal "interesting," runs through the counter-dominance formation he despises—without drawing the consequent conclusion: his preference remains with the "beasts of prey," free in the specific sense of being unbound by the claims of the mass they employ as instrument and material.

Liberal and social democracies, despite their differences in relative emphasis on freedom and equality, both adhere to the principle that each person has substantially equal value. This commitment sharply contrasts with the socio-political ideologies of extreme individualism and extreme social organicism, which deny universal principles in favor of a selective elevation of certain individuals or groups. The true triumph, from this anthropological standpoint, is not the dominance of the *Übermensch* but the enduring resilience of egalitarian principles that seek to harmonize the human condition by mitigating the excesses of klepto-hierarchical tendencies.

In closing, the excursus's contribution to the article's central question can be stated plainly: if the conjectural genealogy sketched here is on the right track, then the *Übermensch*—the intensified bearer of master morality—is genealogically a figure of humanity's deep past, not a herald of its future; and the transhumanist appropriation of the figure as a proto-posthuman ideal rests on a misidentification not only of Nietzsche's values but of the evolutionary direction of the very tendencies those values articulate.

6. Fundamental Incompatibilities: Why Nietzsche Cannot Ground Transhumanism

The analyses presented in the preceding sections converge on a set of fundamental incompatibilities between the core of Nietzsche's philosophy and the ideals prevalent in transhumanist thought. As Hauskeller (2016) has systematically demonstrated, and as Carney (2021) has further argued, these divergences are not peripheral but strike at the heart of both philosophical projects. Consistent with the socio-political and ethical focus of the present article,⁹ and with the identification of self-directed evolution as the defining idea of the transhumanist project, these incompatibilities may be articulated along two principal and interconnected dimensions: the ethical-political, centering on the opposition between Nietzsche's ethical naturalism and the anti-naturalist ethics of transhumanism; and the teleological, centering on the opposition between Nietzsche's radical rejection of progress and the transhumanist commitment to self-directed evolution.

6.1 Ethical Naturalism and Socio-Political Vision

The most fundamental incompatibility between Nietzsche and transhumanism lies in their diametrically opposed stances toward nature as a measure of value. Nietzsche's philosophy is grounded in a radical ethical naturalism: valuation is answerable to the natural order—to natural hierarchies, to biological endowment, to the immutable "order of rank" inscribed in nature itself—and not to any standard erected against it. Exploitation "belongs to the essence of what lives, as a basic organic function" (Nietzsche, 1886/1966, §259); the caste system is "merely the ratification of an order of nature, of a natural law of the first rank" (Nietzsche, 1895/1918, §57); aristocratic capacity is a matter of blood and descent, and cannot be acquired through education, which can only "deceive" about one's hereditary nature (Nietzsche, 1886/1966, §§213, 264). Nietzsche does not, however, derive a universally binding ought from natural fact—that is the very pretension he ridicules in the Stoics who would "live according to nature" (Nietzsche, 1886/1966, §9). His naturalism operates otherwise: forms of life are appraised through a physiological criterion of rank, in which hierarchy, differentiation, and the expansion of power register as expressions of ascending life, while the correction of natural hierarchies registers as a symptom of decadence. Nature legislates nothing; it is the terrain on which ascent and decline are read—and the reading admits of no appeal. Nietzsche's contempt for egalitarian values follows from this: equality is an assault on the natural order, compassion is a pathological weakness, and the aspiration to universal well-being is a manifestation of the despised "slave morality" rooted in *ressentiment*.

Transhumanism, by contrast, is predicated on a thoroughgoing ethical anti-naturalism. Its foundational premise is precisely that nature—including human nature—constitutes a contingent given to be evaluated, redesigned, and transcended in light of values determined through rational deliberation and ethical responsibility. The transhumanist project is, at its core, a declaration of independence from biological fate: it

⁹ Other dimensions of incompatibility—those concerning the body, mortality, and the metaphysics of personal identity—have been examined in independent analyses; Stambler (2010), for example, demonstrates the structural incompatibility between Nietzschean philosophy and the transhumanist commitment to radical life extension, with Zarathustra openly disdaining longevity ("What matter about long life! What warrior wisheth to be spared!"). Notably, Stambler's argument also converges with the diagnosis pursued here on the socio-political plane: he reads Nietzsche's deep elitism as a reflection of German aristocracy that makes him an unlikely forerunner of a movement aimed at the universal distribution of enhancement.

asserts that the limitations, inequalities, and suffering imposed by nature are not morally authoritative but morally arbitrary, and that humanity has both the right and the duty to overcome them through technological intervention. As Hauskeller (2010, p. 5) observes, Nietzsche “had nothing but contempt for those who sought to improve the human condition,” regarding attempts to better humanity as acts of “vampirism.” He specifically identified Cesare Borgia as “a kind of overhuman,” admiringly describing him as a “human predator” (Hauskeller, 2010, p. 6). This constitutes the precise inversion of the transhumanist ethical stance, which holds that the “natural” is not ipso facto the good, and that the proper task of a rational, technologically capable species is to correct the injustices and limitations that nature imposes.

This opposition illuminates and unifies the multiple specific incompatibilities identified in the preceding sections. Nietzsche’s anti-democracy, anti-egalitarianism, aristocratic radicalism, and hierarchical organic communitarianism are not incidental features of his philosophy but direct consequences of his ethical naturalism: if the order of rank is a fact of nature to be read rather than a convention open to revision, then democracy is an aberration, equality is a lie, and the aristocratic order is the only legitimate political form. These positions are not only incompatible with the utilitarian abolitionism of Pearce (1995) and the democratic transhumanism of Hughes (2004)—who respectively seek to eliminate suffering and to ensure universal access to enhancement technologies—but equally irreconcilable with the libertarian, Popperian open-society principles of More (1998) and the liberal-democratic posthumanism of Sorgner (2016), who explicitly identifies his moral framework with the very values that Nietzsche assigned to “slave morality,” thereby inverting Nietzsche’s own transvaluation and restoring precisely those values he sought to overthrow (the same positions prove, by contrast—and this is the decisive point—fully compatible with the bio- and socio-political perspective advanced by Stefano Vaj).

Carney (2021) further highlights the absence in Nietzsche of any foundational moral framework capable of guiding self-overcoming in an ethically responsible manner, concluding that the attempt by More and Sorgner to use Nietzsche for transhumanist purposes represents “simply an error of interpretation, if not outright disingenuousness.” As Losurdo (2002/2019) has extensively documented, Nietzsche’s project amounts to a systematic celebration of slavery, war, and aristocratic privilege—a “transversal racialization of the subaltern classes.” And, as Tännsjö (2009, p. 325) has observed, the bioconservative reluctance to support enhancement for the less favored by nature is attributable to a “Nietzschean view of justice, according to which it is unfair if those who are less fit pool their resources and rob the genuinely strong *Übermensch* of his genetic advantage”—a notion Tännsjö rightly characterizes as “fascistoid.”

The question of rationality further deepens this divide. Transhumanism inherits the Western logocentric tradition, valorizing reason, scientific method, and rational deliberation as the instruments through which humanity can take charge of its own destiny. Nietzsche, conversely, critiques hypertrophied reason and valorizes instinct, the body, and the pre-rational will to power. As Zarathustra’s awakened one declares, “Body am I entirely, and nothing more” (Nietzsche, 1883–1885/1909, “The Despisers of the Body”): his *Übermensch* is a figure of intensified immanence, not of rational transcendence. This is not merely a philosophical difference of emphasis: for Nietzsche, the celebration of reason is itself a symptom of the Socratic-Christian decadence that dismantled the aristocratic pre-rational social order. Rationality, in his view, is the weapon of the weak—the instrument through which the “slaves” compensated for their physical inferiority and overturned the natural hierarchy. The transhumanist faith in reason as the engine of self-directed evolution thus represents, from a Nietzschean perspective, the epitome of the “slave revolt” in the epistemological domain.

The role of education provides a further illustration. As analyzed in §4.3, Nietzsche explicitly denies that education can alter the hereditary nature of individuals: it can only “deceive” about one’s inherited plebeianism. Transhumanism, by contrast, places

enormous faith in education, training, and cognitive enhancement as means of elevating human capacities—a stance that directly contradicts Nietzsche’s biologicistic determinism. If aristocratic capacity is inscribed in blood and lineage, then the transhumanist program of universal enhancement through education and technology is, in Nietzsche’s terms, an elaborate act of self-deception that seeks to disguise the ineradicable inequality of natures.

6.2 Progress, Self-Directed Evolution, and the Rejection of Transformative Teleology

If the ethical dimension reveals an opposition between naturalism and anti-naturalism regarding *values*, the teleological dimension reveals the same opposition regarding *time* and *direction*. The transhumanist vision is oriented toward the future: it conceives of history as a trajectory of progress, of human evolution as a process that can and should be rationally directed, and of the present as a stage to be transcended in pursuit of a technologically engineered *what could be*. Self-directed evolution presupposes that the future can and should be qualitatively different from, and better than, the past. It is, in essence, a wager on the human capacity to reshape destiny through rational agency.

Nietzsche’s philosophy denies this wager at its foundations. His doctrine of the eternal recurrence—the thought that one might will the eternal repetition of one’s life in every single detail, including all its suffering and joy—functions as the ultimate test of life-affirmation: it demands an unconditional affirmation of existence as necessity, rather than its melioristic reclassification as a defective condition awaiting correction. Eternal recurrence is not only a cosmological hypothesis but also, and in its published deployment above all, a moral imperative:¹⁰ it asks whether one can bear, and indeed *will*, the eternal repetition of the same, without the consolation of progress, amelioration, or transcendence. *Amor fati*—the love of fate—complements this idea: it is the active willing and loving of one’s destiny, the embrace of necessity, the affirmation of everything that has been and will be, without reservation (Nietzsche, 1883–1885/1909, “The Vision and the Enigma,” “The Convalescent”; 1901/1968, §§1053–1067). These concepts call for a radical acceptance of the given, including pain, limitation, struggle, and transience, seeing them not as flaws to be eliminated but as integral components of the totality of existence that must be affirmed. As Carney (2021) identifies, this constitutes an inherent contradiction with the transhumanist project: Nietzsche’s belief in eternal recurrence is antithetical to the continuous progress inherent in transhumanism.

Transhumanism is fundamentally predicated on the *rejection* of biological fate and necessity, viewing many aspects of the natural human condition as problems to be solved or limitations to be overcome through technological intervention. Its explicit goals—the elimination of involuntary suffering, the conquest of aging and death, the rational seizure of control over human evolution—constitute, in essence, a declaration of war on fate as Nietzsche conceived it. Where Nietzsche demands that existence be affirmed in its entirety, transhumanism insists on the right to discriminate between those aspects of existence worth preserving and those to be overcome—a “morally toned selectivity,” in

¹⁰ The interpretive status of eternal recurrence is a matter of long-standing debate: cosmological-metaphysical readings, supported by the *Nachlass* sketches and recently defended by Loeb (2010), stand alongside existential-imperative interpretations (Magnus, 1978), aesthetic-literary ones (Nehamas, 1985), and deflationary practical readings (Clark, 1990). The functional reading adopted in the text rests on the published presentations of the doctrine (Nietzsche, 1882/1974, §341; 1883–1885/1909, “The Convalescent”), which frame it as a test addressed to the hearer. Decisively for present purposes, the incompatibility argued here holds on each of these readings, though it is reached by two different routes. Taken objectively, as a cosmological thesis, the doctrine forecloses the open and directional future that self-directed evolution presupposes: where nothing is unprecedented, there is no unprecedented condition to be attained. Taken subjectively—as existential imperative, aesthetic demand, or practical test—it requires that existence be affirmed as necessity, and is thereby opposed not to transformation as such (one may well will the eternal return of a life of self-overcoming—though what one thereby wills is, on the doctrine’s own terms, a life that has already recurred, identically, infinite times in the past, and not merely one that will recur henceforth) but to the melioristic grammar that reclassifies the given as contingent defect awaiting correction. The two routes converge on the same conclusion from opposite directions.

Hauskeller's (2010, p. 8) apt phrase, that is the precise inversion of the unconditional *Ja-sagen* demanded by eternal recurrence. One cannot simultaneously practice *amor fati*, embracing one's biological destiny with all its imperfections, and dedicate oneself to the systematic technological eradication of that very destiny. The two postures—radical affirmation of the given and radical reconstruction of the given—are mutually exclusive.

This opposition is not accidental but follows directly from the deeper conflict between ethical naturalism and anti-naturalism. *Amor fati* is the ultimate expression of Nietzsche's naturalism in the temporal domain—the insistence that what nature and fate have decreed must not merely be accepted but *loved*. Self-directed evolution is the ultimate expression of transhumanist anti-naturalism—the insistence that what nature and fate have decreed must be *overcome*. The two concepts thus stand as symmetrical antitheses: one sacralizes the given, the other secularizes it into raw material for rational transformation.

Taken together, the incompatibilities that emerge from these two dimensions—the ethical-political and the teleological—are not independent objections but two faces of a single philosophical stance: one that naturalizes both the social order and the temporal order, declaring both immune to legitimate transformation.

7. Conclusion

This investigation into the intersection of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy with the transhumanist movement reveals a relationship that is far more complex and problematic than either enthusiastic appropriation or superficial dismissal would suggest. The analysis has proceeded along three converging lines, each of which casts doubt on the coherence of a supposed "Nietzschean transhumanism": a methodological critique of the classificatory framework; a genealogical reconstruction of the most politically charged reading of Nietzsche within the movement; and a philosophical examination of the *Übermensch* and its underlying value system.

Campa's taxonomy, though valuable in framing the debate's future-oriented significance, ultimately conflates positions as distant as More's extropianism, Sorgner's metahumanism, and Vaj's suprahumanism under a single label, thereby obscuring rather than illuminating the field it sets out to map.

The critical exposition of Vaj's position, grounded in Locchi's suprahumanism, reveals not a benign variant of transhumanism but a project that seeks to reconnect technological futurism with explicitly anti-egalitarian and fascist genealogies.

Beyond the specific case of Vaj, the analysis has demonstrated a fundamental incompatibility between the core of Nietzsche's philosophy—his ethical naturalism, his aristocratic morality, his anti-egalitarianism, his critique of compassion, his conception of the *Übermensch* as the apotheosis of master morality—and the ideals of universal progress, widespread well-being, rationality, and democratic governance that animate the greater part of the transhumanist movement. This incompatibility has been articulated along two interconnected dimensions. On the ethical-political plane, Nietzsche's radical naturalism—which grounds his evaluative hierarchy in biological rank and treats as decadent any attempt to override nature's "order of rank"—stands in irreconcilable opposition to the ethical anti-naturalism of transhumanism, which treats nature (at least implicitly including those hierarchical social structures that Nietzsche himself naturalizes as expressions of the dominance principle) as a contingent given to be rationally transcended and redesigned. On the teleological plane, Nietzsche's doctrines of eternal recurrence and *amor fati*—which demand the unconditional affirmation of existence as it is and deny the legitimacy of the aspiration to a qualitatively different future—negate the very possibility of self-directed evolution, the defining idea of the transhumanist project. The "sanitized" interpretations offered by More and Sorgner, while politically harmless, are difficult to reconcile with Nietzsche's stated positions; the "faithful" interpretation offered by Vaj and Locchi, while descriptively far more consistent with Nietzsche's texts, coherently develops his aristocratic and anti-egalitarian commitments into an explicitly

fascist political project. The transhumanist movement thus faces a dilemma with no satisfactory resolution within a Nietzschean framework: it can have a Nietzsche compatible with its own values, or a Nietzsche faithful to his texts, but not both.

The anthropological excursus has further situated Nietzsche's master morality as a sophisticated philosophical articulation of the archaic dominance tendency—a regression to alpha-male behavioral patterns rather than a progressive vision of human evolution. From this perspective, the *Übermensch* represents not humanity's future but a glorified version of its ancient past, and the "morality of the masters" not a superior ethical framework but a regression to primordial dominance patterns that egalitarian counter-dominance mechanisms evolved precisely to suppress.

Campa's insight—that to choose the roots of transhumanism is to forge its future—thus acquires its full significance. If the transhumanist movement is to develop a future that is as ethically sound as it is ambitious, it must engage in a rigorous critical evaluation of its philosophical genealogy. The incompatibility thesis and the article's prescriptive conclusion are, in this respect, mutually reinforcing: precisely because influence can flow despite philosophical incompatibility (§1), the demonstration of that incompatibility is what gives the warning its content. If influence tracked compatibility, no critical vigilance would be required; it is because a movement can absorb—and be redirected by—a genealogy that contradicts its own normative core that the choice of roots demands critical scrutiny. Nietzsche can certainly offer provocative stimuli regarding the critique of human limitations and the imperative of self-overcoming. But his core philosophy—grounded in aristocratic radicalism, ethical naturalism, anti-egalitarianism, the celebration of suffering, and the explicit justification of exploitation as a fundamental organic function of life—does not provide a viable ethical foundation for a project of self-directed evolution that aspires to be inclusive and responsible.

Nietzsche and transhumanism represent distinct, and ultimately antagonistic, philosophical responses to the question of human destiny and the challenges of modernity. The notion of a substantive "Nietzschean transhumanism" remains an appealing but ultimately illusory construct, born of superficial terminological similarities and interpretive strategies that fail to grapple with the deep philosophical incompatibilities separating the prophet of the *Übermensch* from the proponents of the post-natural human. Accordingly, the most consequential risk for transhumanism lies less in *appropriating* Nietzsche than in *equivocating* about him: in conflating readings that, while sharing the same name, point in opposite directions.

The debate over Nietzsche is not merely a theoretical exercise but a way to navigate the internal diversity of the transhumanist movement, providing an opportunity to clarify how different interpretations align or conflict with its foundational ideals. The issue is not whether Nietzsche and transhumanism share a rhetoric of overcoming, but whether they share a compatible moral and political horizon. The argument advanced here is that they do not. The stakes are not merely theoretical: they concern the ethical, social, and political shape of the emerging posthuman era.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing—original draft preparation, and writing—review and editing: G.C.S. The author has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: In the preparation of this manuscript, the author used Anthropic's Claude (Opus 4.6, 4.8, and 5) to assist with English-language translation and editing, structural review,

bibliographic verification, and consistency checking. All scholarly content, arguments, and interpretive claims remain the sole responsibility of the author. All content has been critically reviewed, edited, and approved by the author, who takes full responsibility for the integrity, accuracy, and originality of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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