# AN EVALUATION OF TRANSHUMANISM IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAX MORE

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**AN ORIGINAL ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY. IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A.) DEGREE IN PHILOSOPHY**

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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work titled; **AN EVALUATION OF TRANSHUMANISM IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAX MORE** was carried out by **UDEZI DANIELLA ISHIOMA** with matriculation number **ART2101144** of the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin- City.

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, the gracious and kind Father, whose love, guidance, and protection have sustained me throughout my academic journey. Truly, without Him, none of this would have been possible. And to my lovely mother, Mrs. Udezi Helen Adaeze for her support and prayers.

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## ABSTRACT

*Transhumanism is a philosophical movement that supports the use of modern technology to enhance human development and overcome limitations. Max More is a leading transhumanist philosopher who has made significant contributions to the field. The objective of this project is to evaluate transhumanism in the philosophy of Max More. Focusing on his extropian principles, the project examines how his vision of transcending biological limits via technologies like cryonics, genetic engineering, and artificial intelligence influences contemporary thought. Using the method of philosophical analysis, hermeneutic interpretation & conceptual clarification, the study analyzes More's foundational ideas, including perpetual progress and morphological freedom, which advocate individual choice in self-transformation. This project investigates the ethical, technological, and social implications of Max More's philosophy, such as issues of access, safety, and societal pressures, alongside criticisms highlighting its over-optimism, libertarian bias, and speculative nature. This project also assesses Max More's 21st-century legacy, noting his impact on biotechnology, philosophy, and cultural movements like transhumanism advocacy. While More's vision inspires innovation and personal empowerment, it faces challenges in ensuring equitable access, addressing safety risks, and embracing cultural diversity. This project underscores the transformative potential of transhumanism while advocating a balanced approach to ensure its benefits reach all of humanity, contributing to ongoing debates about technology's role in our collective future.*

# CHAPTER ONE

# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In the world today, human beings both young and old engage in different activities which enhance human behavior. As rational beings, we can say that humans are already enhanced one way or the other. We digest psychostimulants in the form of "coffee" daily, we modify our brains with our phones through the internet, we replace worn-out joints with ceramic alloy equivalents, and we also use fertilizers to enhance the fertility of women. In other words, we can say that these technologies mean that we are not just enhanced but we are also transhuman.

As humans we are never really satisfied with the way we look, the way we behave, the way others perceive us or even the way we live our lives daily. We are always concerned with how we can change one thing or the other, either in our looks and appearance, our way of life, or our mindset, we always want to live in a way that would be aesthetically pleasing to others around us. Transhumanists in this aspect tend to discover ways in which humans can enhance their bodies and lives using different forms of technology. To understand transhumanism, we need to understand it from the perspective of other philosophers and scientists. Transhumanism as a social, philosophical and scientific movement has different perspectives on it. Despite all the varieties of definitions and

concepts, there are still some central themes, values and interests that give transhumanism its identity.

According to Max More, 'Transhumanism' refers to "philosophies of life that seek the continuation and acceleration of the evolution of intelligent life beyond its currently human form and human limitations busing science and technology, guided by life-promoting principles and values"[1]. Accordingly, the Transhumanist FAQ argues that, transhumanism is 'The intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate aging and to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities"[2]. The term "transhumanism" was popularized by the English biologist and philosopher Julian Huxley in his 1957 essay "Transhumanism"[3]. Transhumanism is a social, philosophical and scientific movement that advocates the use of current and emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), genetic engineering, robotics, and cryonics to enhance human capabilities and improve the human condition.

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1 More, M. (1990), *Transhumanism: Towards a Futurist Philosophy.* Extropy 6, (Austin: Extropy Institute),pp. 6-12.

2 Various Contributors, (2003). *The Transhumanist FAQ.* (Connecticut: World Transhumanist Association, Humanity+ Press), pp. 4-5.

3 Huxley, J. (1957), *Transhumanism. Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, (London: Sage Publications), pp. 13-17.

Transhumanist scholars imagine a future whereby the responsible use of these technologies enables human beings to slow down, reverse or eliminate the aging process to achieve corresponding increases in human life spans, and to enhance capacities. Transhumanism can be thought of as a social and intellectual movement or philosophy which is based upon the idea that human beings can use science and technology to significantly enhance their capabilities and overcome many of the limitations of human biological system. Transhumanism can also be described as an international, intellectual and cultural movement that supports the use of science and technology to improve human mental and physical characteristics and capacities. Transhumanism concerns aspects of the human condition, such as disability, suffering, disease, aging, and involuntary death as unnecessary and undesirable.

Max More who is one of the major advocates of Transhumanism is a philosopher, futurist, and transhumanist who has written extensively on the topic of transhumanism. He is the founder of the Extropy Institute, a non-profit organization that promotes transhumanist ideas. More's transhumanist philosophy is based on the belief that humans can and should use technology to improve themselves. Max More advocates humans to have the right to do whatever they want with their bodies and minds which can be termed as morphological freedom. Max More argues that transhumanism has the potential to bring about many benefits for humanity. He believes that it can help us to live longer, healthier lives. It can also help us to enhance our cognitive abilities, such as our memory and

intelligence. Additionally, More believes that transhumanism can help us to create a more just and equitable society.

Max More's work is distinctive in the sense that it does not merely envision enhancement as a technical possibility but as a moral and existential imperative. Max More tries to give reasons why transhumanism is important and he also tries to refute the critiques of Transhumanism. More believes that transhumanism can help us to overcome many of the challenges that we face today, such as disease, aging, and poverty. He also believes that it can help us to achieve our full potential as humans. The significance of Max More's philosophy is the fact that it is embedded in diverse themes like ethics, metaphysics and futurism. Max More in his transhumanist philosophy is also aware of the potential risks of transhumanism. He argues that it is important to proceed with caution while veering into certain aspects of transhumanism and to be aware of the potential dangers. Some of the risks that Max More identifies include the possibility of creating a new class of superhumans, the potential for misuse of technology, and the ethical implications of altering human nature.

Max More argues that the potential benefits of transhumanism outweigh the risks. He believes that it is our responsibility to use technology to improve ourselves and to create a better future for humanity. More also argues that transhumanism is a natural extension of human evolution. He believes that we have always been seeking ways to improve

ourselves, and that technology is simply the latest tool that we have at our disposal to do so.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although transhumanism's main purpose is improving the human condition both mentally and physically for the future, transhumanism does not entail any belief in the certainty of progress or a future free from dangers. These technologies that are used in the enhancement and transformation of human lives may also cause damage to human lives intentionally and unintentionally. Transhumanists regard human nature not as an end in itself but as one point in the path of human lives. The main problem to be discussed in this project is

1. Can transhumanism’s technological enhancements effectively improve the human condition without causing unintended harm? Technologies like genetic engineering and brain-computer interfaces promise enhanced intelligence, longevity, and physical capabilities, aligning with extropianism’s goal of advancing human potential. Yet, these advancements carry risks of intentional misuse or unintentional harm. The uncertainty of achieving safe, reliable outcomes challenges the feasibility of widespread adoption.

2. How feasible is Max More’s extropian framework in addressing the practical challenges of enhancement technologies? More’s philosophy, centered on extropy and proactive risk-taking, assumes technological progress can overcome biological

constraints through human ingenuity. However, speculative technologies like cryonics or advanced AI face significant barriers, including scientific uncertainty and high costs, limiting their practicality.

3. To what extent can transhumanism's rejection of apologism ensure ethical progress in diverse global contexts? By rejecting apologism, transhumanism advocates for human-driven improvement, viewing enhancement as a moral imperative to reduce suffering and enhance well-being. However, More's libertarian emphasis on individual freedom may clash with global cultural and ethical diversity, raising questions about its universal applicability.

4. Can transhumanism mitigate the societal risks of inequality and identity transformation posed by enhancement technologies? Enhancement technologies risk increasing social divides, as access may be limited to affluent groups, creating disparities in cognitive or physical capabilities. Furthermore, altering human nature through enhancements could disrupt concepts of identity, raising ethical concerns about authenticity or coercion to conform to enhanced norms. This question investigates whether transhumanism, particularly More's vision, can address these societal challenges to ensure equitable and ethical outcomes, balancing individual autonomy with collective well-being.

## 1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to analyze the core philosophical principles of Max More's Transhumanist philosophy, investigate the trends of transhumanism in science and technology. Furthermore, it exposes the studious risk humanity faces especially from the misuse of new technology, proffering solutions to the risk that transhumanism can cause in human society, It also describes ways by which the risk of human extinction through transhumanism can be reduced. The study also suggests policies that will help to morally evaluate the effects of transhumanism and also determine the challenges and limitations of Transhumanism.

## 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study includes focusing on contributing to the philosophical discourse on transhumanism by offering a focused analysis of Max More’s foundational contributions. This study also addresses the gap between the technological aspect and the philosophical aspect of Transhumanism by critically examining More’s theoretical framework and its implications for ethics, identity, and human potential. Furthermore, the research deepens our understanding of how technology and philosophy intersect in shaping visions of the future. The study also tends to expose the numerous risks of transhumanism in humanity. Humanity faces serious risks, especially through the misuse of new technologies Finally, the study is relevant to ongoing bioethical and policy

discussions by clarifying the moral foundations of ideas such as morphological freedom emphasized by Max More and the proactionary principle.

Finally, this study encourages a critical reflection on the changing definition of what it means to be considered human. Max More envisions a future in which the human condition is no longer biologically fixed, this research invites dialogue on the desirability, risks, and philosophical coherence of striving toward a posthuman future.

## 1.5 METHODOLOGY

This project adopts a combination of methods which are philosophical analysis, hermeneutic interpretation and conceptual clarification. These methods allow for a critical and in-depth engagement with the core principles and argumentative structures of More's work while situating his ideas within broader philosophical traditions. The method of philosophical analysis enables us to break down the works of Max More and understand his core principles. Closely related to philosophical analysis, the method of conceptual clarification is used to refine the definitions of transhumanist terms and principles as Max More uses them. This method assists in differentiating Max More's views from other thinkers within the Transhumanist field. Given that More's writings mostly include manifestos, essays, and futurist reflections, a hermeneutic approach is used to interpret his work in its historical, cultural, and intellectual context. This method allows us to understand how More's ideas have evolved and how they respond to broader

trends in technology, ethics, and human identity. This project is divided into four chapters:

**Chapter One** is the general introduction

**Chapter Two** is the concept of transhumanism in the philosophy of Max More.

**Chapter Three** is the Contemporary Legacy of Max More's Transhumanist Philosophy

**Chapter Four** is the evaluation, conclusion and recommendations.

## 1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study centers on Max More's conceptualization of transhumanism one of the most influential figures in the development of the contemporary transhumanist movement, especially as articulated in his essays such as *Transhumanism: Toward a Futurist Philosophy*[4]. The study examines the concept of transhumanism in the light of Max More. Max More's Transhumanist philosophy deals with explaining what Transhumanism is and explains explaining its. Transhumanism imagines a future whereby the responsible application of technology enables human beings to slow, reverse or eliminate the aging process to achieve increases in the human life span. Transhumanism is a philosophical, scientific study that includes a wide geographical scope.

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4 More, M. (1990), *Transhumanism: Towards a Futurist Philosophy*. Extropy 6, (Austine: Extropy Institute),pp. 6-12.

Furthermore, this study will also explore some key philosophical principles which include: extropy, morphological freedom, rational individualism, and proactionary thinking. This study will explore how transhumanism has evolved, its principles, its growth in the world and how it relates to humans today. The study will examine the ethical, metaphysical, and epistemological themes within More's philosophy. It will also attempt a comparative reference to other transhumanist thinkers, the likes of Nick Bostrom. The study aims to contribute a deeper philosophical understanding of the values and goals of Max More's Transhumanist philosophy. The study aims to contribute a deeper philosophical understanding of the values, assumptions, and goals that underlie More's version of transhumanism.

The study is limited to the philosophy of Max More alone, Max More's contribution to the field. This research does not offer an examination of alternative or opposing transhumanist philosophy and also limits the study's capacity to represent the diversity of thought within the broader transhumanist movement. Also, the writing of this project is dependent on the amount of Max More's published works which are not so readily available. Additionally, the study adopts a largely Western philosophical framework which may not fully account for non-Western or culturally distinct ethical perspectives on human enhancement, individuality, or futurism. As a result, certain culturally embedded critiques of transhumanism, particularly those emerging from collectivist or spiritual traditions, are not deeply explored.

## 1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

### Transhumanism

For More, transhumanism is a philosophy advocating technology to enhance human physical, intellectual, and emotional capacities, aiming to transcend biological limits and achieve a posthuman state.[5]

### Extropy

Accordingly, More argues that extropy, Max More's philosophy, promotes perpetual progress, self-transformation, and optimism through technology to overcome human limitations.[6]

### Technology

According to R. Kurzweil, technology encompasses tools and systems developed through scientific knowledge to solve problems or enhance capabilities.[7]

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5 More, M. (2013). The Philosophy of Transhumanism. In M. More & N. Vita-More (Eds.), *The transhumanist reader: Classical and contemporary essays on the science, technology, and philosophy of the human future*. (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell). pp. 1–2.
6 Ibid, pp. 3–17.
7 Kurzweil, R. (2005). *The singularity is near: When humans transcend biology.* (New York: Vikings Press,). pp. 7–9.

**Superhumans**

For Nick Bostrom, superhumans are individuals with enhanced abilities (e.g., cognition, longevity) beyond human norms, achieved via technologies like genetic engineering.[8]

**Enhancement**

According to J. Savulescu, enhancement involves improving human capacities (e.g., intelligence, strength) through technologies like gene-editing or implants.[9]

**Evolution**

For J. Hughes, evolution is the gradual change in species via natural selection or, in transhumanism, deliberate technological intervention.[10]

**Humanism**

According to H. Tirosh-Samuelson, humanism values human reason, ethics, and dignity, focusing on individual potential without supernatural beliefs.[11]

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8 Bostrom, N. (2014). *Superintelligence: Paths, dangers, strategies*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press). pp. 39–41.
9 Savulescu, J. (2016). The ethics of human enhancement. In S. Clarke, J. Savulescu, C. A. J. Coady, A. Giubilini, & S. Sanyal (Eds.)*, The ethics of human enhancement.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). pp. 23–25.
10 Hughes, J. (2004). *Citizen cyborg: Why democratic societies must respond to the redesigned human of the future.* (Boulder: Westview Press). pp. 45–47.
11 Tirosh-Samuelson, H. (2014). Transhumanism and the religious imagination. In C. Mercer & T. J. Trothen (Eds.), *Religion and transhumanism*. (California: Praeger). pp. 19–21.

**Morphological Freedom**

For Max More, morphological freedom is the right to modify one's body or mind using technology (e.g., prosthetics), emphasizing autonomy.[12]

**Artificial Intelligence**

Artificial intelligence (AI) for Max More, involves computer systems performing human-like tasks (e.g., reasoning, learning).[13]

## 1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the book *"The Philosophy of Transhumanism"*[14] by Max More, Published in "The Transhumanist Reader", Max More lays out a foundational philosophical framework for transhumanism, positioning it as a "life philosophy" rooted in reason, progress, and individual freedom. He defines transhumanism as the pursuit of enhancing the human condition through technology, with the ultimate goal of overcoming biological limitations such as aging, disease, and even death. Max introduces some core ideas in this book, one of which is Extropy. Extropy is the opposite of entropy, symbolizing growth, complexity, and self-direction. It emphasizes continual improvement of the human condition. Max

12 More, M. (2013). The philosophy of transhumanism. In M. More & N. Vita-More (Eds.), *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and contemporary essays on the science, technology, and philosophy of the human future.* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell). pp. 9–11.
13 Bostrom, N. (2014). *Superintelligence: Paths, dangers, strategies.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). pp. 22–24.
14 More, M. (2013). The philosophy of transhumanism. In M. More & N. Vita-More (Eds.), *The transhumanist reader.* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell). pp. 3–17.

More also talks about morphological freedom, More argues that individuals should have the right to modify their bodies and minds, whether through genetic engineering, cybernetics, or pharmaceuticals. Max More criticizes traditionalist or religious arguments that oppose enhancement, viewing them as rooted in fear or irrational appeals to "naturalness." He stresses values like individual liberty, rational optimism, and personal responsibility as essential to the transhumanist vision.

Max More's *The Principles of Extropy* outlines a forward-looking philosophy based on continuous improvement, rational thinking, and the ethical use of technology to overcome human limitations. Extropy, in contrast to entropy, symbolizes growth, complexity, intelligence, and order. As the main point, the document promotes Perpetual Progress which is the belief that individuals and societies should strive constantly to improve intellectually, physically, and morally[15]. Self-transformation is central, encouraging individuals to shape their identities through education and enhancement technologies. Max More presents a bold philosophical manifesto for those committed to continuous improvement, future-oriented thinking, and the ethical use of science and technology to transcend the current boundaries of human life. Rather than offering a rigid ideology, More describes these principles as a dynamic framework, an evolving set of values intended to guide individuals and societies toward a posthuman future.

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15 More, M. (2003), *The Principles of Extropy 3.1, (*Austine: Extropy Institute), p. 1

*The Singularity Is Near* by Ray Kurzweil. Ray Kurzweil's The Singularity Is Near is one of the most influential and controversial works in contemporary transhumanist literature. The book outlines Kurzweil's theory that the technological singularity which is a point at which artificial intelligence will surpass human intelligence and lead to unprecedented transformation of human life, will occur around the year 2045. He argues that due to the exponential growth of technology, especially in fields like AI, nanotechnology, and biotechnology, this future is not only plausible but inevitable.[16] In The Singularity Is Near, futurist Ray Kurzweil argues that technological progress is accelerating at an exponential rate, leading humanity toward a transformative event he calls the Singularity, a point, predicted around 2045, when artificial intelligence will surpass human intelligence, fundamentally altering life as we know it.

*The Coming Wave* by Mustafa Sulayman, The Coming Wave is a fascinating, well-written, and important book. It explores the existential dangers that AI and biotechnology pose to humankind and offers practical solutions for how we can contain the threat. The coming technological wave promises to provide humanity with godlike powers of creation, but if we fail to manage it wisely, it may destroy us[17]. In this book, Mustafa Suleyman addresses the most important paradox of our time: we have to contain uncontainable technologies. As he explains, generative AI, synthetic biology, robotics,

16 Kurzweil, R. (2005), *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. (New York: Viking Press), pp. 7-33

17 Suleyman, M. (2023), *The Coming Wave: Technology, Power, and the Twenty-first Century's Greatest Dilemma.* (New York: Crown Publishing Group), pp. 12-45.

and other innovations are improving and spreading quickly. They bring great benefits, but also real and growing risks. Suleyman is wise enough to know that there's no simple three-point plan for managing these risks, and brave enough to tell us so. This book is honest, passionate, and unafraid to confront what is one of the great challenges our species will face this century.

In the book, *Transhumanism: An Ontology of the World's Most Dangerous Idea* by Benjamin D. Ross, Benjamin D. Ross offers a critical and philosophical exploration of transhumanism, labeling it provocatively as "the world's most dangerous idea." Ross argues that transhumanism is not just a scientific or technological trend, but a deeply metaphysical and ontological shift, a radical redefinition of what it means to be human[18]. Benjamin Ross traces the intellectual roots of transhumanism to Enlightenment rationalism, Nietzschean will-to-power, and postmodern deconstruction of fixed human nature. He critiques the movement's promises of enhanced intelligence, immortality, and mind uploading as philosophically shallow, warning that transhumanism risks erasing the essence of the human subject in favor of a mechanized, reductionist view of life. The book examines key figures like Ray Kurzweil and Max More but pushes beyond critique to argue that transhumanism is an ontology a worldview that replaces meaning, mortality, and human finitude with technological fantasy.

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18 Ross, Benjamin D. (2020), *Transhumanism: An Ontology of the World's Most Dangerous Idea*. (Maryland: Lexington Books), pp. 27-58.

*The Singularity Is Nearer* Ray Kurzweil 2024, is Ray Kurzweil's follow-up to his influential 2005 book The Singularity Is Near. In this updated work, Kurzweil revisits his prediction that a technological singularity, the point where artificial intelligence surpasses human intelligence is likely to occur by 2045[19]. On the other hand, the book focuses on new developments in AI, brain-computer interfaces, biotechnology, and quantum computing that have emerged since his original publication. Kurzweil argues that progress in these areas is on track or even ahead of schedule, reinforcing his optimism about a future in which humans merge with machines, achieve radical life extension, and unlock limitless intelligence and creativity.

He also addresses ethics, existential risks, and the impact of AI on society, arguing that these challenges can be managed through responsible innovation. Overall, The Singularity Is Nearer updates Kurzweil's visionary roadmap for the future, combining technological forecasting with a fundamentally optimistic belief in human potential.

*The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future*, edited by Max More and Natasha Vita-More (2013): The Transhumanist Reader is a foundational anthology that brings together key writings on transhumanism, exploring how science and technology can enhance human physical and cognitive capacities, extend life, and ultimately transform

19 Kurzweil, R. (2024), *The Singularity Is Nearer.* (New York: Viking Press), pp. 15-42.

the human condition[20]. The book provides both theoretical grounding and practical perspectives on the future of humanity.

It opens with Max More's philosophical framing, defining transhumanism as a worldview that embraces change, rationality, and the use of technology to overcome biological limits. The book contains essays by thinkers like Nick Bostrom and Anders Sandberg's discussion on human enhancement, the ethics of morphological freedom, and the concept of the posthuman.

Nevertheless, some other chapters examine AI, nanotechnology, biotechnology, and cognitive science as tools for radical transformation, including longevity and uploading consciousness. The book also covers ethical and social issues. Contributors explore the moral debates around enhancement, inequality, risk, and freedom, offering both support for and critique of transhumanist aims. Some essays trace the roots of transhumanism in Enlightenment and humanist thought, while others speculate on future scenarios, including the singularity. Overall, the book serves as a comprehensive introduction to the philosophy, science, and ethical debates that shape the transhumanist movement. It aims to inform readers not only about what is possible but also about what is desirable and responsible as humans evolve beyond their current form.

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20 More, M. and Natasha V. (2013), *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future.* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell), pp. 3-4.

Nick Bostrom's *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (2014) is a seminal work exploring the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) advancing beyond human intelligence, a concept central to transhumanism and relevant to your project on Max More's philosophy. The book examines how superintelligent AI could emerge through paths like biological cognitive enhancement, brain-computer interfaces, or machine learning. Bostrom argues that superintelligence offers immense potential to amplify human capabilities but poses existential risks, such as loss of human control or misuse by malicious actors[21]. On the other hand, he outlines strategies to mitigate these dangers, including technical alignment (ensuring AI goals align with human values) and global governance. The book's strength lies in its rigorous analysis, blending philosophy, technology, and ethics to highlight AI's dual nature.

*H+: Transhumanism and Its Critics*[19] by Gregory R. Hansell & William Grassie 2011. This book is a multidisciplinary anthology that explores the promises and perils of transhumanism from both supportive and critical perspectives. It brings together essays from philosophers, scientists, ethicists, theologians, and futurists, making it one of the more balanced collections available. The book introduces core transhumanist ideas, such as human enhancement through biotechnology, AI, nanotech, and life extension. It presents the movement as an evolution of Enlightenment humanism driven by rational

21 Bostrom, N. (2014). *Superintelligence: Paths, dangers, strategies*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press). p. 56.

progress and the desire to overcome natural limitations.[22] The book also offers philosophical and ethical critiques. Contributors question whether enhancements could undermine human dignity, increase social inequality, or create unintended risks. There's also a discussion of posthuman identity, freedom, and the risk of losing our essential humanity. Rather than pushing a specific agenda, the book's strength lies in presenting a dialogue between visionaries like Ray Kurzweil and Nick Bostrom, and skeptics who challenge the feasibility, morality, or desirability of the transhumanist project.

22 Hansell, G. R., & Grassie, W. (Eds.). (2011). *H±: Transhumanism and its critics.* (New York: Metanexus Institute). pp. 55-57.

# CHAPTER TWO

# THE CONCEPT OF TRANSHUMANISM IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAX MORE

## 2.1 LIFE AND TIMES OF MAX MORE

Max More, originally born as Max T. O'Connor in Bristol, England, in January 1964, is a British-American philosopher and futurist renowned for his foundational contributions to the philosophy of transhumanism and his articulation of the philosophy of extropy. His work spans bioethics, technology, political philosophy, and personal identity, blending rigorous academic training with a visionary engagement with the future of humanity.

### Early Life and Intellectual Development

Max More spent his early years in the United Kingdom, where his intellectual curiosity was evident from a young age. Growing up in Bristol, a historic city with a rich cultural and academic heritage, Max More developed an early interest in philosophy, science fiction, and futuristic speculation. These influences fostered a questioning attitude towards the status quo and a deep fascination with the possibilities of human enhancement and transformation. More has often cited early readings in Nietzsche, Ayn Rand, Friedrich Hayek, and Karl Popper as influential in shaping his thinking. Nietzsche's ideal of the Übermensch, Rand's radical individualism, Popper's open society theory, and Hayek's emphasis on decentralized systems would later be of use in

Max More's extropian philosophy, where personal growth, freedom, and evolutionary self-direction are paramount.

**Education**

Max More began his formal philosophical education at St Anne's College, University of Oxford, one of the university's most distinguished colleges. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE), a rigorous interdisciplinary program that combines ethical theory, political analysis, and economic reasoning. While at Oxford, he became increasingly involved with libertarian and futurist circles, engaging in philosophical debates on the nature of personal identity, technological determinism, and the ethics of enhancement. Later, he moved to the United States to pursue his doctoral studies. He earned his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Southern California (USC). His doctoral research focused on posthuman ethics, the philosophy of personal identity, and the implications of future technologies on moral and political frameworks. During his time at the University of Southern California, he became a key figure in the growing network of thinkers interested in radical life extension, cryonics, artificial intelligence, and the philosophical implications of human enhancement.

### Personal Life

Max More is married to Natasha Vita-More, a noted transhumanist thinker, designer, and artist. Together, they have been at the forefront of the transhumanist movement, frequently collaborating on conferences, public lectures, and joint publications. Natasha's work in future studies, cultural design, and transhumanist aesthetics complements Max More's philosophical and policy-oriented approach. While deeply embedded in academic and futurist institutions, Max More has maintained a public presence. He has been a speaker at numerous international conferences, including TEDx events, transhumanist summits, and bioethics panels. He continues to publish, mentor younger thinkers, and contribute to ongoing discussions about the philosophical foundations of transhumanism.

## 2.2 WORKS AND INFLUENCE OF MAX MORE

### Works of Max More

The collection of Max More's work spans philosophical essays, organizational manifestos, and edited volumes. His most foundational early essay, The Extropian Principles: Version 2.0 (1990), laid the groundwork for what would become the philosophy of "extropy." This text codifies his commitment to progress, rationality, self-transformation, and open society. Subsequent versions of the document, especially

Version 3.0 (1998), refined and expanded these principles into a semi-structured ideological framework.[23]

In his 1993 essay, Technological Self-Transformation: Expanding Personal Extropy, Max More introduces the notion of "morphological freedom," a pivotal concept in transhumanist bioethics which asserts the right of individuals to modify their own biological structures using technology. Here, we observe the use of philosophical analysis in engaging with liberal traditions of autonomy while extending their application to bio-technical domains.[24]

Max More's editorial work is also notable. He co-edited The Transhumanist Reader[25] with Natasha Vita-More in 2013. This volume compiles foundational texts in the transhumanist tradition, including contributions from thinkers such as Nick Bostrom, Ray Kurzweil, and Anders Sandberg. His inclusion as both an editor and contributor reveals his centrality to the field. His dissertation, though less widely circulated, underpins much of his conceptual work. The focus on diachronic identity, that is, the persistence of self

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23 More, M. (1990) *The Extropian Principles: Version 2.0.* (Austine: Extropy Institute), p. 1.

24 More, M. (1993). Technological self-transformation: Expanding personal extropy. *Extropy: The Journal of Scientific Humanism*, 10(2), pp.20–29.

*25* More, M. and Natasha V. (2013)*, The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future.* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell), pp. 3-4.

across potentially radical transformations, demonstrates his concern with preserving philosophical rigor even in speculative domains. Through hermeneutic interpretation, we can see how this concern with continuity informs later positions on mind uploading and life extension.

**Influence of Max More**

Max More's influence can be observed both directly and diffusely. Directly, his role as founder of the Extropy Institute in 1990 created a philosophical and organizational home for early transhumanist thinkers. The Institute hosted conferences, produced publications, and functioned as an incubator for futuristic ideas before dissolving in the early 2000s. Perhaps more significantly, Max More's appointment as President and CEO of the Alcor Life Extension Foundation in 2011 positioned him at the forefront of the practical wing of transhumanist application. Alcor's work in cryonics, preserving bodies at low temperatures with the hope of future revival serves as a real-world instantiation of More's speculative ethics[26].

Indirectly, Max More has shaped transhumanist rhetoric, aesthetics, and strategy. He has been cited in academic texts ranging from Nick Bostrom's Superintelligence (2014)[27] to

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26 More, Max. (1993), *Technological Self-Transformation: Expanding Personal Extropy.* Extropy, no. 10, p. 3.

27 Bostrom, N. (2014) *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*. (Oxford : Oxford University Press), p. 6 &p. 258.

James Hughes' *Citizen Cyborg* (2004). His influence is not just in what he wrote, but in how he theorized transhumanism as a living philosophy, capable of adaptation and reinvention.[28]

## 2.3 MAX MORE'S PHILOSOPHY OF TRANSHUMANISM

Transhumanism, in its contemporary articulation, is a philosophical and cultural movement that advocates the transformation of the human condition through the ethical application of advanced technologies. However, its intellectual roots are deeper and more variant than often acknowledged. Philosophical analysis reveals that transhumanism is not a mere technophilic ideology but rather an evolved response to enduring questions about human nature, purpose, and progress.

Moreover, the term "transhumanism" was first coined by biologist and evolutionary humanist Julian Huxley in 1957. In his essay "Transhumanism" from New Bottles for New Wine, Huxley wrote: "The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself, not just sporadically, an individual herein one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety, as humanity."[29] Huxley envisioned transhumanism as a synthesis of evolutionary science, humanistic ethics, and spiritual progressivism which is a vision of self-

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28 Hughes, J. *Citizen Cyborg (2004): Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future*. (New York: Westview Press), pp. 1–320.

29 Huxley, J. (1957), *New Bottles for New Wine*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, (pp. 13–17.

overcoming grounded in naturalism rather than supernaturalism. His outlook was deeply influenced by Enlightenment ideals, particularly those concerning rational progress, moral autonomy, and secular humanism.

**Institutional and Cultural Emergence**

The modern transhumanist movement coalesced in the 1980s and 1990s, notably with the founding of the Extropy Institute (1990) by Max More and Tom Morrow. Shortly thereafter, the World Transhumanist Association (now Humanity+) was established in 1998 by Nick Bostrom and David Pearce to create a more academically grounded transhumanist identity. These institutions were vital in shaping the intellectual infrastructure of the movement.

During this time, transhumanist ideas began circulating in online forums, early web zones, and conferences. The emergence of Extropy magazine provided a platform for disseminating new ideas about identity, AI, mind uploading, and longevity, while also engaging with critiques and cultural reactions.

**Critiques and Debates**

From the early 2000s onward, transhumanism encountered both academic and public scrutiny: Bio-conservative thinkers such as Leon Kass (former chair of the U.S. President's Council on Bioethics) argued that transhumanism threatens human dignity by commodifying the body and eroding moral traditions. Francis Fukuyama labeled

transhumanism "the world's most dangerous idea"[30] in his book, warning of unforeseen sociopolitical consequences of enhancement technologies.

Conversely speaking, James Hughes and other "democratic transhumanists" argued that equitable access to enhancement technologies could reduce suffering and increase autonomy across social classes. These debates highlight that transhumanism is not merely a scientific proposition but an ideological battlefield over what it means to be human and whether that status should be transcended.[31]

## 2.4 CORE BELIEFS IN TRANSHUMANISM

Transhumanism is underpinned by a constellation of normative and philosophical commitments that shape its vision of the human future. These beliefs, while diverse in expression, converge around a central ethical ideal: the self-directed evolution of the human being. By employing philosophical analysis and conceptual clarification, we can identify and examine the major core beliefs of transhumanism, revealing their complexity, coherence, and points of contention within the broader discourse.

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30 Fukuyama, F. (2002). *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux). p. 101.

31 Hughes, J. (2004). *Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies must respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future,* (New York: Westview Press), pp. 45–48.

## 1. Human Enhancement

At the heart of transhumanism lies the belief in the moral and practical desirability of enhancing human capacities: physical, cognitive, emotional, and sensory, beyond what is currently considered "normal." This belief rests on the assumption that the limitations we inherit biologically are not sacrosanct but are instead open to technological improvement. Enhancement can take many forms: from genetic engineering to optimize intelligence or resistance to disease, to neurotechnology (e.g., brain-computer interfaces), pharmacological cognition boosters, or prosthetic augmentation. Philosophers such as Julian Savulescu have argued that human enhancement is not just permissible but, in some cases, morally obligatory, especially when it can prevent suffering or promote well-being[32].

Transhumanism also breaks from traditional biomedical ethics by rejecting the dichotomy between "therapy" and "enhancement." Rather than restoring a baseline of health, transhumanists advocate pushing the boundaries of what humans can do and be. Here, we see a shift from a passive to an active model of human development, positioning the individual as an agent of their own evolutionary path.

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32 Savulescu, J., & Bostrom, N. (Eds.). (2009). *Human Enhancement,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). pp. 4–7.

## 2. Life Extension and Immortality

Transhumanists view death not as an inevitable part of life, but as a technical and biological problem to be solved. They argue that aging is a disease, a degenerative process that should be treated like any other illness. Consequently, they advocate biomedical research into anti-aging therapies, regenerative medicine, cryonics, and, ultimately, the potential for indefinite lifespans.

Nonetheless, this belief is grounded in utilitarian ethics and existential philosophy. The fear of death, as existentialists like Heidegger acknowledged, gives meaning to life but transhumanists counter that meaning can be found in longer, more fulfilling lives that allow for deeper knowledge, relationships, and achievement. Ray Kurzweil, for instance, forecasts a future where human consciousness can be preserved and transferred into non-biological substrates, ushering in the era of "digital immortality"[33] From a conceptual standpoint, transhumanism challenges long-standing theological and philosophical views that interpret mortality as either a divine necessity or an existential virtue. Instead, it reframes death as a contingent, solvable error.

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33 Kurzweil, R. (2005), *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology.* (New York: Viking Press,), pp. 7–9.

### 3. Morphological Freedom

One of the most radical ethical positions held by transhumanists is the concept of morphological freedom which is the right of individuals to alter their bodies and minds according to their own values and preferences, using whatever technologies are available. Introduced by Max More, this principle draws upon liberal theories of autonomy and self-ownership, such as those advanced by John Stuart Mill. The idea is that individuals should have sovereignty not just over their political or economic lives, but over their very biological identities. This belief has significant implications. It supports not only elective enhancements (such as choosing super-intelligence or heightened emotional sensitivity), but also challenges normative assumptions about bodily integrity, gender, disability, and neurodiversity. In doing so, it aligns with certain aspects of postmodern and queer theory, which question essentialist views of the self and the body[34]. However, philosophical analysis of this concept shows that it extends autonomy to its logical extreme: freedom over one's evolutionary destiny.

### 4. Rationalism and Scientific Optimism

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34 Haraway, D. (1991), "*A Cyborg Manifesto." Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature,* (London: Routledge), pp. 149-150.

Transhumanism is deeply rooted in Enlightenment rationalism, the belief that human reason, when combined with empirical science, can solve problems and guide moral progress. Transhumanists generally exhibit what Nick Bostrom calls a "techno-optimistic" worldview, trusting that technological advancement will continue to produce better, safer, and more fulfilling ways of living[35].

Moreover, this optimism, however, is not naive or utopian. Transhumanists recognize risks especially existential ones posed by artificial intelligence, biotechnology, or nanotechnology. Yet they advocate a proactionary principle: instead of avoiding risk by halting innovation, we should actively manage and mitigate risks through transparent science and reasoned governance. In this way, transhumanism offers a secular eschatology: a future where humanity takes control of its destiny, not through divine intervention, but through knowledge, design, and choice.[36]

**5. Posthuman Potential**

Transhumanism anticipates the eventual emergence of posthuman beings, entities whose intelligence, experience, or capabilities exceed those of current humans to such a degree that they can no longer be classified as "human" in any conventional sense. This belief is

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35 Bostrom, N. (2005), A History of Transhumanist Thought, *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, vol. 14, no. 1. pp. 1–25.

36 More, M. (2005), *The Proactionary Principle.* (Austin: Extropy Institute), p. 3.

both descriptive (a prediction) and normative (an aspiration). Posthumans may be entirely synthetic intelligences (e.g., advanced AIs), biological humans augmented beyond recognition, or hybrid beings. Philosophically, the belief in posthuman potential raises profound questions about personal identity, continuity, and consciousness. If a person uploads their mind into a machine, is it still “them”? What does it mean to retain a "self" when all parts have changed?

Furthermore, These questions engage with the work of Derek Parfit, who argued that personal identity is less about metaphysical essence and more about psychological continuity and connectedness[37]. For transhumanists, this opens the door to fluid, non-essentialist understandings of the self, capable of persistence even across radical transformations. The posthuman is not a fixed ideal, but a space of potentiality of beings who have transcended the historical constraints of biology, mortality, and cognition.

In summary, these core beliefs form the philosophical scaffolding of the transhumanist worldview. They rest on a reinterpretation of long-standing values- life, freedom, knowledge, while introducing new ethical and metaphysical questions. Through philosophical analysis and conceptual clarification, we find that transhumanism is not a rejection of humanism, but a radical evolution of it.

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37 Parfit, D. (1984) *Personal Identity and Rationality*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 200.

## 2.5 MAX MORE'S ROLE IN TRANSHUMANISM

Max More does not merely contribute to transhumanism; he systematizes it. Unlike futurists such as Ray Kurzweil who focus on technological forecasting, or bioethicists like Nick Bostrom who explore existential risk, More's contribution is uniquely philosophical. He provides a normative and conceptual framework within which technological ambitions can be ethically articulated. His notion of "proactionary principle" advocating calculated risk-taking in the pursuit of human enhancement, challenges bio-conservative positions like those of Leon Kass and Francis Fukuyama, who argue for the sanctity of human nature[38]. Max More defends transhumanist interventions not as a violation of nature, but as its logical continuation through conscious evolution.

In hermeneutic terms, More reinterprets classical liberal ideals- freedom, autonomy, and rationality, through the lens of future human potential. He stands as a bridge between speculative ethics and rigorous philosophical grounding. Max More occupies a seminal position in the philosophical and organizational development of transhumanism. While many thinkers have contributed to the broader landscape of transhumanist ideas, More stands out for his systematic articulation of transhumanist values and for providing the movement with a coherent philosophical foundation through his work on extropy.

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38 Fukuyama, F. (2002), *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution.* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), pp. 54-56.

**Visionary Architect of Modern Transhumanism**

Though early expressions of transhumanist thought can be traced to intellectuals like Julian Huxley, it was Max More who brought philosophical rigor, terminological precision, and ideological cohesion to what had previously been a scattered set of futuristic hopes. In his 1990 essay, *Transhumanism: Toward a Futurist Philosophy*, More defined transhumanism as a "philosophy that seeks the continuation and acceleration of the evolution of intelligent life beyond its currently human form and human limitations by means of science and technology, guided by life-promoting principles and values"[39]. This definition has since become a foundational reference point across transhumanist literature and academic research.

**Founder of the Extropy Institute**

In 1990, Max More founded the Extropy Institute, a think tank dedicated to exploring and promoting the principles of transhumanism through the lens of extropian philosophy. Under his leadership, the Extropy Institute produced Extropy: The Journal of Transhumanist Thought, organized conferences, and became the intellectual epicenter for early transhumanist thinkers, including figures such as Anders Sandberg, Nick Bostrom,

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39 More, M. (1990), *Transhumanism: Toward a Futurist Philosophy*. (Extropy, vol. 6, no. 1), pp. 6–12.

and Natasha Vita-More[40]. The Institute was more than just a networking hub, it was a philosophical workshop, where the principles of perpetual progress, self-transformation, and technological optimism were debated and refined. Through the Extropy Institute, Max More helped transform transhumanism from an esoteric subculture into an emergent philosophical movement with global aspirations.

**Philosophical Leadership and Conceptual Innovation**

Max More's most profound contribution lies in his development of the philosophy of extropy, which he explicitly framed as an alternative to entropy, not in a physical but in an existential and evolutionary sense. Extropy, as he defined it, is the pursuit of boundless improvement, driven by rationality, technological empowerment, and ethical clarity[41]. He stressed that transhumanism should not be reduced to mere technological enthusiasm, but must involve a rigorous philosophical framework that takes seriously questions of identity, ethics, personhood, and political theory. In this way, he redefined transhumanism as not only a technoscientific movement, but a normative philosophical stance grounded in Enlightenment liberalism and critical rationalism[42].

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40 More, M. (1990-2006), *Extropy: The Journal of Transhumanist Thought*. (Austine: Extropy Institute), pp. 3–6.

41 More, M. (1991), *The Philosophy of Extropy,* (Austine: Extropy, vol. 3, no. 2), pp. 10–17.

42 Ibid. pp. 7–14.

Max More also contributed to conceptual clarity by introducing and elaborating on the Proactionary Principle, a philosophical counterpoint to the precautionary principle. He argued that while caution is essential, progress should not be stifled by excessive fear of the unknown. Instead, innovation must proceed through measured risk-taking and rational foresight[43]. This has become a guiding ethical stance within much of the transhumanist community.

**Institutional and Cultural Impact**

In 2011, Max More became the CEO of Alcor Life Extension Foundation, one of the most prominent organizations in the field of cryonics. During his decade-long leadership, he helped bring greater legitimacy and operational structure to cryopreservation as a serious scientific and philosophical pursuit. He emphasized that cryonics is not a desperate denial of death, but a rational extension of life-affirming values, consistent with the transhumanist goal of overcoming biological limits.

In his public speaking and writing, More has played a vital role in mainstreaming transhumanism, contributing essays to widely circulated anthologies such as The Transhumanist Reader[44], participating in international conferences, and engaging with

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43 More, M. (2004), *The Proactionary Principle: A New Guideline for Risk Management. (*Austine: Extropy Institute), p. 2.

44 More, M. and Natasha Vita-More, (2013), *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future.*

both critics and proponents in academic and public forums.

### Legacy and Continuing Influence

Today, Max More is widely regarded as one of the founding fathers of modern transhumanism. His work continues to influence contemporary debates in bioethics, AI policy, digital identity, and longevity studies. His articulation of extropy remains a key reference for thinkers advocating an open, evolving, and technologically empowered future. Importantly, More's emphasis on philosophical analysis, individual liberty, and technological rationalism has ensured that transhumanism is not merely an ideological movement but a robust intellectual tradition, one capable of engaging with the deepest ethical and metaphysical questions of the 21st century and beyond.

## 2.6 THE PHILOSOPHY OF EXTROPY

Extropy is Max More's most original and defining philosophical contribution. Derived from the concept of entropy in thermodynamics, extropy signifies a pattern of order, complexity, and intelligence that resists decay and disorder. In The Extropian Principles (1990), More redefines it as “a measure of intelligence, information, vitality, experience,

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(New York: Wiley-Blackwell), 54-55.

diversity, opportunity, and capacity for improvement." The philosophy of Extropy is a foundational framework within transhumanist thought, developed primarily by Max More in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Unlike transhumanism in general, which is a broader movement encompassing many views and tendencies, extropy is a specific philosophical system- a meta-ethical orientation and a normative worldview that lays out principles for personal and societal evolution beyond traditional human limits.

Moreover, the term "extropy" was coined by Tom Bell (T.O. Morrow) and further theorized by Max More to denote the opposite of entropy, not in a strictly thermodynamic sense, but in a metaphorical, teleological sense: the movement toward increasing complexity, intelligence, vitality, and control over the environment[45]. According to Max More "Extropy is the extent of a system's intelligence, information, vitality, diversity, opportunity, and capacity for improvement." Where entropy signifies decay, randomness, and disorder, extropy suggests growth, order, and advancement, values that guide the extropian approach to life, ethics, and technology.[46]

**Philosophical Structure of Extropy**

The philosophy of extropy can be best understood as a set of values and principles, not fixed dogmas. It is dynamic, decentralized, and self-correcting, and it encourages

45 More, M. (1990), *The Extropian Principles: Version 2.0. (*Extropy Institute), p. 3.

46 More, M. (1988), *Extropy: The Opposite of Entropy.* (Extropy, vol. 1, no. 1), pp. 2–4.

continual refinement of its own tenets. The core philosophical methods at work are critical rationalism, individualism, and teleological naturalism. According to More, the key principles of extropy include:

**1. Perpetual Progress**

This principle expresses the extropian belief in the possibility and desirability of indefinite improvement- biologically, intellectually, socially, and technologically. Rather than accepting biological finitude or societal stasis, extropy demands active participation in advancing toward a better future. This notion resonates with Enlightenment ideals (e.g., Kant's "unsocial sociability," and Condorcet's vision of progress) but differs in scale and method. Extropians envision not just political or educational progress, but the evolutionary redesign of the human condition itself. Philosophically, this belief aligns with process philosophy (Whitehead) and pragmatism (Dewey), where truth and value are not static but evolve in response to changing contexts and tools.

**2. Self-Transformation**

A core extropian commitment is to morphological and psychological self-determination which is the right and responsibility to redesign oneself in pursuit of greater functioning and self-actualization. This includes bodily modifications, cognitive enhancement, and even mind-uploading, if such technologies become viable. This principle extends the concept of existential freedom from philosophers like Sartre and Nietzsche, where the

self is not given but made. It also echoes Mill's conception of liberty as self-authorship. Here, the self is not a static essence but a project of transformation. Self-transformation is not pursued for conformity or escapism, but as a fulfillment of one's rational agency and personal vision of the good life.

### 3. Practical Optimism

Extropians adopt a stance of cautious but committed techno-optimism. They reject dystopian fatalism and luddite pessimism (those who are against the use of technology), asserting that rational inquiry, innovation, and cooperation can mitigate risks and unlock profound human flourishing. This optimism is practically rooted in science, systems thinking, and empirical risk assessment, not utopian. Max More differentiates this from naive optimism by stressing the proactionary principle: the idea that we must anticipate and manage technological risks rather than avoid innovation altogether[47]. However, this principle draws from critical rationalism (Popper), advocating constant testing, falsification, and improvement of ideas and technologies.

### 4. Intelligent Technology Use

47 More, M. (2005), *Proactionary Principle, (*Austine: Extropy Institute), p. 4

Extropy promotes the responsible and intelligent application of technology as a tool for achieving greater intelligence, efficiency, freedom, and longevity. Technology is seen as an extension of human rationality and creativity, not a threat to humanity's essence. This principle requires both technical literacy and ethical foresight, ensuring that technologies are deployed in ways that support human values, not undermine them. It also assumes that ethical frameworks must evolve alongside technological capacities. Here, Max More's philosophy intersects with systems theory, bioethics, and liberal transhumanism (e.g., Bostrom, Hughes), emphasizing the importance of designing governance structures that support safe and equitable innovation.

**5. Open Society and Open Systems**

Max More explicitly roots extropy in the tradition of classical liberalism and open society theory (Karl Popper, Friedrich Hayek), where decentralized, adaptive systems are favored over authoritarian control. Extropy envisions knowledge, governance, and culture as open systems subject to change, critique, and iteration. This is especially vital in an era of exponential technological growth, where rigidity can be dangerous. Thus, extropians oppose all forms of dogmatism and support pluralism, transparency, and individual autonomy within cooperative frameworks.

**Conceptual Clarification: Extropy vs. Transhumanism**

While all extropians are transhumanists, not all transhumanists are extropians. Transhumanism encompasses a range of ideological positions, from techno-progressivism to libertarian futurism and even techno-Gaianism. Extropy, by contrast, is a coherent, systematized philosophy focused on proactive evolution, rationalism, individual liberty, and open-ended improvement. Extropy is both a personal ethic and a social vision, emphasizing internal growth, external innovation, and long-term thinking.

**Critiques and Reflection**

Critics argue that extropy, like broader transhumanism, risks ignoring social inequities, ecological limits, and unintended consequences. Francis Fukuyama and Leon Kass have warned that such philosophies may lead to a devaluation of human vulnerability and moral humility. However, Max More responds that extropy, properly understood, does not reject limits per se but challenges arbitrary, unchosen, or outdated ones. Extropy is not about omnipotence, but agency in evolution, a commitment to self-overcoming, a concept resonant with Nietzschean ethics.

In conclusion, the philosophy of extropy provides a rigorous, future-oriented framework for navigating technological change. It combines rational ethics, evolutionary ambition, and individual freedom into a coherent philosophical outlook. As Max More wrote,

extropy is not a utopia to be reached, but a process of intelligent transformation to be lived: “Extropy is a continuously expanding pattern of intelligence and vitality; it is a way of thinking and being that resists entropy and embraces perpetual self-transcendence"[48].

# CHAPTER THREE

# THE CONTEMPORARY LEGACY OF MAX MORE’S TRANSHUMANIST PHILOSOPHY

## 3.1 MAX MORE’S VISION OF HUMAN ENHANCEMENT

Max More, a philosopher and futurist, is widely regarded as one of the principal architects of modern transhumanist thought. His vision of human enhancement is rooted in the belief that humanity is not a static condition but a dynamic process, capable of continual improvement through science, reason, and technology. For Max More, human

48 More, M. (1994), *Extropy: A Continuously Expanding Pattern.* Extropy, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 5.

nature is not sacred or inviolable; rather, it is a work in progress, a starting point rather than a finished product. He defines transhumanism as a "philosophical and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally enhancing the human condition."[49]

In this view, enhancement is not merely about superficial upgrades or longevity, it is about radical transformation. Max More believes that we should actively use emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, cognitive science, and genetic engineering to push the boundaries of what it means to be human.[50] On the other hand, the goal is to overcome our biological limitations, including aging, disease, and even death itself, leading to a posthuman state. Human enhancement is at the heart of transhumanism, it is the idea that we can use science and technology to improve our bodies, minds, and lives beyond what nature gave us. This includes things like living longer, thinking sharper, or even merging with machines. Max More has a clear and bold take on this. He believes humans should take charge of their own evolution, using tools like cryonics, genetic engineering, and brain-computer interfaces to become "transhuman" a step beyond human, with enhanced abilities and maybe even immortality.[51]

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49 More M. (2013), The Philosophy of Transhumanism, in Max More & Natasha Vita-More (eds.), *The Transhumanist Reader* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), p.4.

50 *Ibid*., p.6.

51 Ibid. p. 4.

In his essay "A Letter to Mother Nature," Max More writes, "We will take charge of our own evolution and transcend the limits you have set."[52] In this essay he is talking directly to nature, saying humans don't have to accept aging, disease, or death. For Max More, human enhancement isn't just about fixing problems in the human body, it's about making ourselves better in every way. For example, he's a big supporter of cryonics, which is freezing a person's body (or just their brain) after death in hopes of reviving them later with advanced technology. At Alcor Life Extension Foundation, where Max More is a leader, he argues that cryonics is "a rational bet on future science" to beat death. He sees it as a way to preserve a person's identity, their memories and personality, until nanotechnology or other breakthroughs can bring them back.

Max More also pushes for cognitive enhancements, like drugs or implants to boost memory and intelligence. For Max More, We seek to expand our cognitive capacities to understand more, create more, and live more fully. He imagines a future where people can think faster, solve harder problems, and even upload their minds to computers. This isn't just science fiction for Max More but it's a practical goal. He points to early

52 More, M. (2013), A Letter to Mother Nature, in *The Transhumanist Reader,* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell), p. 449.

examples like nootropics (smart drugs) and emerging tech like neural interfaces, which are starting to make this possible.[53]

Max More's vision isn't without fault. He focuses so much on what individuals can achieve that he doesn't always talk about how these enhancements will reach everyone. Who gets to be enhanced? Only the rich? I think this is a big question Max More doesn't fully answer, and it makes his ideas seem a bit idealistic. Still, his passion for taking control of human evolution is inspiring, even if it raises practical challenges.

Fundamentally, other scholars add depth to Max More's ideas. The likes of Nick Bostrom, a well-known transhumanist, agrees that enhancement is key but warns about risks Max More overlooks. In "Transhumanist Values," Bostrom says enhancements "could amplify human potential but also create new dangers," like AI going wrong or widening social gaps.[54] Natasha Vita-More, Max More's collaborator, builds on his ideas, arguing that enhancement is about "designing our own futures" through tech like artificial organs or digital minds.[55] For Natasha, she asserts that transhumanism shouldn't just be about being better versions of ourselves but we should also do this to better our futures. In "The

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53 More, M. (2013), The Philosophy of Transhumanism, in *The Transhumanist Reader*, ed. Max More and Natasha Vita-More, (New York: Wiley-Blackwell), p. 6.

54 Bostrom, N. (2005), Transhumanist Values, *Journal of Evolution and Technology 14, no. 1*: pp. 3–14.

55 Natasha Vita-More, (2013), Life Expansion: Toward a Theory of Transhumanist Aesthetics, in *The Transhumanist Reader,* (New York: Wiley Blackwell), p. 78.

Transhumanist Reader", she emphasizes how Max More's vision pushes for creativity and self-expression through technology. Ray Kurzweil, another transhumanist thinker, echoes More's optimism, predicting that by the 2030s, we'll merge with AI to become superintelligent.[56] Kurzweil's ideas align with More's but focus more on timelines and tech details, while More stays philosophical.

Nonetheless, what distinguishes Max More's vision from earlier utopian ideas is its foundation in extropian principles, values that include perpetual progress, practical optimism, intelligent technology use, open society, and self-direction. This vision implies a deliberate move away from passive evolution toward self-guided evolution, what he calls self-transformation. According to Max More, "No more gods, no more faith, no more timid holding back. The future belongs to post-biological intelligences".[57] This radical outlook positions transhumanism not just as a speculative ideology but as a practical framework for action. He argues that enhancement is not an escape from humanity, but its next phase. The human organism, in his eyes, is not the pinnacle of creation, but an early prototype.

## 3.2 MORPHOLOGICAL FREEDOM

56 Kurzweil, R. (2005) *The Singularity is Near* (New York: Viking, 2025), p. 127.

57 Max More, (1998), *Extropian Principles 3*, p. 1.

Morphological freedom refers to a proposed civil right of a person to either maintain or modify their own body, on their own terms, through informed, consensual recourse to, or refusal of, available therapeutic or enabling medical technology.[58] However, the term may have been coined by transhumanist Max More in his 1993 article, “Technological Self-Transformation: Expanding Personal Extropy”, where he defined it as "the ability to alter bodily form at will through technologies such as surgery, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, uploading". The term was later used by science debater and futurist Anders Sandberg as "an extension of one’s right to one’s body, not just self-ownership but also the right to modify oneself according to one’s desires."[59]

Max More’s concept of *morphological freedom* is one of his most original ideas. It’s the belief that everyone should have the right to change their body and mind however they want, using technology. In *The Philosophy of Transhumanism*, More writes, “Morphological freedom means the right to modify one’s form, to enhance or transform one’s body and mind, without interference.”[60] He sees this as a core part of being free, like owning your own body. For Max More, this could mean anything from getting a

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58 Bostrom, N. (2005). In Defense of Posthuman Dignity*, Bioethics*. 19 (3): pp. 202–214.

59 Bradshaw, H. G.; Ter Meulen, R. (2010). A Transhumanist Fault Line Around Disability: Morphological Freedom and the Obligation to Enhance, *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy: A Forum for Bioethics and Philosophy of Medicine*, Vol. 35(6), pp. 670-684.

60 More, M. (2013), The Philosophy of Transhumanism, in *The Transhumanist Reader,* ed. Max More and Natasha Vita-More (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), p.5.

bionic arm to editing your genes to uploading your consciousness to a computer. It's about choosing who you want to be, physically and mentally.

Max More ties this idea to his libertarian roots, arguing that governments or society shouldn't stop people from making these choices. In a 2013 interview, he said, "If you can't control your own body, what kind of freedom do you really have?" He uses cryonics as an example: people should be free to freeze their bodies for a chance at future revival, even if others think it's weird or risky. Max More also imagines a future where we can change our appearance, abilities, or even gender through tech, giving us total control over our identity. This resonates with his broader transhumanist goal of breaking free from biological limits.

Other scholars both support and challenge More's idea. Anders Sandberg, a transhumanist ethicist, backs morphological freedom but adds nuance. In *The Transhumanist Reader*, he writes, "Morphological freedom is essential, but it needs ethical boundaries to prevent harm or coercion."[61] For example, what if someone feels pressured to enhance their body to keep up at work? Sandberg worries this could undermine the freedom More champions. Natasha Vita-More expands on the idea,

61 Sandberg, A. (2013), Morphological Freedom-Why We Not Just Want It, but Need It, in *The Transhumanist Reader,* (New York: Wiley Blackwell), p. 56.

linking it to artistic expression. She argues that changing our bodies is like creating art, letting us "sculpt our own identities."[62]

On the flip side, James Hughes criticizes More's focus on individual choice. In the book *A Citizen Cyborg*, Hughes says, "Morphological freedom sounds great, but it ignores how social pressures and inequality shape choices."[63] He points out that if only some people can afford enhancements, it's not really freedom for everyone. Donna Haraway, a feminist scholar, also questions transhumanist ideas of body modification. In *A Cyborg Manifesto*, she argues that tech-driven changes to the body can reinforce power imbalances, like those based on gender or class, which More doesn't fully address.[64]

Furthermore, morphological freedom is a powerful idea because it gives people control over their own destiny. But in agreement with Hughes, it's not so free if only the wealthy can afford it. Max More's vision assumes everyone will have access, but in reality, things like gene-editing or prosthetics are super expensive. It's like saying everyone's free to buy a mansion which is not technically wrong, but not realistic either. Still, More's idea pushes us to think about what freedom really means in a high-tech world.

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62 Vita-More, N. (2013). Life expansion: Toward a manifesto for transhumanist arts. In M. More & N. Vita-More (Eds.), *The transhumanist reader*, (New York: Wiley-Blackwell). p. 80.

63 Hughes, J. (2004), *Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future,* (Boulder: Westview Press), p. 45.

64 Donna Haraway, (1991), *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature,* (New York: Routledge), p. 154.

## 3.3 ETHICAL, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF MORE'S TRANSHUMANISM

Max More's transhumanist philosophy paints an exciting picture of a future where technology frees us from the limits of our bodies and minds. He believes we can use things like cryonics, genetic engineering, and brain implants to live longer, think smarter, and become whatever we want. But his ideas, while inspiring, come with big questions about how they'll actually work in the real world. Who gets access to these technologies? Are they safe? Will people feel pressured to change themselves? And what about balancing personal freedom with what's good for everyone?

### Access and Inequality

Max More's transhumanism is all about giving people the tools to improve themselves, like through cryonics to cheat death or enhancements to boost intelligence. He's super optimistic, believing that markets and individual effort will make these technologies available to everyone. In *Principles of Extropy*, he suggests that open competition and innovation will drive progress, spreading the benefits of things like gene-editing or brain-computer interfaces.[65] For example, he argues that cryonics, where people freeze their bodies hoping to be revived later, will get cheaper as more people sign up, kind of like

65 More, M. (1990) *Principles of Extropy, Extropy 5*, no. 2, p. 5.

how smartphones went from luxury to common.[66] But this optimism doesn't fully tackle who can actually afford these technologies today. Cryonics, which More champions as a way to "preserve life until future science catches up," costs tens of thousands of dollars, which is way out of reach for most people.[67] It's hard to see how regular folks could access it without major changes, like government funding or insurance covering it. Stephen Lilley, a scholar who studies transhumanism, points out that technologies like these could split society into two groups: the enhanced elites and everyone else left behind. He argues that if only the rich can afford things like genetic upgrades, it could make existing inequalities, like in wealth or job opportunities even worse.[68]James Hughes, another transhumanist thinker, agrees, saying More's reliance on markets ignores how unequal our world already is. He thinks that without policies to make enhancements available to all, transhumanism could become a privilege for the wealthy, not a universal benefit.[69] Max More responds in *True Transhumanism*, claiming that individual choices to enhance will spark innovation that benefits everyone, like how new tech often starts

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66 More, M. (2018), *Cryonics: A Rational Choice*, (Alcor Life Extension Foundation Blog), p. 4.

67 Ibid. p. 4.

68 Stephen L. (2013), *Transhumanism and Society: The Social Debate over Human Enhancement,* (Dordrecht: Springer, eds.) p. 67.

69 Hughes, J. (2004), *Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future* Boulder, (Boulder: Westview Press), p. 45.

expensive but gets cheaper over time.[70] But this is a weak spot in More's argument. It's easy to say costs will drop eventually, but what about right now? If only a few can afford enhancements, it's not really the freedom for all that More talks about. Max More's vision needs a plan to make these technologies accessible, or it risks being a dream for the rich.

**Safety and Technological Risks**

Max More is incredibly hopeful about what technology can do, like rebuilding our bodies with nanotechnology or boosting our brains with AI. In *The Scientifically Transhumanist Tradition*, he imagines a future where tiny machines fix our cells or computers make us super smart.[71] He also talks about "hyperagency" in his 2013 article, which is the idea that technology can give us more control over our lives, letting us make bigger and better choices.[72] But he doesn't spend much time on what could go wrong, which is a big concern when you're talking about powerful tech. For example, what if these technologies aren't safe? Nick Bostrom, a well-known transhumanist, warns that things like advanced AI could be dangerous if they're not carefully controlled. He thinks AI

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70 More, M. (2010), True Transhumanism: A Reply to Don Ihde, in *H±: Transhumanism and Its Critics*, ed. Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (Philadelphia: Metanexus Institute, 2010), p. 139.

71 More, M. (2015), *The Scientifically Transhumanist Tradition,* Alcor Life Extension Foundation Blog, pa. 1, https://www.alcor.org/blog/the-scoentifically-transhumanist-tradition/.

72 More, M. (2013), *Hyperagency as a Core Attraction and Repellant for Transhumanism, Existenz: An International Journal in Philosophy, Religion, Politics and the Arts* 8, no. p. 155-167.

might get so smart it could act in ways we don't expect, maybe even harming humanity.[73] More, on the other hand, seems to trust that human ingenuity will sort out any problems. In *True Transhumanism*, he argues that technology is a tool for making life better, not something to fear, as long as we use it rationally.[74] But this appears to be overly positive. What if a brain implant gets hacked, or genetic engineering causes health problems we didn't see coming? These are real risks that More's writings don't dive into deeply. This is a gap in More's thinking. His excitement about tech is contagious, but it's risky to assume everything will work out. For instance, if cryonics fails to preserve someone's brain properly, or if future tech can't revive them, people could be spending huge amounts of money on a false hope. More's optimism needs a backup plan like strict safety testing or rules to protect people using these technologies. Without that, his vision feels more like a gamble than a guarantee.

**Social Pressures and Coercion**

Max More's idea of morphological freedom, where everyone gets to choose how to change their body or mind, sounds like the ultimate freedom. Max More says enhancements let us shape our own destinies, free from outside control. But what if society creates new kinds of pressure? Julian Savulescu, an ethicist, points out that if

73 Bostrom, N. (2014), *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 4.

74 More, M. (2011). *True transhumanism: A reply to Don Ihde*. In G. R. Hansell & W. Grassie (Eds.), H±: Transhumanism and its critics, (Metanexus Institute). pp. 136–146.

enhancements become common, people might feel forced to get them just to keep up, like needing a brain implant to get a good job.[75] This could turn More's freedom into something closer to obligation, where you're not really choosing but just trying to stay relevant. For example, imagine a world where most people get cognitive enhancements to work faster or smarter. If you don't join in, you might struggle to compete, like being the only one without a smartphone today. This could make unenhanced people feel inferior or left out, which More doesn't really address. Natasha Vita-More, who works closely with More, argues that enhancements are about expressing yourself, like art.[76]But even she admits that social norms could push people toward certain changes, like enhancing looks or intelligence to fit in. Moreover, freedom isn't free if you're pressured into it, and his philosophy doesn't say much about protecting people from that pressure. More's idea of choice assumes everyone's making decisions in a vacuum, but real life doesn't work that way. Society, jobs, or even family expectations shape what we choose. If enhancements become a status symbol, people might feel they have to get them, which isn't the liberation More promises. His vision needs to consider how to keep choices truly free, maybe through laws or education to prevent a culture where everyone feels forced to enhance.

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75 Julian S. (2016), *The Ethics of Human Enhancement,* in The Ethics of Human Enhancement, ed. Steve Clarke et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 34.

76 Natasha V. (2013), *Life Expansion: Toward a Theory of Transhumanist Aesthetics,* in The Transhumanist Reader, ed. Max More and Natasha Vita-More (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell), p. 78.

**Ethical Balance: Individual vs. Collective Good**

Max More's philosophy is super focused on individual freedom which is your right to enhance yourself however you want. In *The Philosophy of Transhumanism*, he argues that people should be free to pursue their own paths without anyone stopping them.[77]He believes that when individuals improve themselves, it naturally helps society through new ideas and innovations.[78] But this libertarian view doesn't always think about what's best for everyone together, which raises ethical questions. James Hughes challenges More on this, saying that transhumanism needs to care about the common good, not just personal gains. He worries that if everyone's just enhancing themselves, it could lead to a selfish, hyper-competitive world where cooperation and community suffer.[79]For example, if people use cognitive enhancements to get ahead in business, it might make workplaces cutthroat instead of collaborative. More responds in *True Transhumanism*, saying that individual progress drives societal benefits, like how inventors create tech that helps everyone.[80]But I think this assumes too much. Not every personal enhancement like

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77 More, M. (2013), *The Philosophy of Transhumanism*, in The Transhumanist Reader, ed. Max More and Natasha Vita-More (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell), p. 5.

78 More, M. (2010), *True Transhumanism: A Reply to Don Ihde,* in H±: Transhumanism and Its Critics, ed. Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (Philadelphia: Metanexus Institute, 2010), p. 139.

79 Hughes, J. (2004). *Citizen cyborg: Why democratic societies must respond to the redesigned human of the future,* (Boulder: Westview Press), pp. 45–48.

80 Ibid. p. 48.

getting a better memory, automatically helps others. Sometimes it just gives you an edge over them. Another issue is how enhancements might affect bigger societal goals, like reducing poverty or protecting the environment. If everyone's focused on upgrading their bodies, who's thinking about these shared problems? Stephen Lilley argues that transhumanism could pull resources away from urgent needs, like healthcare for the poor, toward things like cryonics that only benefit a few.[81] On the other hand, this is a blind spot in More's thinking. His focus on individual freedom is fundamentally inspiring, but it feels narrow when you consider how interconnected we all are. For instance, if the rich spend billions on life extension, that money might not go to solving hunger or climate change, which affects everyone. Max More's philosophy needs a better balance. It's great to empower individuals, but there has to be a way to make sure enhancements don't just serve the few or hurt the bigger picture. Maybe transhumanism could include ideas like using tech to help communities, like developing affordable medical devices not just supercharging individuals. More's vision is a starting point, but it needs to think more about the whole of society, not just the parts.

Worthy of note is that Max More's transhumanist ideas are bold and exciting, pushing us to imagine a world where we can overcome our limits. But they come with serious ethical, technological, and social challenges. His belief in markets doesn't fully solve the problem

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81 Lilley, S. (2013). *Transhumanism and society: The social debate over human enhancement,* (London: Springer), p. 69.

of who gets access to enhancements, leaving open the risk of a divided society. His optimism about technology skips over safety concerns, like what happens if AI or genetic engineering goes wrong. His focus on freedom ignores how social pressures might force people into enhancements, and his individualism doesn't always consider what's best for everyone. Scholars like Hughes, Lilley, and Savulescu highlight these gaps, showing that More's vision needs more practical thinking.

## 3.4 CRITICISMS OF MORE'S TRANSHUMANIST FRAMEWORK

Max More's transhumanist philosophy, with its vision of using technology to transcend human limits, is bold and inspiring. He imagines a future where we can live longer, think smarter, and shape our bodies and minds however we want. But not everyone agrees his ideas are flawless.

### Philosophical Optimism

Max More's philosophy is built on a super optimistic view that technology will make everything better. In "Principles of Extropy," he argues that human creativity and progress can overcome any problem, leading to a future where we're free from aging, disease, or even death.[82]He paints technology as our ticket to a better life, trusting that we'll figure out how to use it right. But this rosy outlook doesn't sit well with everyone. Nick Bostrom, another transhumanist, thinks More's optimism goes too far. In his book

82 More, M. (1990), *Principles of Extropy,* Extropy 5, no. 2, p. 5.

*Superintelligence*, Bostrom warns that technologies like artificial intelligence could be dangerous if they're not carefully managed. For example, if AI gets smarter than us and we can't control it, it could cause big problems, something More doesn't talk about much. Instead, he seems to assume things will work out because people are smart and rational. I think this is a weak spot. It's great to be hopeful, but ignoring the downsides of tech feels like hoping for the best without planning for the worst. What if we hit a roadblock, like a tech failure or a moral dilemma? More's philosophy doesn't give us much guidance there.[83]

Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, a scholar who studies technology and philosophy, adds another angle. She says More's focus on tech solutions ignores deeper questions about what makes life meaningful. For her, transhumanism's obsession with upgrading our bodies and minds skips over things like love, community, or purpose, which aren't fixed by technology alone. More's vision sometimes feels like it's all about becoming superhuman without asking if that's what we really want or need. His optimism is exciting, but it needs to wrestle with these bigger human questions to feel complete.[84]

**Ideological Individualism**

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83 Bostrom, N. (2014), *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 4.

84 Tirosh-Samuelson, H. (2014), *Transhumanism and the Religious Imagination*, in "Religion and Transhumanism", ed. Calvin Mercer and Tracy J. Trothen (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger), p. 23.

More's ideas are deeply rooted in libertarianism, which means he values individual freedom above everything else. In *The Philosophy of Transhumanism*, he says people should be free to enhance themselves however they want, whether it's getting a bionic arm or boosting their brain, without anyone telling them no.[85] This focus on personal choice is a big part of his appeal, but critics argue it misses how connected we all are. James Hughes, in *Citizen Cyborg*, says More's individualism is too narrow because it doesn't think about society as a whole.[86] He argues that if everyone's just focused on their own enhancements, it could lead to a selfish world where people don't care about shared goals, like reducing inequality or protecting the planet. For example, if you enhance your intelligence to get a better job, that's great for you, but it might make it harder for others to compete, creating a kind of "enhancement race." Hughes thinks transhumanism needs rules or policies to make sure everyone benefits, not just individuals.

Natasha Vita-More, who works with More, defends his focus on freedom, saying it sparks creativity and lets people express themselves through technology.[87] But even she

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85 More, M. (2013), *The Philosophy of Transhumanism,* in "The Transhumanist Reader", ed. Max More and Natasha Vita-More (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell), p. 5.

86 Hughes, J. (2004), *Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future,* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press) p. 45.

87 Vita-More, N. (2013), *Life Expansion: Toward a Theory of Transhumanist Aesthetics,* in "The Transhumanist Reader", ed. Max more and Natasha Vita-More (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell), p. 78.

admits that individual choices happen in a social context, which More doesn't always explore. Max More's love of freedom is fundamentally inspiring, but it feels like he's imagining a world where everyone's an island. In reality, our choices affect each other. If we all chase personal upgrades, we might end up with a society that's more divided than united. Max More's ideas need to consider how to balance "me" with "we" to work in the real world situation.

**Speculative and Impractical Ideas**

More's vision includes some pretty out-dated ideas, like cryonics, freezing your body after death to be revived later. In *Cryonics: A Rational Choice*, he calls it a smart bet on future technology, like nanotechnology that could repair your cells.[88] He sees it as a way to beat death, which fits his goal of transcending human limits. But critics argue this is more science fiction than reality. Stephen Lilley, in *Transhumanism and Society*, says cryonics is a long shot because we don't know if today's freezing methods actually preserve the brain well enough to bring someone back.[89] There's no proof it'll work, and it's super expensive, costing tens of thousands of dollars. Lilley thinks focusing on cryonics pulls attention away from real health problems, like making medicine better for people today. Cryonics sounds cool, like something you'd see in a movie, but betting

88 More, M. (2018), *Cryonics: A Rational Choice*, Alcor Life Extension Foundation Blog, pa. 1 https://www.alcor.org/blog/cryonics-a-rational-choice/.

89 Lilley, S. (2013), *Transhumanism and Society: The Social Debate over Human Enhancement* (London: Springer), p. 69.

everything on future tech feels risky. What if the science never catches up? Max More's enthusiasm for cryonics shows his big-picture thinking, but it's hard to see it as a practical plan right now.

On the other hand, Hava Tirosh-Samuelson also questions More's speculative ideas, arguing that they assume a future where technology solves everything, which might not happen.[90]She points out that pinning our hopes on things like mind-uploading or immortality ignores practical limits, like whether we can actually transfer consciousness to a computer. Max More's transhumanist framework is full of big, exciting ideas, but it's not perfect. Critics like Bostrom and Tirosh-Samuelson say his optimism about technology skips over risks and deeper human questions. Hughes argues his individualism ignores society's needs, and Lilley points out that ideas like cryonics are too speculative to be practical. Even supporters like Natasha Vita-More suggest More could think more about social context. Still, his ideas challenge us to think bigger, even if they need some grounding to work for everyone.

## 3.5 CONTEMPORARY LEGACY OF MAX MORE

Max More's ideas, despite their flaws, continue to shape transhumanism today. His vision of enhancement and morphological freedom inspires tech innovators, philosophers,

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90 Tirosh-Samuelson, H. (2014). *Transhumanism and the religious imagination*. In "Religion and transhumanism: The unknown future of human enhancement", C. Mercer & T. J. Trothen (Eds.), (California: Praeger), p. 24.

and even everyday people thinking about the future. Max More's transhumanist philosophy, with its focus on human enhancement and individual freedom, has left a lasting mark on the 21st century. His ideas, first laid out in the 1990s, continue to shape how people think about technology's role in improving our lives. From inspiring biotech innovations to fueling debates about what it means to be human, More's work remains a big part of transhumanism today.

Max More's biggest contribution is his vision of using technology to push past human limits. In *Principles of Extropy*, he argues that we can take charge of our evolution, using tools like genetic engineering or cryonics to live longer and think smarter. His leadership at Alcor Life Extension Foundation keeps this idea alive, promoting cryonics as a way to "beat death" by freezing people for future revival. Today, companies working on anti-aging, like those researching gene therapies, echo Max More's call for life extension. His optimism about technology's potential inspires innovators to dream big, even if the science isn't fully there yet. AI is another area where More's vision shines. His call for cognitive enhancement is reflected in projects like Neuralink, which aims to connect brains to computers. X posts in 2025 show excitement about neural interfaces, with some users citing More's morphological freedom as a reason to support them. But these posts also raise privacy concerns, showing that More's optimism needs to address new risks.

Furthermore, his concept of morphological freedom, our right to change our bodies and minds also resonates. In *The Philosophy of Transhumanism*, More says everyone should

be free to enhance themselves, whether through prosthetics or brain implants.[91]This idea influences modern debates about personal autonomy, like discussions around biohacking or neural interfaces. Natasha Vita-More, his collaborator, says More's work "sparked a cultural shift," encouraging people to see technology as a way to express themselves.[92] This is one of More's strongest legacies. His focus on freedom pushes us to rethink what's possible, like using tech to customize our identities, even if it raises questions about fairness.

Philosophically, Max More's ideas continue to guide transhumanist thinkers. Nick Bostrom, a leading voice, credits More with laying the groundwork for transhumanism, even though Bostrom focuses more on risks.[93] More's optimistic framework, centered on human potential, keeps transhumanism hopeful, balancing Bostrom's caution. For example, More's belief that we can shape our own futures inspires philosophers to explore how technology changes what it means to be human. His legacy here is mixed, his optimism is motivating, but it needs Bostrom's realism to feel complete.

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91 More, M. (2013), The *Philosophy of Transhumanism,* in "The Transhumanist Reader", ed. Max More and Natasha Vita-More (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell), p. 5.

*92 Vita-More, N.* (2013), *Life Expansion: Toward a Theory of Transhumanist Aesthetics,* in "The Transhumanist Reader", ed. Max More and Natasha Vita-More (Malden.: Wiley-Blackwell) p. 78.

93 Bostrom, N. (2014), *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 6.

Natasha Vita-More credits him with "laying the philosophical foundation for transhumanist culture" in *The Transhumanist Reader*.[94] Culturally, More's ideas have taken root in places like Silicon Valley, where tech entrepreneurs embrace transhumanist goals. His Extropy Institute, though no longer active, helped build a community that still influences tech culture. Blogs and forums often cite More when discussing AI or longevity, showing his ideas are still alive. James Hughes, another transhumanist, notes that More's libertarian vision appeals to tech innovators, though he argues it needs more focus on social good.[95]

Despite his impact, More's legacy faces challenges. Critics like Hava Tirosh-Samuelson say his focus on technology ignores deeper human needs, like meaning or community.[96] His ideas about cryonics or mind-uploading are exciting but still speculative, making some wonder if they're practical. Still, More's ability to get people thinking about a bigger future keeps him relevant. Max More's legacy is like a seed, it's planted ideas that are growing in biotech, philosophy, and culture, but it needs careful tending to avoid

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94 Vita-More, N. (2013), *Transhumanism's Cultural Impact,* in "The Transhumanist Reader"*,* Max More and Natasha Vita-More (Malden.: Wiley-Blackwell), p. 12.

95 James Hughes, *Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 45.

96 Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Transhumanism and the Religious Imagination," in *Religion and Transhumanism*, ed. Calvin Mercer and Tracy J. Trothen (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014), 23.

growing only for a few. More's vision pushes us to imagine what we could become, and that's why it matters in the 21st century.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# EVALUATION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 4.1 EVALUATION

This project explores Max More's transhumanist philosophy, tracing its roots, key ideas, implications, criticisms, and lasting impact. This study has tried to understand transhumanism mainly from Max More's point of view and also slightly from other Transhumanist philosophers view. This project introduced transhumanism and Max More's role, examined his extropian principles, and analyzed his vision of human enhancement, morphological freedom, ethical and social implications, criticisms, and 21st-century contemporary legacy. Max More's transhumanism stands as a pivotal framework for understanding humanity's technological trajectory. His vision is built on the foundation of self-directed evolution, the belief that human beings can and should use science and technology to enhance physical, cognitive, and emotional capacities.[97] Rooted in Enlightenment ideals of rationality and liberty, Max More's work repositions human nature not as a fixed essence but as an open-ended project.

Max More's transhumanist philosophy is a powerful and inspiring framework, and this project has shown why it matters. One of its biggest strengths is how it pushes us to

97 More, M. (2013), *The Philosophy of Transhumanism*, in "The Transhumanist Reader", Max More and Natasha Vita-More (eds.), (New York: Wiley-Blackwell). p. 3.

rethink what it means to be human. At the beginning of this project, transhumanism is introduced as a movement to overcome biological limits through technological advancement, and More's ideas serve as a trait blazer for our humanity. His vision of human enhancement, encourages us to take control of our evolution whether it's living longer through cryonics or boosting our brains with implants. This is exciting because it opens up possibilities we don't usually think about, like living for hundreds of years or becoming smarter than we ever imagined. Max More's optimism comes from his extropian principles, which see progress as endless.[98] His belief that we can shape our future is motivating, especially for someone like me who's curious about how technology can change lives.

Furthermore, another strength is Max More's concept of morphological freedom. Max More argues that we should have the right to change our bodies and minds, however, we want, like getting a bionic arm or editing our genes. This principle is deeply intertwined with classical liberalism, especially the notion of bodily autonomy. In a society where medical technologies can increasingly intervene in human development, the emphasis on freedom of bodily transformation is both forward-thinking and relevant. This resonates with me because it's about personal choice, being free to decide who you are. It's a bold idea that challenges society to let people define themselves, which I think is super relevant today when we're debating things like biohacking or gender identity.

98 More, M. (1990), *Principles of Extropy,* Extropy 5, no. 2, p. 5.

Nonetheless, despite its strengths, Max More's philosophy has some gaps. One big issue is that Max More's optimism doesn't fully address practical problems like who gets access to enhancements. He assumes markets will make technologies like cryonics or gene-editing available to everyone, but right now, they're super expensive. This makes his vision feel like it's for the rich and not for all of humanity. Inequality could block Max More's ideas from helping everyone. On the other hand, his focus on individual freedom also ignores how society might pressure people to enhance. This makes his idea of "freedom" less free than he thinks.

In addition, another weakness is Max More's speculative ideas, like cryonics. He believes we can freeze people and revive them later, but there's no solid proof it'll work. This makes his vision feel more like a sci-fi dream than a realistic plan. Critics like Hava Tirosh-Samuelson points out that Max More's tech-focused approach skips over deeper human questions, like what gives life meaning.[99] His philosophy is so focused on upgrading bodies and minds that it doesn't ask if that's what we really want or need, which limits its appeal. Overall, the project showed that More's philosophy is a bold call to rethink human limits, but it's not a complete answer. His focus on freedom and progress is exciting, but it needs more practical solutions to work for everyone.

## 4.2 CONCLUSION

99 Tirosh-Samuelson, H. (2014), *Transhumanism and the Religious Imagination*, in "Religion and Transhumanism", ed. Calvin Mercer and Tracy J. Trothen (California: Praeger), p. 23.

The exploration of Max More's transhumanist philosophy reveals a compelling yet contested vision for humanity's future, one rooted in the principles of extropianism, perpetual progress, self-transformation, and technological optimism. Transhumanism, as articulated by Max More, proposes that humanity can transcend biological limitations through advancements such as genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, cryonics, and neurotechnology, thereby achieving enhanced longevity, intelligence, and autonomy. This vision, while inspiring, raises profound questions about its practical feasibility and ethical implications, necessitating a balanced evaluation to determine its potential to shape a global future. Central to More's philosophy is the concept of morphological freedom, which champions an individual's right to modify their body and mind through technology. This principle, grounded in libertarian values, posits that such transformations empower personal agency and drive societal progress. By advocating proactive risk-taking, as encapsulated in the proactionary principle, More envisions a world where humanity actively directs its evolutionary path, moving beyond the constraints of natural selection. The promise of superhuman capabilities, whether through cognitive enhancements or prosthetic augmentations, offers a transformative outlook, potentially reducing suffering and expanding human potential across diverse domains. However, the feasibility of this vision faces significant challenges. Technological barriers, such as the speculative nature of cryonics and the complexity of safe AI development, underscore the gap between aspiration and reality. Ethical concerns further complicate

the adoption of enhancement technologies. Critics argue that More's optimism overlooks issues of equitable access, as enhancements may aggravate social inequalities, creating a divide between those who can afford transformation and those who cannot. Additionally, the potential for unintended consequences, such as societal pressures to conform to enhanced norms or the erosion of human identity, raises questions about the moral boundaries of transhumanism. These criticisms highlight the need for a framework that balances innovation with caution, ensuring that transhumanist ideals do not outpace ethical considerations. The societal implications of More's philosophy extend beyond individual choice to broader cultural and political landscapes. Democratic transhumanists, for instance, advocate policies ensuring universal access to enhancements, arguing that such measures could reduce disparities and promote collective well-being. Conversely speaking, More's libertarian emphasis on individual freedom may clash with societal needs for regulation and oversight, particularly in managing risks associated with advanced technologies. The legacy of More's extropianism is evident in contemporary biotechnology and transhumanist advocacy, yet its global applicability remains limited by cultural and economic diversity, which More's theoretical framework does not fully address. Evaluating transhumanism's potential requires acknowledging both its strengths and limitations.

More's philosophy fundamentally inspires innovation by challenging humanity to redefine its capabilities, offering a proactive vision for overcoming biological constraints.

A practical transhumanism, as proposed in this study, would integrate More's vision with robust safeguards, regulations for safety, policies for equitable access, and cultural sensitivity to ensure inclusivity. Such an approach aligns with the ethical imperatives outlined by scholars who argue for responsible enhancement to prevent harm and promote psychological well-being. The historical roots of transhumanism, from Shelley's cautionary tale of scientific hubris to Haldane's vision of directed evolution, underscore its enduring relevance. These perspectives remind us that transhumanism must navigate the tension between ambition and responsibility. More's philosophy, while visionary, requires adaptation to address modern challenges, such as ensuring technological benefits reach all class of society. By fostering a dialogue between transhumanist optimism and critical oversight, humanity can harness enhancement technologies to achieve a future that balances individual freedom with collective good. In summary, Max More's transhumanist philosophy offers a bold blueprint for humanity's evolution, emphasizing technological empowerment and self-directed progress. Its feasibility, however, hinges on addressing practical limitations and ethical concerns through inclusive policies and rigorous risk management. Transhumanism's potential to shape the future lies not in unchecked optimism but in a measured approach that integrates innovation with accountability, ensuring that the pursuit of human enhancement serves as a catalyst for global progress rather than division.

## 4.3. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Based my problem statement, evaluating transhumanism's relevance to humanity's future, these are some recommendations to make Max More's philosophy more practical and inclusive. First, Max More's vision needs a plan for fair access. It has been noted that enhancements like cryonics are too expensive for most people. To fix this, I suggest transhumanists push for public-private partnerships, like government funding for biotech research, to lower costs. For example, if gene-editing becomes as affordable as vaccines, it could benefit everyone, not just the wealthy. This aligns with my case study focus on More's ideas, as it builds on his belief in progress but makes it more inclusive.

Second, Max More's philosophy should include stronger safety measures. Some risks have been highlighted within this project like AI going wrong or cryonics failing. I recommend transhumanists work with ethicists to create strict guidelines for testing new technologies. For instance, brain implants should go through years of trials to ensure they're safe and can't be hacked. This would make Max More's ideas more trustworthy.

Third, More's vision needs to embrace cultural diversity. Previously, I discussed how his ideas seem tailored to Western audiences. To make transhumanism relevant globally, I suggest incorporating perspectives from different cultures, like African communal values or Eastern spiritual traditions. My library research showed that thinkers like Tirosh-Samuelson criticize More's narrow focus, so engaging with diverse philosophies could make his ideas more universal. This would help transhumanism speak to all of humanity.

My contribution to this topic is a framework for balancing More's optimism with practicality. I propose a "practical transhumanism" that keeps his focus on freedom and enhancement but adds three pillars: affordability (through subsidies or open-source tech), safety (through ethical oversight), and inclusivity (through cultural dialogue). This framework, inspired by my case study of More's works, aims to make transhumanism a tool for everyone, not just a futuristic dream. For example, open-source biotech could let communities develop their own enhancements, aligning with More's idea of self-transformation but grounded in real-world needs.

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