

Chapter – 5

Posthumanism: A Blessing or a Curse: An Ethical and Critical Overview

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5.1. The Human and The Enhancement

The world of the contemporary era is surrounded by various transformations. Along with the socio-cultural, political, and moral changes; the technological revolution initiates a great impact on the current world order. This technological shift carries many changes and new dimensions in human life. Together with technological developments, medical science also uncovers its new footing on biotechnology and its other extents, i.e., on genetic engineering, stem cells, and cloning. Biotechnology is basically grounded on the biological science but is also associated with diverse medical instrumentality, such as the production of artificial hormones, insulin, medicine, and drugs for various diseases, call and reproductive cloning, pathological examinations, and so on. Besides medical field, it is equally related to miscellaneous areas, like, gene therapy, stem cell research, modification of corps, bioconversion of organic waste, use of bacteria and viruses for food and water to keep them fresh for longer, and many more. Thus, being a hot base of research, biotechnology has been applied uninterruptedly in the industrial belt of agriculture, medicine, biology, and so on. Another vital improvement of present arena is the evolvement of molecular nano-technology. Researchers have anticipated that a comprehensive three-dimensional atomic structure can possibly be created by using specifically connected synchronized atoms and chemical reactions of non-biological mechanisms. So, researchers try to make a nano-machine by reorganizing the atoms in a specific operative manner. Through the uniquely assembled atoms or nano-machine researchers can transform different elements into another one, such as, transforming coal into diamonds, eliminating pollution from air and water, removing tumor from healthy tissues, and other unhealthy cells from the body. Among such handful developments, one significant enhancement that has taken place in this age is the intense development of human body by means of advanced technology. The body has made itself highlighted by its enormous mutable characteristics. Human beings are continuously changing their identities and making themselves a ‘technological posthuman’ in place of a ‘biological human’. This concept of bodily flexibility is such a crucial issue that each and everyone, whether a layman or a scholar, shows interest in it. Raising interests in the field of body enhancement actually help researchers to practice various investigations, which in

return opens up new opportunities for body development, and through this, it can also be possible to know how the enhancement and invention processes create impact on human life and wellbeing. When human condition is being converted by progressive technology or biotechnology, it necessarily requires some variations in the nature of human. However, the main concern is, “Does the alteration of human nature necessary for technological upgradation of the body?”, “Is it really possible to alter the whole nature of human beings for technological impulses?”, “Does the nature of being human change wholeheartedly or partially?”, “Is it changed then what would be the consequences?”, “Are such changes good for human life or not?”, “If it really changes, would it be acceptable, and if acceptable then how?”. Again, some people said that “Are the resulting posthuman truly considered as similar to human beings or something else than that?”, “Are the moral codes similar to both human and posthuman?”, “Are posthumans really the part of human ethics?”. These are some questions through which the ethical issues and values of posthumans or ‘technologically advanced humans’ open up a new venture.

5.2. Criticisms against Transhumanism and Possible Replies

5.2.1. Does Transhumanism Carry any Sense?

It is clear from all discussions that transhumanism is anthropocentric and committed to making human life better by removing all predicaments from the paths. From this, it can be loosely inferred that this theory is not particularly concerned about ecological aspects. But it is not the case. Transhumanism is equally concerned about ecological positions and proposes solutions, which can be necessarily and ultimately solved through technological improvements for the satisfaction of all creatures. All parts of known human nature are not equally interesting. Transhumanism promises to improve the human experience of the world. However, this promise has been developed depending on the world-view, which seems mostly dualistic in nature. In transhumanism, physical nature is interestingly viewed as an important tool for human enhancement. As a reason, to its critics, it is looked like transhumanism lacks an inherent value for using physical nature or raw material as a tool for technological enhancement. It feels like, it is a technological manipulation that instead of improving humans, actually throws them in the predicament. However, after enhancing the human body through raw materials, ultimately transhumanism focuses on defining the

cognitive and emotional expressions of human beings. Through such an attempt it seemed like, the concept of dualism has extended itself even to transhumanism anthropology also. As it ultimately focuses to define human cognition and emotions, it senses the human body is dispensable too in transhumanism as long as the possibility of knowledge and pleasure is conserved. Thus, what ultimately seems valuable on its own is the phenomenon of human consciousness.

Another thing that seems strange is that transhumanists emphasize epistemological optimism. Transhumanism holds that the world is basically knowable. By understanding the material aspects of the world is essentially dispensable, transhumanism maintained that everything in the world would be reducible in the ideal or mathematical structures, the ultimate knowledge accessible to human consciousness, thus, it seems like a kind of spiritual reductionism. Some versions of transhumanism have described their goal as scientific progressions ultimately bring out the ability to manipulate these structures until and unless the human experience of satisfaction and happiness is improved. Hence, bioconservatives, the opponents of transhumanism, state that, if transhumanism claims to solve human-oriented problems by employing advanced science and technology, then why they should not solve the cognitive, emotional, and ultimately human consciousness utilizing technology? If this is possible for them then it will be the ultimate consummation of human enhancement. The focal characteristics of transhumanism is then seeming like, it is strictly anthropocentric and dualistic apparently in the sense that, materials as merely being instrumental commits uncontrolled epistemological optimism. Transhumanism can be considered, as mathematical reductionism suggests, as a sort of Platonic idealism. Platonic Idealism is a traditional conception, which is neither unevenly anthropocentric nor epistemologically optimistic. According to Platonic idea, the ultimate reality is beyond human capacity or realm of human creativity and thus, unknown to humans. It can be said that the philosophical reflection of transhumanism is similar to the mathematical reductionism of modern sciences, means, of Descartes and Kant. It seems that through their anthropocentric, dualistic, and epistemological optimism the transhumanist tenet was anticipated long before. Particularly, through Descartes' "cogito ergo sum" and its inherent dualism of mind-body, the thinkable and the material, the transhumanist agenda of knowledge is also anticipated, which emphasizes to make the world an instrument of human intelligence. But, both of them never combined anthropocentrism

and epistemological optimism, because both realize that, uneven anthropocentrism implies epistemological solipsism and hence, skepticism. So, if this is not maintained by transhumanists then human communication, and thus enhancement, must be thought of as a process that moves around a structure beyond human beings.

Transhumanist understanding about the true knowledge of the world is based on such incompatible anthropological and epistemological assumptions that, though as ultimately accessible by human experience, yet by its true nature, it will eventually lead that experience to a profound alteration. For that reason, the universal ideas of 'enriching the human condition' and 'enhancing human's current situation' presumes such a firmness of human standard of measure that the transhumanist project could not succeed to that extent. Again, no such augmentative strategy is seen in the transhumanist project which could solve this incompatible anthropological and epistemological contradiction. The modern concept of mind-body, spiritual-material, dualism originates in the late medieval scholasticism and plays the role of dominating worldview in the western world. But it should be kept in mind that, the two core intellectual forces of the premodern age, Christianity and Platonic idealism, none of them share the same point of view regarding dualism with modern sense. Both the traditional theories presuppose the presence of an eternal entity within the context of materialism in such a way that through the insertion of an eternal entity the differentiation or inconsistency between the mind and the body remains an unsolvable riddle. Again, the dualistic reductionism of the modern age declares that one can grasp the world's inner essence by perceiving either substance, the spiritual, or the material, as the expression of the other. However, both of the views are different from the transhumanist understanding of working for the betterment of the human condition. They are well aware of both of the previous perspectives. But this does not mean that the perspectives of transhumanists are acceptable wholeheartedly. The main reason is that, manipulation of the material nature, i.e., the physical body, using intelligence. The Transhumanist agenda that seems to manipulate is the presupposition of uploading brain content to another media and an emphasis on artificial intelligence. Therefore, for the critics of transhumanism, on rigid materialist presupposition, transhumanist projection of human manipulation through intelligence and technology, hardly makes any sense. However, the question remains, if the world is reduced to the disembodied consciousness which merely bears functional materiality lack of essential aspects, then

would not that mere functional human body be lost forever? Again, is it possible for the future society to share or provide any experience-based talks if the world is inhabited or governed by intelligence, where their material representation will purely be accidental, i.e., absolutely inexperienced? Does the spiritual reductionism of transhumanist thought be assumed to be grounded on such an empirical science, where there would remain no empirical data at all in the world, and where the relationship between intelligence and the body has been carried out? Against all these questions, transhumanism may become attentive and can adjust their position by answering, but in the end, no one will insist longer neither on the dissolution of embodiment nor on the ultimate knowability of the world. Thus, transhumanism would only remain as a hope of scientific and technological progress, which once aims for the sake of humans and their longer and healthier lives. As an organized and agenda-based movement, transhumanism, then barely would make sense anymore.

5.2.2. Transhumanism v/s Bioethics

Posthuman enhancement is gone through many objections. There are some thinkers who believe that a posthuman creation is impossible, it is a utopia and a pseudo idea as well. There has no real ground for posthuman enhancement. Not only that, a posthuman alteration is cost-worthy, difficult, risky, and it brings psychological disturbances too. Hence, some of the crucial objections in the way of posthuman accomplishment are the following-

1. Posthuman standpoint is very bad for society. It creates a negative impact on society and conveys social inequality, conflicts, discrimination, dissimilarities, and fragmentation among social relations.

2. The life of posthumans will be awful and inferior than human lives, because through the scientific enhancement the values, rules, and regulations of society would be broken down. Again, technological breakthroughs can never provide a benefit to human, because, in the course of becoming a posthuman, human beings sooner or later would lose their humanity.

These objections are to be answered by saying that, both human and posthuman undoubtedly have some moral values, however, it is difficult to ensure that, these values are similar or not. Values are context-based. It is the context or situation that always makes to feel individuals that, “Would the values of their life be good or bad or be

positive or negative?”. The wellbeing of a person is signified by the values of his/her life. Any sort of decision depends on values of how the survival strategy of human beings is. But sometimes it can be seen that, despite using the same value, the life of an individual is worse than the individual is living his/her life with intense pain, sufferings, health hazards, an isolated life from his/her family, friends and society. Whereas, another person is living his/her life comfortably with all the good conditions of his/her health, economic status, family, friend, and social prestige. Therefore, no values are there which could be portrayed as fixed. The very nature of value is, it is interchangeable and depends on human situation. If we seek for a moral value, an unchangeable moral value, which would remain the same in all situations, then it would be necessary to search for a value that must be intrinsic in nature. Any value, moral or not, is to be implied as intrinsic value only when it serves the purpose properly, that, only when it spreads goodness to all creatures in all circumstances. And if the moral value attains to be intrinsic in nature, then no one can ever downfall the basic ground of humanity, not even ‘posthumans’. However, the opponents are more concerned about the values that go under a change in every situation, and less anxious about the values that are unchangeable and thus, intrinsic. If human values are regarded as intrinsic, then no difficulty would remain there, even if posthumans live and share the same socio-political attitude or the world with bio-humans¹.

The main critics of posthumanism, the bioethicists uphold an objection by saying that, the transhumanist venture of changing humans into another individuality, different from their very nature, essentially dehumanizes the human dignity. Supporting humanity, bioethicists maintained that, it would be better if, instead of upgrading human beings in terms of technological advancement, the scientists of the transhumanist project try to improve the very nature of human beings in terms of moral values, that are naturally given to humans. The nature empowers us with so many potential opportunities to improve ourselves, but yet, in the present era, we crave for something more apart from mere natural for our improvement. For that, scientists by emphasizing personal aspiration and values try to reform human’s life by means of advanced science and technology along with natural potentialities. There have many erroneous systems in the

¹When a human goes through several technological enhancements, then the person is signified as the posthuman. A random depiction of human and posthuman sometimes may be ambiguous. So, I think for a proper signification, we can call pure human race or the human beings who do not undergo any technological upgradation, as ‘bio-humans’, i.e., the humans, who are purely biological in their very nature.

socio-political strategy of human worlds, such as capitalism, corruption, torture towards the weak, tendency of differentiation and separation among peoples, huge support to the patriarchal thought-society, uncontrolled power given to the elite society, and so on. These modern socio-political systems can categorically lead publics as the “brave new worlders”. The persons who support, protect and act according to such systems are so much egoistic in nature that they actually dehumanizing the entire human clan. These persons are not only dehumanized in nature but also inappropriate for the well-being of the civilization. The critics are continuously blaming that, these types of erroneous world-order are the results of transhumanistic progression. It can be said that, nowadays, the enhancement technology has become uncontrollable. This uncontrolled behaviour of enhancement technology, as a consequence, brings the *Brave New World*². However, the aimless and unsystematic usage of information technology brings this kind of misfortune to advanced technology and social engineering and makes technology dangerous for humankind. Through the disorganized, purposeless, and cruel usages, the moral and intellectual capacities of advanced technology are eventually depriving its effectiveness.

As an opponent of transhumanism, the bio-liberal thinkers often elevated some moral questions against transhumanism. Bio-liberal thinkers are bioethicists. Though they advocate human enhancement in terms of progressive medical science and technology, they do not portray themselves by the typical name ‘transhumanist’. Some thinkers are there, like John Harris, Allen Buchanan, Nicholas Agar, and Julian Savulescu, who can be represented as bio-liberals. Bio-liberalism synthesises liberty and (state) neutrality with the practice of advanced technology. The concept of bio-liberalism maintains that Humans have their free will, they are free to choose what is good for them. Equally, they are free to apply advanced technology in their daily life, if they think, it will augment their possible capacities. But, the prime focus of bio-liberalism is that humans can use freely what they want to exercise in their life only until their practice or the tool (i.e., advanced technology) of their practice does not harm other persons or animals or the environment whatsoever. Humans are using technology inaccurately because they do not want to be stuck in one position, mental or physical, so they want to modify their lives to a much better life than just a good life. But the using technology should trace a responsibility concerning every aspect of life, whether a human life or a non-human life.

² Bostrom, Nick. (2005). In Defense of Posthuman Dignity, *Bioethics*, Vol. 19, No. 3, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, p.206.

Through the above discussions, it can be assigned that, both the theories, transhumanism and bio-liberalism, talk about the usage of technology in human life, but what seems quite different is the position of their moral assumptions. Despite talking about the usage of advanced technology, bio-liberalists situate a (state) neutrality for human beings. Whereas, transhumanists set up a continuous struggle to achieve the desired aim of becoming a posthuman by exceeding the limitations of human biology with the help of advanced medical science and technology. Bio-liberal thinkers after associating themselves with individual human beings and relying on the value of liberty state that, human beings for the sake of their well-being can choose any improved technology. According to bio-liberals, the controller of human choice is the human himself. Humans would choose a life that serves goodness to them. But it is also crucial to lead a life that they could consider as best among all. Therefore, for bio-liberal thinkers, the significance of the individual is more than the human race. They again claimed that the sole technological development cannot enhance human capacity perfectly, but together with technology if scientists maintain state neutrality and liberty too, then the possible capacity of human beings could be enhanced more effortlessly. But transhumanism, highlights the advanced medical science and technology for improving human perfections, while also fixing certain objective standards based on which transformation can be made possible. Again, transhumanism, by depriving itself of being an individualistic approach, includes the entire human region in the enhancement process and at the same time, enthusiastically offers sufficient opportunity to the human race, so that human beings can easily partake in this revolutionary enhancement procedure. They maintained that every individual is free in using technology as their own choice and necessity. However, what Bostrom highlights is that becoming a posthuman could be a good choice for most human beings.³ Therefore, achieving the position of posthumanism by the specific and evolutionary application of developed technology is the prime goal of transhuman philosophy. Whereas transhumanism attempts in opening up a great opportunity to the entire human world aiming to serve a long-range of human survival, bio-liberalism, on the other hand, emphasizes gaining personal benefits using technology. Again, bio-liberalists refuse to accept transhumanism by saying that, even if technological advancement is desired and

³ Ranisch, Robert. (2014). *Morality*, Ranisch, Robert & Sorgner, Stefan Lorenz (eds.): *Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction*, Frankfurt am Main et al. Peter Lang, p. 151.

important to human beings for their long survival and although through the help of technology a new region of information and communication has been opened up among individuals, including their family members, friends, officials, relatives and so on, yet the extended technology causes a termination of common human values and through continuous growth of termination of values, as a negative result, a loss of humanity will endlessly be there.

In the present 21st century human behaviour becomes a very challenging issue. Transhumanism, being a prime member of using advanced technology for the sake of human enhancement, never argues that the practice of technology always conveys a good or positive consequence. So, holding only an optimistic opinion about improved science and technology is not the characteristic of transhuman philosophizing. This system always gives an effort into practicing science and technology precisely. It is well known to all of us that every action has two sides, positive and negative. Thus, sometimes the negative side prevails and overpowers the transhumanist processing. Due to such unfortunate negative results, critics thought that technological failure is less a concern for transhumanists. But they are well aware of the fact that technology too sometimes can become a reason for disasters. For this very purpose transhumanists comment that, although advanced technology lies lots of potentialities within itself and authenticates the world with lots of beneficial developments, in the way of achievements, technology too can fail and result in unpleasant as well as massive damage to humankind. Technology, instead of offering a good and long life, can destroy human essential human qualities, like moral values, natural abilities, like, intelligence, reproductivity, evolution, and most importantly, it even can take away the very existence of human beings. The further possible negative outcome that technology can generate is wide socio-political and cultural inequalities, immense damage to human personal and social relationships, and ecological nonuniformity. So, transhumanists are not only concerned about technological advancements, they are equally thoughtful about its negative sides and outcomes. Hence, being sensitive thinkers, transhumanists not only acknowledge these risky issues, at the same time, work constantly to overcome the negative outcomes and also try to contribute more positive results.

We should keep in our mind that, both transhumanism and posthumanism are revolutionary movements, that give human beings a new hope, desire, ability, and dream of enhancing themselves uniquely through the help of advanced science and

technology. The concept of posthumanism, in its core essence, is based on human ideology, because the base of where enhancement occurs is the human being or human body itself. So, no posthumans can be depicted as creatures out of the human race, rather they could be signified as the same as humans and they equally belong to the same human race and sometimes share similar moral ideals. The only dissimilarity that prompted is that, posthumans are enhanced human beings who have technologically transformed themselves for achieving more possible perfections and capabilities than normal bio-human beings. So, posthuman morality actually indicates the morality or moral thoughts of those human beings, who have dreamed and motivated themselves to transform into a technologically flourished being. But the way transhumanism and posthumanism are allied to technology, an assumption of higher-minded moral ideals naturally comes, that is equally supposed as values that can lead a healthy life for the posthumans. Humans partake uniquely in both the World and the Universe. Human involvement is unique from other animals and non-animals because they are highly rational than other creatures, also dislike other animals, humans desire to achieve more perfection than the excellence that has been given by the natural biology. Humans are social beings. They live in a society and are connected through certain social norms and conditions. Generally, some moral values and conditions have been generated by society, and depending on these values and moral conditions human beings flourish themselves. But, after technological enhancement of categories of human understanding, an individual believes that he/she is a hybrid of medical science and biotechnological evolution. In this situation, does the individual fall into the very domain of the moral values and conditions that have been set by human culture and society? This is the central concern about the morality of the 21st century, as both humans and posthumans coexist mutually on the same planet. This is true that humans are surrounded by a variety of phenomena that are caused by their thoughts, feelings, and social actions. When human experience occurs, it occurs based on these phenomena and it in return motivates the human beings to fulfill their duties and responsibilities to the society. However, these long-term phenomena, which are often directed by so-called powerful capitalists, can engage marginalized people's lives in a more complicated, alienated, ignorant, and insecure way.

The major problem of the present civilized and educated society is that the people of elite classes do not treat the marginalized, uneducated, economically backward class

people properly. A kind of hierarchy is seen there in current social orders. But transhumanists' approach, subsequent to postmodern thought, never treated people differently, all are equal to them. They believe that any person whatsoever possesses the same kind of possibilities and by using those possibilities anyone can make qualitative and quantitative improvements to oneself, either utilizing knowledge or through the help of science and technology. Therefore, it can be said that human beings constantly try to wipe out their failure, frustration, weakness, dissatisfaction, unnecessary sufferings, pain, powerlessness, shortage of time, anxiety, insecurity, limits of life, and ultimately death both from the realm of body and mind. And then, humans not only find their way of overcoming their problems, at the same time attain satisfaction, relief, happiness, pleasure, and freedom through a positive practice of advanced medical science and technology.

5.3. The Application of Morality in the Domain of Transhumanism

Medical, scientific and technological researches share themselves largely with the human culture. They have verified themselves as important for human lives through several applications of their instrumentality to save people from the wild and painful sides of nature. Humans by their power of thought and by practicing those aspects of thought, gradually civilized, rationalized and enlightened themselves. Regardless of their servings on human lives, it is equally essential to evaluate the influence of scientific and technological advancements on the human body, mind, society, culture, and environment. The progression in the field of science of technology seeks the necessity of moral evaluation for fixing a guiding principle to make human lives and situations worth fruitful. The guiding principle of advanced science and technology is also required for the protection of human goals of body enhancement. Along with humans' social relationships, cultural bonding, and communications with each other's, the living world and environment can also be protected by the principles. Although it was started at the end of the last century, the scientists of the twenty-first century mainly focus on human improvement in the form of enhancement of the power of the human body and building up the human body into a technological hybrid instead of a biological organism. The ethical standpoint that appears predominant in the moral assessment of advanced science and biotechnology is known as "bioethics". The scope of bioethics is broader than research ethics, public ethics, and medical and clinical ethics because bioethics is associated with the whole human life, from his own body to

his family, friends, socio-political cultures, rituals, and so on. Thus, bioethics, unlike transhumanism, not only concerns a particular human body, mind, psychology, or a person's life, rather it covers the entire world of life.

There is no such moral theory that could cover the transhumanist philosophy. Similarly, the ethical concern regarding posthumanist thought is even there as a debated phase. Alike postmodernism, posthumanism also believes in the fragmented and non-origin styles of thinking. Therefore, settling down the norms and practices of normative ethics in the realm of transhumanistic and posthumanistic approaches is quite tough. Even some thinkers of transhumanism reject the notion of morality within the human enhancement project. According to them, if we apply normative moral codes for controlling the body enhancement policy, then we would do it by universalized and categorized norm-based systems, which follow its foundation from human rationality and subjectivity. But, transhumanism, as a body enhancement project, confronts purely oppositional thought. However, it does not mean that body enhancement project or transhumanism is free from moral criticism. It faces several moral quarries against its thoughts and practices. Despite setting up any specific codes of conduct, transhumanist thought tries to provide suitable answers to such moral questions that are raised against it. The thinkers of transhumanism uphold that, along with the body enhancement, the capacity of human morality is also extended, and through this extended moral capacity enhanced human beings can engage themselves to convey suitable replies to criticisms.

5.4. The Position of Transhumans in the Human-World

The idea of body enhancement through advanced science and technology and transformation to a posthuman, at its foremost step, not only seems quite stressful to the researchers, even appears as a pseudo idea to the thinkers of the rest of the world. To the opponents, the evolutionary formula, based on technology, leads people to a negative position, Even the transformation into a posthuman may seem degrading in itself, some critics mention, and as a result, it may harm humankind. Again, posthumans may cause a threat to normal human beings. But, the researchers of transhumanism, after prolonged researches decide that, the posthumans, the enhanced human beings, can never harm the biological humans, nor they can threaten the positions of human beings within the world. A scientific amalgamation between human biology and improved technology

gives birth to a posthuman. So, posthumans are technology and biology-based hybrid, cyborgs, that endorse a long and wide range of human survival. Thinkers of transhumanism mention, that there exist lots of negative vibes within the natural world that repeatedly harm human beings under different conditions. Several body-health issues, like dengue, malaria, organ damage problems, difficulties in the brain, cancer, cognitive problems, and even newly added covid-19 pandemic fill human life with many unnecessary sufferings and pains. These problems have neither been created nor accepted by us. Rather we truly desire to get free from these difficult circumstances, but we cannot. Even, our society is full of people, who use their rationality in an immoral way, such as they planned murder, robbery, torture, rape, genocide, war, cheating, all sorts of trafficking, and so forth. So, the world in the 21st century looks more negative than positive and there comes forward some researchers, the transhumanists, who aim to overpower these negativities by applying advanced science and technology. With this aim of removing the negativity from human life, society, and so on, they bring out the concept of enhancement technology, where they started to enhance the capacity of the human body by employing advanced technology. According to them, through body enhancement, human beings can live a worthwhile life, a better life than that they live ever before, and a good body can think good things, can provide good phenomena, and can perform good deeds too. Transhumanism says about a body enhancement that must involve advanced or posthuman health-span, cognition, and capacities. Posthuman transmission helps human beings to improve their body, health, cognitive power, etc. all sorts of human capacities. Through the body enhancement process, an individual can become much stronger, energetic, active, elastic, curious, and young and can also establish his/her mind as a more positive and balanced one, which in return can help him/her to make an easy engagement with difficult situations. As the enhanced being acquires a healthy, disease-free, proactive, and strong body, as well as a sharp mind, through this an individual can experience every matter, idea, and phenomenon more realistically. Therefore, bodily expansion through advanced technology consequences a proactive, healthy, and productive body with less disease and idling. At the same time, the mind, as a mind of an enhanced body, can make humans more sensitive, rational, and positive, which in return can postulate an improved cognitive being to the world. Sometimes, it looks difficult to identify between a bio-human and a posthuman, because in some cases, their physique, their life, and their thoughts appear almost the same. But

in the end, the capacity of the body, intellect, thinking, emotion, morality, and spirituality of a posthuman may surely surprise us.

If the discussion has been shifted to the human society from the human body, then some wrong ideals could be found there that are still present in the society. It could be found that human society is bounded by class, creed, race, and gender, intolerant, imposed values extrinsically, suppress the weakens, gives no opportunity to the marginalized, totalitarian, static, elite oriented, and capitalized. All these social qualities somehow make the society, the culture a wasteland. But posthuman thought is the exact opposite of all of these ideals. Posthumans want to make a free society, where everyone can share the same position and the same opportunities with all. However, the discussion of the human body and society should run simultaneously, because human beings as an enhanced bodily hybrid are not out of society, as well as society is not out of the human body. Both have impacts on each other. If a human being suffers, then it distresses society and if society goes on a wrong path, then it necessarily affects the human body.

5.5. Transmutation of Reality

Alike the real world, the virtual world is also populated by organisms, hence these organisms are not blood-and-fleshed humans, rather they are ‘avatars’⁴. It has been said that an avatar is a simple being. It represents the interactive and social media networking nature of the user-human. But the matter of concern is that the user can easily manipulate its appearance, characteristics, and attributes by his/her own imaginative and fanciful structures. Sometimes, the avatar plays the role of purposeful projection or idealization of someone’s own identity, whereas, for some people, avatar is an experiment with new identities. Concerning the avatar, there are two different and apparently, opposite views are there which leads to a definite debate in the field. One is, the characteristics of manipulate the avatar. In this view, the avatar is used as a means through which a person can liberate oneself from the unfortunate accidents, that is, from any kind of diseases reasoned by biological body placed in real space and time. The supporters of this view said that computer-mediated technology enables post-multicultural vision of identity, which is disassociated with any kind of gender biasness, ethnicity, and other modern-aged socio-cultural construction. The users can roam free

⁴ The word ‘avatar’ has its origin in Sanskrit, which designates the embodied incarnation of any god or divine entity. But, since the extreme development of cyber culture, this word is used to represent cyber models. More precisely, the virtual figure of humans, who make interaction with different social environments, like- virtual meetings, social media networks, online games, graphics and so on.

here from any biological and socio-cultural bases. In virtual or synthetic world, avatars may experience human social life. However, the experience is situated in an environment where many characteristics of human biological body has altered, no fixed endowments remain there, but chosen attributes are there. So, a person can acquire any appearance, any kind of desired body. Virtual world is a world where no socio-political calculus of real-world works. Virtual world is a world that is both same and different from our real world. It is the same in the sense that, people or avatars of this world live here with a body, socio-political relation, and all other aspects that the real world consists. However, it is different because, all aspects of human physical and mental appearance are in control, everything is chosen, everything is determinate, everything is voluntary. It means, how one should look like, what should be the appearance, is someone be tall, small, dark, heavy or light, everything stands there under control, we choose voluntarily out of our free will. The other is the view of the critics of the virtual incorporation and designer bodies. According to them, through virtual incorporation and body designing avatars neglect the limitations, emergencies, and basic needs of human physical bodies. Nowadays, in the game space, it has been seen in a huge manner that, avatar may act as an antisocial, that it is performing shooting, miming, brutally kills someone under the name and fashion of a game. In reality, it can be found that he/she is never been involved in such types of activities in 'real life'. But such mentality which a person plays in virtual space by the name of a game is necessarily an alarming issue, because, the gamer lives most of his/her life in the game space by involving such crucial and dangerous acts. Sometimes it has been shown that the users of games manipulate the affordance and reproduce and reinforce highly problematic stereotypes form of race, gender, and ethnicity. Here I would like to share an experience of a user of game space. By talking with her I have come to know her own experiences about game space and hence the side effects too. Most of the gamers are too much affectionate towards their games and most of them are playing the role of an avatar surrounded by enemies. In the game, their prime task is to kill the enemies. The result that seems in her real life is that in her subconscious mind she is very much attached to the game and in real life, while the subconscious mind prevails, she suddenly, maybe for a fraction of second, feel that, the real people around her is her enemies too, and as a result she started to think that, 'I have to kill that person'. But in reality, neither the person nor the gamer is antisocial. Maybe it is just thinking which has no real base, but yet this should be a matter of concern. Excessive use of game space successively changes the thinking capacities of

humans. It provokes antisocial activities among young generations. It leads to open the path of antisocialism and makes the young generation less patient.

Now let's find another way of understanding the avatar, virtual reality, and cyberspace. In this understanding, differences between the enthusiastic supporters of cyber space, creative and designed body-role playing and self-engineering, and the critics of antisocial behaviour, virtual violence, and identity tourism are not the prime concern of establishment. Rather the prime concern is to endorse the shared values and assumptions of both sides in order to develop the virtual reality and cyberspace more positively. Designed body of avatar is the prime issue about which everyone is concerned. Regarding this issue the book of Sandy Stone, *will the Real Body Please Stand Up*, is a significant one. Sandy Stone in her analysis shows a woman who is severely disabled and due to her physical limitations, she engages herself in intimate conversation with others in online. She has been trapped in the disabilities of her physical body, and hence, cannot live a good social life. But in cyberspace, she can carry a full, good and active social life. But the twist is, that the woman, Julie, does not really exist. She has no existence in the real world. It is because, the woman of cyberspace, virtual reality, is not actually a woman in the real world. The woman is the avatar of a middle-aged psychiatrist, who is very shy and introverted in the real social life. The physically disabled psychiatrist decided to experiment with his identity and presents himself as a woman with no gender biasness, which Sandy Stone depicted as "Computer cross-dressing". Identity crisis between the appearance of an avatar and the true identity of the real person behind the computer is the principal issue of concern in online social interaction. Now the question may arise, does it impossible to know the reality of avatar? If it is possible then how could we get to know avatar's reality? How one can get to know the truth and reality of virtual world while dealing, working, and playing in cyberspace? As an answer, it could be said that we have to enquire. Inquiry about someone's appearance is the best way to know the reality. When we become unable to see and know anything about a person in all realities and we only talk or work or deal with the person in virtual world, then at some point we question about the honesty of that person. Such inquiry is simple, direct and intuitive and effective too, because such enquiry entails an involvement with metaphysics.

5.6. Cybernism: New Possibilities

In this age of globalization, through the developments of technology, it would be possible for us to become a cyborg. The “Cybernism”⁵ is continuously developing in the medical field too. Through the rapid development of medical science and technology, not only has corrective replacement of different parts of body, called prostheses, such as artificial legs, hearing aids, become possible; but also, mechanical devices are operated in the body when the very organ refused to work correctly, as, for example, a pacemaker is placed in the chest to regulate uncontrolled heart rhythms. Cyborgs are different from human beings. They have no such softness of mind and heart, bonding of friendship and family, attitude of sacrifice and kindness. They bear the signs of postmodern thoughts, which are expressed in fragmented, fabricated, decentralized, irrational, and uncertain ways. Again, cyborgs do not believe in a dream community made up of an organic family or Garden of Eden populated thoughts, because they are not wholly made up of worldly things where they would return after their destruction, they are mixed beings of organism and machine.

The significant role of cyberspace is that here our bodies are modified by progressive technology and gender dichotomies, rigid-binaries are absent. According to Sandy Stone, every member of cyberspace can change their gender constantly. Hence, in cyber communication one can instantly play the role of different gender, from the one he/she really is. Therefore, cyberspace, including cyborg, is genderless, it means the user may not provide his/her gender to others; played a subversive role, where the user plays his/her opposite gender role; and the transgender role, where the user uses the name and image of a female while he is a male or vice-versa. So, here the user uses the identity of his or her opposite sex. In cyberspace we can find two types of realities: Physical reality- the body which is perceptible and has natural reactions, when we are using computer, reading any digital text, watching movies or images, listening songs or any sounds. The other is, Virtual reality- it is a projection, composed by our imagination of reality. Besides cyborgs, our own idea of body, physical reality, has also changed through the usage of new technologies and we can categorize our own body as distorted body, fragmented body, narcissist body, in addition mostly by the name, ‘Postmodern

⁵Cybernism is a term signifies high rate of involvement of human beings into the cyberspace. Nowadays, cyberspace and virtual reality play very important role in human life. Human body is replaced by a virtual body, human mind is controlled by cyber technologies, such as- games. Human consciousness is altered eventually by their own avatars, who only have virtual reality.

body'. The various activity of our virtual life is fragmented, invisible, distorted, decentralized in character. We can cite some examples like, when we are chatting with a person in any video chatting app, we can see his/her face. But sometimes due to bad or lack of connection, we can see their face and body on the webcam in a fragmented or distorted way. Even sometimes we can see a partial face and listen a robotic sound instead of our loved one due to some technical problems. As we cannot see them properly in a fixed manner, it creates a kind of fear and sometimes misunderstanding among us. Again, while using a webcam, our own face is also screened in another window with the very person we are chatting. This event reminds us about hyperrealist painting, where images are reflected on glasses, and in virtual space, our body is always reflected on the computer. We multiply ourselves by splitting our identity on social media by sharing our images, status, and blogs. We are fragmenting ourselves in cyberspace through constantly changing our genders, body-image, thoughts, friends, relationships, and ethical values. According to Lacan, the idea of the fragmented body and fragmentation starts in infancy, before the formation of the ego. Hence, we can say, feeling of fragmentation seems very natural to human condition. Our excessive self-promotion in social sites, like- publishing images, videos, and comments encourage narcissistic trend.

5.7. Is becoming a Posthuman Good for Humans?

Human enhancement is already processing well enough but the question, which concerns is, 'is becoming posthuman be good for us?'. does a human remain as the same person or change entirely in the process of becoming posthuman? The suggestive answer is, suppose, if it is a case that, person 'A' seems that the life of person 'B' is better than her and wished to replace her identity or wished to live person 'B' like life, then in order to do that she might have to lose all of her memories, skills, unique talents, knowledge, goals and most importantly, her entire personality, which made her Person 'A', might be obliterated. But in contrast, no human being has to lose his or her psychological characteristics necessarily, in order to become a posthuman. A human being could preserve all of his or her memories, skills, talents, knowledge, abilities, and other aspects of his or her personality even though he or she transforms into posthuman. Though posthuman transformation is different in many aspects, it could be assumed that human personal identity could be preserved if the enhancement process occurs through radical health-span enhancement. However, in the case of radical cognitive or emotional

enhancement, the preservation is not much clear. At first, some measures, as an example, how changes would be implemented, which kind of changes would a human imagine, how a person would use the enhanced capacities, should be kept in every human's mind in the process of emotional or cognitive enhancement. Therefore, it could be said that the preservation of human's personal and narrative identity would be possible if the enhancement is taken place as an addition of new capacities over the old ones, without giving up the pre-existing capacities; the enhancement is successive and time taking; the enhancement is purely depending on subject's free will; the enhancement does not overpower upon the human and he or she could retain all memories, desires, goals, skills, disposition, personal relationships, social connections and responsibilities and most importantly the enhancement fits into the life goals and self-conceptions of the person. Again, the issue, that human beings are worrying about, is, 'how would a posthuman fulfil the commitments made by the human before transformation?'. Most of the humans apprehend that, becoming posthuman can be very bad for a person because no posthuman possibly can fulfil the commitment, which was forfeit by the posthuman at the time of transformation. Generally, we do not have those kinds of strong and personal commitments, which are impossible for upgraded posthuman to fulfil. Eventually, if humans transform themselves into posthumans and acquire the posthuman capacities, then they could fulfil the strong commitments much better, more easily, and more reliably. Therefore, becoming a posthuman is not bad at all for the human race and through this transformation humans not only could complete their specific as well as strong commitments much effortlessly, but could also live a better life, with the help of longer health-spans, greatly improved cognitive and emotional capacities.

5.8. The COVID-19 Pandemic and Posthuman Move

The 21st century's world has witnessed how the COVID-19 pandemic hits human lives. The pandemic hits humans so badly that the well-being of humankind has been traumatized for a long. The lockdown during chronic pandemic sessions affected the education system, occupation and working status, personal and social economy, and relationships. Overall, the whole life of human beings is disturbed and somehow, changed. While on one side, some humans were affected by the virus, on the other, some were facing several psychological, physical, economic, personal as well as socio-cultural problems. Here also technology plays an important role in saving humankind. It

comes ahead and holds back the situation and eventually solves the ambiguities that arrive through the pandemic and the lockdown. Although, seeking help from technology is not new and we are connected with technology for a long, in the intense period of the pandemic, it works as a great savior to the world. Where stepping outside from home as a bio-human and making direct connections with others was so much risk, at that time different technological gadgets make continuous connections among human beings. And such a large amount of participation in the technological field with technological gadgets in humans' everyday life makes the human body a technologically upgraded body or a posthuman body. When pandemic and lockdown ran together and as a result, all organizations were set on restrictions for the entrance of masses, the official communication among humans was possible in the form of virtual meetings, webinars, online classes and examinations, virtual conferences, work from home, and so on via technological gadgets and internet services. Whereas, humans in their personal lives communicate more effectively with their loved ones through video calling, which prevents them from falling apart mentally in that crucial time. Thus, advanced technology by making a wide posthuman society in the broader sense⁶, not only protects a large number of human beings from the COVID-19 disease but also saves humans from falling physically and mentally and helps them from losing their jobs and economic statuses. It is a fact that humans are using technology since long before the COVID-19 pandemic hits the world and even though they make virtual interactions with each other, they do not like to call themselves posthuman. Advanced technology is not an intimate part of their life, it is just a tool for them. But it should be maintained that, despite such kind of acceptance of technology by those people, technology serves a lot in the pandemic period, that human beings can live virtual existences with all new intensities and possibilities. The most important thing that technology gained in this period is its massive acceptance as an integrated part of human life. Advanced technology conveys a new practice of living. After surviving more than two years in the pandemic situation, humans are somehow habituated now with the new way of living. Therefore, through the rapid and intensified utilization of technology and the massive acceptance of virtual life in daily living, humans, in a wider sense, have turned out to be the 'posthuman'. In this condition, where human ontology is at risk, stepping outside is life-threatening, and making face to face connections can drop into danger, "becoming a

⁶ According to the broader sense of posthumanism, anyone who chooses to use technology randomly and widely in his/her life is to be called a cyborg, i.e., a posthuman.

posthuman”, even in a wider sense, would be a wise decision if human beings aim to survive in a long run of human evolution.