

Transhumanism: A Modern Quest for Utopia

I. Introduction

Nothing is more popular right now in Hollywood than superheroes. In 1973 a television pilot was aired that featured an astronaut named Col. Steve Austin (played by Lee Majors), who was severely injured in an accident. His body was rebuilt with bionic parts that made him have superhuman senses and strength. It went on to become a successful series as the hero made a career of fighting crime with his new super-human ability. **Science fiction it was, but according to some, it will soon be reality.**

II. The Definition of Transhumanism

It is a type of futurist philosophy aimed at transforming the human species by means of biotechnologies. Transhumanists think of disease, aging, and even death as both undesirable and unnecessary, and think that technology will eventually overcome them all. Massimo Pigliucci

Ever since the Fall in the Garden of Eden man has used all the natural means at his disposal to somehow get back to Eden. Many attempts at Utopia were tried and failed. In the Christian worldview man is rightfully viewed as fallen and in need of redemption. Because of man's sin nature inherited from Adam, all Utopian and self-help schemes are doomed to failure. The evolutionary worldview teaches the process of evolution weeds out defects, and redemption will come with time (*We've come a long way, baby!*). Man will eventually overcome his defects by these purely natural processes. But, along comes transhumanism which declares that *we desperately need to hurry up the evolutionary process* or man will not only destroy himself, but the planet as well. They are optimistic that man can be re-engineered, i.e., become transhuman (transcend our defective humanity) and ultimately become posthuman. Some even refer to this transition as becoming a new species, one that will incorporate a unity between man and machine. Does this not sound like a secular soteriology (the study of how men are redeemed or saved)?

III. Background Of Transhumanism

- A. The word *transhuman* first appeared in a translation of *Dante's Divine Comedy* to describe the final redeemed state of the believer. Later it was used by Julius Huxley to mean *man attempting to overcome his human limitations*. Huxley was inspired by the French Jesuit Priest, Teilhard Chardin, who believed that evolution would lead to the Kingdom of God.
- B. The modern transhumanist movement began with the explosion of the high tech industry in the late 80's. The leading figure and spokesperson, was and is, probably Ray Kurzweil, now a major engineer and manager with Google.
- C. The major assumption of the movement was that newly invented technology could be embedded in the human body. With this additive, humans could transcend their natural bodies and in effect, speed up the evolution process. Some are optimistic that this combining of man and machine will someday be able reproduce and transcend old flawed humankind (old, normal man will eventually pass from the scene).

IV. The Tools of Transhumanism

Some of the new and developing technology that the transhumanists hope to use to bring about this accelerated evolutionary process are:

- A. Genetic engineering: This involves the complicated process of re-editing the DNA code of embryos. The Chinese are already claiming they have successfully done this. With this technology will we see *designer babies*? What could possibly go wrong? What will happen to the progressive value of egalitarianism (all men and their worldviews are equal)?
- B. Nanotechnology and Nanobots: These are very tiny robots that will travel through our bloodstream to monitor and improve our health.
- C. Robots: These are machines not only created for specific tasks, but to do them better and more efficiently than humans. While it sounds like it's straight from science fiction, scientists are serious about making robots that have more intelligence than humans which can ultimately achieve consciousness and reproduce. I'm not making this up!
- D. Artificial intelligence (AI): This is an attempt to duplicate human intelligence, but at a much greater level. Computers already figure in much of our technology and manufacturing. Transhumanists fully believe that computers could one day learn to reproduce themselves and become *malevolent beings* and destroy mankind (cyborgs).
- E. Biotechnology: This is a catch-all term that refers to combining non-living machines with living entities. Example would be hooking up a machine to a paraplegic (a sort of exo-skeleton) that would enable him to walk. They are already profecting such a device.
- F. Drugs: They foresee designer drugs that will enhance your memory and make you smarter, cures diseases, etc.
- G. Human-animal hybrids: The Japanese government has already approved experiments in creating these chimera. One goal here is to produce these hybrids in order to harvest their organs.

V. The Goals of Transhumanism

- A. An Enhanced Life: Three things that transhumanists want to change, or enhance, are our bodies, our minds, and our behavior.
 1. According to TH our bodies can be enhanced by biotechnology and by re-engineering of DNA. Computers will be worn as clothing and connected directly to our brain. We will wear earbuds that are tiny computers that will automatically translate any language. Exosuits can give humans increased strength.
 2. Brain implants (BMI's=brain-machine interfaces) which are tiny computers will increase the speed of thinking, calculations, and communicating. Imagine if you will: when we share our vacation experience today we share photos and videos. Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, thinks someday we will be able to share our entire sensory experience!
 3. Controlling behavior is where we really enter the *sticky wicket*! Who will control whom?

- Who will decide on a standard for behavior? Presumably this will be done by altering brain chemistry through designer drugs. What happens to emotions, love and affection?
- B. A major goal of transhumanists is to merge computers with human brains. Elon Musk, a notable figure in the movement, wants to cure brain disorders by implanting computer chips. Wouldn't you like to have a few more gigabytes of memory?
 - C. Immortality: transhumanists are optimistic that they, through modern technology, can conquer man's greatest enemy: death. Initially they believe they will be able to *download a person's consciousness* (his collected memory) onto a computer as early as in a few decades. This will ensure immortality. Later, they hope to, by genetic engineering, remake a person who will not age or succumb to disease. In the meantime, some propose freezing a person when he dies, via cryogenics (freezing the body). Then after learning how to re-engineer the body that succumbed to death, the person can be revived, download his saved memory, and presto, we have conquered death!

VI. The Problems with Transhumanism

A. Legal Issues

Can you just imagine the legal problems that will arise with transhumanism? Think of the unintended consequences. Who will decide what kind of human to make? Who will decide on right and wrong? Who will have access to all these proposed enhancements? Will it only be the rich and privileged?

B. Usurping the Creator

Transhumanism is a substitute for the redemption already provided by God the Son. Here's the big question? What will God do when man usurps His role as Creator? When will God say: *Ok, I've had enough; I'm the Creator, not man!*

Here's what Lovelock says: *It now seems probable that a new form of intelligent life will emerge from an artificially intelligent precursor made by one of us...*

C. It rejects the concept of human dignity

Transhumanism only sees man only as a complex meat machine with the only difference being more brain cells than animals.

D. It has roots in the Eugenics movement

Hitler was way ahead of his time as he believed that through selective breeding he could bring about superior people. His ideas were rooted in evolutionary theory as shown by scholar, Richard Weikert in: *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany*. P.S. **The eugenics movement is alive and well in transhumanism.**

E. What if a country decides that it values humans with great physical strength and intelligence? Will this not create in essence a new arms race?

F. Currently, as in right now, dot com billionaires are funding organizations such as NeuroLink that will be able to read your thoughts through computer implants. Proponents of this technology are convinced these Brain-Computer Interfaces are just around the corner. Do we want to give up the privacy of your thoughts? Devices have already been created whereby sensory implants can detect brain states which in turn can elicit certain actions. Imagine controlling a computer game with only your thoughts! This is now being perfected. Rumor is that militaries are already deep into developing this technology. Facebook and its billions is funding Reality Labs, which is developing a device that can decode speech directly from the human brain onto a screen.

VII. Who are the major figures in the transhumanist movement and who is providing the funding? You will not be surprised to learn that the major figures are those who made billions in such organizations as Facebook, Google, and Paypal. Others notable thinkers are Nick Bostrom of Oxford University, Elon Musk, David Pearce, and Max More.

VIII. What About the Christian Worldview and Transhumanism?

- A. Man is made in God's image and is therefore creative. When man creates technology he is reflecting His Creator. God meant for technology to advance His Kingdom. Autonomous technology in the hands of fallen and sinful men ultimately leads to tyranny.
- B. The Bible teaches that man is the Crown of His creation and has inherent dignity. With Transhumanism man is not exceptional; we are only an accident of evolution.
- C. Man is fallen according to the Christian worldview; he is deeply flawed. Only the redemption provided by the Creator through the death of His Son can solve this problem and it will not be complete until the resurrection.

IX. Conclusion

Transhumanism in much of the literature sounds like a cult. It is enlightenment humanism gone to seed. False worldviews (those that don't mirror reality) contain within themselves the seeds of their own destruction. Transhumanism is a false gospel, and nothing more than a secular eschatology ending in their idea of a Millennium. Jacques Ellul, I believe, foresaw all this when he said: *Ethics will not be able to control technology. Whatever can be done will be done.*

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