

Creativity *and* Transhumanism: *Where Are the Limits?*

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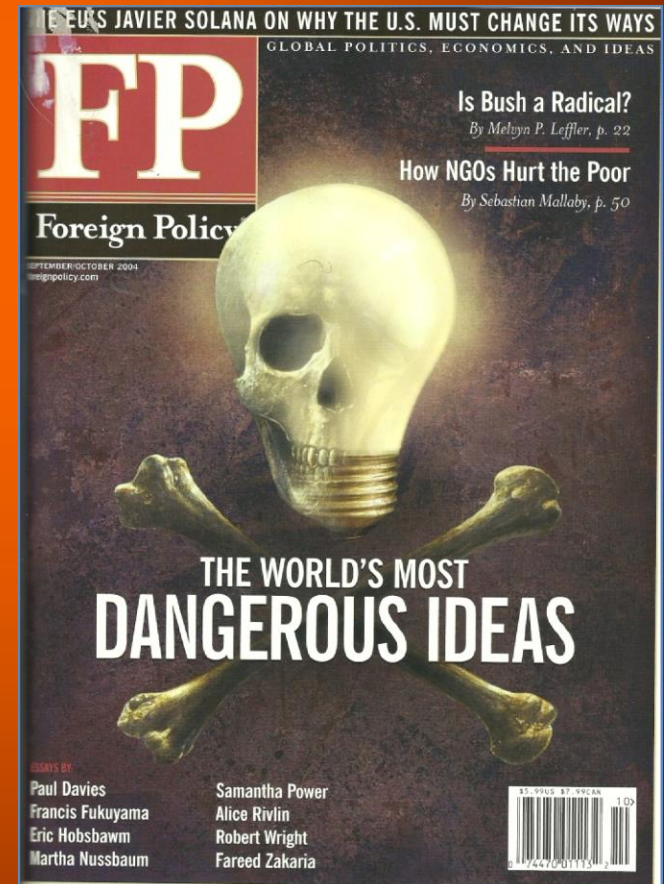
Conference Theme – In God's Image: Celebrating Creativity in Science and Invention

As we celebrate creativity, prudence requires that we ask what limits, if any, apply. The emergence of transhumanism brings this question, and others, into focus.

Feb. 11, 2011



versus



Sept./Oct. 2004

What is Transhumanism?

- To advocates, transhumanism is “a reason-based philosophy and a cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition by means of science and technology.”

Max More, “H+: True Transhumanism,” *Metanexus*, posted February 5, 2009, <http://www.metanexus.net/essay/h-true-transhumanism> (accessed September 5, 2012).

- To opponents, it is “*The World's Most Dangerous Idea*.”

Francis Fukuyama, *Foreign Policy*, No. 144 (Sep. - Oct., 2004): 42-43.

- By the middle of this century, human enhancements could proliferate due to a convergence of several key technologies: biotechnology, nanotechnology, information and communication technology (ICT), applied cognitive science, robotics.

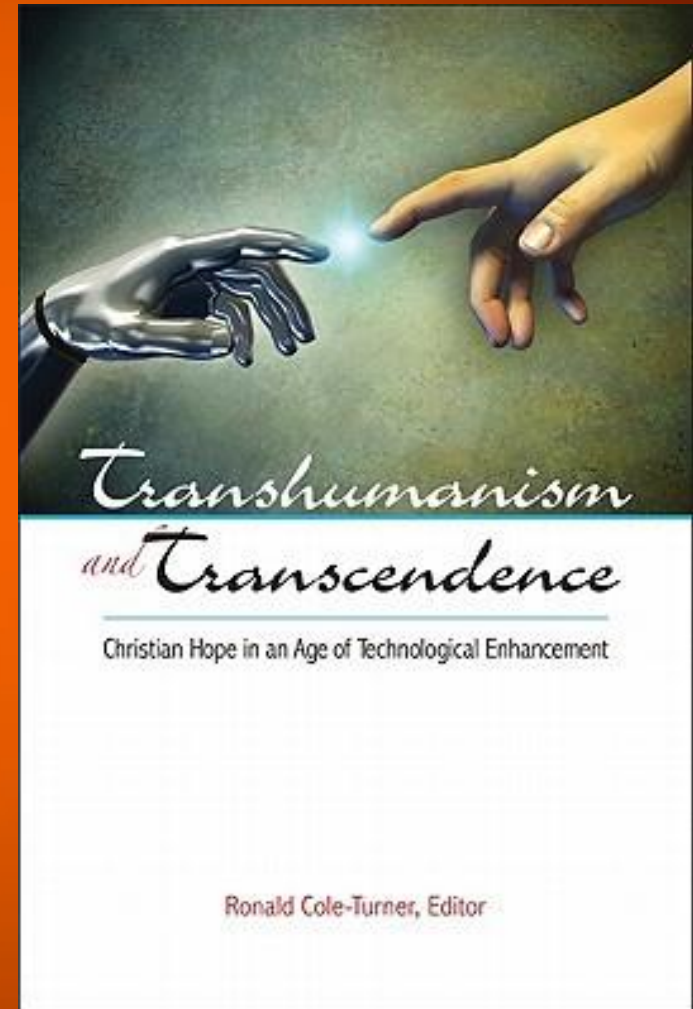
Potential Human Enhancements	Timeframe
Chemical supplements to promote socially desirable attitudes (e.g., cooperation) or promote behaviors that are healthy (e.g., discouraging overeating) or moral (e.g., reducing divorce).	Near-Term ~2020+
Genetic or biological modifications to improve physical or intellectual characteristics, such as one’s height or intelligence.	
Nano-machines for in-situ repair, replacement, or extension of body structures at the molecular, organ, or body system level, possibly including whole-body prosthetics and the elimination or reversal of natural aging processes.	
Artificial super-intelligence, resulting in low-cost computer systems that meet or exceed the human intellect. Neural implants—similar to today’s cochlear implants—could then allow direct interaction between brains and computers, either internal or external.	
Repair and reanimation of people preserved—whole body or brain only—through cryonics.	
Uploading or transfer of human minds into computer systems, potentially eliminating a subject’s problematic biological existence altogether.	Long-Term ~2045+



What divides Christians on transhumanism?

- Christianity and transhumanism share many important goals:
 - Both celebrate human creativity.
 - Both address the results of the fall:
 - Death: Gen 2:17 (before fall)
 - Toil & Pain: Gen 3:16–19 (after)
- Sharp differences arise over the nature and scope of human agency in seeking these goals.

Ref: Ronald Cole-Turner, ed. *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2011).



Are there limits on human creativity?

As an engineer, 2 Chron. 26 (KJV) seems relevant:

15: And he [Uzziah] made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.

16: But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

There are limits: technological progress comes with temptations to pride.

If there are limits, where can we find them?

Consider the categorical requirements of Micah 6:8 (NIV):

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

***So, will transhumanism promote biblical
justice, mercy, and humility?***

Justice

Transhumanism raises concerns about human rights:

“If we start transforming ourselves into something superior, what rights will these enhanced creatures claim, and what rights will they possess when compared to those left behind?”

Francis Fukuyama, *Foreign Policy*, No. 144 (Sep. - Oct., 2004), 42.

Yes, human rights are important, but what about *divine* justice?

The soul who sins shall die. Ezekiel 18:20a (ESV)

***Raw technological immortality violates the
Genesis 2:17 creation ordinance.***

Mercy

Transhumanism could reflect God's mercy by extending life and mitigating suffering in fulfillment of the second great commandment:

Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

Ezekiel 18:23 (ESV)

But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8 (ESV)

Technology provides us with the means to put a righteous love of mercy into action.

Humility

Transhumanism seeks God-like powers . In view of (1) mankind's fallen state and (2) God's identification with our bodies in the incarnation and resurrection, its scriptural basis is questionable.

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" —yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

James 4:13-16 (ESV)

Does transhumanism glorify God or man?

Transhumanism & Idolatry

- Transhumanism finds support in atheism and theism.
- Some transhumanists believe they will eventually “create God.” For them, transhumanism is an idolatrous religion.

“Once we saturate the matter and energy in the universe with intelligence, it will ‘wake up,’ be conscious, and sublimely intelligent. That’s about as close to God as I can imagine.”

Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (2005; repr. New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 375.

“2.2.3 Future technology will enable Terasem to encompass the universe, thus becoming omniscient, omnipotent and omnificent.
2.2.4 In this way we are building Terasem into God, with smart atoms and conscious electrons.”

Terasem Movement Inc., *The Truths of Terasem: A Transreligion for Technological Times* (Lincoln, VT: Terasem Quadrennial Convocation, 2012) 14.

Conclusions

- Transhumanism, insofar as it seeks relief from human suffering, cannot be lightly dismissed.
- However, the movement exhibits a strong tendency to human pride and idolatry in seeking immortality apart from God's grace.
- Christians must always proclaim that men find their ultimate salvation through Christ alone.