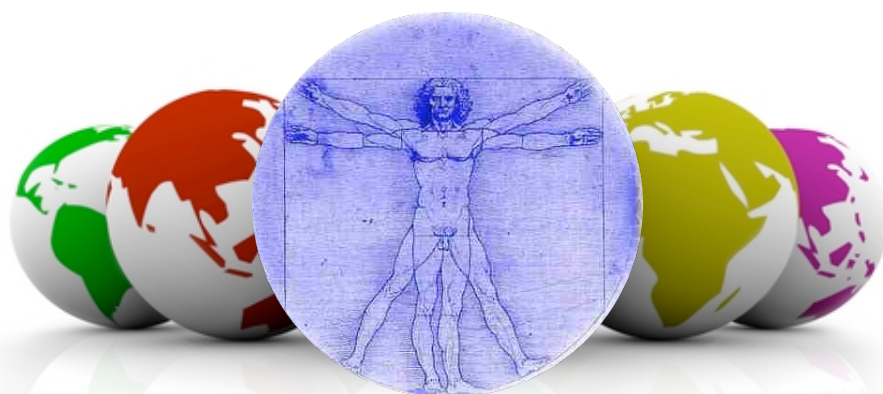


Forcing Change



The Doctrine of Man: A Critique of Christian Transhumanism

By Cris D. Putnam (www.logosapologia.org)



NOTE: Cris has graciously supplied *Forcing Change* with his excellent essay on Christian Transhumanism.

Mr. Putnam is a researcher, writer, and lecturer on Christian apologetics. Only a few short weeks ago, Cris and Tom Horn released their co-authored book, *Petrus Romanus*, a detailed examination and critique of Roman Catholicism (available through Defender Publishing). Cris is also the man behind *Logos Apologia*, a Biblical apologetics blog-site (www.logosapologia.org).



Index:

Doctrine of Man, p. 1.

Transforming, p.16

Tell Me, p.21

Frame by Frame, p.23



Carl Teichrib,
Editor.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to address a few of the many theological implications surrounding transhumanism, especially in regard to its consistency with a Christian worldview. The topic is so broad that it can be best addressed paradigmatically by examining its foundational technologies and philosophies. This presentation will first give a brief summary of the topic and then a broad overview of the technologies involved. As the technologies are discussed a few specific criticisms will be raised and Christian responses offered. Then it will turn to theological matters.

First it will analyze the philosophical underpinnings of the movement and then interact specifically with the more visible proponents who attempt to reconcile it theologically with Christianity. The main points offered in defense of the thesis are that promoters of Christian transhumanism are driven by an unbiblical anthropology, a Pelegian view of sin, and a profound misunderstanding of the Christian life characteristic of theological liberalism.

The first point of analysis will be anthropology which naturally leads to one's position on the biblical creation account and original sin. The denial of scriptural authority on the issues of origins and sin results in an embrace of the naturalistic worldview and leads one open to ideas like Christian transhumanism. This will be revealed as initially hubris and potentially grave sin.

Finally, some suggestions will be offered as a Christian response. This paper will demonstrate that while there are some who claim to be Christian transhumanists, transhumanism is an anthropocentric worldview based on naturalistic presuppositions that is incompatible with orthodox biblical Christianity.

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Summary

Transhumanism is an aspiring international cultural crusade that promises to break through human biological limitations and radically redesign humanity. I contend that it meets the basic definition of a religion and worldview. Adherents to this worldview plan to extend lifespans, augment the senses, boost memory capacity, and generally use technology to enhance the human condition. It is tempting to write off transhumanism as the fantastical musings of a few eccentric gamers and sci-fi fans. However, these are not just kooks; rather they are professors from universities like Yale, MIT, and Oxford and they have a secular vision for the future, an alternative eschatology if you will. They want to conquer death and create a utopia by technological means. The Bible promises the same through Christ. These two visions are not compatible, and a cultural collision is inevitable.

The modern philosophy of transhumanism was first authored in 1990 by Max More in the essay "Transhumanism: Toward a Futurist Philosophy."

According to More, "Transhumanism is a class of philosophies that seek to guide us towards a posthuman condition."¹

More is openly anti-theistic, which will be addressed in the critical interaction section. Oxford philosopher Nick Bostrom has refined and toned down More's initially rather virulent position. Still, most transhumanists are atheists or agnostics, and the criticism that they are "playing God" does not trouble them.² Based on the premise that naturalistic evolution is true, transhumanism looks to shape the human species through the direct application of technology. However, this depends on a myriad of variables. We could end up with the six million dollar man or the Frankenstein monster. There is a quandary in the queries.

What does it mean to be a post human? What are the spiritual consequences? What about the soul? Can a Christian be a transhumanist? While these questions remain unanswered, there are those who attempt to merge Christianity with transhumanism. An answer to last question will be offered near the end of this paper.

The western Christian consensus has passed into history and we are living in a post Christian era. Secularism is becoming increasingly aggressive, finding its voice in the neo-atheist movement championed by Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennet, Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris. Their rhetoric of triumphant scientism is the zeitgeist of the Twenty First century. In large part, transhumanists share this devoted faith in science, yet the transhumanist worldview is more enigmatic.

There can be no doubt that scientific progress and technical advancements are now poised to radically transform humanity. It is moving at such a rapid pace that it is imperative for thoughtful Christians to offer a biblical perspective in the marketplace of ideas. While this is increasingly unpopular, we should not shrink back. This issue has enormous implications for theology.



Unfortunately, there has been very little written on transhumanism within conservative evangelical circles. There is a Mormon Transhumanist Association, which is hardly surprising in light of their polytheism and apotheosis doctrine.³ On the popular level, there are two websites authored by a Nuclear Operations Instructor, James Ledford, called Technical-Jesus.com and HyperEvolution.com, as well as a self-published book which promotes “Christian Transhumanism.”⁴ Paul Tillich is frequently cited in support.

Lately, transhumanism has found theological justification in the work of ELCA Lutheran theologians like Phillip Hefner, Ted Peters, and others. In fact, the Lutheran journal *Dialog* offered an entire issue on the subject in their winter 2005 edition.⁵ The mission of the Lutheran’s seems to be a well-intended, one of building a bridge between science and faith. They are welcomed in largely secular arenas and their work is being taken quite seriously. Unfortunately, with the exception of Thomas Horn, conservative Christian voices are not being heard, albeit they are likely not welcome.⁶

Bostrom, Hefner and Ledford argue that there is nothing wrong with a Christian adopting a transhumanist worldview. I disagree for reasons to be discussed in the critical interaction section of this paper. First, to understand that worldview, we must briefly survey the science and technology behind it.

Technology

Transhumanism is driven by the ambitious juggernaut of the modern scientific and technological revolution. The technologies undergirding transhumanism are all part of the biotech explosion and include genetics, neuropharmacology, robotics, cybernetics, artificial intelligence and nanotechnology. They are all interrelated and fueled by the ever increasing speed of data processing as per Moore’s law.

For the purpose of this discussion, we will examine them in a very limited way in two broad categories: the biological/genetic and the electro-mechanical computer technologies. Of these two, the first has received the most attention by Christian thinkers due to issues such as stem cell research, cloning, and the world wide infant holocaust. As a result, Christians do have a coherent position on the intrinsic value of all human life from conception to the aged. Hence, the basic position expressed by Francis Beckwith in the abortion debate is a good platform to start from.⁷ However, one of the major new challenges facing thinking Christians is our newly acquired ability to alter nature for our own ends through genetic engineering and biotechnology.

The discovery of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) by James Watson and Francis Crick in 1954 opened up the architecture of life to human intervention in a manner that was inconceivable prior. In 2003, the Human Genome Project produced a map of the complete human genome. Consequently, we are now fully capable of using genetic engineering to alter ourselves. The least controversial procedure is somatic cell gene therapy. It entails the injecting of healthy gene material into patients with diseases like Huntington’s.⁸

The second procedure is called germline therapy and involves rearranging defective genetic material in a way that it produces healthy genes. This technique increases the stakes in that it will pass the alterations down to one’s offspring.⁹ Thus, it follows that we could permanently alter the species with this technology. Current gene therapy is experimental

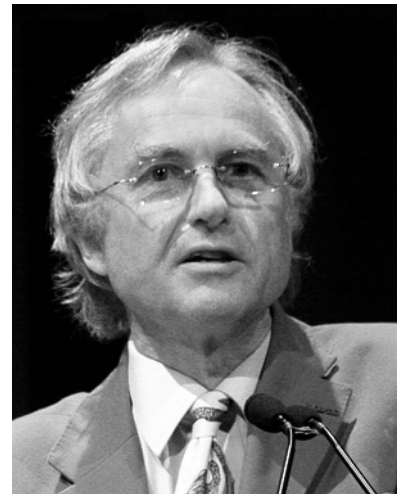
and the FDA is moving with caution, as these techniques are now being developed for healing purposes.¹⁰ However, it is not difficult to imagine their use by the military, social engineers and utopian transhumanists.

Genetic enhancement therapy is something Christians should oppose. It entails introducing novel genetic material simply to improve one's abilities. Transhumanists envision altering or even adding DNA from other species into the human code to create "Human Plus" - essentially, a human GMO (Genetically Modified Organism).¹¹

An instructive analogy is to consider the difference between diabetics using insulin and an athlete using anabolic steroids. There is a clear and normative moral distinction, and it is one that should form the Christian consensus. Even on a secular basis, enhancement also poses higher risk. To correct a faulty gene with what already should be there presents low risk to the patient, but to add something new could adversely affect numerous related biochemical pathways.¹² Thus, it is vitally important to distinguish therapeutic procedures from enhancement. Finally, a biblical ethic discourages enhancement because Christians are called to model Christ in self-denial and humility (Lk 9:23; Mat 23:12; Rom 12:1, 12:16).

The most controversial category is eugenic engineering which involves directing traits to improve a specific gene pool.¹³ This brings to mind Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (published in 1932) and C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man* (published in 1947), both prescient yet disturbing forecasts of our current moral dilemmas. While eugenic engineering may seem prohibitively unsavory, the idea is currently being discussed amongst the intelligentsia. In a recent book discussing dangerous ideas, evolutionary biologist and outspoken atheist, Richard Dawkins (pictured on right), laments that prior to Hitler, scientists in the 1920s and 1930s had no qualms with the idea of designer babies. He then pondered:

"I wonder whether, some 60 years after Hitler's death, we might at least venture to ask what the moral difference is between breeding for musical ability and forcing a child to take music lessons. Or why it is acceptable to train fast runners and high jumpers but not to breed them."¹⁴



Apart from the image of God in all people (Gen 1:26-27), there are no grounds to resist the momentum toward social engineering. After all, the current widespread use of prenatal genetic screening is a private form of it. Perhaps Huxley's world of compulsory test tube breeding is in our not too distant future? The uncomfortable truth is that today we can do it.

The American philosopher, political economist and author, Francis Fukuyama, agrees. He contends that "the most significant threat posed by contemporary biotechnology is the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a 'posthuman' stage of history."¹⁵

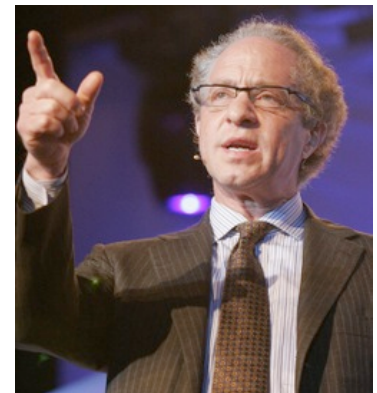
Unfortunately, today there are competing pathways to that end. Other disturbing trends include human cloning, the production of human/animal chimeras and psychoactive drug

use. Now that human cloning is possible, it has been purposed to employ fetal tissue harvested from cloned or genetically engineered fetuses in gene therapy, or even for use as spare parts.¹⁶ In 2007, scientists at the University Of Nevada School Of Medicine created a sheep that has 15% human cells and 85% sheep cells.¹⁷ In addition, neuropharmacology is already being widely used to control behavior and emotions. While there are legitimate uses, psychotropic drugs like Ritalin are being handed out to school children as a matter of routine. Prozac and its relatives are being taken by 28 million Americans, or ten percent of the population.¹⁸ This seems to be heading toward what transhumanists optimistically envision as a biochemically induced utopia:

“Technologies such as brain-computer interfaces and neuropharmacology could amplify human intelligence, increase emotional well-being, improve our capacity for steady commitment to life projects or a loved one, and even multiply the range and richness of possible emotions.”¹⁹

In light of twentieth century history, this seems naïve at best. The secular world view, rooted in material reductionism and genetic determinism, leaves little room for the inherent dignity of all human life. Ready or not, we have already entered the brave new world.

In 1965, Intel co-founder Gordon E. Moore wrote a paper describing a trend of increasing circuit speed that has come to be called Moore's law. It describes the persistent propensity for computing power to double every two years. This pattern has held true and is, in fact, still considered a conservative predictor of future growth. Based on this, MIT computer scientist, futurist, and author Ray Kurzweil (pictured on right) predicts what has come to be termed the “singularity.” This represents a point in time when artificial intelligence surpasses human abilities and begins to design new technologies on its own.²⁰ At this time, he predicts technological growth will go vertical on the exponential curve.



Kurzweil also envisions the next step in human evolution as the union of human and machine. It really is not as fantastic as it seems. Already, cochlear implants are hard wired to the brain in order to restore hearing. Brain-machine interfaces are being used to “assist paralyzed patients by enabling them to operate machines with recordings of their own neural activity.”²¹ Today, similar technology is available for gaming as consumer electronics.²² It is real, burgeoning, and not going away. Kurzweil's optimistic enthusiasm for progress is exciting, and it is easy to understand the attraction it holds for technologists.

Kurzweil is undeniably one of the leading inventors of our time and has been called the “rightful heir to Thomas Edison.”²³ If one were to posit transhumanism a religion, Kurzweil's books, *The Age of Spiritual Machines* and *The Singularity is Near*, would likely be considered its sacred texts. Kurzweil builds his case on the naturalistic evolutionary paradigm, devoting a large section of *The Age of Spiritual Machines* to framing transhumanism as an inevitable evolutionary consequence.

The Darwinian paradigm is a foundational presupposition in Kurzweil's conception, as he purposes computer algorithms that explicitly model natural selection.²⁴ He argues that these and other heuristics derived by reverse engineering the human brain, combined with neural net technology, promise the rapid development of sentient artificial intelligence.²⁵ Therefore, he predicts that computers will achieve the memory capacity and computing speed of the human brain by 2020.

Furthermore, Kurzweil predicts that by the year 2029 the \$1,000 computer will be one thousand times more powerful than the human brain, and that computer implants designed for direct connection to the brain will be widely available.²⁶ As far as artificial intelligence goes, he predicts by 2029: "Machines claim to be conscious and to have as wide an array of emotional and spiritual experiences as their human progenitors, and these claims are largely accepted."²⁷

He also predicts that, eventually, human consciousness will be uploaded to computers, introducing immortality. The claim is this: By 2099, machines and humans will merge to the point that there will be no distinction between human and machine, or between real and virtual, thus eliminating all war, hunger, poverty, death and disease.²⁸ Does this promise sound somewhat familiar (Rev 21:4)?



Theological Critique

The transhumanist eschatology of consciousness uploading is littered with unfounded assumptions. They simply deny the soul *a priori*, viewing consciousness as purely an epiphenomenon. Our bodies are considered simple hardware, a biological prosthesis, which we can re-engineer and improve. They see the essential nature of our being as information patterns and data stored in the brain.²⁹

Accordingly, transhumanists envision immortality via uploading themselves onto computers in the form of their brain patterns. Kurzweil calls it "patternism."³⁰ ELCA Lutheran theologian, Ted Peters, has addressed this subject, observing that, "It assumes that human intelligence and human personhood can become disembodied."³¹

This creates an interesting dissonance with the typical naturalist mind-body identity paradigm. In typical liberal theological language, Peters argues that the term soul is a

“symbolic place holder to identify the dimension of who we are that connects with God.”³² This is problematic in light of scripture (Mat 10:28; Rev 6:9,20:4). However, to his credit, he concludes that the Christian conception of the soul is nothing like the transhumanist’s disembodied patterns of brain activity.

According to Kurzweil, human immortality can be obtained by uploading. As a defeater to patternism, philosopher Derek Parfit has composed a clever thought experiment.³³ The idea is that you are an astronaut going on a mission to a distant planet via a new form of teleportation. To accomplish this, your brain pattern and body type will be uploaded and sent to the planet to be reconstructed from matter precisely engineered from your scan. In the process, your body on earth will be destroyed, but this is not concerning because you will soon be in your new body. Should you go? In Kurzweil’s paradigm it should work, but in reality it does not. And it’s not so much a matter of metaphysics as logic: the law of non-contradiction will not allow it.

Consider a scenario where you are not destroyed on earth, yet the upload is successful. Obviously, the person on the other planet is not you. Since this person is clearly not you in this case, it follows that it is also not you if you were destroyed. Hence, no matter how hard transhumanists might wish it were so, uploading will not defeat death (Heb 9:27). That belongs to Christ alone (Rev 20:14).

Fantasies of immortality aside, one marvels, wondering exactly what Kurzweil means by a machine having a “spiritual experience.” It gets weirder, and this is where it intersects with theological liberalism. In *The Singularity is Near*, he expresses his belief in the need for a new religion. He offers, “A principal role of religion has been to rationalize death, since up until just now there was little else constructive we could do about it.”³⁴

He states that this new religion will “keep two principles: one from traditional religion and one from secular arts and sciences - from traditional religion, the respect for human consciousness,” and from the secular world “the importance of knowledge.”³⁵ This is not any different than traditional secular humanism. So we must ask, “where does God fit into this new religion?” Kurzweil ambitiously resolves, “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.”

In fact, it sounds strangely similar to liberal theologian Paul Tillich’s pantheistic conception of God as the “power of all being.”³⁶ Yet in Kurzweil’s mind, man is engaged in building God which is effectively the antithesis of Genesis 1:26. Indeed, it is exactly backwards: God created in man’s image.

In his early articulation, Max More made no bones about wanting to displace conventional religion. Like Dawkins, he views religion as an obscurant fiction and believes science has discredited the biblical worldview. Accordingly, he argues that transhumanism will supplant traditional religion. He boasts, “The growth of humanism over the decades has begun this job, but now it is time to utilize the more inclusive and memetically attractive option of transhumanism.”³⁷

Conventional secular humanism qualifies as a worldview in the sense that it provides a full set of ideas through which its adherents view reality. Following this line of thought, it is also a religion on the basis that it attempts to answer the same set of fundamental ques-

tions about theology, metaphysics, identity, origins, destiny and morality as other religions.³⁸ In fact, the high courts have ruled in *James J. Kaufman vs. Gary R. MacCaughtry* that secular humanism is a religion.³⁹ In light of that status, it seems fair to argue that transhumanism simply defines its eschatology. Thus, it is vitally important to note the abject failure of secular humanism so far. Unparalleled scientific progress has not delivered a secular utopia, rather, it has led to a human nightmare. The twentieth century world total is 262,000,000 murdered by government and largely *outside of war* in the pursuit of the secular humanist's political ideal of Marxism.⁴⁰

Since the initial vehemently secular expression by More, transhumanist philosophy has been polished by Oxford philosopher Nick Bostrom. While Bostrom denies that it is a religion, he concedes that, "transhumanism might serve a few of the same functions that people have traditionally sought in religion."⁴¹ He states succinctly that transhumanism is a naturalistic outlook, and in a decidedly superior tone offers that, "transhumanists prefer to derive their understanding of the world from rational modes of inquiry, especially the scientific method."⁴² If one is a Christian in any meaningful sense, this is not acceptable. In truth, we have what the secular world does not have: infallible and timeless principles revealed from the very author of life (2 Tim 3:16). However, it is more than a matter of simple proof texting curt responses. Humans are God's highest creation on earth and are commanded to be good stewards of the earth and its resources, and to uphold human life, for we are uniquely fashioned. Thus, we have a mandate to engage in some of the technologies discussed, but with the explicit caveat of when it is exclusively directed toward the healing aspect of medicine.

Accordingly, transhumanism is finding some theological support in the "created co-creator" paradigm of ELCA theologian Philip Hefner.

Hefner has become quite popular in transhumanist circles authoring articles like "The Created Co-Creator Meets Cyborg" and "The Animal that Aspires to Be an Angel: The Challenge of Transhumanism." Epistemic of the overemphasis of God's immanence in theological liberalism, his idea assumes that human beings emerged as purposeful free agents from a natural evolutionary process and that human nature is shaped by both a genetic and cultural heritage.⁴³ Finally, man is God's instrument for fulfilling his purposes in creation.⁴⁴ This theological construct has been articulated by him in this way:

"Human beings are God's created co-creators whose purpose is to be the agency, acting in freedom, to birth the future that is most wholesome for the nature that has birthed us - the nature that is not only our own genetic heritage, but also the entire human community and the evolutionary and ecological reality in which and to which we belong. Exercising this agency is said to be God's will for humans." (Hefner 1993, 26)

This view has been criticized for diminishing human exceptionalism with its embrace of naturalistic evolution, while simultaneously presuming to elevate humans to the same level as God.⁴⁵ Hefner's liberal theology is derived from his low view of special revelation.

Furthermore, Hefner interprets the Genesis creation account as primordial mythology using symbol and metaphor for man's evolutionary past.⁴⁶ He quotes Tillich frequently in his treatise on the fall. For example, "Before sin is an act, it is a state."⁴⁷ This is in reference to

the idea that there was no actual space-time fall of man, rather “the fall” symbolically represents the inevitable tension between cultural ideal and primordial instinct that ensued as man evolved from his lowly origin. In fact, Hefner dismisses the traditional biblical understanding as obsolete:

“Furthermore, certain traditional understandings are seriously challenged, including the necessity for simply rejecting some historically popular insights. Notions of (1) the “first pair,” (2) concepts of the Fall that insist upon some primordial act by early humans that altered subsequent human nature, and (3) certain forms of aetiological interpretation are among the elements that must be looked upon with great skepticism.” (Hefner 1993, 98)

This is highly problematic because it is clear from scripture that Jesus believed in a first pair (Mat 19:4). Moreover, this view does not qualify as theistic evolution in a meaningful Christian sense. As Millard Erickson expresses it, “With respect to the biblical data, theistic evolution often holds to an actual primal pair, Adam and Eve.”⁴⁸ In respect to his complete rejection of Genesis’ historicity, Hefner’s view seems more in line with deistic evolution. For an alleged evangelical theologian, his near scientism is disturbing.

The major flaw in this line of thinking is that it completely undermines the basis for the Gospel message. The Apostle Paul proclaims, “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men” (Ro 5:18).

Thus in Paul’s reckoning, the denial of an original sin effectively denies the atonement of the cross. Furthermore, if sin is merely a vestigial memory then the cure cannot be a restoration via sanctification in Christ (Rom 6:22). The cure for sin necessarily becomes the elimination of the left-over animal instincts. Erickson argues, “This conception of the cure for sin embraces the optimistic belief that the evolutionary process is carrying the human race in the right direction.”⁴⁹ While this idea coheres nicely with transhumanist thought, Jesus taught that “many will fall away,” “lawlessness will be increased,” and that “the love of many will grow cold” at the time world evangelization is completed (Matt 24:10-14). Moreover, scripture supports the fact that increasing apostasy and wickedness will take place (2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 4:3; 2 Pet. 3:3). Finally, consider that Jesus “needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man” (Jn 2:25).



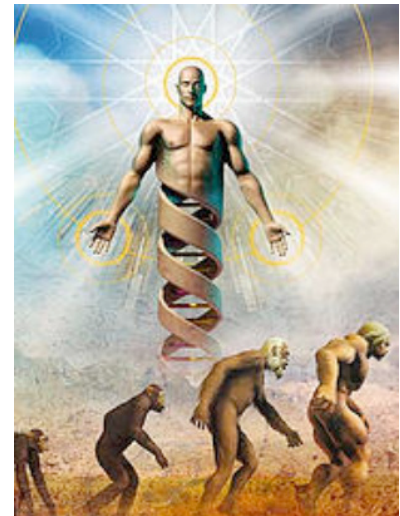
The fact that their theology is antithetical to scripture does not seem to bother liberal theologians like Paul Tillich (pictured on left) and Philip Hefner. The embrace of Darwinism and higher criticism over creation and inerrancy renders one more vulnerable to the latest postmodern trends. In his article “The Animal that Aspires to be an Angel: The Challenge of Transhumanism,” Hefner intentionally blurs the distinction between healing and enhancement, often equivocating transhumanism with medicine. To his credit, Hefner does warn that while we are created to push the envelope, “we are not God; we are finite and sinful.”⁵⁰ However, one must keep in mind his view of sin is not the orthodox Christian one. While he urges caution, it effectively amounts to hedging his bets. The prohibition of

murder in Genesis 9:6 is based on the fact that humanity was created in God's image. It seems reasonable, then, to extend that to include posthuman alteration. But Hefner contends that to object to transhumanism on the grounds of the *imago Dei* imposes an unwarranted normative anthropology by arguing:

“Other thinkers argue that there are inviolable qualities, chiefly, human inviolable qualities, chiefly, human dignity, which are also threatened by biotechnology. The difficulty with such thinking is that it imposes a static quality to nature that does not in fact conform to what we know about nature's dynamic character.” (Hefner 2009, 166)

This reads like he's arguing that the evolutionary mandate trumps the idea that human dignity is fixed. It seems that he views transhumanism as the inevitable next step in human evolution. That transhumanism is a natural consequence of man's status as a co-creator with God. In other words, it is deistic evolution via human agency. In his theological conclusions he writes, “TH is not first of all a matter of morality. Our existence as created co-creators who face the possibilities of TH is profoundly an expression of our human nature.”⁵¹

He also contends that, “to discredit our God-given nature is itself a rebellion against God.”⁵² In other words, we have a God given mandate to transhumanism. It is not difficult to see why Hefner's created co-creator is a pillar in the thought of so called “Christian” transhumanists.



While not nearly as sophisticated as Hefner, Ledford's popular websites also uses the work of Tillich to justify Christian transhumanism. Specifically an idea Tillich called the “profound doctrine of transcendent humanism,” which is Tillich's idea that “Adam is fulfilled in Christ.”⁵³ As Tillich explains: “this means that Christ is the essential man, the man Adam was to become but did not actually become.”⁵⁴

This is not in line with the orthodox Christology which places Christ as the eternal second person of the trinity. It is also logically incoherent because Adam was created through Christ (Jn 1:3). Ledford's reliance on Tillich is not surprising. Tillich's over emphasis of God's immanence has been criticized as amounting to panentheism, and it seems disturbingly similar to Kurzweil's conception.⁵⁵ Ledford's webpages read like a syncretism of New Age mysticism, Christianity, and transhumanist ideology. Notable examples include, “Heaven allows Hyper-Evolution,” and clichés like, “You can do no wrong when the spirit of love, the Holy Spirit, is with you.”⁵⁶

Ledford really makes no effort at scriptural coherence, offering platitudes like, “The path to God is wide as we are different. And, the path to God converges on his calling.”⁵⁷ Of course this stands in direct contradiction to Jesus who said, “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many” (Mat 7:13). Ledford is no theologian, and his work offers no real challenge to

anyone with a basic understanding of Christian doctrine. Unfortunately, less sophisticated seekers are bound to be deceived by it.

As far as the question, "Can a Christian be a transhumanist" - that reveals a wayward heart condition. Transhumanism is less a sin as it is hubris. The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* makes the distinction that:

"Whereas hubris signifies the attempt to transcend the limitations appointed by fate, sin refers to an unwillingness to break out of our narrow limitations in obedience to the vision of faith. While hubris connotes immoderation, sin consists in misplaced allegiance. Hubris is trying to be superhuman; sin is becoming inhuman. Hubris means rising to the level of the gods; sin means trying to displace God or living as if there were no God." (Bloesch 2001, 1104)

Based on this, transhumanism is hubris of the highest order while becoming post-human is a sin. The "obedience to the vision of faith" spoken of above is not Tillich's or Hefner's but Paul's. The Apostle exhorted the Colossians to "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience," (Col 3:12). Tillich, Hefner and Ledford all demonstrate a gross misunderstanding of the human condition. Humans are both finite and sinful. We lack the wisdom and moral purity necessary to decide matters of human "perfection." Therefore, it is immoral and sinful to use such technologies to enhance or evolve humanity. Christians must take an informed stand on transhumanism, understanding both the appropriate use of technology and the potential dangers it presents. Thus, a theology of healing as opposed to enhancement must be developed in accordance with sound biblical guidelines.

Transhumanism is a new anti-Christian religion in the making. Globalism is leading to a "technocracy" or rule by the elite.⁵⁸ When transhuman enhancement becomes widely available, and it likely will soon, only the elite will be able to afford it. This will create new a caste system. Furthermore, the potential within these technologies for mind manipulation opens the door for an Orwellian totalitarianism. Francis Schaeffer and C.S. Lewis issued prescient warnings to the Christian community that this was coming. Schaeffer wrote back in 1976,

"As we consider the coming of an elite, an authoritarian state, to fill the vacuum left by the loss of Christian principles, we must not think naively of the models of Stalin and Hitler. We must think rather of a *manipulative* authoritarian government. Modern governments have forms of manipulation at their disposal which the world has never known before." (Schaeffer 1976, 228)

Indeed they do. A major funder of transhumanist research is the National Science Foundation,⁵⁹ and the military applications are fearsome. Already we see this trend of manipulation in our corporate controlled media and increasingly globalist politics. Considering Kurzweil's prediction that there will be cerebrally interfaced network by 2029 [Editor's Note: This technology is already fast-tracking, and examples of it may be ready before 2029], the

potential for centralized control gets more disturbing. Quite astonishingly, Ledford predicts that "The Antichrist will likely emerge but so will Christ. This becomes a sign that Christian Transhumanism is the way."⁶⁰

While I disagree with the latter, there may be some truth to the former.

Conclusion

In the public arena, it is becoming increasingly difficult to get a fair hearing for Christian values while remaining true to scripture. We are not convincing the public on abortion, and the President recently issued an executive order that expanded embryonic stem cell research.

While those issues are being battled in court, as this research has demonstrated there are a myriad of even more disturbing technologies that are largely unheard of by the general public. The history of science is not silent on one point: transhumanism will not wait for Christians to catch up. While we have a duty to educate ourselves to address highly technical issues with scriptural principles, it is doubtful much can be done other than serious prayer. Historically, the military-industrial complex has never been transparent about their projects. Furthermore, there is nothing to stop ambitious scientists from simply moving to countries like China to work on their more controversial ideas. It is going to happen. While many will want to participate, Christians should take a firm stand against enhancement. Transhumanism is going to be an issue that divides.

This paper offered a brief summary of the topic and a broad survey of the technologies involved. This was followed by critical analysis of transhumanist thought and its implications for theology. It was demonstrated that the philosophical underpinnings are atheistic and opposed to Christianity. Furthermore, the transhumanist hope for immortality via uploading was revealed to be logically incoherent. Particular attention was given to those who attempt to reconcile Christianity with transhumanist ideas. Criticism was offered that their theology is based on a naturalistic anthropology, denial of original sin, denial of biblical creation and an overemphasis on God's immanence.

In the end, we must trust in the Lord to handle man's extreme hubris and sin. We have nothing to fear. After all, we have already read the ending (Rev 21-22). **FC**

Cris Putnam's apologetics website is www.logosapologia.org

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Transforming to the Transhuman

By Carl Teichrib (www.forcingchange.org)

“Technocracy envisages another form of domestication, a form in which man may become more than man.”

- Harold Loeb (1933).¹

“This is not the time, then, to abandon notions of progress, improvement or, indeed, human perfectibility. The simple fact is that man is able, and now as never before, to lift himself by his own bootstraps.”

- B.F. Skinner (1955-56).²

“The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself...”

- Julian Huxley (1957).³

In the late 1950s, Loren Eiseley wrote about his experience of walking through the “Hall of Man,” an exhibit at a nationally recognized museum. Eiseley was no stranger to such places. As chairman of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania and “curator of Early Man in the University Museum,” this was his professional environment. However, a couple of things caught his attention during this particular tour.

First, he noted that the Hall of Man exhibition ended with a question mark. After displaying the evolutionary lineage from “a scarcely human thing” to the modern era of science, the final display left the museum-goer hanging on a quandary. Professor Eiseley found himself agreeing with the statement being made; a question does face humanity. What will become of Man?

Second, he noted that the entire evolutionary track as presented in the Hall of Man centered on energy and technology. In other words, humanity’s evolutionary rise was correlated to Man’s harnessing of energy and the material development this brings. The first example was “fire,” where the caption read in part, “Man begins his technological climb up the energy ladder.” By the time he reached the concluding display, the final source of power was “an atomic machine.” Professor Eiseley made a critical observation: that it’s upon this energy-technology scale that we base the condition of human advancement. However, “what man had dreamed in his relations with other men” - the social civilizing factor - was basically non-existent to the museum-goer.

Mr. Eiseley found this dichotomy troubling; a rift was evident between the “technological race for survival” and the “human tradition” - art, philosophy, ethics, values, social development, even religious and spiritual qualities. Of course, there are deeper rifts than this. Darwinistic evolution is itself seriously questioned and disbelieved by many religious and non-religious people. Conversely, it’s also accepted as gospel by individuals in both camps.

But what's the significance of this seemingly unimportant story of Professor Eiseley? Simply this; it opens up the long held assumption that energy and technology play a key role in the evolutionary process of humanity. As an evolutionist, Eiseley didn't argue this notion, he just wished the social component was represented, as he believing the values-aspect of human existence had been pushed aside by "dogmatic scientific naturalism." As he wrote in *The Saturday Evening Post*, "For man has never lived before in so great an age of exterior accomplishment, so tremendous a projection of himself into his machines, nor yet so disheartening a period in all that stands for the nobler aspects of the human dream."⁴ Nonetheless, the professor made an interesting observation: "Man is not completed - that is the secret of his paradoxical behavior. He is not made. He is, perhaps, about to be."⁵

And this brings us to transhumanism; Man is to be made *or changed* via technology. Humanity, it is believed, will experience an evolutionary jump through the work of his own hands. After all, development and evolution are accepted as joined in the cause of species change - particularly the human species.

History, on the other hand, demonstrates something different. Fire, animal domestication, metallurgy, the construction of pyramids (and other great structures), the science of navigation, shipbuilding, gun powder, the printing press, steam power, the telephone and computer, aviation and rocketry, atomic energy and nuclear science - in every technical development, large or small, including those so revolutionary that they sparked massive paradigm shifts in civilization, *Man has remained human*.

New Bottles for New Wine

The term "transhumanism" is not new. From a modernist point of view, the concept has been in play since Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin, pioneered the idea of eugenics; the application of science to human biology. It also has its roots in the perfectionist ideology of mystical orders and esoteric societies, such as Freemasonry and Theosophy (this will be explored in another edition of *Forcing Change*). Even socialism plays a part in the life-changing transformation, as explained by J. Ramsay MacDonald in his 1911 book, *The Socialist Movement*.

"...the Socialist method is the scientific method. It is the method of evolution applied to science. It assumes that society is fulfilling its past in evolving the more efficient forms of the future...

The Socialist method is the Darwinian method...

...the motivate force behind Socialism is not merely mechanical perfection and social economy, but life itself."⁶

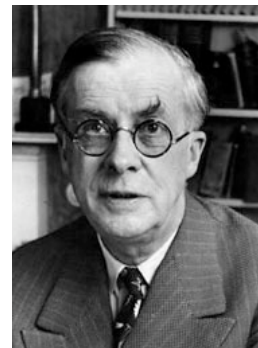
Socialism would thus give us an advanced world order for an evolved Man.

James J. Hughes, one of the most vocal advocates of modern transhumanism, provides historical links between socialism, Marxism, and the trans-human ideal in his fascinating essay, *The Politics of Transhumanism*.

“Marx and Engels convinced millions that the advance of technology was laying the groundwork not only for the creation of a new society, with different property relations, but also of new human beings reconnected to nature and themselves. The nineteenth and twentieth century Left, from social democrats to Communists, have been focused on industrial modernization, economic development and the promotion of science, reason and the idea of progress. Transhumanists and the revolutionary left also share the concept of a technologically-determined social revolution. Like the Singularity, Marxian revolution is a sudden, global, discontinuous social rupture, brought about by technological change, beyond which we cannot predict the form that society will take, and about which it is pointless to speculate.

Perhaps the most transhumanist of the early twentieth century socialists was H.G. Wells. Wells referred repeatedly to the attractive and horrific possibilities of post-human stages of evolution. He believed that new technologies of war would bring civilization to the brink, but expected that humanity would learn from the carnage and establish a world socialist government. Wells believed that the path to utopia was through technocracy, the rule of scientific experts, and as a consequence was at first quite admiring of Lenin’s Soviet Communism, who famously said ‘Communism is socialism plus electrification’.”⁷

With the above in mind, it’s interesting to note that the first time “transhumanism” was used as a term, at least in a way that stuck in the world of intellectuals (it had been used before in Theosophical circles), was in Julian Huxley’s 1957 book, *New Bottles for New Wine*. Huxley (picture on right), the first Director General of UNESCO, was a strong supporter of total world transformation along scientific lines. With that in mind, here are some selections from *New Bottles for New Wine*.



“As a result of a thousand million years of evolution, the universe is becoming conscious of itself, able to understand something of its past history and its possible future. This cosmic self-awareness is being realized in one tiny fragment of the universe - in a few of us human beings.” (p.13)

“It is as if man had been suddenly appointed managing director of the biggest business of all, the business of evolution - appointed without being asked if he wanted it, and without proper warning and preparation. What is more, he can’t refuse the job. Whether he wants to or not, whether he is conscious of what he is

doing or not, he is in point of fact determining the future direction of evolution on this earth. That is his inescapable destiny, and the sooner he realizes it and starts believing in it, the better for all concerned.

What the job really boils down to is this - the fullest realization of man's possibilities, whether by the individual, by the community, or by the species in its processional adventure along the corridors of time." (pp.13-14)

"The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself - not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety, as humanity. We need a name for this new belief. Perhaps transhumanism will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature.

'I believe in transhumanism': once there are enough people who can truly say that, the human species will be on the threshold of a new kind of existence, as different from ours as ours is from that of Peking man. It will at last be consciously fulfilling its real destiny." (p.17).⁸

Although Huxley is credited with coining the term, he wasn't providing an original thought. Others before him, stretching back to Galton, Friedrich Nietzsche, Benjamin Kidd, and H.G. Wells had offered variations on the theme. The core remained: global transformation. And Huxley's peers likewise envisioned a similar shift; Arthur C. Clark, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Stuart Chase, and Julian's brother Aldous Huxley, all pushed for planetary evolution and mass social change. Only a few years earlier, the mystical Jesuit priest, Teilhard de Chardin, had postulated that "some sort of Trans-Human" existence would culminate through evolutionary forces and the "fruit of socialisation."⁹

In related writings, Chardin (pictured on right) added more pieces to the transformational puzzle; world political and social harmonization, spiritual evolution, the rise of the Noosphere - a global consciousness that emerges through Man's collective processes - planetary convergence, and technical advances that bring humanity together. All will be part of the great shift.



"What we see taking place in the world today is not merely the multiplication of *men* but the continued shaping of *Man*," explained Chardin. "In one form or another something ultra-human is being born which, through the direct or indirect effect of socialisation, cannot fail to make its appearance in the near future."¹⁰ And what Chardin called the Ultra-Human - mankind in complete understanding and unity - once fully blossomed, would evolve into something more, the Trans-Human. Chardin's mystical worldview focussed on an evolutionary collectivism and harmonization with the cosmos.

Although Julian Huxley wasn't so mystically oriented, he too took a big picture approach. A science-based world government was necessary, he believed, as was a "socially-grounded humanist religion."¹¹ His 1947 book, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Philosophy*, detailed the social, philosophical, and political goals that UNESCO would need in order to witness a global shift. Essentially, what works for UNESCO would work for the world. And while he didn't use the term "transhumanism" in this book, the larger foundation of social evolution was being laid.

- "...the general philosophy of UNESCO should, it seems, be a scientific world humanism, global in extent and evolutionary in background." (p.8).
- "Our first task must be to clarify the notion of desirable and undesirable direction of evolution, for on this will depend our attitude to human progress..." (p.8).
- "...the struggle for existence that underlies natural selection is increasingly replaced by conscious selection, a struggle between ideas and values in consciousness. Through these new agencies, the possible rate of evolution is now once more enormously speeded up." (p.9).
- "Evolution in the human sector consists mainly of changes in the form of society, in tools and machines, in new ways of utilising the old innate potentialities..." Huxley then added that a further improvement of man's mental powers could be achieved "by deliberate eugenic measures," but that now "it is in social organisation, in machines, and in ideas that human evolution is mostly made manifest." (pp.9-10).
- "From the evolutionary point of view, the destiny of man may be summed up very simply: it is to realise the maximum progress in the minimum time... The analysis of evolutionary progress gives us certain criteria for judging the rightness or wrongness of our aims and activities... Thus, the application of medical science may increase the number of human beings in a given area but lower their quality or their opportunities for enjoyment of life: and if so, in the light of our basic criterion of evolutionary direction, it is wrong." (p.12).
- "In general, UNESCO must constantly be testing its policies against the touchstone of evolutionary progress. A central conflict of our times is that between nationalism and internationalism, between the concept of many national sovereignties and one world sovereignty... the more united man's tradition becomes, the more rapid will be the possibility of progress: several separate or competing or even mutually hostile pools of tradition cannot possibly be so efficient as a single pool common to mankind... the best and only certain way of securing this will be through political unification.... The moral for UNESCO is clear... It must envisage some form of world political unity, whether through a single world government or otherwise, as the only certain means for avoiding war... in its educational programme it [UNESCO] can stress the ultimate need for world political unity and familiarise all peoples with the implications of the transfer of full sovereignty from separate nations to a world world organisation." (p.13).¹²

Everything Huxley proposed centered on an evolutionary goal. In *New Bottles for New Wine* he outlined a few of the obstacles to this ultimate destiny.

“Evolutionary humanism has the further implication that man is at one and the same time the only agent for realizing life’s further progress, and also the main obstacle in the path of its realization... Man has learnt in large measure to understand, control and utilize the forces of external nature: he must now learn to understand, control and utilize the forces of his own nature. This applies as much to the blind urge to reproduce as to personal greed or desire for power, as much to arrogance and fanaticism, whether nationalist or religious, as to sadism or self-indulgence.”¹³

Eugenics and population control would fix the “blind urge to reproduce,” socialism would conquer “personal greed,” a world organization would remedy the problem of arrogant nationalism, and an evolutionary spirituality - one that married lofty feelings with science - would take care of the religious roadblock. Once unshackled from these negative tendencies, Man would be free to ascend. As Huxley penned; ‘I believe in transhumanism’: once there are enough people who can truly say that, the human species will be on the threshold of a new kind of existence.”¹⁴

Compared to the era of Huxley, Chardin, and Professor Eiseley, today’s trans-human movement draws from a vastly expanded technological field; genetic sciences, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence and ro-

Tell Me What is True: A Controversial Talk

On November 5, 1981, Dr. Colin Patterson, a senior paleontologist at the British Natural History Museum, gave a talk to a group of experts at the American Museum of Natural History. Here is an excerpt from his controversial speech as re-published in Jeremy Rifkin’s book, *Algeny* (Rifkin’s book was making the point for a new view of evolution).

“Last year I had a sudden realization. For over twenty years I had through I was working on evolution in some way. One morning I woke up and something had happened in the night; and it struck me that I had been working on this stuff for twenty years and there was not one thing I knew about it. That’s quiet a shock, to learn that one can be misled so long... So for the last few weeks I’ve tried putting a simple question to various people and groups of people... Can you tell me anything you know about evolution, any one thing, any one thing that is true?... All I got... was silence...

The absence of answers seems to suggest that... evolution does not convey any knowledge, or, if so, I haven’t yet heard it... I think many people in this room would acknowledge that during the last few years, if you had thought about it at all, you would have experienced a shift from evolution as knowledge to evolution as faith. I know that it’s true of me and I think it is true of a good many of you here... Evolution not only conveys no knowledge but seems somehow to convey antiknowledge.”

- As quoted by Jeremy Rifkin in his book, *Algeny* (The Viking Press, 1983), p.113.

botics, virtual reality and mind-computer interfacing. Eiseley's museum walk from fire to atomic power seems quaint. However, the core philosophy remains; Man, evolving through technology, must take charge of his own destiny. Thus the old world order, with its antiquated methods and narrow-minded truth-claims, will be pushed under as the evolution of technology ushers in the new world order; with new social norms, new political contexts, and new standards for religion.

Today, when you scratch past the surface of our hubristic techno-talk - the quest for a transhuman reality - it's quickly apparent that what is waiting to emerge isn't just a "New Man," but a whole new society. **FC**

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Frame-by-Frame: Trans-human Themes in Film

By Carl Teichrib (www.forcingchange.org)

Popular culture is steeped in transhuman and post-human themes, and this is particularly evident in the movie industry, with the leading genre being science fiction. In reviewing a number of movies containing transhuman elements, it must be noted that a mix of positive and negative images arise. Some, such as *Avatar*, present the viewer with a world of wonder. Others send mixed signals, such as *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*, where the hero and villain are both cyborgs - repulsion is evident on one hand, and on the other side there is an unmistakable human bond with the machine. Some movies package the meme as a warning; look at how dangerous this "brave new world" might be. Others present it as a message of openness, tolerance, and social acceptance, such as the movie, *Edward Scissorhands*.

In most film examples, if not all, significant questions arise, either in the background or upfront: Can Man become more than human? What are the limits of physical and/or cognitive enhancement? How do we define sentient existence? Will Man's nature change; can it be changed; and what should the goals of change be? How is humanity defined?

Here is a small sampling of films that touch on the trans-human/post-human subject. Themes in these flicks may include one or more of the following: human evolutionary development, sentient artificial intelligence, virtual realities and simulated worlds, genetic enhancement, human-machine hybrids/human-machine bonding, transformation through chemical augmentation, cloning, longevity, hive networking/global mind links, questions regarding human reality and what it means to "be human," etc.

Note: This list is far from exhaustive.

Avatar (2009) – from beginning to end this movie is loaded with transhuman themes, including mind/conscious interfacing and networking, human transcendence, future human evolution, cybernetics, mind-biological uploading, and an "evolved spirituality" – an advanced paganism that introduces a higher-order "nature-intelligence" that can be accessed via a physical, mind-nature linkup.

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) – sentient artificial intelligence, human evolution.

Gattaca (1997) – genetic enhancement.



The Matrix (trilogy: 1999, 2003) – mind-machine interfacing, sentient artificial intelligence, chemical augmentation.

I-Robot (2004) – sentient artificial intelligence.

Terminator (series: 1984, 1991, 2003, 2009) – sentient artificial intelligence, human-machine bonding (and human-machine dissonance).

Splice (2009) – genetic modification.

TRON: Legacy (2010) – virtual reality and simulated worlds.

Star Trek (series: 1979-2009) – the Star Trek franchise contains a smorgasbord of transhuman themes; cloning, cyborg existence and sentient artificial intelligence, virtual worlds, hive networking, etc.

Virtuosity (1995) – sentient artificial intelligence, virtual realities and simulated worlds.

Blade Runner (1982) – genetic-machine modification, longevity, consciousness and the meaning of humanity are also questions that derive from the movie.

Surrogates (2009) – virtual reality and simulated worlds.

Universal Soldier (series: 1992, 1999, 2009) – cryogenics, genetic enhancement, mind programming,

Bicentennial Man (1999) – sentient artificial intelligence, human-machine emotional bonding.

X-Men (series: 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2011) – human evolutionary development.

Johnny Mnemonic (1995) – mind-computer interfacing, memory uploading, virtual reality.

The Sixth Day (2000) – cloning.

Sleep Dealer (2009) – virtual reality and simulated worlds, mind-machine interfacing, hive network existence.

Edward Scissorhands (1990) – human-machine bonding, transcending normal human reality and accepting abnormal existences.

The Island (2005) – cloning, longevity.

Strange Days (1995) – Virtual reality and computer interfacing.



Replicant (2001) – cloning.

The Lawnmower Man (1992) – virtual reality, evolution and enhancement through simulated worlds.

Equilibrium (2002) – individual/social modification via chemical agents. This movie isn't transhuman in a narrow sense, however, the theme of chemically altering individuals in order to create a new world society does pose thematic quandaries regarding the role of individual autonomy versus social outcomes, particularly through the use of technology – chemical modifiers and surveillance.

Natural City (2003) – mind-computer interfacing, blurring the lines of human reality and sentient artificial existence, cyborg and human-machine bonding. **FC**

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