

## PART 7

### CONCLUSION

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Transhumanism

#### INTRODUCTION

Progress such as it is, we might characterise as us lurching forward through rivers of blood. I think we must take that image on board unsavoury as it is. I say that, this most likely will be the same territory for Transhumanism – our connection to tragedy. Shiny new technology does not wash away the blood and leave humanity clean. Sometimes it contributes to the blood.

However, there is, meanwhile, the constraint of doing something urgently about the real world. Our current circumstances demand that we do, with great foresight and with the gravity of their implications in mind, something about climate change, resources and populations. Perhaps an embedded, democracy driven, culturally complex, socially subservient Transhumanism is the answer. We haven't got many others. I have outlined the need to make parallel political and cultural and personal adjustments to pre-empt these crises. Perhaps we might also morph to smaller, shorter lived creatures, but one with more empathy. Such a proposed being, a post –human, itself introduces new risks.

#### Quo Vadis Transhumanity?

Transnational Corporations making this or other post-humans threaten us, as they combine in pursuit of human production. Corporations are very deep challenges because of their societal based requirements and secretive dispositions. In this way, I have argued in this series, the transhumanist, post -object economy will force itself on us by transgression rather than overcoming the problems in its path. Overcome come them, that is, through public engagement and argumentation and evidence of technical success. Economic, political or technological dictatorships will come in its wake, if we don't find some more modest idea of the realisation of such a project, which involves democracy – deeper and more robust.

Transhumanism has separated itself from the complexities of self and society, knowledge and democracy. I believe that is because its adherents fail to reflect on those challenging, yet vital questions of knowledge and life. Rather they prefer to hide behind the cloak of neutrality, progress and science. I adduce both sinister explanations as in “this is a dream of powerful men who are not want to negotiate with society” and the not- so- sinister. Perhaps for them there is no such thing as society as Maggie Thatcher thought. However there are not so sinister accounts as well. I suspect also the blind power of technology fuels their optimism. Yet I hold this is unwarranted because we are foundationally organic e.g. in emotional, physical, cultural, familial and ecological ways. These also are the soft realities of self. A post-person person might seek to build or be built on these organic bases: rather than on what is imagined by removing them or they are no longer a person.

**Transhumanism has democratic implications:** Should we develop the multiplicity of life forms imagined by it. The great questions of equality, community and liberty suddenly take on such

differentiated aspects; we might struggle to allow it in any by the most guided and legislatively prepared manner.

**Transhumanism has social implications:** If we need Transhumanist solutions then we have a concomitant need to supply them to everyone as an opportunity or through the agreement of all to supply some, in transparent arrangements. Of course some people may well choose not to have augmentation. These considerations require a very robust and expanded democratic structure and general culture to deal with equity issues and equality of opportunity issues of both humans and post -humans.

**Transhumanism has cultural implications:** There are strong cultural context questions and cultural insight questions raised by Transhumanism. Part of this is who we are, part, what do we know? My argument suggests however, that this step, this Transhumanist project is basically a long way from convincing because of all the material I have mounted under the rubric of subject and object. I think overall Transhumanism works within a type of reductionism which further permits that simplistic association of technology and science with neutrality. It further seems to do away with well tried ways of learning. Yet despite all that I have said I respect the intent and outcomes of the scientific method and believe it to be a great cultural attribute. However this method is less likely to apply to reproducing our enhanced selves, in toto, as opposed to bringing us back to normality with medicinal or incremental changes and very limited augmentation. Since the knower and knowledge can't finally be separated then Transhumanism only offers a false Utopia where this occurs. My case rests on the idea that to create post-humans we must have perfect knowledge. I admit to that being onerous but I can point to how readily medical augmentation goes wrong. Nevertheless there is great beneficial progress.

**Transhumanism has implications for what we mean by 'progress':** Progress maybe is the Transhumanist hope ,however, we have competing cultural traditions dealing in great depth with that issue including the separation of self and world. **What if we breach subject and object separations? To do that we would also breach the deepest cultural reservoirs of the Romantic and Enlightenment traditions, the key confluences of democratic thought.** These traditions are characterised by the accepted specificity or individuality of each of us and our rational and emotional capacities to manage ourselves wisely and democratically. Democracy, society, culture and self would have to be rethought. Transhumanism's interaction with consciousness, by fixing it at one point and by ignoring the great steps of cultural recasting of this self and society in permanent conflict, threatens to solidify a certain 'logic' and thereby our view of ourselves with over simplification and paralysis.

**Transhumanity has implications for the Subject-Object economy:** A Post object economy rests on the technical mastery of ourselves at a time when nature has been largely shifted from known patterns found in older ecologies. Our environment that feeds back to "natural selection" which now is largely technologically mediated. It is not natural because of this historical shift. Yet we are not much less composed of subjectivity, mind or body, if we take our pills and use our computers in ways that alter us even significantly but not fundamentally. Nor are we any less dependent on a biosphere that functions.

Yet I cannot pretend with all our subjecting and objecting that we haven't ended in a world about to disintegrate, or at least change profoundly - an epoch shift - if its course goes unchallenged. Our all-

so- well- informed or known systems appear under great strain, due in part to their actual rapacity on human, plant, beast, sky and water, indeed Gaia. Neither impulse alone – current Democracy nor Transhumanism – can serve, or save, us well in the future.

**If you think it's rather bizarre to spend so much time negating Transhumanism to end in saying it must remain an option, I can only say those negations found throughout my work are preconditions. We live in extraordinary times. This is no excuse to jettison such pre-conditions but an incentive to find the best solution, given their substance - dare I say their cultural materiality.**

I believe we have about 30 years to sort this mess out – let's start NOW – that's what this issue of CRAFT is about, an attempt to get the ball rolling with reference to all the options.

I think that is one of the ways that movements fail. Of course we cannot forever hold with equal weight all options. However we can avoid allowing the movements we are in, closing down options unnecessarily, for the purpose of simplified proselytising. I don't think simplicity or the singularity individually are going to work. Debate and action, if a clear delineation of Transhumanism's implications for a great many dimensions of our lives, remain a necessity. Equally we should look to our own cultural and historical understandings emerging through insight, mixed with tragedy, for they may have richer veins of wisdom for the future.

**We certainly need to get involved in the future for it is already getting involved with us.**

**Readers Note:** References for all of Dr Jim Prentice's articles are included in one document under the title 'references'.