



Transhumans not Transhumanism

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Introduction: The term transhuman may have little if any meaning to many but to some it may suggest some sort of change in humans towards a new state of being, on the way even to becoming another species or super human as a next step in the progression of life on planet Earth. A natural evolution of life perhaps that today seems essential if life on Earth is not to come to an end or at least be severely compromised because of the increasing capacity of humanity to impact on the viability of all living things, including us. It now seems possible that if the growing negative impact of humans continues unchecked it will lead to a cascade collapse of the life giving natural order as a result of the accumulation of unmanageable ecological debt.

However, the term transhumanism has a quite different point of reference and quite a contentious one at that. I would like to explore this tension between Transhuman and Transhumanism in this article.

Transhumanism has been characterised by one critic, Francis Fukuyama as “among the world's most dangerous ideas”. Ronald Bailey countered that it is rather the "movement that epitomises the most daring, courageous, imaginative, and idealistic aspirations of humanity". Fukuyama argues that as a result of biomedical advancement, we are facing the possibility of a future in which our humanity itself will be altered beyond recognition.

In the latter part of the 20th Century the idea developed that science generated technology could enhance human performance by being integrated with the human biology. Today this field of R&D identified with transhumanism is being pursued with fervour as a means to further advance humanity. The search is on for the ultimate human machine symbiosis.

Ray Kurzweil has said: “By the 2040s the machine portions will be vastly more powerful than the biological portions of intelligence, which would be relatively trivial.

Dr. Anders Sandberg said: “We are the processing going on in our minds (minds presumably limited to activity of our central nervous system). An uploaded (to a computer) mind would in fact be the same person.”

Jaques Ellil 1954, in The Technological Society said: “The creation of the ideal man will soon be a simple technical operation.”

These statements make clear that the perspective held by some in the science/technology community is, that as humans go it is only the physical body and its performance that is of significance. It is my understanding that the view of transhumanists is that the progress of

evolution on planet Earth is increasingly the work of some humans and that the goal is a post human world that will be achieved by replacing biological systems with 'superior' man-made mechanical systems.

This is not surprising given that traditional Science, referred to as Western Science is founded on a mechanical worldview as espoused by Sir Issac Newton that underlies today's dominant scientific materialism. There is no place for spiritual concepts nor any human qualities or abilities that do not fit within that paradigm and are able to be observed by the physical senses or via technologies that enable such detection.

In the 20th Century, following the thinking initiated by Darwin's "natural selection by survival of the fittest" paradigm and understandings of genetics, the Eugenics movement spread throughout the Western Scientific establishment. But following the "Master Race" expression of the Eugenics movement pursued by the Nazi's National Socialism, wherein Rudolph Hess stated in 1934 that "National Socialism was nothing more than applied biology", the term Eugenics lost favour.

After WW2 Sir Julian Huxley invented a new term for Eugenics – transhumanism, he also said "The lowest strata (of society) are reproducing too fast. Therefore ... they must not have too easy access to relief or hospital treatment lest the removal of the last check on natural selection should make it too easy for children to be produced or survive." And "Long unemployment should be a ground for sterilization."

The belief among the more privileged in society, the ones who had gained access to more entitlements and power over others often considered themselves superior and that humanity would be improved if their stock were advantaged over others.

Aaron Franz, reading from a report on the National Science Foundation and Department of Commerce sponsored workshop on NBIC (Nano scale Biology Information Cognitive,) Technologies to discuss their visions for the future alongside government officials, "Converging Technologies for Improving Human Performance", said Technological convergence was given as the answer to all the world's global problems. It promised to bring about a new renaissance of human development; it was the hope of integrating humanity with nature to save the Earth. Visions laid out included robotics, cybernetics, artificial intelligence, life extension, brain enhancement, virtual reality, and genetic engineering. Enhancing human performance would require merging human biology with technology, including brain machine interfaces.

But does this look like integrating humanity with nature or with man-made technology? It seems that what is meant by the word nature could be the issue here.

If nature, the natural world, exists as no more than a mechanism dependant on the Laws of Thermodynamics in a finite universe, which is the traditional science view then there is consistency here and it is logical to proceed in this way. But to accept this belief about the natural world and continue down the path of dependency on entropic technologies as the way to 'evolve', would mean fulfilling the prophecy accepted by those who exclusively follow the current belief that the Second Law of Thermodynamics rules supreme, which means that all life must come to an end. That Law, otherwise known as the Heat Death Law, if considered supreme necessitates an unavoidable ultimate state of total entropy or disorder with no

possibility of life, a condition called universal heat death due to the eventual unavailability of usable energy.

The transhumanist agenda would it seems eliminate the possibility of developing spiritual, other than seeing materialism as a spirituality, other than seeing materialism as a spirituality, human abilities and bring about the predictable behaviour and reliability of a mechanised artificially intelligent post human world. This agenda denies or at least neglects developing, the uniquely human technologies, by which I mean the ignored powers of the human mind and consciousness that increasing numbers of people believe will ultimately, achieve more than is possible using entropic technologies.

This is a serious and growing concern among those aware of this unfolding agenda, considering that almost invisible to the general public, these human transforming technologies are being developed and are accelerating towards the singularity where technological 'minds' will seek to be capable of independently determining the future of humanity and the living system we call Earth. Democratic governments, and indeed democracy, would then no longer have any role to play. Ultimately this would mean a planet entirely in the hands of non-living machines able to replicate themselves and continue on to the predicted complete energy dissipation.

If this outcome is the solution intended by those advocating transhumanism, which it appears to be, then it would not appear to be an exultation of human intelligence but rather a great waste of effort and resources. Therefore it seems necessary to enquire as to the wisdom or actual motivation of those choosing to take humanity down this path to the future. Could it be that rather than transhumanising all people there is in fact the intention that a number, possibly a small minority of humans would be protected from or immune to, many of the human transforming technologies currently being developed? Such an elite minority would then be able to enjoy greatly increased opportunities to indulge their human desires and rather than losing the essentials of a human life experience would have much greater and enhanced experiences. If this is the case then its rationality would not be in question, rather the question would become one of ethics.

Significantly, there is emerging at this time what is being called the 21st Century Renaissance, also called Archaic Renaissance in this Issue, also called the Archaic Renaissance, that is about recovering the lost knowledge of the neg-entropic, extropic or syntropic processes of natural order that counter balance the entropic processes utilised by modern science in accordance with the Second Law, to develop current technologies.

The ancient Greeks from whom we inherited the basics of modern science, understood that it is the balancing of these fundamental processes that underlies the forces that sustain the existence of this planetary living system and that without maintaining this balance life ceases to be possible. Their understanding of reality was based on an integration of the sciences and the arts, a balancing of rational exposition and intuitive insight, expressions of thinking and feeling. It is this balance to the entropy dependency of today that was left behind when our scientific materialism took hold. Understanding the balancing extropic (negentropic) processes of nature is now essential if humanity is to avoid fulfilling the prophecy dictated by the Entropy Law leading to a global heat death by continuing down the current path of extinguishing life on Earth.

Clearly the Western culture that now dominates the thinking and actions of humanity takes its direction from a worldview that is essentially materialistic and exclusively mechanistic and gives credit only to the rational and mathematically describable. This is the culture that rationally supports the philosophy of transhumanism. However as explained above, the rationality of proceeding along this path cannot make sense to humanity as a whole, it would only be rational to a small minority who separated themselves from the downside of the technological upgrades, i.e. the degrading of their natural environment and indeed human potential and the loss of freedom to choose to access their natural higher order abilities.

The question remains as to whether or not, those behind this agenda intend to continue to be in charge of the process and how much of their humanness they themselves intend to give up. **Is transhumanism in fact the old eugenics agenda in a new guise and intended to produce a master race or a world to be inherited by an elite?** The origin of the term transhumanism has already been noted earlier.

Humans are increasingly experiencing life through a relationship with machines or mechanical devices, and this raises the question as to how dependent on them are we becoming and how desirable is that increasing dependency?

Clearly advances in technology provide benefits to the human experience of living and can enable improvements in what humans can do. However technological advancement is accelerating to such an extent that it is already becoming increasingly difficult for societies to assess the overall impact of these developments on human wellbeing and the future of life on Earth. There is growing concern regarding the ethics of these advances but these concerns are not being proportionately pursued.

It seems to make sense to direct technological progress given the growing challenges to sustainable health and wellbeing of the human family; to diminish the negative impact of the entropic technologies we are increasingly depending on and to develop technologies needed to regenerate damaged ecosystems and restore life enhancing natural order. But it seems the intention of transhumanists is to do away with the need for life supporting natural systems by decoupling 'evolution' from living systems in favour of artificially intelligent self-replicating machines.

Some form of transformation of humanity seems to be essential for a sustainable future and appears to be the next step in the natural process of life evolving on this planet. In my opinion, once there is a consensus that developing the human potential is the priority and that none shall be left behind, the true nature of human-kind will be revealed and progress through innovation in socio-technical systems towards this goal will be swift. It is in fact the swiftness of this process that is as critical as it is unexpected, because it is the momentum gained by dispersing the benefits of technological progress throughout the human family that will make recovery and advancement achievable.

Ethics requires equality for all in determining what the purpose of technological progression is and will it be to enhance the future life experience of all humanity, or to favour the few at the expense of the vast majority? After all is it not now possible, with the almost unlimited power of our technological capability, to provide adequately for all the human family?

The answer to the latter would be a resounding yes, if it became abundantly clear that there was universal commitment to leaving none behind as a matter of 'one human family'

awareness, because this would allow for the reallocation of all resources now harmfully wasted in violent conflict, a realisation of “beating our swords into ploughshares.” The consequent availability of energy, resources and manpower would eliminate scarcity throughout the world and provide the resources, including the human resources for the needed regeneration of the life sustaining natural processes and abundance for all.

Certainly, it is not achievable let alone sustainable to satisfy all people in the manner of the current obsession with material acquisition now spreading across the globe, driven by commercial interests and current economic dogmas, with those in turn driven by the global monetary system. It is precisely this unescapable truth that makes us understand that the actual human transformation needed is an awakening to the true nature of humanness. Such that true nature being consciousness as spirit, or that which has potent existence without physical presence other than as projected into the third dimension of physicality where entropic processes have their potential.

It is my opinion therefore that the efforts of those concerned with transhumanism would be best directed towards building wide public awareness of the human transformation required for the sustainability of humanity and all life on Earth. It is certain that continuing along the current trajectory is not tenable and that great change in the way humans are exploiting life and living systems must take place in the immediate future.

The question is how far is it wise to go in merging technological devices with human biology and what potential does the development of human abilities have via encouraging lifestyles that depend for satisfaction on personal development rather than consumption of resources?

The inability to adequately come to terms with the increasing differentiation in standards of living, both within the developed world and between the developed world and the poorest populations, is indicative of the lack of attention to ethics taking over the world in the wake of Western materialism, primarily facilitated through the power of the monetary system.

Accepting a monetary system that because of usury insatiably demands economic growth at all costs, destroys life-sustaining ecosystems, exploits the poorest sectors and populations and enables the wealthy to exponentially accumulate beyond the wildest dreams of emperors of the past exposes gross neglect of any sense of ethical values. Again it is the loss of understanding of what it is that sustains wholesome growth and development of life on Earth. Ethics is seen today as a good that is to be encouraged, that good people take account of and is related to charitable behaviour. It is not understood as fundamental to the workings of the universe, an inescapable balancing component of existence without which there can be no real progress.

This lack of understanding is again a result of the loss of connection with the full knowledge of the ancient Greeks from where Western culture evolved. It was ethics that gave integrity to their understanding of reality and underpinned their balanced science and democratic form of government.

Love of one’s neighbour, care for the whole community and all forms of life, was also an integral part of the cultures of most native/indigenous (close to the Earth) cultures, recognised as essential to success of the people and what made life worth living. It is modern culture’s disconnect from its roots exacerbated by an obsession with scientific materialism and the ‘wonders’ of technological success that is eroding our sustainability. Rather than continuing

to glorify the machine, those who have accumulated the material wealth of the world need to comprehend the ethical imperative for sustaining life and to open their minds to the emerging awareness of the unlimited potential of humankind and to reallocate resources to this end.

Conclusion: After all it is this capacity to love one another that is beyond the capacity of any machine, even though machines could be designed to smile, be most charming and no doubt do great sex. However true love has no real meaning for exclusively materialistic science confined as it is to a mechanical worldview. Only a new culture where the balancing of entropic and extropic processes are understood and love prevails can experience the fulfilment of the human potential; As Teilhard de Chardin said, “The Gates of Heaven will open to all at the same time and not to a chosen race or privileged few”. All other imagining of human evolution is illusory.

Without ethics there can be no sustainable society and with the integration of ethics into our science and technological capability the success of the story of humanity appears to be almost unlimited.

The Sustainability Research Institute’s response to this challenge is to research, develop and trial optimal human ecologies – living environments and lifestyles that optimize the development of the human potential. This is action research undertaken by integrated learning communities, where true love grows from mutual respect and self-reliance while modeling social, economic and ecological sustainability. Established as a network of collaborating settlements and communities on a global basis and open to visitation and learning programs for the general public, these centres of learning will increasingly grow desire and belief in the transformation of humanity as transhumans is the next step in the evolution of life on Earth. [Please contact the author for further details]