

**Human**

*By Design*



*Honors Composition*

*Fall 2012*

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# *Fall 2012*

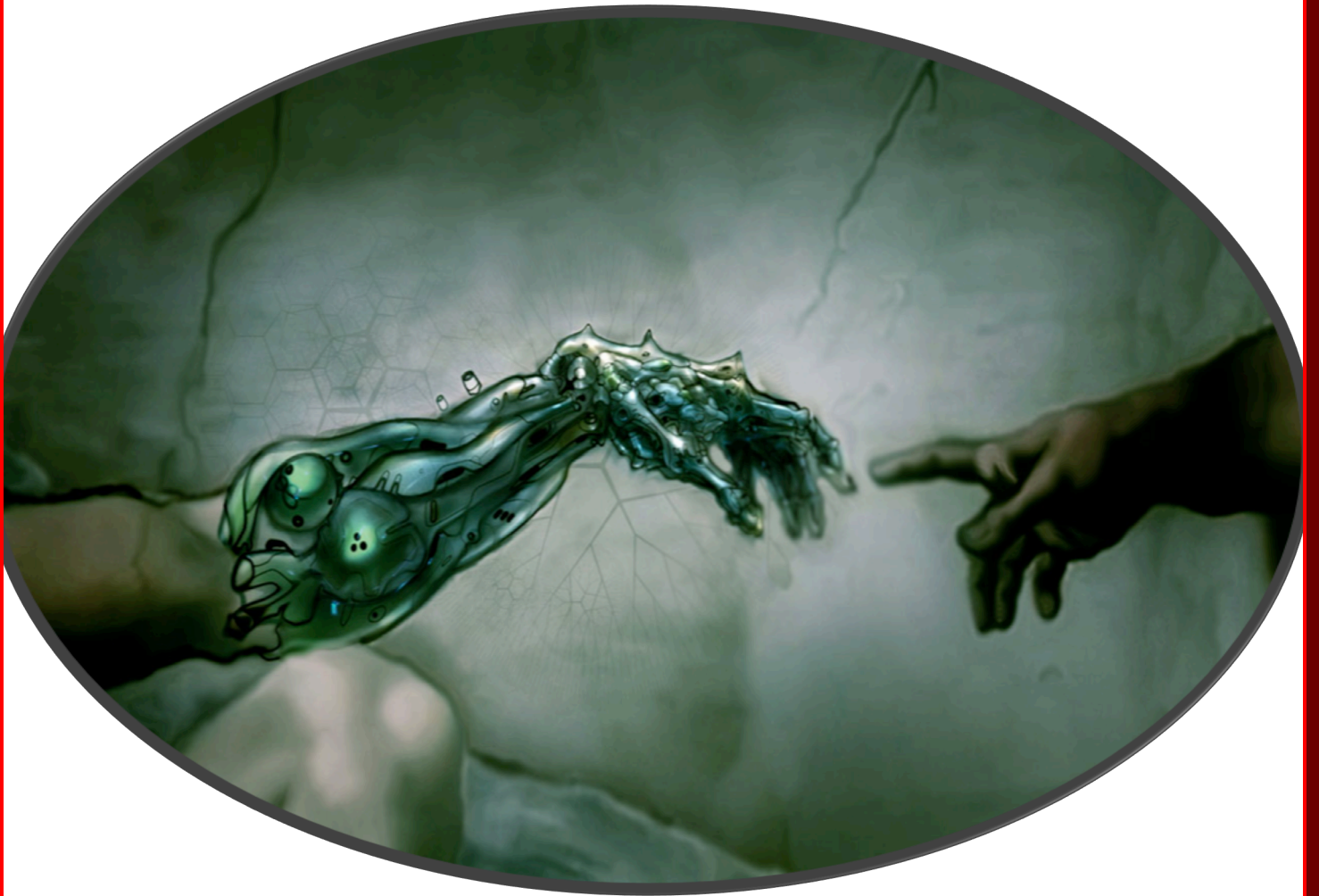
## *Dedication*

*To Mr. Arnold Webb, who opened our minds to the controversial topic of transhumanism, and educated us on its possibilities.*



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# *At First Glance*

## *Transhumanism*

“Man is an artifact designed for space travel. He is not designed to remain in his present biologic state any more than a tadpole is designed to remain a tadpole.”

-William S. Burroughs

### **What is Transhumanism?**

Based on Max More’s original definition, transhumanism is seen as “an intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of improving the human condition through applied reason and the development and availability of new technologies to enhance the human mind, appearance, and capacity.” So what exactly does all this mean? In common terms, transhumanism can be seen as the desire to evolve the human race into new kind of species that is more intelligent, physically superior, and highly capable of achieving things way past the average human capacity. This can be done through new technologies that lead to medical enhancement.

The overall concept of transhumanism is based on the continuation and acceleration of human evolution.

### **Where did the concept originate?**

The first reference to transhumanism was written in 1312 by poet Dante Alighieri in his work “Paradiso of the Divina Commedia” in which he invented a “transhumanized” world to describe what happens to humans through a “beatific vision.” In 1948, Nobel Prize winner T.S. Elliot wrote about the isolation of the human condition. Other individuals that contributed to concept of transhumanism include biologist Julian Huxley (1957), FM-2030 (1989) and finally philosopher Max More who brought about the philosophy and movement of transhumanism. The efforts of the Extropy Institution also help bring about the movement of transhumanism.

### **What are some controversies involved with transhumanism?**

The major critic of transhumanism involves the ethical thought of changing human biology based on incomplete knowledge. Many opponents of the movement

see it as a threat to already established traditional values, arrangement, and systems. Others worry that transhumanism will take away attention and resources from other social problems and solutions. However, those in favor of transhumanism argue that we should focus on both current and future issues as a means to be prepared. Finally, the more difficult critique of transhumanism involves the questions of what constitutes humanity, its nature, and its condition. Also, just how far can a “being” be altered so as that it is no longer seen as human?

What will transhumanism lead too? Will those who are not evolved become inferior to others? Can you evolve into something better than humans and yet still be considered a “human”? These are questions that lead to the controversies facing transhumanism.

### **How does transhumanism compare with religion?**

Transhumanism, like religion, offers a sense of purpose and direction and thus suggests a vision that humans can go beyond or present condition. The difference, however, is that transhumanists rely on rational thinking and the development of science, technology, economics and human nature, instead of relying on supernatural powers and divine interventions.

### **Does transhumanism interfere with nature?**

It depends on what you consider transhumanism to be. Do you believe that transhumanism can still be considered “human” aspects? Humans are a part of nature, thus if you consider transhumanism to still be “human” than no, it does not interfere with nature.

### **What is the difference between transhumanism and transhuman?**

Based on the concepts of FM-2030, transhuman refers to “the intermediary form between the human and the posthuman.” It is simply shorthand for transitional human, whereas transhumanism refers to the philosophy and movement.

### ***Posthumanism***

“No more gods, no more faith, no more timid holding back,  
the future belongs to posthumanity”

-Max More

## **What is posthumanism?**

Posthumanism is the idea that human being can develop to radically exceed the basic capacities ordinary human beings so as to no longer be unambiguously human by our current standards. This differs from transhumanism by the simple fact that posthumanism is not a movement. Posthumanism is a concept, a result of transhumanism.

## **How will a posthuman society affect those who are not augmented?**

Our society today is made up of a broad diversity of people. The differences among us range from the disabled or physically impaired, to the average human being, and unto those physically and mentally advanced. Thus, would having a posthuman society really affect our way of life?

Opponents of posthumanity may argue that those who are “enhanced” will perhaps look down on the average human being, and hence would lead to conflict and issue of control among the societies. However, one must take into consideration those who live in our society today and are part of the posthumanity idea. These include human beings who have been medically altered to better themselves.

### ***Medical Enhancement***

“Maybe technology eventually turns them into something that wouldn’t call human. But that’s a choice they make—a rational choice.”

-Bruce Sterling, Schismatrix

## **Who will benefit from new technologies?**

Typically new technologies that include experimental procedures are available only to the very rich and research subjects. However, as procedures become routine the cost drop thus more people can afford them. Unfortunately, those who have the resources, skills, and motive to learn how to use new tools will have the greatest advantage causing the social gap to widen.

## **What are some examples of Medical Enhancement in our world today?**

Everyday humans are promoters of medical enhancement. For example, humans that have prosthetics are an example of medical enhancement. Prosthetics help an individual perform better and have a better life. Other examples of medical enhancements in today’s world are drugs, such as steroids which enhance the body to perform better, contact lenses and glasses which enhance an individuals vision,



and finally medical devices such as pace makers, insulin pumps and implants are examples of medical enhancements that help individuals better or enhance their health.

**Joseline Loza**

*Joseline Loza*



## *Transhumanism and Religion: Or Should I Say Versus?*

Transhumanism has always been a controversial study, but once religious interpretations are thrown into the mix, it becomes a sin. The successes of these ideas are based on how much influence they can make in society. Which is right, and which is wrong? Is transhumanism sinful or just something that will take some understanding and some time adjusted to? Can transhumanism and religion mix and even possibly come to an agreement? Or should the two be separate based on their beliefs and aspirations?

Transhumanism is a cultural and an intellectual movement, based on applied reason and scientific means, which supports the possibility of transforming humans and human condition. This includes the possibilities heightening physical and mental abilities. Humanity Plus, an organization for the promotion of transhumanism, claims that transhumanism “. . . can make things better by promoting rational thinking, freedom, tolerance, democracy, and concern for our fellow human beings.” What kind of benefits could come of this movement? The prospect of extending lifespans is something that many transhumanists hope for. This would be done by eliminating most, if not all, diseases including genetic, infectious, and bacterial ones. Favorable traits could be singled out, so people could become smarter and stronger. Sounds reasonably noble, right? Our lives would be easier with less worry, healthier, and all around better off. While transhumanists hold this view, most religious thinkers do not, for close-minded attitudes maintain an out-of-date perspective on human enhancement.

Many religious thinkers throughout time have held the common belief that God is in control of creation. They claim that humans were created in the image of God, and we should have no control over our future conditions, for it is God's will, not ours. When you come right down to it, human transformation should not be in our hands, only in those of God's. We should not try to reach a state of homoiosis theo (becoming like a God), and accept what God has established and determined for us. The Vatican, the leader of the Catholic Church, commented on transhumanism's ambitions by demanding: “Thou shall not pollute the Earth. Thou shall beware genetic manipulation. Modern times bring with them modern sins.”

Surprisingly, there is a mix of the two views. Religious transhumanists promote the benefits of transhumanism by actually using religion and the bible as an argument. First, they claim that the concept of free will allows us to shape our futures and make such transhumanistic decisions. Paul Tillich, a Christian transhumanist, states that if we can keep an open mind, that “. . . we can become fully human through participation in this full humanity which has appeared in Christ. This includes eternal life and similitude with God with respect to participation in infinity.” God had intended for us to make changes, as claimed in Psalms 8 (King James version): “[For humans] to have domination over the works of thy hands. . .” By this, religious transhumanists argue that God gave us the task of creating ourselves, for we have self-determination.

Is it possible that God wants us to be in a co-creation partnership? Some religious transhumanists believe that we should explore and employ enhancements for the human condition in agreement with God. However, this brings rise to the controversial focus of a kind of equality with God. Is it right to claim that we can have a partnership with something that is beyond ourselves?

Would it be “playing God” if we were to take our fate into our own hands? This argument by religious thinkers has plagued the transhumanist movement for countless years. Max More, a passionate advocate for transhumanism, argues in favor of transhumanism goals by stating: “I will propose here not that we seek to play God or become gods, but that we strive to become posthuman.” However, religious thinkers claim that trying to improve our state, whether it is in a medical, physical, or intellectual approach, is unnatural. It destroys God’s perfect image of humans, and insults His creation. However, transhumanists, both religious ones and atheistic ones, implore that transhumanism has been around for hundreds of years, and its improvements are already intertwined in our world. Aren’t vitamins and nutritional supplements enhancements? What about medicine and prosthetics to those who need them? Should those be removed from society in order to keep from upsetting God?

Another far-fetched argument against transhumanism deals with the benefits of having diseases and disabilities in our world. Generally, many religious thinkers believe that people who are influenced with such afflictions gain certain experiences and qualities that they would not have gained otherwise. Is the possibility of a good



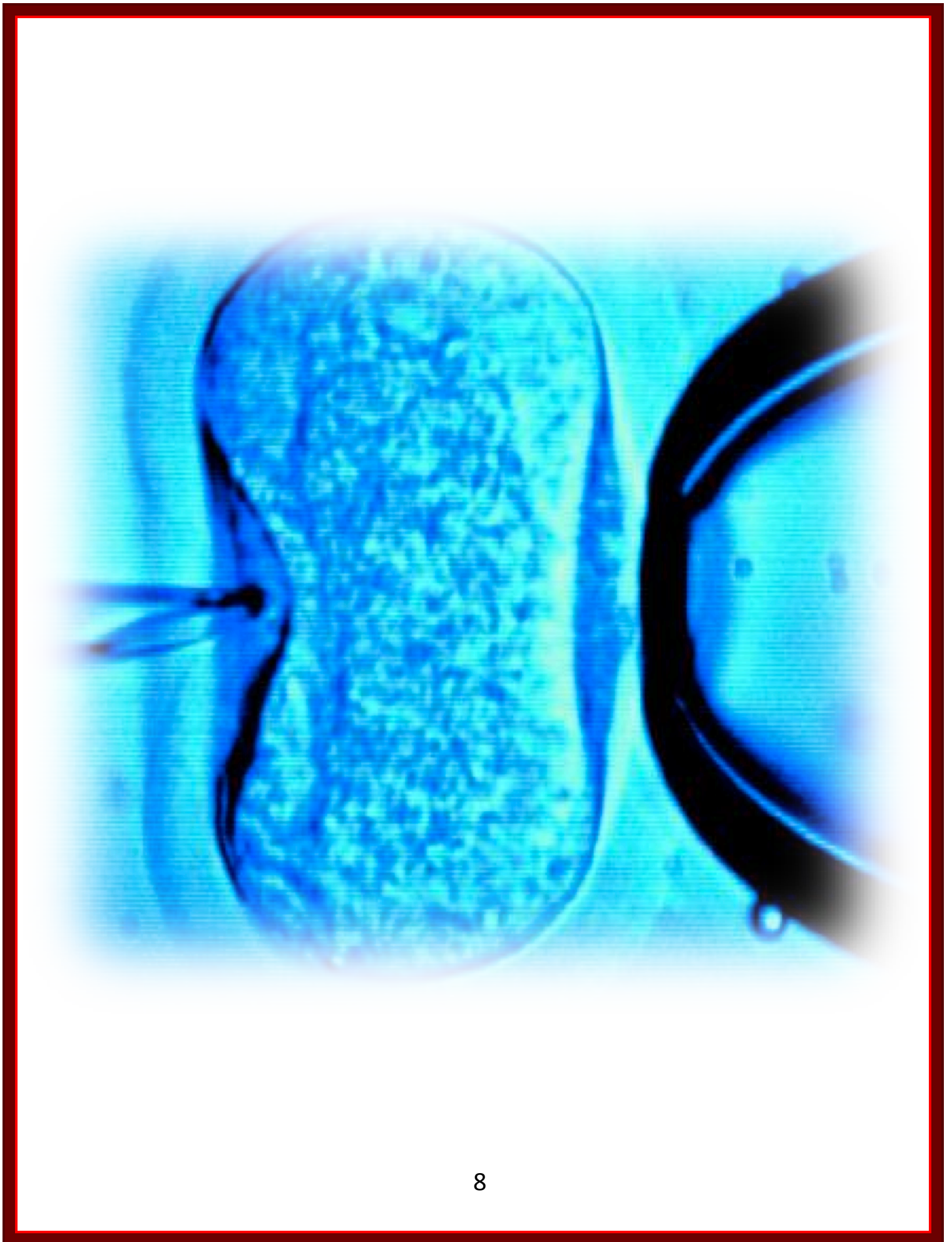
experience worth allowing illnesses to continue to foster? If diseases and disabilities were eliminated, people would not have to try to find the positive characteristics if they were to be inflicted; people would be able to experience and appreciate life without the worry of such dismays.

Transhumanism can be perceived as a progressive and forward movement, not one that will hinder our lives. It promotes health, in that it aims to eradicate sickness and encourage lengthier lifespans. Who would want to stop such a magnificent progression? Max More, a transhumanism philosopher mentioned earlier, claims that “religion acts an entropic force, standing against our advancement into transhumanity.” Religion, based on outdated practices and beliefs, is standing in the way of transhumanism. Religious thinkers against transhumanism do not see the purpose in trying to improve God’s vision for mankind—going back to the religious idea that we were created in the perfect image of God. This kind of thinking puts the transhumanist movement into remission. Our world needs to put constructive and modern philosophy into action, and no longer attend to archaic views.

Both transhumanism and religion influence our world, each in its own distinctive way. transhumanism shall move us further in enhanced life by improving the world we know today. The possibilities for transhumanism are endless, including genetic alterations and future improvements, while religion has offered everything that it can. What sounds more appealing? Religion is a system that we can push to the past, and transhumanism, including some of the thoughts of religious transhumanists, is an innovative ideology that needs to become a forerunner in society. Our lives would be more pleasurable, for we would be healthier, more intelligent, and more stable as a society.

**Carol Cantrell**

*CAROL CANTRELL*



## *InVitro Life*

“Now it’s you and me against the world, kid,” whispered the brown haired man rocking his baby daughter in his arms. “Just you and me against the world.” What else can you say to a baby, just a year old, after her mother has passed away? How else do you express the things that often go unsaid? The “I’ve got your back”, and “I’ll take care of you’s, the “I love you’s, and the “I’ll never leave you’s. How else would you react to death if you couldn’t grasp onto the new life that was sleeping there in your arms. Although she is ignorant to the loss you have just felt, she holds you as close as if she were aware.

My mother died when I was two years old. Her blood runs through my veins, her eyes are what I see in the mirror. But, she was never pregnant with me.

Nobody would know I was one of the first IVF in a host surrogate babies here on the west coast. Nobody could tell it had taken my parents three years to conceive me. Not one person could tell that I was conceived in a petri dish. I was the miracle baby. The one they held their breath for. Three times they underwent the painful process of invitro fertilization. I was their last try.

Who could look at me any differently based on how I got here? Who has the right to tell me I am not natural? My mother had to have her uterus removed years prior and my father wanted a baby. Is it wrong for them to utilize the newly available technology to aid in the conception of a child?

My life is no less valuable than the next persons, my memories no less real. I am human. I was made in a lab but I came home from the hospital with two loving parents and a warm, safe home waiting there for me. I have to thank technology for my life. Without the developments in surrogacy and IVF trials I wouldn’t be here.

The process of Invitro Fertilization in a host surrogate has been much developed and adapted over the years. The efficiency of the process now allows a much higher expected pregnancy rate than when I was born. Nevertheless, the process follows a relatively simple, though in some cases extremely painful,

pattern. First, the eggs must be stimulated and monitored to ensure their overall health and potential for success in the conception. The eggs and sperm must then be collected and combined in the laboratory given the appropriate environment for “conception” and early embryonic development. A small selection of embryos is then transferred to the uterus of the surrogate mother.

**Step 1:** Fertility medications are prescribed to control the timing of the egg ripening and to increase the chance of collecting multiple eggs during one of the woman's cycles. This is often referred to as *ovulation induction*. Multiple eggs are desired because some eggs will not develop or fertilize after retrieval. Egg development is monitored using ultrasound to examine the ovaries, and urine or blood test samples are taken to check hormone levels.

**Step 2:** Eggs are retrieved through a minor surgical procedure that uses ultrasound imaging to guide a hollow needle through the pelvic cavity. Sedation and local anesthesia are provided to reduce and remove potential discomfort. The eggs are removed from the ovaries using a hollow needle, a procedure called *follicular aspiration*. Some women may experience cramping on the day of retrieval, which usually subsides the following day; however, a feeling of fullness or pressure may continue for several weeks following the procedure.

**Step 3:** Sperm, usually obtained by ejaculation is prepared for combining with the eggs.

**Step 4:** In a process called *insemination*, the sperm and eggs are placed in incubators located in the laboratory. The incubators enable fertilization to occur. In some cases where there is a lower probability of fertilization, intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) may be used. Through this procedure, a single sperm is injected directly into the egg in an attempt to achieve fertilization. The eggs are monitored to confirm that fertilization and cell division are taking place. Once this occurs, the fertilized eggs are considered embryos.

**Step 5:** The embryos are usually transferred into the woman's uterus (in this case the surrogate mother's) from one to six days later, but in most cases the transfer occurs between two to three days following egg retrieval. At this stage, the fertilized egg has developed into a two-to-four cell embryo. The transfer process involves a speculum which is inserted into the vagina to expose the cervix. A predetermined number of embryos are suspended in fluid and gently placed through a catheter into the womb. This process is often guided by ultrasound. The procedure is usually painless, but some women experience mild cramping.

These steps are followed by rest and watching for early pregnancy symptoms. A blood test and potentially an ultrasound will be used to determine if successful implantation and pregnancy have occurred.

**Krista Brockman**

*KRISTA BROCKMAN*

## *Types and Questions of Transhumanism*

There are many different definitions of transhumanism, but the commonality is that transhumanism involves advancing the human race in some way that is beyond our reach without that specific technology. New technologies have allowed for more and more advancement of the human race through artificial means, and new possibilities have come to fruition as humans become more technologically advanced. With the constant technological advancements of the modern human race, the possibilities are endless. These new technologies can lead to inventions and can allow humans to create accessories that may have been thought of as science fiction only a few decades ago. As these new technologies are perfected and available for use, questions of whether or not these technologies should be used tend to arise with the more serious issues, such as the idea of designer babies, as well as a handful of other thoughts concerning the development of the human race.

A common misconception of transhumanism tends to be the thought of cyborgs from a *Terminator* movie, but this is not the case. Although transhumanism could involve the possibility of cyborgs, this idea does not have to be that extreme. Even though one may not realize it, transhumanism is present in the everyday world, whether it is hearing aids for those hard of hearing or artificial limbs for amputees. But this is just the tip of the iceberg as far as technology to further the human race goes. New advancements to aid the human body are being worked on every day, and new technologies are being developed to upgrade the human body.

Steroids are a very good example of the use of transhumanism. They have a variety of uses, including improving athletic performance and cosmetic flaws, and many other different types of steroids have been developed to perform other specific purposes in the body. Typically, one hears of athletes using steroids in order to make their bodies bigger, stronger, and faster than they would be able to using natural means, but these are not the only types of steroids out there. Other types of steroids can be used in adolescents in order to bring puberty and maturation on quicker than what would naturally happen. Steroids also have sanctioned medical purposes, and can be used to manage or even cure some forms of anemia, and have also been used with breast cancer patients for the same reasons.



Questions regarding the use of steroids have definitely arisen in society. Most professional sports associations have outlawed any use of steroids because it is seen as a form of cheating, but there could be some debate over whether or not steroids should be banned. If the human body can reach a higher level of performance with steroids than it can naturally, then why not allow the body to reach its maximum potential? On the other hand, can the body handle being constantly pushed to the extreme and past its natural limitations?

Other forms of technology, such as the use of pacemakers for the heart, can also be seen as forms of transhumanism because they aid the human heart to keep it going in a way that would not be possible naturally. Pacemakers are small devices, normally placed in the chest, that help to control irregular heartbeats by using electrical pulses. These devices are essential to those who suffer from an irregular heartbeat, because if this condition is left untreated, fatality is more than a possibility. Without the technology of the pacemaker, the people with this condition would in all likelihood die at a much younger age than they should, but pacemakers allow for these people to live normal lives.

Pacemakers are perfect for a person with a pumping heart, but what if someone's heart fails, and that person needs an entirely new heart? More recently, scientists have been able to develop an artificial heart that can actually completely replace the natural heart if completely necessary, but this artificial heart will only keep the body alive for a temporary amount of time, approximately five months on average. This technology has obviously not yet been perfected seeing as how it is only a temporary fix until the patient either gets a heart transplant from a natural heart, or ends up passing away because of the condition. Scientists are currently working on new advancements to create a permanent replacement for a natural heart, but it has still yet to be completely perfected. This advancement would be an absolutely incredible feat because it could potentially completely eliminate any type of heart disease or disorder.

It is hard to question to answer whether or not technical advances of transhumanism such as artificial hearts should be used. There are both pros and cons to these transhumanistic advances. On the personal level, one obviously would want to do everything in their power to stay alive, and if the technology was

available, it would most likely be used. From a global standpoint, this technology allowing people to live longer can lead to complications such as overpopulation.

Another idea that has been suggested with transhumanistic advances is the possibility of “designer babies”. As scientists map the genetic code of humans, they learn what specific genes control certain traits, such as eye and hair color. Learning and mapping out the genetic makeup of humans could allow scientists to alter traits of a developing fetus. If this is accomplished, then it would be possible not only to influence the physical traits of the child, but could also eliminate disease and fatal illnesses, as well as eradicate mental conditions such as autism and Down syndrome. More questions regarding these designer babies arise as progress is made toward accomplishing this feat, and again there are pros and cons. From a parent’s perspective, one would most likely want to make sure that their child isn’t going to have any complications, both physical and mental. Looking through the world’s perspective though, elimination of disease would create a dramatically decreased infant fatality rate, again leading to the possibility of overpopulation. Another question also arises out of the issue of “designer babies”: Should parents be allowed to tailor their children’s traits to their wants?

The subject of transhumanism tends to be a very intriguing matter, because the topic is so broad and can include a variety of different technologies and advancements. Some aspects of it assist certain people in their day to day lives, such as allowing somebody to hear through the use of a hearing aid for someone who otherwise would have very minimal hearing. It would be difficult to find someone that would say the use of hearing aids for the hard of hearing is morally wrong, but when transhumanistic advances begin to get more in-depth and complex, such as using technology to create designer babies, the morality of the action tends to come into question. So, in this case, where does mankind draw the line? When does transhumanistic technology begin to become a bad thing rather than a good?

This just goes to show that transhumanism is an idea that comes with many questions. Advancements in technology have allowed the human body to do things that would have been impossible twenty years ago, and with these new advancements always comes the more questions on whether or not this technology should be used. It is hard to answer this question with a “no” when these advancements have the potential to be so beneficial, such as keeping someone



alive with a pacemaker or artificial heart, but when it comes to actually changing our bodies, via the use of steroids for example, things get a little bit more complicated. Should the human race continue to push their bodies past their natural limitations? All of these new technologies can lead to more advancements, but just how far can we take this technology? Should parents be able to premeditate what color eyes or hair their child will have? These are only a small number of questions that the topic of transhumanism brings up. There seem to be many benefits for the use of these types of transhumanistic technology, but pros never come without cons.

**Tyler Nester**



## *Being Human*

Being different had always been hard for Henry Chesterfield. Ever since he was born, he had been distinct from the other babies. Henry was born ugly, weak, and unintelligent. But most importantly, Henry was born naturally. No genetic alterations, no drugs, just completely up to nature.

In a society of genetically perfected fetuses, Henry was a far cry from what anyone would consider 'decent'. Throughout his school career, the other students would call out jabbing insults to him. His appearance was horrid; his eyes were too far apart and dull, his nose too straight, his cheekbones not defined. He stood at five feet seven inches; several inches shorter than any other male in his age group. He was scrawny, with no visible muscle. He was pale, his skin scattered with light freckles. His hair was a lackluster, dirty blond. His intelligence was a laughable joke, with an IQ barely over 110; what the Old Society would have deemed as a 'mentally challenged' child. He was, as his peers called him, the human race's weakest link.

Mrs. Chesterfield didn't want a perfect baby. She wanted an organic, unrefined child of God. Religion was a dying trifle of an archaic idea, with only a few cultist members scattered throughout society. Henry's mother was one of these rouge Christians. Lying to her husband, she hid her pregnancy from society, avoiding the genetic enhancement of her child. Her fellow Christians forged her paperwork of the genetic selection, but the entire hospital knew he was wrong the moment he was born crying. For her crimes against society and her crimes against her child, Henry's mother was removed from Society.

"This freak child should be kicked out from Society with his mother," the nurses had scoffed.

"No need," commented the Doctor, "to punish this poor, bastard boy any more than he already has been." The nurses blushed and looked away, ashamed.

"We're going to have to keep an eye on this member," The Doctor continued. "Remember, he hasn't been altered, his mind is his own. We've no idea what his natural emotions will react to, or how they will react." The Doctor sighed and rubbed his hand across his eyes. "We have to inform Society of this anomaly immediately, before he gets out of hand." The nurses nodded in agreement.

Henry pulled at his hair in frustration, his eyes burning holes in the paper in front of him. While his classmates had no trouble with the class work, Henry more often than not found himself struggling and lagging behind in even the most remedial of classes.

"What a dumbass," a girl behind him snickered. Her friends joined in on her joke, adding more insults and giggling. Henry turned around, glaring at them, hoping they would cease their insults if they knew he could hear. The girls stared back, unashamed and uninitiated. If anything, Henry realized, their smirks widened when he turned around, proud of themselves for irritating him so well. Henry returned to his work, embarrassed and ashamed that he had given them even more satisfaction at his expense.

Henry had read in a history book that, once upon a time, every child was born like him. No one ever changed their babies, and their appearance, intelligence, personality, and immunity were all up to chance. Children died, quite often, too. And then science did something amazing: they guaranteed parents that their children would be long-lived, beautiful, smart, with nothing gambled. The child would be perfect, and exactly what the parents wanted. More importantly, the book had conveniently excluded, the children would be exactly how Society wanted them, no ifs, ands, or buts. They would be perfect little molds who turned into perfect adults.

Henry also read that, in the beginning, almost everyone was completely against this type of birth. "Children should be natural," they cooed. "We are made in God's image, we're perfect just the way we are." This part always baffled Henry. Why would anyone *enjoy* living like him? Weak, ugly, unwanted? It made no sense. His ancestors were deranged, he had finally decided. Anyone who would put a child—a human—through this special brand of Hell was psychotic.

For a long while, Henry wondered what it would be like to be a true member of Society. Someone who was respected, admired, someone who was normal. He could never imagine it, though. Life as a Member was too far from him. It wasn't just within his reach; it was miles away; never to reach him.

"Just like Henry," his teacher lectured, "our foolish ancestors were barely even considered human. Thankfully, we've matured and advanced far beyond

them." Henry felt the entire classes' eye rest upon him. He sunk lower into his hair. Suddenly, Henry felt a tickle in his nose, and before he could stop himself, he sneezed, burying his face into the crook of his elbow. The entire class froze, too shocked to even breathe.

"As we once said," his teacher said, snapping the class out of their stupor, "God bless you." Henry blushed and mumbled his thanks, hoping she would leave it at that.

"But Henry, next time? Please leave the room before you do something so heinous. We understand that you can't control it, but please, try to be considerate."

"May I please be excused?" Henry stuttered, his face still burning with embarrassment. His teacher sighed, but signed him a pass anyway. He rushed out of class and into the nearest bathroom. Turning the tap on as far as it would, he splashed his face with icy water, hoping to calm himself down.

Even though our ancestors fought to live this way, Henry thought, I would give anything just to be normal. I just want to be human like the rest of Society.

**Selena Fiore**

*SELINA FIORE*

## *The Terminator Turning into Reality*

“Transhumanism is an intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of transforming humans and the human condition through applied reason and scientific means, primarily by development and making commonly available all technologies to enhance human mental and physical capacities and abilities.” When reading this definition you may think you have never heard of or been exposed to transhumanism. However, the truth is transhumanism is a part of your everyday life. You may not realize it, but in all actuality you probably have seen, heard or participated in a form of it. Ever heard of the movies Avatar, The Terminator or The Bourne Legacy? Maybe. What about contacts and hearing aids? You’ve definitely heard of those. All of these are examples of transhumanism. With all of the advancements occurring in transhumanism, we are becoming more and more aware of the concept every day. Movies seem harmless and contacts and hearing aids are helpful; but is there a risk in advancing further? Would Artificial Intelligence produce a dangerous world for us?

Most of us have seen or heard of the movies Avatar, The Terminator and The Bourne Legacy; but how many of us have sat there watching The Terminator and thought about the transhumanist theme of the movie? Most of us probably haven’t. We just like watching the action. If you actually open your eyes to the theme of The Terminator you realize the true meaning of the movie...Its 2029 and the machines have taken over. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s character is a cyborg that is sent by the machines to kill. Mankind is fighting for their lives. In a world of man vs. machine, who do you think would win? The transhumanist theme in The Terminator series is singularity. Once the intelligence of machines surpasses the intelligence of man there is no telling what could happen. Would the machines claim their superiority over man?

Most have heard of Modesto’s Jeremy Renner starring in the new movie The Bourne Legacy. In the movie Jeremy Renner’s character Aaron Cross is chemically enhanced into a super soldier. Aaron Cross has H+ qualities and abilities. In the movie he has to flee because the defense program, who was giving him the drugs to increase his intelligence and strength, are threatened with exposure. The

transhumanist theme in this movie is the fear of rejection. Many transhumanists have a strong fear that if the concept of transhumanism is rejected by society it will be developed underground and used unethically. If society doesn't believe Artificial Intelligence is right what will happen to our world? People, like Aaron Cross, will have to be running for their lives, running away because of the fear of being assassinated. If the transhumanist movement did advance so much that everyone could participate we would want to use it in an ethically suited way. Having it be developed underground would cause many problems in our society, as illustrated in the movie.

As the transhumanist movement advances, scientist and transhumanists alike are becoming more and more aware of the dangers. Another question that comes up is "Would people WANT to live in a world of transhumanism?" Take Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, for example. In this "new world" everyone belongs to everyone. People don't grow old, they have all the sex they want, and ideas such as marriage are absurd! In this seemingly perfect world problems arise. Characters in the book start to renounce the use of soma, a drug used to make people happy. While renouncing the "norm" of soma, characters start to like the idea of love and marriage. This idea is, as mentioned before, preposterous. In Brave New World everyone was sorted into groups...Alphas, Betas, Gammas, ect. Freedom of choice did not exist. In a powerful part from the book, the rejection of this "perfect world" is shown.

"But I don't want comfort. I want God. I want poetry. I want real danger. I want freedom. I want goodness. I want sin....I am claiming the right to be unhappy".

Later on the page it goes on to say that claiming the right to be unhappy also includes:

"The right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis or cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind".

This is a breakthrough...the Savage breaks the chain of what has been going on. He has renounced soma and decided that he does not want to live in this "perfect world". The Savage decides that he wants to live a life with chance. This is

an example of what rejections people have or may have. Not everyone may want to live a perfect life. Some people like the idea that they don't know what may be in store for them later in life. Simply the idea of dying is their own. In Brave New World individuality does not exist. There are always ninety-six people who are identical to you. In a world of transhumanism you give up individuality.

Transhumanism is a movement that strives to use technology to help achieve longer and healthier lives. This is the main goal of the movement. Scientists are working hard to find a way for humans not to suffer or struggle. Could you imagine a world with no blindness, deafness, or cancer? With transhumanism many different advancements can occur, the possibilities are endless. The goals and aims of these transhumanist scientists are all ethical. The idea is it to make the world a better place; a place where everyone is faster, smarter and fit.

It is true that the transhumanist world seems like it would be the perfect world. Everyone would be smarter and healthier; there would be no cancer, no blindness or deafness. But what is the guarantee? Do we have one? What if that vision of a transhumanist world is just that? A Vision, an illusion. The truth is we don't have any guarantee. For all we know our world can turn into The Transformer's version of 2029...machines taking over mankind..

All three of these examples: The Terminator, The Bourne Legacy, and Brave New World, show the dangers of transhumanism. Artificial Intelligence is defined as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines". The possibility that after machines exceed our human intelligence they may very well take over, like they did in The Terminator, creates the most frightening part about transhumanism and Artificial intelligence, the risk. Yes, the idea of Artificial Intelligence is fascinating but do we want to take the chance and risk being attacked by the very machines that we as humans gave intelligence too? To transhumanist and scientist the possibility of these machines taking over is very real. The idea that "robots" could take over sounds a lot like a bit of fiction pulled from a Sci-Fi movie; but in a world where Artificial Intelligence is advancing all the time, it is a great possibility. The fear that machines may take over is growing in the world of transhumanism. As a huge Harry Potter fan myself I suddenly realized the forms of transhumanism that are carved into the epic series. One of fans' favorite memories of Harry Potter is after Harry and Ron miss the train to Hogwarts. Only one train goes to Hogwarts so the two boys did



what any kid would do...take daddy's car. Once arriving on the grounds of Hogwarts, Ronald accidentally flies the car into the Whomping Willow. Shortly after the accident, the car literally throws Ron, Harry, and their luggage out of the car and flies back to the Weasley's home. This is an example of machines v. man. Yes, Harry Potter is a world of magic. But magic could be mistaken for Artificial Intelligence in cases like this. The car, in a sense, took over. The car, by itself, decided what it wanted to do. In the Harry Potter series there are many magical things that could now be looked at as ideas of Artificial Intelligence.

The idea of transhumanism and Artificial Intelligence is greatly growing. Advancements are being made more and more. Most people, however, are not educated about what is going on in the Transhumanism movement. The ideas and advancements are forever stuck on the section in the newspapers after the obituaries. People should be educated about what's now becoming a great possibility in our world. Machines v. man may indeed be our future. Of course there is no doubt that forms of transhumanism are necessary. There are always people who need glasses and hearing aids. But how far will scientists go? Will they know when to stop? Or will the advancements go so far that machines end up taking over our world? Should we continue advancing? Do the pros outweigh the cons? Or are the cons just too dangerous to take the chance? These are all questions we should be thinking of.

**Bianca Mar-Elia**

*Bianca Mar-Elia*





## *Devolution*

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: Victor Foster: May 3, 2237: Capital City, Earth: Holocronical Recording 37:

*\* Hello, my name is Victor Foster and I don't have much time...\**

They are after me, it's all gone to hell down here; looting, murdering, and rioting in the street. Shocktroops are everywhere, weeding out the weak among us, but it hasn't always been this way. This world was once flawless, or so we thought. "Do your best, to be your best" they always said. Everything seemed perfect, too perfect. This is all I have left, my thoughts, and I am not even sure if they are my own. This is my story, our story, the story of the human race; and its demise.

It all started out very innocent, enhancement that is. Science had been growing by leaps and bounds since the cybernetic revolution of the late 2100's. Now not just the rich could afford bodily enhancement, every Joe Blow on the street could afford a cybernetic bicep, organ or even a leg if he wanted to spend a few credits. At first people couldn't get enough of the stuff, the doctors were booked for months in advanced for the simplest of procedures such as user controlled eye color units or fat eating Nano robots. There was no downside, no side effects; run faster, jump higher, see farther, and live longer. Who wouldn't want in on some of the action? The doctors were cheap, the implants cheaper.

Altered humans became the normal, no one questioned it. It was a fact of life for most people, especially in the Capital City. Sure there were a few groups of extremists and religious groups that preached against any form of human enhancement but they weren't even given the time of day by most of the population. There was only one thing that you had to do if you wanted an enhancement. Just take a simple little harmless anti-rejection drug, Zamphil; or as they called it on the streets Zam. The sky was the limit for the human race as time went on; people were pushing the limits of what it meant to be human. Those with the money could have up to ninety percent of their natural bodies replaced with cybernetics. Large portions of the brain could be interchanged with silicon chips that gave the host a skyrocketed IQ, enhanced photo memory, and much more. The rich could even have most of their organs replaced or bypassed altogether. Sickness and disease were a thing of the past. The line between human and android was being blurred, but the people (if you could call them that) didn't care. Human cybernetics became the driving force behind the world economy; there was nothing that could stop it.

To some the business of enhancing their bodies became a sick fetish, people would spend every penny they earned on new modules and would have the procedures done in the cheapest back alley holes that they could find. Everything was fine and dandy for the most part. People were happy, that's all that mattered. But there was a dark side that had they no idea about, one far darker than a simple addiction. Everything that was cherished was a ploy.

You see, if one could see past the glittering generalities of enhancement, there was a dark underside to things, those who brought it up were labeled conspirators, and made into a laughingstock. You see, the scientists that invented about ninety nine percent of human augmentations were government backed or sponsored in some way. The only approved cybernetics was produced by the state itself and the nail in the coffin; Zamphil was a proprietary drug. Only the government knew how to manufacture it.

If you didn't take enough Zamphil, your body would start rejecting its augmentations. The effects were progressive and in some cases would lead to the death of the user after an extended absence. People were being made into junkies by their own government and didn't even pay attention to it; they were being too encapsulated by their shiny new enhancement. At first there was an abundant supply of Zam, but at the start of the last decade shipments started to decrease for no apparent reason. There was no need to worry, at first the price went up a little, no big deal. The shipments became more and more scarce but nothing a little more cash couldn't fix. Eventually things began to stabilize but only for so long.

By this time, I myself have had sixty percent of my body replaced and augmented by cybernetics, twenty percent of my brain, and a few large muscles and organs. If you compared me to the human being of the twentieth century, we may look the same but we're totally different. I have an IQ of two hundred and thirty, can run at speeds up to thirty five miles per hour and have a life expectancy of over two hundred years. But that's just the thing; I won't live another two months.

I need Zam. Everyone needs Zam. The Government makes Zam. The government controls the people.

It started slowly as I have said but it evolved into this, chaos and anarchy. The shortages got worse and worse. The price of Zam skyrocketed. Everyone was feeling the impact. Unfortunate souls sold everything that they had to buy enough

Zam to keep their limbs from falling off or organs shutting down. The streets were filled with what looked like zombies, barley being able to be kept alive; their neurons and bionic chips struggling to send the most basic impulses.

Riots started chaos in the street. That's exactly what they wanted. The homeless and destitute banded together with the rich and powerful (not so powerful anymore). An insurrection was born, the Government against the people, urban war. Every once in a while we find some water, nutrients, and most importantly Zam. We are the resistance, we are the people, and we will survive...for now.

There are many like me that are a part of the resistance. It's the only thing that we have left. We fight for our lives, whatever they are worth, we fight a guerrilla war, striking convoys of government troops, and trying to fight back, it gives us a sense of purpose but I know that we will lose. Tyranny is our normality. What decisions are our own, everything goes back to Zam.

So as I sit here in my dark hole, hiding from the government's rebellion crushing shock troops I think about what we did, what the human race did. We tried to transcend ourselves. We did. Humanity has evolved; we are no longer what we once were. Was it worth it? This is the question that haunts my every conscious moment. Was there any way to do it differently, was there any way that would have ended better? Is there any way we could have prevented this catastrophe? Forming and opinion is absolutely futile, the bottom line is life and death.

I look to the horizon I see the dull glow of the burning Capital city. It was great once. I am taking my last capsule of Zam, now. What has happened to our "great" human race? All promise that we had is gone. The universe would have been better off if we had never existed, this human stain on the cosmos. What good do I bring? Nothing. Life is hopeless and futile. Time to end mine and take as much of the problem with me as I go...Zam give me the strength... from dust I've come, back to the dust I shall go.

My name is Victor Foster. Am I human?

Goodbye.

**Matthew Johannes**  
ESSENTIAL WRITING

## *Discussing the Controversial World of Transhumanism*

Transhumanism is a movement aimed to better society through the process of improving the human body to live longer, adapt faster, and tolerate more destruction. It is headed by professionals from various scientific communities; including authors, professors, scientists, etc. The professionals leading and pushing this new movement have released a plethora of information about the topic. From books and newspaper articles on to a complete Transhumanist Declaration and Constitution, information regarding the newest developments in transhumanism is abundant.

Transhumanist thinkers believe that the world and the people on it are imperfect beings, which are easily fixable by applying technological and scientific advancements to the human world. Some of the basic enhancements supported by followers of the transhumanism movement are genetic engineering, designer babies, and biotechnology. These enhancements are some of the most controversial progressions science has recently embraced. This leads to the great controversy that is transhumanism. Many people believe that this movement is in fact a negative influence on society because the enhancements to the human condition supported by the leaders of transhumanism oppose various individual's ethical standards. While others believe that the progress transhumanists are supporting is simply embraced for the betterment of the environment in which humans live. With the many opinions, and opposing views regarding the ethical standards of this movement, it becomes difficult to formulate one's own viewpoint.

Determining whether one is in support of or disagrees with the transhumanist movement is a feat on its own. The movement is not a black and white, I fully support this, or I absolutely oppose this deal. It is composed of many layers, and prompting questions that leave one pondering his/her own opinion. Is it wrong to alter our genetic make-up? Am I a bad person for not wanting to make these changes to society, although they may make life better? Do I believe that this is the ethical solution to the world's problems? The world was created as an imperfect place; is it wrong to attempt to perfect it? Are these modifications safe? These are all questions that arise with the concepts that are incorporated with the



transhumanist movement. The answers to these doubts are not common sense, and will vary between individuals, only leading to even greater arguments between opposing views on transhumanism.

In order to fulfill their purpose, and improve the quality of human life, transhumanists embrace genetic engineering and newly emerging biotechnology. Such scientific advancements involve the altering of DNA, the code for the basis of life on earth. The hope of the scientists altering the human genetic code is that people will eventually be able to become posthuman. Posthumanism is a concept that once “fixed”, people will be above any limits that essentially hold them back. Followers of the posthuman movement believe that with the aid of technology and science, people will be able to improve their pain tolerance, strength capabilities, lifespan, and overall lifestyle. All of these progressions to perfection will come as a result of genetic engineering, and biotechnological advancements. This is also where the confusion and ethical arguments really begin to play their key role. Should humans strive to become posthuman?

One begins to wonder, why is it important that humans progress to become posthuman? Well, according to the official humanity+ website, “The conservative projection, which assumes only that progress continues in the same gradual way it has since the 17th century, would imply that we should expect to see dramatic developments over the coming decades.” (More). Transhumanists simply highly regard keeping technological advancements going in the upward direction. The leaders of this movement follow the mantra that embracing scientific advancements in biotechnology and genetic engineering is the best way to progress society. Looking back throughout history, advancements both to the human body and to the world have always been made. Whether it was a walking cane, glass replacement eye ball, or prosthetic limb, history shows that we as people place an importance on engineering ourselves to be better suited to the environment. In order to progress even past the point that our ancestors have crossed, the transhumanists hope to genetically engineer humans to be less likely to obtain genetic diseases, become stronger individuals, and all-in-all, live longer.

Not only do ethical arguments exist from doubters of this new movement, but, questions regarding the desirability of this changing world have surfaced. The public

wonders if living in a perfect world will be boring. After all, individuals were created to be imperfect, and some would argue that this is the spice of life. In response to these critiques, the humanity+ website says, “It is probably wiser to speak of improving the world, rather than making it “perfect”” (More). Transhumanists therefore make an agreement with the public, that a perfect world may not be the most desirable. The leaders of the movement are stating that transhumanism and posthumanism are not looking to destroy ethical values to achieve what in their minds is a perfect world. They are simply attempting to use scientific advancements for the benefit of the world, in order to better society for all people who inhabit it.

**Megan Holm**

*MEGAN HOLM*



## *From the Journal of June*

Before giving you a piece of my heart, by letting you read a section of my own personal journal, you should know some background about me. June 7, 3081, I was born a little differently than most. My brain was missing the usual chemicals necessary for proper thought, emotion, and reaction. This made growing up difficult as I was comparing myself to other children, while facing struggles no one else faced. I could not focus to process the depth or detail of information I was given. I was confused by the reactions appropriate for common situations. I did not know how to feel happiness or sadness. And most of all, I had a difficult time loving. The idea of unconditional, constant love seemed foreign and illogical. This may be the description of a monster, but there was more to me. I knew I had these problems, but I also believed I could be more. I knew I had the ability to grow, learn, and become the person I wanted to be. However, I had no idea how difficult this process would be.

*September 4, 3098*

I am suffocating trapped in the walls of this doctor office. Today they, the doctors, say they have discovered what it is that makes me “different.” It was a simple neurochemical test to determine the chemical (or chemicals) missing from the processes that allow the brain to function “normally.” They describe it like a blood test to determine what the body is missing and what it needs. Some people need vitamins, some need insulin, and I need three pills to make me think “right.” I understand the basic idea is similar, but it seems to me they are trying to make me a different person. I do not have the choice to take this medicine. They have decided for me, because they know best. There's no air in this controlling one way place. Sitting, trapped, I hear something outside as it calls, beckoning me to leave this crazy fake life. The need to end the pain of the daily struggle that has been my life has overcome my need to run away. I am going to stay and give the medicine a chance.



*September 25, 3098*

I have been taking their medicine for nearly a month now. I hate swallowing those pills every day. I hate knowing it is changing the way I think. I do not naturally think the way they are making me think. I do not behave or respond in the way they make me perform now. This isn't the person I was. The person I was wasn't good enough for them though. The world we are in was made for one type of person to succeed. But when you don't fit the mold, there is no way to survive. When you can't survive, the doctors will make you the person who can, the person you should be. I can't help but to feel as though the person I am becoming isn't me. I have tried explaining this to the doctors but they do not listen. They think it is helping me so it's worth it. They don't know for sure though. It's only me going through this process alone. I don't know who to talk to because no one has experienced what I have. I must rely on myself. If the possible benefits outweigh the risks than it may be worth it, but at this time it's anyone's best guess what will come from this "experiment."

*October 7, 3098*

We edit our thoughts, our actions, our emotions to be and be perceived as the person we want to be. How though, do we know what is real and what is fake? What is who we are naturally and what is what we want to be? Is it the same or different? If we are constantly editing ourselves, who then are we? What if we did not edit? Would life be chaos or real? I have tried so hard to fit the mold, to edit myself into "that person" the world expected me to be. It is possible. I can do it with hard work and dedication. But is it what I should do? Should I do something just because it is possible, or should I do something because I know that is where I belong? How does one find that place and that balance though? Where does doing what you have to do, even if you don't want to, overtake being yourself?

*October 14, 3098*

It has been hard, trying to make it without someone who has been through the process to understand my experience and to understand me. I have to make it on my own. I dream of the person I want to be. The doctors say the medicine will help me with this. I work and try for a while, and it gets me so far. Then I make a mistake,

take a long fall back to how I was before, before the medicine, and I hit the ground so hard. The hope and desire to be a strong woman was once my sole goal, but today it's long gone. Maybe tomorrow I can be the person of my dream, but what if that dream never comes back to me. I have so many fears as they change who I am. There is no one around that has had to face these fears. There is no one there who truly understands, and all I want was someone who cares. I try talking to my best friend. She has always been by my side full of support and encouragement. When I tell her of the missing chemicals she does not understand. She questions why I can't just decide to change and then be different. I try to tell her, "It is out of my ability. I can't decide the message these chemicals send or the amount of each chemical I have in my brain." The idea is so foreign. It's hard to explain and I can't blame her for not understanding. However, this does not deny the fact that this isolation hurts so badly. I want to scream at the world. I'm trapped inside my head with no one to help me. But I can tell that I am changing for the better. I am beginning to lose all numbness and feel small moments of joy, pride, and even hurt. I am more focused and see the consequences of my choices. I knew these things in theory. They are concepts children know, but since the medicine they seem real. I can experience them. I do not want to let myself go back to the person I was before I got help, so I have to make it. I am going to make it, with or without help. I thought my family was always going to be beside me. I thought my friends could relate to my experiences. When I was little, I thought that no matter what happened I would always have them. It came and went as I grew up, but their support is what I want, what I need. I don't know who to trust. I think that I can rely on others, but they don't understand and leave me. I can only trust myself, because everyone is only looking out for themselves. It hurts to be alone, but when you do trust yourself, you can survive. I did not believe I could make it before; now I am the only person I have. I just swallow my fears and take a deep breathe.

*November 1, 3098*

Two months ago, I expected myself to simply be well enough without the help of modern medicine. Life before help was dark. The daily struggles to do the simple tasks most people are able to do effortlessly lead me down a difficult path. Each time I made a mistake, let someone down, or felt as though I achieved less than

what I could I became more and more disappointed and frustrated with myself. The ability to now achieve what I once worked so hard to, but fell short of, is an incredible feeling. I was unable to do simple tasks or think problems through. My life suffered immensely as I fought to hold on to the person I had always been. I couldn't focus and understand information in such depth and detail, as I do now. I didn't understand the consequences of each decision I made, as I am beginning to see more clearly now. I couldn't care for myself, let alone those around me, as I do now. I couldn't keep track of time or deadlines, as I can now. I didn't feel the joy and happiness when someone appreciates you, as I can now. I didn't see how love can change you, as I am beginning to see and feel today. Since then, I have learned so much. I found the strength to make it through the darkest times in life and learned the true meaning of perseverance. I will be the first to admit I did not believe the doctors. Looking back over the chance I have experienced in a short amount of time, I am eternally grateful for the change in my life they made possible. No one would choose to sit in hurt, pain, and suffering, when the possibility for the opposite exists. Life is not easy, so why make it harder when the ability for a better you and a better world are possible.

**JoEllen Reece**  
*JOELLEN REECE*







## *Something Can Never Be*

Her eyes fluttered as sunshine  
Broke through the window,  
Her sleepy smile  
Made him stare

I love you.  
She was now wide awake.

I love you too.  
But that's not all you need to hear.

There's more to me you need to see.  
What do you mean?  
She begged him please,  
To love her all the same

My heart beats,  
Just like yours.

I love,  
Just like you.

He pleaded,  
Where are you going with this?  
She put a finger to his lips,  
All you need is to listen.

I seem to be  
What you are.

What I am  
Is what you are not.