The Challenge of Transhumanism

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What is it?

Here’s one author’s explanation:

“Transhumanism (H+) is not a religion or a secular ideology...it has no body of codified beliefs and no agreed agenda for change. It is instead, a broad intellectual movement – not so much a philosophy as a class or cluster of philosophical claims and cultural practices. Ultimately, transhumanists argue, technological intervention in the capacities of the human body and mind will lead to alterations so dramatic that it will make sense to call the deeply altered people of the near or not-so-near future posthuman.; they will be continuous with us but unlike us in many ways.”

*The Transhumanist Reader* ed. Max More
Some examples

From biotechnology:
  DNA repair & enhancement
  DNA write
  Life extension
  Cryonics

From computer science
  Advanced forms of AI
  The singularity
  Brain uploading
Transhumanism - a look back

technology
transforming
humanity
Isn’t this idea a bit far-fetched?

Well, no – it’s already happened.

1) Fire

2) Transition from hunter-gatherers to:
   Farmers
   Herders

And, it’s worth noting the potential for conflict

Consider: Cain (farmer) and Abel (shepherd)
Ok, technological change has happened. But extreme predictions –

like the use of technology resulting in genetically modified humans and a transformed society –

that’s a bit over the top.

Well, no – it’s already happened.
Lactose Tolerance
(the ability to digest milk products as an adult)

Around 10-20K years ago, the vast majority of humans were unable to digest milk as adults.

But, mutations arose enabling adult milk consumption – and, in cultures that herded cattle, these mutations were advantageous and spread throughout the population.
Gouda kaasmarkt - Welkom in Gouda
An estimate of the percentage of adults that can digest lactose in the indigenous population of the Old World.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lactose_intolerance
Aside: There’s the popular comic book and movie series on the X-men, a fictional group of mutant humans with superhuman powers.

It’s interesting to note that super powered mutants actually do exist.*

*So long as you count the ability to eat ice cream without flatulence as a superpower.
Now, if you have a constant growth rate, you get exponential growth.

Is that what’s going on?

We can test this by putting the y-axis on a logarithmic scale.

If the growth rate is constant, we should see a straight line.
The graph shows the world population over time, with two notable events labeled:

- **Black Death**: Around 1350 AD, which had a significant impact on population decline.
- **Industrial Revolution**: Around 1800 AD, leading to a sharp increase in population due to improved living conditions and technologies.

The x-axis represents the years AD, while the y-axis shows the number of people.
Throughout most of human history, low growth rates have been the norm.

It was only after the industrial revolution started, that we have had high growth rates.
Perhaps you’ve heard the following phrase, or a variation thereof:

“In the natural order of things, parents are not meant to bury their children.”

In London in the 1700’s, less than half of all children survived to age 10.

Christian Transhumanist Association

Using science & technology to participate in the work of God, to cultivate life and renew creation.

As members of the Christian Transhumanist Association:

1. We believe that God’s mission involves the transformation and renewal of creation including humanity, and that we are called by Christ to participate in that mission: working against illness, hunger, oppression, injustice, and death.

2. We seek growth and progress along every dimension of our humanity: spiritual, physical, emotional, mental—and at all levels: individual, community, society, world.

3. We recognize science and technology as tangible expressions of our God-given impulse to explore and discover and as a natural outgrowth of being created in the image of God.

4. We are guided by Jesus’ greatest commands to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength...and love your neighbor as yourself.”

5. We believe that the intentional use of technology, coupled with following Christ, will empower us to become more human across the scope of what it means to be creatures in the image of God.
Our hope for a new creation is not tied to what humans can do, for we believe that one day every challenge to God’s rule will be crushed. His kingdom will fully come, and the Lord will rule. Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Section 55 of the Contemporary Testimony: *Our World Belongs to God*
“There is one caveat in all this for the pro-enhancement crowd, though. And that is for them to ask themselves what they want from enhancement. If enhancement appeals to them only because it offers power, distraction, libertine gratification, an endless existence of vapid entertainment, then they are not seeking to be more than human, they are seeking to be less than human – but just for a really, really, really long time with more durable equipment. As with so many of our other quests, enhancement should be pursued because it can satisfy worthwhile and noble ends. To have enhancement justifiably recognized as a right, it needs to be not only perceived as worthwhile, dignified, and noble, it needs to be worthwhile, dignified, and noble.”

Patrick D. Hopkins, *Is Enhancement Worthy of Being a Right?*