

A SHORT TRANSHUMANIST BIBLIOGRAPHY

Transhumanism is a relatively recent intellectual and cultural movement that promotes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding and evaluating potential means for enhancing the human organism, the human race and the human condition.

Expressed in broad strokes, transhumanism seeks to produce "posthumans" who will variously live longer, be smarter, be stronger, be more peace-loving, or otherwise constitute an improvement over regular humanity in some nontrivial manner. It aims to achieve its goals primarily through technological innovation in fields such as genetic engineering, neuropharmacology, computer technology, artificial intelligence, and molecular nanotechnology. Some of the less mainstream transhumanist themes include efforts to develop conscious, self-aware computers, efforts to reanimate individuals deemed to be dead by ordinary clinical criteria, and even altering humans with a view to facilitating space colonization.

Transhumanist issues have been the subject of a considerable number of books; I have listed many of these in the following short bibliography. While the list is not exhaustive, it is highly representative of the transhumanist literature. The list is presented in order of publication date and includes both works aimed at the intelligent layman as well as works aimed at the professional academic philosopher. Note that this list is not offered as a kind of hermeneutic key or guide to the field but rather merely provided to acquaint the reader with some of the more readable accounts. In each case in this list I have tried to summarize the key message of the book in one or two sentences.

Gregory Stock. *Redesigning Humans: Choosing our Genes, Changing our Future.* Mariner Books, 2003. *In this book Stock wants society to give our future children an edge, even if it involves profound changes of our biological makeup.*

Francis Fukuyama. *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution.* Picador, 2003. *In this book the author identifies concerns that the foundations of liberal democracy may become eroded by unbridled biotechnology advances, and argues that human biotechnology must be regulated to prevent this and other undesirable outcomes.*

James Hughes. *Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future.* Basic Books, 2004. *In this book James Hughes argues that while biomedical technologies like genetic engineering can fundamentally improve our quality of life, it is important that they be controlled democratically.*

Nicholas Agar. *Liberal Eugenics: In Defence of Human Enhancement.* Wiley-Blackwell, 2004. *In this book the author makes the case for ethical eugenic intervention through genetic enhancement of the human organism.*

Bill McKibben. *Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age.* St. Martin's Griffin, 2004. *In this book McKibben argues that developments in genetic engineering, robotics, and nanotechnology threaten what it means to be human, and that for the sake of humanity we should critically consider the potential dehumanizing impact of such technologies before it is too late.*

Ronald Bailey. *Liberation Biology: The Scientific and Moral Case for the Biotech Revolution.* Prometheus, 2005. *In this book the author takes a libertarian position, attacking both bioconservative thinkers such as Francis Fukuyama and Leon Kass, as well as critics of transhumanism from the political left.*

Simon Young. *Designer Evolution: A Transhumanist Manifesto.* Prometheus Books, 2005. *In this book, Young argues for scientific rationality and a rejection of superstition and nihilism as a means to encourage human progress.*

Ramez Naam. *More Than Human: Embracing the Promise of Biological Enhancement.* Random House, 2005. *Written from a libertarian perspective, Naam reviews the state of the art in genetic engineering, computer technology and other fields to make the case that biological enhancement will improve the human condition.*

Joel Garreau. *Radical Evolution: The Promise and Peril of Enhancing Our Minds, Our Bodies -- and What It Means to Be Human*. Broadway, 2006. Like other books of this genre, the author seeks to present a balanced view. Along with a discussion of how humanity might be improved, Garreau identifies concerns raised by bioconservative thinkers such as Francis Fukuyama, Martin Rees, Bill McKibben, Leon Kass and Michael Sandel that while advances in genetics, nanotechnology and robotics may help some segments of society, they also pose genuine threats to human survival itself.

Ray Kurzweil. *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. Penguin Books, 2006. Kurzweil argues that humanity is at the threshold of an era ("the singularity") in which our biology will be combined with genetics, nanotechnology and robotics to create a new form of human organism with almost no constraints on our mental, physical and moral capacity.

Michael J. Sandel. *The Case Against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering*. Belknap Press, 2009. In this book the author argues that the pursuit of perfection via technological enhancement is morally problematic for reasons that go beyond arguments related to safety and social justice. Sandel crafts an argument that the pursuit of perfection by such means represents a bid for mastery and control that ignores the gifted nature of human powers and achievements.

Nicholas Agar. *Humanity's End: Why We Should Reject Radical Enhancement*. Bradford, 2010. In this book Agar argues that the radical interventions envisioned by some transhumanists could be far less positive than the rosy futures imagined by these thinkers, and that any transition to a posthuman future is fraught with moral challenges, such as the possibility that posthumans might rule tyrannically over ordinary humans.

Allen Buchanan. *Better than Human: The Promise and Perils of Enhancing Ourselves*. Oxford University Press, 2011. This book attempts to present a balanced view on the ethical dilemmas surrounding biomedical enhancement. In the book, the author argues that the debate over enhancement has been contaminated by false assumptions and disingenuous rhetoric, and that the existence of "design flaws" in our biological blueprint should be acknowledged. Consequently, humanity should be open to attempts to improve the design of the human organism (and with it, of course, human nature), while still recognizing that such attempts may on occasion fail calamitously.

Gregory R. Hansell (Ed.). *Transhumanism and Its Critics*. Metanexus, 2011. This volume is a collection of 16 essays presenting the cases for and against improving humanity via bioengineering methods.

Julian Savulescu and Nick Bostrom (Eds.). Human Enhancement. Oxford University Press, 2011. *This anthology provides a comprehensive look at the question of human enhancement by artificial means, with commentaries by authorities from both transhumanist and bioconservative (“anti-meliorist”) camps.*

Julian Savulescu and Ingmar Persson. Unfit for the Future: The Need for Moral Enhancement. Oxford University Press, 2012. *The authors argue that our moral shortcomings "are preventing our political institutions from acting effectively" and that artificial moral enhancement has become essential if humanity is to avoid catastrophe. Moral enhancement, the authors posit, "would enable us to act better for distant people, future generations, and non-human animals".*

Daniel Berleant. The Human Race to the Future: What Could Happen - and What to Do. Lifeboat Foundation, 2014). *The author offers us visions of possible futures ranging from the near-present to many millions of years from now.*