Transhumanism – Promise or Peril?

A Critical Reflection

Aaron Frank

In November 2018, a landmark summit in Hong Kong convened 500 of the world's leading biomedical researchers, policymakers, and ethicists to confront a suite of pressing issues that a new technology had forced upon the world.

Just six years earlier, a research team led by two biochemists, Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier, published their work, revealing what is now widely considered one of the most important discoveries in the history of biology. CRISPR-Cas9, as it's known, is a type of 'genetic scissors'[1] that give scientists an unprecedented ability to modify DNA at the level of single nucleotides, the basic units of A, T, C, and G that make up our genetic information.

Just as computers can edit letters in a Word file,[2] the world now possesses a cheap, easy-to-use method for genetically modifying anything made of DNA. At the time of the discovery, scientists hailed its potential to cure genetic diseases and develop more sustainable agriculture. The ethical implications were also obvious since the technology offers an ability to genetically modify human beings, not only to eliminate disease but perhaps optimize for intelligence or physical traits. The phrase 'designer baby' became widely used in imagining this future.

Chaired by the US National Academy of Sciences, the Royal Society of the U.K., and the Academy of Sciences of Hong Kong, Doudna and her fellow committee members convened the summit to seek a global consensus on ethical issues related to the genetic modification of human beings using CRISPR.[3]

In a twist that shocked the world, that future came far sooner than the committee anticipated.

Just days before the summit was set to begin, He Jiankui, a Chinese researcher, revealed in an accidentally leaked video that he had not only used CRISPR to modify the embryos of twin girls, but subsequently implanted them in the womb of their mother to generate a pregnancy. The power to rewrite the genetic code of a human life was no longer a speculative future. For the first time, at least confirmed to science, human beings are born on earth with deliberately altered DNA and capable of passing those genetic changes to future generations.

The science community immediately recognized that a threshold of deep significance had been crossed, and the condemnation from the gathering was emphatic. They described He's work as reckless, premature, and ethically irresponsible. Seeking to create distance, He's University in Shenzhen immediately issued a statement expressing "deep shock" at the experiment, which they stressed was done without their knowledge.

[1] Gostimskaya I. CRISPR–Cas9: A History of Its Discovery and Ethical Considerations of Its Use in Genome Editing. *Biochemistry* (Mosc). 2022;87(8):777-788. doi:10.1134/S0006297922080090

[2] Pollack A. Jennifer Doudna, a Pioneer Who Helped Simplify Genome Editing. *The New York Times*. May 11, 2015. Accessed April 9, 2026. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/12/science/jennifer-doudna-crispr-cas9-genetic-engineering.html

[3] Ruwitch J. His baby gene editing shocked ethicists. Now he's in the lab again. *NPR*. June 8, 2023. Accessed April 9, 2026. https://www.npr.org/2023/06/08/1178695152/china-scientist-he-jiankui-crispr-baby-gene-editing

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While science, technology, and human reason can and should be used as tools for humanity to overcome many of the afflictions we encounter, today's transhumanism reflects a profound imbalance in its overreliance on engineering and logical reasoning at the expense of other ways of engaging the world.

Given the overwhelming response, He was invited to address the summit to share more details. In the lecture, attended by dozens of journalists, he defended his experiment as an effort to modify a specific gene, CCR5, which encodes a protein that HIV uses to infect blood cells.[4] Citing the heavy disease burden that HIV/AIDS has on much of Africa, He's goal was to knock out the gene as a way to make the babies resistant to HIV.

Shortly after the summit concluded, He disappeared in China before reappearing in a Shenzhen courtroom where he was sentenced to three years in prison for "illegal medical practices." The court found He had forged ethical review documents and misled the doctors who implanted the embryos.[5]

The episode involving He Jiankui, which is still ongoing, suddenly, and perhaps uncomfortably, makes it clear that a range of powerful technologies are rapidly emerging that promise to reshape our ability to steer the direction of humanity and life on our planet. This is true not only in biotechnology but also in areas including nanotechnology, computing, brain-machine interfaces, artificial intelligence, and many others.

In this rapidly developing technological context, transhumanism, a philosophy advocating the use of technology to enhance, augment, or ultimately transcend the limitations of human biology, has gained relevance as a growing area of interest.

Given its likely increased cultural presence, especially its popularity among influential figures across Silicon Valley, it's worth measuring transhumanist ideas against the Neohumanist philosophy of PR Sarkar. While Neohumanism preserves the importance of reason, rationality, and science in human society, it also "asserts the centrality of spirituality and the intuitive faculties to human experience."[6]

As Dr Kathleen Kesson describes it: "[Neohumanism] acknowledges the sanctity of all life forms and urges us to live in accordance with deep ecological principles, a revival of the ancestral wisdom embodied by people who have lived in sustainable ways with their biosystems for centuries. It recognizes the vitality and worth of all the cultures of the world and argues against the homogenization of local cultures through economic and cultural exploitation. It regards all beings as worthy and advances a rational and egalitarian distribution of wealth and resources, so that all people on the planet are guaranteed a minimum standard of living, and it challenges all forms of violence, imperialism, racism, sexism, exploitation, and injustice."[7]

When measuring the project of contemporary transhumanism against this worldview, several

[4] Normile D. Researcher who created CRISPR twins defends his work but leaves many questions unanswered. Accessed April 10, 2026. https://www.science.org/content/article/researcher-who-created-crispr-twins-defends-his-work-leaves-many-questions-unanswered

[5] Normile D. Chinese scientist who produced genetically altered babies sentenced to 3 years in jail. Accessed April 11, 2026. https://www.science.org/content/article/chinese-scientist-who-produced-genetically-altered-babies-sentenced-3-years-jail

[6] Kesson K. *The Posthuman Era.*

[7] Ibid.

troubling issues arise. Transhumanism today largely fails to align with Neohumanist ideas due to three core objections put forward in this essay.

First, the movement is deeply rooted in Enlightenment-era knowledge systems, which fetishise human reason to the exclusion of other sensemaking and maintains a dogmatic commitment to scientific materialism. As such, its current incarnation is particularly poisoned by its emergence within the structures of global capitalism.[8] Second, today's transhumanist ambitions are steered by an egoic desire for control with the risk of "shaping our society in the direction of our existing neuroses."[9] Third, transhumanist discourse is structurally rooted in a pathologizing (*treating as a disease*) of existing human traits, experiences, and conditions.[10]

This essay will argue that while Neohumanism certainly has room to celebrate the ways science and technology can be rationally applied to improve the well-being of humanity and life on this planet, it would urge extreme caution for those seeking to align with today's transhumanist ideologies.

Introduction to Transhumanism

The origins of transhumanism are often traced to an influential 1957 essay by Julian Huxley, a prominent British evolutionary biologist and eugenicist. Huxley was a lifelong supporter of eugenics, a theory and practice that involves controlling human reproduction to optimize genetic traits in a population. In the pre-war years of the 1930's, Huxley championed a centrally organized state project with "eugenics as part of an agenda of social planning and to shape the emergent welfare state on biological lines."[11] He argued that nations should seek to select traits considered beneficial to society, such as intelligence and physical health.[12]

Following Nazi atrocities in their pursuit of racial cleansing, a project that many observed shared

significant overlap with the ideas proposed by Huxley, he became an outspoken anti-racist, suggesting race played no meaningful role in biological heredity. However, Huxley never renounced the idea that societies should steer human evolution based on biological traits and maintained a lifelong justification for controlled human evolution based on genetic science. A strong believer in IQ as a measure of intelligence, Huxley believed that average intelligence could be increased if more people of higher IQ had children together.[13]

Transhumanism, a term he used periodically in the 1950's, came to serve as shorthand for his views on 'evolutionary humanism', the idea that human beings are not the destination of creation but rather one step in a ceaseless journey of evolutionary change.[14] This view, at least, is shared by Sarkar's vision of Neohumanism.

In his 1957 *New Bottles for New Wine* essay, Huxley writes: "The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself – not just sporadically, an individual

[8] Thomas A. A Brief History of Transhumanism and its Critics. In: The Politics and Ethics of Transhumanism. 1st ed. Techno-Human Evolution and Advanced Capitalism. Bristol University Press; 2024:1-31. doi:10.2307/jj.14284473.4

[9] Pacheco A. Personal Discussion. April 7, 2026.

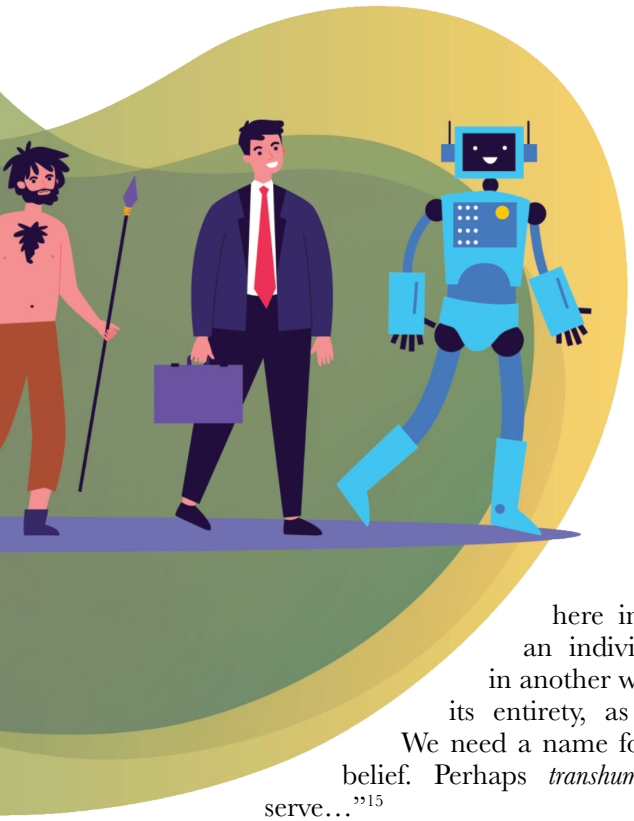
[10] Rübsaam A. Personal Discussion. March 23, 2026.

[11] Weindling P. 'Julian Huxley and the Continuity of Eugenics in Twentieth-century Britain.' J Mod Eur Hist. 2012;10(4):480-499. doi:10.17104/1611-8944_2012_4

[12] Duncan J. Julian Huxley: The prophet of transhumanism. *Refinelife*. September 10, 2025. Accessed April 11, 2026. https://refinelife.co/the-prophet-of-transhumanism/

[13] Bernhardt-Radu S. Julian S Huxley, the man who put eugenics into UNESCO | *Aeon Essays*. Accessed April 11, 2026. https://aeon.co/essays/julian-s-huxley-the-man-who-put-eugenics-into-unesco

[14] Philip JK. A Philosophical History of Transhumanism | Issue 160 | *Philosophy Now*. Accessed March 30, 2026. https://philosophynow.org/issues/160/A_Philosophical_History_of_Transhumanism



here in one way, an individual there in another way – but in its entirety, as humanity. We need a name for this new belief. Perhaps *transhumanism* will serve…"[15]

In *The Politics and Ethics of Transhumanism*, Dr. Alexander Thomas, a professor at the University of East London, offers a comprehensive history of the movement and its intellectual landscape since then. He begins by describing how today's transhumanism evades simple definition due to the widely varying lineages, factions, and interpretations that comprise its philosophical territory.

Among the primary differences Thomas notes is the degree to which various groups emphasize their stated goals of 'super-longevity', 'super-intelligence', and 'super-wellbeing'. Thomas points out that the first two of these goals are quantifiable, with the caveat that intelligence is still largely measured by the "historically compromised methodology of IQ," which Nassem Taleb, a known statistician and public intellectual, describes as a pseudo-scientific swindle.[16] Defining concepts of well-being, by contrast, requires navigating subjectively defined

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constructs shaped by cultural values, a feature which resists the reductive engineering-first approach advanced by most transhumanist advocates. Tellingly, there are many fewer transhumanists focused on this third category of well-being.[17]

Another important division relates to those who prioritize the use of biotechnologies such as genetic engineering to enhance human beings, and those who believe that we'll migrate 'ourselves' to alternative computational substrates, leaving behind the fleshy world of biology altogether. The ideas of this second group, most notably expressed in the work of Ray Kurzweil, are rooted in a reductive understanding of consciousness and intelligence, which holds that these are exclusively phenomena of 'information-processing.' For this group, transcending the human form involves merging with, or uploading our consciousness into, computers.

Finally, a further distinction concerns the contextual politics that inform how transhumanists pursue their ambitions. Thomas writes:

"Transhumanists are broadly split between two poles: the right-leaning techno-libertarian wing, often associated with Silicon Valley, and the left-leaning techno-progressive faction most notably represented by transhumanist James Hughes. The former generally emphasize the rights of individuals to upgrade themselves, whereas the latter offer more recognition of the societal implications, advocating a politics which fosters responsibility towards humanity at large to ensure transhumanist aims are broadly inclusive."

At one end of the poles, the techno-libertarian faction currently enjoys funding and support from tech billionaire Peter Thiel and other significant figures. This form of transhumanism took root in the

[15] Julian Huxley. New Bottles For New Wine. 1957. Accessed April 11, 2026. http://archive.org/details/NewBottlesForNewWine

[16] Taleb NN. IQ is largely a pseudoscientific swindle. *INCERTO*. August 26, 2025. Accessed April 11, 2026. https://medium.com/incerto/iq-is-largely-a-pseudoscientific-swindle-f131c101ba39

[17] Thomas A. A Brief History of Transhumanism and its Critics. In: *The Politics and Ethics of Transhumanism*. 1st ed. Techno-Human Evolution and Advanced Capitalism. Bristol University Press; 2024:1-31. doi:10.2307/jj.14284473.4

early 1990's when Max More, a British philosopher, and others, began publishing Extropy Magazine, a publication which over time articulated a worldview deeply rooted in enlightenment concepts of 'individual liberty' and the elevation of 'rational logic' as the dominant sensemaking tool to discover the nature of things.

The group's emphasis on individual liberty underpins its stated opposition to eugenics, which many still associate with transhumanist ambitions. In the extropian view, the association with eugenics is no longer valid because of their focus on bodily autonomy over state-enforced policies governing procreative choice. The preservation of individual choice is often cited as a critical distinction between contemporary transhumanism and 20th-century eugenics.

Rather than disavowing the ambitions of the eugenics movement, however, their project displaces decision-making agency from the state to the individual. Embedded within this libertarian worldview, the group also articulates a fundamentalist belief in markets that ought to guide the emergence and morality of new technologies. Extropy Magazine was known to publish frequent support for the ideas of Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman, going so far as to endorse the idea of privatizing the air and oceans.[18]

At the other pole are the techno-progressives and James Hughes, a contradictory presence when Neohumanist perspectives are measured against transhumanism. While genuinely attempting to take the political and social critiques of transhumanism seriously, often questioning its Enlightenment assumptions, Hughes, a bioethicist and sociologist, will equally publish transhumanist boosterism, asking us to "embrace transhumanism – to collectively enhance human intelligence" and "merge with our electronic exocortex, wiring greater memory, thought processing, and communication directly in our brains."[19]

His views often demonstrate a clear recognition that, without social equity, inequalities from the emergence of new technologies are likely to produce new capacities for concentrated power and control. While Hughes, a non-theistic former Buddhist monk, can sometimes align with Neohumanism, he equally deviates from several key Neohumanist perspectives. Hughes champions a physicalist model of reality, indicating his commitment to scientific materialism, and he often perpetuates many of the reductionist paradigms that inform transhumanist concepts, including a computer engineering approach to "moral enhancement."[20]

None of the objections this essay will now propose are fully original in their confrontation with transhumanist ideology.

The group of critics who have proposed similar arguments have come to be known collectively as bioconservatives. As Thomas notes, scholars from a range of domains have questioned the "transhumanist dependency on the outdated figure of the liberal human subject", "the failure of transhumanists to acknowledge and contend with the 'wicked complexity' in which we are enmeshed", and the modernist approach of presuming an objective and external "universal" truth.[21]

Objection 1: Transhumanism as an Outdated Expression of Enlightenment Era Assumptions

Perhaps the biggest conceptual flaw at the heart of transhumanism, and much of contemporary thinking, is the reductionist view that fundamental reality can be understood as a linear machine of individual parts. Like unseen dry rot beneath a polished floor, this overextended cognitive frame quietly shapes many of the hidden assumptions powering the modern world. Traceable through the Western canon,[22] and finding expression in the Enlightenment's elevation of logical reasoning as the highest form of sensemaking, this view rests on a variety of 'articles of faith' assumptions smuggled in as self-evident truths.

Among these assumptions are the atomist views of scientific materialism, which hold that reality is fundamentally physical and intrinsically composed of a ground layer of smallest separate particles. This fuels today's mainstream science in the so-far-fruitless search for consciousness derived from physical systems. It also partially explains the transhumanist belief that we might one day upload ourselves into computers.

Another is the dualistic idea that there exists some intrinsic separation between an external objective

[18] Ibid.

[19] Hughes J. The Big Questions: What comes after Homo Sapiens. *New Scientist*. Accessed April 14, 2026. https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg19225780-076-the-big-questions-what-comes-after-homo-sapiens/

[20] Hughes J. Cyborg Virtues: Using Brain Stimulation for Moral Enhancement. In: Dubljević V, Coin A, eds. *Policy, Identity, and Neurotechnology: The Neuroethics of Brain-Computer Interfaces*. Springer International Publishing; 2023:151-168. doi:10.1007/978-3-031-26801-4_9

[21] Thomas A. A Brief History of...

[22] Lent, J. (2017). *The Patterning Instinct: A Cultural History of Humanity's Search for Meaning*. Prometheus Books.

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reality and a "neutral" subjective observer. The Enlightenment's focus on the liberal individual, which prefers framing humans as self-contained islands of activity rather than socially embedded in communities, is an unsurprising 'social theory' expression of this knowledge system. Along with the structures of global capitalism, which often poison the emergence of new technologies in society, these ideas are central to much of today's transhumanism.

Rather than acknowledging the indivisible wholeness of existence as a singular web of non-linear connection, this worldview trades in the currencies of separation, rigidity, and linear cause-and-effect.

The overwhelming success of technology and engineering as tools for manipulating aspects of material reality has further entrenched these cognitive patterns as a foundation for metaphysical truth. Logical reasoning is certainly a necessary tool for understanding and acting on the natural world and was understandably significant in the context of medieval religious institutions, which had long dressed up their political power in the language of 'divine truth'. But what began as liberation hardened into its own form of dogma, extending the tools of logic beyond their appropriate domain. Neohumanism isn't a rejection of science or the engineering of nature, but it does seek to recalibrate an overextended use of logical reasoning with other tools of sensemaking. As Sohail Inayatullah points out, Sarkar often identifies other ways of coming to know reality which include things like sense inference, intuition, and devotion.[23]

With its optimization-obsessed approach to engineering the human experience, transhumanism is an expression of the overextension of the use of reason.

Nowhere is this more readily observable than in the world of 21st-century biology, where transhumanist science often presumes that living cells are equivalent to computers, with DNA as their digital software. Understanding DNA through the lens of a linear cause-and-effect relationship is entirely misaligned with most biologists' understanding of life as an irreducibly complex system of non-linear interaction. During his press conference, He Jiankui was pressed to defend his decision to knock out the CCR5 gene, which many argued was unnecessary for preventing HIV/AIDS in the girls. Research also indicates this gene has several roles in the immune system. The twin girls of his study may now be particularly susceptible to a range of other diseases, including West Nile virus.[24] Biology, like reality itself, does not easily subject itself to the controls of discrete optimization.

Another area involves the transhumanist obsession with boosting 'intelligence', a phenomenon that is often reduced to a single, poorly specified definition. As Melanie Mitchell describes it, "most cognitive scientists would agree that intelligence is not a quantity that can be measured on a single scale and arbitrarily dialed up and down, but rather a complex integration of general and specialised capabilities that are, for the most part, adaptive in a specific evolutionary niche."[25]

Put another way, intelligence depends on its context. Much like asking whether I am smarter than a squirrel should be followed up with a clarification of whether we are measuring an ability to store and then recover acorns in the winter, 'intelligence' as a feature, is dependent on what is being accomplished. The common colloquial distinction between book-smart and street-smart should suggest that there is no universal attribute called intelligence that, as transhumanists believe, can be boosted.

Relatedly, today's fixation on IQ is another testament to our mechanistic age. Invented by French psychologist Alfred Binet in 1909 to identify children with learning disabilities, and who explicitly warned against extrapolating his test into a "single,

Continued on page 68 ...

[23] Inayatullah S. Rethinking Science and Culture. In: *Situating Sarkar.* Gurukul Publications; 1999.

[24] Normile D. Researcher who created CRISPR...

[25] Mitchell M. Debates on the nature of artificial general intelligence. *Science*. 2024;383(6689):eado7069. doi:10.1126/science.ado7069

Continued from page 23 ... **Transhumanism - Promise or Peril? A Critical Reflection**

linear scale of immutable intelligence",[26] IQ tests became a beloved resource of early 20th-century eugenicists who used the measure to argue that intelligence could be objectively identified.

As a single benchmark, IQ is particularly optimized to measure skills like sequential rule-following, working memory, symbol manipulation, and numerical reasoning; traits that map closely to the kind of bureaucratic work demanded in our industrial society of global capitalism. Or, as Taleb, whose paper really should be consulted on the matter, puts it, IQ measures "how good someone is at taking exams designed by unsophisticated nerds."[27] It does not, however, measure traits such as creativity, emotional intelligence, or skills that require past real-world experience.

Today's ever-evolving landscape of newly created artificial intelligence benchmarks, of which there are an untold number (theoretically infinite) yet to be invented,[28] should clearly suggest that our current understanding of intelligence, superintelligence, and general intelligence is rooted in a flawed universalist conception of the phenomenon.

Even as evidence suggests intelligence isn't reducible to a linear relationship with genes,[29] there are now a growing number of startups offering intelligence-related embryo screening for wealthy clients. Whether intelligence can be meaningfully selected for or not, what is no longer debatable is that for the first time in human history, parents are now capable of selecting, and soon even editing, preferred genetic traits for their children.

And for the young companies offering these "genetically optimized embryos"[30] to a market of rich (and nervous) parents, business is growing.

Objection 2: Transhumanism as a Project of the Ego in Shaping Society in the Direction of Our Existing Neuroses

As an exceptionally talented high school senior, Noor Siddiqui made the unconventional decision in 2012 to join Peter Thiel's fellowship program, which offers teenagers $250,000 in exchange for dropping out of school to pursue other work.

Nearly a decade later, Siddiqui is building Orchid Health, one of the most prominent startups in the field of 'preimplantation genetic testing'(PGT). Since the 1990's, couples undergoing in vitro fertilization (IVF) have accessed PGT as an optional procedure to screen embryos for genetic or chromosomal abnormalities.[31] PGT-M (M for *monogenic*) is a relatively common version which detects 'single-gene disorders', including conditions like sickle cell anaemia and Huntington's disease.

Today, however, a new, more controversial form is emerging called PGT-P (or *polygenic*), which claims to offer insight into more complex conditions and is pulling transhumanist ideas closer to mainstream reproductive medicine. Whereas single-gene disorders are well understood and caused by a single mutation in a specific gene, PGT-P suggests to parents that they can now select embryos based on polygenic features that involve effects across hundreds or thousands of genes. The first baby born using PGT-P in 2020 was made possible thanks to Orchid's technology.[32]

Siddiqui says that a significant motivation for starting the business relates to her mother's rare genetic eye condition, retinitis pigmentosa, which led to her progressive vision loss and eventual blindness.[33]

Today, however, her company and others like it go beyond preventing disease and now sell parents

[26] Reddy A. The Eugenic Origins of IQ Testing: Implications for Post-Atkins Litigation. *DePaul Law Reveiw*. 2008;57(3 Spring 2008). https://via.library.depaul.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1270&context=law-review

[27] Taleb NN. IQ is largely a pseudoscientific...

[28] Rübsaam A. Building Inclusive Automated Decision-Making Systems. April 14, 2026.

[29] Helsinki JAL University of. Bad news for "intelligence-genes" | *Practical Ethics*. September 29, 2014. Accessed April 17, 2026. https://blog.uehiro.ox.ac.uk/2014/09/bad-news-for-intelligence-genes/

[30] Sherry B. This 25-Year-Old Biotech Founder Says His Startup Can "Optimize" *Embryos for Intelligence*. Inc. June 9, 2025. Accessed April 17, 2026. https://www.inc.com/ben-sherry/kian-sadeghi-says-nucleus-genomics-can-optimize-embryos-for-intelligence/91198815

[31] Preimplantation Genetic Testing (PGT) | *Fertility & Reproductive Medicine Center* | Washington University in St. Louis. Accessed April 21, 2026. https://fertility.wustl.edu/treatments-services/genetic-counseling/preimplantation-genetic-testing-pgt/

[32] Ball P. Polygenic screening of embryos is here, but is it ethical? *The Guardian*. October 17, 2021. Accessed April 24, 2026. https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/oct/17/polygenic-screening-of-embryos-is-here-but-is-it-ethical

[33] Kehe J. This Woman Will Decide Which Babies Are Born | *WIRED*. Accessed April 21, 2026. https://www.wired.com/story/this-woman-will-decide-which-babies-are-born-noor-siddiqui-orchid/

> *What we experience as suffering is the necessary expression (or exhausting) of our vibrational waves, or samskaras. This is a necessary rhythmic adjustment crucial to our journey toward the realization of a single undivided field of consciousness.*

on the ability to select traits like intelligence, height or eye color. While Orchid doesn't explicitly offer intelligence screening to the public, a company employee told *The Washington Post* that the company privately offers this to its wealthiest clients, and it was reported that Elon Musk used this service in the conception of at least one of his children.[34]

Another company, Nucleus Genomics, abandoning all caution in its marketing, explicitly states that it is willing to assist parents in selecting traits, including intelligence and height. For $5,999, Nucleus also claims to predict conditions including anxiety, severe acne, or seasonal allergies,[35] predictions that many biologists have dismissed as junk science[36] due to the complexity and role of non-genetic environmental factors of these traits.

Going further, several well-funded Silicon Valley startups are now building on the controversial work of He Jiankui to test CRISPR gene editing on human embryos.[37]

It's certainly true that PGT and CRISPR technologies could be used to bring about favorable outcomes like reduced risks of certain debilitating diseases. Neohumanism does not reject the use of modern science to play a role in the process of procreation, and even Sarkar spoke on the implications of laboratory 'test-tube babes', which was remarkably prescient for discourses delivered in the 1950s.[38]

However, today's "embryo optimization' industry within our current cultural paradigm unwittingly seeks to imprint our collective psychic imbalances into biology itself.

"Maybe you want your baby to have blue eyes versus green eyes," Kian Sadeghi, the founder of Nucleus Genomics, announced during the company's launch event in 2025.[39]

Having children in the same decision-making register as choosing a paint colour for your car reflects our current materialist society, which conflates physical beauty standards with human worth. Parents spending thousands to evaluate a dashboard stat-sheet for their embryos, selecting their child's performance features in the way one might shop for a vacuum cleaner, may certainly reflect the good intentions of a parent seeking to provide the best life for their child, but it reveals a

[34] Dwoskin E, Torbati Y. Inside the Silicon Valley push to breed super-babies. *The Washington Post*. July 16, 2025. Accessed April 21, 2026. https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2025/07/16/orchid-polygenic-screening-embryos-fertility/

[35] Black J. The race to make the perfect baby is creating an ethical mess. *MIT Technology Review*. Accessed April 21, 2026. https://www.technologyreview.com/2025/10/16/1125159/ethics-embryo-screening-reproduction-baby/

[36] Tabery AC James. No, You Can't Design Your Baby—And Trying Would Be a Terrible Idea. *Scientific American*. December 1, 2025. Accessed April 21, 2026. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-genetically-optimizing-embryos-is-misleading-unethical-and-not-even/

[37] Tech billionaires want to make gene-edited babies. *The Economist*. Accessed April 21, 2026.

[38] Sarkar P. *Prout in a Nutshell*. Vol 1. 1959.

[39] Black J. The race to make the perfect...

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fear-driven culture focused on the outer material world at the ruinous expense of our inner spiritual lives.

These fears, driven by culturally reinforced standards of embodiment, are further perpetuated within a context of global capitalism, which has proven extraordinarily effective at identifying insecurities, manufacturing new ones, and selling relief in the form of purchasable status signals through an endless supply of consumer products. By extending that process into the biology of our children as a form of biocapitalism, embryo optimization is just one way transhumanist thinking unknowingly steers humanity in the misguided direction of biologically reinforcing our existing neuroses.

Objection 3: Transhumanism as a Pathologizing of the Human Experience

"Ageing is a disease."

The first sentence of a manifesto is usually a good indication of a group's priorities. As the opening four words of her influential *Transhumanist Manifesto*, Natasha Vita-More, a founding figure of the extropian community, offers a glimpse into how transhumanists feel about getting older.

Of all transhumanist fears fueling their search for technological salvation, none is more overpowering than a fear of dying. The history of humanity is filled with social movements hoping to overcome death, and transhumanism is simply a continuation of this ancient human tendency. Whether ageing should be classified as a disease is an issue that sometimes consumes mainstream policy discussions, most visibly when the World Health Organization sparked a fierce debate by adding, and then quickly removing, "old age" as a diagnostic category to its 2022 revision of its global standard for diagnosis.[40]

Transhumanists, however, take things further.

"Until aging is resolved through nanomedicine and other innovations, augmentation and enhancement to the human body and brain are essential for survival," Vita-More's manifesto exclaims in the second paragraph.

Rooted in a materialism that excludes consideration of the non-physical dimension of human existence, longevity-obsessed transhumanists rarely pause to ask the philosophical question of what the 'me' is that seeks to preserve itself. The yogic knowledge system underpinning Neohumanist thought holds that human beings are composed not only of the physical body, which transhumanists focus on exclusively, but also of non-material psychic and spiritual elements.[41]

These ideas, which can seem nonsensical within Western materialism, are starting to find validation in some areas of mainstream science.

Donald Hoffman, an MIT-trained cognitive scientist, builds on the work of high-energy physicists like Nima Arkani-Hamed to argue that if space-time is not a fundamental reality, as physics is increasingly suggesting,[42] then the materialist assumption that consciousness simply ends at physical death is less certain than typically acknowledged.[43] While many in the west might dismiss the concept of reincarnation and karmic science as the wishy-washy nonsense of new-age thinking, Hoffman's work represents a rigorous mathematical approach in exploring the underlying elements of these ideas, substituting terms like 'conscious agents' and 'data structures' for what spiritual traditions might call a 'soul' and 'karma'.

Ageing isn't the only attribute to find itself on the transhumanist naughty list. Its founding logic, which suggests that our biology is inherently a suboptimal system needing upgrade, tends to perpetuate a normative vision of human functioning that disability scholars identify as a descendant of the eugenic attempt to eradicate the 'unfit'.[44] Rather than supporting all forms of human variation through community, transhumanism proposes the same eugenic endpoint of eliminating undesired conditions and chooses market forces as the instrument rather than state coercion.

The existence of any preference at all presumes the existence of a hierarchy; a parent's decision to choose their child's eye colour necessarily contains the rejection of other options.[45] We culturally

[40] Belshe S. Should Aging be a Disease? Accessed April 24, 2026. https://www.kumc.edu/communications/about/publications/kansas-medicine-and-science/fall-winter-2024/should-aging-be-a-disease.html

[41] Anandamurti. *Ananda Vacanamrtam* Part 14. 1979.

[42] Arkani-Hamed, N. (2017, December 1). The Doom of Spacetime—Why It Must Dissolve Into More Fundamental Structures—Nima Arkani-Hamed. *PSW Science*. https://pswscience.org/meeting/the-doom-of-spacetime/

[43] Tim Ferriss. Does Consciousness Survive Death? — Donald Hoffman. 2022. Accessed May 4, 2026. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbWGJeKq4tU

[44] Kafer A. Fixed: The Science/Fiction of Human Enhancement. *Disability Studies Quarterly*. 2015;35(4). doi:10.18061/.v35i4.4985

[45] Rübsaam A. Personal Discussion...

Transhumanism's uncritical faith in engineering as the master tool of human progress is also a flawed approach to transcending our limitations. While technology may be helpful in the journey, an overfocus on external intervention is a particular disservice to the inner tools of spirituality.

reinforce this tendency when we ask expecting parents whether they want a boy or a girl.

Transhumanism tends to take this to an extreme. In a clip from the documentary *Fixed: The Science/Fiction of Human Enhancement*, James Hughes appears in a television debate making the claim that it is immoral for parents to knowingly bring an embryo with Down's Syndrome to term and that they should 'get a dog' instead.[46] While later admitting carelessness in his phrasing, he says the clip was taken out of context and that his point was about imposing disabilities on a child on the grounds that their disability might enrich others.[47] Contained within Hughes's blog post clarifying his position is the idea that if parents are given reproductive choice over their children, then society will naturally choose fewer children with disabilities, what he terms 'liberal eugenics.' Later in the same film, he states this more crudely when he says, "There are going to be fewer short, ugly, fat, dumb people in the world."

What disability scholars will point out is that what counts as disability, divergent from the norm, or a preferred trait, is often socially constructed and changes across history. Today's society, which inherits its values from 17th-century Europe, tends to emphasize the traits of white, western, able-bodied men who prioritize logical reasoning. Transhumanism tends to use this form as the measuring stick to assess "improvement." As an extreme expression of this projection, transhumanists will sometimes argue that we have a moral obligation to use technologies to 'uplift' non-human animals to a more 'human-like existence.'[48]

To counter these objections, the most common argument transhumanists advance is that their use of technology is broadly aligned with the goal of ending human suffering. While it's true that efforts to reduce suffering are worthwhile, a spiritual understanding of suffering may also reframe its role in our lives.

Newton's well-known third law of motion states that every action has an equal but opposite reaction, but this is merely a physical expression of a deeper principle guiding the structure of the universe. Current scientific understanding confirms that everything in our known universe exists as waves of energy.[49] From a spiritual point of view, what we call the mind is simply a collection of vibrational impressions stored as unprocessed reactions of past mental or physical actions. These vibrations, referred to as samskaras in Sanskrit, give rise to our personalities, ambitions, preferences, desires, and aversions. Therefore, what we experience as suffering is the necessary expression (or exhausting) of these vibrational waves. In this view, suffering shouldn't be seen as 'punishment' in the way some traditions frame it, but as the discharging of reactive momenta accumulated across lives we no longer remember. This is a necessary rhythmic adjustment crucial to our spiritual development in the journey toward the realization that what we experience as an

[46] Fixed: The Science/Fiction of Human Enhancement - *Fixed: The Science/Fiction of Human Enhancement*. Accessed May 4, 2026. https://fixed.vhx.tv/packages/fixed-the-science-fiction-of-human-enhancement/videos/fixed-vhx-v2

[47] Hughes J. Of Dogs and Disabilities. October 5, 2013. Accessed May 4, 2026. https://web.archive.org/web/20131005095241/http://ieet.org/index.php/IEET/more/hughes20130929

[48] Hauskeller M. How to Become Post-Dog: Animals in Transhumanism. Between the Species. 2017;20(1).

[49] Gleiser M. Not just light: Everything is a wave, including you. *Big Think*. December 15, 2022. Accessed May 5, 2026. https://bigthink.com/13-8/wave-particle-duality-matter/

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> *The tantric practices of yoga are holistic tools designed to work in harmony with our nervous and chemical systems; a set of technologies for transcending the limits of the personal self.*

isolated self is a temporary expression of a single undivided field of consciousness.

Suffering is a necessary friction of that recognition working itself out.

Within this view, suffering isn't an arbitrary accident but has a deep and significant purpose in our journey. The impossible paradox is that while we should certainly strive to reduce suffering in collective society, there is equally nothing out of place within the totality of existence and its flowing waves of energy.

This means we are already whole and complete as bundles of the complementary vibrational states we experience as "good" and "bad."

In a telling exchange with an interviewer at *Wired Magazine*, Noor Siddiqui is confronted by the idea that had her embryo screening technology been used by her own grandparents, her mother's embryo would have been discarded and that she herself would not exist.[50] Siddiqui misses the point by retreating to the claim that, "I would have a mom, but my mom wouldn't have suffered in the way that she did." The journalist tries another approach by suggesting that perhaps her mother's genetic blindness is intimately woven into the specific sequence of experiences, responses, and motivations that produced *that* specific woman and ultimately *this* specific daughter working on embryo selection technology.

The samskaras we carry, including those giving rise to our suffering, are not flawed distortions layered over an otherwise undamaged self. They are the self, in its specific and irreplaceable configuration. The point is not to say that we should preserve health conditions because they might bring unexpected good, but rather to acknowledge the harm in reducing the world to the simplistic binary of good or bad. What Siddiqui's technology might eliminate is not only disease, but also the pressures that shape our lives and everything those lives go on to do.

Conclusion

On April 28th 2026, the FDA in the United States made history by approving the first-ever gene therapy for a rare but devastating form of hereditary deafness. The condition, caused by mutations in a gene responsible for producing a protein that converts sound waves into brain signals,[51] leaves children with few options other than a cochlear implant. The clinical trials, which delivered a functional, non-heritable version of the gene to the inner ear, were stunningly effective at restoring natural hearing to children with the mutation. For the first time, a generation of children with this condition may never need the mechanical help of an implant.

Neohumanism certainly does not hold the position that emerging technologies applied to human health are undesirable. Scientific developments across many fields of technology are sure to bring tremendous benefits to humanity. As is the case for many of Sarkar's philosophies, which escape tidy categorical assignment, Neohumanism cannot be seen as falling cleanly within all existing bioconservative discourse, though it does share overlapping criticisms.

Of the many ways transhumanism violates Neohumanist philosophy, none is more

[50] Kehe. This Woman Will Decide Which Babies Are Born | *WIRED*. Accessed May 5, 2026. https://www.wired.com/story/this-woman-will-decide-which-babies-are-born-noor-siddiqui-orchid/

[51] Sheridan C. Historic FDA approval brings first gene therapy for genetic deafness | *Nature Biotechnology*. Accessed May 5, 2026. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41587-026-03145-w

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consequential than its breach of *prama*, a Sanskrit term at the core of Sarkar's philosophy, meaning 'balance' or 'equilibrium.' While science, technology, and human reason can and should be used as tools for humanity to overcome many of the afflictions we encounter, today's transhumanism reflects a profound imbalance in its overreliance on engineering and logical reasoning at the expense of other ways of engaging the world. This imbalance is rooted in the materialist assumptions of the Enlightenment, of which transhumanism inherited and built its worldview upon. Rather than seeking balance, those assumptions prioritize separation over connection and logical reasoning over the intuitive faculties that yogic sadhana cultivates and refines.

The consequence is not only a philosophical error but an exclusionary vision of human advancement that is liable to harm a great number of communities on earth.

Much like Cornelius Ewuoso and Ademola Kazeem Fayemi argue that Ubuntu humanism, a community-centred philosophy of social integration,[52] might serve as a guide to reclaiming transhumanist futures, it is possible that the ambitions of transhumanism could be reconfigured within a context of Neohumanism. However, given its historical affiliation with eugenic projects that gave rise to many 20th-century horrors, the term may be sufficiently poisoned to warrant abandoning it entirely. What remains of transhumanism today is, broadly, an expression of flawed Enlightenment assumptions, the religion of physicalism, and the deification of human reason.

Transhumanism's uncritical faith in engineering as the master tool of human progress is also a flawed approach to transcending our limitations. While technology may be helpful in the journey, an overfocus on external intervention is a particular disservice to the inner tools of spirituality. What are the tantric practices of yoga if not tools, developed holistically to work in harmony with our nervous and chemical systems, as a set of technologies to *transcend* the limits of the personal self?

[52] Ewuoso C, Fayemi AK. Transhumanism and African humanism: How to pursue the transhumanist vision without jeopardizing humanity. *Bioethics*. 2021;35(7):634-645. doi:10.1111/bioe.12902

Continued from page 39 ... **P.R. Sarkar on Indology: Lost and Forgotten Cultural …**

books were written in the Sriharsha script. Oriya script used to be written on palm leaves with iron pens, so in order to avoid tearing the leaves, it was written in rounded letters. Bengali was, however, written in angular letters. Kashmiri scholars were the first ones to write the ancient Rk Veda and Atharva veda in the Sarada script. The Sarada script is 1300 years old. The Nárada script was used in the south-west of Allahabad up to the Gulf of Kachh, north of Mumbai, and is 800 years old. It was invented by Nagar Brahmins, who started writing Devabhasha, i.e., Samskrta, in Nágrii, and so it was called the Devanágarii script. (Devanágarii script came from Gujarat, not from UP). The Kutila script is used in the east of Allahabad and is used for Bengali, Oriya, Bhojpuri, Maethalii, Angika, etc. Bengali is 1100 years old. Now, it has 12 dialects.

Another significant aspect of the cultural history of ancient India is the use of Bhaeravii Cakra and Swastika. Bheravii Cakra is popularly known as the Star of David and used by Israel in its national flag. The swastika was later used by Hitler and given a negative connotation, but both the symbols are originally from the time of Shiva and part of the Tántric culture of ancient India. They have spread all over the world and have later been absorbed by different cultures and belief systems. They have been found on Viking ships, in old churches and on old forts and temples. The five-pointed star is also found on the walls of Purana Quila in Delhi. It is also found in ancient Persia and amongst Aryan relics.

The so-called tribal people of India have distinct ethnological and linguistic characteristics. Rohtas of the Bhojpuri area belong to the Austric tribe and speak their own dialect as well as Bhojpuri. Tharus who reside in the Bhojpur area of Nepal speak a non-Aryan dialect and Bhojpuri. In Bengal, Munda, Humunda and Uraon speak Bengali as their second mother tongue. Jamatia and Chakma tribes of Tripura and Mizoram also speak Bengali as their second mother tongue. In Ra'r'h, the Singmundas are Austrico-Mongoloids, while Bauris and Dakras generally have Bengali fathers and Austrico-Mongoloid mothers. There is little Negroid influence in the Singhmunda, Bauris and Dakras. Their complexion is not jet-black but light brown, and they speak Bengali as their first language. The Bagdis live in Birbhum, while the Oraon tribe lives in Ranchi and Palamu and belongs to Austrico-