(Trans)humanism & Biopolitics

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Author *Citizen Cyborg*

Executive Director, World Transhumanist Association & Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies

Public Policy Studies, Trinity College, Hartford CT
Signs of Biopolitics

- Schiavo, stem cells, reprotech
- Christian Right vs. libertarians
- Progressives and Secularists divided
- Why?
- Biopolitics is new, and it cuts across existing political ideologies
20th Century Politics

Economic Politics

Conservatives

Progressives

Populists

Social Democrats

New Right

Libertarians

Cultural Politics

Conservatives

Progressives
21st Century Politics

Cultural Politics
Conservative ← Progressive

Biopolitics
BioLuddism

Transhumanism

Economic Politics

Progressive

Conservative
Biopolitical Battlefronts

- **Who is a citizen with a right to life?**: abortion, stem cells, great ape rights, brain death, chimeras
- **Control of Reproduction**: contraception, abortion, fertility treatments, genetic testing, germline gene therapies, cloning
- **Fixing Disabilities to “Human Enhancement”**: cochlear implants, prosthetics, eye and brain chips, gene therapies, cosmetic procedures
- **Extending Life**: from treatments for aging-related diseases, to anti-aging drugs and therapies
- **Control of the Brain**: Ritalin and Prozac, psychoactive drugs, brain chips
Drivers: Emerging Technologies

Tech that will radically change human life:
- Psychopharmacology
- Genetic engineering
- Nanotechnology
- Artificial intelligence
- Cognitive science
- The accelerating convergence of all these
BioConservatives/BioLuddites

- Religious Right
  - CS Lewis *The Abolition of Man*
- Deep Ecologists, Romantic Luddites
  - Aldous Huxley *Brave New World*
- Left-wing/Feminist Critics of Biotech
  - Jeremy Rifkin *Algeny*
  - Gena Corea *The Mother Machine*
- Pro-Disability Extremists
2002 BioPolitical Landmark

- Francis Fukuyama 2002 *Our Posthuman Future*
- Leon Kass 2002 *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity*
- Bill McKibben 2003 *Enough*
- PCB 2003 *Beyond Therapy*

**Leon Kass**
Chair, President’s Council on Bioethics
Hindsight on the Slippery Slope
by D. Joy Riley, TN CBC Director

It is said that hindsight is 20/20. Whether or not that is precisely true, it is appropriate to take stock of where one has been before embarking on the exploration of new territory. This is certainly true in scientific endeavor, and especially important in the case of cloning. Ian Wilmut and team introduced 'Dolly' the cloned sheep in February 1997. Now Wilmut is the latest recipient of a cloning licence from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority in the United Kingdom. A look in the rear-view mirror is in order.

Donald M. Bruce, Director of the Church of Scotland's Society, Religion and Technology Project described 'gradualism' the same year Dolly's birth was announced. In an essay called 'A View from Edinburgh', he wrote:

Read | Cloning and Stem Cell Research | Discuss

Book Review: Human Dignity in the Biotech Century
by Charles Colson and Nigel Cameron

reviewed by CBC staff writer, Sandra Davis,
In every era, men and women have been given the responsibility to be stewards of the world and its affairs. In our
Nader and the Culture of Life

Ralph Nader and Wesley J. Smith Say "Let Terri Live"

By: Ralph Nader and Wesley J. Smith

Ralph Nader and Wesley J. Smith

March 24, 2005

Consumer Advocate Ralph Nader and Discovery Institute Senior Fellow Wesley J. Smith, author of the award winning book Culture of Death: The Assault on Medic Ethics in America call upon the Florida Courts and Governor Jeb Bush to take any

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Biotechnology and American Democracy

The Biotechnology & American Democracy program seeks to encourage moral reflection and thoughtful political deliberation on emerging biotechnologies and their impact on the character of American life. [Read More]

Latest News & Publications

How Liberalism Failed Terri Schiavo
The question is not only what she would have wanted, but what we owe her
By Eric Cohen
Friday, March 25, 2005
For all the attention we have paid to the Schiavo case, the impact on our society of the ramifications of the dominant liberal ethic is understated.

New Cloning Controversy
New Atlantis Editor discusses South Korean Experiment
In an appearance on PBS's NewsHour to discuss the recent cloning of human embryos in South Korea, New Atlantis editor Eric Cohen asked whether cloning research will "undermine our understanding of family and ourselves as moral beings and perhaps weaken our dignity and respect for human life."

The New Atlantis
A Journal of Technology and Society
Opposition to “TechnoSapiens”

CBC organizes Technosapiens Conf
• September 2003
• October 2004
Alerting Christians to transhumanist threat

Speakers:
Christian Right
Chris Hook, CBC
William Hurlbut, President’s Council on Bioethics
C. Ben Mitchell, CBHD

Secular Conservative Biocons
Leon Kass, President’s Council on Bioethics

Transhumanists
Christine Peterson (nano-policy)
Nick Bostrom, WTA
Wrye Sententia (cognitive liberty)

Left BioLuddites
Lori Andrews, IBHF
IBHF: Building Biocon Alliances

- Left-wing
- Christian Right

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<tr>
<th>topics</th>
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<tr>
<td>genetic discrimination</td>
<td>George Annas</td>
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<tr>
<td>germ line intervention</td>
<td>Nigel M. de S. Cameron</td>
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<tr>
<td>gene patents</td>
<td>Jean Bethke Elshtain</td>
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<td>reproductive technology</td>
<td>Debra Greenfield</td>
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<td>Jaydee Hanson</td>
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<td>Douglas Hunt</td>
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<td>Andrew Kimbrell</td>
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<td>M. Ellen Mitchell</td>
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<td>Judy Norsigian</td>
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<td>Stuart Newman</td>
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<td>Kevin FitzGerald</td>
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<td>Paige Comstock Cunningham</td>
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<td>Brent Blackwelder</td>
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<td>Lori Andrews</td>
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Leftist, feminist and anti-racist opponents of “technoeugenics”
Deep Ecologists and Luddites

- Jeremy Rifkin’s FOET
- Andrew Kimbrell
- ETC
- Foundation on Deep Ecology
- Anti-GM food groups

Brent Blackwelder, President, Friends of the Earth
Pro-Disability Extremists

- E.g. *Not Dead Yet*

- Opposed to:
  - Efforts to “cure” or “fix” disabilities
    - Christopher Reeve
    - Cochlear implants
  - Parent’s right to terminate disabled fetuses
  - The right of sick and disabled to refuse life-sustaining medical treatment
  - Human enhancement medicine
What is Transhumanism?

An intellectual and cultural movement that affirms

- the possibility and desirability of transcending the limitations of the human body through applied reason,

- especially by using technology to eliminate aging and enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities.
Trans-humanism

- 18th century rationalism and skepticism
- Dignity and worth of humanity
- Liberty, equality, democracy
- Our capacity for self-realization through reason, without supernatural assistance

Transhumanists are humanists who emphasize what we have the potential to become through reason.
Transhuman-ism & the Posthuman

- **What is a transhuman?**
  - We are now 'transitional humans' becoming posthuman (glasses, insulin, vaccines, prosthetics...)

- **What is a posthuman?**
  - How different does someone have to be before they are post-human?
Proto-Transhumanists

- JP Condorcet and William Godwin – foresaw conquering death as part of utopian programme
- HG Wells and Olaf Stapledon – portrayed future evolution of humanity
- JD Bernal, 1929, "The World, the Flesh and the Devil" – first projection of cybernetic implants
“Transhumanism”

Julian Huxley, 1957, coined term "Transhumanism" - "the human species can transcend itself."

“FM-2030” (FM Esfandiary) popularized term “transhuman” in the 1970s
90s: Libertarian H+ & Extropians

Extropy Institute
- http://extropy.org
- Extropian Principles
- Extropian email lists

Max More

Reason writer Ron Bailey

Deep Anarchy: An Eliminativist View of “The State”

by Max T. O'Connor

[Editor: This article is reprinted from Extropy #5, Winter 19 published by The Extropy Institute]
Contemporary Transhumanists

World Transhumanist Association
transhumanism.org
Transhumanist Declaration & FAQ
30 chapters, 3000 members

Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies
ieet.org

WTA & IEET
Chair
Dr. Nick Bostrom
Oxford University
Transhumanist Communities

- Computer Scientists
  - Singularity Institute for Artificial Intelligence siai.org
  - Ray Kurzweil, Hans Moravec, Ramez Naam
- Life Extenders
  - Immortality Institute  imminst.org
  - Biomedical Researchers, e.g. Aubrey de Grey
  - Calorie Restrictors, e.g. longevitymeme.org
  - Cryonicists, e.g. Alcor alcor.org
- Nanotechnologists
  - Foresight Institute  foresight.org
  - Center for Responsible Nanotechnology  crnano.org
Most Bioethicists Moving H+?

- **Greg Pence**, author *Who is a Afraid of Human Cloning?*
- **Greg Stock**, author of *Redesigning Humans*
- Religious Right (Schiavo) and Kassites polarizing, scaring bioethicists
- Forced to defend autonomy & technology against religious thuggery and nonsense yuck factor arguments

**Arthur Caplan**: “…enhancing intelligence or changing personality or modifying our memory, maybe that should be available to everyone as a guarantee of equal opportunity.”
What Transhumanism is Not

Transhumanism is

- *Not* racial eugenics
  - Transhumanists are categorically opposed to pseudoscience, racism & authoritarianism

- *Not* a religious movement or cult
  - Most transhumanists are non-theistic, although transhumanism is compatible with humanistic religious beliefs

- *Not* libertarianism or objectivism
  - Transhumanists have variety of political and philosophical views
### WTA Members’ Politics Today

**What term best describes your political views?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Political View</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Not political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Social democrat/democratic socialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Libertarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Upwinger/advocate of future political system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>European Liberal</td>
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<tr>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Libertarian socialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Green</td>
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<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>US-style liberal</td>
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<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Left anarchist</td>
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<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Anarcho-capitalist</td>
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<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
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<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Randian/Objectivist</td>
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<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Communist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Radical</td>
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<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Minarchist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Total</td>
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*WTA Members Surveyed in March 2005 (N=550)*
BioPolitical Ideologies

Ideological Positions in the 21st Century

A- Democratic transhumanism
B- Libertarian transhumanism
C- Left bioLuddism
D- Right bioLuddism

Biopolitics

Transhumanism

BioLuddism

Cultural Politics

Conservative  Progressive

Economic Politics

Progressive

Conservative
Democratic Transhumanism

- H+ is radical democracy
- **Equality** and **solidarity**, not just **liberty**
- Tech needs regulation, universal access
- Public policy to prevent and redress downsides of innovation, e.g. BIG for structural employment
# Central Biopolitical Disputes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transhumanists</th>
<th>BioLuddites</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personhood</td>
<td>Human-Racism, Deep Ecology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanism, reason, individual liberty</td>
<td>Sacred taboos, “the natural”, yuck factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risks are manageable</td>
<td>Tech should be banned</td>
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Beyond Human-racism…

- **Human-racism:** Humanness is basis of rights-bearing
- **Humans have souls or crypto-spiritual “human dignity”**
- **Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (UN General Assembly, 1998)**
  - “The human genome underlies the fundamental unity of all members of the human family, as well as the recognition of their inherent dignity and diversity.”
- **Annas/Andrews Treaty:** Human enhancement should be “a crime against humanity”
…to Personhood

- Is hairlessness one of the genes necessary for citizenship?
- **Persons**: “conscious beings, aware of themselves, with intents and purposes over time”
- You can be **human and not persons**: fetus, braindead
- You can be a **person and not human**: great apes, AI, posthumans
- Legal personhood confers “right to life”
Liberal democracy suggests personhood *not* race, gender or species as base of citizenship.

Citizens have right to self-ownership, self-determination: Control own bodies & brains.

LibDem State should encourage fulfillment of individual potential.

---

John Locke  
1632-1704
Technology frees us from the tyranny of Nature

Democracy, liberty, equality frees us from the tyranny of social conditions
Technological Self-Determination

- The right to use technology to control our own bodies and minds
- The right to more life and ability
  - Health care access
  - Cognitive liberty
  - Transgender rights
  - Right to body modification and cosmetic enhancement
  - Reproductive rights
  - Right of disabled to assistive tech
Religious (Trans)Humanism

- Split the opposition by allying with religious (trans)humanists
- Did God give humanity reason for a reason?
- Ted Peters: Co-creator theology
- Vatican: “The idea of man as ‘co-creator’ with God could be used to try to justify the management of human evolution by means of such genetic engineering.”

Limits on Human Reason?

- Hubris, secular & religious
- Deep Ecological suspicion of reason and “meddling”
  - Human intervention will always end in disaster
  - Nature is too complicated to ever understand
- **Precautionary Principle:** When do we know enough?
- Aspirin, antibiotics
The Risks of Doing Nothing

"We've considered every potential risk except the risks of avoiding all risks."

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Grounds for Restricting Liberty

- **Strong grounds:** Stop harm to others
- **Weaker:** Stop people from harming themselves
  - At least until their choices are free and fully informed
- **Weakest:** Distaste (yuck factor), hypotheticals
Example: Reproductive Cloning

- Harm to others
  - Gene-damaged children
- Harming to self
  - Risks for egg donors
- Distaste, hypotheticals
  - Psychological harm to child
  - Odd family ties
  - Clone armies
  - Homogenous societies

The same hypothetical risks to clone kids are used against gay parenting.
The Goal of Transhumanism

- A global society that allows individuals to make informed decisions to use tech to live
  - Longer
  - Happier
  - Smarter
  - With more control over their lives
- Tech that is **safe** and **universally accessible**
- A **transhuman democracy** where humans and posthumans can coexist
Tech is *not* the problem

- Greed, racism, inequality, poverty, patriarchy, authoritarianism, ignorance and **superstition** are the problems
- Technology only opens new battlefronts
Free People Make Liberatory Tech

- Free informed use of safe technology makes the world **freer**
- Free informed choices require strong research and regulation for safety, **free from corporate control and hype**
Universal Access is a Problem

Expand universal access

- Universal health insurance coverage, including beneficial enhancements
- Research & tech transfer for needs of the developing world
  - clean water, telecom, vaccines, immune tweaks, nano
- Toronto Bioethics Centre reports
For more information

- World Transhumanist Association
  transhumanism.org

- Institute for Ethics
  and Emerging Technologies
  ieet.org

- Betterhumans.com
  (online magazine & daily news feed)

- Me: james.hughes@trincoll.edu

- Join us in Caracas, July 22-24, 2005
  Transvision 2005