Transhumanism: Contemporary Issues

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http://www.transhumanist-party.org
http://www.rationalargumentator.com/index/nevada-transhumanist-party/
Three Major Controversies

• **Artificial Intelligence**: Existential risk / threat to jobs **OR** boon to humankind?

• **Religion**: Compatible **OR** incompatible with transhumanism / life extension?

• **Privacy**: Is privacy dead, **OR** can emerging technologies **rescue** it?
Artificial Intelligence

Existent Risk?

“China, Russia, soon all countries with strong computer science [will develop AI]. Competition for AI superiority at [the] national level [will be the] most likely cause of [World War III, in my opinion. The war] be initiated not by the country leaders, but one of the AI’s, if it decides that a preemptive strike is most probable path to victory.”

~ Elon Musk, Twitter Posts, September 2017

“The development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race. It would take off on its own, and re-design itself at an ever increasing rate. Humans, who are limited by slow biological evolution, couldn’t compete, and would be superseded.”

~ Stephen Hawking, 2014

Threat to Jobs?

“When 3.5 million American truck drivers lose their jobs, these are not people who will go home quietly. They will light Molotov cocktails. They love their guns. They are going to pick them up and show us they aren’t happy.”

~ Zoltan Istvan, 2016

“These exponential advances, most notably in forms of artificial intelligence, will prove daunting for as long as we continue to insist upon employment as our primary source of income. The White House, in a stunning report to Congress [...], put the probability at 83 percent that a worker making less than $20 an hour in 2010 will eventually lose his job to a machine. Even workers making as much as $40 an hour face odds of 31 percent.”

~ Scott Santens, 2016

Boon to Humankind? / Not a Dire Threat?

“[Nick] Bostrom and [Eliezer] Yudkowsky’s arguments for existential risk have some logical foundation, but are often presented in an exaggerated way. For instance, formal arguments whose implication is that the ‘worst case scenarios’ for advanced AI development are extremely dire are often informally discussed as if they demonstrated the likelihood, rather than just the possibility, of highly negative outcomes. And potential dangers of reward-maximizing AI are taken as problems with AI in general, rather than just as problems of the reward-maximization paradigm as an approach to building superintelligence. If one views past, current, and future intelligence as ‘open-ended,’ […] the potential dangers no longer appear to loom so large, and one sees a future that is wide-open, complex and uncertain, just as it has always been.”

~ Ben Goertzel, 2015

“I believe we will remain in charge of the technology for a decently long time and the potential of it to solve many of the world problems will be realized.”

~ Rollo Carpenter, Creator of Cleverbot, 2014

“A Deloitte study of automation in the U.K. found that 800,000 low-skilled jobs were eliminated as the result of AI and other automation technologies. But get this: 3.5 million new jobs were created as well, and those jobs paid on average nearly $13,000 more per year than the ones that were lost.”

~ Alston Ghafourifar, CEO Founder of Entefy, 2017

“It might be wise for us to put ourselves in the hands of a machine intelligence that can take the best decision for the greatest amount of people. That’s what a democracy should be about.”

~ Zoltan Istvan, 2016
Artificial Intelligence: U.S. Transhumanist Party Position

“Allied Membership in the Transhumanist Party is open to any being capable of logical reasoning and of the expression of political opinions. Specifically, if sentient artificial intellects or intelligent extraterrestrial life forms are discovered at any time after the founding of the Transhumanist Party, such entities shall be eligible for Allied Membership.”

~ U.S. Transhumanist Party Constitution, Article II, Section IX - http://transhumanist-party.org/constitution/

“The United States Transhumanist Party stands for the rights of any sentient entities defined in the Preamble to the Transhumanist Bill of Rights as possessing Level 5 or more advanced information integration. Any such sentient entities, including new kinds of sentient entities that may be discovered or developed in the future, shall be considered to be autonomous beings with full rights, and shall not be made subservient to humans, unless they as individuals pose direct, empirically evident threats to the lives of others. The protections of full individual rights shall extend to Level 5 or higher-level artificial intelligences. However, Level 4 or lower-level entities – including domain-specific artificial intelligences that have not achieved sentience – may be utilized as part of the production systems of the future, in a similar manner to machines, algorithms, computer programs, and non-human animals today and based on similar ethical considerations.”

~ U.S. Transhumanist Party Platform (USTP Constitution, Article III, Section XXXIII)

“Given the inevitability of technology eventually replacing the need for the labor of sentient entities, the United States Transhumanist Party holds that all sentient entities should be the beneficiaries of an unconditional universal basic income, whereby the same minimum amount of money or other resources is provided irrespective of a sentient entity’s life circumstances, occupations, or other income sources, so as to provide a means for the basic requirements of existence and liberty to be met.”

~ U.S. Transhumanist Party Platform (USTP Constitution, Article III, Section XVI)
Sentience is ranked as Level 5 information integration according to the following criteria:

- **Level 5 – Awareness + World model + Primarily subconscious self model = Sapient or Lucid:** Lucidity means to be meta-aware – that is, to be aware of one’s own awareness, aware of abstractions, aware of one’s self, and therefore able to actively analyze each of these phenomena. If a given animal is meta-aware to any extent, it can therefore make lucid decisions. Level 5 capabilities include the following:
  - The “sense of self”;
  - Complex learned behavior;
  - Ability to predict the future emotional states of the self (to some degree);
  - The ability to make motivational tradeoffs.

(Adopted via Electronic Vote on December 25-31, 2016)
Religion and Transhumanism

Incompatible?

“I don’t want to criticize religion too much, but we live in a Judeo-Christian culture that for centuries has taught us it’s okay to die, since there’s an afterlife. This of course also applies to war and a culture’s feelings about going to war. I don’t believe in God. When people die, they return to dirt. So until we have a more secular culture that realizes that death is a final thing, we won’t be too worried about it. We’ll feel like the military is more important than medicine.”

~ Zoltan Istvan, 2016

“But must we relinquish religious beliefs now, before science gives us everything we want? Might we allow the comfort of religious beliefs to those who need them, to those who must tell their children something when someone dies? The most important reason to abandon religious belief is religion’s opposition to most forms of progress. From the elimination of slavery, the use of birth control, and women’s and civil rights, to stem cell research, genetic engineering, and science in general, organized religion often opposes progress. The comfort provided by archaic superstitions often impedes advancement and should be set aside.”

~ John G. Messerly, 2014

Compatible?

“There [are] people that are saying that religious groups might be very opposed to [life extension]. Turns out that the Catholic Church actually published a chapter in my book supporting it, saying this is part of what they want to see happen.”

~ Bill Andrews, 2016

“I personally have no religious views, but I have sometimes been attacked by religious people, who said that I was playing God. But it’s quite interesting that it’s really easy to get people coming from a religious background to understand that it would be a sin not to work on this. That’s because ageing causes a lot of suffering, and alleviating suffering is something the scriptures told was our duty. I had some success with that argument.”

~ Aubrey de Grey, 2014

“[T]here is actually a philosophical and theological debate happening within transhumanism as to how the movement should practically proceed. This point of conversation is a place where Christians can make a positive moral impact. To be clear, transhumanism at its core is not some sci-fi or superhero, this will happen in 100 years, concept. Transhumanism is happening right now. As a pastor serving a local congregation, I see proof of transhumanism in my congregation everyday.”

~ Rev. Christopher Benek, 2017
Religion and Transhumanism: U.S. Transhumanist Party Position

“The United States Transhumanist Party strongly supports the freedom of peaceful speech; religious, non-religious, and anti-religious philosophical espousal; assembly; protest; petition; and expression of grievances. The United States Transhumanist Party therefore strongly opposes all censorship, including censorship that arises out of identity politics and the desire to avoid perceived offensive behavior.”

~ U.S. Transhumanist Party Platform (USTP Constitution, Article III, Section XX)

“The United States Transhumanist Party welcomes both religious and non-religious individuals who support life extension and emerging technologies. The United States Transhumanist Party recognizes that some religious individuals and interpretations may be receptive to technological progress and, if so, are valuable allies to the transhumanist movement. On the other hand, the United States Transhumanist Party is also opposed to any interpretation of a religious doctrine that results in the rejection of reason, censorship, violation of individual rights, suppression of technological advancement, and attempts to impose religious belief by force and/or by legal compulsion.”

~ U.S. Transhumanist Party Platform (USTP Constitution, Article III, Section XXV)

“The United States Transhumanist Party opposes those specific cultural, religious, and social practices that violate individual rights and bodily autonomy. Examples of such unacceptable practices are forced marriage (including child marriage), male and female genital mutilation, and honor killings.”

~ U.S. Transhumanist Party Platform (USTP Constitution, Article III, Section LXIII)
Is Privacy Dead?

“For better or worse, we can already see the beginnings of an era of in which nothing is private: WikiLeaks has its own transparency problems and has a scattershot record of releasing documents that appear to be politically motivated, but nonetheless has exposed countless political emails, military wires, and intel documents that otherwise would have remained private or classified forever. There is an ongoing battle about whether police body camera footage should be public record. Politicians and police are being videotaped by civilians with cell phones, drones, and planes. But it’s not just government that’s a worry. It’s also important that people can track companies, like Google, Apple, and Facebook that create much of the software that tracks individuals and the public. This is easier said than done, but a vibrant start-up culture and open-source technology is the antidote.”

~ Zoltan Istvan, 2017

“Today, we live in a panopticon world. During the 20th century, we witnessed the birth of what was known as the surveillance state. In the last 10 years or so, it’s transformed into a self-surveillance state, whereby an increasing number of people are opting out of privacy in favor of transparency and technological advantages. And from there, we’ll eventually turn into what is known as a sousveillance state. In 10 years or less, we may very well see the end of privacy as we currently perceive it. With the proliferation of cameras, sensors, and other technological advances, the very idea of privacy will once again be considered somewhat alien. By 2020, there’ll be an estimated 1 trillion sensors in operation, from GPS, smart homes, energy harvesting, to biomedical. And by 2022, there’ll be an estimated 45 billion cameras in operation, from smartphones, IP, to CCTV.”

~ Gray Scott, 2017

Can Emerging Technologies Rescue Privacy?

“We should armor ourselves using systems we can rely on every day. This doesn’t need to be an extraordinary lifestyle change. It doesn’t have to be something that is disruptive. It should be invisible, it should be atmospheric, it should be something that happens painlessly, effortlessly.”

~ Edward Snowden, 2015

“Maintaining individual privacy is a crucial element in free society. Yet there are many who want to invade it for personal or political gain. As our digital fingerprint becomes a part of our notion of self, how do we maintain our personal privacy on an inherently impersonal network of data? Where do we draw the line on what is private, and how do we enforce it? These are questions that are difficult to answer when looking at a short-term perspective. However, if we look further into the probable future, we can create a plan that helps protect the privacy of citizens today and for generations to come. By taking into account the almost certain physical merger of human biology and technology, the answer becomes clear. Our electronic data should be treated as part of our bodily autonomy.”

~ Ryan Starr, 2016

“But history has shown that technology also has the ability to enhance privacy. Software like Tor allows people to browse the Internet anonymously, giving people in repressed countries the ability to access uncensored information. Anonymous Web mail services allow whistleblowers to safely communicate with journalists, and give voice to political dissidents living in repressive regimes. A businessman who encrypts data on a company laptop computer keeps valuable trade secret information private from competitors if lost or stolen. For these individuals, the use of technology does not involve an “inevitable” tradeoff with privacy. Rather, their use of technology is specifically intended to protect their privacy. We should all view technology the same way; the only inevitability must be the demand that privacy be a value built into our technology.”

~ Hanni M. Fakhoury, Electronic Frontier Foundation, 2012
Privacy: 
U.S. Transhumanist Party Position

“The United States Transhumanist Party strongly supports individual privacy and liberty over how to apply technology to one’s personal life. The United States Transhumanist Party holds that each individual should remain completely sovereign in the choice to disclose or not disclose personal activities, preferences, and beliefs within the public sphere. As such, the United States Transhumanist Party opposes all forms of mass surveillance and any intrusion by governmental or private institutions upon non-coercive activities that an individual has chosen to retain within his, her, or its private sphere. However, the United States Transhumanist Party also recognizes that no individuals should be protected from peaceful criticism of any matters that those individuals have chosen to disclose within the sphere of public knowledge and discourse.”

~ U.S. Transhumanist Party Platform (USTP Constitution, Article III, Section I)
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http://www.transhumanist-party.org  - Navigate to the “Become a Member” option.

Questions?
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