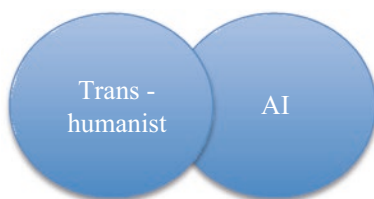


Chapter 41

Pragmatic Paths in Transhumanism



Jeffrey Zilahy



The overlap of these two circles are self-improving processes

What are some qualities and concepts that can help elucidate transhumanism? Here is a mnemonic:

Technology
Risk
Anti-aging
Nanotechnology
Self-improvement
H+
Universal
Mind
Adaptability
Natural

“Every man desires to live long; but no man would be old.” (Jonathan Swift)

“Death is *nothing* to be afraid of.” (Anil Seth)

“Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.” (Arthur C. Clarke)

“We live in the future.” (Anonymous)

To say that we *live in the future* can be interpreted in a multitude of ways, suffice it to say technological progression is happening at such a swift pace that our concept of what defines our present is in a very real way *constantly under construction*. Naturally, this makes it a very unique time in our history because the technology we foresee in the future has a funny way of appearing today.

J. Zilahy (✉)
Transhumanist Consultant, New York, NY, USA

If we imagine the long arc of human history beginning with those early and ancient days of *Homo sapiens* with so few of us and so little in the way of tools, a world shrouded in a seemingly impenetrably deep cloak of mystery then fast forward all the way through to this moment; a present day plethora of tools and technology, many billions of people roaming about and many mysteries unfurled every day, our world is nothing short of genius.

This then is a *transformation* of humans *and their tools* that began with our early ancestors iterating generation after generation to ever better versions, in a constant state of sorting conflicts and solving puzzles.

Our own flesh and blood ancestors would scant believe all the modern marvels, as if their future progeny were more akin to *transformed humans*. We are indeed in a way transformed humans and that pattern will never cease, our minds are *pre-programmed* to be **curious**, to improve our environment and to **survive**. Our neural algorithms cause us to constantly question and consider and we are born like all other creatures doing all we can to survive. These two aspects of our sentience are most fundamental to our concept of self. This vector of pre-programmed *curiosity and survival*, charted against time ensures we become defined by our tools and technology, and over time inextricably linked.

It is somber but still worth pondering that every single last person ever born will get spun around by their swirl of consciousness and then merely decades later predictably vanish into nothingness. It is not a crime or ethical travesty to state without reserve that this reality is wholly unacceptable. Aging is nothing more than faulty biological code and there have never been more *programmers* than there are today rewriting and improving on this code. It is a reality that *only very recently have we even had a chance* to peer towards brighter horizons.

We all know deep down in the recesses of our souls that there is *so much* more we can make of ourselves but are stymied by our own life spans, most of us barely scratch the surface of really developing ourselves intellectually, emotionally, physically and spiritually. The final tally everyone eventually reaches is that it simply serves you and consequently your fellow human to be an active participant in the most exciting developments in humankind.

The transhumanist movement then is in a sense simply saying society is evolving so fast that it hasn't been able to catch up to itself but as individuals we can play that catch up by proactively doing all we can to embrace the resources of the world to better ourselves and in turn the world in which we occupy. It is also a reality that transhumanism is largely about self identification and a proactive nature as there is nary a person that is truly not transhumanist simply because when you participate in society, when you rely on tools and information you are acting as a transhumanist, just at a lower amplification than the self-identified version.

Look, let's face it, we all embrace technology it's impossible not to. Even if you are the type to pride yourself on not having a smart phone you still use many layers of modernity; infrastructure, modern medicine, even a wheel and a match are examples of tools and tech. Do you use the internet? Do you have surgery if your life depends on it? Do you try to eat the right foods and feel guilty when you don't get enough exercise? Congratulations you are a budding transhumanist. So much of

what the vast majority of the population considers an acceptable relationship and attitude towards technology and even life extension is really just what could be deemed *transhumanism lite*.

We take for granted going to the doctor for any number of ailments and issues and use technology to enhance our lives everyday. Many people then are ostensibly transhumanists and many others might initially be afraid or even repelled to consider themselves transhumanists but upon deeper reflection would admit to being as much.

The good news is that there is a great deal of overlap between the “normal” good habits of keeping yourself healthy in all facets; physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually and the deliberate transhumanist nature of proactive healthy aging also known as *ceneogenics*.

Also it is worth mentioning that the fundamental and ingrained reason for people’s fear, doubt and uncertainty surrounding transhumanism is because our sanity depends on refuting false hope. After all, the current *record* is of 100% of every single generation of people *having to accept* a mortal existence. It is only now there is a glimmer of hope for some form of post Mortem or at least a more direct challenge to the status quos of aging and death as we define them today. We also have to face the reality of our existence, that we need to transcend this mortal coil to survive, the universe is giving our consciousness an ultimatum, hack your code and evolve or be banished to infinite nothingness. Is that really even a choice?

But how best to navigate and integrate these breakthroughs into your own life? Keep in the forefront of your mind that there is no perfect or even correct way to be a transhumanist. We all have different wants, different perspectives and different demands on our own personal situations that will necessarily steer us differently for how best to embrace the brave new world we live in. Ultimately though we are all trying to avoid whatever the leading *risk* factors are of the time we live in. Nowadays, in the developed countries we are mostly trying to avoid heart disease and cancer, but the big killer used to be pneumonia and before that it was tuberculosis. Today you would be appalled at the idea of succumbing to tuberculosis; do you really think people in the future won’t be appalled by the thought of dying from cancer or heart disease?

While transhumanism is a complex word with many different interpretations and meanings, one of the most synonymous concepts with transhumanism is the *fight against aging*. Aging is humanity’s ultimate battle; it is the bane of our existence, literally. Life is in many ways a multifaceted fight, a fight against aging, a fight against all the threat vectors that would otherwise do you in. This notion of life being a fight is what makes the UFC Performance Institute a great metaphor for many of the aspirations of transhumanism. It is a place dedicated to using the most state of the art technology and science to provide bespoke therapies to help its fighters recover and regenerate. While the Performance Institute may be reserved for mixed martial art fighters, this proactive approach to our health can and should be modeled by everyone, we all must take on this fight individually but we can all work collectively to bring some measure of *death to aging*. *We start this fight by doing*

everything we can to live longer and healthier lives, later in life to stave off frailty and ultimately we seek to be organisms that are negligibly senescent.

So what can we consider as some patterns of behavior that we can employ immediately that are at the *easy end* of the transhumanist spectrum? What are the pragmatic and even essential techniques you should consider incorporating into your life? These *solutions* are of course nothing more than a mere smattering of the breadth and depth of what exists in this world to assist and aid you and of course results and mileage will vary but at minimum provides one interpretation of the framework for *transhumanist habits*.

#1 Fan You must have a deep well of forgiveness reserved for yourself, you will make mistakes with frustrating consistency in some regard and your capacity for self forgiveness will regulate how effective you can cast off faulty processes. Forgiveness is nothing without care so you also have to constantly recommit to taking care of yourself and step one is to maintain a positive and optimistic outlook each and every day, part and parcel of a + attitude is gratitude and appreciation, form them into custom mantras and be sure to add regular restful sleep every night and at least some social connectivity that is not reliant on social media.

Quiet Time It is probably as close as you get to a universal truth that we all benefit from *quieting our minds*, whether it is Buddhism, Transcendental Meditation, any form of Zen or still prayer. It is a classic example of something that is elusive in its simplicity but transformative in its utilization. The practice of being still and calm in a sea of personal struggle will open portals of your potential with access to capability previously unseen. Can you silence your own voice? Can you do it regularly?

Moving Target Probably one of the most proven and easy to follow options for improving your health is the notion of motion or more colloquially referred to as getting exercise. While you don't need to become a professional athlete or gym junkie to benefit, at the very least make it a habit to just move. A new study suggests that even the act of dancing can reverse or slow down cognitive decline, that is news worth dancing a jig to!

Trust Your Gut A little known fact is that our stomach contains somewhere on the order of 100 million neurons and is a critical link to your overall health. Make sure you consider probiotics and do all you can to keep your *second* brain healthy.

Abstain & Refrain The idea of willingly refraining from eating and or drinking seems like a terrible idea to a species that literally survives by eating and drinking. However there is evidence that fasting offers health benefits not to mention the most obvious impact of a lower caloric intake, which over the long term has been linked to extended longevity. There is a more manageable form of fasting for the modern transhumanist called intermittent fasting, which can increase energy, mood and memory.

Pour Cold Water On It Another idea that sounds downright awful but shows a lot of promise is cold therapy. Now we know ice and compression are used to reduce pain and swelling in injuries but exposure to cold like taking an ice cold shower as indicated by extreme athlete gurus like Wim Hof show potential for improving

circulation and mood and alleviating many symptoms of disease and decay. There is also the growing field of cryotherapy which has been shown to aid in improving overall blood flow.

Poisonous Avoidance Unfortunately there are insidious forces out there and whether it is in your food, the air or even certain people, push back on all forms of toxicity *as you perceive it* at all costs. The hardest part with toxic influence is often just the acknowledgment that something is not good for you, but the more you are capable of identifying and rooting out virulent vectors, the healthier you are sure to become.

Ingredients There are many known chemicals and compounds that have proven capabilities in slowing or even reversing the harmful effects of aging. Here are a few that are worth considering for your regular diet; curcumin, quercetin, nicotinamide riboside, pterostilbene, metformin, resveratrol, even coffee and aspirin. For a more thorough catalog, just ask Ray & Terry.

Brain Food Your brain is the sole organ in your body that really defines who you are. It is key that you ensure this organ has lots of good “food”.

Luckily for us there is an inexhaustible supply available now. For example, study the fantastic research of the *Blue Zones* and the habits of people in these regions that afford them longer and healthier lives than the rest of us. Check out MIT OpenCourseWare for quality free education, and be sure to pay close attention to the *Great Brains* of our world and what they are saying and doing. We all know Elon Musk is working to usher in twenty-first century technologies and Bill Gates is making great progress to improve the lives of people in developing countries but be sure you are well acquainted with the goings-on of geniuses like Stephen Wolfram, Eliezer Yudkowsky, Aubrey De Grey, Demis Hassabis, George Church, and Craig Venter. This is of course a tiny sample of influential movers and shakers, just take a gander and expand your grey matter.

While the suggestions covered so far are relatively easy to implement, inexpensive or free and for the most part proven strategies, the following are additional solutions that either have financial costs or opportunity costs or contain potential risks, so be sure to proceed with caution. They can be thought of as *a more advanced setting* of transhumanist habits.

Future Therapies There is such a myriad of different treatment options available today that governments and doctors haven't reached consensus on their relative safety and efficacy. Despite the disagreements, there is increasing evidence that these approaches offer benefits not available through traditional approaches. Some of the evolving medical options on the menu today include Human Growth Hormone therapies, Rapamycin treatments, young plasma transfusions and the fast growing world of stem cell treatments.

Mr. & Mrs. Roboto Nowadays artificial assistance is everywhere and is quickly becoming a helpful and indispensable layer of our information driven society. The names Alexa, Siri and Watson are well known but did you know Sophia has citizen status and

Wolfram Alpha computes answers to just about everything? The wild thing about these intelligent outgrowths of humans is they are still very much in their early days, and will only improve in their abilities to help us sort through the problems of humanity.

Edit Yourself Genome engineering or more commonly referred to as gene editing is the ability to modify our own DNA and will probably end up as one of the most powerful tools humans have ever invented. These are very early days but methods like CRISPR editing are guaranteed to completely revolutionize medicine and molecular biology in the years to come. How does the curing of diseases, the creation of healthier food and even bringing back extinct species sound?

Who's the Boss? Regardless of what side you take in the political battle, these times have aroused passion in our populace and that can be a good thing properly channeled. When you consider who you will support in the voting booth, keep in mind that there are new candidates and movements that have distinctly transhumanist philosophies and know you have a decision to make about who you will give power to and know that you always have the power to embrace transhumanist political leaders that can bring more rapid change to our government, for example consider studying the political perspectives of the U.S. Transhumanist Party.

Frozen > Burial & Cremation Firms like Alcor will use your life insurance policy to put your recently deceased body into a deep freeze, replacing your blood with a specific chemical, the goal being to keep you in a type of stasis until such time that technology can revive you. A remarkable plan that at the *very least provides a new kind of hope* to its clients.

DOT ORG Research and find organizations that stoke your passion and find ways to take your talents to new venues. Here are a few that are at the forefront of progress and science: Buck Institute for Research on Aging, Machine Intelligence Research Institute, Future of Humanity Institute, Singularity University, Future of Life Institute, U.S. Transhumanist Political Party.

My Avatar has an Avatar Virtual proxies for your biological self are a great feature of a twenty-first century world. There are so many types and even methods for creating and evolving these extensions of yourself. They allow you to tap into different sides of your personality and are a ubiquitous part of video games, social media and virtual worlds.

Regardless of how successful and influential the transhumanist movement ultimately becomes, it provides a community and a philosophy that empowers individuals. It is a call to arms to view our world as a place with tremendous possibility and opportunity for developing and enhancing yourself. The notion that it is crazy to think and act like a transhumanist is backwards, it is crazy to not be one. Perhaps it is fair to say that the very deliberate nature of the movement and even the word transhumanism is a bit on the nose. Don't let semantics repel you and hold you back, there are many more ways to describe people in this movement such as technological survivalists, techno-healthy, convergists, singularists, neuro-optimists, life extensionists, mind-uploaders, transformers or just human+.

In a way we as a species have been collectively marching toward a transhumanist future. After all humanity is in a constant state of battling all forms of maladies, sickness and ailments. If given an opportunity, we all use the best medicine and care to protect our own bodies so we may keep trucking along. For most of us, we die trying not to die, transhumanism is this same battle against death, the only distinction is we attempt to articulate how to fight this battle in a time in our technological development where there are new weapons available to us to challenge the grim reaper.

When we talk about this battle with aging and death, it is important to delineate the two aspects of our lives that we are attempting to enhance. The first aspect of our lives that we are trying to enhance is our health span. This is a measure of how *much* of your life is in a healthy state. This is a critical but often ignored metric. Would you rather live 150 years in a sick state or 100 years in a super healthy state? Most people would choose the latter because healthspan really determines the *quality* of our lives.

The second is our lifespan, which refers to the expectation of how long we can expect to live. Lifespan has a direct relationship with the level of technology we have, so not surprisingly as we progress through time the average human lifespan has steadily gone up from as low as mid 20s to present day in the mid 80s, depending on the country and sex you specify. In the last century for most developed nations we have essentially doubled our lifespans. What is interesting is that the age at which most people are OK to die at is also the age they expect to live until. So how people view their lifespan is really a game of expectation. If tomorrow everyone was suddenly expected to live until 200 then it is safe to assume that many people would *suddenly* find 120 as simply not enough of a life. Given the dynamic nature of lifespan both in reality and in our expectations, we can conclude that the average actual lifespan will closely parallel the expectation of what we consider a good lifespan. Bottom line, if you could confidently live longer, then you would expect to live longer. Let's not forget that what people want to do, what they consider their "purpose" changes with time and developments. What is clear is that the universe is a giant computer of sorts and we have already begun to *reprogram our code*. The insights of a computational world are most certainly a *natural evolution* and one that we should all embrace.

Transhumanism seeks to elevate ourselves, our discourse our entire society by a deeper connection and appreciation for the forces of reason and science. We want to elevate rational thought and deemphasize dogma. We want to transcend the bitterness and pettiness of racial divides and unite as a planet under a banner of a single humanity. We view the rapid rate of technological progression as not stifling but in fact opening avenues for social and cultural evolution and revolutions, just like every previous technological enhancement has done for humanity. We want to participate now and in the future in the greatest developments of our species and we want to do it as healthy and happy 125 year olds.