

Chapter 49

A Transhumanist World Comes from Diversity of Thought



Martin van der Kroon

We currently live with over 7 billion people on earth. What are the odds everyone will agree on any issue? Will there even be a solution to anything that will suit everyone? What happens to Transhumanism once we've reached its goals?

These are not the questions most of us pay too much attention to when we hypothesize on how to improve the world and humanity. It is however, fundamental that we do keep asking these, and other questions over and over.

Transcendence, I think, is about more than overcoming biological and technological limitations, it is also about evolving and growing mentally. We have seen, and can see today what single-mindedness can do, that a conviction that one has the right answer can do great harm. The way forward is diversity, not only in color, gender as diversity is often labeled nowadays, but in diversity of thought, and considering each others ideas and positions seriously.

This is especially true within a political framework such as the U.S. Transhumanist Party. Too often do we see policies enacted that are not supported by evidence, but also gloss over a large segment of the population that might be affected. Well intended bills are passed to legislate something with dire consequences that could have been prevented if someone had listened or tried to understand those that would be affected.

The U.S. Transhumanist Party has the potential to not merely listen, but to give people a voice, to share and challenge ideas. This is a critical component to better understanding, to change, to evolve, and hopefully transcend humanity's tendency to dismiss otherness.

M. van der Kroon (✉)
United States Transhumanist Party, Amersfoort, The Netherlands

49.1 Introduction

In some chapters arguments may have been made for the necessity or even the inevitability of transhumanism, and I agree that transhumanism can contribute to improving life. Up to this point transhumanism seems to be the way forward, backed by scientific development and innovation, humanities natural instinct to survive and improve. It seems ideal, through technology, medical, and scientific advancement, by means of that which distinguishes humans from other species on earth, our ability for complex thought, reasoning, and unparalleled problem solving skills.

This chapter however is not to advocate for transhumanism, but instead to be critical of transhumanism, and everything you may have read in this book thus far, and that you may read in, and after this chapter. Just as much as transhumanism, and the ideas and ideals it brings are on the rise, we might be equally close to the edge to fall down if we forget to look at the ground we walk on.

49.2 The -ism-trap

There are many viewpoints from which to view the world. Many ideological lenses as social academics would say. Each of these lenses, or perspectives if you will, can highlight issues in the world in their own unique way since they focus on a more narrow aspect of the world, like a magnifying glass, or a colored lens, only being able to see one color. It is good that we might be able to look at the world through such an ideological lens, it has brought us many great things throughout history such as; Democracy, Liberty, Women's rights, and LGBTQ+ rights, among many others. On an even broader scale, it has brought the Enlightenment, as well as the idea of Romanticism to be critical of the prior.

The ideological lenses however also have a downside, the ideological trap that seeing the world through one color becomes so natural and comforting that all other colors appear to be unreal.

49.3 Utopia is Around the Corner... If Only...

The idea of Utopia is beautiful, a great thought experiment to envision how the world could be ideal. It helps us process issues we see in society, and subsequently come up with solutions to these issues. Such ideas also give unique insight into the way we think ourselves. A transhumanist might look towards technology or genetic sciences, whereas a socialist might look more towards how to solve issues through societal means and perhaps with help or support from government institutions. A perception of what Utopia would look like is different, probably, for every human, and obviously is based on a person's ideal view of the world. Such visions are very useful to illustrate what we find important, and to discuss issues, in essence they are a great tool.

People tend to forget that the idea of Utopia is to be used as a tool, not as a goal to be achieved. This is where the pitfall lies.

49.4 Everyone Would Think This Way

Utopia is beautiful, because it is perfect, all aspects work flawlessly, everything and everyone cooperates as envisioned in one's thoughts. If we want to apply a Utopia to the real world it would thus require everyone to follow suit, to get into lock-step, otherwise it fails. In essence utopia is built on a Platonesque notion of a pure idea, the theory of form or idea. This argument of Plato poses that a non-physical idea or form represents the most accurate reality possible. It might be fair to say that this is argument could be true in each individual's mind, for example an ideal man or woman is different for everyone, and represents the most accurate possible form of reality, but not necessarily in a more general sense of reality for everyone.

In the book 'Philosophers at the pulpit' (translated from the Dutch title: *Filosofen op de kansel*) Dutch pastor Rienk Lanooy compared people's tendency to desire utopia to the story of the tower of Babylon. The people thought that if they could manage this one time to work all together, in the name of God, to create something great and beautiful that all would become better, showing that humans could all live in peace and be happy. This however did require everyone's cooperation and participation. It required everyone to agree that coming together to build the tower was the right course of action. As per the story, this of course didn't happen, and this required regulations of what was allowed and what not. So in order to get everyone to cooperate, they needed to be compelled, or coerced if necessary.

This is, however, how many ideologies are framed as well, that there is one right way to look at the world. Over time they too evolve and take in ideas of people that follow the particular ideology, but the core remains the same. This makes sense as everything will naturally evolve over time. An issue with ideologies is that because the world is only viewed from one perspective, the evolution goes through a figurative tunnel-vision, and becomes deprived of any other viewpoints as the members of said movement find themselves within an ideological echo-chamber. As an ideology endures and its followers cannot bring the intended goals to fruition, rules and regulation are brought into play to ensure cooperation. Over time we may observe within most ideologies that an 'the end justifies the means' mentality within factions of the movement emerges.

There is another problem with ideologies, and that is that the ideologues forget an entire aspect of reality because they are so focused on the slice they are concerned with. Don't believe me?

Let's take the Transhumanist idea of indefinite lifespan. Is it realistic to think that everyone will find something meaningful in their lives, instead of, for example watch Netflix everyday for 14 hours, especially if jobs are mostly automated? Speaking of automation, if there are very few jobs, and almost everything is ordered online, how do people create social groups outside of the digital world? For the moment work and grocery shopping are among the most important places to have social interaction.

This isn't meant to flame transhumanism, but to show that we too have blind-spots. That I used transhumanism is because you, the reader, most likely by now have at least some idea of transhumanism.

Regardless of the problems that the effects of ideologies can bring, such ideological viewpoints, in moderation, are of great value in our quest to innovate, and further human, and societal progress.

49.5 We Have to Do Better

It is fairly easy to get a following with some ideals that people agree on, especially when we combine those with some good one-liners and seemingly obvious truths. It has been done over and over. We may observe that this happened, quite effectively, in Nazi-Germany, The Soviet Union, ISIS, all manner of cults, the European Union on its promise of unity, and the United States built on the belief that anyone can become successful and rich. All these groups require a belief in whatever ideal picture has been painted, or whichever enemy is presented.

We have to do better than this, and we can do better than this.

The Transhumanist community seems to pride itself on the use of reason, science, and evidence, often referring to the Enlightenment Era, a period that has been of great influence to the development of science as we know it. This is a good first step, although I personally think the Enlightenment Era is too much being romanticized.

Having the knowledge of ideological pitfalls, and echo-chambers, we should equip ourselves with a critical eye towards each other and ourselves, not for the purpose of scrutinizing or bullying one another, but to help each other keep our faculties and wits sharp, and our perspectives and viewpoints opened wide.

If we wish to transcend humanity, it is however crucially important to not become puritanical about who is deemed worthy, whether if technology will make everything better, or that everyone has to prove their 'openness' of viewpoints, their ability to criticize or reason. The so-named SJW, a broad generic moniker, suffer from this with ever increasing "tests" of tolerance for those deemed minorities. Libertarians face similar tests of purity in how much they wish to minimize government. Such tests become 'ends' of themselves, losing sight of what is trying to be accomplished and why.