



TRANSHUMANISTS: WHO ARE THEY, WHAT DO THEY WANT, BELIEVE AND PREDICT?

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Through the World Future Society, author/writer, Hank Pellissier, in concert with Teresa Dal Santo, Ph.D., Research Associate with the University of California at San Francisco, conducted a 100-question survey (using surveymonkey.com) of 818 Transhumanists¹ on what their (and in essence, our) future holds. The online survey took place over eight days during July 2012. An expert in qualitative and quantitative studies and statistical analysis, Dr. Teresa Dal Santo's report illuminates what Transhumanists believe, hope for, and predict for the future with a particular focus is an inquiry into their ideas about radical life extension and immortality.

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¹ "With roots in humanist and Enlightenment thinking, Transhumanism is an emerging and broadly based philosophy, bioethic, cultural phenomenon and lifestyle choice whose proponents... aim to promote and encourage human enhancement through the application of science and technology."

Dvorsky, G. (2004, May-June). Better Living through Transhumanism: More Than Just a Philosophy and Social Movement, Transhumanism Is for Many a Way of Life. *The Humanist*, Vol. 64, No. 3. Retrieved from <http://www.questia.com/read/1G1-116733749/better-living-through-tranhumanism-more-than-just>

The results of this survey are two-fold. Statistics on the majority of the survey questions are within Part One, including Dr. Dal Santo thoughts about what did and did not surprise her. In Part Two, Dr. Dal Santo opines on the action she believes the results of this survey should promote.

PART ONE
(Data abbreviated)

Do you want to be immortal? If not, why not?

- 76.1% I do want immortality
- 4.8 Earth would be overpopulated
- 8.2 Boredom
- 7.4 Fear of being trapped in a painful life
- 3.7 Want to go to afterlife

Many comments indicated that a choice was desired; they didn't want to be forced to either live or die. A sampling of other responses included: "I don't want immortality, but the choice of when to cease existence," "I want to have the ability to live forever, but I also want to have the option to die whenever I want to", "I want infinite choice; a number of years between zero and infinity", "I'd only want to die if trapped in pain", "I will be happy to die once I have accomplished my dreams", "I would like immortality, but not unconditionally - quality of life is more important than quantity".

What would you do if you had 100 extra years of life?

- 80.3% Travel
- 77.7 Read and Write
- 62.3 Help Other People
- 56.8 Pleasure
- 51 Sex
- 48 Relax
- 46.7 Spend Time With My Family
- 23.5 Seek Powerful Position in Society

**Rank the following methods by which you believe immortality is likely to arrive.
(The highest possible score is 5)**

- 4.37 The Singularity²
- 4.37 Nanotechnology³

² "The Singularity... represent[s] the culmination of the merger of our biological thinking and existence with our technology, resulting in a world that is still human but that transcends our biological roots."
Kurzweil, R. (2005). *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (p. 9). London, England: Viking Penguin.

³ Nanotechnology – a branch of technology dealing with the manufacture of objects with dimensions of less than 100 nanometres and the manipulation of individual molecules and atoms.

- 4.35 Genetic Engineering
- 3.84 Virtual Existence
- 3.65 Mindfiling⁴ in Cyborg
- 3.52 SENS
- 3.35 Stem Cells

When do you think the Singularity will arrive?

- 10.3% It won't happen at all
- 20.9 Imperceptibly slow
- 9.4 2100
- 8.3 2085
- 17.7 2065
- 28.9 2045
- 4.4 2025

Rank the Appeal of these Life-Extending Options

- 4.12 Mindfiling (uploaded into cyborg)
- 4.01 Mindfiling (uploaded into fresh body)
- 3.9 Inhabiting Different Types of Bodies
- 3.53 Inhabiting Multiple Selves
- 3.52 Virtual Existence
- 3.02 Cryonics (full body)
- 2.51 Cryonics (head only)
- 2.47 Cloning

Under which of the following conditions are you willing to continue living?

- 90.8% Enhanced capabilities
- 63.5 Same capabilities
- 24.8 Limited capabilities

What is your religious / belief system?

- 81.4% Not Religious
- 9.5 Christian
- 1.8 Jewish
- 1.8 Buddhist
- 5.0 other religions

Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition. Retrieved from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/nanotechnology>

⁴ Mindfile – “the sum of saved digital reflections about you. All of the stored emails, chats, texts, IMs and blogs that you write are part of your mindfile. All of the uploaded photos, slide shows and movies that involve you are part of your mindfile. Your search histories, clicked selections and online purchases, if saved, are part of your mindfile. Your digital life is your mindfile.”

Rothblatt, M. (2009). Mindfiles, Mindware and Mindclones. Retrieved from <http://mindclones.blogspot.com/2009/03/what-are-mindfiles.html>

Comments to this question included: “Teresebian”, “Thelema”, “collectivist”, “Panendeism”, “4th Way”, “Taoist”, “a mix of scientology and discordianism”, “Chaos Magic”, and “Okay, Seriously? People”)

What is your sexual preference?

| | |
|-----|--------------|
| 73% | Heterosexual |
| 3.4 | Homosexual |
| 9.8 | Bisexual |
| 1.8 | Asexual |
| 6.8 | Pansexual |
| 5.5 | Other |

Comments to this question included: “omnisexual”, “demisexual”, “Kinsey 5”, “post-sexual”, “situationally dependent sexual”, “Saplosexual”, and “no reason you need to know, dears!”

What is your political position?

| | |
|-------|-------------|
| 32.7% | Liberal |
| 27.4 | Libertarian |
| 15.6 | Moderate |
| 16.9 | Socialist |
| 4.2 | Marxist |

Many comments to this question indicated anarchism or a dislike of politics; here’s a few: “I hate all politics”, “politics suck”, “apolitical”, “green pirate”, “waste of time”, “no”, “rebel”, “I’d like it if there was a need for it”, “anarchist”, and “NA”.

Describe your health

| | |
|-------|---------------|
| 18.1% | Excellent |
| 34.3 | Very Good |
| 29.9 | Good |
| 11.7 | Average |
| 5.1 | Below Average |
| 1.0 | Poor |

Describe your occupation

| | |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 27.8% | Computers and mathematics |
| 13.0 | Arts, design, entertainment, sports |
| 10.5 | Life, physical, social science |
| 9.1 | Education |

Far smaller occupational representation occurred in fishing, farming, forestry (.2%), construction (.4%), legal (2.7%), and office and admin support (2.1%).

Relationship status

64.4% Unmarried
27.2 Married
6.0 Divorced

Diet

74.4% Omnivore
10.1 Vegetarian
8.0 Caloric Restriction
5.9 Paleo
1.7 Vegan

Ethnicity

85.4% White
3.3 Asian
1.0 Black
10.0 Multiple races

Comments in reply to this question included: “Human (for now)”, “this question is stupid”, “race doesn’t exist”, “Homo Mutantes”, “relevance?”, and “aren’t we beyond the importance of subspecies distinction?”.

Level of Education

27.6% Graduate degree
28.8 Bachelor degree
27.0 Some college but no degree

Gender

90.1% Male
9.9 Female

Numerous comments with various options to the categories above included: “genderqueer”, “MTF Transsexual”, “We are all part of either. Augment and who knows more than 3 natural genders may present themselves”, “transwoman”, “androgynous consciousness occupying a male human body”, “meat popsicle”, “Pangendered⁵”, “N/A”,

⁵ Pangender, Pansexuality - not limited or inhibited in sexual choice with regard to gender or activity. Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/american_english/pansexual

“undisclosed”, “post-op (20 years) transsexual woman”, “other?”, “My biohost is xy. My consciousness is androgyne”, “Androgynous⁶”, “Prefer not to list”, “Wannabe M-to-N”, “burned out male (ED)”, “Sort of yanno”.

Age

9.4% under 19
45.8 20-29
21.5 30-39
12.1 40-49
7.7 50-59
3.3 60-69

Home Location

43.8% Large city
36.7 Small city
11.5 Town
3.3 Village
4.7 Rural

Additional answers to this question included: “Narnia”, “Second Life”, and “on the internet”.

What do you see as the world political government in 100 years?

41.8% One World Government
20.1 Abolition of Government
15.5 Thousands of Small Fractured States
11.3 Dominated by Europe and USA
11.3 Dominated by East Asia

What is your optimal level of transparency?

22.8% 100% transparency
13.3 90% transparency
12.1 80% transparency
9.6 70% transparency
5.5 60% transparency

⁶ Androgynous – **1**: having the characteristics or nature of both male and female. **2a**: neither specifically feminine nor masculine **b**: suitable to or for either sex **3**: having traditional male and female roles obscured or reversed.

Morse, J. (2005) Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary. (11th Ed) (p. 46). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated.

How much sleep would you prefer to survive on?

- 44.7% no sleep
- 19.8 1-2 hours
- 20.3 3-4 hours

What do you predict in the next 50-100 years?

- 56.5% Accelerating progress, then Singularity
- 25.8 Humans will slowly progress
- 13.3 Expand through solar system in 100 years
- 1.0 Expand through galaxy in 50 years
- 2.8 Extinct in 100 years
- 0.9 Extinct in 50 years

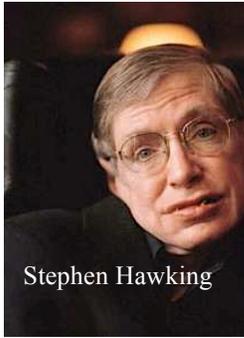
What is very important to you in the future world?

- 61.6% More personal freedom
- 43.5 Kinder people
- 20.5 Less work
- 13.5 More luxury

What are your top ambitions?

- 85.1% Brain enhancement
- 84.8 Maximizing health
- 80.4 Radical life extension
- 72.3 Immortality
- 68.9 Ending war
- 68.4 Ending oppressive governments
- 61.4 Ending environmental destruction
- 60.7 Ending social inequity

Categories that were far less important included: colonizing the moon (34.8%), ending property and money (31.4), cloning (22.0), and ending gender (17.3).



Credit:
<http://www.hawking.org.uk>



Credit:
<http://www.kurzweiltech.com>

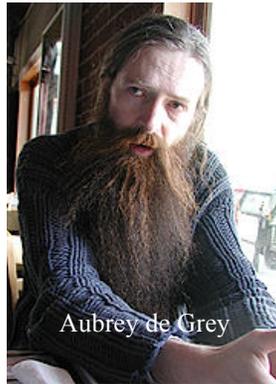


Credit:
<https://www.facebook.com/michiokaku>

Most Admired Person

- 45.7% Stephen Hawking
- 38.8 Ray Kurzweil
- 29.4 Michio Kaku

Within comments to this question, Aubrey de Grey received, by far, the most admiration; dozens of other individuals were also named.



Credit: <http://en.wikipedia.org>

Indicate your personality traits

- 33.2% Realist
- 28.7 Optimist
- 2.7 Pessimist
- 9.9 Cautious
- 12.4 Ambitious

Two of the lowest personality traits given in answer to this question included: “lazy” (2.5%), and “depressed” (3.4%).

Your Favorite Hobbies

| | |
|------|------------------|
| 88% | Reading |
| 62.1 | Multimedia |
| 59 | Self-Improvement |
| 54.4 | Gaming |
| 45.1 | Exercise |
| 40.5 | Travel |
| 31.0 | Dining |
| 24.4 | Cooking |
| 17.5 | Alcohol |
| 14.4 | Drugs |

Reason You Want Immortality

| | |
|-------|-----------------------------|
| 52.7% | Curiosity |
| 43.8 | Challenges I want to tackle |
| 24.9 | I want more pleasure |

If you died and could return in another body, what gender would you want to be?

| | |
|-------|---------------|
| 53.6% | Male |
| 18 | Female |
| 13.4 | Hermaphrodite |
| 14.9 | Asexual |

To conclude Part One, please remember - there's copious additional information that was "left on the editing room floor." Thousands of other comments were written in, which, for the purpose of this study, were of lesser importance. The full 417 pages of data are available (in a pdf file) through the World Future Society.

PART TWO: DR. DAL SANTO'S OBSERVATIONAL ANALYSIS

Most of the data was expected however; a quintet of statistics caught my attention, they are:

1. The majority of Transhumanists that answered the survey are quite young - the largest demographic was 20-29 years of age. Despite this, their primary goal was still immortality or radical life extension. It was surprising that people under 40-50 years old were the least bit concerned about death. At 60 years of age, what's my opinion regarding this? **I'm thrilled that the 20ish crowd is committed to ending aging and death!** Perhaps they see themselves as the first generation to transcend expiration, or at least push it back multiple decades? Congrats to them!

Why were the respondents so young? I am puzzled; the vast majority of leadership in Transhumanism is considerably older, but apparently our “audience” is half our age. Examining how I got the respondents doesn’t provide any clues - I garnered many respondents from David Orban and Alex Lightman’s social network - and they’re both around 50 years old. The readership of IEET.org and hplusmagazine.com is considerably younger, but I would have guessed that the biggest demographic was around 40, not around 25 as the data revealed.

The burgeoning popularity of Transhumanism among young people is a detail that H+ leadership should notice and accommodate.

2. Transhumanists are largely alike in almost every category, **except one**. Most are non-believers; most are white, male, urbanites, educated, etc. **Only in Politics** is there absolutely no overwhelming majority. Indeed, there’s a wide schism between pro-government and anti-government camps. Libertarian-Transhumanists and Anarcho-Transhumanists are a large, outspoken, feisty contingent that has and will continue to clash with Liberals, Moderates, Socialists, etc. Additionally, when the future is predicted, the two groups envision widely disparate scenarios. Will there be One World Government? Will there be Abolition of Government? Will there be thousands of small fractured states? The division between these two parties needs to be recognized and (hopefully) mutually respected, so that they can proceed together towards common goals.

3. The data reveals an even larger proportion of white males than was expected. It seems obvious to me that it is in the interest of Transhumanism to reach out to women more, and to reach out to non-white populations.

4. Let’s make sure the future is a place we’re happy to live in, in our far longer lives. One question reveals that “Travel” is the favored activity of the future, so... let’s dedicate ourselves to creating a myriad of places for travelers to venture. Conversely, “Seeking Power” received very few votes as an option; suggesting that creating an Egalitarian society might be advantageous. “Sex” however, remains very popular with a majority of Transhumanists, so it’s sensible to develop a future with copious amounts of it. “Spending Time With My Family” is less popular than “Helping Other People”, so perhaps the latter should be prioritized over the former, etc., etc.

5. Many projects currently in operation are counting on public enthusiasm, i.e., financial support, to meet their goals. Russia 2045 - a relatively new enterprise - aims for immortality via “Mindfiling in Cyborg.” This option Ranked #1 as the “most-appealing life-extension option.” Is it really, already, the most popular path to immortality?

Aubrey de Grey (in another part of the survey) received more favorable comments as the “Most Admired Transhumanist” than anyone else. Respect for his vision and efforts is extraordinarily high, but his goal to maintain the “meat-bag”, to indefinitely extend the life of the flesh, is at odds with the popularity of “Mindfiling in Cyborg.”

I believe perhaps the most contentious Transhumanist debate in the near future will be in deciding whether or not to abandon our organic biological bodies. At present, the vast bulk of research is in maintaining and lengthening the lives of our fragile flesh. However, there's obviously (according to this survey) a big desire and interest is scrapping our blood-and-bones and moving on, into lives as machines.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I want to thank Terasem Movement Inc. for having granted the ability to conduct this survey and analysis. I hope the data serves as a valuable mark in time, a point in history that future scholars can refer to when they write the chronicles that chart the course of Transhumanism.

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