

It is not surprising that when we get down to the basics about policies, laws, permissions, and restrictions on biotechnological enhancement, the question is quickly framed this way: Do we have a fundamental right to biotechnologically enhance ourselves? We live in a culture – largely worldwide – whose moral deliberations are dominated by the modern discourse of rights. This was not always the case and it does not have to be the case now. Instead of deciding what we should do, or be allowed to do, by asking whether we have a fundamental “right” to something, we might instead ask whether that something is good, or whether it is intelligible, or whether it is rational, or healthy, or virtuous, or tending toward edification, or commanded by God, or granted under a social contract. But we do ask the question in terms of rights. As the announcement of the conference which prompted this paper says:

Defenders of enhancement argue that the use of biotechnologies is a fundamental human right, inseparable from the defense of bodily autonomy, reproductive freedom, free expression and cognitive liberty ... defenders of enhancement believe that bans on the consensual use of new technologies would be an even greater threat to human rights.¹

So what does putting the question of enhancement in terms of rights do?

First of all, notice the term “fundamental” used in this debate. The purpose of this term is to separate the kind of right being talked about from purely conventional or legal rights. Legal rights could be changed at will, but the concept of a “fundamental right” is supposed to have greater power. A fundamental right cannot be changed; it is not the product of community agreement or local ordinances. In this respect, “fundamental rights” serve the same function as the older locution of “natural rights” or the even more recent “human rights.” They are all supposed to be things that have a claim on us above and beyond the vagaries of society. They are supposed to generate moral limitations on what society can do to us and what we can do to each other. “Fundamental rights” are largely protections for the individual, then, constraints on the pursuit of social or community goals.² A purported right to enhancement would be a sort of moral immunization, a claim against society not to (at the very least) criminalize enhancement.

What is the problem with putting the question of enhancement in terms of rights?

There are general problems with any rights talk. At the outset, it is questionable whether there are such things or what they are even supposed to be. While earlier natural law and natural rights thinkers thought of rights as divine commands³ or sometimes merely practical requirements for pursuing our natural ends, Hugo Grotius (the seventeenth-century “father” of modern rights and international law) influentially described rights as inherent “moral qualities,” which had the simultaneous effect of disconnecting rights from theology and of putting rights into some sort of ghostly realm.⁴ Rights are invisible and intangible, but “real.” They are just supposed to be there without having been legislated by anyone. It is these sorts of assertions that have led some thinkers to say that rights are just fictions. Jeremy Bentham (the eighteenth-century legal and moral theorist) famously called the concept of rights being used in the American and French Revolutions “nonsense upon stilts.”⁵

This is not to say that rights are merely defended as intuited or supposed. There is a large literature on rights which includes defenses of rights as practically necessary given the fact of our having interests, or even logically necessary concepts given our experiences of purposive action.⁶ The *practical* problem with the assertion of a right is not belief in the existence of rights in general (which is largely assumed) but rather that there is no clear way to detect which rights we have or how strong they are. Which rights we have is an issue constantly debated. As L. W. Sumner has argued, the very prevalence of rights talk may be the greatest threat to rights.⁷ The ease with which these undetectable and invisible moral qualities can be asserted has led us to a situation in which rights seem to proliferate unchecked. Some people prefer a minimal list of rights – life, liberty, property. Some prefer a different list – life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (probably the most expansive right ever discussed). Others might derive from these broader rights free speech, free assembly, freedom of religion, and ownership of guns. Others discover previously unrecognized fundamental rights to contraception, abortion, gay marriage, public funding of religious schools, suicide, or a right against one’s parents not to have been born at all. Some assert that the right to healthcare or public education is fundamental. A university might assert that students have a right not to hear racist language. A church might assert that students have the right to public prayer in public schools. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that we all possess the right to a paid vacation and to enjoy art.⁸ The Council for Responsible Genetics has issued a “Genetics Bill of Rights” stating that all people have the right to a world in which living organisms cannot be patented, and that all people have the right to have been conceived, gestated, and born without genetic manipulation.⁹ In protesting human cloning, bioethicist Daniel Callahan asserted that we all have a right to a unique genetic identity.¹⁰

Not only the number, but the scope of rights is also open to expansion. Free speech rights might not just mean being able to criticize government policy, but to publish pornography or create video games in which players get to murder prostitutes.¹¹ Procreation rights might mean not only the right to have children but to genetically engineer them or to raise them with religious beliefs forbidding the use of medicine. Property rights might not just protect your home from government seizure, but also mean you can own genetically engineered tissues or patent an athletic move in a track and field event, for which others will have to pay you to use in the future. In short, we are tempted to assert the claim of a “right” over anything we desire. This proliferation of rights and the limitless widening of the scope of rights serves to weaken the power of rights language altogether. When the assertion of rights become little more than a reflex to secure desires, the entire notion of rights as sacrosanct is undermined, and rights need sacrosanctity to function as they do.

To make rights language retain meaning, then, we need some form of decision procedure that lets us distinguish what are “real” rights and what are merely desires that we might wish to be knighted as rights. The possibility of developing such a procedure is a complicated debate in ethical theory that I will not go into detail about here. What I will say, however, is that there is no clear test, morally or legally, that we can trot out for determining what is and is not a right. It would be nice to have a rights-detector, but we don’t have one generally agreed upon.

What we do know, however, is that conceptually and rhetorically, and certainly legally, when you appeal for something to be recognized as a right, you have to make a case for it. That case has to appeal to certain values and to articulate why the alleged right you are interested in is worthwhile, and usually how it stems from a more basic recognized right.

How might one make the case that enhancement be treated as a right?

Roughly speaking, there are three strategies in the discourse on rights that have been used to get a right recognized as fundamental or natural.

The first is the oldest and most closely associated with natural law – conformity with human nature. The idea is that if there is a universal human nature, then what counts as fulfilling us, nurturing us, and truly satisfying us is fixed, within a certain range of constraints. Rights then, are seen as an important way that we can respect and pursue these elements of our nature – our whole purpose for being. Not having rights, and not having duties, is thought to make no sense given our natures. What is most important about us is that we are something fairly specific, that we have a nature, and that it is our nature that makes any conception of a valuable existence for us intelligible. Rights (and correlative duties) are the most coherent way of supporting the actions required for us to satisfy these natural, intelligible ends. To recognize something as a right, then, means to show that it serves to properly satisfy a natural end.

The second idea of what grounds rights is interests. While our interests might be determined by a fixed human nature, they wouldn’t have to be. The idea here is that rights serve to protect the things that we do care about, that we do have interests in, so that we are understood primarily as benefiting from the duties that our rights impose on others – whether those duties are to help us or just not to interfere with us. What is important here is that we care about certain things and care about having a certain kind of experience. Rights are all about benefits to us, given our interests, especially our interest in our own well-being. To recognize something as a right, then, means to show that it serves a basic interest.

The third strategy for defending a right is the one most commonly and casually asserted in contemporary culture – autonomy. The focus here is on choice and the general idea is that what is most important about us is our free will. What things we actually choose are not nearly so important as the fact that we get to choose at all. Choice itself is the highest intrinsic value and the *sine qua non* for respecting rational beings. Rights are, therefore, predominantly about preventing others from constricting our choices, and as long as our choices do not interfere substantially with others, then they are purely our own. To recognize something as a right, then, means to show that it could be chosen freely and does not harm others.

So, in thinking about the asserted right to enhance, which of these strategies best captures what is at the heart of the desire for enhancement, for the intelligibility of wanting enhancement, and for making enhancement seem worthwhile? This is not the same question, though it is related, as

asking what rhetorical strategy will most likely work politically. It is the question of worth. What understanding of the right to enhancement most captures enhancement as worth having a right to?

The first thing that must be understood, for all these strategies, is that a right never gives you *carte blanche* to harm another directly or perhaps even foreseeably indirectly. The discourse of rights almost always includes the idea that rights are rarely absolute and are at least limited by whether or not our actions harm others and whether our actions violate other's rights. But assuming one can make the case that enhancement will not harm others (a contested assumption), then what rights appeal can be made?

Appeal to autonomy

The appeal to autonomy is probably the most common contemporary defense of specific rights and it does have the greatest flexibility. It gives the greatest scope to whatever right you might be interesting in defending, and it appeals to a general interest in doing what we want without government or social interference. However, its flexibility is also its weakness. The concept of autonomy has a rich and morally powerful history. Unfortunately, autonomy has been watered down intellectually so that today it often means nothing more than the right to be permitted to do *anything* that does not harm others. Merely appealing to autonomy for the right to enhancement then, says nothing specific about enhancement itself, but only makes a general demand not to be interfered with. Accordingly, there is really no need for the issue of enhancement *per se* even to arise. A pure appeal to autonomy would support a right to enhance oneself no more or less than it would support a right to impair oneself. Pure autonomy says nothing about the value of enhancement or why anyone would want such a thing, but only speaks to the alleged value of being unconstrained in whatever actions you wish to pursue. One can appeal to autonomy equally to demand the right to vote freely, to print pornography, to worship freely, to self-mutilate, to choose your own career, to stay drunk all the time, to kill yourself for noble reasons, or to kill yourself for ignoble reasons. The extreme nonspecificity of pure autonomy claims, and its content-free nature, makes merely appealing to autonomy weak, formalistic, nonspecific, and immature.

Earlier understandings of autonomy were often about recognizing the rational and practical nature of human beings. Respecting autonomy in natural law meant recognizing that, though we were morally constrained by being rational creatures, we made use of our free will and introspection in deciding how best to fulfill our general and specific natures. Respecting autonomy in deontological ethics was about recognizing that rational beings produce their own moral laws, not in a relativistic manner, but in manner which showed that universal reason generated morality, not some arbitrary legislator. Respecting autonomy in consequentialist ethics was about recognizing that when other authorities decided our actions for us they almost always got it wrong and that a rational person was best placed themselves to determine how their actions would in fact produce the best consequences.¹² In none of these views was autonomy seen as an ultimate content-free value in and of itself so that what our choices were had no moral relevance, and only the fact of our choosing did. Autonomy was meant to be rational and practical, not vapidly libertine.

In contemporary times however, autonomy is often used as a catch-all and has sometimes devolved into little more than the plaint of a teenager to be allowed to do whatever they want, no matter how self-destructive or pointless, just because "it's my life." This situation is reminiscent of Plato's criticism of democracy in the Republic. He argues that democracy at first develops because people are denied freedom, but once they have it they come to value nothing but freedom

itself – that is, they do not value what they could *gain* by having freedom, but just the freedom itself. As a result they see anything they could possibly desire as being their birthright and they see any potential constraint on their freedom as an assault no matter how beneficial it might be to them. The result of this is a self-destructive breakdown, culturally and individually. Plato says:

[The young democratic man] spends as much money, effort, and time on unnecessary pleasures as on necessary ones ... And he doesn't admit any word of truth into the guardhouse, for if someone tells him that some pleasures belong to fine and good desires and others to evil ones ... he denies all this and declares that all pleasures are equal and must be valued equally ... And so he lives on, yielding day by day to the desire at hand ... And isn't it inevitable that freedom should go to all lengths in such a city? ... a father accustoms himself to behave like a child and fear his sons, while the son behaves like a father, feeling neither shame nor fear in front of his parents...¹³

It is from the fear and disorder generated by the fetishism of liberty that Plato says tyranny arises, when a charismatic authoritarian appears promising to provide protection and order for the people, who themselves now fear a dangerous and aimless society in which people misuse their liberty.

So, the idea is that in late democracies, the appeal to autonomy (which remember, literally means *self-lawed* – not *no-lawed*) degenerates into nothing but the appeal to formal liberty. It thus loses nobility and worth, and especially practicality. People begin to experience a reactionary response, despising the mere call for being allowed to do whatever you want as silly, immature, weak, socially destructive and dangerous. As critic of enhancement Francis Fukuyama says in *Our Posthuman Future*:

... while freedom to choose one's own plan for life is certainly a good thing, there is ample reason to question whether moral freedom as it is currently understood is such a good thing for most people, let alone the single most important human goal ... Contemporary understandings of individual autonomy ... seldom provide a way to distinguish between genuine moral choices and choices that amount to the pursuit of individual inclination, preferences, desires, and gratifications.¹⁴

Defending a right to enhancement then, by merely appealing to autonomy, to the larger right to do whatever you want, is empty. It is also likely to be seen by many, as with Fukuyama, as immature and vapid – and rightly so. But this point should not be seen as disappointing to enhancement defenders. Appeals merely to autonomy denigrate the potential value of enhancement to little more than a teenager's demand to stay out as long as they want just because. While such an appeal (if accepted) would show that we do have a right to enhancement, presumably the defenders of biotechnological augmentation have some rather more substantial and specific interest in enhancement itself. Presumably they want to show something more than that enhancement is a right simply because it is one of infinitely many things we can do given unfettered autonomy. Otherwise, there would be little point to organizing conferences and editing special issues of journals on the specific question of enhancement and rights. Presumably, they want to show that enhancement can be something good, something valuable.¹⁵

Appeal to interests

The appeal to interests, I think, is more powerful than just appealing to autonomy. The appeal to interests says that there is some end or goal that we care about, that is important to us, and that we

cannot completely fulfill the potential goodness of our lives without pursuing. This is much more specific than mere autonomy. It doesn't say that we should be permitted to pursue anything we desire, no matter its reasonableness or consequence, but rather that some goals are worthwhile and important, and we need freedom in order to pursue those goals.

Now the term "interests" as it is used here does not mean simply "desires and preferences" but rather things that are important for our welfare, for our well-being. Using this language, you might have a "desire" to kill yourself or a "preference" for neurotoxic recreational drugs, but your interests would not be satisfied by those things. You would instead be destroyed or impaired by satisfying such desires. Our interests are those things that we need to secure a life worth having, to assist in our flourishing. Though there are many variations on the list of basic interests that humans are thought to have, most of the lists include the preservation of life, health, bodily integrity, play, friendship, classic autonomy, religion, aesthetics, and the pursuit of knowledge.¹⁶ These are the kinds of things that everyone needs in order to make life worth having had at all. Specific rights, then, are the claims we make to receive, or not be interfered with in our pursuit of, those things which satisfy our interests. Freedom of assembly, healthcare, freedom of worship, education, or police protection, etc., are all specific rights that can benefit us through satisfying interests or final ends.

For defending enhancement, then, the goal would be to explain how enhancement would in fact be a reasonable and meaningful way to pursue the satisfaction of recognized interests. Although bioconservative critics often see enhancement as a kind of repudiation of traditional human values, we can see that the kinds of things enhancement might provide are very much in keeping with traditional understandings of worthwhile, reasonable human values and interests. The most fundamental of interests – the preservation of life – is certainly pursued by life extension. The pursuit of knowledge is obviously relevant to cognitive enhancement. Better health through organ replacement or cybernetic implants is too obvious to mention. And we can fairly easily make the case that specific forms of enhancement can address interests of friendship, bodily integrity, play, aesthetics, autonomy, and even I think religion¹⁷ – in general, all the things that have been recognized as providing worthwhile and fulfilled lives. Enhancement, then, is not freakish; it is not a repudiation of value; it is the pursuit of value.

Appeal to natural law

This interest talk is deeply connected to the third strategy that I mentioned, about appeals to natural law and human nature. While proponents of natural law theory may seem to be some of the most vocal opponents of enhancement, this is often because of concomitant religious commitments they have which are – by their own admissions – not the ground of, or necessary for the justification of, natural law. Much of what natural law defenders want to promote is the idea that, in fact, there is a human nature. Their opponents in this regard are not biotechnologists and transhumanists, but rather anti-essentialist social science model devotees who think there is no biologically grounded human nature and treat humans as kinds of independent minds subject only to language, rhetoric and politics, not to neurology or genetics. Most proponents of enhancement already agree with proponents of natural law that there is a biologically-grounded human nature – otherwise biotechnological alteration would be mostly irrelevant to changing our behavior and cognitive capacities. Of course, while enhancement advocates may have a long row to hoe when it comes to making friends with natural lawyers, one thing we can see is that whatever the tension, it is not the case that the enhancement lobby is dismissive of or opposed to the concept of a real human nature.

Our interests are – as most natural lawyers would attest – the result of our human nature. It is perfectly natural, and perfectly humanly-natural, to seek self-preservation, expanded knowledge, greater control of ourselves. As Ramez Naam says: “Far from being unnatural, the drive to alter and improve on ourselves is a fundamental part of who we humans are. As a species we’ve always looked for ways to be faster, stronger, and smarter and to live longer.”¹⁸ What defenders of enhancement can do, then, is to point out that those who seek enhancement are not repudiating the human, but are pursuing a species-old interest – more life, more knowledge, more happiness, more aesthetics, more friendship, more play, even more religion. In respect of this last element, it is worth mentioning that two of the most famous philosophers and theologians of Christianity – Boethius and Thomas Aquinas – both argued that happiness was the ultimate goal of human beings but that our desire for, and even mental ability for, happiness could not possibly be satisfied by the current bodies and physical world in which we live.¹⁹ That is why there is a heaven and an afterlife – because the happiness of which humans are capable is greater than our current biological and physical limitations permit us to achieve. Of course, there is a great gulf between claiming that only God can fulfill ultimate human desires and claiming that biotech can fulfill them, but it is perhaps not the gulf that most people think of – and in any case, no enhancement supporter need claim biotech is the ultimate, but only to make the case that biotech is worthwhile in moving us forward in the securing of valuable ends.

Conclusion

My point is simply this: The theory of rights has significant problems, but we do live in an era where rights language dominates the moral and legal landscape and so defenders of enhancement have to deal with that language. In making the case that enhancement should be a right, then, defenders have to adopt a strategy. They have to argue that enhancement should be recognized as important enough to be protected by a right. The most common strategy is to appeal to autonomy or liberty, but this is the weakest appeal. Its libertine form (“it’s my life and I should be able to do whatever I want”) is content-free, shallow, and often self-impairing, saying nothing about the worth of enhancement itself. An appeal to basic interests, however – to those things widely recognized as valuable, worthwhile, and even necessary for a life worth having had – can accommodate the attraction of enhancement, make it less alien, and more obviously noble, worthy, and reasonable. An appeal to interests, which focuses on explaining the goals of enhancement as noble and worthy, also has the advantage of connecting enhancement to concerns about human nature and natural law. Once we see that the classic values of natural law – life, health, knowledge, and sociability – are eminently revered by the core pro-enhancement community, we can see that the worry that enhancement is somehow unnatural or alien to human nature is deeply false.²⁰

There is one caveat in all this for the pro-enhancement crowd, though. And that is for them to ask themselves what they want from enhancement. If enhancement appeals to them only because it offers power, distraction, libertine gratification, an endless existence of vapid entertainment, then they are not seeking to be more than human, they are seeking to be less than human – but just for a really, really, really long time with more durable equipment. As with so many of our other quests, enhancement should be pursued because it can satisfy worthwhile and noble ends. To have enhancement justifiably recognized as a right, it needs not only to be perceived as worthwhile, dignified, and noble; it needs to *be* worthwhile, dignified, and noble.²¹

Notes

¹ See <http://ieet.org/index.php/IEET/HETHR>, accessed April 27, 2008.

² This concept of a fundamental right developed from the tradition of natural law, a complex moral system with influences going back to Plato, Aristotle, and especially the Stoics, and then reformed by Thomas Aquinas as the chief moral theory of the Roman Catholic Church. So, the aforementioned “defenders of enhancement” might just as easily have claimed that we all have the natural right to enhance ourselves — a natural right to alter our natures. “Fundamental” rights are the modern children of natural law. See Patrick D. Hopkins, “Natural Law” in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, second edition (Farmington Hills MI: Macmillan References USA) v. 6: 505-517.

³ For example, Cicero, *On the Republic*, Book III, xxii, in *Philosophical Treatises: On the Republic. On the Laws* (Cambridge MA: Loeb Classical Library-Harvard University Press, 1928): 211.

⁴ For comment on moral qualities, see Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, Book I, iv. (New York: Walter Dunne, 1901): 19. For comment on independence from theology, see Hugo Grotius, *Prolegomena to the Law of War and Peace*, paragraph 11 (Kansas City: The Library of Liberal Arts, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957): 10.

⁵ Jeremy Bentham, *Anarchical Fallacies: Being An Examination of the Declarations of Rights Issued During the French Revolution in The Works of Jeremy Bentham* 489 (John Bowring ed., 1843). Quoted in Hugo Adam Bedau, "Anarchical Fallacies": Bentham's Attack on Human Rights, *Human Rights Quarterly* 22.1 (2000): 261-79.

⁶ See Alan Gewirth, *Human Rights: Essays on Justification and Applications* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982): 198-200. He writes: “Even if persons’ having rights cannot be logically inferred in general from the fact that they make certain claims, it is possible and indeed logically necessary to infer from the fact that certain objects are proximate necessary conditions of human action that all rational agents logically must hold or claim, at least implicitly, that they have rights to such objects. [...] Every rational being must claim or accept that he has rights to freedom and well being. If any agent were to deny that he has these rights, he would contradict himself. For in holding that freedom and well being are necessary conditions of his agency, he holds that they are necessary goods; and because of his conative attachment to his purposes he holds that it is necessary that he have these goods in that he (prudentially) ought to have them.”

⁷ L. W. Sumner, “Rights,” in Hugh LaFollette, ed., *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000): 298.

⁸ <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>, accessed April 27, 2008.

⁹ <http://www.gene-watch.org/programs/bill-of-rights/bill-of-rights-text.html>, accessed April 27, 2008.

¹⁰ Quoted in *Time*, November 8, 1993: 68.

¹¹ Grand Theft Auto: Vice City.

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0000696CZ/103-6183399-7150204?v=glance&n=468642>, accessed April 27, 2008.

¹² John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 92-93, 121.

¹³ Plato, *Republic*, in John M Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 1171-1173. There is a spectacular example of Plato’s criticism in contemporary literature. In Max Barry’s novel *Jennifer Government*, a libertarian society is breaking down as a result of too little government and social paternalism. The main characters engage in the following exchange of dialogue: “You know, this all started when they got rid of tax. That’s when everyone started buying out of society.

When we tax, we had a community” ... “What, you want to reintroduce tax? How do you do that?”... “I don’t know,” she muttered. “But somewhere along the line, this freedom stuff got way out of control.” Max Barry, *Jennifer Government* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003): 230-31.

14 Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002): 124.

¹⁵ I don’t assume that this is true for all those who find enhancement interesting, but it is true for many. No doubt some of those attracted to enhancement are attracted for the meanest of goals. In other places, I’ve referred to this as the difference between “high” transhumanism and “low” transhumanism.

¹⁶ See, for example, Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 41-42; John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press): 81-90.

¹⁷ See Patrick D. Hopkins, "Transcending the Animal: How Transhumanism and Religion Are and Are Not Alike," *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, 14(2) August 2005: 13-28.
<http://www.jetpress.org/volume14/hopkins.html>, accessed April 27, 2008.

¹⁸ Ramez Naam, *More Than Human: Embracing the Promise of Biological Enhancement* (New York: Broadway Books, 2005): 9.

¹⁹ See Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): esp. 53-58. Also see Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Happiness* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964): 57.

²⁰ Though largely arguing against enhancement, the President’s Council on Bioethics acknowledges that human beings have always been seeking to better themselves through technology (even in Biblical views) and thus they say of humanity: “By his very nature man is the animal constantly looking for ways to better his life through artful means and devices; man is the animal with what Rousseau called “perfectibility”. *Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness* (New York: ReganBook/HarperCollins, 2003): 291 (footnote).

²¹ Though not explicitly arguing for this position, the World Transhumanist Association’s Transhumanist Declaration uses language such as “personal growth” and “well-being” in describing certain of its goals: (4) Transhumanists advocate the moral right for those who so wish to use technology to extend their mental and physical (including reproductive) capacities and to improve their control over their own lives. We seek personal growth beyond our current biological limitations. (7) Transhumanism advocates the well-being of all sentience (whether in artificial intellects, humans, posthumans, or non-human animals) and encompasses many principles of modern humanism. Transhumanism does not support any particular party, politician or political platform.

<http://transhumanism.org/index.php/WTA/declaration/>, accessed April 27, 2008.

Similarly, the Extropy Institute uses the term “wisdom” in explaining its goals: “Extropy means seeking more intelligence, wisdom, and effectiveness, an open-ended lifespan, and the removal of political, cultural, biological, and psychological limits to continuing development.”

<http://www.extropy.org/principles.htm>, accessed August 15 2006.