

# Are Humans Fluid or Solid? Or What is Human Nature?

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## Potentiality and Preserved Human Nature

### ❖ Human Nature changeable?

❖ Almost all people in the modern world can be divided by worldview.

◆ Those who act and believe that humans beings and 'human nature' can be known, conquered, and molded just as the physical world can be known, conquered, and molded, and those who act and believe that human nature is static and objective and must be accounted for accordingly in human behavior and action.

◆ The driver of the latter mentality is our ever increasing steps of removal from 'nature' or creation or the things of the earth via 'technological solutions'

\* The end of this path is a complete disassociation of 'nature' from our lives. And the belief that human nature is simply something entirely fungible.

- All things about humans are "social constructions" that can be remade.

- No reference to tradition or historical refinement of 'social tradition' that the second view holds.

- The teaching of a 'static human nature' does not mean there is not a spectrum of expression. It rather means that humanity as a whole has both a horizontal relation and commonality among ourselves across culture time and space and a vertical or transcendental reference point in being the *imago dei*. It is a cross!

- We can know human nature by studying both humanity broadly (history and world cultures) and theology. We only fully know it by knowing both. That is by loving God and loving neighbor.

❖ Questions we should be asking: If humanity is changeable, by whom is it changeable? Is who will be the creator or the decider of this 'new humanity'? To what purpose? Any changing that occurs will benefit whom?

◆ I will argue that what you find is that tranhumanism is a warping of the command given in the Garden turned into a 'man-centric-self-referencing' and not a theocentric reference. God the Creator is cut out or dethroned and some future 'human' is put in His place.

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\*Description of the book *Game of Gods* "Humanity has three Great Desires: To be as God, to be Masters of Meaning and Destiny, to build Heaven on Earth – this is that story."

- This book critiques the growing dominance of the transhumanist narrative.
  - "The history of Man "playing God" is one of deepest subjugation and destruction. We proclaim the good but are unable to break from that which is evil; we are incapable of resisting the allure to become a god *made in our fallen image.*" — Carl Teichrib, *Game of Gods: The Temple of Man in the Age of Re-Enchantment*

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## Transhumanism

### ❖ Man and Machine (Technology)

◆ "Engineering is the closest thing to magic that exists in the world" - Elon Musk

❖ Definition = technological advances will allow us to transcend ourselves, enhancing our capabilities and possibly extending life beyond the human body.

◆ Jacob Shatzer in *Transhumanism and the Image of God*, "describes the three main waves of transhumanism: (1) morphological freedom to change ourselves, (2) use of augmented reality to merge the physical and digital world, and (3) the pursuit of artificial intelligence to finally transcend our human limitations entirely."

(<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/transhumanism-image-god/>)

\*Enhancement via tech is a right —> augmented reality and growing merging with tech —> full union and 'immortality' by uploading 'the mind' to intelligent computers

◆ Two relevant quotes from *Designer Evolution: A Transhumanist Manifesto*

\*"Man is not born free, but everywhere in biological chains. People of the world, unite! - you have nothing to lose but your biological chains."

\*"As humanism freed us from the chains of superstition, let transhumanism free us from our biological chains."

❖ Stages of the Technology

❖ External Tech builds

- ◆ Smart phones and devices, constantly with us
- ◆ Virtual and augmented reality worlds starts the next stage of tech integration and the lure of the virtual world.

❖ Implantations integrating the body to technology

◆ Chips for networking

- \* RFID under skin
- \* Other chips for recording bio data or location

◆ Elon Musk's Neuralink

\* Claims and Goals

- Direct brain to technology control
- Learning new 'brain pathways' and 'ways of communicating' to go the other way: computer to brain control

◆ Cyborgism - A being formed by a "human, machine brain/nervous system coupling" or "a human whose nervous system is linked to a computer"

\* Dusseldorf 'Science + Fiction: The world's first Cyborg-fair'

- It is about enhancing or improving on human bodily capability
  - Call themselves 'biohackers'
  - Not therapeutic or health related
- Goal is to have a seamless technologically networked life that takes your effort and thought out of the process of going about your life.

\* Kevin Warwick (pioneer of cyborgism) "talks of a future in which cyborgs will view ordinary human beings as lower beings, just as we now look on chimpanzees or cows."

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- The thinking is that since the technology is 'in your body' it is you, so the psychological effect is more profound than a smart device.

❖ Desire for and searching for full merger with AI and or 'mind uploading'

◆ "By definition, posthumanism (I call it 'cyberhumanism') is to replace transhumanism at the center stage circa 2035. By then, mind uploading could become a reality with gradual neuronal replacement, rapid advancements in Strong AI, massively parallel computing, and nanotechnology allowing us to directly connect our brains to the Cloud-based infrastructure of the Global Brain. Via interaction with our AI assistants, the GB will know us better than we know ourselves in all respects, so mind transfer, or rather 'mind migration,' for billions of enhanced humans would be seamless, sometime by mid-century." — Alex M. Vikoulov, *The Intelligence Supernova: Essays on Cybernetic Transhumanism, The Simulation Singularity & The Syntellect Emergence*

\*Major goal is the extension of human life indefinitely or of at least our brains 'processing power' or abilities via a 'technological fix'

- "The philosophy that accepts death must itself be considered dead, its questions meaningless, its consolations worn out." — Alan Harrington, *The Immortalist*

\*The Danger on the human level of accepting a Transhumanist future.

- Digital technology is ephemeral and this lack of the "distinctive visceral connection" with history may be much diminished, if not lost, when our cultural heritage is stored in sterile databases rather than in actual objects. ... What's different now is that our cultural memory is embedded in a complex and ever-shifting system of technologies. Any change in the system can render the record unreadable. A book can sit on a shelf for hundreds of years and retain its legibility. All that's required to decode it is a pair of eyes. A digital file is far more fussy. Dependent on computers for decoding, it can disappear or turn to gibberish whenever operating systems, software applications or document standards are revised." (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/when-our-digital-memory-is-lost-in->

[the-cloud-what-becomes-of-our-human-history/2016/03/24/11ed1482-ba46-11e5-99f3-184bc379b12d\\_story.html](https://the-cloud-what-becomes-of-our-human-history/2016/03/24/11ed1482-ba46-11e5-99f3-184bc379b12d_story.html))

- Examples to outmoded technology: floppy disks, 404 error for a webpage, VHS, tapes
- Additionally, humanity can become bifurcated into those 'enhanced' and those unable or unwilling to enhance their bodies.
- ❖ Through this process, humanity could lose who we are and any ability to see what God created us to be as we increasingly get further removed from the reference points of actual objects in creation which we observe directly with our bodily senses. The more everything is digitized and goes to *the cloud* the greater the struggle to understand God's commands given in the Garden, either pre- or post fall.
- ❖ Man and Genetics is another avenue of Transhumanist experimentation.
  - ❖ Celebrating the "unlocking of the Human Genome"
  - ❖ Humanity as a biomass to be modified and hacked
  - ❖ Making Chimeras
    - ◆ Human and Monkey embryo made lived 19 days
  - ❖ Biology as art — [Symbiotica: Biological Arts at the University of Western Australia](#)

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## Transgenderism

- ❖ This is but one prong of trans- and post-humanist thought. It is an over turning of the gender social norms rooted in the Genesis account of creation and of roles inherited by being 'born into this type of human body' that *natural law* teaches.
  - ❖ A rejection of our teaching that humans have one nature expressed in two bodily forms and replaces it with an ideology that human nature and biology is only what we make it to be.
    - ◆ Completely ignores any biological reproduction and at best turns to 'technological' fixes for the body disjunction they claim to have. Increasingly, body identities that are beyond masculine and feminine are turning to the technologies like the ones mentioned above to 'make it so.'

❖ Men and Women & Male and Female Bodies

- ❖ Queer identities are at heart the full embrace of earthly symbols of gender roles (or other body identities) to flaunt them by mismatching bodies to gender expression.
- ❖ Transgender individuals may go so far as to surgically alter their bodies to add or take away the biological expressions of male and femaleness to 'perform' the opposite gender of their birth, or some other body identity.

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Scriptural and Early Church Gender Order — Gender is solid seen in clerical roles

❖ Scriptural and the Church's idea of gender is the conjoining of gender roles to biological sex.

- ◆ Deuteronomy 22:5 — "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to (*kele*) a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment (*kele*); for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God."

\* *Kele* means some sort or tool or a vessel here a garment ie the commandment is concerned with the gender roles the clothing signifies.

❖ Male Headship and Female acceptance of authority (helpmeet)

- ◆ Gender reflected in symbolism of Christ (men/male/head/provider) and Church (women/female/body/receiver)

\* Within the Church I see at least three ways this is expressed (1) The specific commands for female behavior in Church (2) The marital commands to Christian husbands and wives (3) the all-male clergy

\* Female/Feminine roles more fully embodying the feminine role of the whole Church

- I Corinthians 11:5–12 — head coverings as a sign of submission to Christ and being under His authority
- I Corinthians 14:34–35; 1 Tim. 2:11–15 — The command to women to be silent and not prophesy in Church (within the Divine Services)

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\*Christian marriage is a reflection of the ecclesial and divine reality of human creaturely relation to the uncreated God

- Christian Marriage roles typify the Church as a whole in the particular relationship of husband and wife.
  - Ephesian 5 — the commands for husbands and wives in their marital roles
  - Matthew 19:6 — The permanency of marriage “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

◆The all-male Clergy

\*All the Church is feminine in that it receives and accepts the headship of Christ and the priesthood is the particular reflection of headship of Christ made present to the whole Church, both in the sacrifice and in the blessing.

- The church never separates biological sex from gender. However, Gender traits (masculine/ feminine roles) are used and appear in scripture and in our hymns to teach us about our relation to God, who revealed Himself as Father. He did not simply call himself, “Parent”.
  - Our gender and our roles are a theomorphism, not an anthropomorphism ie they come down from God not projected up to the Divinity.
  - We are all in the feminine role as receiving, but in relation to one another the feminine and masculine roles of biological sex stand.
- This is the main theological reason the Priesthood (clergy) are all males.
  - Obedience to Christ’s appointing only males as Apostles
    - St. Ignatius of Antioch in his epistle to the Magnesians tells the faithful to honor the bishop as God, the deacon as Christ, and the presbyters as the Apostles; all have male bodies. In a particular way clergy reflect that ‘masculine’ perception we have God, by a relation to the Priesthood and priests.

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- Maleness *is able to*, by the gender role given by God, typify and make present at the Altar the headship of Christ in a unique way that femaleness *is not able to* typify, since femininity is typifying the receptive role of all the people of God.
  - It is the woman's role to make the receptive quality fully present and the clergy's role to make the providing quality present to all the faithful.
  - The all-male clergy is a refinement of the typology and symbolism of Christ to the Church.

❖ Deaconesses? Are female deacons a wrinkle or a problem for this presentation?

❖ It was thought to be an "apostolic order" due to the greek language being unable to easily distinguish between an ordained Deacon and simply a person who has a *diakonia*, that is a helper with a certain job in the retinue of the Apostolic missions. Such ambiguity led to the idea of female deacons in the eastern half of the Church.

◆ The latin speaking Church never had this problem as they translated the words as service or server and Deacon. In fact, many western councils in the united church condemned the practice of female deacons which they heard was taking place in some eastern churches, and among heretical groups.

❖ How the *Didiscalia* summarizes and regulates the duties and purpose of a female deacon.

◆ Keep in mind that the *Didiscalia* is not a whole-heartedly accepted book in the Church. It does not count as a 'regulatory writing' but it does show us how the Church in the East grappled with certain issues.

◆ "Those that please thee out of all the people thou shalt choose and appoint as deacons: a man for the performance of the most things that are required, **but a woman for the ministry of women.** For there are houses whither thou canst not send a deacon to the women, on account of the heathen, but mayest send a deaconess. Also, because in many other matters the office of a woman deacon is required. **In the first place, when women go down into the water, those who go down into the water ought to be anointed by a deaconess with the oil of anointing;** and where there is no woman at hand, and especially no deaconess,

he who baptizes must of necessity anoint her who is being baptized. But **where there is a woman, and especially a deaconess, it is not fitting that women should be seen by men. But with the imposition of hand do thou anoint the head only.** As of old the priests and kings were anointed in Israel, do thou in like manner, with the imposition of hand, anoint the head of those who receive baptism, whether of men or of women; and afterwards—whether thou thyself baptize, or thou command the deacons or presbyters to baptize—**let a woman deacon, as we have already said, anoint the women. But let a man pronounce over them the invocation of the divine Names in the water. And when she who is being baptized has come up from the water, let the deaconess receive her, and teach and instruct her how the seal of baptism ought to be (kept) unbroken in purity and holiness.** For this cause we say that the ministry of a woman deacon is especially needful and important. For our Lord and Saviour also was ministered unto by women ministers, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the daughter of James and mother of Jose, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee [Matt. 27:56], with other women beside. And thou also hast need of the ministry of a deaconess for many things; for a deaconess is required to go into the houses of the heathen where there are believing women, and to visit those who are sick, and to minister to them in that of which they have need, and to bathe those who have begun to recover from sickness." (*Didascalia* 16, Connolly, 70–71)

- ◆ Further on, the *Didascalia* explicitly prohibits Deaconesses from teaching and from the actual baptismal act. The later reworking of the *Didascalia*, called the *Apostolic Constitutions* says this:
  - \* "A deaconess does not bless, nor perform anything belonging to the office of presbyters or deacons, but only is to keep the doors, and to minister to the presbyters in the baptizing of women, on account of decency." (*Apostolic Constitutions* 3.2, ANF 7, 431; 3.2.19, ANF 7, 432; 3.1.14, ANF 7, 430; 8.3.28, ANF 7, 494)
- ◆ "It is plain too that there is an order of deaconesses in the church. But this is not allowed for the practice of priesthood or any liturgical function, but for the sake of female modesty, at either the time of baptism or of the examination of some condition or trouble, and when a woman's body may be bared, so that she will

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not be seen by the male priests but by **the assisting female who is appointed by the priest for the occasion**, to take care of the woman who is in need of it when her body is uncovered. (St. Epiphanius of Salamis, Adv. Haer., PG 42, 745, in Panarion, trans. Williams, Vol. 2, 623)

\*Here there is not a firm indication of an 'order of deaconesses' but just a female trusted and appointed by the priest to help him.

◆ Canon 19 of the 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Council mentions Deaconesses as part the Paulianist heretical group, wherein they decide to receive them into the Church as laity, not as a clerical order.

\*"Using literary evidence alone, we can easily chart the trajectory of deaconesses in the regions where they were most common—from "minor clergy" in the fourth century, to "major clergy" in the sixth century, to "minor clergy" and then lay office before the twelfth century, and finally to defunct office by order of Patriarch Athanasius I of Constantinople in the first decade of the fourteenth century." (*The Disappearing Deaconess*, p. 35, by Brian Patrick Mitchell)

- The historical evidence shows that some 'deaconess order' existed mostly in East Roman Metropolitan areas and only with highly limited roles. Historically the 'order' disappears entirely by the 12th century, but is essentially gone in the 7<sup>th</sup>.

❖ Conclusion: The role of the Deaconess as a specific role would be to assist in situations where a woman would be naked. This was done to preserve the Priests and male Deacons from the scandalous accusations or the hint of temptation in touching the woman when chrismating her. They had limited and delegated roles when it would appear scandalous for a priest to visit. However, if no deaconess or trusted female were available the Church demanded the priests do these visitations and chrismations by the hand his own hand.

◆ The modern idea of a restoration of the female deaconate, has little to no resemblance to this above description of a deaconesses in the Church history.

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\*Nowhere did they serve the same role as male deacons and in the vast majority of Orthodoxy in place and time they did not exist. The modern movement to promote female deacons has more to do with eliminating the gender order than restoring some 'apostolic order.' Indeed, it is not an 'apostolic order' at all.