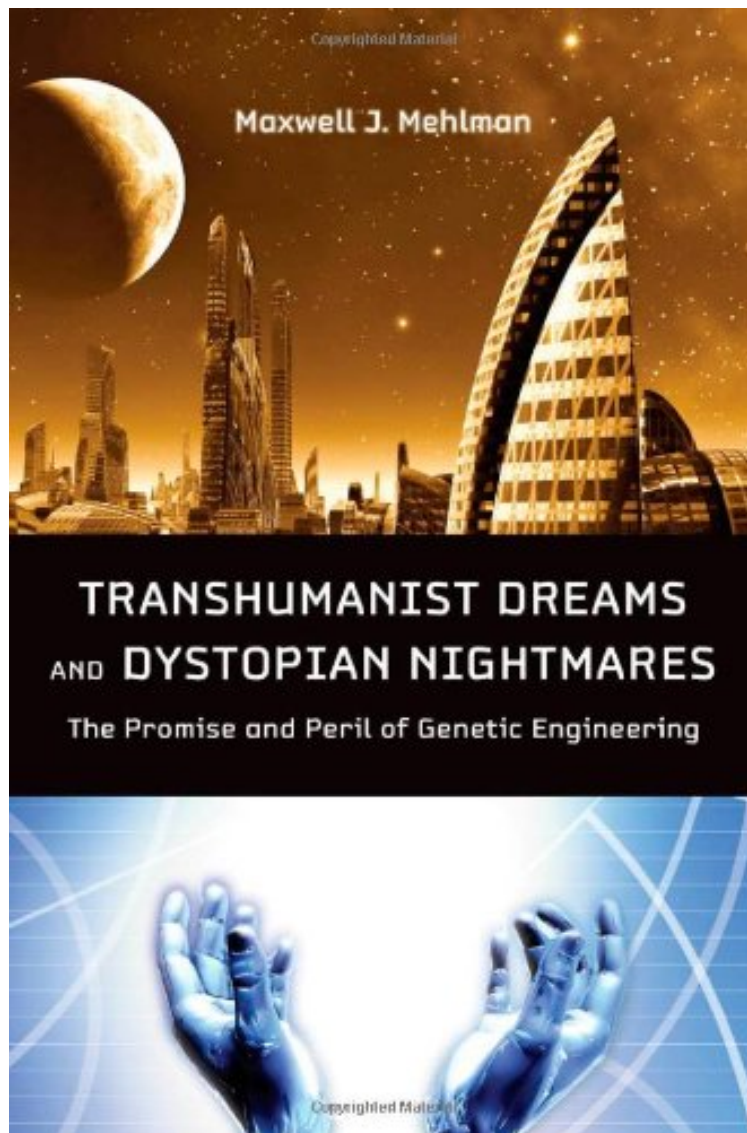


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# Transhumanist Dreams and Dystopian Nightmares: The Promise and Peril of Genetic Engineering

Maxwell J. Mehlman

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**Maxwell J. Mehlman : Transhumanist Dreams and Dystopian Nightmares: The Promise and Peril of Genetic Engineering** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Transhumanist Dreams and Dystopian Nightmares: The Promise and Peril of Genetic Engineering:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Biased and not particularly informative By Customer The author

presents his bias pretty clearly in the first chapter, and it only goes downhill from there. Most of his arguments are some variant of "here's a far-fetched scenario, now we assume that will happen, wouldn't that be awful?" with a healthy dose of "Think of the children!" and a few ad-hominem attacks thrown in for good measure. He pretty much only cites the opposing viewpoint as it suits his argument, but tries to make it seem like a balanced portrayal. In short, if you want a one-sided rant against the transhumanist viewpoint, this is the book for you. Otherwise, you'll probably be better off reading something else.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. What will really happen?

By Keven Cole

The book gets better at about mid-way however too much time is spent on things like ridiculed and shunned by society Spider babies. Eugenics will occur in my opinion but what will be produced are something much more improved than us. These engineered trans humans will be better looking, taller, fitter, stronger, more disease resistant, age slower, and have a real IQ far greater than any human whom has ever existed. This new being will make its own communities, their own companies, their own institutions of learning. They will require less food and other resources, less medical attention, refuse to inter-breed with us. They will view us like we view the great apes at best. Lastly they will exterminate us in order to preserve the planet, themselves and resources. Their morality and their religion will be much different than ours. They will eventually figure out how to download themselves into robotic AI bodies and never die thus gaining even more knowledge. Knowledge will be their goal and fuel reaching out into the universe no matter how long the journey will be a cake walk for them. They will no longer need any form of biological life eventually and thus via nano tech will terra-forming the earth into one giant singularity use the core, fusion, ion and stars and move the planet as its own self contained engine anywhere it wants. If we ever have an alien encounter here on earth this will also be the most like scenario and the end of us all or in 100,000 yrs we accomplish this it will also be the end of humans. The spark that led us on this path of self destruction will be genetic engineering. Variation within said species will be less than 1%.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Rough Draft Never Finalized?

By C. Richard

I wanted to like this book. The subject is something I am quite interested in learning more about. Though the book had a few interesting parts, I was disappointed for the most part. I'll start with Good Points. The cover art was perfect - made the book very enticing. The book itself was a very sturdy, high quality hardcover - so many hardcover books today are very shoddily constructed. Background information presented for various sections of the book was often interesting and well presented. A few "food for thought" ethical issues were well presented and discussed. Now for the Bad Points. At the beginning of the book, the writing itself was OK, but it left much to be desired as the book went on. Overly long paragraphs and unnecessarily complex sentence structure made it very hard to follow what the author was trying to say. Did the publisher edit this book or just publish a rough draft? Section subtitles would have helped a lot - they used some odd symbol instead which added very little by way of clarity. Overall, I would have a hard time telling anyone what the author's main points were - that's how confused the book left me. When I read non-fiction, I prefer books where the author is objective. I find it hard to call this author objective when this book made it crystal clear that he is very partisan politically and which side of the aisle he cheers for, so to speak. The author is a law professor and wrote this more like a law review article than anything else - I'm a lawyer, so I can tell. That didn't turn out well in this context. It's really the way he handled sources - I have no idea who these people are and information given about them does little to clarify, so why should I care what they think kind of explains how it came off. Finally, there are factual errors. Other reviewers have commented on several - and added that the author was probably a political science major and way out of his depth here given that so much hard science is involved. I saw two errors that I didn't see mentioned in other reviews. First, an embryo does not turn into a fetus simply by becoming implanted in a womb as the author states - an embryo becomes a fetus after a given number of weeks (some say it's 11) of gestation. Second, in *Gonzalez v Carhart*, the Supreme Court did NOT uphold partial birth abortions as the author states, it rather upheld a federal law banning them. Do editors not fact check anything anymore? Though it had some good points, I would not recommend this book.

Transhumanists advocate for the development and distribution of technologies that will enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities, even eliminate aging. What if the dystopian futures and transhumanist utopias found in the pages of science journals, Margaret Atwood novels, films like *Gattaca*, and television shows like *Dark Angel* are realized? What kind of world would humans have created? Maxwell J. Mehlman considers the promises and perils of using genetic engineering in an effort to direct the future course of human evolution. He addresses scientific and ethical issues without choosing sides in the dispute between transhumanists and their challengers. However, *Transhumanist Dreams and Dystopian Nightmares* reveals that radical forms of genetic engineering could become a reality much sooner than many people think, and that we need to encourage risk-management efforts. Whether scientists are dubious or optimistic about the prospects for directed evolution, they tend to agree on two things. First, however long it takes to perfect the necessary technology, it is inevitable that humans will attempt to control their evolutionary future, and second, in the process of learning how to direct evolution, we are bound to make mistakes. Our responsibility is to learn how to balance innovation with caution.

"Bioethicist Maxwell Mehlman thinks that we will inevitably reengineer the human species, and he writes about that

and the mistakes we might make in the process... A deep and wide-ranging catalog of the implications of transhumanism as a philosophical doctrine and a careful analysis of potential pitfalls and concerns... Accessible while having enough scientific substance to be taken seriously, *Transhumanist Dreams* provides a thought-provoking read for genetics professionals, ethicists, interested scientists, and concerned citizens." (Michael A. Goldman *Science*) "A well-balanced and well-documented look at how we now are positioned (at least in the United States) to control this process, and what some of the pros and cons of enlarging control, or alternatively loosening it, might be." (*International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*) "In his highly readable and especially timely new book, *The Price of Perfection*, Mehlman makes it clear that he is not at all persuaded that the ethical response to the availability of performance-enhancing drugs in sports or elsewhere in society, for that matter, is to ban them and then spend a lot of effort testing for those who use them anyway." (*Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*)

**About the Author** Maxwell J. Mehlman is a professor of bioethics, the Petersilge Professor of Law, and director of the Law-Medicine Center at Case Western Reserve University. He is author of *The Price of Perfection: Individualism and Society in the Era of Biomedical Enhancement*, also published by Johns Hopkins.