A Dangerous Ambition

This essay is fundamentally about transhumanism and the integration of biotechnology into the bodies of humans.

Draft 1:

My story is about a scientist who has been recruited to a project which seeks to promote transhumanism and become a leader in the field of merging humans with technology. He wants to do this because he has lost a family member/ close friend to ALS and wants to improve humans at all cost (A world without weakness). He is initially hesitant about the ethically dubious testing practices and experiments that the company undertakes to achieve the goal and is skeptical of their intentions. As time goes on he learns to quell any sense of empathy for the victims of the experiments and becomes focused on creating the next generation of humans despite any arguments to the contrary. Eventually he comes to think that all the tests were a good thing in the long run for the subjects (ends justify means) from an intrinsic perspective but realizes that humanity will not respond well to the new technology.

Draft 2:

Ryan Jansen is a scientist recruited by a company to work on the biomechanical section of a project on transhumanism. Initially the experiments repulse him and he starts doing his work half-heartedly but is convinced to the cause when he brings his doubts up to his mentor who convinces him that what they are doing will aid humanity and the ends will justify the means. He then continues the testing program and eventually comes to the conclusion that the tests resulted in an uplifted species but also realizes that he had not considered the psychology behind the how the tech would be used and he’d looked through an optimistic lens at a happy day scenario. When looking at his final samples he decides that he can’t decide how people will react and believes that human’s ability to create things outstrips their ability to understand how their creations will affect others and to deal with how that technology works.

Plot: Researcher signs on to a project. Has a chat with mentor and conducts experiments.

Protagonist: Ryan Jansen (scientist)

Goal: Bring on the future for humans by integrating biotechnology with human beings (That’s arbitrary. I need to make this more personal. If Ryan Jansen is involved then Hannah Laersen will be involved as well. Maybe this is about Ryan trying to save himself?).

Plot affects the character:

Ryan becomes increasingly disheartened and less and less concerned with humanity as the story goes on.

Transhumanism: Self-directed evolution. Elevating the human format.

**Have to decide which department Singleton, Cortez and Jansen are in.**

Instead of (or in addition to) the mentor speech in Entry 2, there should be a moment where Jansen goes over the time when first fell in love with transhumanism and technology. Have him attend a Ted Talk or something where he first sees the possibilities for the future of the species. Ryan has to have something personal on the line. The story needs stakes.

“Technological progression is inevitable and natural. The process of developing new tools to create new systems and ways of life for the entire species is one that has gone on for thousands of years and will continue to go on and change our lives. I see no reason why we should stop now.”

“Will robots inherit the Earth?”

“Yes, but they will be our children.”

* Marvin Misky

The protagonist: Dr Ryan Jansen

Secondary protagonist: Rebecca Hollman (Australian student, doing her Master’s degree)

Definitely structured in terms of a journal (found by whom I wonder)

* Can go into Moore’s Law – Wired magazine’s article
* Explore the ethics surrounding the creation of and reaction to this technology
* People can and will go to war over this. There is no way religious groups and conservatives will be accepting of this technology. There will definitely be protests and riots. Deus Ex: Human Revolution’s purists will become real. On the other hand, people can and will explore, exploit, expand and exterminate using this technology.
* We are a species that transcends and transforms. It is how we extend our reach. Perhaps we have not met the pinnacle of human potential. This may seem farfetched, the realm of science fiction. Yet there are those that don’t realize how right science fiction can be.
* What if we didn’t have the limitation of biology?
  + Biology is what has brought us to this point but it is also what places an upper bound on where we can go. What if humans could be improved by working in conjunction with machines? Look at the Chess Tournament in which Grand Masters teamed with supercomputers.
    - Counter Argument 1: Becoming less than human
      * Becoming more than human (A matter of perspective)
    - Technology limited to the rich and the elite (how can the brightest poor child compete with the dumbest kid with a rich parent who can afford brain implants)
* I believe that the future is hopeful

Race against the machine – Andrew McAfee

Inscription:

“Will robots inherit the Earth?”

“Yes, but they will be our children”

“Citizens! The revolution is established on the principles with which it began. It is over.”

* Not really for a Dangerous Ambition, more for its sequel: Reign of the Supermen

**Entry 1:**

The new engineers arrived today. There will be those that call us mad for this kind of research. There are those that will say that it is impossible. There are those that will say that it is unnatural. But they will soon be left behind in the new world.

In truth I never thought mice to be worth anything yet as we begin trials, the work we do on them could prove to be the key, the starting point for a new revolution. Yet in the words of Sir Francis Drake “There must be a beginning to any great matter, but continuing unto the end until it be thoroughly finished yield true glory” and if this great matter, the dawn of this new age for mankind has to begin with a humble set of mice then so be it. Naysayers - past and present – be damned.

* Weave in the Sir Francis Drake’s quote (Need to put a profile together for Dr. Jansen. Understand who he is and who he was as a child and an undergrad to have that inform who he is when he begins writing his journal)
  + Jansen is ambitious and contains enough ruthlessness to carry his ambitions out
    - Or at least he believes himself to be. At first he is quite empathetic and filled with doubts but these quell as goes on.
    - He will slowly become less emotional and more goal driven as the Entries themselves carry on.
    - In the beginning he will look down on mice as a lower form of life and by the end he will believe that the kind of vicious experimentation that the company undertook was a good thing. He believes that they uplifted the mice and create super-rodents
    - He will also begin to show doubts about how humanity will handle the power that they are developing and the counter arguments to his goals will start creeping in.
  + He is a learned man who delights in reading about ambition, human achievement and technology. He will have great respect for inventors and thinkers
    - He would be interested in the classics and will his favourite heroes will not be those who were strong like Heracles/ Hercules but those who were clever or inventors like Odysseus/ Ulysses or Daedalus (who may have created automatons which would be a good parallel).

Digital natives

So let's say transhumanism will be possible, but you can't be born as a transhuman but always as a biological human so being a transhuman will always be a choice to make later in life, I suppose. How come nobody mentions that?

Recommended Reading

Max Moore – Philosophy of transhumanism

Eric Drexler - Nanotechnology

Robert Etinger – Immortality

Damien Broderick – The singularity

Natasha Vita-More –

Marvin Minski

Transhumanism as a world view (one that could supplant post-modernism)