

A Letter to Mother Nature

From Max More

August 1999 (undergoing revision May 2009)

Dear Mother Nature:

Sorry to disturb you, but we humans—your offspring—come to you with some things to say. (Perhaps you could pass this on to Father, since we never seem to see him around.) We want to thank you for the many wonderful qualities you have bestowed on us with your slow but massive, distributed intelligence. You have raised us from simple self-replicating chemicals to trillion-celled mammals. You have given us free rein of the planet. You have given us a life span longer than that of almost any other animal. You have endowed us with a complex brain giving us the capacity for language, reason, foresight, curiosity, and creativity. You have given us the capacity for self-understanding as well as empathy for others.

Mother Nature, truly we are grateful for what you have made us. No doubt you did the best you could. However, with all due respect, we must say that you have in many ways done a poor job with the human constitution. You have made us vulnerable to disease and damage. You compel us to age and die—just as we’re beginning to attain wisdom. You were miserly in the extent to which you gave us awareness of our somatic, cognitive, and emotional processes. You held out on us by giving the sharpest senses to other animals. You made us functional only under narrow environmental conditions. You gave us limited memory, poor impulse control, and tribalistic, xenophobic urges. And, you forgot to give us the operating manual for ourselves!

What you have made us is glorious, yet deeply flawed. You seem to have lost interest in our further evolution some 100,000 years ago. Or perhaps you have been biding your time, waiting for us to take the next step ourselves. Either way, we have reached our childhood’s end.

We have decided that it is time to amend the human constitution.

We do not do this lightly, carelessly, or disrespectfully, but cautiously, intelligently, and in pursuit of excellence. We intend to make you proud of us. Over the coming decades we will pursue a series of changes to our own constitution, initiated with the tools of biotechnology guided by critical and creative thinking. In particular, we declare the following seven amendments to the human constitution:

Amendment No.1: We will no longer tolerate the tyranny of aging and death. Through genetic alterations, cellular manipulations, synthetic organs, and any necessary means, we will endow ourselves with enduring vitality and remove our expiration date. We will each decide for ourselves how long we shall live.

Amendment No.2: We will expand our perceptual range through biotechnological and computational means. We seek to exceed the perceptual abilities of any other creature and to devise novel senses to expand our appreciation and understanding of the world around us.

Amendment No.3: We will improve on our neural organization and capacity, expanding our working memory, and enhancing our intelligence.

Amendment No.4: We will supplement the neocortex with a “metabrain”. This distributed network of sensors, information processors, and intelligence will increase our degree of self-awareness and allow us to modulate our emotions.

Amendment No. 5: We will no longer be slaves to our genes. We will take charge over our genetic programming and achieve mastery over our biological, and neurological processes. We will fix all individual and species defects left over from evolution by natural selection. Not content with that, we will seek complete choice of our bodily form and function, refining and augmenting our physical and intellectual abilities beyond those of any human in history.

Amendment No.6: We will cautiously yet boldly reshape our motivational patterns and emotional responses in ways we, as individuals, deem healthy. We will seek to improve upon typical human emotional excesses, bringing about refined emotions. We will strengthen ourselves so we can let go of unhealthy needs for dogmatic certainty, removing emotional barriers to rational self-correction.

Amendment No.7: We recognize your genius in using carbon-based compounds to develop us. Yet we will not limit our physical, intellectual, or emotional capacities by remaining purely biological organisms. While we pursue mastery of our own biochemistry, we will increasingly integrate our advancing technologies into our selves.

These amendments to our constitution will move us from a human to a transhuman condition as individuals. We believe that individual transhumanizing will also allow us to form relationships, cultures, and polities of unprecedented innovation, richness, freedom, and responsibility.

We reserve the right to make further amendments collectively and individually. Rather than seeking a state of final perfection, we will continue to pursue new forms of excellence according to our own values, and as technology allows.

Your ambitious human offspring.

