SUBBTO 69, no. 2 (2024): 19-32
DOI:10.24193/subbto.2024.2.02

"Get Up and Heal Yourself!" Self-Enhancement Technologies and Sanctification

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ABSTRACT. This paper critiques the use of self-enhancement technologies through the lens of sanctification, avoiding a simplistic binary between affirmation and rejection. It examines the cultural fascination with self-tracking and optimization tools, which promise physical, mental, and spiritual improvement. By contrasting these technologies with theological concepts, the paper raises critical questions about their anthropological and spiritual assumptions. It highlights how these technologies perpetuate a reductionist view of the human self, rooted in data-driven self-regulation. The paper also critiques similarities between self-enhancement and transhumanist aspirations, pointing to their shared emphasis on control, efficiency, and self-perfection.

A Christian theological response is proposed, emphasizing the transformative process of sanctification as an alternative to the performance-oriented paradigm of self-optimization. By engaging critically with the promises and limitations of self-enhancement tools, the paper advocates a nuanced understanding of human flourishing that respects the mystery and relationality inherent in Christian anthropology.

Keywords: Self-enhancement, quantification, self-sanctification, Christian anthropology

The modern predicament

The case study presented here reflects my interest in mission within a secular context. My central conviction is that Christians—specifically those in Western European societies—exist in a secularized milieu. The secular framework

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profoundly influences how faith is understood and practiced. I opine, it should not be construed as antithetical to faith.[1] Consequently, mission must engage meaningfully with individuals shaped by such a mindset rather than attempting to establish a counter culture.[2]

In the broader popular imagination within these secular societies in Western Europe, one observes a pervasive longing for wholeness and healing—a yearning that transcends the recovery from physical illness or reliance solely on conventional medical practices. Well-being is often articulated as the pursuit of a holistic sense of completeness, happiness, and fulfilment in life associated with spirituality. This aspiration, dynamic yet diffuse, finds one expression in the numerous self-help resources and lifestyle guides that aim to expand life's possibilities to their fullest potential.[3] One prominent dimension of this fluid concept of wholeness is the premise that individual well-being is contingent upon deliberate self-enhancement[4] and optimization. For instance, even guides addressing time management and productivity frequently advocate for a comprehensive strategy of setting goals for one's life, transcending mere efficiency in organizing tasks. Other resources propose so-called bio-hacks, employing techniques such as neurolinguistic programming or nutritional interventions, to facilitate mental and physical transformation.[5] Yet another category of advisory literature explores processes to heal trauma and achievea sense of contentment.

In its more extreme manifestations, this quest for wholeness can converge with the ideals of transhumanism, as exemplified by Yuval Harari's popular book *Homo Deus*. Here, the human aspiration for self-perfection is extrapolated to envision a posthuman future wherein technological and biological

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1 For Germany, for example, see the critical review of the last Church Membership Survey (Kirchenmitgliedschaftsumfrage). The practical theologian Kahle critiques the narrow understanding of religion applied by the survey, contrasting it with spirituality, which many understand as a non-churched form of lived pietism. Isolde Kahle, "Religion am Ende?, *Deutsches Pfarrerinnen- und Pfarrerblatt* 124 (2024): 591-596.

2 See Michael Biehl, "Believing in a Secular Way: A West-German Perspective," in *Mission in Secularised Contexts of Europe: Contemporary Narratives and Experiences*, ed. by Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, Michael Biehl and Knud Jørgensen (Oxford: Regnum, 2018), 62-73.

3 As an example, check the website of the journal „happinez", https://www.happinez.de. The number of self-help books abound as a quick check with booksellers or platforms like https://www.blinkist.com demonstrate.

4 See Matthias Felder, *Christliches Leben und die Verbesserung des Menschen: Enhancement und Heiligung bei Calvin* (Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann, 197) (Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 2022), 17-23.

5 See for example, Olli Sovijärvi, Teemu Arina, and Jaakko Halmetoja, *Biohacker's Handbook: Upgrade Yourself and Unleash* (Kustantaja: Biohacker Center BHC Inc, 2019).

enhancements redefine the limits of human existence.[6] Harari's projections about the future intersect significantly with current discourses on "technoscience" and "cyberculture." These paradigms are already reshaping fundamental understandings of life, particularly in Western contexts. A review article in an academic anthropological journal underscores in that line a transformation in societal attitudes towards birth: from perceiving it as the "miracle of life" to regarding it as a calculated task—integrating a "perfect number of perfect children that fit 'perfectly'" into predefined life plans.[7] This shift signifies a profound reorientation, where life ceases to be viewed as a divine gift received passively. Instead, the individual is increasingly burdened with the responsibility to shape and design their existence. Such developments, viewed through the lens of theological anthropology, invite critical reflection on the implications for human dignity and relationality in a context increasingly dominated by technological materialism. This marks not merely a cultural but an ontological turn, reshaping the human condition itself.

Tools of "cyberculture"

With the exponential use of smartphones beginning around 2010, these devices have increasingly become platforms for digital tools supporting the tendency of self-enhancement, such as tracking and promoting, health, fitness and wellbeing. With smartphones at users' fingertips, digital applications for setting goals and enabling individuals to pursue their achievement have proliferated. Wearable technologies and associated applications not only monitor physical activities, such as workouts and nutrition, but also offer tools to enhance mindfulness and support meditation, promising users an improved—if not ideal—state of body and mind. These applications have gained widespread acceptance, appealing to the growing cultural emphasis on maintaining control over one's life.[8]

According to a report published in a German IT magazine in spring 2024, approximately 833 million individuals worldwide utilize sports apps. Although the number of users engaging with meditation apps is relatively smaller, these apps generate more than three times the revenue per user compared to

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6 Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (London: Vintage, 2017).

7 The review article argues that even birth and death are affected by consumer's choices, Sirkku K. Hellsten, "The 'Meaning of Life' during a Transition from Modernity to Transhumanism and Posthumanity", *Journal of Anthropology,* 2012, Article ID 21068, 4. (doi:10.1155/2012/210684).

8 Without naming any specific product a quick search in the app stores will give evidence of this. Compare for example, the statistics on this website https://www.statista.com/topics/11045/meditation-and-mental-wellness-apps/.

sports apps and significantly outpace nutrition apps in profitability. It is projected that, by 2024, revenue from all such applications will total €15.88 billion, while revenue from fitness wristbands, smart scales, and other smart wearables will reach €68 billion. In Germany, approximately 33% of the population use such applications and associated tracking tools, with the highest rates observed among individuals aged 18 to 39. In 2023, 38% of respondents aged 18 to 29 reported using apps for fitness exercises, 17% for awareness and breathing exercises, and 16% for meditation. Half of these respondents noted that such tracking tools encouraged them to exercise, improved their motivation, or helped them achieve a sense of balance, whereas 13% reported no perceived benefit from using these devices.[9]

It remains unclear whether Christian apps were included in the aforementioned research. However, an exploration of the internet and the Play Store (Android) reveals a significant number of applications designed to support a Christian lifestyle digitally. These include apps for daily Bible reading,[10] as well as platforms offering specifically "heilsame Unterbrechungen" (wholesome interruptions) by meditation practices and prayer time.[11] In an orthodox context it may be worthwhile to note that one such app is called theosis-app which succinctly markets itself as providing nourishment for the mind, fostering peace through prayer, and strengthening Christian faith.[12] Another application, aptly named an App for Jesus, aims to enhance discipleship and facilitate networking among Christians in Germany.[13] These examples affirm that Christians actively engage with such digital tools, integrating them into their spiritual practices. It is reasonable to conclude that Christians are in general neither averse to utilizing tracking devices or apps nor to integrating digital technologies into their personal and community life, to mature in faith or to promote the mission of the church.[14]

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9 „Zahlen, Daten, Fakten. Fitness-Hardware und -Apps", in: c't issue 2 (2024): 112-113.

10 See for example the review "10 Best Bible Study Apps" on https://rootedandgrounded.com/blogs/news/bible-study-app.

11 See, for example, the app "Evermore", advertised by the German Evangelical Church, as: "Erlebe Heilige Momente. Mehr Achtsamkeit und Kontemplation im Alltag". https://evermore-app.de/. The app succeeds the app XRCS, launched in 2019, so support "Gott mitten im Alltag wahrzunehmen". "*Der Name XRCS leitet sich ab vom engl. eExercise (Übung) ab [sic]. Er bezieht sich auf die urchristliche Tradition der Exerzitien. Sie sind ein spiritueller Weg, neue Erfahrungen zu machen im Kraftfeld der Liebe Gottes.*"
https://www.landeskirche-hannovers.de/presse/archiv/tagesthemen/2019/01/04.

12 https://www.theosis-app.com/en.

13 https://oikos-projekt.org/christen-in-deutschland/jesus-app.

14 Next to the examples quoted above, see, for example, the thesis Andrea Onduku, *A Contribution to the Discussion on Theologically Motivated Digital Mission among Children* (London: Spurgeon's College, School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, 2023).
https://cte.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/06/Andrea-OndukuDissertation-2023-Final-B.pdf.

The modern self and sanctification

The panorama outlined thus far highlights a notable trend in Western societies: the pursuit of a fulfilling life through self-enhancement, often facilitated by digital tools and applications, particularly among younger and middle-aged demographics. Building on my broader argument that the secular framework deeply shapes the understanding and practice of faith, I suggest that this phenomenon is closely linked to the declining significance of the concept of sanctification in regions where Christianity has been profoundly secularized.

Soteriology, the reflection on how salvation through God's redemptive action is appropriated, addresses a central dogmatic question: "How can God's transformative work within humanity be described in a way that preserves its divine distinctiveness while remaining distinct from human effort?"[15] This tension has given rise to various Protestant articulations of the relationship between justification and sanctification. The challenge lies in outlining a process of sanctification that avoids works-based righteousness while affirming the believer's active response to grace in spiritual growth. The modern mindset has seemingly resolved this tension by situating the human being as the sole agent of transformation. This individualistic orientation supplants concepts such as *embodied relationality*, as articulated by German philosopher and psychiatrist Thomas Fuchs in his critique of the modern anthropological condition. Embodied relationality refers to the understanding that human beings are fundamentally relational and corporeal, with their identities and actions shaped through interactions with others.[16]

The divergence between these outlined perspectives is aptly illustrated by contrasting the modern self-conception with narratives of healing in the Gospel. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus asks Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:46–52; cf. Matthew 20:29–34), and in another instance tells a paralytic, "Get up, take your bed, and walk" (Mark 2:1–12). In contrast to the modern self-conception such interactions can be understood through Fuchs' concept of embodied relationality: a dynamic encounter between two persons, where one acts upon the other to facilitate an outcome that the recipient could not achieve alone. This interaction, however, is not one-sided, as it leaves a lasting impact on both participants. The modern self, however, is conceived as an autonomous being who must ask itself constantly, "What do I need to do?" and "What do I want to do?". It is the modern self that eventually needs to command

[15] Friedrich Mildenberger, *Grundwissen der Dogmatik. Ein Arbeitsbuch* (Stuttgart et al.: Kohlhammer, 1982), 163.

[16] Thomas Fuchs, *Verteidigung des Menschen. Grundfragen einer verkörperten Anthropologie* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2020).

itself to get up and act. It is thrown back unto itself with the lesson: Do not expect the transformation of your life from anyone. No one can do this for you, only you can do it.

The philosopher Charles Taylor, in his examination of the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of secularity, describes this modern self as a *buffered self*. The modern subject is conceived as a rational, self-determined individual whose inner self is insulated from external spiritual or transcendental forces.[17] Such a person autonomously constructs their identity and sense of well-being, focusing on shaping their life in accordance with personal desires and goals, independent of any transcendental agency. Taylor highlights that this disenchantment of the outer world "has been accompanied by an interiorization; … the growth of a rich vocabulary of interiority, an inner realm of thought and feeling to be explored."[18] The modern self asserts sole authority over its development, prioritizing self-realization in a way that stands in tension with traditional notions of a higher, divine calling. This disenchantment of the world not only isolates the self from external spiritual forces but also undermines the fundamental Christian reliance on God's transcendent action in bringing about transformation and healing. Within this framework, the imperative for achieving fulfilment and healing becomes: "Get up and heal yourself," a sentiment increasingly prevalent even within popular discourse on medicine. The individual is presumed to bear the full responsibility for their transformation, with no expectation of intervention or assistance from an external, transcendent source.

The *buffered self* finds its dignity in autonomy and the capacity for self-determination, whereas the Christian perspective regards humanity as fallible, finding true freedom and identity in devotion to Christ and in communion with others. In Lutheran theology, healing and sanctification are understood as fruits of justification by grace through faith, manifesting not as self-driven projects but as the Spirit's work in the believer, oriented toward love of neighbor and union with God. The divergence becomes particularly evident in attitudes toward the practice of life. For the *buffered self*, commandments and moral values are personal choices, selected to facilitate self-development and individual fulfilment.[19] This anthropological shift away from relationality has profound implications for theological understandings of salvation, as it redefines the locus of transformation from divine intervention to autonomous self-realization. By contrast,

[17] This concept is present throughout the book; it is particularly developed in Chapter 15 "The Immanent Frame," Charles Taylor, *The Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 539-593.

[18] Taylor, *The Secular Age*, 540.

[19] See Taylor, *The Secular Age,* 559.

Christian sanctification interprets God's commandments as a divinely ordained path toward healing and flourishing. This path is not solely focused on the self but is oriented toward the well-being of others and communion with God.

A Sanctification perspective on self-enhancement

Critique of dataism

While a full exploration of the implications of this contrast lies beyond the scope of this article, I argue that the trends outlined at the beginning are significantly reinforced by self-enhancement technologies supported by digital tools. Following Taylor's characterization of the buffered self, these technologies may seem to be able to illuminate the inner realm of sensitivity and states of mind, yet they remain closed to the breath of the Holy Spirit. In line with my broader argument—that the secular framework profoundly shapes how faith is understood and practiced—the prospects for persuading individuals to embrace the traditional Lutheran interpretation of justification and sanctification as a path to a fulfilling life appear bleak. Nevertheless, the Lutheran tradition itself, along with its ability to navigate challenges across centuries since the Reformation, offers critical resources for identifying problematic aspects of the self-enhancement movement.

For such a critical examination, I propose focusing on how reality is perceived and represented through the technological devices driving the self-enhancement trend. A key underlying assumption of these tools is that the essential aspects of human existence can be captured as data.[20] This claim—that reality can be numerically represented—results in a reduction of reality to quantifiable aspects. Depending on their purpose, whether related to fitness, health, nutrition, mindfulness, or meditation, these tools prompt users to collect measurable data about their behaviors and lifestyles. This data is then compared with previously stored information, and algorithm-based advice is provided for improvement. Feedback loops provide detailed insights into users' behavior and performance, as well as summaries of progress over specific periods, such as the previous week. Many apps also incorporate a feature allowing users to compare their data with others. Additionally, these tools often contextualize individual data within the scope of big data, offering feedback that indicates, for instance, what percentage of people perform similarly. The app may then propose

[20] See Thomas Fuchs, „Menschliche und künstliche Intelligenz. Eine Klarstellung," in Thomas Fuchs, *Verteidigung des Menschen. Grundfragen einer verkörperten Anthropologie* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2020), 21-70.

strategies for users to surpass this benchmark, encouraging them to achieve higher levels of performance. Notably, this feature contributes to the app's perceived indispensability, as the pursuit of progress becomes an open-ended process with no clear point of completion.

The interpretation of these data by algorithms relies on weighing a variety of factors in an equation and employing statistical evidence drawn from correlations in large datasets. No app can genuinely assess a user's happiness unless the user assigns a numeric value to their state of mind—such as rating it 7 out of 10. Based on these self-reported inputs and their correlations with other factors—such as sleep quality or whether users engage in activities they enjoy or dislike—the app might propose that the user feels better or even happy. While these tools can offer users a sense of self-awareness and structure, particularly in managing specific aspects of their lives such as sleep or exercise, it is important to recognize their inherent limitations. Anyone experienced in quantitative or qualitative research will recognize that such feedback is a correlation based on selective inputs and numerically represented aspects of experience. It is an interpretation of reality, not a statement about reality. Despite this, many users appear willing to overlook these limitations, as digital devices are often perceived as more objective and trustworthy than human judgment.

Mämecke studied the self-enhancement movement and offers a critique along similar lines, arguing that the movement positions itself as the culmination of a long-standing scientific progress, leading to an objective self-improvement of individuals. He identifies one of its unacknowledged roots in the emergence of statistics, which he traces to the late 18th and early 19th centuries.[21] From the perspective of Foucault's studies on governmentality, statistics emerged as a mechanism to govern and discipline the population.[22] In the 18th and 19th centuries, statistical methods were used to categorize populations in order to manage public health and social structures. Individuals and their activities were quantified and categorized, enabling the identification of statistically relevant correlations—particularly in areas such as health, hygiene, and security—which were essential for exercising governance.[23]

[21] Thorben Mämecke, *Das quantifizierte Selbst. Zur Genealogie des Self-Trackings* (Digitale Gesellschaft, 34) (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2021), 47-52.

[22] Michel Foucault, *Die Geburt der Biopolitik. Geschichte der Gouvernementalität*, 2. Vorlesung am Collège de France 1978-1979, ed. by Michel Sennelart (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2006). See Mämecke, *Das quantifizierte Selbst,* 26-31.

[23] Christopher Clark, *Revolutionary Spring. Fighting for a New World 1848-1849* (London et al.: Penguin, 2023), 16-25.

Building also on Foucault's insights, Mämecke further observes that the shift from authoritarian rule toward governance based on biopolitics was increasingly accompanied by self-regulatory processes of individuals. This historical development, he argues, laid the groundwork for the contemporary self-enhancement movement, in which individuals internalize and reproduce the logic of quantification and self-discipline as part of their pursuit of self-improvement.[24]

Mämecken argues that, contrary to the self-enhancement movement's perception of itself as the pinnacle of scientific progress, its approach is rooted in a reductionist worldview.[25] One source for this worldview is the use of statistics to categorize different strata within society for more effective governance. The irony, however, lies in how self-enhancement apps appear to reverse this process: they promote individual self-regulation by feeding personal data back into the vast pool of big data, rendering it meaningful through algorithm-based probabilities.

Mämecke is equally interested in the origins of this mentality and the nature of the goals to which self-enhancers aspire. These goals, he observes, must be quantifiable and reducible to numerical summaries. In the case of digital apps, this becomes particularly evident: the ideals pursued by self-enhancers reflect the growth ideology and performance-oriented thinking characteristic of modern capitalist society. Even practices like meditation, often associated with stress relief and mindfulness, are co-opted within this framework, becoming tools to enhance resilience to stress and, ultimately, a resource for increased productivity.[26]

Critique of the enhancement anthropology

The issue with self-enhancement apps—and even more so with the aspirations of transhumanism—is that they do not use technology to help humans become more human. Instead, they conform humans to a mechanistic way of thinking. They relate to a broader vision in which reality is reduced to what can be calculated in numbers and grasped by algorithms; the brain is viewed as hardware running a "software" that can be hacked, reprogrammed, and optimized; and the body is treated as an assemblage of parts with limited capacities that must be upgraded.[27] The underlying myth of human potentiality within this framework mirrors a consumer-producer model, where individuals must continuously improve themselves, much like machines.

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[24] Mämecke, *Das quantifizierte Selbst,* 15.

[25] Mämecke, *Das quantifizierte Selbst,* 52.

[26] Mämecke, *Das quantifizierte Selbst,* 68-70. See also Felder, *Christliches Leben und die Verbesserung des Menschen*, 81-84.

[27] For such arguments, see Harari, *Homo Deus*.

In contrast, viewing human nature in light of its ultimate purpose—eschaton and judgment—offers a profoundly different Christian perspective. This understanding does not endorse a bio-conservatism that defines human nature solely by its origins, such as an assumed zero point in evolution. Rather, in the Christian understanding, sanctification is fundamentally about a transformative process—a process for which humanity has been set free through justification in the first place.

Sanctification, as a result of justification, stands in stark contrast to anthropocentric ideologies by emphasizing transcendence and locating salvation outside the self, in Christ. The concept of *incurvatus in se*—the individual turned inward upon itself—serves as a powerful image of fallen human nature. Rather than pursuing infallibility and perfection, the perspective of sanctification challenges individuals to acknowledge the limitations of their own actions, fostering a more compassionate understanding of human nature. This critique highlights both the inherent limitations of the human condition and the relational nature of human existence. It reintroduces the tension between the necessity of personal effort and the recognition that such efforts are ultimately insufficient for achieving perfection or self-salvation. From a Christian perspective, humans are fundamentally dependent on God's justification. Sanctification, therefore, is not a static endpoint but a dynamic journey shaped by the stages of life towards its end and the relationships encountered along the way—one that cannot be reduced to an algorithmic formula.

From the perspective of sanctification, the use of the technological devices for self-enhancement appears to reflect a pervasive sense of unease—a deep longing of the individual for control in the face of a complex and often chaotic world, coupled with an earnest desire to improve one's life. At its core, the self-enhancement tools prioritize self-mastery, framing progress as the result of quantifiable metrics, algorithmic feedback, and a matter of individual effort. These tools risk reducing the human experience to measurable outputs, sidelining deeper questions about meaning, purpose, and relationality.

Four key distinctions

In line with my broader argument, I do not position sanctification in opposition to tracking and self-enhancement apps but rather use it as a lens for critically examining their underlying assumptions.[28] For those who no longer

[28] For a similar argument from a Calvinistic perspective, see Felder, *Christliches Leben und die Verbesserung des Menschen,* 202-218.

adhere to the Christian faith, this critique can be framed like this: the ideal of a self-sufficient individual striving for a holistic and perfectly harmonious life is not only unattainable but also a burden that can lead to disillusionment and despair. The challenge lies in engaging with the mindset behind these technologies from the perspective of sanctification while avoiding a binary exclusive opposition. In the context of self-enhancement, the theological tension between justification and sanctification is replaced by a different tension: the constant striving of the self, paired with the realization that any achieved state is always subject to further improvement.

My aim is to unpack the assumptions embedded within self-enhancement technologies and consider their broader implications for understanding sanctification. It is crucial not only to evaluate what these tools do but also to interrogate the image of humanity and the self they promote. By fostering a clear awareness of their approach to reality and the type of information they provide, these technologies can still be seen as helpful for achieving specific goals or supporting a disciplined lifestyle, even as their limitations are critically assessed.

In that line I propose four key distinctions for a critical look at self enhancement from a Christian sanctification perspective.

Critique of the reductionist and scientistic perception of reality

The first distinction addresses the reductionist and scientistic view of reality —one that narrowly prioritizes materialistic and empirical approaches while excluding the richness of humanistic and spiritual dimensions—that underpins many self-enhancement tools. These tools often reduce human experience to data expressed in numbers and framed in statistical probability. This perception misses the complexity and richness of human existence. Life cannot be fully understood or measured by quantifiable dimensions alone.[29]

From the perspective of sanctification, humans are more than what can be tracked or enhanced by algorithms. A critique here challenges the narrow focus on optimization and invites a rediscovery of the fullness of what it means to be human—limited but relational, spiritual, and embodied.

Recognising human limitations and dependence on grace received

Christian sanctification reminds us that salvation and true transformation come not from our strength but from the grace of God. This contrasts with the culture of self-improvement, which celebrates autonomy and individual performance. Apps

[29] For a thorough critique of the positivistic reductionist approach to reality, see Markus Gabriel, *Warum es die Welt nicht gibt* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2013).

should reflect the human dependence on the help of others and guide the user not to rely solely on their own strength and discipline. While some apps claim to foster community, their design often leads to competitive challenges—who walks more steps, who eats fewer calories—rather than fostering genuine relationality. True relationality transcends these shallow comparisons, inviting us into genuine, embodied community.

A critique here underscores the need to embrace human limitations and dependence. Instead of viewing failure as a personal shortcoming, users might reflect on how the unattainable goals set misrepresent the human condition. The Christian perspective also challenges the transhumanist dreams embedded in some self-enhancement narratives, reminding us of the dignity found in shared vulnerability and mutual support, thus reflecting the relational nature of maturing in faith and life.

Focus on relationship rather than self-centredness

Sanctification emphasizes the relational nature of human life—our relationship with God and with others. In contrast, self-enhancement apps often foster a self-centered perspective by focusing on individual performance and well-being. A shift is needed to encourage users to see themselves within a larger context of solidarity and bold humility, to borrow David Bosch's phrase. The aim is not simply to maximize personal well-being but to nurture the growth of humanness in community. Apps can be a tool to foster genuine community to connect with a supportive community and relational engagement by facilitating to share prayer requests or spiritual reflections. Helpful functions could be to connect 'spiritual companions' or 'accountability partners' to encourage mutual support and faith-based reflection.

Transformation through spiritual discipline rather than mere self-improvement

Sanctification calls for discipline that foster spiritual deepening rather than mere personal optimization. While self-enhancement apps aim to make users more productive, healthier, or mentally balanced, sanctification invites mindfulness of our limitations and gratitude for what we receive from others and from God.

Apps could support spiritual growth by helping users in practices such as daily prayer, Bible reading, or fasting. However, the emphasis should not be on performance metrics but on maturing in faith through reflection and engagement with others. For example, prompts could encourage users to reflect on their

spiritual journey, fostering growth in faith and relational depth. The goal is not to create the most disciplined Bible reader but to nurture a life of deeper faith, shaped by relational and spiritual growth. Apps and tools can motivate initial steps but should remain secondary to the deeper transformation found in communion with others and with God.

Conclusion

Self-enhancement tools and apps hold undeniable potential for fostering personal growth, discipline, and self-awareness. However, when approached uncritically, they risk reinforcing a reductionist view of humanity, prioritizing self-centered optimization and promoting unattainable ideals of perfection. From the perspective of sanctification, these tools can be evaluated and reimagined to align more closely with a holistic and grace-filled understanding of human life. These apps can motivate us to get up and start.

Sanctification offers a profound critique of the underlying assumptions of self-enhancement technologies. It challenges the reduction of human identity to quantifiable data, calls for a relational rather than self-centered approach, emphasizes human limitations and dependence on God, and directs transformation toward spiritual depth. Apps and tools, when designed with these principles in mind, can serve as valuable instruments—not for replacing faith or community but for supporting them.

The Christian message does not deny the desire for growth or transformation but reframes it: true flourishing comes not from striving to optimize oneself as though one were a machine but from embracing our dependence on God and growing in relationships with others. In this light, the invitation of sanctification is not to reject tools of self-improvement but to critically assess their purpose and limitations. It calls us to rise above a mechanistic, performance-driven narrative and to embrace a vision of life shaped by grace, humility, and relational depth.

The words of Christ in the Gospel remain ever relevant: *"Get up and heal."* Not in the sense of self-sufficiency or isolated striving, but as a call to step into a transformative journey—one that is sustained by grace, deepened in community, and oriented toward the wholeness found in relationship with God and others.

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