

Speculative Realms

TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2010

Kurzweil Abominations and the Grays: Eternal Recurrence of the Same

by Gary Haden

"What awaits is not oblivion but rather a future which, from our present vantage point, is best described by the words 'postbiological' or even 'supernatural.' It is a world in which the human race has been swept away by the tide of cultural change, usurped by its own artificial progeny."

--Hans Moravec, [Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence](#)

I listened to a [Ray Kurzweil](#) talk recently. For those who don't know, Kurzweil is an artificial intelligence (AI) guru responsible for bringing us voice recognition and is a best-selling author. He is bizarrely brilliant, a cross between Buckminster Fuller, William Kristol, and the M-5 computer.

He postulates a postbiological transhuman in [The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology](#), a 2005 book that still gets juices flowing. In the talk I listened to, Kurzweil seems almost orgasmic in his discussion of transhumans. He says we're going to put chips in our brains to improve intelligence and we're going to evolve into cyborgs and eventually into immortal cybernetic, artificially intelligent "beings." Importantly, Kurzweil says these beings will be sexy beings who will have sex. Humans will have sex with AI beings. AI beings will have sex with AI beings. We will all have orgasms.

I guess that makes it ok. Although what is an orgasm to a computer, contemplating equations that result in an answer of infinity?

Kurzweil says we haven't artificially simulated emotional intelligence (EI) yet. He says AI has to back-engineer the rest of the brain first. But Kurzweil expects transhumans to possess EI. It is only a matter of time. But wouldn't science tend naturally to culturally contaminate this critter with the idea that AI or SI (scientific intelligence) is evolutionarily superior to EI? What is to keep a Kurzweil Abomination (KA) from killing off its own EI out of its programmed predilection for evolutionary choices?

Kurzweil, being Mr. AI, is naturally going to be effusive in his praise of his cybernetic ubermensch. He certainly stands to make a "killing" (double-entendre) if (when) humans decide to carve chip slots in their skulls to snap in their AI circuit boards. That isn't likely to look good on the runway. Not that the runway is our primary concern here.

There is such an ethically target rich environment here it isn't funny. We could be a race of Manchurian candidates. War protests would almost certainly vanish. We could get lost in a simulation. We could lose our emotional intelligence, upon which is based our capacity for compassion, art, poetry, spirituality—the things which restrain us from being complete horrors.

We could kill on the basis of evolutionary utility to get rid of the evolutionary dead weight—dead weight like Middle Eastern and Central Asian Muslims, for instance, who won't give us any oil for our propulsion systems.

Is a transhuman even alive? Is AI life? And, if Moravec is right, and artificial humans are going to sweep us aside, should we be aspiring to become artificial humans? Isn't that aspiration suicidal? Is this abomination science gushes about what we want to be? Just how will these transhumans behave around us older models?

Look, I don't have problems with evolution. I'm not a creationist. But I'm also not a [Social Darwinist](#). The transhuman is being offered out as a natural consequence of evolution. I'm afraid the social darwinistic superman concept is something folks should bring to bear on the transhuman. I mean, is this [Roy Batty](#) with a swastika here? Is this a solar-paneled slat-being with no human affect whatsoever? What is this thing going to do to us?

I think it is going to go back in time, visit Ray Kurzweil in his office, kidnap him, take him to its ship, extract genetic material from Kurzweil, and try to make themselves human again. KAs are going to use their evolution-based

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programming to refute the idea that their abominated state constitutes evolution.

Whoa, where does that come from? Well, we don't really need to wait for the advent of KAs to consider what might happen. We have a fine example of KA behavior in the Gray Narrative from paranormal research. The thread from the narrative that most closely resembles KAs is that we get from [Dan Burisch](#). Some Grays, according to Burisch, are transhumans from the future who are so genetically abominated, presumably from some future Kurzweilian transhuman project, they have to travel back in time and abduct humans to extract genetic material to help them revert to human form.

How ironic that humans like [Hans Moravec](#) and Kurzweil want to become abominations while abominations, who are theoretically the result of [transhumanist](#) meddling, want to become human. That's pretty sad. [Mary Shelley](#) couldn't come up with a better plot.

So from a social darwinistic perspective, which should fit the psychological makeup of KAs, we can expect to, at the worst, in a century or two, be put to the sword in favor of the evolutionary superiority of transhumans, (in the meantime becoming abominations ourselves with chips in our brains and cloudy absent looks in our eyes), or, we get used as spare genetic parts. We will be genetic crops for KAs to harvest. It is the vision from the Matrix: flesh on a stick, distracted by cybernetic hyper-realities, stupidly unaware of what is going on.

I don't assert the truth or falsehood of the Burisch Narrative. I borrow from Burisch's accounts to analyze ethically the romantic view of the transhuman. I see little difference between Kurzweil's transhumans and Burisch's transhumans. I doubt they're going to be our beautiful biomechanical-cybernetic children.

It is more probable transhumans will be Frankensteinian abominations, groping about in the genetic dark, trying to find home, horrified at what has been done to them. The transhumanist project may be the new [eugenics](#) scandal where scientific endeavor once again strays badly off course from lack of ethical investigation and proper observance of scientific humility.

Here it is again. It is the [eternal recurrence of the same](#)--the eternal return of the ubermensch, the eternal return of the eugenics program in the form of a cyber-eugenics program, the eternal return of the hatred of our basic humanity.

The transhuman is the symbol of human self-hatred articulated through the lens of science.

The Gray, then, may be the symbol of human self-hatred articulated through profound alienation.

Deep-seated misanthropy permeates the Universe.

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BRAIN CHIPS AND OTHER DREAMS OF THE CYBER-EVANGELISTS BY JOHN HORGAN

Posted by Gary Haden at 7:54 AM 

Labels: [Dan Burisch](#), [Grays](#), [Humanity Plus](#), [Ray Kurzweil](#), [Singularity](#), [Transhumans](#)

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