Hacking Humanity: Transhumanism

by Michael Rectenwald

This piece is an excerpt from "The Great Reset and the Struggle for Liberty."

The notion that the world can be replicated and replaced by a simulated reality says a great deal about the beliefs of those who promote the metaverse [treated in the previous chapter]. The conception is materialist and mechanistic at base, the hallmarks of social engineering. It represents the world as consisting of nothing but manipulable matter, or rather, of digital media mimicking matter. It suggests that human beings can be reduced to a material substratum and can be induced to accept a technological reproduction in lieu of reality. Further, it assumes that those who inhabit this simulacrum can be controlled by technocratic means. Such a materialist, mechanistic, techno-determinist, and reductionist worldview is consistent with the transhumanist belief that humans

themselves will soon be succeeded by a new transhuman species, or humanity-plus (h+)—perhaps a genetically and AI-enhanced cyborg that will outstrip ordinary humans and make the latter virtually obsolete.

The term transhumanism was coined by Julian Huxley, the brother of the novelist Aldous Huxley and the first director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In an essay entitled "Transhumanism," published in the book "New Bottles for New Wine" (1957), Huxley defined transhumanism as the self-transcendence of humanity:

"The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself—not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety, as humanity. We need a name for this new belief. Perhaps transhumanism will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature."[1]

One question for transhumanism is indeed whether this transcendence will apply to the whole human species or rather for only a select part of it. But Huxley gave some indication of how this human self-transcendence might occur: humanity would become "managing director of the biggest business of all, the business of evolution …"[2] As the first epigraph to this Part makes clear, Julian Huxley was a proponent of eugenics. And he was the President of the British Eugenics Society.[3] It was in his introduction of UNESCO, as the director-general that he suggested that eugenics, after the Nazi regime had given it such a bad name, should be rescued from opprobrium, "so that much that now is unthinkable may at least become thinkable."[4] As John Klyczek has noted, "In the wake of vehement public backlash against the atrocities of the Nazi eugenic Holocaust, Huxley's eugenics proper was forced to go under-ground, repackaging itself in various crypto-eugenic disguises, one of which is 'transhumanism.'" Transhumanism,

Klyczek suggests, is “the scientific postulate that human evolution through biological-genetic selection has been largely superseded by a symbiotic evolution that cybernetically merges the human species with its own technological handiwork.”[5]

Contemporary transhumanist enthusiasts, such as Simon Young, believe that humanity can take over where evolution has left us to create a new and improved species—either ourselves, or a successor to ourselves:

“We stand at a turning point in human evolution. We have cracked the genetic code; translated the Book of Life. We will soon possess the ability to become designers of our own evolution.”[6]

In “A History of Transhumanist Thought,” Nick Bostrom details the lineage of transhumanist thought from its prehistory to the present and shows how transhumanism became wedded to the fields of genomics, nanotechnology, and robotics (GNR), where robotics is inclusive of Artificial Intelligence (AI).[7] It is the last of these fields that primarily concerns us here. The transhumanist project has since envisioned the transcendence of humanity via technological means. In the past thirty years, this technological transcendence has been figured as “the singularity.”

Vernor Vinge, the mathematician, computer scientist, and science fiction author introduced the notion of the technological singularity in 1993.[8] The singularity, Vinge suggested, is the near-future point at which machine intelligence will presumably supersede human intelligence. Vinge boldly declared: “Within thirty years, we will have the technological means to create superhuman intelligence. Shortly after, the human era will be ended.”[9] Vinge predicted that the singularity would be reached no later than, you guessed it, 2030. The question Vinge addressed was whether, and if so, how, the human species might survive the coming singularity.

The inventor, futurist, and now Google Engineering Director Raymond Kurzweil has since welcomed the technological singularity as a boon to humanity. Kurzweil, whose books include “The Age of Spiritual Machines” (1999), “The Singularity Is Near” (2005), and “How to Create a Mind” (2012), suggests that by 2029, technologists will have successfully reverse-engineered the brain and replicated human intelligence in (strong) AI while vastly increasing processing speeds of thought. Having mapped the neuronal components of a human brain, or discovered the algorithms for thought, or a combination thereof, technologists will convert the same to a computer program, personality and all, and upload it to a computer host, thus grasping the holy grail of immortality. Finally, as the intelligence explosion expands from the singularity, all matter will be permeated with data, with intelligence; the entire universe will “wake up” and become alive, and “about as close to God as I can imagine,” writes Kurzweil.[10]

Thus, in a complete reversal of the Biblical creation narrative, Kurzweil posits a dumb universe that begins with a cosmic singularity (the Big Bang) and becomes God by a technological singularity. This second singularity, Kurzweil suggests, involves the universe becoming self-aware, vis-à-vis the informational, technological agent, humanity. Thus, in the technological singularity, the technological and the cosmic converge, as Kurzweil resembles a techno-cosmic Hegelian. (Hegel figured collective human self-consciousness progressing in self-actualization and self-realization, finally becoming and recognizing itself as God, “through the State [as] the march of God in the world.”[11]) Incidentally, according to Kurzweil, our post-human successors will bear the marks of their human provenance. Thus, the future intelligence will remain “human” in some sense. Human beings are the carriers of universal intelligence and human technology is the substratum by which intelligence will be infinitely expanded and universalized.

More recently, Yuval Noah Harari—the Israeli historian, World Economic Forum (WEF)-affiliated futurist, and advisor to Klaus Schwab—has also hailed this singularity, although with dire predictions for the vast majority. According to Harari, the 4-IR will have two main consequences: human bodies and minds will be replaced by robots and AI, while human brains become hackable with nanorobotic brain-cloud interfaces (B/CIs), AI, and biometric surveillance technologies. Just as humans are functionally replaced, that is, they will be subject to the total control of powerful corporations or the state (or, what's more likely, a hybrid thereof, a neo-fascist state). Rather than a decentralized, open-access infosphere of exploding intelligence available to all, Singularitarian technologies will become part of the arsenal for domination. The supersession of human intelligence by machine intelligence will involve the use of such data and data processing capabilities to further predict and control social behavioral patterns of the global population. In addition, the biotechnical enhancement of the few will serve to exacerbate an already wide gulf between the elite and the majority, while the "superiority" of the enhanced functions ideologically to rationalize differences permitted by such a division. That is, Harari suggests that if developments proceed as Vinge and Kurzweil predict, this vastly accelerated information-collecting and processing sphere will not constitute real knowledge for the enlightenment of the vast majority. Rather, it will be instrumentalist and reductionist in the extreme, facilitating the domination of human beings on a global scale, while rendering opposition impossible.

In an article in Frontiers in Neuroscience, Nuno R.B. Martins et al. explain just how such control could be implemented through B/CIs, which the authors claim will be feasible within the next 20 to 30 years:

"Neuralnanorobotics may also enable a B/CI with controlled connectivity between neural activity and external data storage

and processing, via the direct monitoring of the brain's ~86 x 109 neurons and ~2 x 1014 synapses …

"They would then wirelessly transmit up to ~6 x 1016 bits per second of synaptically processed and encoded human–brain electrical information via auxiliary nanorobotic fiber optics (30 cm3) with the capacity to handle up to 1018 bits/sec and provide rapid data transfer to a cloud-based supercomputer for *real-time brain-state monitoring and data extraction*. A neuralnanorobotically enabled human B/CI might serve as a personalized conduit, allowing persons to obtain direct, instantaneous access to virtually any facet of cumulative human knowledge (emphasis mine)."[12]

Such interfaces have already reached the commercialization stage with Elon Musk's Neuralink,[13] Kernel,[14] and through DARPA,[15] among others.

When neuralnanorobotic technologies that conduct information and algorithms that make decisions interface with the brain, the possibilities for eliminating particular kinds of experiences, behaviors, and thoughts becomes possible. Such control of the mind through implants was already prototyped by Jose Delgado as early as 1969. Now, two-way transmission of data between the brain and the cloud effectively means the possibility of reading the thoughts of subjects, interrupting such thoughts, and replacing them with other, machine-cloud-originating information. The desideratum to record, label, "informationalize," rather than to understand, let alone critically engage or theorize experience will take exclusive priority for subjects, given the possibilities for controlling neuronal switching patterns. Given the instrumentalism of the Singularitarians–or, as Yuval Harari has called them, the "Dataists"–decisive, action-oriented algorithms will dominate these brain-cloud interfaces, precluding faculties for the critical evaluation of activity, and obliterating free will.[16] Given enough data, algorithms will be better able to make decisions for us. Nevertheless, they will have been based

on intelligence defined in a particular way and put to particular ends, placing considerable emphasis on the speed and volume of data processing and decision-making based on data construed as "knowledge." Naturally, Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" comes to mind. Yet, unlike Huxley's mind-numbing soma, brain-cloud interfaces will have an ideological appeal to the masses; they are touted as enhancements, as vast improvements over standard human intelligence.

Harari peels back the curtain masking transhumanism's Wizard of Oz promises, suggesting that even before the singularity, robotics and machine intelligence will make the masses into a new "useless class."[17] Given the exorbitant cost of entry, only the elite will be able to afford actual enhancements, making them a new, superior species—notwithstanding the claim that Moore's Law closes the technological breach by exponentially increasing the price-performance of computing and thus halving its cost per unit of measurement every two years or less. How the elite will maintain exclusive control over enhancements and yet subject the masses to control technologies is never addressed. But perhaps a kill switch could be implemented such that the elite will not be subjected to brain-data mining—unless one runs afoul of the agenda, in which case brain-data mining could be (re)enabled.

In a 2018 WEF statement, Harari spoke as the self-proclaimed prophet of a new transhumanist age, saying:

"We are probably among the last generations of homo sapiens. Within a century or two, Earth will be *dominated* by entities that are more different from us, than we are different from Neanderthals or from chimpanzees. Because in the coming generations, we will learn how to engineer bodies and brains and minds. These will be the main products of the 21st century economy (emphasis mine)."[18]

No longer capable of mounting a challenge to the elite as in

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and having no function, the feckless masses will have no recourse or purpose. Exploitation is one thing; irrelevance is quite another, says Harari. And thus, as Harari sees it, the remaining majority will be condemned to spend their time in the metaverse, or worse. If they are lucky, they will collect universal basic income (UBI) and will best occupy themselves by taking drugs and playing video games. Of course, Harari exempts himself from this fate.

As for the elite, according to Harari, their supposed superiority to the masses will soon become a matter of biotechnological fact, rather than merely an ideological pretension, as in the past. The elite will not only continue to control the lion's share of the world's material resources; they will also become godlike and enjoy effective remote control over their subordinates. Further, via biotechnological means, they will acquire eternal life on Earth, while the majority, formerly consoled by the fact that at least everybody dies, will now lose the great equalizer. As the supernatural is outmoded, or sacrificed on the altar of transhumanism, the majority will inevitably forfeit their belief in a spiritual afterlife. The theistic religions that originated in the Middle East will disappear, to be replaced by new cyber-based religions originating in Silicon Valley. Spirituality, that is, will be nothing but the expression of reverence for newly created silicon gods, whether they be game characters, game designers, or the elites themselves.

Harari's pronouncements may amount to intentional hyperbole to make a point, but his statements are remarkable for the cynicism and disdain for humanity they betray. They are revelatory of the unmitigated gall of believers in the transhuman future. Coupled with the neo-Malthusian impulses of the elite, centered around the U.N. and the WEF, a picture emerges of an elite whose objective is to reduce the population of "useless eaters," while keeping the remainder in

their thrall.

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First published in Mises.org