

On Artificial Intelligence and Transhumanism

By Charles Upton

Memory is Eternal Death

Those, such as the late Stephen Hawking, who fear the development of what is called “artificial intelligence,” often bring forth the frightening possibility that AI may someday—perhaps sooner than later—become self-aware in the sense of cynically self-interested, and move to eliminate humankind as an unnecessary and obsolete system, pursuant to the firm AI principle that “all error is human error.”

This doom however, while possible, is not my greatest fear when it comes to artificial intelligence. What I fear much more than the prospect of a self-aware AI turning against humanity, the thing that truly terrifies me because it is already happening without our being aware of it, is that the human race will surrender its own self-awareness and self-determination in its interaction with and reliance upon AI. In other words, more than authoritarian oppression, my greatest fear when it comes to AI is the capitulation of the human race to chaos, while foolishly believing it to be order. As I see it, this outcome is next to inevitable, precisely because the essence of artificial intelligence is nothing other than the organized technological expression of collective human volatility, irresponsibility and cowardice. Since the human race has opted to dominate God’s creation without God, the Almighty is now punishing us by letting humanly-created systems dominate humanity—even to the point where we will believe, not too far down the road, that they are our creators. *They plot, but Allah also plotteth; and Allah is the best of plotters* [Qur’an 8:30]—which is to say, God is not only the Master of justice, but the Master of *poetic* justice.

Some people today cannot conceive of how the pyramids could have been built by mere men; they must have had help from extraterrestrials. In the future it will be just as implausible that human beings of our age were somehow able to think, reason and make decisions on our own; we must have had help from artificial intelligence. Just as the transhumanists believe that consciousness is nothing but recorded human experience plus the algorithms that allow it to be controlled and manipulated, so the proponents of artificial intelligence believe that what William Blake called “the ratio of the perishing vegetable memory” is all there is to man. There is no such thing as Intellection because the human form has no inwardness, no *synderesis*, no Heart. Thus the totality of the artificial intelligence enterprise, and the transhumanist imposture as well, is nothing but the attempt to build and predict and control what will be on the basis of what has already been, because nothing else than what has already been is believed to exist. Immersed in time, with no access to Eternity, we are all “eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves”—the mill of the eternal return. When I watch a particular movie on a Roku TV channel, it immediately appears in my “recommendations” field, as something the Roku AI program has determined I might want to watch in the future; when I purchase something online, Google sends me an ad suggesting that I purchase the same product. This is artificial intelligence in its most rudimentary yet fundamental form. There is no Insight, no Inspiration, no Illumination—much less any Imagination, particularly in Blake’s sense of the word—because, in effect, there is no Present Moment, and without a Present Moment there can be no “Behold, I make all things new.” AI, then, is nothing less than the universal mechanism of *karma* with no possible intervention of Dharma, or Grace, or Forgiveness, or Enlightenment—this being an apt definition of Hell. To paraphrase the famous line by Auguste de Villiers de L’Isle-Adam: “Live? Our robots will do that for us.”

The hopeless attempt of artificial intelligence to understand humanity by collecting and manipulating more and more mere *data* on us, all so as to better control us—a project that is already well begun—may be compared to the description given by C.S. Lewis in *The Screwtape Letters* of the obsessive struggle of the demons to understand what God could possibly mean by the mysterious word “love”. Says Screwtape:

We have begun to see why the Oppressor [God] is so secretive. His throne depends on the secret. Members of His faction have frequently admitted that if we ever came to understand what He means by Love, the war would be over and we should reenter Heaven. And there lies the great task. We know that He cannot really love: nobody can; it doesn't make sense. If we could only find out what He is *really* up to! Hypothesis after hypothesis has been tried, and we still can't find out. Yet we must never lose hope; more and more complicated theories, fuller and fuller collections of data, richer rewards for researchers who make progress, more and more terrible punishments for those who fail—all this, pursued and accelerated to the very end of time, cannot, surely, fail to succeed.

And, since we have now descended from high lament and the invocation of Divine Justice to low satire, it only remains for me to commend those who have given us the great gift of artificial intelligence, and to ask when we may expect research and development to be completed on artificial compassion, artificial courage, artificial humility, artificial integrity and artificial honor? These too promise to stand as great achievements for the benefit of humanity—or at least for the memory of what humanity used to be.

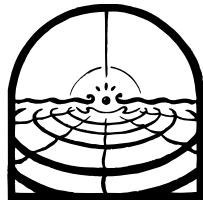


Islam vs. Transhumanism

On Saturday, Nov. 3, 2018, I and my wife Jenny, Dr. John Andrew Morrow, Craig Considine and Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid spoke at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Toronto, Canada, on the subject of the Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of the World. The next evening, Sunday, Nov 4, Dr. Benedikt Göcke, a Catholic academic associated with both Oxford and the Ruhr-University in Germany, delivered a speech entitled "Transhumanism and Faith in God," in which he espoused the view that the creation of what he calls "an immortal Christian cyborg" would not be a violation of Christian doctrine. It is up to any Christian who disagrees with this notion to critique it from a Christian standpoint, but since I am a Muslim, it is my duty before Allah to give what I believe to be the ruling of the Holy Qur'an on this matter.

In the Surah entitled *Women*, 4:117-119, Allah says:

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