

Amongst social scientists, there are those who think that the social sciences must be strictly descriptive. Others, like DC, clearly think that description is just part of their job, and that they have to engage themselves in defending what is important to them. On such a view, we all have a responsibility in terms of what will happen to us in the future: researchers concretely involved in building our future are clearly responsible for what they are doing. But users who accept the use of devices that are proposed to them completely share that responsibility. DC is not an exception – she is fully part of her society, with a computer on her desk and a mobile phone in her handbag – but she thinks that we cannot just let things go the way they are going without standing back from our own practices. That means trying to anticipate plausible scenarios, analyze them, wonder whether they are what we really want for our future, and, if necessary, warn about the possible consequences of our current choices.

In other words, our future must be a collective choice, a result of interaction and confrontation between the different positions. The current original collaboration between the two authors, a cyborg-in-creation, who happily faces the disappearance of humankind, and an anthropologist deeply attached to our homo sapiens condition, is a first step in the right direction to opening the debate about what our future might and should be.

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In deciding on our future it is perhaps appropriate to investigate the likely outcomes. For a moment put yourself in the position of being a member of a new breed. Either you are an intelligent machine, or a Cyborg – you can choose. A group of humans is still in existence and, whether you like it or not, there are many of them. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that these humans used to be the dominant life form on earth for quite a few years and they are not overly happy at giving up their position to the new breed, even though they were largely responsible for originating it. They are trying therefore, as hard as they can, to destroy every member of the new breed. From the perspective of these intellectually inferior beings, the humans, if they can destroy the new breed then humans will again be the dominant life form – maybe next time they will not make a hash of it.

So what will you, and other members of the new breed do? Perhaps you could be nice to the humans. Even though they are intellectually inferior, and you do not respect them, possibly you might let them make all the important decisions. But that seems extremely unlikely. Indeed why should you be nice at all to these humans? Given half a chance they will probably try to end your life. Realistically it is dangerous to give humans any power at all, as they could easily use it against the new breed.

Of course we can, at this time, only speculate as to how members of the new breed, such as yourself, would treat humans. After all, as the new breed are all far more intelligent than humans, it is difficult for humans to guess with any considerable accuracy the actions of the new breed. However, as the new breed have stemmed

from humanity there is perhaps mileage in considering humans themselves and extrapolating from known human behavior. Nietzsche (1961) said that “All creatures hitherto have created something beyond themselves”. He asked “What is the ape to man? A laughing stock or painful embarrassment? And just so shall man be to the superman: a laughing stock or painful embarrassment”. One could understand the superman as the new breed of which we have been talking.

So, at this point in time, our best guess as humans as to how the new breed would treat humans in the future, is obtained from looking at how humans have treated those, arguably less intelligent than themselves, from whom humans have evolved. How do humans treat chimpanzees and other animals? Do we treat them as brothers? Do we elect them to government, follow their orders or even treat them as equals? We certainly do not. Indeed why should we? After all they are less intelligent than humans. It would be a considerable embarrassment to have an orangutan as Prime Minister.

What humans actually do with apes and other evolutionary ancestors is shoot them, cage them, remove their living environment and glare at them from a safe distance in zoos. We generally abuse other animals to make our own lives more comfortable, using their bodies for food or to make glue. Amazingly, in the UK, until recently foxes were hunted and killed, just for fun, for sport. That is how humans treat creatures who are only slightly less intellectually capable than themselves. A very lucky few animals we keep as pets.

In fact apes, over the years, have probably not been anywhere near the same threat to humans as humans would be to the new breed – we do not tend to witness gangs of apes roaming the streets of New York City trying to eliminate a human or two. Despite this, humans have gone out in force looking for animals in order to destroy them, in many cases to extinction.

In reality therefore we can expect that the new superintelligent breed will wish to dominate. This they will attempt to achieve in both physical and mental ways. This is the sword that humans have wielded to establish and retain the position in which we find ourselves, and this will be the sword that the new breed, who have evolved from humans, will use to keep humans in their new found position as a sub-species (Warwick, 2004).

In debating the creation of a new Cyborg species the options are considerable indeed. It is likely that many humans will not fancy the idea of taking up a sub-species role. But what can they do about it? Conversely, many other humans (like KW) will find the possibility of upgrading and becoming a Cyborg extremely appealing. If we believe in the freedom of the individual to choose their own destiny, shouldn't that be paramount? Rather, should humans now stand up for their species and protect what we have before it is too late?

References

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