
Book Review

Robotics as Post-Humanism

by Carl Osgood

Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution And Conflict in the 21st Century

by P.W. Singer

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If you're not upgraded ... you're going to be something of a subspecies.

So says Kevin Warwick, the head of cybernetics and robotics at Reading University in the United Kingdom. Warwick is the “pioneer” in connecting humans to computers, using himself as his guinea pig, to create a “superior” being, who views “un-augmented humans a little differently,” like a farmer views his cows. Not surprisingly, Warwick’s inspiration is the Borg, the man-machine race of cyborgs, from the TV series *Star Trek*, that “assimilates” other species and their technologies, in an unrelenting drive to improve itself, destroying those civilizations that resist.

Warwick may think he’s on the cutting edge of the future, but the source of his outlook is an historical tendency that dates back to at least the Babylonian Empire (ca. 7th Century B.C.). As Lyndon LaRouche noted in his “Information Society: a Doomed Empire of Evil,” (*EIR*, April 28, 2000), “That form of society known to

history as ‘the oligarchical model,’ is premised, implicitly, on the practiced assumption that the mass of human beings was fated to live as human cattle, herded, selectively bred, used, and culled as a farmer might herd, breed, use and cull cows.... The determination of the fate of such human cattle, was left, conventionally, to the ministrations of either the relevant oligarchy itself, or to the mass of lackeys such as today’s breed of HMO-controlling and kindred all-too-typical chief executive officers who performed such and related functions for the oligarchy.”

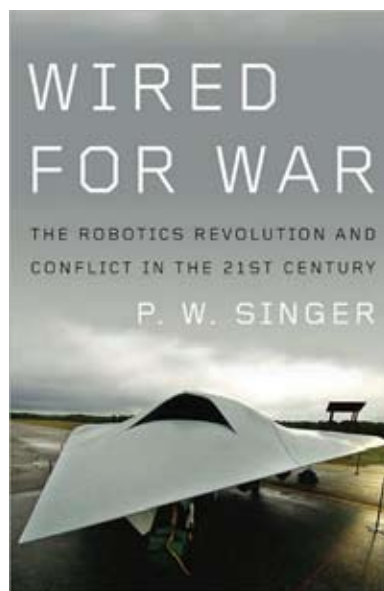
Robotics and the Military

Warwick’s hellish vision of the future is documented in *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century*, by the Brookings Institution’s Peter W. Singer, notable for his 2003 book *Corporate Warriors*. In *Wired for War*, Singer covers, in great, scholarly detail, many areas already touched on earlier by

EIR, in a series of articles on the Revolution in Military Affairs, including the application of robotics and artificial intelligence to warfare (see “Revolution in Military Affairs: The Shape of Nasty Things to Come,” *EIR*, Aug. 10, 2007).

Singer covers the full range of issues related to robotics and the military, from the widespread use of

unmanned ground and air vehicles in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the ethical and legal issues raised by the use of robots in combat. Singer includes a chapter on how scientists and engineers, working in the fields of robotics and artificial intelligence, are often inspired by science fiction, everything from the stories of Robert Heinlein and Arthur C. Clarke, to Hollywood’s *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* movies and TV shows. Singer even takes note of the influence of H.G. Wells, in which he cites, among other things, *The Shape of Things to Come*, in which Wells “predicted a world war that would feature aerial



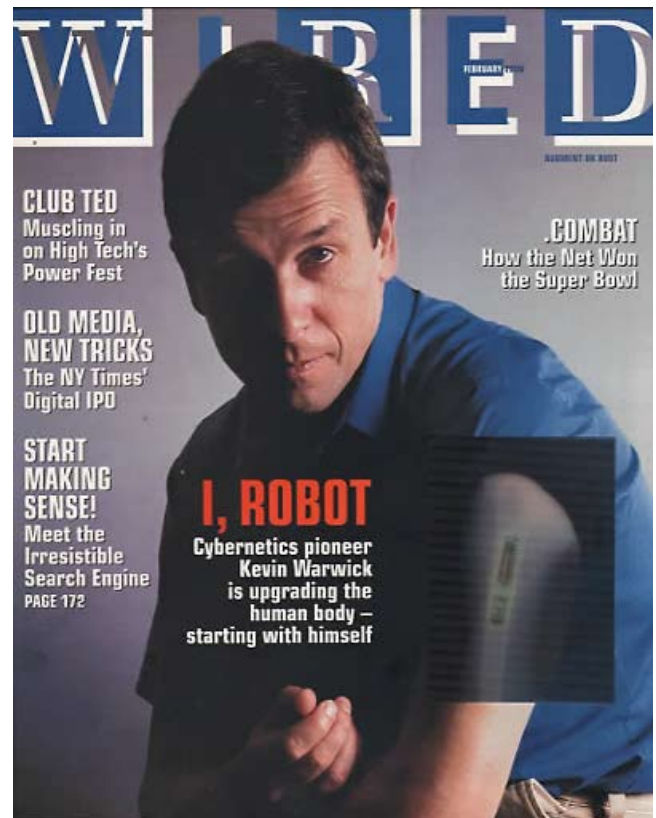
bombing of cities,” and *The World Set Free*, in which Wells first described “a new type of weapon made of radioactive materials, which he called the ‘atomic bomb.’” What Singer does not mention, however, is that Wells, along with Bertrand Russell, was a promoter of dictatorial world government, and that both of these works figured in that effort.

What today’s roboticists get from science fiction, and perhaps, their own miseducation, as well, is a misconception of the nature of humanity. The oligarchical idea of man as little better than cattle to be herded and culled, has been brought forward into this new context, but amounts to the same thing it did in feudal times. Like the radical empiricist who insists that man can learn nothing except through his five senses, today’s roboticist builds a machine that also can only learn through its senses, albeit with much more powerful sensing equipment that can see in the dark, in all kinds of weather, and at great distances; and can process that data at near instantaneous speeds, and retain it with perfect recall. In the mind of a roboticist like Kevin Warwick, that makes the machine superior to the human being, and the human being who can plug himself into that machine becomes still more superior.

Warwick tells Singer, “One of the reactions I had to having the implant [in his arm] was a feeling of affinity with my computer. Once that becomes a permanent state, you’re not really a human anymore, you’re a cyborg. Your values and ethics would be bound to change, I think, and you would view un-augmented humans a little differently.” How differently, Singer explains in the next paragraph. Like LaRouche, Warwick uses the cattle metaphor to make his point, only from the opposite standpoint. He considers “naturals,” that is, those of us who are “un-augmented,” as the cattle. “Warwick thinks that naturals should expect a similar regard from the technologically enhanced,” writes Singer, and from that thought flows the quote with which this review opened.

While author Singer is clearly troubled by much of what he sees in this “cyborg world” (such as giving robots the autonomy to decide whether or not to kill a human “target”), he has yet to make the conceptual leap necessary to understand the threat that it represents to the notion that there is a qualitative distinction between human beings and cattle, not to mention robots.

LaRouche declares in his above-cited paper, that the distinguishing characteristic of the human species is its ability to willfully increase its relative potential popula-



Kevin Warwick “upgraded” himself by implanting a silicon chip in his arm and hooking his body up to a computer. He says it gives him “a feeling of affinity with my computer.”

tion density. “Such an increase is brought about through the processes of cognition which set the human species absolutely apart from, and above all other species, whether the increase occurs within the human species as such, or among the plants and animals into whose destiny mankind intervenes. That quality of change in ecological potential, expresses the specific quality of human nature.”

LaRouche adds that “The form in which this efficient principle of human nature is expressed, is most readily recognized as the capacity for mankind to generate and implement successive, validated revolutions in applied universal physical principles, and in the correlated development of what are to be recognized as Classical forms of universal principles of artistic composition, principles consistent with the Socratic method of defining truthfulness and justice.”

There is no indication in *Wired for War*, that either Singer or any of his interlocutors quoted in this book, have any recognition of this crucial point. Indeed, many of the roboticists Singer interviewed seem to

share Warwick's outlook, even if not quite to that extreme.

Just Who Are the Luddites?

One of the major characters in Singer's book is Bill Joy, founder of Sun Microsystems. Joy is at the forefront of what futurists, such as Ray Kurzweil, call "The Singularity," a paradigm shift brought on by robotics and artificial intelligence, so profound, that life will be "irreversibly transformed," in Kurzweil's words. "By 2030, we are likely to be able to build machines a million times as powerful as the personal computers of today," says Joy. The polar opposite to Joy is Unabomber Ted Kaczynski, who is presented as the neo-Luddite opposing all this. Singer quotes from Kaczynski's manifesto, to the effect that people are becoming so dependent on their machines, that turning them off "would amount to suicide." Kaczynski advocates "a revolution against the industrial system," the object of which "will be to overthrow not governments but the economic and technological basis of the present society."

But, in fact, has not the Information Age, itself, overthrown the industrial system that Kaczynski raged against? The breakdown of American industrial capabilities over the last four decades demonstrates the affinity between Joy and Kaczynski. LaRouche noted this affinity in the above-cited article from 2000, in which he quoted Joy, from the April 2000 edition of *Wired* magazine, expressing shocking recognition in reading an excerpt of Kaczynski's manifesto in Kurzweil's *The Age of Spiritual Machines*:

"Kaczynski's actions were murderous and, in my view, criminally insane. He is clearly a Luddite, but simply saying this does not dismiss his argument; as difficult as it is for me to acknowledge, I saw some merit in the reasoning of this single passage. I felt compelled to confront it. . . ."

Joy reports that he started showing the Kaczynski quotes to friends and found more material from Hans Moravec's *Robot: Mere Machine to Transcendent Mind*, "material surprisingly supportive of Kaczynski's argument." In fact, he ends up taking up Kaczynski's "warning," that we are going to become so dependent on our machines as to allow them to make decisions for us.

LaRouche goes on to document the origins of the worldview reflected by both Kaczynski and Joy, in Bertrand Russell's Unification of the Sciences project of 1938, the post-World War II Cybernetics conferences sponsored by the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation, and

MIT's Research Laboratory for Electronics of the 1940s and 1950s. These projects, based on the psychological warfare programs of London's Tavistock Clinic, gave us the CIA's MKUltra LSD experiments, and the anti-science rock-drug-sex counterculture of the 1960s, as well as "artificial intelligence," and related information-theory dogma, credited to Norbert Wiener and John von Neumann.

The fraud of Wiener and von Neumann, in particular, LaRouche noted, was "to simply ignore the existence of cognition, and baldly assert an interpretation of ideas, including universal physical principles, as mere epiphenomena of statistical methods. All of so-called information theory, systems analysis, and artificial intelligence dogma rests crucially upon the presumption that non-linear processes can be so fully explained in such ways, that nothing else need be taken into account."

Indeed, this fraud was documented in *EIR*'S Aug. 10, 2007 package. Hans Moravec, founder of the robotics research program at Carnegie Mellon University, is quoted, claiming that one day, in the not too distant future, human consciousness will be downloadable into computers. "We are cyborgs not in the merely superficial sense of combining flesh and wires," Moravec says, "but in the more profound sense of being human-technology symbiots: thinking and reasoning systems whose minds and selves are spread across biological brain and non-biological circuitry." Wiener had gone further in the 1950s when, sounding more like writer for *Star Trek* than a scientist, he predicted that, one day, we will be able to "transmit the whole pattern of the human body," as if through a telegraph, to be reconstructed by an "appropriate receiving instrument."

These kooks see human minds, and even biological processes, as nothing more than information patterns that can be uploaded into computers. They've probably trained their own minds to operate in such a manner, yet, the history of human creativity demonstrates that they are wrong. Johannes Kepler's discovery of universal gravitation, or Friedrich Schiller's composition of his "Ode to Joy," and Beethoven's subsequent setting of that poem to music, could not have been produced by even the most sophisticated computers, and certainly not by monkeys, because such discoveries can only be made by human beings acting in the creative image of God.

It is that principle that the Russell/Wells-spawned Information Age aims to wipe out.