

Re: LETTER TO THE EDITOR - Ray Kurzweil (May 14 issue)

Dear Editors:

Thank you for leaving enough white space on page 60 to insert another check box for the most appropriate appellation for Ray Kurzweil, which for me is: "The 'Wrongest' Futurist on Earth." (See <http://www.phrenicea.com/FORTUNEKurzweil.htm> ;-)

With all do respect to Kurzweil's brilliance and technical accomplishments, I'm afraid his crystal ball may be as cloudy as his vanity mirror. The computer wizard frankly is out of his league when it comes to the biological sciences. Pure genius oftentimes begets hubris - with misguided actions leading to unfortunate consequences.

His is to attempt to extrapolate the advancement of man-made information technology to the natural world. Never mind that Mother Nature has millions of years of evolutionary experience on us. Our naive attempts to tamper with her equilibrium will surely have unintended consequences. We've already seen the damage we can propagate in our macroenvironment - global warming, species extinction, pollution, etc. Messing with our body's microenvironment - our cells and DNA - is downright scary, as most of the intracellular machinations manifested as "life" are still a mystery.

Kurzweil's unrealistic timeframe for unveiling these will lead to disaster. You have to give him credit though; he practices what he preaches. Unfortunately he may end up the first victim of this tampering with his daily consumption of hundreds of pills and untested nostrums. Perhaps this is the only way an iconoclast with the intellect of Kurzweil can deal with the reality of inheriting a less than robust genome. But if our technological "progress" has taught us anything, it is that with bigger technology comes bigger problems. (Let's hope Kurzweil's desperation doesn't get the better of him - and us.)

In the end though Kurzweil *may* be right - if only because it appears that academic achievement among the young, particularly in math and science, seems to be inversely proportional to Moore's law dictating the capacity of their computers.

Sincerely,

John Herman
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