

ANSWERING MY CRITICS

Prof. Dr. Hugo de Garis

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Abstract

March 1st 2012 was the planet's first "Future Day", an idea conceived by Ben Goertzel. The idea was to "celebrate" the future. I have no objection to the idea of "reflecting" on the future, but the idea of "celebrating" it annoyed me, because we cannot be sure whether we should "fear" the future, so celebrating it seemed naïve and premature. So I started "flaming" (trolling?) on the kurzweilai site on this point. Quite a dialog sprang up between one of my critics, which I reproduce in this essay. I hope you find it interesting. It dealt with quite a range of topics, ranging from the overoptimistic naivete of the "singularitarian pollyannists", to the American Muddle Class, culture bashing, Globa, etc. It begins with the announcement of Future Day (which ironically I helped edit the text of, via Adam Ford, the organizer of the Australian Singularity Summits, and the Humanity Plus meetings.) I then hit back with my "I am so Sick of American Singularity Pollyannists" and then it started.

1. The Original "Future Day" Announcement

Future Day: a new global holiday March 1

February 29, 2012



[+]

Why are nearly all our holidays focused on celebrating the past, or the cyclical processes of nature? Why not celebrate the amazing future we are collectively creating?

That's the concept behind a new global holiday, [Future Day](#) (March 1), conceived by AI researcher Dr. Ben Goertzel.

[Future Day 2012 gatherings](#) are scheduled in more than a dozen cities, as well as in [Second Life](#).

“Celebrating and honoring the past and the cyclical processes of nature is a valuable thing,” says Goertzel. “But in these days of rapid technological acceleration, it is our future that needs more attention, not our past.

“My hope is that Future Day can serve as a tool for helping humanity focus its attention on figuring out what kind of future it wants, and striving to bring these visions to reality.

“The past is over; the present is fleeting; we live in the future.” — Ray Kurzweil re Future Day

“Ray Kurzweil predicts that technological paradigm shifts will become increasingly common, leading to ‘technological change so rapid and profound it represents a rupture in the fabric of human history,’” says Goertzel.

“Future Day is designed to center the impossible in the public mind once a year as a temptation too delicious to resist,” says Howard Bloom, author of *Global Brain*.

“If all matter in the universe is comprised of patterns, let’s redesign what doesn’t work and form new methods for approaching the future with fluidity,” says designer Natasha Vita-More, Chair, [Humanity+](#).

Future Day events so far

[Melbourne](#), 5:30 PM (1:30 AM EST) to 10:30 PM, moderated by Singularity Summit AU organizer Adam A. Ford and Australian ABC TV newscaster Josie Taylor, with Skype call-ins by Goertzel and Vita-More.

Hong Kong, 7PM (6 AM EST), [informal event](#) in Hong Kong organized by Goertzel.

Terasem Island, Second Life, 6 PM EST: a [public event](#), where authors Howard Bloom and Martine Rothblatt and blogger Giulio Prisco will join Goertzel, Vita-More, and Ford.

[FastForward Radio](#), 10 PM EST, guest PJ Manney, “Future Day — what is it? How should we celebrate it?”

Other events: Sydney, Berkeley, Edmonton, Houston, Sao Paulo, Salt Lake City, Brussels, Paris, Los Angeles, Palo Alto, Washington DC, Lehi (Utah), and Wroclaw (Poland). See <http://futureday.org/events> for updates.

Starting your own Future Day event? List it here: info@futureday.org

2. My Negative Reaction to the Idea of *Celebrating* the Future



[February 29, 2012](#)

by [Prof. Dr. Hugo de Garis](#)

I AM SO SICK OF AMERICAN SINGULARITY POLLYANNISTS

I wrote an essay recently “I am so sick of American singularity pollyannists” which expressed my growing disdain for American naïveté concerning the rise of the artelect (<http://profhugodegaris.wordpress.com/essays/>). Why should the future be celebrated? Perhaps it should be feared? Imagine a time traveler going back to the “gay 90s” (i.e. the 1890s in Europe, a time of great optimism, with scientific and medical prowess rising, and after a near century of European peace) and trying to educate them on the horrors of trench warfare that were to come two decades later in WW1. The time traveler would not have been believed. My questionnaires that I have been using for the past 6 months show that a substantial proportion of the general public are horrified at the idea of machines/cyborgs becoming the dominant species, and suspect there is a very real probability that there will be a great “species dominance” (Artelect) war. killing billions. I’m impatient for China to rise, to democratize and bring its old world maturity to the dominant issue of our century – “Should we build artelects?” How can I take seriously a new world parvenu culture (i.e. the US) that so naively thinks that the future will necessarily be all rosy. Old world cultures know better, based on longer experience. White Americans haven’t had a major war on their territory for a century and a half, and even then only roughly half a million were killed in the US civil war. At the same time, the Taiping Rebellion in China killed 20 million. America’s lack of sophistication and historical sense, makes it unsuitable to be the intellectual leader of the planet’s dominant political issue of the 21st century. My god, literally half of Americans think the earth is less than 10,000 years old, so it doesn’t surprise me that many of them think the future will be just wonderful.

A Future Day should be to “reflect” on the future, considering both the possible good and the possible bad, and not be celebrated. Should the “gay 90s” Europeans have celebrated a future WW1?

Prof. Dr. Hugo de Garis (profhugodegaris@yahoo.com)

3. The Critiques and my Replies

[February 29, 2012](#)

by [Spikosauropod](#)

To Dr. de Garis:

First of all, PhD's who refer to themselves as "Doctor" are universally reviled. I recommend that you drop the affectation.

Just your use of the term "SINGULARITY POLLYANNISTS" is proof enough that you are completely off the mark on singularitarian interest in accelerating technology. Singularitarians are not people who "believe" the future will be a cybernetic utopia. Actually, a lot of us are scared to death. One of the reasons why we study the subject and try to draw attention to it is so that people will be aware of the issue.

For years, before I discovered Vernor Vinge's seminal work, I thought I was the only one who had thought of the Singularity. Back then, I called it "Threshold Technology" and discussed it endlessly in my personal journals. I had never heard of the term "intelligence explosion" coined earlier by I. J. Good. It actually frightened me that humanity was rushing headlong into something that, for some reason, no one but me was able to perceive. I can't describe my elation at finding out that I was not alone in my hopes, but even more so my fears. I was delighted to realize that there were people who had ideas as to how we could navigate our way to and through this imponderable obstacle.

Are you another person who hates Christmas? Honestly, your description of the future is lacking only in one or two sentences to place you firmly inside a Charles Dickens novel. What is wrong with looking to the future in a positive light? Are pessimists more likely to create a better world?



o [February 29, 2012](#)
by [Prof. Dr. Hugo de Garis](#)

THE AMERICAN MUDDLE CLASS

Dear Anonymous,

I'm glad to hear that there are some American singularitarians who are worried about the future. I wish there were more and that they would speak out more to counter the overweeningly naive optimism of US organizations such as kurzweilai, Humanity+, Transhumanists etc.

Re my Dr in front of my name and your "First of all, PhD's who refer to themselves as "Doctor" are universally reviled. I recommend that you drop the affectation." I'm probably mostly European in my (lived in) 7 country mentality (Australia, England, Holland, Belgium, Japan, US, China). I didn't like living in Australia nor America because of the lack of sophistication and the lack of a strong intellectual upper class tradition of those two countries. The US is a colony, to which Europe's intellectual upper class did not migrate. (What would they have done in a wilderness? Work with their hands?) With few European upper class intellectual migrants, by default, the British

colonies became English speaking lower class cultures with strong pressures to conform to middle class values. In Europe, where I lived for 30 years, the intellectual upper class have real teeth (en France, les intellectuels sont les dieux) and look down on everyone, because they feel superior to everyone, and of course they are. They are the sages of their cultures. They dominate and lead their cultures. They browbeat the middle class, and the middle class is afraid of them, of being intellectually crushed by superior intellect and knowledge. Im very happy to be a sage and piss on American middle class mindlessness (e.g. 80% religious, 50% believe the earth is less than 10,000 years old, anti Darwin, still nationalistic, corporate bought up politicians, ad infested TV, death penalty, no national health service, lax gun laws, etc.)

What I'm doing here is "culture bashing" which I consider increasingly to be an important prerequisite for globification (i.e. the establishment of "Globo" – a world state – hence no more wars, no arms trade (the US is the world's biggest arms trader), no ignorance, no poverty). Culture bashing (so opposite to American PC values) is needed to "shake nationalist monos (mono cultured people) out of their complacency" to help form a homogenized global culture. I am a globist.

I see the US as a middle class colony, with all its mindlessness and lack of old world intellectuality and sophistication. It deserves to be culture bashed. It has way too much PC (an attitude I despise, due to its intellectual dishonesty). The "hard reality" scientists should speak out more in the US by proclaiming such things as "blacks (av.IQ 70) are dumber than whites (av. IQ 100), whites are dumber than yellows (av. IQ 105), the geni are males (with their 10% greater IQ variance over females), the Zionist Jews are Palestinian land robbing colonizers, US politicians are corporate puppets, etc."

There is too much middle class mindlessness in the US. That country's sages should fight sageism (anti-intellectualism) and speak out, slapping down the stupidities of the American middle class. "Sages of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your brains"

When optimism and realism clash, I prefer realism. Im not a child. I want to know the reality, warts and all. The "singularity pollyannists" need to be counter balanced by the singularity "jeremaists." Intellectuality demands it, and Im saying that as a sage (which by definition is someone in the top 1% IQ wise, has a PhD, has ideas, and writes books about them. Sages are "1 in a 1000" and have a duty to slap down middle class mindlessness that the US is full of.

Whew, got that off my chest,

Cheers, Prof. Dr. Hugo de Garis (sage)

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- [March 1, 2012](#)
- **by Giulio Prisco**

I am European and fully qualified for membership in the “intellectual upper class,” but I can tell you that many self-styled European “intellectuals” are complete idiots in love with the sound of their own voice and fully immersed in their self-delusion of importance.

In my native language we have a nice expression on them: the cock on the rubbish (imagine a cock standing on a big pile of rubbish and singing). I gave up my intellectual class membership card long ago.



[February 29, 2012](#)

by Giulio Prisco

@Hugo re Artilects – I envision a co-evolution of organic and non-organic intelligence, with humans and machines hybridizing and merging until it will be impossible to tell which is which. So I am not worried about “them” exterminating “us”, because they will be us and we will be them. I hope artilects will find more interesting things to do than killing old-style humans 1.0, like for example moving to space and explore the stars.



[February 29, 2012](#)

by [Prof. Dr. Hugo de Garis](#)

Dear Giulio,

I think you are stating a standard argument of the Cyborgists, i.e. that if all humans become cyborgs (and later artilects), there wont be any humans (Terrans and Cosmists) left over to wage an Artilect War. I see the fault with this argument, is that the growing presence of cyborgs everywhere, will only hasten the alienation and paranoia of the Terrans, and motivate them all the more to “first strike” against the Cosmists/Cyborgists/cyborgs/artilects before it is too late for them (i.e. before they become too stupid to be able to fight back effectively). My questionnaires show that this is a widely held view. I see Cyborgism not as the solution to the prospect of a gigadeath Artilect War, but as part of the problem. I dont deny the likelihood of billions of cyborgs, but their “cyborgian divergence” i.e. their many types and directions will cause traditional “humanness” to get lost and many Terrans will simply not tolerate that and will go to war to preserve human species dominance. The pollyannists dont seem to consider this very real possibility, and hence do not merit my respect. The pollyannist cyborgist view (that an Artilect War can be avoided by having everyone become cyborgs) I see as wishful thinking, rather like the idea of life after death.

Cheers, Hugo de Garis

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▪ [February 29, 2012](#)

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by **Giulio Prisco**

Dear Hugo, unfortunately I see “the alienation and paranoia of the Terrans, which motivates them all the more to “first strike” against the Cosmists/Cyborgists/cyborgs/artilects before it is too late for them,” as a plausible scenario. History has many examples of murderous mass hysteria against minorities that don’t harm anyone and only want to be left in peace and do their own thing.

I hope sanity will prevail. If not, everyone will be forced to choose a side. If it comes to that, I will certainly side with the Cosmists, because that is the direction of our evolution.

An analogy that I use often is: children become adults, and at some moment a child ceases to exist and an adult takes his place. But this does not mean that the adult has killed the child, it just means that the child has grown up, as children are supposed to do. We (humans1.0) are children, waiting to become adult. Of course, the transition can be painful, as we all remember.



▪ [February 29, 2012](#)

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by **[Prof. Dr. Hugo de Garis](#)**

Dear Guilio,

Privately Im a Cosmist. I think it would be a “cosmic tragedy” if humanity chooses to freeze the current state of evolution at the “puny human level” when there’s a whole universe to explore, but publicly Im Cosmist and Terran and Cyborgist, and try to raise the alarm on the “Species Dominance War (Artilect War)” that I see coming, and is a likelihood that my questionnaires also seem to confirm.

Sometimes I feel that the “singularity pollyannists” havent fully absorbed the ENORMITY of what is at stake in the species dominance debate - namely that THE RISE OF THE ARTELECT SPELLS THE END OF THE DOMINANCE OF THE HUMAN SPECIES. Let that sink in. Most people today, do not take it to heart. Its just an intellectual abstraction to them, too far into the future to be taken seriously, and to be thought hard about.

But, its only a few decades away, probably, so that means that if Im right about a gigadeath artilect war coming, then most young people reading this WILL BE KILLED IN THIS WAR.

THATS WHAT IM TALKING ABOUT

From the point of view of the Terrans, the Cosmists/Cyborgists are the very opposite of being harmless as you suggest. The Terrans see these groups as a PROFOUND THREAT, who will have the capacity to wipe out humanness, and humanity. When humans are threatened with their very survival, they usually lash out with murderous violence.

I see the Artilect War as history's most passionate, because there is so much at stake this time – not the survival of a country (e.g. when Stalin was fighting Hitler at Stalingrad) but the survival of a species, i.e. human beings. This Artilect War will be an extermination war, to wipe out the Cosmists/Cyborgists/cyborgs/artilects. I really dont want to see it. Im glad Im alive now and will die quietly in my bed (probably). I dont want to witness the gigadeath horrors that my grandson will see and be destroyed by. Shudder.

(not so) Cheers, Hugo de Garis

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▪ [March 1, 2012](#)

by Giulio Prisco

Well, Hugo, I have no doubts that the Terrans will see the Cosmists as a profound threat. For the same reason, fear of hatred of diversity, why the “moral majority” see immigrants, homosexuals, and radical liberals as profound threats. I can understand that, but the moral majority and the Terrans will have to give in.

Re “THE RISE OF THE ARTILECT SPELLS THE END OF THE DOMINANCE OF THE HUMAN SPECIES.” I disagree, this depends on how you define the “human species.” As I define it, the human species includes our AI and cyborg mind children, so the “end of human1.0 dominance” means no more to me than the dominance shift from a specific human culture (like the Roman empire) to a younger and more dynamic one.

Remember my analogy: children become adults, and at some moment a child ceases to exist and an adult takes his place. But this does not mean that the adult has killed the child, it just means that the child has grown up, as children are supposed to do.



▪ [March 1, 2012](#)
by [Prof. Dr. Hugo de Garis](#)

Dear Giulio,

I wrote another essay a while back called “There are no cyborgs” (<http://profhugodegaris.wordpress.com/essays>) which made the point that a single grain of sand that has been nanotechd to manipulate one bit per atom and switching in femtoseconds, can outperform the equivalent bit flipping capacity of the human brain by a factor of a quintillion (a million trillion). So very quickly cyborgs become artelects. The human component is quickly drowned by the artelectual component. I am cynical of organizations such as the Transhumanists and the Humanity Plussers, because they don’t seem to appreciate the above point. To the Transhumanists I could say “A transhumanist is to an artelect as a transbacterium is to a human” and to the Humanity Plussers I could say “Humanity wont be augmented, it will be drowned.”

Cheers, Hugo
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▪ [March 1, 2012](#)
by **Giulio Prisco**

Dear Hugo, if cyborgs become artelects, then I look forward to becoming a cyborg! I doubt this will happen “very quickly” though, because cyborgization, with the first brain implants and AI grafts, will probably happen much before the development of artifact-class processing substrates. It will be a relatively slow process, with the possibility of a gradual adaptation. We will be able to choose what to keep and what to discard, and I am sure most will choose to keep their basic human empathy and compassion, and so will treat old-style humans kindly.

Eventually, the human component may be “drowned” by more evolved components, but I am not shedding any tears or losing any sleep. My child self was mostly drowned when my adult self emerged, but I still feel like the continuation of that child. We may well lose parts of our current “humanness” — but is that really a big deal? I wouldn’t mind losing the part of our humanness that created Auschwitz, for example.