

**Review of Steve Fuller, *Humanity 2.0: What it Means to be Human Past, Present and Future***  
**David C. Winyard, Virginia Tech**

Steve Fuller. *Humanity 2.0: What it Means to be Human Past, Present and Future*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, Pp. 1, 265.

In his introduction to *Humanity 2.0*, Steve Fuller writes: "I have spent much of the past decade engaged in redefining the foundations of the social sciences in the face of a pincer attack from biology and theology" (3). The warfare analogy seems apt, for Fuller has made a habit of stepping into the no-man's land between these rivals to seek peace. Unfortunately, his courage has exceeded his persuasiveness, for he continues to take fire from both sides.

The new fighting front is transhumanism, the application of technology to *enhance* human capabilities. Its advocates foresee an end to biological evolution — the old battleground — as an anthropogenic alternative takes over, with convergent technologies (CT) yielding god-like power to upgrade, alter, and even eliminate our physical bodies. Transhumanism's pace, scope, and ethics raise anew old struggles over human nature and its place in the universe. Theology and then biology have offered their definitions of humanity, but transhumanism has raised new questions and rekindled simmering animosities. Fuller's proposed peace treaty seeks to balance Christianity's investments in science with biology's need for religious motivations and heuristics. How does this deal appear to the combatants?

For Christians, Fuller reviews a bewildering diversity of views regarding personhood: from classic Greek philosophy, through traditional Roman Catholic, Eastern, and Reformed Christianity, to the latest thoughts from post-secular *Radical Orthodoxy* (98). He affirms the important concept of man made in the image and likeness of God — the doctrine of the *imago Dei* — and the uncertain meaning and means of its restoration after the fall. Indeed, the central issue of Christian theology is sin, with its consequences (e.g., death) and how to deal with them. Unfortunately, Fuller never deals with sin as the root cause of humanity's problems. Instead, he offers to (re)sanctify science through two *Theology 2.0* candidates from Joseph Priestley and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, described as "heretical scientist-theologians." (195). Exploitation of questionable theology for secular, even hostile, purposes is unlikely to satisfy the Church. As Jack Swearingen notes, "For the Christian, such utilitarian uses of religious motives are not only empty, but they are tantamount to suggesting that it is acceptable to believe a lie as long as the belief produces desirable results" (239).

So, are scientists — biologists in particular — open to *Theology 2.0* help? I think not. In his defense of teaching intelligent design (ID) in public schools, Fuller pointed to multiple historical examples of religious viewpoints and motives benefiting science, but to no avail (Fuller 2005, 7-9). Evolutionary biologists and their philosophical allies held firm in opposing any intrusion of religion in experimental science. Fuller notes that

biology's aversion to ID persists even though "designtalk" has "grown stronger as the discipline has migrated from the field site to the molecular laboratory and computer simulator" (Fuller 2011, 191). Fuller refers to this obstinacy as *Neo-Darwinian apologetics*, a kind of fundamentalist belief system that sacrifices the coherence of science for the sake of maintaining independence from theistic thought (164-173). This strongly contrasts with increasingly open discussions of metaphysics and the supernatural in general philosophy (e.g., Plantinga, 1967).

So, does *Humanity 2.0* offer anything new? I think so, especially in its powerful critiques of the embedded theology of CT policy, its underlying aspiration to enhance evolution, and the incomplete ethics of John Harris' *Enhancing Evolution*. Fuller holds nothing back, reaching a climax in his observation that Harris lacks a "religious sensibility" regarding transhumanism (159). This is a serious handicap, for transhumanism's rhetoric is saturated with terms with religious meaning: life, death, immortality, resurrection, spirit, perfection, transcendence, eschatology, millennium, progress, faith, hope, and love, to name just a few. Transhumanism and its goals cannot be effectively approached without religion, Christianity in particular.

On this point, Sabrina Weiss' excellent review of *Humanity 2.0* goes astray. She questions Fuller's "presumption of Abrahamic theology as the best tradition to use" (2012). Weiss seems to overlook the well-documented links between modern science and Christian thought. If science is off course, is it not wise to look first for a causative error in Christian theology?

The key figure in Fuller's account is Franciscan John Duns Scotus (1266–1308), whose "theological innovations" were identified by *Radical Orthodoxy* as "the founding moment of modernity, a version of Original Sin in secular time" (98). Thomas Aquinas and his followers (Thomists) saw man's characteristics in the *imago Dei* as *analogous* to God's, what is known as an *equivocal* version of *divine predication*. But Scotus argued for a stronger *univocal* relationship (79-81), thus opening the door to mankind sharing in God's divine attributes, including those regarded as incommunicable: omnibenevolence, omniscience and omnipotence.

Transhumanists aspire to these qualities, but their approach is one of self-reliance, not faith in God. Unfortunately, Fuller stops short of any critique of transhumanism as idolatry, but perhaps that is best left to professional theologians.

*Humanity 2.0* documents the theological insights — and heresies — that have shaped science and technology for centuries, but which continue to be ignored by scientific fundamentalism. Fuller's proposed peace treaty is inadequate, but it is a serious contribution to resolving the science-theology dualism at the heart of modernity's problems (3).<sup>1</sup> Whatever faults it has can be forgiven, for serious consideration of religion is critical to dealing effectively with run-amuck science and its nascent offspring:

---

<sup>1</sup> Fuller refers to such dualisms as "a bipolar disorder that runs deep and long through Western culture."

Winyard, David C. 2013. "Review of Steve Fuller, *Humanity 2.0: What it Means to be Human Past, Present and Future.*" *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 2 (2): 16-18.

transhumanism. Instead of filling the gaps himself, perhaps Fuller (and other scholars) could engage directly with interested theologians?<sup>2</sup>

**Contact details: [winyard.david@gmail.com](mailto:winyard.david@gmail.com)**

## References

- Cole-Turner, Ronald, ed. 2011. *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement*. Washington: Georgetown University Press.
- Fuller, Steve William. 2005. "Rebuttal of Dover Expert Reports." Accessed November 12, 2012. <http://ncse.com/creationism/legal/expert-witnesses>.
- Fuller, Steve. 2011. *Humanity 2.0: What it Means to be Human Past, Present and Future*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harris, John. 2007. *Enhancing Evolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Plantinga, Alvin. 1967. *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Swearengen, Jack Clayton. 2007. *Beyond Paradise: Technology and the Kingdom of God*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers.
- Weiss, Sabrina. 2012. "Review of *Humanity 2.0* by Steve Fuller." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective*. <http://wp.me/p1Bfg0-9M>

---

<sup>2</sup> A place to begin: Ronald Cole-Turner, ed. *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2011).