keep Washington happy. The people in Taiwan also find it inconceivable that China would actually attack their own people on Taiwan, unless provoked in the extreme.

The current leadership in Washington seems deadset on confrontation with China. Their zero-sum approach does not leave room for compromise or collaboration. I worry a lot but have no way of predicting when and if the U.S. will back off. Hopefully, conferences of this kind by the Schiller Institute and others will convince the American public that our government needs to change the course leading to disaster.

Thank you very much.

Mike Robinson

The Dehumanizing Metasphere

This is the edited transcript of the presentation by Mike Robinson to Panel 4, "Classical Culture and the Dialogue of Civilizations," of the Schiller Institute's June 18–19 Conference, "There Can Be No Peace Without the Bankruptcy Reorganization of the Dying Trans-Atlantic Financial System." Mr. Robinson is the Editor of UK Column. *Graphics used in the presentation have been omitted.*

Schiller Institute

Mike Robinson

I'd like to begin by saying thank you to the Schiller Institute for hosting this conference. I think what you're going to find me presenting in a second is going to be quite dark, and hopefully this conference to a large degree is an antidote to that.

I've been asked to say a few words about the direction that the tech billionaires are wanting to take humanity in, and the effect that that's having on the minds of people. As I say, that vision that they have seems to be a quite dark one. First of all, they don't see any particular reason to have humans in it at all, in fact. There is an article from *Wired* magazine, a tech magazine, headlined, "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us," because robotics, genetic engineering, and nanotech are threatening to make humans an endangered species. That may well be the case, as we'll see in a second, because what is behind this type of headline is quite a pessimistic view of the future.

Just before we get on to that view, I'll just make the point here, that increasingly we're seeing headlines such as, "Google Engineer Says LaMDA AI System May Have Its Own Feelings" (*ABC News*). So, at the same time that we are seeing humanity being degraded, we're seeing artificial intelligence being upgraded, or at least we're being told that it's developing feelings, it's becoming almost human. Or we're seeing on the one hand, humanity being taken down, and on the other hand, technology being raised up.

At what point are we going to be the same thing? Well, that is the key point, because according to Elon Musk at least,

> A merger of biological intelligence and machine intelligence will be necessary for humans to stay economically valuable.

With that in mind, he has a nice little company going called Neuralink. This is what they say they are developing:

> Neuralink is building a fully integrated brain-computer interface (BCI) system. Sometimes you'll see this called a brain-computer interface. Either way, BMIs [brain-machine interfaces] are technologies that enable a computer or other digital device to communicate directly with the brain, [and vice versa]….

Why would they be doing that? Because they want to "elevate the human condition."

This is a website called *Humanity+* and it's all about "elevating the human condition," and "advancing science and technology for a better future," because the way to elevate the human isn't through Classical culture. No, it's through connecting with technology and enhancing and augmenting the human species. They

have a nice logo, an "h" with a "+" on it. They hold summits, and they "envision a humane humanity." Well, let's see how humane that is in a second. They say,

> Transhumanism is a way of thinking about the future that is based on the premise that the human species in its current form does not represent the end of our development, but rather a comparatively early phase.

So they talk about,

> Posthumans could be completely synthetic artificial intelligences, or they could be enhanced uploads, [we'll talk about that in a second] or they could be the result of making many smaller but cumulatively profound augmentations to a biological human. The latter alternative would probably require either the redesign of the human organism using advanced nanotechnology or its radical enhancement using some combination of technologies such as genetic engineering, psychopharmacology, anti-aging therapies, neural interfaces, advanced information management tools, memory enhancing drugs, wearable computers, and cognitive techniques.

There are people urging caution on this; in fact, beyond caution. This is Francis Fukuyama from Stanford University calling transhumanism "one of the most dangerous ideas in the world." We'll see how dangerous it is in one second.

First of all, virtual reality (VR)—because this is a step along the way. Most people have seen the goggles people wear as they're exploring virtual worlds, but at this point in time, virtual worlds are still quite artificial looking; they're not that real. Although they are apparently real enough to have a real physiological effect almost like drugs. So for people that have been campaigning on the computer game issue, it gets much worse with this. So here's the quote from an article, "Virtual Reality Can Leave You with an Existential Hangover," by Rebecca Searles in *Atlantic* magazine:

> When the headset comes off, though, it's back to a dreary reality. And lately [Tobias] van Schneider has been noticing some unsettling effects. "What stays is a strange feeling of sadness and disappointment when participating in the real world, usually on the same day," he wrote on the blogging platform *Medium* last month. "The sky seems less colorful and it just feels like I'm missing the 'magic' (for lack of a better word)…. I feel deeply disturbed and often end up just sitting there, staring at a wall."

This is what's being done to the minds of people that are using this technology. We've got to remember, that according to this article,

> VR's very purpose is to make it difficult to distinguish simulation from reality.

We know that VR exists in the form that we've all seen in the media and so on, but where are the real technologists wanting to take it? Let's have a look at this from 2008. This is a draft Sentient World Simulation Concept Paper from 2006. It was for comments only, but let's just have a look at what they were saying:

> Modeling and simulation quickly become out of sync with new events, the emergence of new forces, and newly proposed theories. The goal of the Sentient World Simulation (SWS) is to build a synthetic mirror of the real world, with automated continuous calibration with respect to current real-world information, such as major events, opinion polls, demographic statistics, economic reports, and shifts in trends.
>
> The ability of a synthetic model of the real world to sense, adapt, and react to real events distinguishes SWS from the traditional approach of constructing a simulation to illustrate a phenomenon. Behaviors emerge in the SWS mirror world and are observed much as they are observed in the real world. Basing the synthetic world in theory in a manner that is unbiased to specific outcomes offers a unique environment in which to develop, test, and prove new perspectives.

They were talking about building a parallel universe in Silicon, and to have bulk data collection in order to make predictions perhaps about the future. Now, that was only for consultation, that particular paper, but IBM is progressing very nicely with it, thank you very much. It's called the "digital twin" program:

> A digital twin is a virtual representation of an object or system that spans its life cycle, is updated from real-time data, and uses simulation machine learning and reasoning to help decision-making.
>
> Although simulations and digital twins both utilize digital models to replicate a system's various processes, a digital twin is actually a virtual environment, which makes it considerably richer for study.
>
> The difference between digital twin [and] simulation is largely a matter of scale: While a simulation typically studies one particular process, a digital twin can itself run any number of useful simulations in order to study multiple processes.

It doesn't just apply to non-living systems, either. Here is another headline: "Human Digital Twins: Creating New Value Beyond the Constraints of the Real World" (from NTT R&D).

So, modeling human interactions and so on to a massive degree.

Another aspect we've already mentioned of this is the idea of augmentation. There is the British tech company, AI-Tech UK, and one of the things they do is, they make AI sex dolls, and of course they're made of plastic mainly. And if we look at their faces, well they're not very human, are they?

But actually, when we start looking at what's going on in celebrity culture, maybe we can see some parallels. Because, increasingly, celebrities are turning their faces into plastic. One particular so-called "celebrity," Katie Price, showcased her dramatic transformation after returning from her third facelift in Turkey this week, reported the *Sun* some time ago. But what we seem to be seeing in celebrity culture is the attempt to sexualize plastic faces, which brings us back to the idea of AI and robotics and so on. This is robotics being used in a particularly dark way.

But it doesn't end there, because we have something called "body hacking." One article describes it in its headline, "Body Hacking: Futuristic, Creepy and Totally Unregulated." A *Guardian* article, headlined, "Body-hackers: the people who turn themselves into cyborgs," runs a photograph of an Australian performer who has been growing a human ear on his forearm for the last nine years. The concept, the idea of becoming a cyborg, is absolutely what Elon Musk was talking about.

What kinds of things are body-hackers doing? Well, they're turning themselves into elves, with, in one case, £25,000 of plastic surgery to result in long, pointed ears.

They're turning themselves, this particular transhumanist—well, I'm not quite sure what this particular person has turned themselves into, but "hundreds of body modifications to evolve with technology and time," is a headline description of the process.

It starts getting really dark at this point. A particularly dark example is Michel Faro do Prado, described in this headline: "Extreme modification addict 'Human Satan' has ears amputated to mark end of facemasks" (*Mirror*, April 13, 2022). This is what they turn themselves into. This is not as rare as people might think. This seems an extremely extreme version of body augmentation, but there are people walking around my city with face tattoos like this, with pointy ears, and with the eyeballs tattooed just like this. That is the way it is being implemented within society.

But what about the technologists? They would like to see us turn into "silicon-based organisms rather than carbon-based organisms." This might seem science fiction, far-fetched, but in fact, the idea of silicon-carbon bonds is already a reality. Under this headline in *Chemistry World*, "Engineered Enzyme First to Forge Carbon-Silicon Bond," We find this:

> Scientists in the U.S. have engineered proteins that can catalyze carbon-silicon bond-forming reactions—processes never before seen in nature. Such an enzyme could one day offer researchers to make silicon-based hybrid organisms typically reserved for the realms of science fiction.

I'm not saying by any means that this particular research was transhumanist, or being driven by a transhumanist agenda. But, certainly, this is something that transhumanists are aiming for.

But it gets darker again, because we start using terms which absolutely degrade the human body, for example. Here's an article headline from *Xconomy*, Feb. 26, 2014: "With Suitable" (which is a company), "Park Your Meat Body at Home and Beam" (that's a product) "in to Work."

This concept of the *meat body* I find quite offensive, but let's have a look at this headline: "Uploading: what about the carbon-based version?" Let's take a

quote from the article:

> In this video, 'long about 48:00, Eliezer talks about uploading and about how it wouldn't be murder if his meat body were anesthetized before the upload and killed without regaining consciousness.

Now, "uploading" is this concept of taking your human consciousness, uploading it to a computer system, where it will continue to exist in a virtual world. But in this case, because the idea of his physical form has been degraded to the idea of a "meat body," then this person has no problem with being anesthetized and killed once that upload is complete. This drew parallels for me with this very famous film, *Logan's Run*. I'm sure most people have seen that, and will see what I'm getting at.

Let's have a look at this, then, because virtual worlds are going to need laws, just like the real world, because we're creating a mirror of the real world, and so laws will be required there. So, we're starting to see headlines like this: "Woman's Avatar" (the character she operates in the virtual world) "Raped Within an Hour of Signing into the Metaverse." (*Metro 50*, May 31, 2022)

We've got other headlines: "The Metaverse Is Not Designed for Women," and "Metaverse: Another Cesspool of Toxic Content."

This is very key, because if we look at the UK's legislative agenda for this current Parliament, we have a bill going through Parliament called the Online Safety Bill, so that what is unacceptable offline will also be unacceptable online:

> Duty of Care: In line with the government's response to the Online Harms White Paper, all companies in scope will have a duty of care towards their users so that what is unacceptable offline will also be unacceptable online.

That's really what I've got for you at the moment. It's just a slight introduction to this topic. Really what I'm saying is that the tech billionaires—the likes of Elon Musk and Peter Thiel, and so on—Facebook with their rebranding themselves Meta as they develop the metaverse, are really attacking human culture and the human mind. This is where they would like to see humanity go. I think perhaps the people who are taking part in this conference have a better vision for where humanity may go in the future.

Panel 4 Discussion

This is the edited transcript of the Discussion Session immediately following Panel 4, "Classical Culture and the Dialogue of Civilizations," of the Schiller Institute's June 18–19 Conference, "There Can Be No Peace Without the Bankruptcy Reorganization of the Dying Trans-Atlantic Financial System." Participating in the discussion were Dennis Speed (moderator), Helga Zepp-LaRouche, Mike Robinson, Jacques Cheminade, Dr. Zaher Wahab, Diane Sare, and Prof. Felipe Maruf Quintas. Dr. George Koo was unable to participate in the discussion. Subheads have been added.

Comments on Panel Presentations

Dennis Speed: We're now going to bring up panelists onscreen and also some additional people for discussion. Helga, do you have any response to anything that's been said so far?

Helga Zepp-LaRouche: I must say I was very moved by what Professor Wahab and also what Dr. Professor Koo were saying, and if you compare the seriousness of the entire tone of the conference today and yesterday, both in terms of worry where this all may go, in terms of nuclear war, but also the destructive power which has ravaged the world, such as in Afghanistan; and also Dr. Professor Koo is worried that something similar to Ukraine is on the horizon—something which could happen in Taiwan. I hope a lot of people will help us to share these incredibly important words, because humanity has never been so in danger for many reasons.

Mike Robinson, what you said at the end of your presentation on "The Dehumanizing Metasphere," is equally shocking in a different way. And actually, I'd like to ask you a question. I came across a study a little while ago, which was a joint study between the British Defense Ministry and the German Bundeswehr. The study talks about similar things, like augmenting soldiers with artificial intelligence, and you are not even allowed to quote from the study if you don't have the permission of the authors. Do you see any interface be-