

## Are We Here to Re-Create Ourselves? (<https://mindmatters.ai/podcast/ep100>)

Robert J. Marks:

Are we here to recreate ourselves? That's the topic today on Mind Matters News.

Announcer:

Welcome to Mind Matters News where artificial and natural intelligence meet head-on. Here's your host, Robert J. Marks.

Robert J. Marks:

Greetings. Today we're going to talk about a book by Dr. Geoffrey Simmons. It's entitled, Are We Here to Recreate Ourselves? The Convergence of Design. Dr. Simmons is a fascinating guy. He's a retired medical doctor who has over 40 years of specialization in internal medicine. And he's written a number of books, both fiction and nonfiction. I just learned about one of his books, Common Sense and Disaster Preparedness. My wife, I told Dr. Simmons, is a big fan of the television reality show Preppers, and it sounds like they do a lot of disaster preparation there.

Robert J. Marks:

In nonfiction world, his book, Z-papers, has sold over 350,000 copies and was selected by number one, the Detective Book Club of the month, and number two, Reader's Digest. Dr. Simmons' nonfiction books include Billions of Missing Links that critiques gaps in evolutionary records. We'll put a link to Dr. Simmons' book and his list of books on the podcast notes. But his latest nonfiction book that we're here to talk about today asks the serious question, are we here to create ourselves? Dr. Simmons, welcome to Mind Matters News.

Geoffrey Simmons:

Yes. Thanks for having me.

Robert J. Marks:

When I first read the title of your book, I think I shared with you, I was a little skeptical, but I have to admit after reading your book, I really like it. I think that it's very informative. It has details. It has lots of references to external material, and I would recommend it to anybody that would like to read it. It's called, Are We Here to Recreate Ourselves? The Convergence of Designs. So let's start out with the basic premise. What's the main premise of your book, are we here to recreate ourselves?

Geoffrey Simmons:

And indeed, I think we are. I've been writing books on intelligent design and I have three international blogs as well for about 10, maybe 14 years, thereabouts. And I've been writing about convergence of designs in people, in humans and other biological entities. And it never occurred to me back then that actually, I think we are doing that now and have been for a long time in the making of our, or re-making ourselves. I find that, look, if I don't mind me diverting to intelligent design for a moment, just to set the

pattern here, is in intelligent design, we see design for sure. We see purpose, we see foresight, and we see engineering. And we see the different designs converge to form a human being.

Geoffrey Simmons:

For instance, I talk about cardiovascular, the heart and the circulation, and that's one design that's going on. Actually one could break that down even further. But it converges into the design of the brain and the nerves and they combine in part to form a human being. And then you have the kidney function and you have the immunology and you have the musculoskeletal. And you have integument, which is skin. All these patterns, or these designs, converge in the fetus to form a human being. And it's very interesting, for me at least, to follow this convergence. I like to read science fiction. I write science fiction. I like to read a lot of science itself and it started to dawn on me, and it's really sort of a no-brainer, I think, that there's a pattern of us converging designs where we're going to make humanoids and robots and to recreate ourselves.

Geoffrey Simmons:

And so, that's kind of where the book is coming and going. The other thing is, I delve into purpose. If something is designed like a human being or any animal, is there a purpose to this? I mean, is there a reason? We don't design things technologically in our modern world without a purpose. And so, if we're designed, one has to ask, I think is a purpose and a lot of philosophers and a lot of other folks have dealt with the purpose of human beings. Pursue happiness, help others, glorify God, raise a family, stay healthy, dominion of the animals. But we see a definite pattern of growth. We see a pattern of a way of birth. We see a pattern of shelf life, human shelf life, and a definite way of changing through life. There's this clear-cut patterns, this clear-cut design, and it's all convergence of designs. Your eyes were designed to converge in a sense with your ears, with your thinking, with your mouth, with your activity. So, we're just a collection of, I think, converging designs. That's the long answer to your question.

Robert J. Marks:

I had a grandfather who had a third grade education who told me once, there's really nothing that people have done in terms of invention and stuff that hasn't been done by nature. Yet, we spent a lot of time copying nature in the things that we do. So, when I first looked at your book, let me have a confession. Are we here to recreate ourselves? Ray Kurzweil wrote a book called, *The Singularity is Near*. And in there, he makes the supposition that we... Have you read the book?

Geoffrey Simmons:

It's been a while, but I've read it. And I've read other things by him.

Robert J. Marks:

I had a hard time getting through it because of all the hyperbolic assumptions that he made. But his premise, one of his premises is, is that evolution happens and we've evolved to the point where we can't evolve anymore. So therefore, we have to create artificial intelligence as the next step of human evolution. And that's going to take over, that's going to augment us and do other things of that sort. So, that's a distinct contrast to your book and what you've written. So with that, why did you write the book?

Geoffrey Simmons:

Well, just that. First off, I love writing, so that's for a start. It's a huge hobby of mine. I'm not a golfer or a tennis player. And so, I love to write. A lot of my friends are writers. My knack is to look for things to write. And this just jumped off the page. It kind of fit because I wrote... The first book I wrote was what Darwin didn't know. And that went for about 11 printings. And that did so well, the publishers asked me to do another one. That was Billions of Missing Links. And so then I got into this area. They weren't as interested in this when I proposed it.

Geoffrey Simmons:

So, I went a different route with pursuing publication, but at the same time I had to pursue it. Nobody is saying it exactly the way I'm saying it. We're recreating exactly how we were created. And it also, I think, shows how intelligent design might happen. For lack of another word, how it might evolve, but we're not evolved. I mean, that's a huge argument in of itself. But as I've mentioned just moments ago, we are a convergence of designs, our whole body is. The way our legs work have to do with the design in our muscles and the design in our nerves and the design in our brain and what our eyes saw.

Geoffrey Simmons:

So, the same thing has to go into humanoids. And so, then one adds in, I like science fiction. So, I've always been interested in robots and humanoids and movies about the such. And if we're going to outer space for one, I can't help but think a human... I'm a biologist, I don't think humans are ever going to be able to do this. They're going to have to come up with some other technology that is not evident at this time. I don't think we can have a human go into suspended animation for 20, 30 years on a trial basis to see if it works and if they come out alive on the other end. Indeed, 20 years into it, everything will change so much that they'll probably just abandon the experiments if you wake up.

Geoffrey Simmons:

So, I can't see the experimentation happening. I just don't think we're going to go, unless we get the speed of light or wormholes or some technology that we can't think of. I can't see us ever having the time to get to something that's a million light years away, whereas robots, sure. And you don't have to put them asleep, you just turn them off, I guess. So, I think what we've done is, we're recreating ourselves and to go to outer space, why not look like us and why not sound like us? And why not do things like us if we're going to have them represent us? And so, I see that as an absolute thing to happen in the future.

Geoffrey Simmons:

But we also, as you know, you're an expert in this area of robots and computer science, but all the drudgery works. You can't get people to want to do those. All the nuclear power plants cleanup, especially the one in Japan that was destroyed. You have to have non-humans doing this. And sometimes it takes something that looks like and acts like a human. Sometimes it's just something rolling with arms. Or you can manage with a radio. The police need robots for the future with bombs and all kinds of accidents. Firemen can use robots. It goes on and on, the benefits of having robots. So, when do we need them to look like us? Well, maybe in medicine, which is my area of expertise. And I think counselors down the road... We're already doing this, talking into a box, but we're going to have humanoids, probably doing counseling with people.

Robert J. Marks:

You really think that counseling can be done well by artificial intelligence?

Geoffrey Simmons:

Yeah. It's going to be a challenge.

Robert J. Marks:

I'm skeptical.

Geoffrey Simmons:

Yeah. I'll tell you what they can do because they're already doing some of it. It's basically checking off of boxes and if you get so many boxes, seven out of eight or something, you're depressed. And then you make sure they're not suicidal. If they're not suicidal, you prescribe this medication. It's a recipe. But a lot of people who are needing psychiatric care, just need someone to talk to. And so they can fulfill that role probably. Can they understand some of our emotions? Probably not. I mean, they may be able to fake it, but I don't think they can understand our emotions. Can they show compassion? Well, I don't think so.

Robert J. Marks:

I don't think so either. I think they can fake compassion, but I don't think they can actually feel any sort of compassion. You mentioned robots and space. Come to think of it, we've had robots on Mars already. So, I think your prophecy is already been fulfilled, except you're thinking more about deep space sort of exploration.

Geoffrey Simmons:

Absolutely.

Robert J. Marks:

Something I learned in your book, Geoff, was about space brain. I'd never heard of that before as a deterrent for human flight. That's amazing. Tell us what space brain is.

Geoffrey Simmons:

Well, it's a new documented phenomenon. They can actually see changes on MRIs in astronauts where they've got pinged in some way with cosmic rays or the like. And I think if somebody's in outer space for extremely long periods of time and they only have the protection that we know of at this point, there's going... is likely brain damage and another reason not to go to deep, deep space.

Robert J. Marks:

So, space brain is due to cosmic rays. We're wonderfully designed according to Guillermo Gonzalez, that our atmosphere and our magnetic poles deflect these cosmic rays and they actually go around the earth instead of to the surface. And so we escape all of the negative things that happen from cosmic rays. But when you're in space, that doesn't happen and I think that's what you're saying, happens to the brain as we go in outer space, that is really fascinating.

Geoffrey Simmons:

I think we're designed to be here.

Robert J. Marks:

That's a good point. I'm wondering if in the spaceship they could actually put around a Faraday cage or something like that to block the cosmic rays. That might be something that has to be done in the future. I'm not sure. What patterns do you see heading toward the perfection of humanoids and AI?

Geoffrey Simmons:

Well, I think we're going to go down the path of science fiction movies in some regard. They're going to look like us at some point and they're going to sound a lot like us and they're going to fool a whole bunch of us. But I think, if you're on the phone or on some kind of speaker system, it's a little harder to know whether you're talking to a person or not. It will be, but Professor Turing talked about a test to see if you're talking to AI or a real person. I think they're going to get better than what he even envisioned. I don't know if they'll ever be able to pick up the timing on a joke. And I don't think they'll be able to understand some of our feelings. I mean, they may have some rote answers.

Geoffrey Simmons:

If you're face to face with a humanoid... I joke about it in my book and I joke about it in my talks, but if you carry a safety pin and say, ask them, "Can I stick your finger? I want to see if you bleed." And there's your test. Or, "Can I feel your skin and see what temperature you are?" So, there's a few ways that are biologically to get around this, but they're going to be good at fooling us. But I think there'll be plenty ways to tell for a long time, certainly while you and I are alive.

Robert J. Marks:

Excellent. You say in your book, and I think this dovetails with exactly what you say, but here's a quote from your book. It says, machines will never fall in love with each other. They will never say a prayer in earnest and they will never comprehend their own death. Now, never is for a long time. You believe that that's true, that they will never do that?

Geoffrey Simmons:

Well, they can talk about their own death. I suppose they can talk about running out of grease or oil and rust of some sort, but can they really get down to a conversation of what death means other than rote answers? I don't think so. Prayer, well, they can say a prayer.

Robert J. Marks:

And I noticed that you said they never say a prayer in earnest.

Geoffrey Simmons:

Right.

Robert J. Marks:

That's a nice phrase to put in there. I agree with you, Geoff. I don't think that artificial intelligence will ever be creative. I don't think it'll ever have sentience. I don't think it'll ever understand what it does. I think it can add the numbers three and four, but it won't understand what the numbers three and four are. And so, I totally agree with you on that. Another state from your book, you say some might argue that lower animals lack consciousness, with good reason. Could you elaborate on that? Do you think that animals are conscious? I guess first of all, it depends on your dictionary and how you define consciousness.

Geoffrey Simmons:

Yeah. I have a lot of information in my book, a couple of chapters probably. In past times, people thought of animals not thinking, not having a conscious, just kill them and eat them or shoot them or whatever you do with animals and not worry about them. They're just kind of soft, robotic individuals. But we now know a whole lot more, including bacteria. They may not have a consciousness but they do things that suggest thought. Consciousness to me, and according to other people I've read, is first of all, the theory of mind, which basically is being aware that the other person also is able to make decisions and think, and has feelings. The theory of mind is extremely important for thinking, also self-awareness itself, planning, imagining, playing and having a language. I mean, you can't do these things without a language.

Geoffrey Simmons:

So, animals are in the short end of the stick, but not... I don't know if you're familiar with the red spot test where they put a red spot on a certain kind of monkey and while he's kind of under anesthesia of some sort, doesn't know it happened.

Robert J. Marks:

You mention this in your book.

Geoffrey Simmons:

Yeah. And so, they have him stand in front of a mirror. If they go to wipe it off, it suggests they have self-awareness. And dolphins can do this kind of thing and elephants can do this kind of thing. And there's a whole host of things that we're finding that they can think. They've done a lot of incredible studies with dolphins, choosing the kind of food they want and how much and when. I go through all the different groups from bacteria all the way up through lizards and fish, where some of the tests have shown that there is some kind of thinking going on. To our degree? Probably not. But we don't know about dolphins yet. They may surprise us.

Robert J. Marks:

Great. Thank you. We've been talking with Dr. Geoffrey Simmons. He's a physician and the author of the new book, *Are We Here to Recreate Ourselves?* Buy it and read it, I recommend it. And that's all today. Until next time on Mind Matters News, be of good cheer.

Announcer:

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