

Geoffrey Simmons: Human Design and Robots (Bingecast)

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Austin Egbert:

Are we here to recreate ourselves? We've got another great interview for you today on Mind Matters news. This week, we revisit our conversation with Dr. Geoffrey Simmons about design, consciousness and the future of AI. Now 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 Re-Create 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 non-fiction. 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. In non-fiction 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 non-fiction 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 Re-Create Ourselves? The Convergence of Designs*. So let's start out with a basic premise. What's the main premise of your book? Are we here to re-create 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 remaking ourselves. I find that in - if you 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 that different designs converged to form a human being. 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.

Geoffrey Simmons:

But it converges into the design of the brain and the nerves and they combine in part and form a human being. And then you have the kidney function and you have the immunology and you have the

musculoskeletal and you have entanglement, which is skin. All these patterns or these designs converged in the fetus to form a human being. And it's very interesting for me at least to follow this convergence. And so 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 or we're going to make humanoids and robots and to recreate ourselves and so that's kind of where the book is coming and going.

Geoffrey Simmons:

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? Well, 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 there's 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 all 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 clear cut patterns, there's 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, of 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 spend 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 Re-Create 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 awhile, 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 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 in 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 of all, I love writing. So that's the first start. It's a huge hobby of mine, I'm not a golfer or tennis player. And so I love to write, a lot of my friends are writers and so my knack is to look for things to write. And this kind of just jumped off the page, it kind of fit because 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. So I went a different route with pursuing a publication but at the same time I had to pursue it, I mean, just nobody is saying it exactly the way I'm saying it.

Geoffrey Simmons:

We're recreating exactly how we were created and it also, I think, shows how intelligent design might happen. And for lack of another word, how it might evolve, but we're not evolved, I mean, that's a huge argument in and of itself. But as I 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 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, I'm a biologist, I don't think humans are ever going to be able to do this.

Geoffrey Simmons:

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 have changed so much that they'll probably just abandon the experiment, see if you wake up. And so I can't see the experimentation happening. I also, 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. 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?

Geoffrey Simmons:

And so I see that as an absolute thing to happen in the future 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 clean up, 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 are... 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 the 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. They're not suicidal, you prescribed 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. Well, 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? Wow, 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 in space, come to think of it we've had robots on Mars already so I think your prophecy has already been fulfilled except you're thinking more about deep space sort of exploration. Something I learned in your book Geoff was about space brain, I've 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 and 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 is in outer space for extremely long periods of time and they only have the protection that we know of at this point, this 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 Gonzales, 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. But they still, 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 mean, I joke about it in my book and I joke about it in my talks, but you carry a safety pin and say I 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? I mean, 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:

So 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 yeah, I totally agree with you on that. Another statement 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 books, 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. I mean, 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. So animals are in the short end of the stick but they think. 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 while he's kind of under anesthesia of some sort, doesn't know what happened.

Robert J. Marks:

You mention this in your book.

Geoffrey Simmons:

Yeah. And so they have him standing 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, and 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:

We have been talking about your book and I wanted to talk some more about it. You have one chapter, something called The Thinking Piece, and another one on The Memory Piece, and in there you trace from one cell organisms to humans. Can you kind of unpack that and give us some examples that highlight these capabilities?

Geoffrey Simmons:

I'd be glad to. As I mentioned a little earlier on the previous podcast that we do see animals and all kinds of organisms having some ability that smacks of thinking. And indeed you can expose bacteria to something scary, a light or anything like that, and then show that to their offspring (which are not offspring in the sense that we think of it) and they will go away from it. Now, is that thinking or what is that? Is it change in DNA? We see that kind of thing with animals too where it'll skip a generation, epigenetics is the title to that. And we see that with monkeys, we see that with a lot of problem solving - monkeys using tools, monkeys using mechanisms to get places like a stick for a cane or through water, getting across a creek. In other words, problem solving, coming up with something novel to solve a problem.

Geoffrey Simmons:

You see it with crows, there's a whole bunch of shows on National Geographic, I think, TV, where they show animals doing these things and crows can use sticks to get different items to eat. They can drop rocks in a beaker to make the water level come up so they can get whatever it is that's floating on the top of the water. It's something that they've never seen before so it's not as if this is just in their genes or something maybe they learnt long ago. They actually seem to think through what they're doing. And we do all that kind of stuff and more, and dolphins in particular and whales and animals of higher thinking capabilities, there's lots of data on things that they do for thinking.

Geoffrey Simmons:

I remember a study with dolphins choosing what food they wanted and how much they wanted and when they wanted it and it is as if they were thinking. We haven't learned to be able to talk to them yet, I mean, it'd be wonderful if we could, but I think they're very smart and they're right up there with the top five in the world and dogs, we all know our dogs think, goodness, my dogs think all the time. Most people who are dog owners would tell you that dogs have emotions and they think and they think through things. I think it's too obvious, there's a veterinarian who has written a book about dogs thinking. I think his name is Ernst, but I could be wrong. But be as it may, they study these animals with MRIs, functional MRIs, they train the dogs to stay still and then they show them certain things and they

try to show that they're actually thinking about what they're showing them or asking them to do. It's very, very interesting stuff.

Robert J. Marks:

One of the things that I wonder about artificial intelligence is well, concerns creativity. I don't believe artificial intelligence will ever be creative. And I'm joined in that arena by such notorious people such as Nadella, who's the CEO of Microsoft. He wrote a book I think called Hit Refresh. And also by the great Sir Roger Penrose who wrote a phenomenal book called Shadows of the Mind, which challenged the idea that artificial intelligence could ever be creative. They said that creativity comes from a flash of genius typically in the human being, or that's a common vehicle for it. You had a great quote in your book which I thought was, yes, this is a micro flash of genius. You quoted Rush Limbaugh and Rush Limbaugh said, "That's one of the best questions I've ever asked myself." It was kind of like this mind that was external to the brain that was conversing with itself. You also quoted Plato that said, "Thinking is the talking of the soul with itself." So there's something happening there with thinking and creativity that is beyond probably what artificial intelligence will ever do.

Geoffrey Simmons:

That's a, I find, extremely interesting area. I have in my book and my talks and other actually blogs, too: who's talking to whom? People always say, "I told myself," all kinds of things along that line, bald myself out and who's talking to who? Is it the left brain talking to the right brain? Is it the soul talking to the body? Is it Freud's id, ego and the super ego? Who or what in there is talking to themselves? In fact, people who have half a brain - if they're young enough, they have brain removed because of epilepsy - have thinking almost similar to our own. I cannot say exactly if they say that or think that. So it's as if we could function with either half in a certain point in life and beyond. Who's talking to who? I go back to this Pinocchio movie where Jiminy Cricket is on one shoulder and Lampwick is on the other.

Geoffrey Simmons:

Lampwick is telling him to do bad things and Jiminy Cricket is telling him to do good things. Some of us think that's what's going on. Split personalities - are they really telling us what's in there? Are people who blackout alcoholics who go on to drive cars and do other things, is that the other personality that's come forward? There is something going on that we really can't explain and so is this just some physical phenomenon, something mechanical or is it the spark of life? Is it the soul? And I think it's in part the soul or the spirit. These scientists tried to explain how life came about with a Urey-Miller experiment that's kind of tired of hearing about it, but in actuality, they didn't prove anything there. And nobody understands where the spark of life comes from and yet we know it's there. We know it's there. And I don't think we can be creative without that spark of life.

Robert J. Marks:

Yes. Speaking about the Miller-Urey experiment, I heard a good story about that recently in Dallas where somebody that was challenging the Miller-Urey experiment and exactly what it contributed to the origin of life, put a bowl of chicken soup next to a chicken. And he says, now all we have to do after the Miller-Urey experiment is take this chicken soup and make it into the chicken because that's how far that they had to go in order to get something. But another thing is that people have challenged - including in the book by Thaxton, Bradley and Olsen, "The Mystery of Life's Origin," which the Walter Bradley Center is re-releasing with lots of good augmented material - talks about the Miller-Urey

experiment and the fact they didn't even have the atmosphere right at the time so all of their conclusions were just totally bogus.

Geoffrey Simmons:

I think I have that book. I think Discovery Institute sent me a copy and I think I have it to read on the nightstand.

Robert J. Marks:

The good part about it, it was released 35 years ago and a lot can happen in science in 35 years. So there's augmenting chapters by people such as Steve Myers and Jim Tour and Jonathan Wells and it basically says that, yeah, it's still a mystery, there is absolutely no idea or no clue where life originated from. Just fascinating stuff. You mentioned about people with a half a brain, that kind of goes back to Rush Limbaugh, doesn't it? And one of his sayings that he talks with half of his brain tied behind his back. But the brain is fascinating. Michael Egnor actually talks about experiments, this is also epileptic where they actually do a split-brain experiment and they actually sever the right hand portion of the brain with the left-hand portion of the brain and so there's no longer communication. Yet even after that happens, you have a person with a single personality. So it maybe suggests that there's something of the mind that is happening external to the brain. It's really mysterious stuff.

Geoffrey Simmons:

It is, and it lacks an explanation.

Robert J. Marks:

Yes. Well thus far. Maybe there's some things that can be done scientifically to shed more light on that. So final question from a sci-fi writer, and you do write science fiction, and a physician's perspective who writes nonfiction, how do you see AI playing out in the future?

Geoffrey Simmons:

Not good in some instances. Two of my books, actually four of my books, one is called "The Adam Experiment" which has to do with childbirth in outer space, the first time humans do that. One called "Murdock." These are old books, I mean, the technology in there is very old-fashioned. But Murdock was a malevolent computer in a hospital. And then I have two spooks, one called "The Glue Factory" and the other one called "To Glue or Not to Glue." Anyway, be that as it may I talk about some of these issues in there. And I think AI in medicine is going to be a whole lot up to the programmer or the coder because I already see it in my profession and I don't like what I see. I mean, it already knows, if I make a diagnosis of pneumonia it knows not only you have to put a code down for pneumonia but I also have to prescribe a certain antibiotic if it's a bacterial infection.

Geoffrey Simmons:

So the machine, the electronic record already knows what I'm doing and it already has built in, if a diagnosis pneumonia is made, this is what should be tried first unless they're allergic, and this is what should be tried second, and these are what tests you should do. So what would happen next is why didn't you do that? Congrats, you followed what we told you to do. And so not only would it be telling you what to do and watching what you do but also be tabulating what you do. And I can just see at the end of the month, half the time you didn't listen to what you're supposed to do or something along that

line, into a doctor or to a nurse. And if you keep this up, coming from a computer, you'll have to come explain yourself in front of so-and-so committee. And so we have more and more protocols.

Geoffrey Simmons:

I retired, I think almost in time to get out of most of this, but we have lots of protocols that come along. This is what you do in this circumstance and that's why actually we're having less doctors in the primary care and more nurses and other technicians who don't need to go through medical school to follow the recommendations of the computer. And so I just see it taking over, and the more malevolent it is, or the more attentive to the bottom line financially, or whatever they're trying to prove or not prove, I mean, there's all kinds of problems in medicine, I could write a whole book on it except am I writing somewhat as an escape in life. And companies don't want the doctors who attract the complicated patients that take up time and costs a lot of money. They don't want the doctors who are capable of taking care of those. And so their AI will be designed to look for that.

Geoffrey Simmons:

The other thing is, about AI, it is helpful in some areas, like pap smears. They have AI reviewing pap smears now and after seeing 10,000 of these in preparation it could spot problems and has been shown this to spot problems better than human beings can. If you have a skin lesion, and I'm sure it's going to happen if not the science fiction part of me, is that the machine will have visual capabilities and lights. And it'll say, have them hold their forearm up in front of the camera and then have them turn it right, left, whatever, let me change some lights and make them blue and ultraviolet and everything else.

Geoffrey Simmons:

And then it'll make a diagnosis for the doctor and it'll tell them what to do and if the doctor doesn't want to do it, it'll keep track that you didn't want to do it. So I foresee all - I just know that's coming, it's already here in many senses. So from a medical perspective, I don't like what I'm seeing. At the same time one could argue, well, medical care may be better, medical care may be cheaper along in some of those things. But on average, with average stuff it's wonderful. But it's like making everybody in third grade pass with Cs. We don't want any A students and we don't want any F students and so I see AI making us all kind of mediocre and following orders.

Robert J. Marks:

Hopefully artificial intelligence will augment the skills of physicians. They will offer advice but the final decision, I think in all matters concerning artificial intelligence, needs to be with a human being. You mentioned about automatic pap smears. Interesting background, I was an expert witness in a lawsuit between two companies that did automated classification of pap smears. They got it away from the cytologist who would spend a day looking through microscopes and get really sleepy at the end of the day and make false diagnosis and these two companies, when both of them started making money, they sued each other. And one of them hired me as an expert witness so I know all about that. And the interesting thing is that they got into big litigation, they exhausted all their money and then as soon as they were poor a third company came in and bought them both out and the two companies went away, so that's what happens when you fight and are watched over by a third more powerful company.

Geoffrey Simmons:

See, I don't see it entirely as benign and just being wonderful care. I think that's an offshoot and it'll be common that people will get a diagnosis quicker and will probably get care quicker, that's good care. But

I foresee this in the administrative side of this, trying to control costs and control access and control employees and I don't think it's going to feel good to those people.

Robert J. Marks:

Well, this is great. What a fun time to talk with you Dr. Simmons. We've been talking to Dr. Geoffrey Simmons. He's a physician and he's the author of the new book, "Are We Here to Re-Create Ourselves?" I've read it, I've recommended it, it's available on amazon.com. Until next time be of good cheer.

Announcer:

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