Slow Sunset of the Self: Digital Redesign of the Human

Governance of Emerging Technologies
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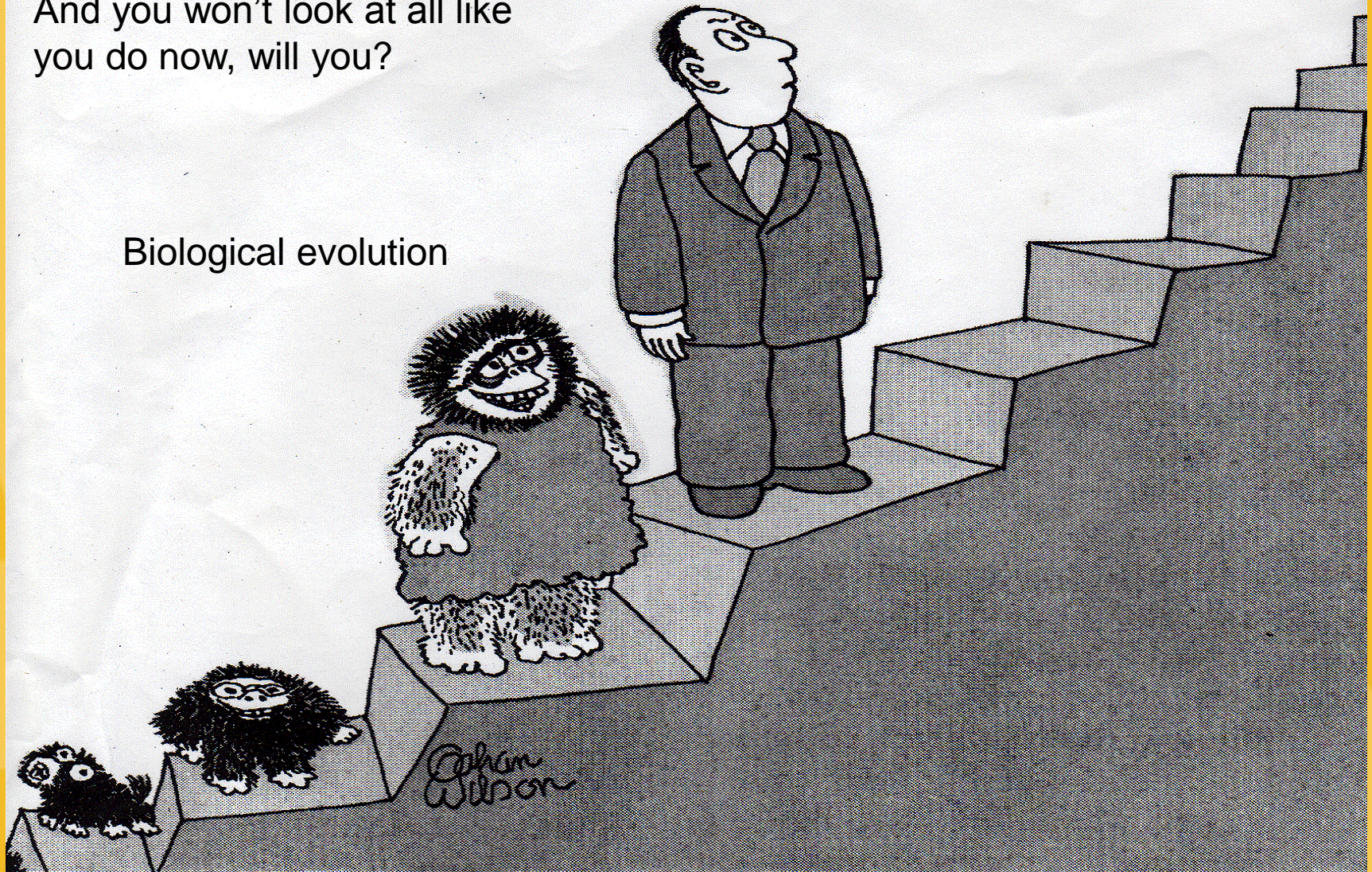President's Professor of Civil, Environmental, and Sustainable Engineering

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"I was wondering when you'd notice there's lots more steps."

Technology and the Thinking Ape

Technology, Information. . . and the Thinking Ape

- Ape and bone, versus ape and bone and information – two very different systems

- Humans integrate with their technologies

- Humans and their socio-cultural systems are, among many things, information processing systems

- Change the information environment, and you change the human and the social.
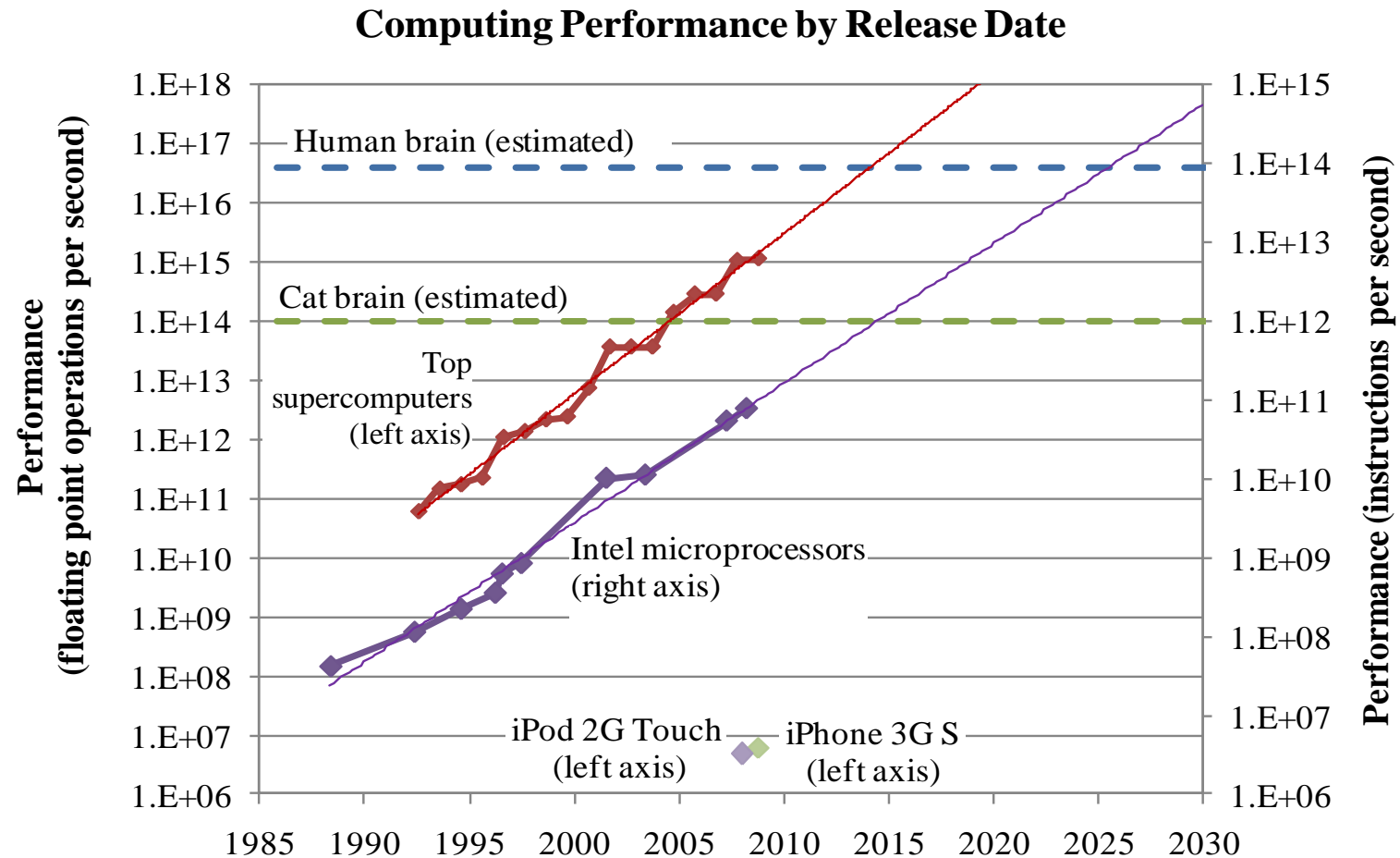
Straws in the Wind

- Eric Schmidt, CEO Google: Every 2 days we create as much information as we did up to 2003

- Google: We are as gods

- Augcog in combat and your car: when complexity overwhelms low bandwidth human cognition

Straws in the Wind

- The end of the Cartesian model: Cognition arising from techno-human networks (and networked robot learning in the cloud)

- Telepathic interconnection: CMU detecting nouns; Japanese detecting visuals; DARPA funding telepathic helmet development

- Radical life extension – biological or download: your choice

Computing Performance

Computing Performance by Release Date

Note that human and cat brain estimates apply to both the left and right y-axes.

Prepared by Carolyn Mattick. Adapted from Ananthanarayanan, Esser, Simon, & Modha (2009), Bennett (2008), EconomicExpert.com (n.d.), Moravec (1998), Polsson (2009), and TOP500.Org (n.d.).

The Sunset of the Self

- The Galileo problem: we stand on the Earth and it doesn't move, we are not blown off by thousand mile an hour winds, and we clearly see the sun moving around us every day. So we "know" the heliocentric model is wrong.

- So: we all know intuitively what "the self" is by introspection, but generations of philosophers, theologians, and scientists have yet to provide a generally accepted definition.

Sunset of the Self

- If the self is an emergent integration of wetware, software, and evolutionary experience . . .

- It is an information artifact, and the volume of information and accelerating technological change mean that . . .

- The Cartesian self is already obsolete. Each of you is already a techno-human self, and the evolutionary potential of that self, especially as AI rises, is unlimited.