

# Vernor Vinge Foresight and the Singularity no1: Some critical reflections.

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I looked at Vernor Vinge's *youtube Foresight and the Singularity* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tngUabHOea0> with great interest. I found we agreed on some important things, despite us coming from very different places in every conceivable way. That said, fundamentally, I find myself in deep disagreement with the majority of what he says.

In this exhibit I would like to explain how and why I disagree with him. When I considered his interests in super intelligence, his ideas on the self and Transhumanism, I chose a particular way of doing it. I extrapolate from his statements, the influence of context on the Transhumanism he talks about. Extrapolation to and from context is my concern. Therefore the formation of the goals of Transhumanism and the consequences of its implementation, furnishes my discussion of context. I find my doubt about his Transhumanism just grows in this process.

I wanted to see more in his video about Transhumanism's implications for our society but found myself reflecting on why these were absent, tangential or superficial. With extrapolation as its base, I accept this is an unusual method. While it has great potential to unfairness, it is also defensible and reasonable with equal potential. I share his expressed desire to debate the subject in good faith.

## Discussion

I see him this way. Vernor Vinge underwrites a utopian technological optimism. I refer to his absence of thought in this video about society, culture, democracy, self and family. Suchlike are collective realities (even blindspots in some quotient) which I suspect is why he might balk at my critique. Yet these untouchable, intangibles make up so much of our world. To their understanding, I argue, Vinge offers only this optimism as if the technological singularity –person and machine inextricable melded – replete with promises of everything we ever wanted. I could call it mysticism.

Yet he has a concern with the democratic process and Transhumanism, and a concern to use the intelligence of humans. Perhaps where I find discomfort is in the disconnect between his Transhumanism goals and their seriously- less- pleasant possibilities about which he has next to nothing substantive to say. I am perplexed by his work for I have no reason to doubt his intelligence rather the opposite. While I suspect this is an absence of great significance and to which I will allude in terms of a West Coast miasma (again this has great potential to unfairness). What doesn't have this potential and remains my central concern is this: there is the more important need for Transhumanists to define a location in a societal context, not to denigrate it but explicate it in ways Transhumanism deserves as a powerful idea. Or does society disappear like Maggie Thatcher and Ronald Reagan thought if you said it had no concrete meaning and only individuals exist. Is that what Transhumanists think?

You will see I talk about super-intelligence, self in context and risk through reference to; nations, corporations, war, politics, a little about the materiality of things and something of the traditions of self and society. These are the matters that I see need teasing out and I note Vinge makes tangential, but welcome in my case, reference to several of these. My working hypothesis is that

**Transhumanism's progress is a matter for the U.N.** I express corollaries to that. My intention here is to feed more exploration rather than offering answers but you will see why I suggest it directly.

Of this super-intelligence that will soon exist, Vernor Vinge's ideas need teasing out. That's not because machines cannot be smarter than us. It's because they can't be smarter about us than we are in the fundamental sense of our totality, as opposed to, say, our brain wave patterns. In reading these, and in many other things, machines win every time. However I admit the "we" is not "us" since he talks of another species -post humans. This adds greatly to difficulties of seeing implications. I guess this is a different synergy but I don't think it can exist.

However what we value about humans surely needs preserving/augmenting in post humans and one dimension of that is self - this self for better or worse is now described complexly not just in science but also in art, literature and sociology. I include the softer disciplines of study in this descriptive and analytical richness. Softness here is about absence of strict scientific proofs. I show this softness is necessary and inevitable and not a cause for the avoidance, I read into Vernor Vinge.

The other dimension of rich value is society. We have made some achievements in formulating ideals again these apparently suffer soft proofs but ones we cannot ignore nevertheless. I stress the value of democracy in this essay. These achievements suffice to require preservation. I mention such basics because I suggest we might see unintended consequence of; dictatorship in political/economy; cultural collapse - the sense of how we share meanings; and related failure to deal with context which constrains us and ushers forth contemporary problems for us to solve. From a man of great intelligence there is dangerous whimsy in his Transhumanism reminiscent of the originator of the ideas of the Singularity Teilhard de Chardin

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre\\_Teilhard\\_de\\_Chardin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Teilhard_de_Chardin).

### **SUPER-INTELLIGENCE: *Of losing self***

What is a super-intelligence? Perhaps it is something that correlates human wishes and needs. Perhaps it finds, and realises, solutions to problems that collectively we can't. In effect, it 'tells' us what to do about problems, it and we perceive. Vernor Vinge, in fact does not explain what it is all about. We might assume it has the capacities of multiple humans in all areas, in all circumstances. It allows for human processes or post-human processes to assimilate, but not, I think, discuss and agree. Yet I wonder if perhaps we wouldn't be able to know what super-intelligence is by definition because it is beyond our comprehension – just as humans are to chimpanzees, and needless to say to some extent vice versa. How does he know that it is a singularity? I might need to be told it is unknowable at least if that could be explained. There is a very thorny complexity here.

The machine and Artificial intelligence is largely stuck as adjunct, extension, pattern change responder, and number cruncher. I see absolutely no evidence that machines can simulate humans in actual life, only parts of them or their abilities as confined activities in particular settings. How does a machine simulate the gaining of conscience and consciousness? **How does it substitute engaging in a protest** and so learning about authority, political power, oppression and even the necessity of protest? How about falling out with your first true love? Or what about finding out the bosses can be vindictive and destructive? Or unravelling the truth about loving parents or their opposites? At this point such assumptions of reductionism i.e. that these are chemical formulas or the like, seems just as far off and doubtful. Are these experiences translatable materially at all? Are they are material yet materiality we need to still interpret through our own psyches, synergistically with others in processes? These maybe processes forever elusive in their complexity because of the

nature of self, other and environment. Of course I have now committed the cardinal sin of doubting reductionism indefinitely into the future. I am sticking with it as you will see. Mine is a theory of ontology or being, if that at least gives it a fancy name. I will explain it but in effect my ontology resists reductionism by definition – most do.

This irreducibility is not just a matter of complexity but about human knowledge itself. Because of the dimensions of our originality or individuality and self-perception, the processes of human knowing are historical, personal and social in varying ways. They remain so even with undeniable progress in knowledge. Histories of science tell us so, as do paradigm shifts. In other ways, understanding self is a process that is a cumulating of learning, assessment and demystification. Not only one which remains one measure of a life fulfilled or understood, but also one widely regarded in our stories and those of our families. Perhaps improving this organic process, speeding it up might be really wonderful. **Indeed we have used education haphazardly and with great limitation to achieve the same goal.**

### **A Transhumanist mindset**

However I wonder what we would do with a Transhumanist mindset. Simulate life? I cannot get my unintelligent mind around it, but I think that's because it is no longer then my life but someone else's to have for or give to me. Although the standardised product might have better qualities, these come at the cost of self. That puts my growth outside the purview of a super-intelligence, unless we know its relationship to us in transparent ways.

Artificial Intelligence has not demonstrated a capacity that is like, rather than better or worse than human intelligence. It's the interpretations of things like the meaning of interactions, the moral question of ends rather than the more calculating question of means (let alone their connection). The most important things, for us to have or preserve appear opaque to machine intelligence. The answers we need require solutions to questions like: how to live peaceably?; or how we adopt ideology or blocking mechanisms to obscure needs from our reason, democratic processes or the 'free' media?

All these questions need our answers desperately and immediately even prior to the emergence of full blown Transhumanism. We can only achieve these tasks by convincing each other, or engaging in public dialogue. The implications of that are enormous, although the founding fathers and mothers of democracy like Mills or Voltaire or Jefferson or Wollstonecraft realised this. We should learn by engagement in the democratic process by our self-assertion and understanding. Equally, we require education and open-mindedness heralded by the Enlightenment ...the pal of democracy and science. Our AI friend needs to supplant all these modes of interaction by which human intelligences register and sometimes compound.

I hope it is the case that the possibility of this super-intelligence is well advanced and answers all my objections. Perhaps I just need to wise up. Alternatively this is a piece of pure supposition, a lot of boosterism, which gives support to those companies interested in these developments and softens us up for the next great period of unencumbered authoritarianism. Authoritarianism this time made palatable because it was a machine who became intelligent beyond its initial programmers. Otherwise we would be getting a West Coast machine or a Chinese machine for which I respond "good for them". I see limitations not about nations or cultures but just the possibility that other people might have programmed it differently initially.

If you say this super intelligence can know us better than we do ourselves, and then let's imagine how this enlightenment will happen assuming our intelligence is that of post-humans. Imagine; world peace rekindling democracy; and building more conjoined and complex communities when we have lost the belief in these things apparently. We need surely to have imbibed these ideas again. We will have retained the hope, despite the current cultural desert that defines our mass communications. One cause of this loss is that we are reduced to a very arduous life, time-pressure - wise in which we exclude fostering deep thought as irrelevant to the equations of life. **Ironically this is the result in part in harnessing ourselves still further to the very machines that would free us.** Hell I can't find my computing/communicating device!

Will our super-intelligence will plumb history to find our best ideas and teach them to us and remind us of our past limitations like these beliefs just mentioned, while we are at work on the job? It will find the history and thoughts we have lost by capitulating to other authoritarianisms and rekindle our desire for liberation even as these hopes have disappeared from our cultural exchanges. In effect these ideas censored by their irrelevance to daily life now? I think this faith in a super-intelligence is a very challenging idea and one we all need to face consciously before our super-intelligence reconstructs us.

Equally, the articulation between post humans and a super-intelligence seems extremely problematic. Perhaps I should not worry my shiny head about it, because it's all more super than I can imagine. However it seems that we might imagine subverting rational consideration and deliberation painful by a simplistic type of mutual uploading and downloading and crowd sourcing. I don't believe these are anywhere near the point of replacing self and rightful engagement in the political process. It is only that these processes are now a nonsense of 'underpants' elections (whose are worn the most perhaps), that we can imagine such a substitution for what was intended. Democracy as education, education as democracy with freedom ordered freely and organically.

Who owns this super-intelligence anyway? How and by whom was it programmed? Who paid for it? If this super-intelligence does eventuate it leaves we post -humans with less autonomy, less intelligence, less rationality - we surrender it to a super intelligence. There is a very frightening notion here. How could we know it was right? By trial and error which we judged? I think what is left open is that we recognise a superior force which would change our behaviours. In any real perception of this we must say this is simply a view of the corporate whole, much as the concept of Fascism was.

This is not to insinuate racism or anti-Semitism but a concept of society imposed by military, industrial elites that Fascism was. The word means literally the binding of sticks. That is, it is not just cooperative but really forcible incorporation into a cohesive body. Is Transhumanism incorporation into a cohesive mind? A mind which cannot just understand our wishes, it must do more than simply aggregate and average/focus group them, and notwithstanding this it will rather surely then, need to interpret them. We have something that is just as prone to being a dictatorial entity because irreproachable, than it is to be the Virgin Mary or god. Big Sister perhaps? That's the issue.

There is an irreducible authority in all this. This super-intelligence is sanitised by its great knowledge free of particularity and bias -or so "it" says. Somehow then, Transhumanism supersedes self. Well let's say that out loud. If the answer is no it augments it, let's see what that means in the context of super-intelligence.

## **Transhumanism, super-intelligence and the Narrative of self**

I have suggested that super-intelligence removes the basic narrative of self as about self-learning much as that is constrained and nurtured. It should not be so constrained and nurtured more so. I think that begs a lot of questions about education and society. In the course of writing this article, my co-editor sent me a quote from Noam Chomsky:

*The whole educational and professional training system is a very elaborate filter, which just weeds out people who are too independent, and who think for themselves, and who don't know how to be submissive, and so on --because they're dysfunctional to the institutions.*

Society's rationality, which Habermas defines as unimpeded communication is limited as much by power and its influence, at least that's so just as much as poor knowledge accumulation, and not seeing what's in front of you.

Many options are simply written out of people's consciousness, for instance girls in Afghanistan may not ask for education. So what this type of thinking relies on is a pre-existing perfect world. Ok does that mean that our reason doesn't outpace our experience...no but there is a connection.

That's a long way from Transhumanism. However, Transhumanism should take on the mantle of profound change, and so needs to incorporate the dynamic of self and society and show care not to obliterate them. Some of critics of artificial intelligence aim at the question of emotion and one dimensionality i.e. a computational being as too narrow. That sort of issue doesn't come across with Vinge. His view of self is apparently well rounded and he recognises moral and emotional domains readily. Yet I wonder just how deep these recognitions are. This question comes in speculation about longevity as much as it has about super-intelligence.

Vernor Vinge is softening the way for a new technological miracle (singularity) which by implication, abrogates our right to control our own destiny. Transhumanism takes over our autonomy. That's because we recognise a superior intelligence. So how can we do that, except by our own assessment for which agreement surely is required? A super-intelligence presumably wouldn't bludgeon us into submission, so how then might it gain this authority legitimately? We would need to believe that we must or should accept this. So we would agree that it gave us things we wanted other than our mutual capacity to determine these ourselves since that of course would be taken away.

### **Self: on gaining self indefinitely**

I consider that the notion of self is diminished by the process of augmentation. Of course you say: why should it be? My answer is that it appears to be a process that was attained by adding new elements which may not resonate with our individuality but rather resonate with the methodology and logic base of their design, implantation, construction or connection. They may be formulaic. Vinge assumes, I suppose, that these accoutrements are perfectly tailored to us. However, even if we chose them, parts of self-emerge through life experience. So when do we choose our augmentations?

I would hope we are wiser from longevity but that really depends on the quality of the society, its education and equality and fostering of sensitivity. Insights about self come variously, and indeed only occasionally. Familiarity with psychology or experience through the effect of social structures suggests there are very different learning mechanisms at play. We must replicate them and increase the speed of learning and social innovation yet through self not its obliteration. We could be so

much more intelligent if self rather than super-intelligence takes the foreground in progress. Vinge sees only super-intelligence and longevity which is of course related to self if passively or quantitatively. Part of my insight of older age, such as it is, is to do with the life cycle whose processes Vinge wants to delay by say a million years.

Let's consider what it would be like to live a million years or more. Venor Vinge's outlook is that there is a problem of losing self, about which he says no more. The other outcome is the positive he elaborates upon. We will surely become wiser. Are older people wiser? Well one of the ways they are wiser is that their commitment to the life cycle appears to strengthen as they reach its end. Now many grandparents are in their 40s so here experience outweighs the awareness of the ending of life and reflecting on that and life's significance. Yet if these grandparents are older the wisdom I claim as a special lifecycle insight happens. Such grandparents or great grandparents are fragile but wise, like children in mirror - hence their synergy. I wonder then if the wisdom of the old is the product of frailty or the sense of the imminence death, in this way as well as experience.

We have perhaps less invested in life because of failing capacities; to execute some sorts of problem solving, to physically work and procreate and so we see more clearly some of the stakes and problems at least at the human level. As I get older I have a more acute sense of time in the sense that I must try to leave a mark that is valuable, I become concerned with continuity and so may have a more long term outlook. I imagine this is not uncommon or of course true for everyone. The investment in life itself obscures truth. Perhaps this investment lessens with old age. This is both folkloric and observable.

Interestingly we are talking about time not quality, which perhaps really is out of reach of this discussion. Even the physical characteristics of unaugmented longevity might best be addressed by fasting regularly. Sure that's not going to be popular, dangerous because attentions might wane and so challenges our work /life balance. It is also anti-consumption. Transhumanism is not about small increases in life but surely about quality of life as revamping organs will be complex in a thousand year life. I wonder if the issue of longevity is in part because the element of good quality of life is so apparently difficult. <http://www.dailylife.com.au/health-and-fitness/dl-nutrition/the-fast-track-20130218-2em4n.html>. In other words, the debate is about blocking quality by reference to quantity.

Fukuyama <http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Transhumanism.html> raises a similar point about time and execution of problem solving. There is the sense of things needing doing in finite time as a great stimulus to learning, facing and dealing with problems. Now I can't say for sure what a life span of a thousand years might herald but it would possibly encourage you to make no choices – "next century maybe". Meanwhile we have a gap of 1000 years or more before we get this 'final phrase of life' once called wisdom now overpowered by the fear of senility.

### **Transhumanism, yet another corporate profit strategy**

We don't operate as individuals nor as crowds but as structured groups formed by gender, sexual orientation race, native language. To a large extent who we are and what we can be, depends on what nation we were born in – yes you can pedal out the exceptions and I can peddle out the statistics. Both are important neither however deniable. So what? My point is that **relationships of power** exist at every turn and so things that we espouse will have lesser or greater chances of success on that basis in part. Transhumanism is not some ideology floating out there for us to sign

up for or not. **Transhumanism is the strategy for the systematic control and domination of nature by corporations** and other power brokers **for the purposes of profit**. In other words, Transhumanism is also a corporate strategy, emerging in the face of crises and new potentials derived from science. Vinge, I believe suspects that this is problematic.

He hopes to find answers in good planning , scenario planning crowd sourcing and democracy unelaborated. It is not at all clear that he addresses power in this. I think he may feel that it's out of his principal domain. That assumption is highly dangerous even if he acknowledges the role of democracy. There is no evidence that the democratic process as it exists will allow interference. Even he dismisses the picking - winners logic. However, what States can do is pick losers with more aplomb via criteria about the most threatening to democracy. Indeed Transhumanism is sold to us as longevity and medical miracles when in fact, just behind the veil we find a bog-standard Corporate small picture profit strategy. There is a lot to lose. Democratic oriented people should reconsider whether **we need a Transhuman non-proliferation arrangement**, a reigning in of corporations final say and so some sort of oversight.

Sad and pathetic as democracy seems, as with the attempt to change gun laws in America recently, we have to force this discussion into a strong social movement and a strong committee to elect a panel of people who have the expertise to defend human interests and a final commitment to open debate referenda and education. Ok it's clumsy, it's slow and it threatens commercial secrecy but that is the type of road map we need. It can't have tangential reference; just nodding of heads. It must become a precondition. It might have to be a U.N. project like nuclear ambitions. I understand that the U.N. is neither beyond corruption nor mistakes.

Reflection on contexts indicates human interests from gender to nation and commerce to religion will influence our steps to post –humanism. Presumably some post- humans will be primed to avoid tax at any cost including deft transnational transhuman transactions (only some humour intended). My point is corporations have strong interests, operate within particular mindsets. They are able to establish market dominance through non rational means such as not informing fully on drawbacks with equal weight as benefits, and are prone to secrecy necessarily. A robust democracy needs to meet corporate inspired Transhumanism head on. In my view this will prove beyond nation states to effect.

That said, corporations, and I argue Governments will be spending more and more on transhuman research and consequently less and less on human research such as democracy and social innovation. I argue they should be forced more than ever before to defend investments in making post humans. Vinge's view is that post-humans will emerge with participation and so acquiring legitimacy. Corporations have not required this or legitimacy except in the broad sense i.e. the general belief in private enterprise, rather they make legitimacy and they defend their property. In my other exhibits, I argue that these practices activate the potential for **'the dictatorship of profit'** heightened by Transnational Corporations and enforced by the corporate state we see emergent today. These corporations already have budgets bigger than many states in the world and indeed are replacing the Nation State in importance. Indeed the Nation State too has become an annex of the market.

The reason why common commercial practice is not a benign transaction between suppliers of needs and demanders of wants takes many forms. Let's use an example like a soft drink

manufacturer. Here perhaps, children not only because it's addictive but also because the weight of the information economy lies with the big players and their ability to merge thirst and/or self-esteem with soft drink want these drinks. The makers can represent the product widely, largely as they want.

The opposite view that softdrinks are a somewhat important element of our general bad health is occluded. That is power. It could be changed say by a different tax regime, more research money showing my proposition is right or wrong, and intervention in public health, early intervention in the disease of obesity, and counselling to address identity and corporate image and their toxic connection. That doesn't happen or only very belatedly. Will Transhumanism simply change all that bypass commerce as process. Or is it not too preposterous to imagine a post-human who needs or wants no other liquid but softdrink and only one brand. **Here transhumanism becomes an easily conditioned consumer indeed an extension of corporate brand marketing and social control.**

### **A context structure for Transhumanism**

We are considering; who will orchestrate Transhumanism? Who will benefit? Who will be left out? What type of Transhumanism will prevail? We will find such questions answered within relations of power and domination, or empathy and democracy, unless context is part of a critical strategy.

Vinge does have one context structure .The world he described is populated by extremes like his recognition of the threat of nuclear war as outside reference point or boundary of on-going social existence. However within that we get a picture (perhaps a picture in absence) of a soft, woolly, malleable and benign world which exists for all of us in 'democracies' but even the world at large. What are the problems of our society as they interface with the Transhumanist agenda? This matters because his response to whether there are things that might go wrong is to answer it is this way. Yes of course. (No-one doubts his intelligence) but what could really go wrong is hugely entropic nuclear war. That's right but it's convenient too. It's a matter of treaties, goodwill, technological sophistication: all relatively doable. The order of complexity relevant to post humanism is infinitely more complex than that very real and dramatic example –complicated enough I grant you and likewise frightening.

For Vernor Vinge the dangers of misjudging are left to the **'breakers' and not the 'makers'**. I agree with him entirely that the breakers do not always win, after all the asteroid in effect generated us, that most of us are makers and that there is room for optimism about this. What he neglects to indicate, and here is where his naivety shows as a key constituent of his optimism, is that we live within societies. Within those societies, we structure our beliefs reinforced by media, sometimes education and via common knowledge. The latter is a lot of survivalist knowhow which becomes practical philosophy or wisdom of the majority –a praxis largely imposed on us by the control others have of structures and in which we are somewhat important periodically but largely bit players. For this to be significantly different would take a lot of conflict and reconceptualising of society.

For all Vernor Vinge's talks about planning he manages to skirt one of the great risks, in fact the three great risks, of our time. I might well imagine that I am not privy to the latest solutions to **climate change, population excesses and resource depletion** and so am as always open to the latest discovery showing there is 'no' problem. After all solar energy plus education and the pill minus religion might well do it with some geo-engineering thrown in. In this case technology may not be the issue but its delay and our adaption to problems are. It's nearly too late. Context again

intercedes. These are urgent problems with long long long lead times according to Nicholas Stern [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stern\\_Review](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stern_Review).

I think it beggars belief that this is so much out of the picture of a man that wants to talk about planning. However there is of course no risk in Transhumanism itself. Not half! On the surface people living 100 thousand years seems to be to be enormously risky. This is 'ga ga land' (read mystical Utopianism) stuff. I cannot accept this because there are so many missing steps in regard to how this is managed. The answer is simple you need to be much more than an optimist rather a fanatical devotee to follow Vernor Vinge on this. Devoted to what? It's technological optimism or mystical utopianism, I think –to express it more kindly. It's quantitative and reductionist, myopically scientific – really ultimately only partially human.

### **Technological optimism or mystical utopianism**

Let's reflect for a moment about technology and recognise, with so much of Critical Theory that technology is a mixed blessing. I am rather glad I don't spend all day in the fields but I wish the air I breathed was cleaner. While technology promised me relief from drudgery everywhere, I am linked as adjunct to machine as a result – time takes centre stage in my life. Vinge just offers more of this time dependence perhaps. His view is strongly based on the multiplication of time as our experience is its stolen nature – stolen from successive generations, stolen thorough work.

We produce more but much of it is junk i.e packaging consumption for consumptions sake and so today much consumption has questionable satisfactions – lots of repetitive and unsatisfying work, some leisure in which consumption of consumables dominates. Technology is a mixed blessing – hospitals and nuclear bombs. I think that's the problem or at least a place to start. Again it's the limits ON human reason not the limits OF human reason. I don't believe in shiny new technologies nor Father Christmas. Instead I believe in slow, participative and exacting progress and belief in underlying need to preserve nature – as my recipe. I have elaborated this in my other exhibits in this issue of CRAFT.

Vernor is engaged in a sort of mysticism just like Theihard de Chardin. One sure way to see is to see this in someone with little reference to context. There are two things that are really great for humans right now in the West –eating less and learning a second language. The latter I think is a place where California, and much of Europe, is very advanced. I have suggested more broadly that if we can imagine Transhumanism humanely and I want us to try, then Transhumanism can imagine a post human who is the product of interactions between elected supervisory world- wide representatives, the U.N., interested communities of which there are many, wise people and last but not least, corporations.

### **Conclusion**

At the moment, however, the trouble is Transhumanism might not be a good idea without reflection, participation, transparent engagement with power and reference to quality. I think it's as easy to see a kind of extreme authoritarianism in it. Vinge's authoritarianism is not proactive one but the product of absences and implications. I happily add is hardly great personal condemnation but still remains a serious systemic problem which needs addressing. More personally, I might suggest that three absences really have a meaning we should explore as part of a method of reviewing Transhumanism. It's this. Basically Vernon Vinge lives in a fanciful world of naive optimism, scant

acquaintance with people's lives and the consequent obstacles they endure. Secondly Vinge's transhumanism leaves unanswered the issues of context, power and participation all of which have been struggled with over millennia on our planet with consequent huge loss of life, and finally his Singularity opens up more questions than it answers. He has predicted a super-intelligence that can aggregate and reconstruct data into reason, analysis, or foresight but can it, and will it, weigh other dissenting opinions giving the minority report even one authored by our beloved Gaia, all the outcomes and implications for humans beyond what humans themselves want?

Democracy does this better. I ask is a super-intelligence prone for structural and human reasons to super stupidity. Admittedly transhumanism and revamped democracy need each other but in my view so great are the limitations, it is more Transhumanism's need. I think Vinge has an inkling of this. He needs an experiential and intellectual tour through it, just as some of its critics like me might need a similar in depth immersion in A.I. perhaps. Indeed I am proposing context shattering and sharing processes.

Such is very much more preferable than his deal. The trade-off for slavery to a super-intelligence is a super memory and super life all rolled into hyperbeing. Sounds good, but is it? Predictably perhaps his solution is the West Coast one: it's all about self, sensuality and longevity and a castrated form of libertarianism, while it is less about others' lives even our children's, sense, sensibility and equity and finally little if anything about our planet.

The West Coast is everywhere now. It is the new black. It also carries the democratic spirit, somewhere but hopefully much deeper than Vinge explores by implication. This is a debate I am taking into the Australian Greens policy arena. Stay tuned more to follow..... hopefully.....