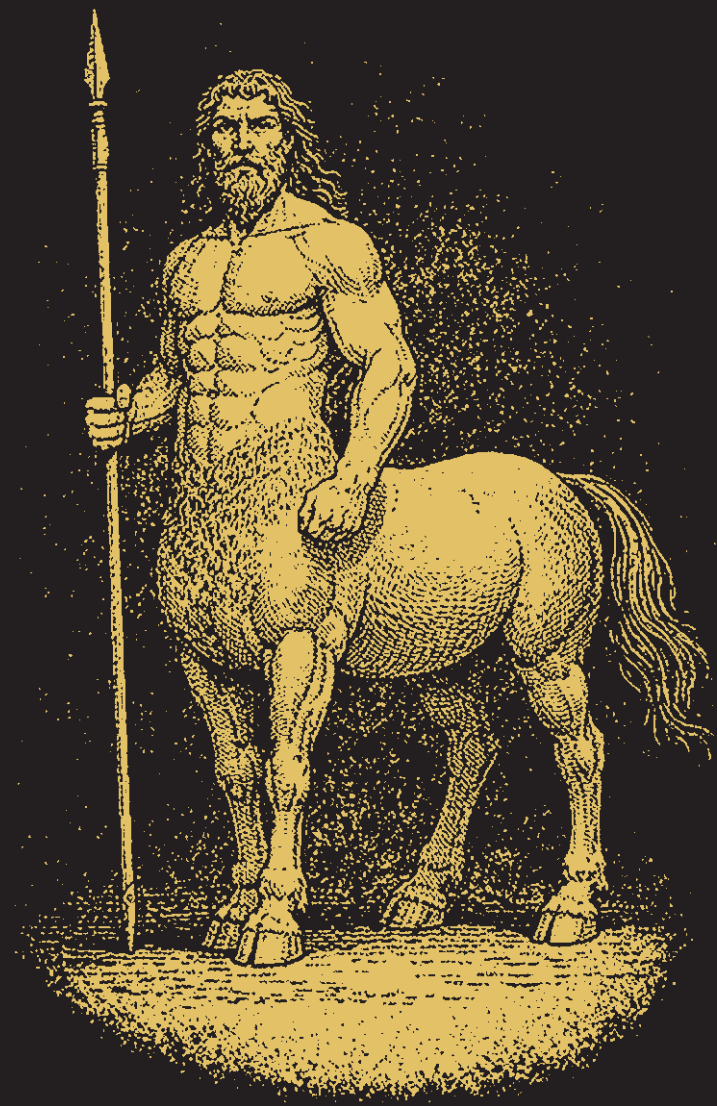




Centaurus

3

Susan Schneider

The future of the mind

A thought experiment

It's 2045, and you're out shopping. Your first stop is the Center for Mind Design. As you walk in, a large menu stands before you, listing brain enhancements with funky names. Hivemind is a brain chip that allows you to experience the innermost thoughts of your loved ones. Zen Garden is a microchip that induces zen-master-level meditative states. Human Calculator is an implant that gives you savant-level mathematical abilities. What would you select, if anything? Enhanced attention? Mozart-level musical skills? You can order a single enhancement or bundle several together.

So that's the scenario. As a philosopher, I like thought experiments because they really get our imagination going. This text is about the future of your mind, and how our understanding of ourselves, our minds, and our nature can change the future for better or worse. What I'll be asking is, at a place like this hypothetical Center for Mind Design, could you truly merge with artificial intelligence?

This text explores key issues surrounding transhumanist ideas, neurotechnology, and the age-old philosophical questions they invoke. It begins with an examination of the foundational concepts, providing the necessary context for understanding the broader implications. From there, the discussion shifts to the potential limits of human intelligence augmentation, particularly in relation to consciousness and personhood. Finally, the chapter concludes with a reflection on these advancements within the larger framework of our place in the cosmos.

Mind design

Let's turn to some quick background. Brain evolution was heavily constrained by environmental, anatomical, and metabolic demands, but AI-based brain enhancement technologies could augment intelligence at a rate that's much faster than biological evolution. I call this new enterprise "mind design".

It's a kind of intelligent design, but we are not some Gods pur-