

TRANSHUMAN SPACE

FIFTH WAVE

Written by Jon F. Zeigler
Illustrated by Christopher Shy

POWERED BY
GURPS



STEVE JACKSON GAMES

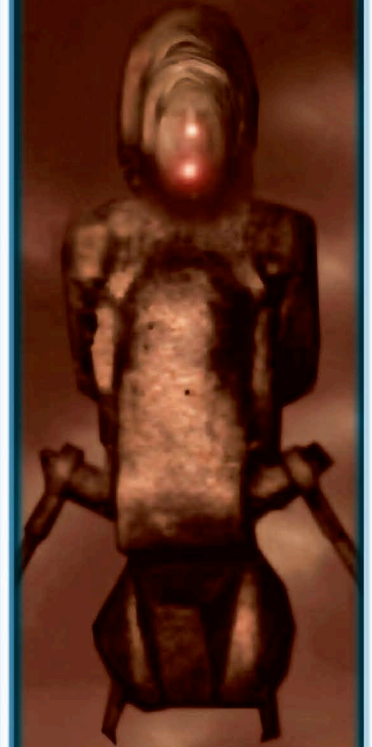
The Homeworld

The Third Wave was information. The Fourth Wave was biotech. The Fifth Wave is a combination of nanotechnology, memetics, and artificial intelligence, and it's changing mankind more than the first four Waves put together. ***Transhuman Space: Fifth Wave*** is an overview of our home planet at the end of the 21st century. Most humans (and other sapient life) still live on Earth, doing business, raising families, and fighting wars just as they have always done. Humanity and its partners may be scattering into deep space, but Earth is still the center of the human universe . . . crowded, busy, fast-moving and still picking up speed.

- Nation-by-nation overview of Earth.
- In-depth coverage of the hyper-advanced Fifth Wave societies.
- Close-in descriptions of three of Earth's most important cities.
- New racial packages.
- Cutting-edge technology, such as Earth's massive virtuality nodes.
- Rules for network intrusion and defense.
- Land, sea, and air vehicles of interest to adventurers.

Welcome home. It's different here.

GURPS Basic Set, Compendium I, and Transhuman Space are required to use this book in a *GURPS* campaign. *GURPS Space* and *Bio-Tech* may also be useful. The ideas and maps in *Fifth Wave* can be used with *any* roleplaying system.



Written by Jon F. Zeigler Edited by Andrew Hackard
Illustrated by Christopher Shy
Transhuman Space designed by David Pulver



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FIFTH WAVETM

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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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INTRODUCTION

A black and white photograph showing a hand holding a small, metallic, futuristic object. The object has a complex, angular shape with some circular patterns on its side. The background is a close-up of a planet's surface, possibly the moon, with a bright light source creating a strong shadow and highlighting the texture of the ground. The entire scene is framed by a white border with rounded corners.

Earth. For all the dynamism of colonial culture, the homeworld remains the center of human civilization. The vast majority of human beings (and other sapients) live on Earth, doing business, arguing over ideas, and fighting wars just as they have always done. Humanity and its partners may be scattering into deep space, but their destiny has not yet divorced itself from the planet of their birth.

Transhuman Space: Fifth Wave is the first of several books covering Earth and its people. This book

presents an *overview* of the homeworld's status, with special emphasis on the so-called "Fifth Wave" nations. These wealthy societies dominate the world through ideology and advanced technology. They are also the nations which have changed the most since the end of the last century, riding the leading edge of transformation. Hundreds of nation-states, thousands of splinter cultures, millions of organizations struggle to survive and grow in the hothouse environment of the homeworld.

In addition to being a guidebook for Earth, *Fifth Wave* includes a number of new racial packages. There are also rules for some of the special technology found on Earth: virtuality nodes, software for network intrusion and defense, and various land, sea and air vehicles popular among adventurers.

Welcome home. It's different here.

About the Author

Jon F. Zeigler has been a science fiction fan since the cradle (literally). He has been playing roleplaying games since about 1980. In 1988, he discovered *GURPS* and hasn't looked back since. He and his wife and two children live in Maryland, where he works as a computer security consultant. He has written several past books for *GURPS* and has also done freelance work for other games.

ABOUT TRANSHUMAN SPACE

The *Transhuman Space* series presents a unique hard-science and high-biotech universe to roleplay in. Set in the Solar System in the year 2100, it is a setting rich in adventure, mystery, and the exploration of the possibilities of existence. The core book in the line is *Transhuman Space*, written by David L. Pulver. It presents an overview of the Solar System of 2100. *Transhuman Space: Fifth Wave* is the third book in the line. Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *Transhuman Space* setting; future titles will detail Mars and the inner solar system, cover the Deep Beyond outside Mars orbit, and provide more details of the home-world itself.

ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for an SASE. Or check out our website (below).

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE. Or download them from the Web – see below.

Gamer input. We value your comments, for new products as well as updated printings of existing titles!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for an online catalog, errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

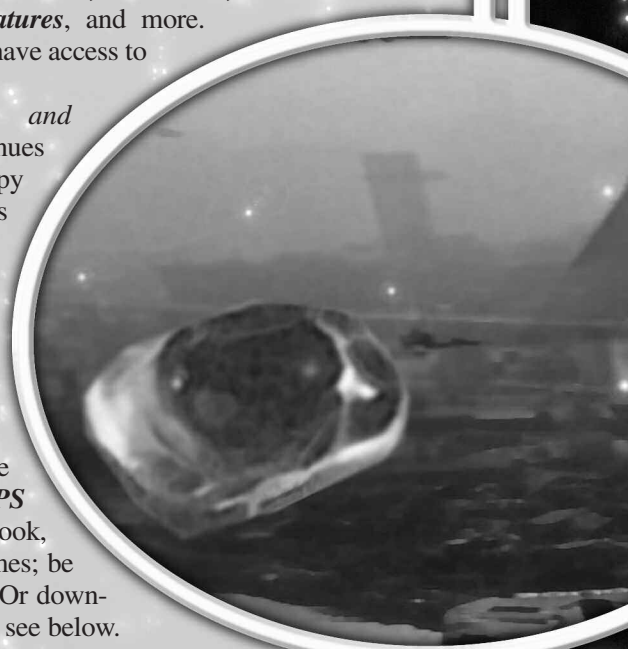
GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, e-mail majordomo@io.com with “subscribe GURPSnet-L” in the body, or point your web browser to gurpsnet.sjgames.com.

The *Transhuman Space* web page can be found at www.sjgames.com/transhuman/.

Page References

See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, for a list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles, or visit our website at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html for the most recent list.

Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B23 refers to page 23 of the *Basic Set*. CI refers to *GURPS Compendium I*, BIO to *GURPS Bio-Tech*, and TS to *Transhuman Space*.



CYBERDEMOCRACY

Since the early 20th century, most representative democracies have seen the rise of mass media as a tool of politics. Politicians advertise themselves to the electorate. Access to the media costs money, usually far more than an individual politician can supply for himself. The result has been the rise of a class of professional politicians, beholden to the wealthy interests which donate money to election campaigns.

Further, even the best (and most honest) professional politicians are only human. The sheer complexity of modern society means that few laws are without unintended consequences, some of them drastic.

One possible solution to these problems has become increasingly popular: *cyberdemocracy*. Cyberdemocracy incorporates certain political forms that have until now been used only by small communities. It draws most of its inspiration from the political constitution of ancient Athens and the structure of New England “town-meeting” democracy. In order to make these institutions work at the nation-state level, cyberdemocracy makes intensive use of AI.

There is a great deal of diversity in cyberdemocratic systems, but most of them share a few common features.

Selection of Officials

Under a cyberdemocratic system, some political offices are no longer filled by direct popular vote. Instead, citizens are chosen to fill each office *at random* from a list of eligible candidates. Eligibility may be limited to citizens who have reached a certain age, who can pass minimal education requirements, who have not been convicted of any crimes, or who fit other reasonable criteria. The selected citizen holds office for a fixed term, after which he returns to private life.

Office-holders selected by lot are almost always political novices. To fill this gap, each official may select a human staff and a set of advanced AI to advise him. This support team collects information, provides legal counsel, helps to draft legislation, and so on. The AI team member is particularly important, designed to avoid bias and give clear, thorough advice. Of course, even with cybernetic support some “amateur politicians” fail as wise and effective officials. For this reason, selection by lot is usually applied only to large councils, such as regional or national legislatures. In such large groups, individuals who are incompetent or politically extreme will tend to be checked by their colleagues.

One variation on this system is to select *candidates* for office at random. For example, if a legislative seat is open, a fixed number of candidates are selected by lot from among the eligible citizens. Each candidate is given AI and human staff support in order to run his campaign, and an equal amount of funding to spend on the media. Campaigns are usually quite short, lasting no more than a few weeks. At the end of this time, the citizens select their legislator through direct popular vote in the traditional fashion. This system does not prevent the intrusion of money into politics –

moneyed interests can still use their own funding to influence the vote. Still, it minimizes the effect of machine politics and preserves the role of citizen voting in the selection process.

Lawmaking

Selection of public officials partially or completely by lot is the most distinctive (and controversial) aspect of cyberdemocracy. More fundamental to the system is the mechanism by which law is made.

Most cyberdemocratic systems require the citizens as a whole to take on the bulk of law-making duties. All citizens are permitted to propose new laws. AI trained in the law are available to help citizens frame sound proposals, and the web is used to make the citizenry aware of proposals under consideration. The level of public support for a proposed law is constantly measured by web-based polling. If a proposal appears to have sufficient support, it can be voted on by the whole citizenry, again through the web.

With the primary responsibility for law-making shifted to the citizens, the formal legislature’s role is reduced. In most cyberdemocracies, the legislature has only limited authority to pass laws without citizen involvement. Instead, it helps *review* proposed laws, killing some proposals and sending others back for reformulation. The citizenry can always override these decisions, given enough public support.

The Cyberdemocratic Experiment

Cyberdemocracy has only recently become feasible, with the appearance of AI sophisticated enough to administer elections and provide the necessary advisory support. The system was first tried in Switzerland, where several canton parliaments were reorganized in the late 2070s. Since then, cyberdemocracy has been adopted by a number of European nations. The European Parliament is itself experimenting with cyberdemocracy; half the delegates are selected by lot, while all receive extensive AI support.

Cyberdemocracy is not without its critics. Many question whether the form can be called “democratic” at all, given the radical change in the way public officials are selected. The fact that AI is so integral to the system at every level is also a matter for concern. Some critics call cyberdemocracy a thin veneer over oligarchic rule by infomorphs. Others point out that the lawmaking and voting processes can be subverted by manipulation of the controlling AI systems.

In Europe, cyberdemocracy has generally been adopted peacefully, as a natural evolution of liberal democracy. In the Americas, the concept has often served as a trigger for political violence. This has been particularly true in the United States, where the growing “People’s Choice” movement faces stiff resistance from the entrenched political class. The movement’s supporters include several urban-insurgency groups, which have fought small but fierce battles against federal forces.

CROSSROADS

Crossroads is a large consulting firm, based in New York City, but with branch offices all over the world. It was founded in the 2020s as an alliance of several smaller consultancies working in various disciplines. Crossroads targets the “social problems” market, attempting to resolve social difficulties brought on by the rapid advance of technology.

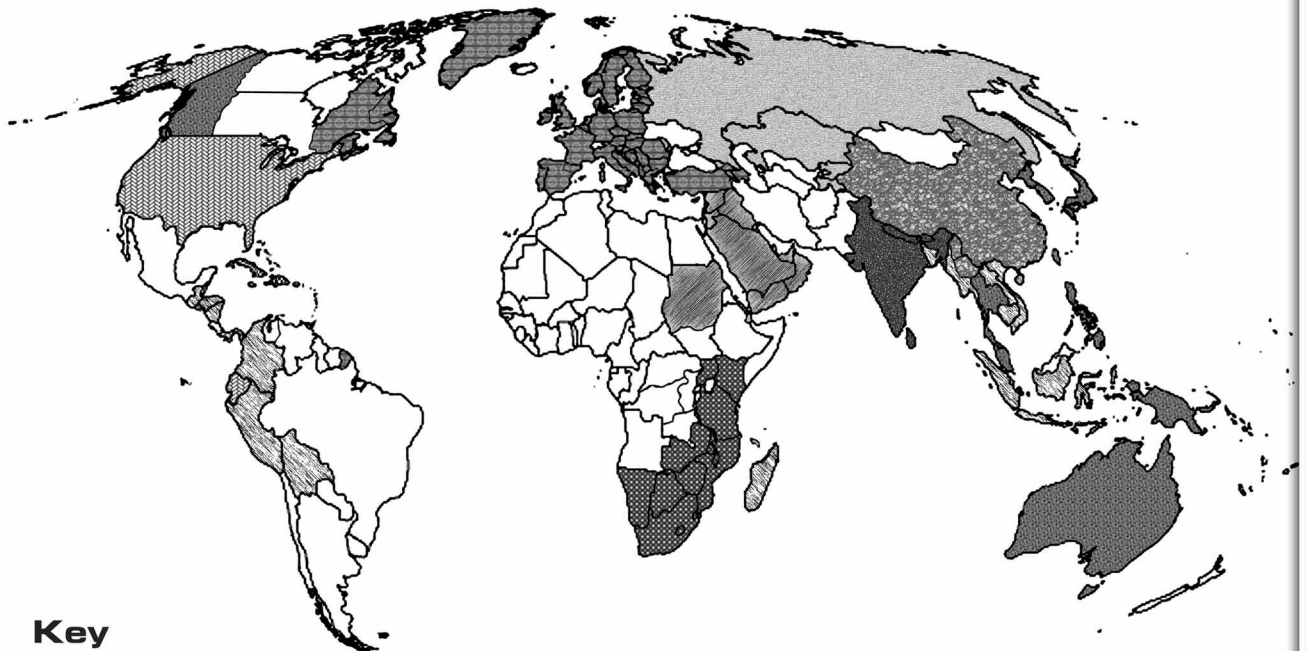
Crossroads consultants work alone or in small teams (a team usually includes at least one attorney, one memetic engineer, and some number of experts in “hard” technology). The usual Crossroads client is a government, or a private institution with at least regional scope. Crossroads consultants are most often called in to study a local situation and recommend economic or social policies. Sometimes they are needed to help mediate a social dispute. While Crossroads tries not to get involved in situations of imminent violence, its consultants have sometimes been caught in the thick of a riot or uprising.

The Crossroads corporate culture is strictly egalitarian; there are few social distinctions between the CEO of the company and its lowliest data analyst. The salary structure is also

remarkably flat, and there is an extensive training-and-education budget for all employees. Crossroads is a superb firm to work for, but it is very selective in recruitment. A potential employee must speak several languages fluently, demonstrate the ability to adapt to different cultural norms, and be willing to travel worldwide on a moment’s notice.

Crossroads has a very good public reputation around the world, based on a solid record of accomplishment in a wide variety of cultural contexts. For example, in 2088 the firm gave the new government of Uganda a comprehensive set of policy recommendations, which have since served to firm up the national economy and resolve long-standing differences between internal factions. Meanwhile, throughout the 2090s Crossroads has been deeply involved in India, helping various local governments deal with ethnic strife and economic difficulties. These efforts have been successful more often than not, and have incidentally done much to keep India stable and out of the nanosocialist camp.

WORLD NATIONS: BY ALLIANCES



Key

- | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| American Bloc | Indian Bloc | South African Coalition |
| Caribbean Union | Islamic Caliphate | Transpacific Socialist Alliance |
| Chinese Bloc | Pacific Rim Alliance | Unaffiliated |
| European Union | Russian Bloc | |

A color version of this map is available on the *Fifth Wave* website, www.sjgames.com/transhuman/fifthwave/.

Spartan**85 points****Attribute Modifiers:** ST+5 [60]; HT+1 [10].**Advantages:** Bioroid Body [0]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Extra Encumbrance [5]; High Pain Threshold [10].**Disadvantages:** Short Lifespan 1 [-10]; Unattractive [-5].**Features:** None.**Date:** 2084. **Cost:** \$160,000.

The Spartan is a typical high-end combat bioroid, with hormone-boostered muscles, reinforced skeleton, reduced pain response, and sharpened reflexes for emergency situations. The most attractive feature of the Spartan is its ability to use heavy infantry support weapons *alone*, without mechanical or personal assistance. The Spartan model was developed in the United States, and is now widespread throughout the Americas. Versions of it can be found in China and have also been pirated by the nanosocialist states.

Xenocop**88 points****Attribute Modifiers:** DX+1 [10]; IQ+1 [10].**Advantages:** Alertness +2 [10]; Attractive [5]; Bioroid Body [0]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Extra Fatigue +3 [9]; Fit [5]; Hard to Kill +2 [10]; Increased Speed 1 [25]; Voice [10].**Disadvantages:** Attentive [-1]; Selfless [-10]; Short Lifespan 1 [-10].**Features:** Taboo Traits (Mental Instability, Unattractiveness).**Date:** 2089. **Cost:** \$138,000.

The Xenocop bioroid design is intended for police and paramilitary situations rather than open combat. Xenocops must be able to work within human communities, overcoming any anti-bioroid prejudice and making contacts with informants. When on patrol, they are alert, tough, and *fast*, able to run down most suspects in short order.

Xenocops were first developed in the United States, but they have become popular in most bioroid-using nations. They are commonly employed by large police departments and private security firms.

UPLIFTED ANIMALS

In recent years, the trend toward uplift of animal species has accelerated. Few observers have been able to keep track of all the existing uplift projects, the more so since some of them are being undertaken in secret. It is possible that *every* animal species of above-average intelligence is in the process of being raised to sentience. The following are some of the new species being produced on Earth today.

Ganesh**305 points****Attribute Modifiers:** ST +240 (Limitation: No fine manipulators on all ST above 15, -40%) [192]; DX+2 [20]; IQ-2 [-15]; HT+6 [80].**Advantages:** Acute Hearing +1 [2]; Alertness +1 [5]; DR 4 [12]; Extra Flexibility (One limb) [5]; Extra Hit Points +22 [110]; Extra Reach (One limb) [10]; Less Sleep 4 [12]; PD 3 [75]; Penetrating Call [5]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Subsonic Speech [20].**Disadvantages:** Bad Grip [-10]; Cannot Jump [0]; Chummy [-5]; Dull [-1]; Horizontal [-10]; Inconvenient Size [-10]; Increased Life Support 2 [-20]; Innumerate [-5]; Mute [-25]; No Depth Perception [-10]; One Fine Manipulator [-15]; Reduced Dodge -7 [-105]; Slow Eater [-10]; Social Stigma (Valuable property) [-10]; Staid [-1]; Stress Atavism (Mild, uncommon) [-6].**Date:** 2081. **Cost:** \$351,000.

Ganeshes are uplifted Asian elephants. The name is common everywhere *except* South Asia; Hindus consider it impious to refer to these genetic constructs by the name of a deity. In India, they are simply called “uplifted elephants.” Ganeshes have become popular work animals in much of Southeast Asia. They are very intelligent, hard-working, patient, and affectionate toward their handlers. Effective beasts of burden, they can assist intelligently with forestry, land reclamation, or construction jobs. Note that the cost of the template is for a zygote engineered from scratch – naturally bred ganeshes are *much* less expensive.

Genetic engineering has reduced the size of the male ganesh’s tusks until they are no longer effective as strikers (female ganeshes have no tusks at all). Other modifications raise the ganesh’s trunk ST slightly, raise its IQ by 2 points, and remove the Bestial and Presentient disadvantages. Side effects include Stress Atavism and reductions in sensory acuity, robustness, and walking speed. All other advantages and disadvantages are those of wild elephants.

Ganesh characters can raise their body ST by buying more ST using the No Fine Manipulators limitation. To raise their trunk ST, they can buy off the limitation from more of their natural ST.

Monkey Plus**-87 points****Attribute Modifiers:** ST -7 [-60]; DX +3 [30]; IQ -3 [-20]; HT +3 [30].**Advantages:** Acute Hearing +2 [4]; Alertness +3 [15]; Brachiator [5]; Decreased Life Support [10]; Extra Arm (No attack) [5]; Fur [4]; Increased Speed [25].**Disadvantages:** Chummy [-5]; Inconvenient Size [-15]; Innumerate [-5]; Reduced Hit Points -7 [-35]; Semi-Upright [-5]; Short Arms [-10]; Short Lifespan 2 [-20]; Sleepy (50% of the time) [-10]; Social Stigma (Valuable property) [-10]; Stuttering [-10]; Weakness (Cold temperatures, 1d per 30 minutes) [-10].**Date:** 2082. **Cost:** \$50,000.

GLOSSARY

The following terms were introduced in this book, and are more or less common on Earth in 2100 (at least in English-speaking nations).

arbitragist: A businessman who specializes in buying and selling items to take advantage of short-lived market imbalances. Usually deals on his own behalf, not as a broker for others.

biotech sanctuary: Place where local law or policy permitted radical experimentation in biological or genetic science in the early part of the 21st century. Many significant advances (and some disasters) took place in the biotech sanctuaries.

cyberdemocracy: Rising political form, in which advanced AIs are used to help the citizens of a democratic society exercise power directly rather than through elected representatives.

cybershell: A piece of computerized equipment, designed to be teleoperated or run by an AI operating system.

decivilization: Trend toward the abandonment and dismantlement of dense urban areas.

developed nations: Nations at or near the leading edge of technological and economic development. In terms of the “wave” terminology, the developed nations include the Fifth Wave societies, and may include some of the Fourth Wave societies as well (depending on context).

developing nations: Nations which are far behind the leading edge of technological and economic development.

eloi: Disparaging term for a member of the leisure class.

exploit: To take advantage of a design or programming flaw in a computer system, gaining unauthorized access. As a noun, *exploit* can mean a specific technique for taking advantage of such a flaw.

freehand: Unskilled laborer who uses AI assistance and VR tags to help him perform skilled tasks.

fringer: Member of any social group which stands outside mainstream society. Fringers include criminal elements, Isolates, and others who wish to avoid the formal structures of modern society.

generational style: Complex of beliefs and behavior patterns shared by a large number of people born within the same few years, but not shared with people born in different eras.

gray goo: The byproduct of a runaway nanotechnology disaster. “Gray goo” is normally used as a tag-phrase for all the supposed dangers of nanotechnology.

hyperdeveloped nations: Nations which are leaders in some area of technological or economic development. The term is somewhat disparaging, implying that local development has been excessive.

infomorph: The AI operating system managing a given cybershell.

infosocialism: Original term for the political philosophy now usually called *nanosocialism*.

Isolate: An individual who chooses to live alone or in a small community, as far away from urban settlement as possible. Isolates often subscribe to unusual beliefs and have detached themselves from mainstream society in order to practice those beliefs in privacy.

kindercomp: A very common piece of computer equipment, a cybershell and infomorph designed to act a child’s companion and teacher.

meme: An idea, or more precisely a unit of cultural information. *Meme* is defined as analogous to *gene*, the unit of information in biological inheritance.

memesplicer: Slang term for a specialist skilled in applying the principles of memetics in order to manipulate individuals or groups. A psychotherapist or propagandist.

memetics: A subfield of psychology, focusing on the semantic content of ideas and the means by which they can be most efficiently spread through human populations. Related to such early disciplines as advertising, pedagogy, and religious proselytism, but made rigorous by a thorough understanding of how the human brain stores and handles information.

mobot: A mobile cybershell.

nanosocialism: Political philosophy first stated by the Australian academic Kyle Porters in 2034. Porters called for the state to seize ownership of all copyrights and patents, and claimed that only the state could properly reward innovation, while still distributing the benefits of such innovation fairly to all.

Old Transhumanists: Surviving members of the earliest Transhumanist movements, dating back to before the turn of the 21st century. The Old Transhumanists were among the first to investigate the potential of life-extension technology, and some of them survived to play a leading role in the Transhuman Awakening and subsequent social trends.

Overturn: Historical period circa 2070-2084, during which the established international order was “overturned” in favor of the modern world system.

parahuman, econiche: A parahuman design intended to live in climate or terrain hostile to unmodified human beings.

parahuman, ideal: A parahuman design intended to meet or promote the demands of a specific ideology.

pelagiculture: Deliberate husbandry of oceanic life forms (fish, kelp, and so on) for the harvesting of food and other resources.

replacement migration: Migration of people from regions of growing population density to regions of static or shrinking population density. Many nation-states which are suffering from a relative lack of native births encourage replacement migration as a matter of policy.

Transhuman Awakening: Historical period circa 2050-2070, characterized by worldwide social upheaval and the first widespread acceptance of Transhumanist principles.

ubiquitous computing: Concept under which computing resources are constantly and transparently available to any citizen.

uplift: Process of granting sapience to animal species.

virtuality node: Data service which specializes in offering a variety of VR environments to its customers.

vulnerability: A design or programming flaw in a computer system, which might allow an attacker to gain unauthorized access or degrade the system’s performance.

Wave: Popular term for the technological complex determining the nature of an entire civilization.

web: The global (and Solar System-wide) network of intercommunicating computers.

weblife: Software agents and infomorphs which exist independently in the web and are capable of self-reproduction.



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