

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HUMAN?

<https://www.bbcearth.com/news/what-does-it-mean-to-be-human>

“It’s a question we have been asking for thousands of years. Priests and poets, philosophers and politicians, scientists and artists have all sought to answer this ultimate puzzle, but all fell short, never able to fully capture the vastness of the human experience.... Why do we behave the way we do? How do we live better? How did we get to now? What is our future?”

“So what is our story? We are one species of primate that emerged from the dry savannahs of East Africa just over 100,000 years ago and began a migration that continues to today ... We had an unusually large brain and held ourselves upright, giving us a high vantage to scan the distant horizon for enemies, and the freedom to use our hands for other purposes. Over time we began to fashion tools.

.... Other animals could communicate, but we evolved astonishing vocal ability, able to create sounds that represented not just

objects, but also concepts. We learned how to express ideas. We could speak of danger, hope, and love. We became storytellers, able to weave together common narratives about who we are and how we should live. From this point on the pace of change was electrifying.

Twelve thousand years ago, we learned how to domesticate plants and other animals for food, and were able to settle in one place. We became a social animal, building complex communities ... learning to trade with each other using a concept called money.

By 2500 years ago, a small group of humans in Southern Europe and the Middle East started to ask big questions about who we were. What is the best way to live? What is a good life? What does it mean to be human? How we responded to these questions is how we built our civilisation, art, and philosophy. Five hundred

years ago, the scientific revolution began, allowing us to harness the resources of our planet to live longer and more productive lives.

When the digital revolution began only 50 years ago, the world shrank. We became a global village, our hopes and dreams converted into an infinite stream of ones and zeroes echoing throughout cyberspace. Today, we stand astride the world as a god, with both the power to destroy our own planet and to create life.

We may even be the last of our species to be fully human as bio-technology and artificial intelligence begin to rip apart the very core of who we are. Indeed, BBC’s Being Human campaign is led by Sophia, an incredible lifelike robot who is developing her own intelligence. She looks human, she sounds human, but she cannot yet think or feel like a human. How many years until she is truly one of us? Or we are one of them?

