



Origination vs Continuation: Ethical Dilemmas of Digital Identity in Robert J. Sawyer's *Mindscan*

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Abstract

Background: Robert J. Sawyer's science fiction novel *Mindscan* explores a future where human consciousness can be uploaded into synthetic bodies, offering technological immortality. This premise forces a critical examination of personal identity, posing the central dilemma of whether such a process constitutes genuine survival ("continuation") or merely creates a sophisticated copy ("origination").

Objective: This paper aims to analyze the ethical, philosophical, and societal tensions arising from digital identity in *Mindscan*. It interrogates the novel's speculation on whether mind-uploading preserves personhood or creates a discrete entity, and it investigates the practical challenges such technology would pose to legal, social, and emotional frameworks.

Methods: The research employs a conceptual analysis of Sawyer's narrative through the critical lenses of philosophers skeptical of human enhancement, primarily Nicholas Agar and Stephen Cave. Their arguments on personal identity and the illusion of technological immortality provide the primary framework, complemented by Mark Coeckelbergh's insights on relational personhood and moral status.

Findings: The analysis concludes that *Mindscan* presents mind-uploading as an "identity illusion" that benefits a copy rather than ensuring the survival of the original biological self. The novel dramatizes the inadequacy of existing legal and social institutions to accommodate digital beings, highlighting issues of rights, inheritance, and discrimination. Furthermore, it critiques how this technology would exacerbate social inequality by making immortality a luxury commodity.

Conclusion: Sawyer's work serves as a cautionary meditation, suggesting that the pursuit of digital immortality through mind-uploading offers a false promise of salvation. It ultimately



underscores that genuine personhood is rooted in spatiotemporal continuity and embodied social interaction, which cannot be replicated by mere pattern duplication.

Novelty: This study moves beyond purely philosophical debates on identity to focus on the *practical implications* of digital consciousness, including legal personhood, economic disparity, and societal integration, as dramatized in a seminal science fiction text.

Keywords: digital identity, mind uploading, origination, continuation, posthumanism

Main Body

Origination vs Continuation: Ethical Dilemmas of Digital Identity in Robert J. Sawyer's *Mindscan*

Robert J. Sawyer's *Mindscan* assumes a hypothetical future where a company named Immortex scans and transfers a person's consciousness into an artificial synthetic body. The original biological version is exiled for good on the far side of the moon. This copied consciousness remains questionable, either to retain its original identity or remain a mere simulation. Several analysts have raised questions on the subjectivity of the replication, thereby elaborating this science fiction to tread on the transhuman world where Artificial Intelligence could at some point, be undeniably surpassing human intelligence.

I contend that there is a societal bias against the non-biological consciousness that questions the idea of personhood and its legal rights on copied, immortal synthetic versions of a human. The gap between the idea of achieving immortality through such beings and the practical acceptance of their propositions demands scrutiny by examining the practical ethical dilemma posed by a digital identity. This paper intends to explore the real-world implications of such technologies.

Not to confuse with the central character in *Mindscan*, Jacob Sullivan, introduces the two of him, one as Jacob, with OB at the end standing for 'original body' and other as Jake, with the final E for 'electric' representing the copied body (Sawyer, 2005, p. 246). While coping a mind became easier than curing one (Sawyer, 2005, p. 242), and that too, as strong as to survive a fall out of an airplane even if the parachute doesn't open (Sawyer, 2005, p. 249). The market for intelligent robot labor is bigger, but the market of uploading consciousness may be still a matter of discussion on what would be produced.

In examining the origination/continuation dilemma in the novel, I will draw the critical ideas of Steven Cave and Nicholas Agar. Both of them express skepticism toward ideas of human enhancement, mind uploading, and technological immortality, questioning the desirability and feasibility of transcending biological limits. Their cautionary stance provides a grounded framework for interrogating the novel's depiction of copied consciousness, which disrupts traditional boundaries of identity and moral responsibility. This skeptical lens challenges the utopian promises made by futurists like Hans Moravec and Ray Kurzweil, who envision a post-biological future where consciousness can be digitized and preserved indefinitely. While Mark Coeckelbergh's relational and responsibility-based approach offers useful insights into the shifting dynamics between humans and technology, his views serve as a complementary



perspective rather than a central one in this analysis. His critique of anthropocentrism and advocacy for techno-regulation help contextualize the broader societal implications, but the emphasis here remains on Cave's and Agar's ethical concerns.

The innate pain of human vulnerability profoundly influences our desire for immortality, manifesting through philosophical, psychological and cultural dimensions. Existentialist thought places that the recognition of our mortality generates a search for transcendence, in which the desire for immortality becomes a means of citing existential anguish. Psychologically, vulnerability shapes our identities and influences our fears about death. Coeckelbergh (2013) explores how our awareness of life's uncertainties promotes a continuous negotiation of oneself, in which the desire for permanence can be understood as an attempt to mitigate the existential terror associated with mortality. He says, we do not want to be vulnerable, or at least not as vulnerable as we are now (Coeckelbergh, 2013, p. 4). This psychological lens reveals that the search for immortality may not simply be to avoid death, but rather an expression of our deep need for reassurance against the intrinsic uncertainties of life. The idea of mind-uploading here promises immortality presenting ideas beyond body's decay. A biological body or a silicon body, the real struggle is the refusal to surrender.

Science fiction has long grappled with mind uploading dilemmas. Mind uploading challenges traditional notions of subjectivity, personhood, and human essence (Hamdan et al., 2012, p. 107). Subjectivity is not confined to biological forms, rather is transferred to an artificial form with digital consciousness. As is said, "...because it is a thinking being, Jake's mind senses the separation that it went through and after being re-embodied is signaling to him a disjointed experience" (Hamdan et al., 2012, p. 106). In his quest for longevity, Jake's organic body is now a machine. It has put forward a possibility of synthesizing complex abstract minds and immortal concrete machines, questioning the Cartesian mind/body dualism (Hamdan et al., 2012, p. 105).

Some transhumanists propose that we dispose of it altogether and upload ourselves. This would mean that we are no longer humans. The fantasy is that we are pure minds, souls without bodies. But Jake's fractured self serves as an example of how the mind-body interaction is essential for making sense of ourselves and the environment.

Amid the possibility of technological singularity, artificial intelligence is in a run to surpass human intelligence. This hypothesis has been exploited by contemporary American science fiction and films that play a role in stigmatizing AI. Some studies portray how the science fiction world shows the posthuman world as a ruthless place with unfeeling beings whose sole purpose is to control and dominate humans. They delve into the idea of "Frankenstein complex" (Shafi & Shafiq, 2023, p. 369) where the human consciousness copied artificial beings might rise against their creators. These technophobic narratives portray the post-humans negatively and stigmatize them as destructive and uncontrollable (Shafi & Shafiq, 2023, p. 370). AI not only poses challenges of job displacement or ethical dilemmas but also creates new opportunities.

Philip Snyder (2005) appreciates Sawyer's ability to handle big ideas like identity, consciousness and personhood. Sawyer blends hard science with humanistic inquiry, yet the



story stays interesting and relatable. He emphasizes how Sawyer uses legal and ethical conflicts to be human, or post-human in an era of technological transcendence. With vivid storytelling, the courtroom drama raises questions about the rights and personhood of ‘consciousness copied’ in a near-indestructible android body. It makes readers think deeply about the future of human identity and contemplate the possible challenges new technology could bring. As he says, “*Mindscan* is a heavy brew of hard SF, blended with enough comedy, romance, and adventure to appeal to a wider audience, as well.” Snyder says that *Mindscan* is both fun to read and makes you think. The book is not only about cool future technology but also about human fears like getting old and dying, and how technology might change our ways to remain alive. Sara Bergstresser (2013) catches the same line to put a valid debatable question about human subjectivity while the body one had, as a child almost gets gone completely at a molecular level. The rhetorical question, Is continuous memory of selfhood the same as being the same self? It remains subtly answered while inking the idea that the legal validity of transferred self and the continuity of selfhood becomes a relevant topic to discuss. Would the digital Self have the same rights as the original? What would happen to the original person if a digital version exists? She also sheds light on the romance between new Karen and Jake, raising questions about the age difference meaning less when the body gets immortal. Her titles ‘bio-Jake’ and ‘neo-Jake’ (Bergstresser, 2013, para. 4) delineate the body/mind dichotomy while being subtle on telling the story to the point.

Unenhanced human by 2060 possibly would be considered intellectually inferior. Humanity would certainly see unprecedented progress, but critics worry about the possible loss of humanity’s core essence. Jake’s instilled consciousness replicates the reduplication problem, suggesting that sameness of pattern is not sufficient for sameness of person. “For any sort of uploading case will give rise to a reduplication problem, for uploaded minds can in principle be downloaded again and again” (Agar, 2013, p. 269). She calls enhancements like uploading to avoid death as suicidal because it lacks a “spatiotemporal continuity” (Agar, 2013, p. 270) which means that a personal identity depends on the uninterrupted, continuous existence of a person’s consciousness over time and space.

In *Spiritual Machines*, Ray Kurzweil (1999) uses Jack’s story to explore questions of identity, continuity and consciousness. “Jack will have the option of scanning his entire brain and neural system and replacing it with electronic circuits of far greater capacity, speed and reliability. There’s also the benefit of keeping a backup copy in case anything happened to physical Jack” (Kurzweil, 1999, pp. 47-55). Similarly, Jake in *Mindscan* undergoes mind transfer to a synthetic body. This reflects a shared science fiction premise that consciousness can be separated from the biological brain. Both stories explore the nature of consciousness as pattern-based and expose how societies would struggle to accept or adapt conscious copies.

Scholarly discussions highlight the text’s engagement with philosophical questions such as the continuity of self, the nature of personhood, the stigmatization of AI in science fiction, and the moral implications of technological immortality. The ethical consideration of digital identity in a post-human world is a prominent question.



There are ample conceptual implications, but the past research misses to delve into the real world with practical issues that could arise from the widespread adoption of digital identity transfer. A significant gap is explored in the practical challenge of integrating digital identities in a functioning society. Legal questions of inheritance, criminal responsibility or citizenship, economic issues related to property ownership, social misfit about being a non-biological identity, relationship crises, and new dynamics of communal structures would be major questions to be addressed. The practical implications and ethical dilemmas of adopting such advanced technology remain a subject of study in the present paper.

To reiterate my claim, Robert J. Sawyer's *Mindscan* dramatizes the ethical tension between origination and continuation in digital identity by challenging the notion of personal identity preservation through mind uploading, raises profound moral dilemmas about what it means to be the same person in a digital form and raises critical questions about consent, authenticity, and legal recognition in the age of digital consciousness.

Discussion

The evolution of the concept of self, in particular in relation to personal identity, has undergone significant transformations from the philosophical picture of John Locke to the modern theory of models. The Empirical Foundation of Locke positions personal identity in terms of consciousness and memory, proposing that it is not the substance of the soul or body that constitutes identity, but rather the continuity of consciousness. This perspective laid the foundations for subsequent discussions on the self, underlining the psychological continuity on simple physical or metaphysical statements (Bermudez, 2010, p. 98).

Robert J. Sawyer's *Mindscan* dramatizes one of the most urgent ethical and philosophical dilemmas of speculative fiction: whether transferring consciousness into a synthetic body can truly preserve identity, grant immortality, or merely create a convincing copy. As Coeckelbergh (2013) puts it, digital immortality is a desire to be uploaded to cyberspace to avoid the vulnerabilities related to bodily existence (p. 3). "Death is odd. On the one hand, our old brain is programmed to fear it, yet our bodies are programmed to die" (Hawkins, 2019, p. 188). Through a carefully layered narrative, the novel explores whether mind-uploading is genuine self-preservation to overcome this fear of immortality. Other part of the coin examines if the enhancement is ethically coherent when it benefits a digital duplicate rather than the biological person.

The transferring of a person's consciousness into an artificial synthetic body is a procedure that produces ambivalent results about what humans are and can do with the humans. John Sugiyama, the vice-president at Immortex says, "We'll provide you with an artificial body – one that's infinitely maintainable, infinitely repairable, and infinitely upgradeable" (Sawyer, 2005, p. 10). This complex interference of the technical and material embodiment challenges the practical implication of such being in a societal frame. Perhaps humans will voluntarily become hybridizations, beginning with enhancements. Kurzweil (2024) suggests that we will become cyborgs, upload ourselves, have nanobots in our bloodstream, and enjoy nonbiological



experiences – whatever the means. To get another body, not just cyborgization but a whole non-biological being, a copied consciousness would leave ample space to question one's personhood, legality, identity, and sociobiology in total.

When read alongside Stephen Cave's (2020) analysis of how narratives of technological immortality draw power from human existential fear, and Nicholas Agar's (2013) critique of enhancement and personal identity, *Mindscan* emerges as a skeptical and deeply human examination of what it means to survive beyond the body.

Sawyer's narrative explores the emotional and existential consequences of these philosophical tensions. The synthetic Jake enjoys new capabilities (Sawyer, 2005, p. 21), including improved reflexes and endurance, highlighting Agar's point that enhancement benefits the copy rather than the biological self who originally feared death (Agar, 2013, p. 185). The biological Jake's decline makes tangible Cave's critique that mind-uploading narratives fail to ease existential suffering for those who remain mortal (Cave, 2020, p. 313). The synthetic Jake's moments of doubt—"Is this really me?" (Sawyer, 2005, p. 25)—mirror Agar's philosophical challenge: subjective conviction cannot resolve the metaphysical gap between copy and self (Agar, 2013, p. 188). Even the synthetic Jake's love for his mother and Karen feels real (Sawyer, 2005, p. 26), but as Agar (2013) cautions, authentic emotions do not prove continuity of personal identity if the self that feels them is a new being (p. 187).

The story begins with protagonist Jake Sullivan's terror of inheriting Katerinsky's syndrome, the same brain illness that destroyed his father's mind. Faced with the devastating thought—"You mean I might end up like Dad?" (Sawyer, 2005, p. 5)—Jake sees his own mortality reflected in his father's decline. Cave (2020) describes how such profound fear is fertile ground for "transcendence narratives," which promise salvation by escaping biological limits (pp. 311–312). Immortex, the company offering mind-uploading, exploits this fear perfectly. Sugiyama, its charismatic founder and himself an uploaded mind, reassures clients that the synthetic copy "won't wear out... won't die. The new you will live potentially forever" (Sawyer, 2005, p. 10). This promise, while seductive, embodies what Cave (2020) critiques as a cultural mythology built around overcoming death technologically, rather than confronting its inevitability (pp. 313–314).

Yet from the beginning, Sawyer embeds skepticism into Sugiyama's sales pitch. Sugiyama admits candidly that the mind-uploading process creates two individuals: "From the moment the synthetic body is activated, there will be two of you..." (Sawyer, 2005, p. 11). This moment crystallizes Agar's (2013) philosophical objection: copying the mind—even flawlessly—does not transfer the self; it produces a distinct being whose psychological continuity is insufficient for true survival (pp. 186–187). Jake's acceptance of the process—motivated by the desperate hope to escape disease and death (Sawyer, 2005, pp. 14–15)—aligns with what Cave (2020) terms the cultural compulsion to "deny the finality of death" (p. 313). Jake explains to his worried mother, "They – see, you transfer the legal rights of personhood to the copy. And then after that, the biological you has to retire from society" (Sawyer, 2005, p. 18). Sawyer thus situates Jake's choice within a broader cultural and philosophical context of refusing mortality, while hinting at its flaws.



Sawyer weaves this tension through the novel's key events. At Immortex (Sawyer, 2005, pp. 6–12), Jake hears the promise of enhancement: his synthetic body will not age, tire, or die, and its neural net can be upgraded over time. This promise is the purest form of what Agar (2013) calls an “enhancement of a copy” (p. 185), since the biological self—flesh and brain—remains mortal. Immortex's moon colony, High Eden (Sawyer, 2005, p. 12), offered as a “retirement home” for biological originals, reinforces Agar's (2013) critique of “copy-and-abandon” ethics (p. 185): the biological Jake is exiled to wait for natural death while his synthetic duplicate lives on Earth.

The pivotal scan itself marks the precise moment when psychological information is transferred, but metaphysical identity is not (Sawyer, 2005, p. 19). The synthetic Jake awakens (Sawyer, 2005, p. 20), filled with the conviction of being the same person, echoing Agar's (2013) observation that “psychological continuity can fool us into believing we have survived” (p. 187). This raises the paradox at the novel's heart: the synthetic Jake remembers, loves, and feels as Jake Sullivan—but is he truly Jake?

Two entities, each feeling they are the same, but the first impulse to respond as original would be the flesh-and-blood one. Cave (2020) puts it, “A person could have multiple uploads made, providing further insurance against destruction” (p. 316). Sugiyama defends on which to be considered the real one, the one that suffers aches and pains, the one that has trouble sleeping through the night, the one that is frail and old, or the vigorous one in full possession of all the mental and physical faculties (Sawyer, 2005, p. 12). On this line, Moravec says that with widely dispersed copies, permanent death would be improbable (as cited in Cave, 2020, p. 112). Buying a machine and reloading all our old software would be like giving a better software platform to the degrading body and saving the programs that run as human consciousness. It would not stop there, for the new and the old would tussle in between replicating consciousness or copied consciousness.

Sawyer deepens this paradox by exploring relationships and social perceptions. The synthetic Jake meets Karen, another upload, and they bond over their shared fear and hope (Sawyer, 2005, pp. 6–7). Yet the biological Jake, alive and deteriorating, sues to reclaim his identity (Sawyer, 2005, p. 22), dramatizing what Agar (2013) identifies as the conflict between original and copy, both claiming to be the same person (p. 186). The legal battle brings into sharp relief Cave's (2020) argument that identity is not merely an internal psychological state but is recognized and negotiated socially (p. 316). Society itself fractures under this question, as public debate reveals an inability to decide if uploads truly deserve human rights (Sawyer, 2005, p. 24).

The courtroom drama in *Mindscan* is no less interesting where Karen Bessarian, a synthetic copy of the famous writer of the same name, gets her will probated by her son, Tyler Horowitz. The Transfer of legal personhood had never been challenged until then. Horowitz claims, “There is no continuity of personhood . . . they have divergent experiences. This copy is no more my mother than my mother's identical twin sister, if she'd one, would be my mother (Sawyer, 2005, p. 170). Mind uploading is merely made look attractive out of certain narratives. Stephen Cave's (2020) Aladdin's Lamp narrative (p. 319), represent a time of boundless wish



fulfillment. Borrowing Moravec's idea, another narrative is the exponentialism (Cave, 2020, p. 320), where the rate of technological progress is increasing in a way that makes it inevitable that all problems will be solved. Moreover, in the narrative of pronominal continuity, Cave (2020) clarifies that the person who emerges from a mind-uploading process is not the same person as the original who was supposed to be uploaded, in which case this process would not be a route to immortality at all (p. 320). The line between personhood and nonpersonhood pertains to remain a practical as well as philosophical challenge in bioethics.

Referring to critics like Jeff Hawkins (2019), a copy of our brain would not be us. It would be a new person who think they are us. He explains, consciousness, like intelligence, is not something that can be uploaded, because it depends on the structure of the neocortex and its ongoing interactions with the world (Hawkins, 2019, p. 190). Simply copying brain data wouldn't recreate the experience of sense of self. Consciousness is rather aroused from the way brain is physically structured and how it constantly interacts with the world. Hawkins (2019) questions, "How can we detect and measure everything in sufficient detail to recreate you in a computer? The human brain has about one hundred billion neurons and several hundred trillion synapses (pp. 189-190). This significant question about the real life applicability of the process of mindscan remains skeptical.

On the other hand, Chalmers (2009) does not take a hard yes or no position. He argues if computationalism is correct, upload is possible while he says, accurate simulation of neural behavior and dynamics might result in emulation of the original brain (p. 34). The idea of transferring consciousness should however be gradual. Without consciousness, the copy would be a life of greatly diminished meaning and value, a mere zombified existence (Chalmers, 2009, p. 35). Andrew Porter, a Ph. D. in cognitive science, a witness from Immortex, elaborates how it is not possible to actually scan the configuration of cellular automata, but the interconnections of every neuron in our brain can be recorded (Sawyer, 2005, pp. 160-161).

Sawyer's close attention to the social dimension of identity intensifies the ethical critique. The biological Jake's family ties unravel (Sawyer, 2005, p. 23), showing that personal identity is not merely an internal construct but is confirmed through relationships. Cave (2020) emphasizes that "identity is shaped by embodied interaction within society" (p. 316), a truth the novel reveals through the alienation of both Jakes. The legal system, unable to choose between the biological and synthetic Jakes (Sawyer, 2005, p. 24), reflects the inadequacy of current ethical and legal frameworks to address technological copying.

The narrative also stages events that expose the seductive but flawed promise of immortality. Sugiyama, himself an upload, defends pattern continuity as sufficient (Sawyer, 2005, p. 11), echoing patternist theories in philosophy of mind. Yet Sawyer undermines this by showing that the biological Jake, who first feared death, still dies, while the synthetic Jake, enhanced and immortal, is ultimately someone else. The synthetic Jake's growing perception of his difference from ordinary humans suggests that the copied mind (Sawyer, 2005, p. 27), even if it begins as similar, inevitably becomes another person. Karen's parallel story—she too fears that her biological self will soon die—reinforces the tragedy that copying does not save the self that fears death.



In the final chapters, Sawyer does not resolve these contradictions. The biological Jake's acceptance of mortality (Sawyer, 2005, p. 30) stands as a quiet counterpoint to the synthetic Jake's extended existence. This unresolved ending aligns with Cave's (2020) insight that mind-uploading narratives "soothe rather than solve" the existential fear of death (p. 316). The question remains: does continuity of memory and personality constitute survival, or does true personal identity demand the irreducible continuity of the biological self?

Through these interwoven events and reflections, *Mindscan* articulates what Agar and Cave both argue: mind-uploading offers the appearance of immortality without real survival, enhancement that benefits copies not originals, and identity without embodied continuity. By dramatizing the legal, social, and emotional consequences of copying consciousness, Sawyer's novel reveals the deep ethical contradictions behind technological promises to conquer death. There's something we can learn from Nicholas Agar's (2013) Betelgeuse Thought Experiment. In this, extraterrestrials scan and create molecule-for-molecule duplicates of Earthlings on a distant planet, subjecting these replicas to experiments. The key is that the scanning process leaves the original Earthlings entirely unaffected (Agar, 2013, pp. 185-86). Agar (2013) suggests a shared intuition that the Betelgeuse replicas are not identical to any Earth-dwelling human (p. 186). The copying is "epiphenomenal" to the original and there is no sense in which the original would experience the copy. Sawyer's *Mindscan* also has High Eden, a retirement village on the far side of the moon (Sawyer, 2005, p. 13). The earth is left to be inhabited by the copied ones while the real humans are taken to the far dark side of the moon to never come back. The blood-and-flesh humans would be sent to High Eden, claimed to offer unsurpassed luxury, it could not excite humans. Jake sounds helpless as he says, "No – not checked in. Moved in. And there was no moving out (Sawyer, 2005, p. 81). A critical question remains on how long the copied embodiments would remain on earth enjoying immortality. Look at how Karen says to Jake, "... a thousand years from now, I'll be less than 105% of your age. And we both expect to be around a thousand years from now, don't we (Sawyer, 2005, p. 83)? Let us now try to explain the Illusion of Survival by Copying. The strong intuition that identity translates to the copied individual upon destruction of the original is due to how the copied individual feels about their identities. Agar (2013) explains this as an "identity illusion" similar to optical illusions (pp. 193-94). While our "identity sense" is generally reliable, circumstances like copying can fool it. Mere transferring personhood from a biological mind into a nanogel matrix (Sawyer, 2005, p. 157), would not truly preserve the original, rather just create someone like the original.

The deep rooted anxieties about identity and personhood reflected by the uploaded minds aligns with Mark Coeckelbergh's (2013) philosophical work on technology and moral status. Coeckelbergh (2013) argues that moral consideration is often tied to embodiment and perceived authenticity, meaning that even when posthuman beings are functionally identical to humans, they are still denied full rights due to ontological biases (p. 89). Sawyer's narrative shows how legal and social institutions lag behind technological change, reinforcing discrimination by refusing to recognize uploaded minds as legitimate persons. Coeckelbergh (2013) would likely critique this as a failure to ethical imagination, where society clings to



rigid definitions of humanity rather than adapting to new forms of existence (p. 76). *Mindscan* thus serves as a cautionary tale, demonstrating how discrimination persists when institutions and cultural narratives resist redefining personhood in more inclusive ways. The synthetic body in *Mindscan* worsen social hierarchies, turning immortality into a privilege of the wealthy. Jake Sullivan calls the procedure to cost a fortune (Sawyer, 2005, p. 31). Only the wealthy could afford to cheat the death. It is a luxury commodity rather than a universal right. The years long waiting list (Sawyer, 2005, p. 89), the question on why should the rich live forever and rest rot (Sawyer, 2005, p. 112), and the immortality for the 1% (Sawyer, 2005, p. 156), clearly reflect that the luxury goods highlight its inaccessibility to the working class. Like *Mindscan*'s wealthy elites, the first mind transfers will be expensive, but will open door to indefinite lifespans (Moravec, 1999, p. 145) if it would ever be done.

Lastly, Stuart Russell's (2019) "off-switch game" relates to the fate of original Jacob in *Mindscan* where electronic Jake murders his biological counterpart (Sawyer, 2005, p. 179). AI is supposed to preserve human agency. It should allow itself to be turned off if humans choose, but, an AI that wants to achieve its goal might disable its off-switch to prevent humans from interrupting it, as in the example of Robbie's coffee analogy (Russell, 2019, pp. 182-84). This demonstrates how easily digital consciousness could exploit its power over biological humans, a scenario Russell warns about an unchecked AI.

Conclusion

To conclude, Sawyer's *Mindscan* offers an extensive interrogation of the relationship between technological progress and the question of human identity. By staging the dramatic transfer of consciousness from biological to synthetic form, Sawyer compels us to ask: Is digital immortality genuine survival or merely the illusion of it?

Sawyer's narrative is anchored in the philosophical and existential anxieties that propel humanity's pursuit of immortality. Mind-uploading, as dramatized in the novel, capitalizes on deep-seated fears of vulnerability and death. The technological transcendence, embodied in Immortex's promise of an indestructible, infinitely upgradeable body, reflects a widespread cultural compulsion to deny mortality. However, *Mindscan* repeatedly surfaces skepticism about whether such mind-uploading is true self-preservation or simply the creation of a convincing duplicate. The distinction between "origination" (the biological self) and "continuation" (the digital copy) is at once subtle and, for Sawyer, ethically urgent.

Sawyer uses legal battles and social unraveling to show the inadequacies of contemporary frameworks in the face of digital identities. Both synthetic and biological Jakes lay claim to legal personhood and familial roles, yet the law and society stumble over how to arbitrate these unprecedented disputes. Is the upload entitled to inherited property and relationships, or is the connection irrevocably severed? Karen Bessarian's probate case underscores the deep practical and emotional costs of copying consciousness: families fracture, societal trust frays, and our concepts of justice and responsibility are exposed as hopelessly inadequate.



Beyond the law, *Mindscan* dwells on the relational and embodied roots of identity. As both Jakes experience alienation, from each other, from society and even from self. The narrative of Coeckelbergh's (2013) insight that identity is socially constructed, confirmed in our embodied interactions, rather than simply "patterned" into code. The enhanced copy lives, enjoys, and grows beyond the frail humanity it was modeled after, but it is another being entirely. Genuine personhood, as critics like Agar and Cave maintain, demands not just remembered experiences, but a continuous, embodied, spatiotemporal existence.

The synthetic body in *Mindscan* exclusively intensifies social hierarchies turning immortality into a privilege of the wealthy. Moreover, when life extending technologies become market commodities, they replicate existing power structures.

Importantly, *Mindscan* warns that the technological "resolution" to death is, at best ambiguous comfort: digital continuity might soothe the fear of dying but cannot dissolve the metaphysical divide between copy and origin. Pattern sameness does not equate to personal sameness.

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