



Mad Scientist, Impossible Human: An Essay in Generative Anthropology

Andrew Bartlett

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The myth of the modern scientist playing God-the-creator asks how does the human come into being? Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein, H. G. Wells' Dr. Moreau, the engineers in Capek's R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots) and the genetic engineer Tyrell in Blade Runner all aim to re-make the origin of the human, as if human reality could be invented and discovered by science alone. But when the human becomes nothing but an object of science, the object is no longer human – for humans act as sacred, esthetic, and erotic objects to and for each other. Frankenstein and his heirs incarnate not technology in the service of human exchange, but scientism in denial of the uniqueness of the human. His victims are “impossible” because he makes them serve his historical purposes; it is impossible for them to enter history as our equals. This ambitious analysis restores the power of the Frankenstein myth, showing us anew how it can shock us with the horrors of scientism. Whatever else humans are, they cannot be made from matter alone, built in factories, or reduced to DNA. Humans make one another human by exchanging signs of resentment and love, signs that transcend physical reality.



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