Gregg Braden asks the question: do we want to relinquish our humanity, without even knowing what it means to embrace that capacity?

TRANSCRIPT (Gregg Braden)

It’s a moral question. How much of this do we have the right to relinquish? How much do we choose to relinquish? But we can’t even make those decisions if we don’t know what it means to be human. So this conversation is an invitation just to be aware that it’s more than just being able to talk to your computer through your mind.

It’s happening right now. One generation. There’s a battle unfolding and many people don’t know the battle even exists. Yet they are part of the battle because they are willing to embrace this. And other cultures are doing it. Japan, you mentioned, not singling them out, but they are on the forefront. You can marry an AI robot. Many couples are opting for artificially intelligent robotic children, rather the conceiving their own children, because they get to care for them when it’s convenient. And then when it’s not, because they’re very career-oriented, you don’t have to worry about that.

But at the same time, beautiful example, look at what’s happening. The birth rate is declining. Sterility in men, men are becoming more sterile. Women’s fertility rates are dropping. They don’t know if there is a correlation. They
suspect there’s a correlation and this is one of the places where they’re really looking into this. But this is just one example of how can we possibly make these kinds of decisions until we know what it means to be human. And if we don’t know what it means, why would we give it away? Why would we relinquish this extraordinary capacity given no other form of life, without even knowing what it means to embrace that capacity?

I live in a rural community, northern New Mexico. I go to a little Co-op for my groceries. I was behind a man in line who had a lot of groceries. And he went to pay for his groceries and I watched this happen. He pushed up his sleeve and he rolled his sleeve over a scanner and checked out. And I asked the cashier, I said, what did I just see? And he says, yeah, it’s kind of weird, isn’t it? And I said, what happened? He said he has an infrared tattoo in his wrist that is linked to his credit card and his bank account. And he just charged these groceries to his bank account.

And I’m not saying it’s right wrong, good or bad, but I’m saying as we embrace and become so plugged into that technology, how does it change the way we think about ourselves and our humanness? And the digital technology, you know, we are more connected than we’ve ever been and yet we feel more alone and more separate. Young people spend so much time communicating digitally, emotionally they’re not getting those connections.

And relationships now are developing digitally to the point where you can have a full-blown relationship, even an intimate sexual relationship online, and never, never be in the presence of another person. That’s all done digitally, through accouterments and gadgets that are controlled remotely, and things like that. And we lose the ability to have that intimacy. So is that really something that we want to give up as a species?