The Human Instrumentality Project In The *Rebuild of Evangelion*

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Abstract

"The Human Instrumentality Project" in the *Rebuild of Evangelion* is a multi-faceted ideology that directly correlates to transhumanism and positions human suffering as the key driving force behind the transhumanist project. The project is primarily orchestrated by the organization

SEELE, who intend to replicate the events of the second impact through technological means coining ’The Third Impact’ with the objective of merging all humans with the Divine being known as Lilith to achieve a posthuman state. Thus, this reflects the ultimate objectives of transhumanism as outlined by theorists including Sorgner and Bostrom, respectively.

SEELE’s rationale is founded on the transhumanist and posthumanist ideology that individual existence results in inevitable suffering, subsequently through technological means of synchronization, they believe that the merging of all consciousness into one entity with the Lilith will enable society to overcome human limitations as well as eradicate suffering and death by merging human consciousness with the Lilith. Additionally, NERV leader Commander Gendo personal motivation in the project is directly connected with his desire to reunite with his deceased wife, Yui Ikari who was killed during the events of ‘The Second Impact.’ Commander Ikari believes that by achieving SEELE’s project goals, he can transcend the limitations of human existence to reunify with Yui in a new form of existence through the synchronization technology of the Evangelion units. As a result, Anno utilizes Gendo Ikari’s motivations to illustrate that trauma serves as a significant catalyst for pursuing transhumanist ideals, where the boundaries of life and consciousness are expanded and significantly altered.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the multi-faceted concept of the Human Instrumentality Project and its connections to transhumanism, focusing on the motivations of SEELE and Commander Gendo Ikari, and how trauma plays a pivotal role in driving these ambitions. This paper continues from the author’s foundational work, which analyzed The Second Impact, Tokyo-3, and the concept of synchronization. By understanding the context of The Second Impact and the subsequent establishment of Tokyo-3, as well as the synchronization technology that forms the basis of piloting, we gain crucial insights into how these elements set the stage for the ultimate transhumanist vision embodied in the Human Instrumentality Project. This paper therefore, broadens the discussion by examining how the culmination of these previous events and technologies leads to the ultimate posthuman vision of SEELE and the deeply driving motivations of Commander Ikari, positioning these catalysts within the larger philosophical and ethical discourse of transhumanism.

Figure 4.1 Lilith's Introduction in *Evangelion 1.0: You are (Not) Alone*

Figure 4.1 shows Lilith's initial emergence in the *Rebuild of Evangelion* movies. Although the first installment, *Evangelion 1.0: You Are (Not) Alone*, closely replicates the beginning episodes of the original series, it differs by presenting Lilith much sooner. Conversely, Lilith and "The Human Instrumentality Project" are disclosed much later in the original series and movies. By highlighting Lilith in the initial segment, Anno redefines her as a visual signifier of humanity's elevation, highlighting radical transhumanist ideologies that drive NERV and SEELE's objectives. This denotative depiction of Lilith as a restrained divine force serves as the foundation for her connotative significance, where Lilith's semiotic resonance extends beyond the literal meaning to represent SEELE and NERV's profound desire for transcendence and unification, encapsulating the philosophical and existential tensions within "instrumentality." This denotative depiction of Lilith as a restrained divine force serves as the foundation for her connotative significance, where her symbolic resonance extends beyond the literal confines to embody SEELE's profound desire for Kurzweil's concept of posthuman singularity. At a connotative level, Lilith signifies the aspiration to transcend human limitations through unification with a divine entity—reflecting the ultimate goals of the 'Human Instrumentality

Project' through merging with Lilith to reach the ultimate posthuman stage. This signified meaning becomes evident as Misato introduces Shinji to Lilith early in the narrative, positioning Lilith as an essential element in the transhumanist quest undertaken by NERV and SEELE. It is important to note that Lilith is absent from traditional Christian theology; Lilith originates from Jewish mythology as Adam's first wife, who defied both Adam and God by leaving Eden (Nicholas, 2020). Lilith's exclusion from the Christian biblical canon serves to create a more coherent narrative based on Adam and Eve. Anno's choice to incorporate Lilith within *Evangelion* emphasizes the theme of rebellion and autonomy—elements that are essential to the transhumanist vision depicted in the series. The relationship between the signifier (Lilith's literal representation) and the signified (the transhumanist desire for transcendence and transgression against divine limits) is crucial to comprehending Lilith's role within the narrative, as it highlights the conflict between humanity's limitations and its aspiration to transcend human limitations, echoing the films' broader exploration of technological evolution and human transformation.

Expanding upon Barthes' model in the introduction Lilith, Kress and Van Leeuwen's metafunctions assist expand Lilith's role in the context of transhumanism. The representational metafunction of Figure 4.1, depicting Lilith in a crucifixion pose, with the 'Spear of Longinus' impaled through her, evoking imagery that is immediately reminiscent of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The impaling of Lilith, once again the spear used in Christ's crucifixion, reinforces the idea of transcending human limitations through divine means, but also warns of the inherent suffering that comes with such pursuits. The act of impaling is echoed earlier in the narrative with Adam during The Second Impact, represented in Figure 2.1, where the Angel Adam is similarly subjected to this treatment. Both instances reflect humanity's repeated attempts to control and manipulate the divine to achieve their own ends, whilst the failure to restrain Adam leading to 'The Second Impact' foreshadows the same consequences. This connection between Adam and Lilith suggests a recurring theme of transgression and suffering—a reminder of the cost of overreaching divine boundaries. This alignment with the first Angel Adam also resonates with Greene's (2022) discussion of Christian symbolism in *Evangelion*. Greene argues that the use of crucifixion imagery serves as a visual representation of humanity's struggle to overcome its limitations. By depicting both Adam and Lilith impaled by the spear, Anno emphasizes that the pursuit of power through technological means often requires significant sacrifice—both on a

personal level and a collective one. The crucifixion imagery evokes the Christian notion of atonement through suffering, suggesting that humanity's quest for transcendence is inevitably tied to profound trauma and loss.

In contemporary transhumanist discussions, similar ethical and existential concerns arise, particularly around technologies like genetic engineering and cloning. The desire to enhance human capacities—such as intelligence, longevity, or physical strength—echoes the transhumanist ambitions depicted in Figure 4.1, where humanity seeks to transcend its biological limitations through radical means. Nonetheless, like Lilith's crucifixion, these aspirations often come with hidden risks. For example, advancements in genetic engineering, including CRISPR, present possibilities for human augmentation but raise significant ethical dilemmas around identity, inequality, and unforeseen consequences. Shatzer (2019) discusses how CRISPR, as a tool for rewriting genetic conventions, reflects humanity's transgressive desire to manipulate foundational aspects of life, echoing Anno's portrayal of impaling divine entities to achieve SEELE's perspective of singularity and "instrumentality". This pursuit of power illustrated in the representational metafunction reflects the essence of life mirrors humanity's ambition in the series, where such overreach risks devastating repercussions. Both in *Evangelion* and in modern technological discourse, these ambitions reveal a willingness to alter core aspects of existence without fully comprehending the ethical and existential costs.

The interactive metafunction between Lilith and the viewer is established through several key visual elements, drawing from both Christian and Shinbutsu-Shugo concepts. The low angle shot places Shinji and Misato in a position of reverence as they gaze upward at Lilith, visually framing her as a divine beimg distinct from humanity. While the visual signifier of Lilith's crucifixion is derived from Christian iconography, suggesting sacrifice and divinity, the underlying signified meaning is embedded with Shinbutsu-Shugo concepts. In the context of Shinbutsu-Shugo, the notion of suffering arises from Susanoo's disruption of harmony between the human and divine realms (Dumpert, 1998). This disturbance is triggered by the activities of NERV and SEELE leading to 'The Second Impact.' The positioning of Shinji and Misato in the foreground, with Lilith looming above them, highlights this separation between the human and divine realms, emphasizing the inherent imbalance created by humanity's attempts to transcend its natural state. By positioning the characters below and Lilith in an elevated divine position,

Anno visualizes the disconnection between humanity and the sacred. The image evokes the consequence of these transgressive actions—the continuing of human suffering through the violation of natural boundaries and the pursuit of forbidden knowledge and power. This positioning also suggests a loss of balance and order, aligning with Shinbutsu-Shugo beliefs that suffering is a direct result of disturbing the natural harmony of existence.

In Figure 4.1, human identity and individuality are depicted as sacrifices necessary for achieving transhumanist goals from NERV's perspective. This aligns with Garner and Shatzer's concerns about the ethical implications of using technology to such an extent. Garner and Shatzer, from a Christian perspective, argue that technology must align with moral and ethical principles, emphasizing the sanctity of human life and the inherent goodness of creation. Gartner and Shatzer caution that technology, if used without ethical restrictions, can lead to the dissolution of humanity. This concern is vividly portrayed in the scene with Lilith, where the imagery of crucifixion—a powerful symbol of sacrifice and redemption in Christianity—is repurposed to highlight the potential loss of individuality and humanity in the pursuit of transhumanist goals. The auditory dialogue semiotics complement the visual elements of the scene. When Misato introduces Shinji to Lilith, she explains that the Eva units are humanity's salvation following the destruction of 'The Second Impact.' She states, "If we have to sacrifice ourselves for humanity to prevent the third impact, we will do it." This dialogue, accompanied by a slow panning shot highlighting Lilith in a crucified and impaled position, reiterates the themes of sacrifice and the divine potential of technology. This visual and auditory interplay resonates deeply with Garner and Shatzer's Christian perspectives on technology. Shatzer's theory underscores that humans are created under Imago Dei (the image of God), and any technological advancement must respect this divine image. The scene with Lilith highlights the tension between using technology for humanity's benefit and the ethical risks of altering human nature. The crucifixion imagery suggests that pursuing transhumanist goals may lead to significant ethical compromises, aligning with Shatzer's caution against technology that significantly alters human functions and identity.

The narrative progression leading up to Figure 4.1 provides context for these theories, illustrating how they are developed and explored within the narrative. Initially resistant, Shinji retreats from his role as a pilot, embodying internal conflict and trauma-driven reluctance. Misato persuades Shinji at NERV headquarters, marking a pivotal moment of reluctant acceptance that symbolizes

his internal conflict and eventual submission to technology's transformative potential. This synchronization with Evangelion Unit 1 signifies a merging, highlighting the human struggle between autonomy and technological transcendence.

Anno's concealing composition of Lilith's face highlights the attraction and underlying dangers that Scheidt asserts about the transhumanist idea of mind-uploading, which presents the potential to surpass death while also provoking deep inquiries about the genuineness of a digitally transferred identity. This concept aligns with Anno's visual arrangement; Lilith's hidden face, concealed by the SEELE logo, represents the intrinsic dangers associated with SEELE's transhumanist goals and the moral intricacies involved. Mind-uploading technology obscures critical issues related to identity, consciousness, and the implications of detaching the self from the physical body. Scheidt (2015) argues that the disconnection of consciousness from the body fundamentally disrupts conventional perspectives on identity and experience. This corresponds with the Shinbutsu-Shugo idea of anatta, which perceives the self as a dynamic and constantly changing process rather than a static essence. By converting identity into digital information, mind-uploading interrupts the continuity of self, implying that an uploaded consciousness might simply be a copy, devoid of the richness and genuineness of lived experience. Seen from this perspective, Lilith's hiding and the concept of mind-uploading highlight the deep ethical and existential dilemmas that emerge from the quest for transhumanist ideals.

Thus, the analysis of Figure 4.1 provides a comprehensive understanding of Lilith's symbolic role within *The Rebuild of Evangelion*, illustrating how Anno weaves together Christian visual symbolism and Shinbutsu-Shugo concepts to explore transhumanist themes. The imagery of Lilith's crucifixion, along with the symbolism of the 'Spear of Longinus,' introduces themes of sacrifice and divinity, highlighting the consequences of transcending human limitations, thus connecting back to Sorgner's concerns. This visual representation communicates the connection between human suffering and the transhumanist pursuit, reflecting the objectives of both NERV and SEELE. Visual positioning, low-angle shots, and symbolism further highlight the interaction between Lilith, Shinji, and Misato, emphasizing the separation between humanity and the divine. Anno consolidates both Christian and Shinbutsu-Shugo concepts into the symbolism of the films, portraying the pursuit of technological ascension as a complex, transformative process with ethical implications. This scene's significance serves as a precursor to the subsequent section,

which delves deeper into the next stage of SEELE's transhumanist ambitions as represented by Figure 4.2. Figure 4.2 introduces the 'Nebuchadnezzar Key', a significant device within the second film that plays a pivotal role in Gendo Ikari's personal pursuit of transcendence. This key represents the continuation of SEELE's desire of eliminating the boundaries of humanity as previously illustrated with Lilith.

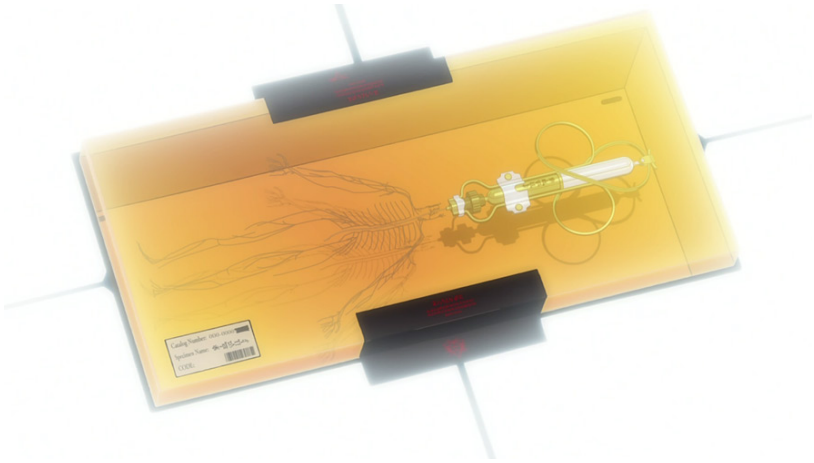

Figure 4.2 The Introduction of the 'Nebuchadnezzar Key' in 'Evangelion 2.0: You Can (Not) Advance'

Connecting the theological foundations of Shinbutsu-Shugo and Christian visual symbolism via the introduction of Lilith in *Evangelion 1.0: You Are (Not) Alone*, the audience is offered a visual representation of how these concepts appear within the narrative structure. Figure 4.2 in *Evangelion 2.0: You (Can) Not Advance presents the 'Nebuchadnezzar Key* as an important visual symbol, essential for grasping 'The Human Instrumentality Project' and transhumanist concepts in *The Rebuild of Evangelion*. Anno's visual signifier, presented in clinical seclusion, emphasizes the multimodality of the indicator. Featuring a conversation between NERV official Kaji and Gendo Ikari, which contextualizes the artefact's importance to transhumanism and divine unity, Figure 4.2 represents a pivotal moment for examining the connection between human trauma and the transcendent goal of 'The Human Instrumentality Project.' The inclusion

of the 'Nebuchadnezzar Key' in the second movie influences Anno's storytelling and thematic complexity concerning transhumanism.

The application of Barthes' two-level signification model, as illustrated in Figure 2.1, facilitates an insightful exploration of the Nebuchadnezzar Key in Evangelion, linking its narrative role with broader contemporary themes of transhumanism and technology. On the denotative level, the Nebuchadnezzar Key operates explicitly as a critical narrative element, enabling Gendo Ikari's transformative pursuit toward technological transcendence. It serves as a symbol granting access to forbidden knowledge and power, thus anchoring itself as an essential visual motif and advanced organizer recognized by the audience. At the connotative level, the Key symbolizes the deeper philosophical and ethical dilemmas inherent in humanity's quest to surpass biological and cognitive boundaries through technology, a central concept within contemporary transhumanist discourse. Anno's consistent depiction of the Nebuchadnezzar Key prompts viewers to reflect on the ethical complexities and societal implications of rapid technological advancements, such as genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, and human-machine integration, which parallel ongoing debates in modern society. As a result, in this scene Anno underscores the tension between the potential of technological enhancement and the associated existential risks, vividly illustrating the precarious balance humanity must maintain in pursuing transhumanist ideals.

Building on the Barthes' semiotic model, the representational metafunction of Figure 4.2 visually illustrates the human nervous system with the mechanical Eva entry plug, which signifies the synchronization or merging between humans and machines within the films. The representation of the visual signifier not only foreshadows the technological manipulation of human biology but also symbolizes the biblical story of Nebuchadnezzar, a king of Babylon, who has been punished by God for his transgressions, underscoring the consequences of unmonitored transhumanist endeavors in the context of the films (Greene,2022). Both Gendo Ikari and King Nebuchadnezzar embody themes of desire. As depicted in the Christian theology, Nebuchadnezzar was a powerful king who boasted about his achievements and was subsequently humbled by God, forced to live like a beast until he recognized divine sovereignty. Similarly, Commander Ikari's transgressive actions result in his dehumanized form in Figure 4.3, which is discussed in the next section of this paper.

Expanding on Anno's representational semiotics, the interactive and compositional metafunctions visually isolates the "Nebuchadnezzar Key" within a stark yellow container, a color conventionally associated with caution and danger (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006). This isolation is subsequently reinforced as the key is saliently positioned against a white background isolating it, highlighting the transformative impact this technology has on humanity. This yellow hue signals to viewers the potential hazards tied to radical transhumanism, specifically within the context of "instrumentality." Anno's selection of a wide shot to display the key within its container establishes an impersonal perspective, inviting the viewer to observe the object in its entirety before engaging with its features. This distance initially provides a detached, almost clinical view of the key, highlighting its role as a tool or artifact of technological ambition. The subsequent close-up panning shot brings the viewer into an intimate proximity with the Key, moving from a conceptual observation to an engagement with its intricate features. This transition from the distant wide shot to a more detailed examination aligns the viewer with the narrative's shift from abstract notions of transhumanism to the tangible and literal consequences of such technology. Through the interactive semiotic elements, Anno encourages the viewer to contemplate the ethical and existential implications of the Key's power, gradually intensifying the sense of risk associated with its use. The closer perspective draws the audience deeper into the unsettling nature of "instrumentality" and its ethical disregard for humanity, emphasizing the boundary between human and machine that this technology seeks to dissolve.

The dialogue between Ryoji Kaji and Gendo Ikari, invoking theological concepts from both Christianity and Shinbutsu-Shugo, provides an auditory backdrop that frames the "Nebuchadnezzar Key" as a significant symbol within the narrative. Kaji's reference to the Key as a "guidepost towards the unification of all souls unto God" positions it as a radical technological solution to human suffering, aligning with scholarly perspectives on technology's role as a form of modern salvation, as explored in the literature review. Simultaneously, the visual illustration of the Key integrated with a schematic of the human nervous system reinforces the notion of synchronization, visually signifying the transhumanist drive to transcend individual limitations through a collective merging of humanity.

Commander Ikari's statement to Kaji that the Key "opens the door to Human Instrumentality" further emphasizes the device's role in realizing SEELE's vision of a unified human existence.

This allusion to Illudain-Agurruza and Hata's theory regarding the Shinto-Buddhist concept of anatta—or non-self—implies a collective existence that transcends individual identity, achieved through technological means. As highlighted in the literature review, Anno's utilization to blend auditory and visual cues reflects a multimodal approach that invites viewers to confront the ethical boundaries of such technology. Through this complex interaction of modalities, Anno positions the key as a symbol that not only consolidates the power of technology but also challenges the audience to consider the moral implications of altering human identity for the "greater good" a theme that aligns with scholarly critiques of transhumanism by Schneider and Sorgner.

Connecting the semiotic illustration of the 'Nebuchadnezzar Key' in its broader thematic role with the specific instance of its usage by Gendo Ikari in *Evangelion 3.0 Plus 1.0: Thrice in a Lifetime* reveals a compelling continuity in Hideaki Anno's exploration of transhumanism. The key's function, as explored in the initial discussion, sets a foundation for understanding the climatic encounter in the fourth film. The transition from a conceptual discussion of the key's implications to its direct application in "human instrumentality" highlights the comprehensive investigation into the consequences of merging human and technological elements. This progression from the general to the specific illustrates how the abstract fears and ethical considerations surrounding transhumanism manifest in Commander Ikari's grotesque regeneration scene and his transformation into a posthuman state through 'The Human Instrumentality Project.'

Figure 4.3 depicts Gendo Ikari's transformation after using the 'Nebuchadnezzar Key' to Synchronize with the Divine Lilith in *Evangelion 3.0 Plus 1.0: Thrice in a Lifetime*. The top image depicts Commander Ikari's regenerative actions following being shot, whilst regenerating the below image reveals the removal of his human eyes.

The "Nebuchadnezzar Key" functions as a complex signifier through Barthes' dual levels of meaning, connecting NERV and SEELE's conceptual transhumanist goals with the unsettling portrayal of their implementation. In the initial layer of meaning, illustrated in Figure 4.2, the Key represents a tangible object that grants entry to restricted knowledge, embodying the aspiration for mastery over human development. Transitioning to the connotative representation in Figure 4.3, Gendo Ikari's horrific metamorphosis following being shot by Ritsuko recontextualizes these principles, revealing the moral and individual decline linked to excessive technological advancement. In Figure 4.3, Anno's disturbing representation of Gendo Ikari collecting his disaggregated brains illustrates both the actual regenerative ability of the Key and its symbolic implications: the degradation of humanity and identity.

The representational metafunction of Figure 4.3 in *Evangelion* visually signifying Gendo Ikari's radical perspective of transhumanism, echoing Sorgner's interpretation of Nietzsche's

Übermensch through Gendo Ikari's grotesque transformation. Commander Ikari's act of gathering his brain matter signifies a departure from natural human constraints, symbolizing the ambition to alter humanity beyond conventional barriers. His altered, non-human eyes further reinforce his detachment from humanity, with these cold, mechanical features transforming a symbol traditionally associated with empathy and connection into one of isolation and ethical void. Applying Barthes' two levels of signified meaning deepens the symbolic implications of this transformation. At the denotative level, Commander Ikar's physical transformation through his brain reconstruction and mechanical eyes—serve as a literal manifestation of transhumanism's aim to surpass human limitations. His actions visually signify the desire to redefine human nature by altering essential aspects like cognition and identity. Whilst, on the connotative level, these details take on a darker, cautionary meaning: while Gendo Ikari may achieve evolution to the posthuman stage, his transformation represents a profound loss of humanity. Connotatively this serves as Anno's critique of the "overhuman" concept within transhumanism, suggesting that the unrestrained pursuit of enhancement may lead to ethical indifference and disconnection from collective human consciousness. From this perspective, Anno uses Commander Ikari's transformation to critique radical transhumanism by illustrating it as a pathway to dehumanization. By removing one of the most crucial human features—Gendo Ikari's eyes, Anno visually underscores the extent of his loss of identity and autonomy. Through the "Nebuchadnezzar Key," technology fundamentally redefines Gendo, marking a climactic point in the films where the pursuit of overcoming trauma is shown not as empowerment but as a descent into the erosion of his personal identity.

The representational metafunction aligns with contemporary ethical debates on genetic engineering, as seen in Shatzer's concerns about CRISPR and the creation of "designer humans." While CRISPR holds the promise of eradicating genetic diseases, it also raises ethical concerns about the erosion of human qualities and human identity. This scene critiques the dangers of genetic modification, resonating with Sorgner's warnings of an ethically detached "overhuman." This critique is embodied in Gendo Ikari, whose genetic modifications manifest physically in a scene where he levitates above Ritsuko and Misato. His unnatural elevation, set against a crimson backdrop, evokes a sense of kegare—a spiritual defilement arising from the transgression of natural boundaries. By visually framing Gendo's transformation through this lens of kegare, Anno reinforces the narrative's warning about the ethical perils of unchecked

technological ambition. Commander Ikari's detachment from humanity, illustrated through his physical transcendence, signifies not just his pursuit of technological perfection but also the erosion of his human characteristics as he transitions into the final posthuman form.

By reinforcing the representational metafunction, Anno employs the interactive metafunction to provoke the audience's anxieties regarding the degradation of human identity due to technological advancement. By utilizing semiotic signals of visual horror, Anno emphasizes the risk of dehumanization stemming from drastic technological interventions, where the boundary between human and machine is not just obscured but aggressively redefined. The depiction of Commander Ikari floating post-regeneration, shifting to a wide shot over Misato and Ritsuko, alters conventional viewer-character interactions. At the denotative level, Gendo's elevated state, floating, and placed above everyone else, visually represents his rise above human constraints and death. Commander Ikari's icy, robotic gaze and the procedure of grasping his brain matter highlight the tangible nature of his technological transformation, marking his shift from human to posthuman. The wide angle of Commander Ikari floating above Misato and Ritsuko displays his dehumanizing physical transformation and newly acquired posthuman powers. In this climatic scene, Anno's camera perspective portrays Gendo as the dominant figure, highlighting his dominance and physical separation from the other human characters such as Misato and Ritsuko. As the camera shifts closer to highlight Commander Ikari's process of reconstructing his brain matter, the visual focus on this act illustrates the actual mechanics of his transformation. Through a close-up, Anno focuses on the intimate, visceral aspects of Gendo's regeneration, highlighting the physical change key to his posthuman condition.

The denotative layer accentuates the physical and literal elements of Commander Ikari's transformation. The connotative aspect, as explained by Bezemer and Jewitt's multimodal framework, enhances this depiction, involving the audience with the ethical and spiritual consequences of Gendo's disconnection from humanity. Anno's shift from a wide shot to a close-up immerses the audience in an intimate encounter with the disturbing truth of his technological development. The slow emphasis on Commander Ikari's cold, mechanical gaze highlights his lack of empathy and shared identity, illustrating the moral violations of radical transhumanism and resonating with the wider narrative critique of surpassing human limits. Figure 4.3 resonates with Nakami's perspective of Shinbutsu-Shugo notion of kegare (spiritual

impurity), representing Gendo's divergence from inherent human integrity. Gendo Ikari's reconstruction of brain matter epitomizes this form of kegare, simultaneously resonating with Shatzer's concept of breaching Imago-Dei. Commander Ikari's significant transformation, characterized by non-human eyes and a loss of humanity, echoes Sorgner's concept of the 'overman.' As his change serves as a pivotal signifier to the themes of "instrumentality," critiquing radical transhumanism as not just an evolutionary progress but a disturbance of natural limits, highlighting its ethical and existential consequences.

The visceral visuals of Commander Ikari's regeneration, including the unsettling action of scooping his brain matter, are consolidated by a lingering soundscape and harmonic music, creating a layered, immersive experience that emphasizes the unnaturalness of his transformation. The background auditory semiotics, particularly the loud Christian harmonic background music accompanying Gendo Ikari's transgressive actions, reinforce the grotesque nature of his physical metamorphosis, accentuating his radical departure from human norms and enhancing the viewer's emotional response. The dialogue, another crucial mode, also underscores SEELE's logic of proceeding with "instrumentality." Gendo's proclamation, "Gods need no barriers; we accept absolutely everything that comes our way," is delivered with a cold and indifferent tone, reflecting his absolute disregard for ethical limitations in SEELE's pursuit of posthuman existence. This statement aligns with Kurzweil's singularity theory, which envisions a future where humans transcend biological constraints, achieving God-like powers. Here, the phrase "accept absolutely everything" signifies a radical approach, reflecting the ethical concerns of theorists like Bostrom and Sorgner, who warn that striving for such power may erode fundamental human values. Misato's response, "Gendo Ikari, you used the Key to Nebuchadnezzar and abandoned your humanity," directly confronts his ethical transgressions. Her shocked tone and the rapid action shots capturing her and Ritsuko's stunned faces highlight the moral boundaries Gendo has crossed and the human cost of his pursuit. This layered interaction between visual and linguistic modes reinforces the narrative's critique of technological enhancement pursued without ethical restraint. By integrating these multimodal elements, Anno not only illustrates Gendo's transformation but also invites the viewer to reflect on the potential alienation and loss of empathy inherent in SEELE's radical ideology.

Consequently, the interactive metafunction aligns with Vita-More's (2008) concept of regenerative existence, where human modifications redefine the human form as "amended and extended." Commander Ikari's altered eyes serve as an intense visual anchor that challenges traditional ideas of continuity and identity within human interaction, pushing the viewer to consider how radical enhancements might undermine personal identity and connection. Through Commander Ikari's cold and mechanical gaze, Anno makes viewers confront the existential and ethical costs of transcending human limitations. The interactive metafunction, subsequently, intensifies the audience's engagement with the broader implications of transhumanism, positioning Gendo Ikari's inhuman appearance as a powerful critique of the alienating potential of unrestrained technological ambition.

Expanding on the interactive elements of this scene, the compositional metafunction in Figure 4.3 prominently positions Commander Ikari's altered state, highlighting the scene's significance within the films and the exploration of the transhumanist pursuit. Anno's specific framing of Gendo Ikari's transformation highlights its thematic importance, making it a visual focal point that demands the audience's attention. At the first level of signification, Gendo Ikari's central position and the cross-shaped symbol on his forehead visually mark his transformation, making it the focal point that captures the audience's immediate attention. This glowing symbol, saliently displayed, signifies Commander Ikari's dehumanizing transition through "instrumentality" and invites scrutiny of his physical modification. The surrounding red background and dark shading visually suggest danger and a significant shift in his character, underscoring the transformation's immediate impact on his appearance and aura of power. This visual emphasis, through both his positioning and marked forehead, draws the viewer into the semiotic elements of his transformation.

Although the denotative elements highlight the immediacy of Commander Ikari's posthuman evolution through visual and spatial emphasis, a connotative interpretation reveals profound thematic connections, placing this transition within philosophical framework regarding identity, humanity, and the moral challenges of surpassing natural boundaries. Applying Barthes' connotative level of signification, Anno highlights Gendo Ikari as the prominent figure in this scene and marks his eyes with a divine-like cross symbol, which enhances his role as a representation of the technological fusion between humans and the divine, signifying SEELE's

quest for God-like power through transhumanist means. This cross symbol connotes Christian ideologies of sacrifice and rebirth; in this context, Gendo Ikari sacrifices his "humanity" from his viewpoint for the collective pursuit of "instrumentality," enabling humanity to achieve the posthuman phase it has reached. The crimson and hazy background enhances the symbolism of the moral uncertainty surrounding Gendo Ikari's transformation, visually resonating with Sorgner's and Bostrom's sentiments regarding the ethical indifference that could stem from the construction of a 'superclass.' This clear and authoritative composition contrasts with the sentiment that technological flawlessness is inherently beneficial; rather, it illustrates Gendo Ikari's evolution as a warning symbol of the possible erosion of human traits like empathy and ethical accountability.

Commander Ikari's grotesque composition of scooping brain matter contrasted against a blurry, dark background that symbolizes isolation from humanity. Applying Barthes' first level of signification, Commander Ikari's act of scooping his brain matter, positioned at visual salience against a blurry, dark background, emphasizes his literal transformation. This act, grotesque and unnatural, visibly illustrates the transhumanist pursuit of transcending bodily limitations, highlighting his posthuman state. His central position in the frame further draws attention to this moment, establishing his altered state as the focal point of the scene and inviting the viewer to confront the physical reality of his transformation directly. Utilizing Barthes' connotative level of signification, this central, salient positioning conveys a deeper, symbolic meaning, where Commander Ikari's isolation from humanity becomes a powerful commentary on the personal and ethical costs of transhumanism. In this scene, the dark, obscured background around Gendo Ikari serves as a semiotic boundary that separates him from human norms, visually emphasizing his shift away from natural human identity and into a realm associated with the divine, yet profoundly isolated. This composition resonates deeply with Shinto-Buddhist conceptions of human suffering, particularly the notion that suffering arises from a departure from one's natural place within the human and spiritual order. Positioned at the center, Gendo epitomizes the dangers of unrestrained transhumanist pursuits, his dominant and dehumanizing positioning signifies the risks of "instrumentality" for the people of Tokyo-3.

Additionally, Anno's selection of color further enhances the thematic depth of the scene. At the first level of signification, the intense red and dark shading surrounding Gendo signifies

immediate visual markers of danger and foreshadow a significant shift in his character. The glowing, cross-shaped symbol on his forehead naturally draws the viewer's attention, acting as a focal point that directly emphasizes his transformation. From this perspective, Anno's composition resonates with philosopher Sorgner's theory about the emergence of a 'superclass' through posthumanism and the ethical detachment that may accompany the quest to exceed human limitations. Gendo's transformation, while visually powerful, signals a loss of empathy and moral responsibility, reinforcing Sorgner's concerns about the ethical risks inherent in technological transcendence.

Furthermore, the culmination of Commander Ikari's transformation in this scene reflects the broader consequences of "instrumentality," which precedes this moment in the narrative. While The Fourth Impact addresses apocalyptic events on a global scale, Figure 4.3 focuses on the personal and individual level of Gendo Ikari's dehumanization. The removal of his human eyes symbolizes the complete loss of his humanity, serving as a powerful reflection of the existential crisis at the heart of the Human Instrumentality Project. The slow, deliberate unraveling of Gendo Ikari's identity throughout this scene mirrors the larger crisis humanity faces, as depicted in the climatic events of "The Fourth Impact" in the 3rd film.

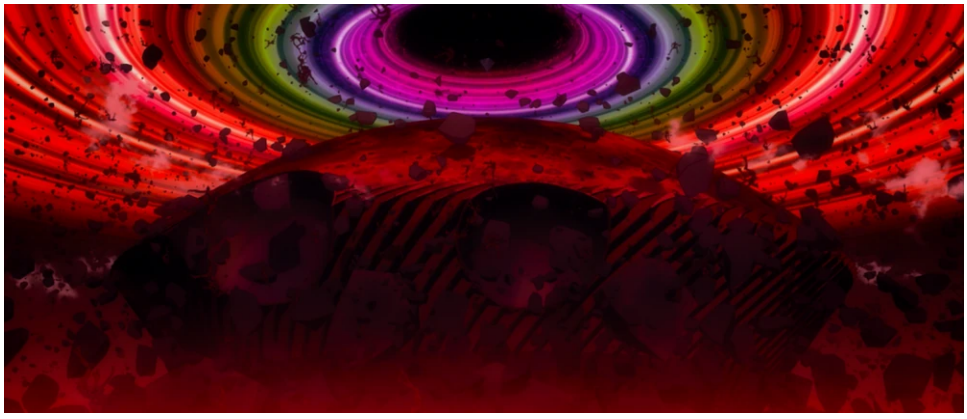

Figure 4.4 The Fourth Impact in *Evangelion 3.0: You Can (Not) Redo.*

Figure 4.3 illustrates Gendo Ikari's posthuman transformation through “instrumentality,” symbolizing his personal descent into dehumanization as a prelude to the larger, apocalyptic vision that SEELE seeks to impose on humanity. Gendo’s physical transformation, the erasure of his human eyes, signifies the significant personal cost of his commitment to “instrumentality,” linking it to the collective dissolution of humanity in the previous film. Figure 4.4 introduces "The Fourth Impact" in *Evangelion 3.0: You Can (Not) Redo*, an apocalyptic event that marks the continuation and culmination of "The Near Third Impact". Continuing from the aftermath of Figure 3.3.6, where Shinji Ikari's rejection of forced synchronization with the dummy plug created the “Near Third Impact” which prevented NERV’s premeditated vision of “The Third Impact,” The Fourth Impact is a calculated act set into motion by SEELE to achieve their vision of the Human Instrumentality Project. Unlike Shinji's actions at the conclusion of the second film, which were rooted in emotional desperation to save Asuka, The Fourth Impact is a calculated move orchestrated through Evangelion 13, signifying the next phase in SEELE’s pursuit of transhumanist evolution. Figure 4.4 highlights Anno’s transition from Gendo Ikari’s dehumanized transformation to SEELE’s ultimate objective, as represented in the transpiring of “The Fourth Impact,” is to eliminate individual identity and merge humanity into a single, unified consciousness. This deliberate attempt to enact collective Instrumentality draws a direct

connection between Gendo's personal loss of humanity and SEELE's larger goal of universal transcendence, illustrating the ethical and existential costs of pursuing such a forced evolution.

The representational metafunction of "The Fourth Impact" visually illustrates Evangelion 13 as a biomechanical entity of profound narrative and symbolic significance, piloted jointly by Gendo and Shinji Ikari. Unlike previous Evangelion units, Evangelion 13's dual-pilot capability and its critical role in triggering apocalyptic events mark it as a culmination of humanity's transhumanist ambitions, transcending the boundaries of the natural and divine through technological means. This transition from Evangelion Unit 1.0 to Evangelion 13 signifies not just an escalation in power but an irreversible shift in the human-machine dynamic, reflecting the franchise's evolving discourse on identity, control, and existential transcendence.

Evangelion 13 is not merely a new iteration but the evolved form of Evangelion Unit 1.0, embodying a radical departure from its predecessor's constraints. Unit 1.0 functioned as an intermediary stage in the transhumanist trajectory—a biomechanical vessel deeply entwined with Shinji's individuality and struggles. However, its limitations, both narrative and thematic, prevented it within the boundaries of human agency of the pilot. Evangelion 13, by contrast, signifies a posthuman leap: its activation removes the last restrictions of individual autonomy, subsuming its pilots into a collective will that aligns SEELE's vision of absolute human transcendence. The act of dual synchronization itself signals a departure from singular human agency, reinforcing the shift from personal evolution to enforced metamorphosis.

The retrieval of the Spears of Longinus from Lilith amplifies this thematic evolution, serving as a semiotic rupture between the divine and the human-technological synthesis. The Spears, once instruments of restraint for god-like entities such as Adam and Lilith, symbolized the containment of unchecked power within a structured metaphysical order. Their removal, however, dismantles these constraints, precipitating Lilith's destruction and Evangelion 13's transformation into a radiant, haloed entity—marking the onset of "The Fourth Impact." This moment encapsulates a profound shift: at the denotative level, it is an act of physical extraction, yet at the connotative level, it signifies the final break from natural and divine limitations, reinforcing transhumanism's ultimate goal of redefining human existence beyond biological constraints. In this context, Evangelion 13 emerges as a visual signifier of posthuman evolution. It embodies both the pinnacle of SEELE's ultimate goal of "instrumentality"—overcoming

mortality, suffering, and existential limitations—and the ethical void of such an unrestrained pursuit. The integration of Commander Ikari and Shinji as co-pilots reflects the transition from an individualized struggle toward an imposed collective transformation, mirroring broader concerns about technology's role in eroding personal agency. The Spears of Longinus, once again signifies suffering and salvation, further emphasizes the ethical dilemmas inherent in this radical transcendence. While Evangelion 13 represents Gendo Ikari's theoretical apex of human evolution through technology, it simultaneously serves as a cautionary emblem of the existential risks posed by posthumanism—where the drive for omnipotence leads not to enlightenment but to the dissolution of selfhood.

Continuing from the representational metafunction, the interactive metafunction expands this perspective by providing a wider view of Evangelion 13 and creating a feeling of separation through a long shot. Anno's perspective prompts the viewer to consider the crucial significance of the action, highlighting the recurring motif in Shinbutsu-Shugo: the divide between humanity and the divine. Denotatively, Anno illustrates Evangelion 13 extracting the spears, leading to Lilith's transformation into LCL. Connotatively, this act represents SEELE's manipulation of spiritual purification for their own purposes, distorting Gendo Ikari's justification of misogi by removing the spears. Evangelion 13 dissects these artificial spears—tools that embody Gendo Ikari's desire to control humanity and SEELE's aim to address the underlying cause of dukkha. From SEELE's perspective, humanity's connection to individuality and autonomy causes the Shinto separation from the divine, as well as the root cause of dukkha.

The transition from this broader visual context into a slow pan of Lilith's disintegration into red LCL serves to heighten the emotional and symbolic resonance of the scene. This technique draws viewers deeper into the unfolding catastrophe, focusing intimately on the detailed destruction and transformation of Lilith, and the ensuing mass synchronization attempted by Commander Ikari. Bezemer and Jewitt's theory of multimodality underscores the importance of the interplay between visual and auditory elements in constructing meaning and emotional engagement. Anno employs a sophisticated auditory landscape, including crackling sounds, liquid splashes, and Lilith's haunting screams, amplifying the viewer's emotional reaction to this symbolic demise. These auditory elements, coupled with the slow visual pan, evoke feelings of

inevitability, loss, and profound transformation during the attempted evolution of humanity into the posthuman state of existence.

The interactive metafunction of "The Fourth Impact" strongly resonates with Sorgner's critique of transhumanism, highlighting the ethical risks of eradicating human uniqueness through technological enhancement. SEELE's vision embodies this danger by seeking to forcibly remove human vulnerability and suffering (dukkha), ultimately transforming humanity into a mechanistic state that lacks the emotional and ethical bonds defining our essence. The multimodal composition of the scene, especially the auditory elements like Lilith's eerie screams and her visual disintegration, amplifies this critique. It compels viewers to confront the profound ethical implications of transhumanist ideals. Through these sensory elements, the narrative challenges the perceived notion of human vulnerability as mere flaws, instead reinterpreting them as vital characteristics whose removal threatens significant dehumanization rather than genuine progress.

In addition to the interactive metafunction, the compositional metafunction further illustrates these thematic concerns through strategic visual arrangement. The compositional metafunction refers to how visual elements are organized to convey meaning. The depiction of Evangelion 13 and the Spears of Longinus emphasizes SEELE's ambition for God-like power through a strategic visual hierarchy. Evangelion 13's transformation—turning a radiant white, sprouting spikes, and acquiring halos—is centrally framed, granting it visual salience and symbolizing SEELE's aspirations toward forced evolutionary transcendence, reminiscent of Kurzweil's concept of achieving a posthuman singularity. Conversely, Lilith's corpse, exploding into red LCL, is visually placed beneath, representing the collapse of conventional order and underscoring the destructive consequences of manipulating divine order. The Golgotha Object, emerging from the Gates of Guf, explicitly symbolizes SEELE's pursuit of artificial salvation through technological means, visually reinforcing the Christian critiques by Shatzer and Thompson concerning the ethical hazards of altering the Imago Dei—the image of God inherent within humanity.

Connected through these three metafunctions, the contemporary concepts of BMI's and cloning become central to understanding Anno's narrative exploration. This scene, resonating with Fadziso's claims, highlights the integration of technology with human biology. Anno utilizes wide shots and positions Evangelion 13 prominently, particularly during the elimination of the

Spears, visually reflecting the Gendo Ikari's desire to surpass biological and existential limitations. Here, the Spears symbolize natural constraints meant to protect humanity—limitations akin to biological factors like memory, intelligence, and consciousness that restrict our ability to integrate with technology or duplicate consciousness through cloning. SEELE's narrative ambition to remove these barriers parallels contemporary technological advancements, including brain-computer interfaces and cloning, aimed at enhancing human longevity and abilities. These technologies mirror SEELE's ultimate goal of transcending the boundary between human and divine, seeking an elevated state of existence.

Furthermore, building on the themes introduced in Figure 4.3, Figure 4.4 illustrates the apex of SEELE's pursuit of "instrumentality" through "The Fourth Impact." This calculated apocalyptic event illustrates an extension of the themes introduced in Figure 4.3, notably Gendo Ikari's personal transformation and the loss of his human identity. Whilst Commander Ikari's transformation illustrated an individual change into posthumanism, Figure 4.4 expands this to humanity from a collective perspective. The calculated and deliberate steps taken by SEELE, through Evangelion 13, to enact The Fourth Impact, signify their unwavering ambition to force all humanity into a singular form of existence, promoting a singular existence that prioritizes posthuman evolution. The three metafunctions of Figure 4.4 highlight the shift from the personal transformation of Gendo Ikari to the broader objectives of SEELE and NERV to alter collective human identity. By linking these themes with transhumanist ideologies, Anno critiques the ethical and existential implications of pursuing technological transcendence without restraint, building on the previous discussion of SEELE's objectives. SEELE's use of technology as a tool for overcoming suffering and limitations reflects contemporary transhumanist discussions. This is particularly evident in advancements like Neuralink, which similarly aim to overcome biological constraints but evoke ethical questions about the impact on autonomy and human identity, thus tying back to SEELE's objectives.

Conclusion

The analysis of semiotic signifiers throughout this paper reveals Anno's extensive exploration of "instrumentality," transhumanism, and their associated ethical concerns. Commencing with Lilith's introduction in Figure 4.1, Anno establishes a narrative framework rooted in Christian visual symbolism and embedded Shinto-Buddhist concepts, which frames humanity's quest for

transcendence as a transgressive act against divine boundaries. The early introduction of Lilith emphasizes SEELE's desire to transcend its associated barriers through artificial mechanisms, a theme that reverberates across the subsequent figures and events, illustrating the persistent quest for transcendence. The visual signifiers, such as Lilith in a crucifixion pose and the Spear of Longinus, evoke notions of sacrifice, divinity, and transgression, which are central to the broader analysis of semiotic signifiers in the paper. They reveal the direct consequences of attempting to attain a posthuman state. Figure 4.2 expands on this foundation, illustrating the 'Nebuchadnezzar Key' as a key artifact in SEELE and Gendo Ikari's yearning for "instrumentality." By embedding Barthes' two-level signification model, the key serves as a denotative signifier of the hazards and sacrifices involved in the extreme pursuit of transhuman ideologies. The key acts as a connection between abstract transhumanist discourse and Anno's tangible depiction, foreshadowing the literal and grotesque ramifications of transhumanism, as illustrated through Commander Ikari's transformation. Subsequently, in Figure 4.3, Gendo Ikari's grotesque transformation after utilizing the Nebuchadnezzar Key visually depicts the ethical consequences of eradicating the human condition. Anno's erasure of Commander Ikari's human eyes symbolizes the physical manifestation of posthuman capabilities, highlighting the loss of empathy and identity that accompanies such transformations. The transformation in Figure 4.3 acts as a criticism of unfiltered transhumanist progress, reiterating the danger of dehumanization inherent in the relentless pursuit of Kurzweil's concept of singularity. By using a range of different semiotics, such as wide shots transitioning to close-ups, Anno encourages viewers to confront the unsettling implications of Gendo Ikari's transformation, illustrating the risks associated with unmonitored transhumanism. Ultimately, Figure 4.4, depicting The Fourth Impact, represents SEELE's broader vision, the culmination of individual transformations into a collective, apocalyptic redefinition of humanity. Anno's portrayal of SEELE's deliberate attempt to enact instrumentality on a universal scale demonstrates the transition from the individual loss of humanity, as seen in Gendo Ikari's transformation, to a forced unification of collective human consciousness. This event aligns with contemporary discussions about transhumanism, reflecting a desire to overcome human limitations through radical technological means, similar to Huxley's claim about the requirement of appropriate ethics or the objective of BMIs of interfacing the human mind with machines. Anno's illustration in Evangelion reflects current ethical concerns about

genetic engineering, mind uploading, and human-machine interfaces. It also allows the audience to assess the broader societal consequences of unmonitored technological progress.

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