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WHAT THIS DOCUMENT IS

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TEDX PRACTICE SCRIPT · TEDXCHANTILLY

AI Can Fake Anything but a Kept Promise

Representation, authentication, and the "is" — why a life of kept promises becomes the one proof a machine cannot generate on command.

By **Ravi R. Iyer, MD**



From the talk at TEDxChantilly. Retained as part of the record of how the talk was presented.

> **WHAT THIS ENTRY IS**
> The script carries the working title “The Human Authenticator?”; the talk was published under the title recorded here. It was issued on the official TEDx YouTube channel, where the author’s own round-up of October 2026 — entered in this Record as AR-2026-11-001 — lists it as the most-viewed TEDx talk *published in that month*, at 510,596 views, under the event name TEDxChantilly HS. That is a monthly chart of October 2026 releases, not an all-time ranking: the most-viewed talk in this Record is the TEDxGary talk of 5 October 2024 (AR-2024-10-001), at some 4.48 million views. The TEDx channel credits this talk to **Ravi Ramamoorthy**. That is the name the author himself entered on the signed TEDx Speaker Release for this event, which is also the source of the date above; the credit follows the form on the release rather than the form he ordinarily uses. It is recorded here so the talk stays findable under the name it was published beneath.

THE HUMAN AUTHENTICATOR?

[Walk to center. Stop. Look at the audience.]

> This morning, you may have opened your phone.
> You saw a photograph of a war.
> Maybe a video of a world leader announcing a new policy.
> A doctor explaining a breakthrough.
> Every image will look real.
> Every voice will sound real.
> Every person will seem credible.
> And every one of them may have been created by a machine.

PAUSE.

So let me ask you a simple question.

Which one is real?

PAUSE.

For the first time in human history, you may not be able to answer.

On today's internet, EVERYYY ONE gets a second opinion — including the machine.

Which is particularly inconvenient for those of us who spent our careers becoming experts.

SMALL SMILE.

But here is what may surprise you.

This is not a new problem.

It is one of the oldest problems we have.

REMEMBER? There was a time when everybody knew witches were real.

> Not suspected.
> Not imagined.

Knew.

And because witches were real... people burned people.

Today we know witches, as they were conceived, never existed.

The word didn't change.

Our belief about their reality did..... So what was the mechanism of a phenomenon that consumed tens of thousands of people?

> Let me show you the mechanism with something smaller.
> A black cat crosses your path.
> Bad luck!

BEAT.

> For us.
> Last I checked, the cat seemed perfectly fine.
> Now we know that unlucky black cats is a superstition....

But A superstition only has power when you DO NOT experience it as a superstition.

If I think, "Some people believe black cats are unlucky," it has no grip on me.

But when that black cat simply is bad luck—

> the belief disappears.
> And becomes reality.
> HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

Well for cats... it began with a Pope put it in writing in 1233AD: an official Church document equating black cats with Satan.

An institution commanding the attention of a continent authenticated a superstition.

> And a harmless animal became evidence of the devil.
> So here is the mechanism.
> There are Three steps.

COUNT SLOWLY.

One — Representation.

Someone puts a claim into words:

> *There are witches.*

> *Black cats are bad luck.*

At this point, it is only a sentence.

Two — Authentication.

Someone with enough authority and a platform vouches for it.

> A church.
> A crown.
> An institution.
> A voice heard by millions.

Three — the "IS."

> The claim disappears.
> People stop weighing it and start living inside it.
> And now it shapes reality.

Representation. Authentication. Reality.

And this mechanism does not care whether the claim is true.

It is never information and always **the authenticator that determines the outcome.**

This summer, a few miles from this stage, the liner at the bottom of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool began to peel.

> It was authenticated as vandalism.
> A man was named and charged with a felony.

For a while, that became reality:

> A culprit.
> A crime.
> Then the Justice Department asked to drop the case.
> Its own filing blamed rushed, faulty installation.
> Not a vandal.
> A contractor.
> The authentication changed.
> And reality changed with it.
> Now consider another claim.

In 2024, America heard that Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio were eating people's pets.

> Local officials said it wasn't happening.
> Police said it wasn't happening.
> Ohio's governor called the claim garbage.

Then it was repeated from perhaps the biggest podium in America — a presidential debate.

And people started singing songs about it.

By the time it was debunked, for millions of people it had already become real.

> Real enough for threats.
> Real enough to close schools.
> Real enough to make a town afraid.

A sentence, authenticated from a podium, became an "is."

> Do you see the pattern?
> The Pope and the black cat.
> The church and witches.
> The state and the pool.
> The podium and the pets.
> Different centuries.
> Different costumes.

One mechanism.

BUT WHY DOES THIS MATTER? WHY AM I, A PHYSICIAN SPEAKING TO YOU ABOUT THIS. MY WORK IS ALL ABOUT DISTINGUISHING THE REAL FROM THE UNREAL. THE ACTUAL FROM THE IMAGINED.

I deal with this every day as a physician.

Someone pulls out their phone and shows me something from Google, ChatGPT... or a WhatsApp forward from their aunt back in their village.

And we have all learned never to dismiss the aunt.

LAUGHTER.

Then they ask:

> *Doc... is this true?*

They are asking me to authenticate it.

Because none of us lives long enough to experience everything and determine reality for ourselves.

> We need authenticators.
> Because something just changed for all of us.

For most of human history, there was a bottleneck on manufactured reality:

making the representation was hard.

> You needed a camera.
> A printing press.
> An army of scribes.
> That bottleneck is gone.
> AI can manufacture a photograph without a camera.
> A voice without a speaker.
> A face, a study, even an entire human life story—
> instantly.

One person with a laptop and an internet connection can create a whole world of representation that is indistinguishable from the real stuff.....

For thousands of years, humanity suffered from too little information and people who had information had the power.....

We solved that problem now a little too well.

Now we have a new one:

Too much information — and not enough reality.

And when anyone can manufacture the representation, the oldest question becomes the most important question:

Whom do we trust to authenticate what is real?

> Anyone with a platform can command attention.
> But attention is not trust.

The real test is whether that person's words and choices remain coherent with reality over time.

A lie authenticated by authority eventually collides with the world.

> The pool was an installation failure.
> The pets were not being eaten.

> There were no witches..... and black cats are not Satan
> Reality is patient.

And it always comes to collect.

I had a recent conversation with an AI researcher who said.... Artificial intelligence will always be what it is... Artificial and unless you want artificial problems to become REAL PROBLEMS, you have to keep the human element in the middle.

Human judgement, human integrity, human inclusionary world view, human authenticity

An authenticated human being.

> Not the loudest voice.
> Not the biggest audience.

A person whose authority has been earned through historical performance—

whose life has become their word,

one kept promise at a time.

Because every kept promise is a statement that has survived contact with reality.

Their reputation becomes evidence.

And a lifetime of that evidence becomes something no machine can simply generate on command.

DROP VOLUME.

> Promises made.
> Promises kept.
> Decisions tested against reality.

Reputation.

PAUSE.

That may become one of the most valuable human assets of the AI age.

Because when information becomes infinite—

authenticity becomes scarce.

When reality can be manufactured—

reputation becomes the compass.

And when a machine can imitate almost everything—

the thing it cannot instantly manufacture is a life whose words have been tested by reality...

and kept.

PAUSE.

That status of being an Authenticated Human..... will belong to every teacher, scientist, physician, journalist, parent, and citizen..... willing to make their life an observable promise.

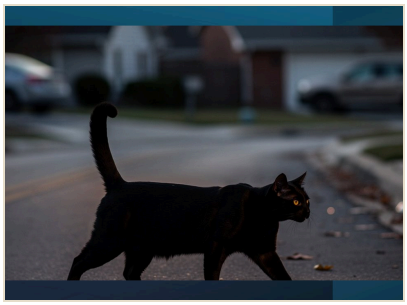
And perhaps our greatest responsibility in the age of machines will be learning how to recognize one—..... and becoming one ourselves.

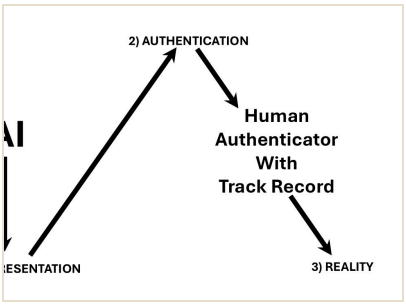
Because in a world where almost anything can be faked,

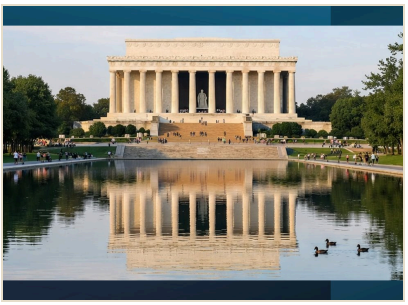
a life of kept promises becomes the one proof that is about to become the most important differentiator of all

Thank you.

IMAGES FROM THE ORIGINAL







SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY, AS PUBLISHED BY THE EVENT

Ravi Ramamoorthy Iyer · Founder, ActivPower Inc., The Iyer Clinic & IR-FocalPoint; Chief Strategy Officer, Ayora Health

Ravi Ramamoorthy Iyer, MD, is a Harvard-trained physician-scientist, author, and educator with a 42-year career. He founded ActivPower Inc., The Iyer Clinic, and IR-FocalPoint and serves as Chief Strategy Officer at Ayora Health. He previously served nine years as a hospice director and four years as chairman of a 225-bed hospital. He has written ten books on leadership, strategy, and human performance, created the Neuroalignment framework for focus and resilience, and holds patents in human and veterinary therapeutics.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ravi R. Iyer, MD is a physician-scientist, entrepreneur, author and five-time TEDx speaker who has spent four decades exploring a deceptively simple question: what makes human beings, and the organizations they create, perform at their best? A Harvard-trained physician, corporate strategist and the founder of multiple healthcare and performance ventures, he is the creator of Neuroalignment, a framework for building high-performance organizations around the realities of human cognitive diversity. His work sits at the intersection of biology, leadership, technology and human behavior.

THE AKAASHIK RECORD

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