SYMPOSIUM TOPIC

In our first symposium we discussed the human-technology relationship and the promises and perils of artificial intelligence in terms of some of the less emphasized properties of the human spirit — namely, our propensity to be vulnerable, unpredictable, arbitrary, and at times, unreasonable. The suggestion was that it was *these* things (not our ability to reason) that make material reductionism nonsensical and, thus save humanity from a life of artificial robotic realities.

In this symposium, we will continue our investigation of the human-technology relationship. First, we will continue to explore some of the uses and meanings of vulnerability raised in the first symposium, as well as its relationship to the human spirit. Second, we will consider various visions of our future technological world (is there reason to be optimistic? pessimistic?). Finally, we will look at some ethical implications posed by an increasingly technology-dependent and artificially-intelligent world.

Regarding ethics, our focus will be on the less obvious implications of our technologies and all-connected network when viewed as extensions of ourselves. What do our creations say about us and where we're going? Obvious issues might include hacker vulnerability, privacy issues and legal precedents. *But are there less obvious ethical issues we should be considering as well?*

Some questions to consider include:

- What potential ethical issues might arise from our growing dependency on technology for ordinary tasks?
- Do our technologies pose a threat to the way(s) in which we relate to ourselves and others (e.g., is the "increased" capacity for communication really a wolf in sheep's clothing? Are things important to our very "being" lost in translation?)
- Is the interpretive process open for humans in a way that it may not be for an artificial intelligence (i.e., does vulnerability have some play in the openers of our interpretive schemes? If so, and assuming vulnerability cannot be programmed, what ethical implications might this have)?
- Will human vulnerability, as a tool for facilitating real, meaningful and lasting connection still be relevant or valuable? If not, and assuming this sort of vulnerability is important to our "humanity", what might this mean in terms of who we are/become moving forward?
- Are there possible ethical implications in the medical field, patient care and our conceptions of and relationships with life and death? Even if immortality is possible, is this something for which we should be striving? How would this possibility effect the ways in which we behave and the systems we put in place?
- Is there a connection between hope and vulnerability? If so, and assuming that vulnerability is not programmable, what does this mean for a society that is becoming

more and more intermeshed with technology? Is hope at risk? Can a society flourish without hope?

- The ways in which people engage in the world around them is often correlated to the technological platforms available in their society. But does technology have an effect on the *choices* that we make as well (beyond a choice-restriction due to limitations of what might or might not be available)? For example, some have suggested that we can map our voting patterns (choices) based on technological advances: when there were no TVs, elections were about *ideas*); after TVs, elections were about *personalities*; and when internet was developed, elections became about *emoticons*. If this is the case, what might such a perspective offer to the debate about free-will? Is media (and technology) reflective of a society or is it an actual "participant/active agent" in its evolution? And if it is the latter, what ethical implications arise for the tech world developers?
- Some developers have the goal of using technology to eliminate pain and suffering from the human experience. While the reduction of pain and suffering as a general goal has some arguable merit, is their *elimination* from the human experience entirely something we ought to strive for or desire? Is there value in our ability to feel and experience pain as a species?
- Technology offers the possibility for our past thoughts and opinions to be archived, transmitted and broadcasted. What sorts of adverse effects might this pose *societally* (e.g., could this result in ideologies? new structures? an ideological purity that is less than desirable in a free society?) and *relationally/interpersonally* (e.g., could this change the way we view relationships? Could this result in a shift toward anti-social behavior and the eventual dissolution of intimate or close relationships altogether? And if so, why?)

Each of our panelists will provide their own perspective on vulnerability and its relationship to the human spirit, their vision of our future world, and some of the less obvious ethical implications we might (or might not) be facing. Then the symposium will open up to the audience for a free-flowing Q & A-style symposium.