

BEING HUMAN IN A TECHNOLOGICAL AGE: RETHINKING THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

22-23 February 2019
Leuven, Belgium



Invitation to an international academic conference

On February 22-23, 2019, the Institute of Leadership and Social Ethics (ILSE), part of the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven (Belgium) will organize an international, academic conference, addressing the theme *Being Human in a Technological Age: Rethinking Theological Anthropology*, focusing 1) on the challenge posed by technological developments to the traditional Christian understanding of the human being, and 2) on the question of what resources Christian anthropology can offer for thinking through the question what being human means, given these new technological realities. The conference encourages presentations from various theological and interdisciplinary perspectives. This exchange will be facilitated by keynote lectures by Prof. Dr. Brian Brock, Prof. em. Dr. Henk Jochemsen and Prof. Dr. Brent Waters, who will each present distinct perspectives on these questions. Moreover, fifteen paper presenters will offer their expertise in their respective fields on the topic.

Location

The conference will take place in the Leuven Center for Christian Studies, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, St. Jansbergsesteenweg 95-97, 3001 Leuven, Belgium.

Accommodation

A limited number of rooms are available at 45 Euros, including breakfast.

Conference Fee

85 Euros for regular participants, 75 Euros for paper presenters and 20 Euros for students, including lunch and coffee breaks. There will be a conference dinner for 50 Euros per person.

Registration

Registration is via the website of ILSE, etf-ilse.org or directly through this link etf-ilse.org/conference. For more information, please contact the conference coordinator, Cees Tulp, at info@etf-ilse.org.



This conference forms part of the research project "Moral Discernment in an Age of Technology: Tools for Pastors in Europe," which is fully funded by The Blankemeyer Foundation, tbmission.org.



On the Present Reality of our Posthuman Future

Contemporary attempts to analyze the anthropological implications of contemporary technologies very often generate analytical insights by extrapolating technological dreams and ideals onto imagined alternative futures. In so formulating the theological and ethical analysis it is often assumed that technological innovations connect in direct ways to implicit or explicit anthropologies. It is likewise often assumed that the intended aims of technological development correspond to the use to which these technologies are put in practice. There are substantial problems with both assumptions. New technologies are often conceived and sold without thought about the anthropologies they imply and are very often used in ways no one imagined. Contemporary analysis of technology would do better to discuss the ways contemporary humanity is already being enacted. I will take as my case study the contemporary inability to distinguish between medical therapies and enhancements.

Prof. Dr. Brian Brock is Reader in Moral and Practical Theology at the University of Aberdeen (UK).



Converging Technologies and Humanity: The Tension between Control and Freedom

Science and technology are dominant powers in our society. Converging technologies (ICT/AI, biotechnology, nanotechnology, neurotechnology) are developing rapidly. These new technologies given tremendous power to control diseases and create a virtual environment for people that can serve them in many ways, providing forms of freedom. However, at the same time these facilities exert a form of control on people either overtly or covertly. What does that mean for the interpretation of these technologies and their (potential) role in human life? What presuppositions of our technological culture should be challenged to do justice to both our pursuit of control and of freedom? In this contribution these questions will be discussed from the perspective philosophy of technology as developed within Reformational Philosophy. The insights to which this will lead can be a basis for further ethical reflection.

Prof. em. Dr. Henk Jochemsen is emeritus Professor of Christian (Reformational) Philosophy at Wageningen University (NL).



Remaining Human in a Technological Age

Some proponents of extensive technological development contend that the goal is not only to promote human wellbeing, but to enable humans to become better than human; it is to liberate humans from the constraints of their unfortunate embodiment. This ambitious goal is captured in both transhumanism and posthuman discourse. My principal objection to this goal is that a technological age guided by these themes will diminish human flourishing because they distract attention away from what it means to be genuinely human. In contrast, I argue that human flourishing requires a selective engagement with technological developments and applications in order to promote human flourishing. Ultimately human flourishing is predicated upon a series of mundane activities and relationships that are directly related to being embodied creatures, and technologies should be assessed and applied accordingly.

Prof. Dr. Brent Waters is Jerre and Mary Joy Stead Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, in Evanston, Illinois (USA).

