

BEING HUMAN IN A TECHNOLOGICAL AGE: RETHINKING THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

22 & 23 February 2019

Call for Papers

iLSE

INSTITUTE OF
LEADERSHIP &
SOCIAL ETHICS



Call for Papers

INTRODUCTION

‘What does it mean to be human?’ This age-old question has gained new urgency in light of new technological developments in areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), anti-aging treatments, and robotics. According to Yuval Harari, who describes these tendencies in his best-seller *Homo Deus*, we are fast approaching a post-human era, where humans will increasingly be hybrids between organic and non-organic material. Advances in AI will eventually allow us to digitally upload our brains and ‘keep living’, even though our bodies perish. Some prophets of human progress welcome these new developments enthusiastically. Others are more cautious, worrying about the potentially disastrous consequences of these developments. They wonder if, instead, it will lead to the abolition of humankind. Similarly, opinion is divided about what these new technological developments will do to human relationships. Will they help inaugurate a new era of increased equality and more understanding? Or will they rather exacerbate existing inequalities and contribute to increasing abilities of ‘shielding’ ourselves from each other?

The new technological developments present a particular urgency for theological anthropology. Does post-humanism offer a reason to update the traditional understanding of human beings as made in the *imago Dei*? Or is it precisely because of this doctrine that we are to reject the new drive towards post-humanism? Other questions arise as well: is bodiliness indispensable to being human, or can we live our earthly lives without a body? And what about the human soul? Can the soul indeed be ‘uploaded’, or should we resist such an idea as an dangerous expression of reductionism?

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 this theme, 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 that present distinct perspectives on these questions.

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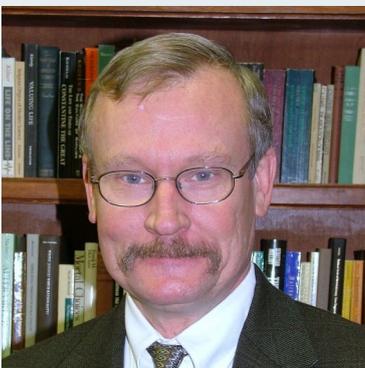
KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Prof. Dr. Brian Brock earned his D.Phil. from King's College, London (UK). Currently, he is Reader in Moral and Practical Theology at the University of Aberdeen (UK). He is an editor of the theology and technology blog *Second Nature* and has published widely on the ethics of technology. His publications include *Christian Ethics in a Technological Age* (Eerdmans, 2010) and *Captive to Christ, Open to the World: On Doing Christian Ethics in Public* (Cascade, 2014). He edited with John Swinton *Theology, Disability and the New Genetics: Why Science Needs the Church* (T&T Clark, 2007), and *A Graceful Embrace: Theological Reflections on Adopting Children* (Brill, 2018).



Prof. Dr. Henk Jochemsen earned his Ph.D. in Mathematics and Natural Sciences from Leiden University (the Netherlands) in 1979. He is emeritus Professor of Christian (Reformational) Philosophy at Wageningen University (the Netherlands). His areas of interest include philosophy and ethics of new technologies, development cooperation, and sustainable agriculture. He has published numerous articles and books on medical ethics, including *Human Stem Cells: Source of Hope and of Controversy* (Bioethics Press, 2005) and *Toetsen en begrenzen: Een ethische en politieke beoordeling van de moderne biotechnologie* (Buijten en Schipperheijn, 2000).



Prof. Dr. Brent Waters earned his D.Phil. from the University of Oxford (UK) and currently serves as the Jerre and Mary Joy Stead Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, in Evanston, Illinois (USA). Theological reflection on the philosophy and ethics of technology constitutes one of his main research interests. He has written a number of works on this topic, including *Christian Moral Theology in the Emerging Technoculture* (Ashgate, 2014), and *From Human to Posthuman* (Ashgate, 2006).



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DATE & LOCATION

The conference will be held on February 22–23, 2019, at the Leuven Center for Christian Studies, part of the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit. The address is: Sint- Jansbergsesteenweg 95, 3001 Leuven, Belgium.

Registration information will be available soon on the ILSE website <https://www.etf-ilse.org>.

ABSTRACTS AND DEADLINE

Scholars are invited to submit an abstract for a paper. Abstracts should be maximum 500 words, and fall within the theme of the conference as described above. Each abstract will be assessed blindly by two experts. Abstracts are to be submitted by email to Dr. Steven van den Heuvel, at info@etf-ilse.org.

Please attach two separate Word documents to your email:

- *Document 1*: Your paper proposal, include key bibliographic sources consulted (max. 5). In this document, all references identifying the author should be removed.
- *Document 2*: Your last name, first name, email address, institutional address, the title of your abstract, the conference topic under which your proposal falls, as well as a short CV (maximum 1 page).

Deadline: December 15, 2018.

You can expect to receive a response by December 31, 2018 at the latest.

PUBLICATION

A volume in the academic peer-reviewed series Christian Perspectives on Leadership and Social Ethics (Peeters Publications) will be dedicated to the publication of selected conference papers.