

Technology and Human Dignity

As human society has been becoming more secularized and many new academic fields and disciplines have been appearing in the mosaic of the study of man, all kinds of approaches have been formulated, many conflicting with one another, many reductionist in nature, and have made it necessary for theology to reaffirm its stance, not by rejecting or ignoring the other approaches but by engaging them in fruitful conversation.

Theology presents the existence of man as a theocentric event. Being created in God's image or being posited as a self by God, in Kierkegaard's terms, and thus standing before God, man is bestowed with glory and honor, which are royal attributes, and from which worth and dignity spring.

Yet reductionist theories of the human being and dignity are taken by many as a basis for technological experiments, like in the case of biomedical, robotics, information and cybernetic technologies, which by others are seen as a profound assault on human dignity.

The coming of artificial intelligence (computer systems with human-like intelligence, or "thinking machines") with the prospect of the creation of computers that can rewire themselves and become totally different devices based on changing needs, combined with chemical and biological engineering and with the arrival of computer devices that will be parts of human bodies rather than being held in hand, and many other such revolutionary innovations, is raising the serious issue of what kind of being the posthuman man will be, when man will be part of the machine and vice versa.

It is in this context that this Symposium will explore the issues of authenticity and alienation, of personhood, technology and transcendence in the framework of an interdisciplinary dialogue that is expected to be a fruitful contribution to the interchange of ideas, knowledge and experience.

Theodor Damian

The aspiration of the one who accepts to become witness of Life, of Being, provokes the reaction of the little "I". At this point this one begins the grow and becomes capable to receive the great force that works starting from the night of the Mystery. "The night of the Mystery" expresses, of course, the point of view of the one who has not penetrated it, because the Mystery, when one realizes its presence, in itself, is Light, pure transparency. Thus one must begin with the opening... As for the structures that are revealed to us, once our vision ceases to embrace only the little "I", their study is entirely the object of mathematics.

Meaning is the content of a new life, this one internalized, where our existence is finally in totality impregnated by Being. Being is the All which forms the One. This is also the Head of Creation from which the seed springs, the light-cell of matter.

Anoushka von Heuer

In some discussions of the posthuman there are strong religious resonances and ideologies at work, especially in some writers' expansive pronouncements on the mystical and metaphysical dimensions of cyberspace, their equation of new technologies with a kind of demiurgical power, and their expectations of technologies effecting the liberation of the human race from the limits of embodiment, finitude, and mortality.

Elaine L. Graham



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PROGRAM

The Nineteenth Ecumenical Interdisciplinary Symposium

Alienation and Authenticity in Environments of the 21st Century: Technology, Person and Transcendence

Saturday, December 3, 2011
10:00 AM

Bonhoeffer Room
at Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway, New York, NY 10027
(at 121st Street,
Subway 1 and 9, stop at 116th Street
Bus M4, M5, M60, M104,
stop at 120th Street)

Theodor Damian, Ph.D.

Professor of Philosophy and Ethics, Metropolitan College of New York; President of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality:
Man as Divine Gift: The Transcendent Character of Human Identity

Richard Grallo, Ph.D.

Professor of Applied Psychology, Metropolitan College of New York:
Digital Technology and Transcendence

Louis Tietje, Ph.D.

Professor of Ethics, Metropolitan College of New York:
The Phenomenology of Sin: What Lutheran Theology Can Teach the Unbeliever

Mihai Himcinschi, Ph.D.

Professor of Missiology and Ecumenism, Orthodox School of Theology, Alba Iulia University, Romania:
Homo Technicus as Contemporary Missionary Challenge

Steven Cresap, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Modern European Intellectual History, Metropolitan College of New York:
The Morality of Mayhem

Paul J. LaChance, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Philosophy/Theology Department, College of St. Elisabeth, New Jersey:
Authenticity and Education: Bellah on Formation, Critical Thinking and Existential Engagement

George Lazaroiu, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Philosophy, School of Journalism, Communications and Public Relations, Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, and

Ramona Mihaila, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of English Literature, Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania:
The New Logic of Social Media

Gheorghe Dinu, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Law, Spiru Haret University, Constanta:
Direct Consequences of EU Regulations on National Courts

Mihnea Drumea, J.D.

Associate Professor of Labor Law and Social Security, Spiru Haret University, Constanta, Romania:
New Liabilities for Persons According to the 2011 Romanian Labor Code Provisions

Alina Feld, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Hofstra University:
Transcendent Man

Onorina Botezat, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Legal English and French, School of Law and Public Administration, Spiru Haret University, Constanta, Romania:
EU Legal English in a Multilingual Environment

Fr. Nicolae Nicolescu, Ph.D.

Director *Epiphania* Magazine, Jassy, Romania:
The Concept of Eros and Agape in the Works of the Holy Fathers and the Concept of Philia in the Thought of Father Pavel Florensky the Martyr

Sergey Trostyanskiy, Ph.D. candidate

Union Theological Seminary, New York:
The Issue of Personal Identity in the Light of Social and Cosmic Evil; The Patristic Response to the 21st Century Issues of Theological Anthropology

Cristian Dima, Ph.D. candidate

Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova:
NBFI Factoring Market: A New Service in the Romanian Economic Environment

Alina Botezat, Ph.D. candidate

“Nicolae Testemitanu” School of Medicine and Pharmacy, State University, Republic of Moldova:
Increasing Persons’ Immunology with Bio-R Treatment

MODERATOR:

Humphrey Crookendale, JD

Dean, School of Management, Metropolitan College of New York

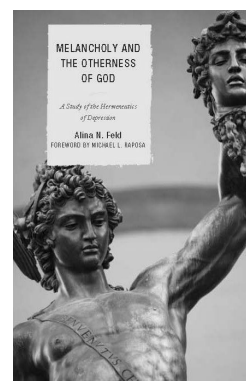
DISCUSSANTS:

Doru Tsaganea, PhD

Associate Professor of Mathematics, Metropolitan College of New York

Bert Breiner, Ph.D.

Adjunct Professor of Religion, Hunter College, City University of New York



SPECIAL EVENT: Book launching Alina Feld, *Melancholy and the Otherness of God. A Study of the Hermeneutics of Depression*