

Crossing the Border of Humanity: Cyborgs in Ethics, Law, and Art

International Online Conference

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The idea of being a cyborg is as alluring as it can be repulsive (at least to some). Literary and pop-cultural visions of becoming a cyborg and becoming a nation of cyborgs have seductively taken hold of our imagination, resulting in a prevalent, yet simplistic, image of a one-laser-eyed being with a robotic limb. This unanimous picture ostensibly evident what a cyborg is and what (s)he/it is not. We are, after all, by no means something like a Borg!

While the commonly adopted definition of a cyborg as a hybrid of the mechanical and the biological seems to leave no doubt about what a cyborg really is, it appears to be sparking controversies, rather than solving them today. In our world, where cyborgs walk among us, the maze of cyborg-issues is becoming ever more tangled and expands beyond the definitional dilemmas to reveal a burgeoning panoply of problems: the restorative/elective facet of cyborganization, an enhancing/curing aspect of becoming a cyborg, the legal status of cyborgs, and hesitations over whether one's 'cyborg' status needs to be visible or can be invisible.

Our conference will challenge some of the notions we have developed about cyborgs, which are often underpinned by simplistic and simplifying dichotomies of various nature: philosophical, legal, and artistic. It will be an opportunity to articulate problems we have to face as humans, recurrent yet still though-provoking questions, and insights that help us build a platform for the cross-pollination of ideas.

What is a cyborg?

a new form of evolution?

a new version of personhood?

a transition from a human person to a cyborg person?

a cyborg citizen?

a liminal specimen?

the end of the human species?

a denial of personhood?

a trans-human?

a mainstream specimen to be?

a genetically/technologically enhanced form of being?

an enhanced human?

a human with restored capabilities?

will make us more human and humane?

will make us less human and humane?

the doom of humanity?

the future of the person?

We pose all these unsettling questions, but we by no means promise answers to them all. Our goal is far more modest; we only wish to dismantle the binary and anthropocentric perspectives to seek and (if we are lucky) to unriddle the cyborg-puzzle. This is a journey we as individuals and as a team are eager to take and invite you to join. We hope it will be a chance for all of us to boldly go where no one else has gone before.