

Redeeming Technology

Run of Events: Session One (7th October 2017)

Prior to the Workshop:

Participants should get hold of a copy of the recommended text for the workshops:

- Robert C Scharff and Val Dusek (Eds.) (2014)
[Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition: An Anthology](#)

Read the four set texts from the [reading list](#) reading list for Session 1.

Optional: contact Katy Mok (kytmok@hku.hk) and volunteer to present a brief “book report” during the workshop.

At the Workshop:

09:00 Registration opens.

09:30 Welcome and introduction

09:40 Talk 1.1: “Can Stuff be Morally Good?” – Dr Mike Brownutt

10:00 Q&A / Discussion

10:20 Group activity: “Whom Do You Serve?”

10:40 Break

10:55 Talk 1.2: “Overview: Beyond a Utilitarian View of Technology” – Dr. Leung Wing Tai

11:15 Q&A

11:30 Book reports

11:55 Discussion

12:15 Closing remarks and explanation of the homework(!)

12:30 Carriages

Session 1.1: Introduction

7th October 2017

Title: Can *Stuff* be Morally Good?

Speaker: Dr Mike BROWNNUTT

Faith and Science Collaborative Research Forum, University of Hong Kong



Mike Brownutt obtained his first Master's degree (MSci in physics) and his PhD (in experimental quantum mechanics) from Imperial College London. Following this he moved to Innsbruck, Austria, for eight years, firstly as a post-doctoral researcher and later as an Assistant Professor, developing scalable architectures for quantum computers. Throughout this work he has had an abiding interest in the relationship between science and religion. He completed his second Master's degree (MA in theology from the University of Chester) considering how "faith" is understood by various parties in discourse on the relationship between Christianity and science. Now living in Hong Kong, he is Associate Director of the Faith and Science Collaborative Research Forum.

Abstract:

We are used to the idea that *people* can be good or bad, but it is less obvious to see how an inanimate object – without desire or volition – can be morally good or bad. This talk therefore considers what it means to redeem, or even need to redeem, a *thing*.

The things people make, from guns to phones to Coke cans, are designed to be used in particular ways. This inbuilt purpose is not value free, and predisposes objects – deliberately or inadvertently – to be used in ways which are morally value-laden: you *can* use a gun as a paperweight, but you are using it wrong.

The engineers and scientists who develop new technologies are in a unique position, and have a unique responsibility, to be aware of the moral dimension of their work. This awareness can open new vistas for research. It enables us to move beyond the usual puzzles of finding how to make something faster, lighter, or cheaper, and ask how to make something which is, morally speaking, *good*.

Reading:

- "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" Langdon Winner. Article #55 in Scharff and Dusek.

Session 1.2: Introduction

7th October 2017

Title: Overview: Beyond a Utilitarian View of Technology

Speaker: Dr LEUNG Wing-Tai

Founding President, Lumina College, Hong Kong



Leung Wing-Tai has had an education spanning science, theology, media, management, and communication. He has a PhD in Communication (Regent); Master of Fine Arts in Cinema-Television (University of Southern California); MTS in Christianity & Society (Gordon-Conwell Seminary); MA in Radio-TV-Film (Bowling Green State U); and a BSc in Physics-Chemistry (HKU).

Dr Leung has demonstrated a life-long commitment to cultivate values and worldviews among youths and leaders, through the media and higher education. He served in - and later became the Head of - *Breakthrough*, a youth-culture organization. He currently serves as the founding President of Lumina College, a Christian higher education institute. He has served as the producer of award-winning youth media, and is involved in public policies for the government advisory system and church leadership. He has been an invited keynote speaker at international conferences on youth, media, culture, education, faith and futuristic concerns, and has authored ten books addressing these topics.

Abstract:

This is an overview of technology beyond the utilitarian view to the philosophical, ethical and theological levels. What do we gain and lose in an invention? Does the form of technology shape human consciousness and culture? Is technology merely a tool or will it rule over humanity? What is the inner logic of technology? Is what *can* be done what *should* be done? What about the cases of gene cracking and human cloning? Are there any gender biases in technological development? What are the characteristics of convivial tools? What are the biblical views of technique and technology? What is to be said of either utopian or dystopian visions of a technological future? How, in light of this, can we redeem technology?

Readings:

- “From Tools to Technocracy” in *Technopoly* (pp. 21-39) Neil Postman (1993).
- “Tool Users vs. Homo Sapiens and the Megamachine” Lewis Mumford. Article #32 in Scharff and Dusek.
- “A Moratorium on Cyborgs: computation, cognition, and commerce” Evan Selinger and Timothy Engström. Article #52 in Scharff and Dusek.