

Ladies and gentlemen, cyborgs and übermenschen,

Last Thursday we kicked off the semester with a bang (and some laughs) as we investigated the merits and demerits of comedy and tragedy both as art forms and as the . After a number of acts and some thrilling scenes the curtains closed to victorious laughter, although we certainly discovered wisdom in our tears as well.

This week we turn our attention to an issue of utmost seriousness with the following:

RESOLVED: WE OUGHT TO TRANSCEND HUMAN NATURE.

AFFIRMATIVE: David Francisco Phipps (III) '14

NEGATIVE: Aesop '15

Transhumanism to many sounds like a word straight out of science fiction - interesting when applied to the fanciful realms of literature, but of ultimately little consequence or import when referenced with the real world. And yet, advancements in technology and medicine that allow us to overcome our natural human limitations already exist today, and their power to shape and transform those elements of human nature long held to be unchangeable will only continue to grow. Philosopher and futurist Max More defines transhumanism as "a class of philosophies of life that seek the continuation and acceleration of the evolution of intelligent life beyond its currently human form and human limitations and technology, guided by life-promoting principles and values." That our pleasures and goals in life would be fundamentally and dramatically altered by such developments as the overcoming of the aging process or the ability to cure all diseases is no question, although how they would develop in such scenarios is. Would the transcendence of human nature by a certain number of individuals lead to disastrous and unsustainable consequences to the human species as a whole? Or would such transcendence instead herald a brighter and richer existence for mankind, an era of enlightenment inconceivable by today's standards? Would it lead to a society of hierarchical oppression and existential depression for its individual members? Or would humanity instead, freed from so many earthly restraints, come to realize forms of beauty and artisinal or technical proficiency hardly now imaginable?

Join us at **7:30pm** this **Thursday, February 6th** on the **Third Floor of**

Massachusetts Hall to aid in the exploration of these most pressing of questions.

One final note!

This week I have attached, as a trial-run of sorts, a very brief collection of readings pertaining to the disputation to come. This collection consists of one very short article from Foreign Policy, a small short story by Isaac Asimov and the one-page Transhumanist Declaration adopted by the most prominent transhumanist organization, Humanity+. It should take all-together no more than 15 minutes or so to read in its entirety. This is not intended to be an exhaustive outline of all that we hope to cover in the disputation, but rather an introduction to its themes and central ideas. Please take the time to read it. If you don't, we'll just assume you don't support free inquiry.

Many thanks and see you soon,

Adam Smith, Allan Bloom & The Peucinian Council of Eight