

Futurist Philosophy Research Agenda: Key Topics / Problems by Melanie Swan, Technology Philosopher

Philosophy can be helpful in thinking through many traditional topics that may evolve in our technologized future: personal identity, subject/object, self/other, self/world, mortality, language, meaning, being, ontology.

1. **Zombie Uploads:** This is the basic problem of the confirmation of subjective experience. How is it possible to determine whether uploaded mind files are fidelitous to the full range of inner experience of a being or just running in a surface-level zombie mode that reasonably simulates external personality characteristics (a possible cost-savings measure by server farms and mind file operators).
2. **Future Politics/Group Ethics/Resource Allocation:** How to make group decisions impacting the utility of numerous persons, including capturing and incorporating their opinions. (A sub-problem: The Non-Identity Problem 2.0: Extending Derek Parfit's problem formulation: certain policy decisions prevent certain new identities (beings) from existing; how to include their views (rights?) in decision-making (example: population control)
3. **Fourth-Person Perspective:** The continuous information climate provided by our wearable computing gadgets is providing a perspective on ourselves that is distinctly new and different from the traditional first, second, and third person perspectives, a non-human eye that extends the cinema gaze in important new ways. This includes having objective metrics regarding formerly inaccessible subjective experiences of areas like biophysical reaction, affect, and mental performance.
4. **Repticity (Representational Authenticity):** a measure of the accuracy/correspondence of a representation to that which it is representing. This is an issue particularly for the growing number of contexts of unrepresented/unrepresentable such as big data and synthetic biology/molecular design.
5. **Wider Ecosystem of Self/Other:** Self/Other seems a rigid formulation of how intelligence, experience, and identity are currently packaged, but this could be a temporary convention as digital technologies allow mind resource-sharing with online projects and communities. What could more malleable flexible concepts of identity look like? 'The self' is a recent historical concept in the modern era (Belk 1984).
6. **Technology Philosophy:** Using philosophy to improve the rigor of our thinking and proactively address issues as we create technology that opens up new possibilities for humanity and the world. Technology Philosophy is specifically not the 'philosophy of technology' which in large part a retroactive and passive chronicle of activity in science and technology. The more affirmatory field of Technology Philosophy has as its ambit creating and theorizing novel science and technology with philosophy.
7. **Ethics of Perception / Ethics Modules:** Explicit creation of ethics modules in our technology objects that may have different kinds of access to and use of 'objective' or

adjusted reality perceptual frames. POV HUDs re: values elicitation, bias adjustment, aesthetics/other POV-sharing.

8. **Complete Experience:** Our contemporary human endeavor where activity is complex: simultaneously technologized, aesthetically-designed, and philosophically/conceptually meaningful.

9. **Philosophy of Personalized Medicine**

10. **Rethinking Difference:** Does difference as explained by Deleuze, Bergson, and others persist, or does it need to be re-thought (is difference different?) as digital objects manifest less difference, are identically reproducible, and may not be different. What would constitute a difference in difference?

References

Belk RW. Cultural and Historical Differences in Concepts of Self and Their Effects on Attitudes Toward Having and Giving. *Advances in Consumer Research* 1984; 11:754–763. Available online at www.acrwebsite.org/search/viewconference-proceedings.aspx?Id=6345 (Last accessed on March 20, 2013).