

Second Discussion Paper (Due Monday, October 26):

Write a five-page essay on one of the following topics.

1. Is it possible, in your opinion for (a) non-human organisms and (b) non-organic beings, such as robots, to be ensouled?
2. In your opinion, can entities other than humans -- think about animals, corporations, nation states, ecosystems, artificial agents, etc. -- be the bearers of rights and/or duties? What about robots?
3. What, in your opinion, is the place of emotion in the moral life? Would it be necessary for an ethical robot to possess a capacity to read, understand, and express emotion?
4. Among the major frameworks for ethical decision making that we have discussed are: (1) Deontology (rule based), (2) Consequentialism (such as utilitarianism), and (3) Virtue Ethics. Explain the basic features of each, and then give an argument defending one of them, or some clearly articulated combination of them, as the optimal framework for ethical decision making.
5. Advances in combining prosthetics, robotics, and AI promise not only to restore normal functioning in patients who have suffered the loss of limbs but also to equip such individuals, perhaps even otherwise "normal" individuals, with enhanced abilities. Should there be guidelines or limits on how far we might let technology go in this direction? Or should we let the marriage of human and machine transcend the "normal" without limit?