



Preface — What is it to be Human?

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This booklet takes a transdisciplinary and cross-cultural approach to explore what it means to be human in the face of pervasive intuitive technologies of the 21st century. This project began as a conversation that followed a shared panel discussion at the East-West Philosophers' Conference in May 2016, at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawai'i. We exchanged questions and interests about the broad intersections of Japanese philosophy and embodied cognition. We hatched a plan that culminated in a transdisciplinary workshop titled, "5EVEAI: Embodied, Enactive, Extended, Embedded, and Ecological Cognition in the Age of Virtual Environments and Artificial Intelligence," which took place in the University of Tokyo in December 2018.

The papers presented in this booklet are the flowers that bloomed through our collaborations. The booklet contains contributions from scholars from fields ranging from philosophy, film studies, Buddhist studies, linguistics, and cognitive science attempting to understand what it means to be human in an increasingly technological and virtual age. The works here represent many first steps toward a truly cross-cultural approach to philosophy and cognitive science without borders.

Back in 2018, none of the participants was aware, neither could have predicted, that with the global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 in 2020, the humanities are to face and forced to adjust to the new-normal. The new-normal not only let us familiarize ourselves in cyberspace meetings and conferences but is prevailing silent

but steady progress and arise of the surveillance society through the individually owned digital devices. In the case of Japan, citizens are encouraged to install an application named COCOA on their mobile phones that traces the possible contact with the identified COVID-19 patients. The new-normal suggests humanity is an equiprimordially (in Heideggerian terms) of the good and bad aspects in the use of technology.

While the topology of an argument made by Shoshana Zuboff in “The Age of Surveillance Capitalism” (2019) may slightly differ from the problem setting of this booklet, it seems that the global society has consistently been moving the path that leads the citizens to well-adapt themselves to the controlled society, where citizens unconsciously or oftentimes willingly and voluntarily provide personal and private data in the cyberspace. The 2020 global pandemic only made us realize that environmental change has an impact that forcefully leads us to social and behavioral change. Needless to say, the global pandemic proved that the change in the system leads to the change in individual behaviors. Although the pandemic reveals unbreakable inter-relations between the environment and human behaviors, it might be the last chance for humanity to learn a lesson in various aspects. Among those aspects include changes in the environment that will lead humans to change their behavioral patterns and ways of thinking.

As mentioned, the focus of the 2018 SEVEAI Workshop was on much fundamental questions than Zuboff’s. Rather than questioning “HOW those technologies are going to change our society and affect our daily lives,” and the means and consequences of over-dependence that results in invasions of human minds, our focus is on “WHAT it means to be human” in facing the digitally-electronically-operated machines and robots, and by placing ourselves in the digitally-created virtual environment. Therefore, the common key research question is set on to identify and ques-

tion “humans” through the looking glass of emerging technologies of AI and virtual environments where technology simply expands human capabilities. The booklet intends to open the door to discuss the deep integration and infiltration of technology into constitutive human practices. Of course, some may point out that the close link between the creator and the created — in this case, humans and the technologies — and its mutual dependences and influences are identical with the problem of eggs and chickens. However, one has to set foot down and make choices from which side to see the targeted object to well understand the target, which is “humans” ourselves. To question “humans” in the digital era, there were several questions posed to the authors of this booklet. Among those questions are: What’s next for interdisciplinary and cross-cultural work in philosophy and cognitive science? How does intuitive technology augment what it means to be human? Given what we know about embodied cognition, what are the implications of the advancement of intuitive technology?

The central argument of the book is that the relationship between the human-beings and the world of intuitive technologies is fundamentally changing with the rise of new technological development. For example, with Artificial Intelligence where humans cannot truly grasp what and how the collected data is being processed within the algorithms, the human-made machines turn themselves into a black-box where humans can no longer predict the outcome of the AI processed data. Alternatively, for example, in Virtual Reality, because of the limitations in our cognitive ability, humans (especially children) are increasingly facing difficulty to differentiate what is “real” and what is virtually occurring in “cyberspace.” Therefore, it is increasingly getting problematic for humanity to enframe technology as in Heideggerian terms of Ge-stell. In other words, arguments of how to enframe new technologies, such as AI and VR, also inevitably alert its potential threat to humanity. This booklet aims to highlight such embedded paradox of technology that it can do good and bad, and it

is totally dependent on how we humans enframe such technology.

Although the booklet is comprised of eight chapters in total, it is divided into two sections. The first volume of papers in section one, **Intuitive Technology and Human Practice**, argues that the increasing cybernation and virtualization of the world changes what it “means” to be human, rather than “what” is human. In other words, the fundamental question that unites the first section is the question on “What does it mean to be human?” Section one focuses on questions that are interesting and new but are facing difficulty to answer. Therefore, it invites a broad range of papers that approach the question from different perspectives ranging from Buddhist to French philosophy with reflections from cognitive philosophy. In short, the first section demonstrates that what it means to be human is fundamentally augmented by the advancement of technology in our current age.

The second section, **Embodiment and the Virtual World**, discuss embodiment, virtual environments, and humans’ relationship to actions through tools and instruments. The four papers in Section Two deploys the tools of Embodied Cognitive Science to correct the misunderstanding deriving originally from the Cartesian dichotomy that emphasizes on embodied mind related to the world as being “extended” rather than “distributed.” It also includes the relationship between the embodied mind and our devices within cognitive science that explores the ramifications of conceiving humans as integrated mind-body-environment systems. The section invites the view from film studies and also provides a few related answers using ecological psychology, eco-linguistics, and enactivism. The second section builds upon the first section to argue that humans live in an intrinsically virtual environment and that we act, think, and live through our devices, and not merely with them.

This booklet provides a unique variety of aspects in humanity studies, that al-

though the initial portal to approach the key question may differ, the papers compiled in this booklet share an attempt to answer the same question. There are several attempts and challenges made in this booklet that is relatively new in the discipline of philosophy. As we have argued several times above, the first attempt is an argument about “what it means” to be human. The question asking “what is human” in comparison with non-human-living-beings and machines is the usual approach in philosophy. However, in this book, we hope to challenge canonically accepted conceptions of human beings through analysis of the ways where intuitive technologies and tools change our world, bodies, and minds through their influence upon our daily practices (e.g., social, cultural, ethical). The second attempt is an argument by example, where we are demonstrating that it is possible, and indeed worthwhile, to engage cross-cultural perspectives beyond the confines of traditional comparative philosophy. Here, our attempt is to capture a new trend of World Philosophy, a philosophy ‘without borders.’ The third, but not the least, the attempt is an argument about “how” this theoretical reformation of “what it means” to be human (compiled in Section 1) impacts our “empirical” studies of human beings (compiled in Section 2). Here we focus on the impacts in cognitive science and linguistics, but we also discuss the importance of interdisciplinarity for understanding the complexity of “human-beings” as “human-becomings.” We sincerely hope that this booklet will open a new window to the interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approach to the existing research field.

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Photos from the 2018 5EVEAI Workshop