

PHIL 259 Test 2 Quotations

The following quotations will appear on the test along with questions that do not appear here. The test consists of two parts. For the first part there is one short-answer question based on the first quotation below (5/15 marks). For the second part, you will be given an essay question based upon the second set of quotations (10/15 marks).

Date: **Wednesday, March 5, 2008** (50 minutes)

Week 7 Human Nature

The Pessimists

Those philosophers of technology who are negative or pessimistic concerning technology are usually those who define humans in terms of language in order to reject the notion that technology is central to being human. ... Thinkers who seem (sic) technology as a danger or a curse tend to emphasize human mind (in earlier writers) or language (in twentieth-century thinkers) to counter the pre-technology stance. Lewis Mumford, Martin Heidegger, and Heidegger's student, Hannah Arendt, emphasize language or art as characterizing human nature or the human condition in order to counter the dominance of technology in an understanding of the nature of humanity.

Val Dusek, *The Philosophy of Technology*. (pp. 112-113)

Robots and Emotions

In the CBC Radio One program *I Robot: Robots and Emotions* Alan Mackworth proposes:

One of the most important areas, I think, will be in the area of robots that are your friend. Consider a senior that lives alone in the house, who wants to stay in the family home, but the kids may be off in other parts of North America, and you could imagine a robot that could interact with such a person in various ways. I mean, on a functional level, could help them get food from the fridge and vacuum the floor and so on – these things exist already. But also, at an emotional level, could understand the emotional state of the senior and could help the senior. If we had that kind of emotional understanding in robots, then I think we'd have much more useful companions. Our rational life is not all that we are. Emotional intelligence is key and if we are to have true companions, they'll have to understand us and we'll have to understand them in ways that we haven't done yet. I think that's, that's where the true potential lies.

Mark Morley responds:

I think of how, say, in the service industry in a store 30 years from now, one might encounter a humanoid robot there at the cashier. And if this is programmed well, it'll recognize me when I come back and it'll ask me questions based upon my interests of previous purchases in much the same way that sales people do now. I think the difference will be that, in the world as it is today, there's at least the potential to move from the imitation or the simulation of rapport to, at some point, actually appropriating a relationship or friendship. So, at some point, we might be able to step out of that store and pursue our own interests as friends. That's not going to happen with the robot.

Hint: Reflect upon the nature of friendship.

You will find the audio and a complete transcript of the program at:

<http://technologist.org/irobot>