

Introduction

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I actually think this is a great way to spend a Saturday. I know I woke up this morning and I sort of needed the impetus to get out of bed on this gray, rainy day. And when I thought about what I was coming to, it really made it worthwhile. Some of you know that I come, originally, from a science background. So, in that world, you are so able to rely on certain universal laws such as the laws of thermodynamics, energy, motion. And all of the areas that I studied—whether it was physiology or biochemistry—really depended on those underlying laws. And you had certainty; they didn't change. Why? Because they are not person-made. So, it was actually really hard for me when I first transitioned to law school and the law. Because what I discovered was that as lawyers we live in a world that is contingent—that is, contested—precisely because we have created it, and that makes it changeable. It gives lawyers work to do because we can argue the meaning of words and statutes. So, I've grown pretty comfortable with that. The question of what does intent mean? How do we know when someone has knowledge? What is a reasonable person? But the subject today—singularity, artificial intelligence, and the law—really takes us into another new world. And I have to tell you it stretches me.

I was at Microsoft yesterday meeting with one of our wonderful alumni, and he's a visionary who is working in this virtual technology world, and he was spinning out scenarios for me. The entire industry is being disrupted, and there are questions of responsibility, accountability, and autonomy in this world of artificial intelligence. And I have to tell you, I'm one of those people who just got kind of freaked out. It was too much for me to even imagine. And so, I am so grateful that the people who are speaking today are not like me. We have panelists who are spending their time, their academic lives, and their lives in practice really working through what concepts and doctrines such as freedom of expression and liberty and equality mean in a world that becomes, if not dominated, at least attended by a great presence of artificial intelligence.

So, I'm looking forward to today's program. I'm going to try to stay for most of it. I want to remark on the fact that this symposium really does reflect the value of the knowledge production and scholarship that our faculty are engaged in. Sometimes that is questioned. Why is it that faculty don't spend all of their time teaching? The reality is that this piece of their lives—knowledge production—is so important to us as citizens and to our lives, and I'm proud of the work that they do and to be part of a law school that values scholarship.

I also want to thank our Law Review. I know how much work goes into putting on these kinds of events, and they've done a great job. We look forward to the program. Thank you.