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IMPROVED HUMANS?

Max Mehlman to focus on legal and political issues of transhumanism as 2008-09 Templeton Research Fellow

What are the legal, social, and political implications of transhumanism? Is it possible, given the commercial possibilities and politics of international science to regulate or constrain human enhancement research?

Is there a difference between therapeutic genetic research and enhancement genetic research? How does human enhancement and artificial intelligence affect our notions of personhood, responsibility, culpability, punishment, fairness and justice?

Do transhumans have rights? Will transhumanism undermine the values of political liberalism according to which all individuals are endowed with inherent value? How does transhumanism and its potential to affect human evolution affect our relationship with God?

These are some of the questions that **Maxwell J. Mehlman**, Arthur E. Petersilge Professor of Law and director of the Law-Medicine Center at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, will take on as Templeton Research Fellow in 2008-09.

Mehlman was selected by an interdisciplinary research committee that guides the Templeton Research Lectures project at ASU, which is directed by history professor **Hava Tirosh-Samuelson**.

"Our aim is to bring the best minds in the country together with ASU faculty to address issues of transhumanism," commented Tirosh-Samuelson. "As we began to look nationally at who was doing cutting-edge work on the legal, ethical and political implications of human enhancement, Max Mehlman was the name that kept coming up."

Gary Marchant, executive director of the Center for the Study of Law, Science & Technology at ASU's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, agrees. "Max Mehlman is one of the few legal scholars in the country who has begun to think about issues of human enhancement and transhumanism in a systematic way. His leading work in the area of genetics, ethics and the law, human subjects, patient rights, and medical malpractice has well prepared him to take on this challenge."

Mehlman will deliver a series of lectures in the fall and spring as part of the Templeton Research Lectures series, work with the project's interdisciplinary faculty seminar, meet with students and faculty, and keynote a workshop on the legal, social, and political implications of transhumanism.

"Being named a Templeton Research Fellow on this important project will afford me the opportunity to explore a set of issues that, so far as I know, no one has tackled," said Mehlman. "One of my assumptions is that at least some people will try to use emerging genetic science to manipulate human evolution—whether it is possible or even desirable to constrain this through political, legal, ethical, social, or even religious mechanisms is a deeply urgent problem."

Max Mehlman will be delivering the first of two public lectures on legal, ethical and political challenges of transhumanism at 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, November 12, 2008 at ASU's College of Law.

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