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Ethics Panel

by Autumn Nielson
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Take a minute and answer the following statements true or false. 10 lb. atomic bombs, the size of a briefcase, can be purchased in the United States. Marilyn Monroe could star in an upcoming 2005 film. Robots could have souls. People with Alzheimer's could switch brain parts with an aborted fetus to help control the disease.

If you answered anything but true to the above questions, you did not pass this exam.

Dr. Wayne Hanewicz addressed these true facts, and many other interesting developments in the field of interdisciplinary technology on Wednesday, November 3 in the library. He holds a doctorate in political theory and philosophy, and was a professor at Eastern Michigan University for many years.

Hanewicz came to discuss some of the questions that arise from technological advances in cloning, stem cell research and robotics, and addressed other important issues relevant to our rapidly advancing world.

It is Hanewicz's goal is to have an interdisciplinary technology class included in general education requirements across the nation. In such a class, questions concerning these two fields would be addressed. In his words, "Wisdom is not the gathering of new facts; it is looking at old facts in new ways."

Some of these new ways include an instance where a woman in Germany was paid to conceive and then abort a child so that a successful man suffering from Alzheimer's could use the fetus' brain to extend the use of his own.

Another fascinating study finds that there is a specific part of the brain that, when stimulated, creates "religious feelings," or feelings that there is a God or a higher power in the world. The question arises on whether this is our only perception of religion or not.

Dr. Hancewicz also spoke of an experiment where lab mice were taught how to go through a maze. The scientist recorded their brain transmit signals and

then got two new batches of mice. With one batch, they taught them how to go through the maze, and the other, they simply placed in a maze and transmitted the brain waves to the new mice. The untrained mice went through the maze as perfectly as the trained mice, with no errors.

If this could be replicated in humans, for it has in chimps, then people could be "forced" to do something without even thinking about it, realizing it, or needed the education to do so.

Another debate was stirred when six-year-old Molly Nash was discovered to have a genetic disease that left her without a hip and part of her brain. The doctors and parents discussed the situation, and decided that her parent's would conceive another fetus whose stem cells could be extracted and used to help Molly. The life or death of the fetus was not the highest priority. Scientists fertilized eggs of the mother that were found to be lacking the genetic dieses and Adam Nash was conceived. He donated, without choice, to his sister, and the procedure went well. Both Molly and Adam survived, and to this day he states that if it would have happened, he would have gladly given up his life for his sister.

By including a class that would educated all students on the issues and questions that are expanding the world of technology, students would have a better knowledge of where their world, and the world of their children is heading, and Dr. Henciewicz believes that these questions are important enough to be explored.

And about Marilyn Monroe? Technology has advanced to the point where we could duplicate her voice perfectly, actions, body movement, and have her star in an upcoming movie. The only question would be who would get the royalties?

