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EXISTENTIAL THREATS TO HUMANITY: WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

**An international conference planned for May 2024 in Montenegro
(details to come)**

The forthcoming conference builds on the Center for the Study of Bioethics' tradition of bringing together top experts in the field of (bio)ethics and other disciplines in order to discuss novel issues. This time it partners up with The Hastings Center and Oxford University's Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics in order to organize the conference "Existential Threats to Humanity: What are they and how to Address them".

In May 2013, the Center for the Study of Bioethics and the Oxford Centre for Neuroethics jointly organized the conference "Enhancement: Cognitive, Moral and Mood." Peter Singer, Julian Savulescu and John Harris were among the esteemed presenters. In October 2015, the Center for the Study of Bioethics and The Hastings Center carried the 2013 debate one step further with the conference "Enhancing Understanding of Enhancement." The keynote speakers were John Harris and Erik Parens. In August 2017, the Center for the Study of Bioethics partnered with the Division of Medical Ethics in NYU School of Medicine's Department of Population Health and The Hastings Center for the conference "Genome Editing: Biomedical and Ethical Perspectives". An international group of bioethics expert gathered to discuss genome editing in both humans and nonhumans. All three events were held in Belgrade, Serbia.



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In March 2021, the Center for the Study of Bioethics organized the conference “Enhancement: Cognitive, Moral and Mood; Part II” – in partnership with Oxford University’s Wellcome Centre for Ethics and Humanities. The idea of the conference was to re-address the issues from the 2013 conference, but from the perspective of seven years after 2013. The event was planned for 2020, but was delayed and held online – both due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In light of the potential existential threats humanity has been facing during the previous years, and still may be facing, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the ever-present threat of nuclear war, it is difficult to imagine a more important issue in various scientific disciplines than the issue of existential risks to humanity and the ethically responsible possibilities of lowering their likelihood. To that effect, the Center for the Study of Bioethics, are partnering to organize the conference “Existential Threats to Humanity: What are they and how to Address them”.

The conference will be held in May 2024 on the coast of Montenegro (exact date and hotel/resort soon to be determined). This conference is expected to be one of the most important scientific events of 2024. Confirmed speakers will be Peter Singer, John Harris, Julian Savulescu, Arthur Caplan, Josephine Johnston, Ingmar Persson, Anders Sandberg, Vardit Ravitsky, Roger Crisp, and Vojin Rakić.

The conference organizers will convene presentations and panels that include but are certainly not limited to the following potential existential threats to humankind, and the possibilities of lowering their likelihood:

- Pandemics
- Bio-terrorism



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- Nuclear threats
- Artificial intelligence as an existential threat to humanity
- Cognitive and moral bio-enhancement as a means of decreasing existential threats to humanity
- Climate change as an existential threat to humanity
- Food safety, food production and population growth as a possible existential risk to humanity
- Risks of germ-line genome editing and other forms of genetic engineering for the future of humanity

ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

The Center for the Study of Bioethics (CSB), founded by Vojin Rakić, was designed to stimulate scientific debate on a variety of bioethical issues, including the establishment of morally responsible policies of creating better humans and better lives. With the passing of time, CSB broadened its activities to other, mostly ethical issues. CSB is located in Belgrade, Serbia, but is global in scope. To that end, it regularly organizes international conferences and events, and global partnerships.

The Hastings Center, founded in 1969, has been addressing fundamental ethical issues in health, health care, life sciences research, emerging technologies, and the environment for over 50 years. The Hastings Center accomplishes its mission by producing original research, publishing two journals, engaging the public through a variety of in-person and online events, and providing service to the field of bioethics through its visiting scholar program, widely read blog, workshops for journalists, and other platforms.



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The Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics, founded by Julian Savulescu in 2003, with funding generously provided by the Uehiro Foundation on Ethics and Education, chaired by Mr Eiji Uehiro, established the Uehiro Chair in Practical Ethics at the University of Oxford. The goal of the Centre is to encourage and support debate and deeper rational reflection on practical ethics. The Centre as a whole will not promote a particular philosophy, approach, solution or point of view, though its individual members may give an argument to a substantive conclusion as a basis for dialogue, engagement and reflection. It is the method of rational analytic practical ethics that it aims to advance. The vision is Socratic, not missionary. The Centre seeks to be inclusive, encouraging debate between different approaches to ethics, aiming to resolve disagreements and identifying key areas of consensus.

ENVISIONED CONFERENCE RESULTS

An outcome of the conference will be a summary report on various existential threats to humanity and ethically responsible means of lowering their likelihood. This report will be a sort of summary of the conference, preferably (some of) its conclusions that will be formulated at a panel to be held at the end of the conference. The report may be submitted, for example, to the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Security Council, the World Health Organization, the World Medical Association, the International Atomic Energy Agency and to the Food and Agriculture Organization.



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CONFERENCE PUBLICATIONS

Another outcome of the conference might be the publication of an edited volume or a journal's special issue "Existential Threats to Humanity: What are they and how to address them". In this publication, the conference participants will have the opportunity to publish the papers they presented at the conference or other texts that foster the debate on existential risks to humanity.

Vojin Rakić

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for the Study of Bioethics

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