In biology and technology scientific reality has changed dramatically in the recent past and we are entering a time of mind-blowing discovery and rapid change that forces us to deal with fundamental questions about the nature of our humanity. These have direct practical consequences in fields ranging from developmental biology to robotics and health care. In this second Branco Weiss lecture we will discuss topics ranging from artificial human embryos to artificial intelligence and the astonishing collective intelligence of social insects. In doing so we aim to stimulate a dialogue at the interface of science and society that is required for scientific progress that benefits humankind.

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