

Cyborg citizen – person or property? Consent or commodification? Debate on law, technology and ethics

Gandhinagar, Oct 01, 2019: Gujarat National Law University (GNLU) organized an interactive session with Ms Kelly Dhru on “Cyborg citizen – person or property? Consent or commodification?”

Ms Dhru discussed some of the cutting edge technologies of our times, such as the use of microchips, neuroprosthetics, and genetic engineering. Kelly argued that emerging technologies not only raise questions about whether or not the law should regulate these technologies but challenge some of the existing categories of law. The emerging technologies are now creating new types of entities, such as human-animal chimaera, and raise the question, whether or not they are to be right-holders. Are they to be treated as “humans” or not? In particular, she discussed the distinction made by the Roman Law between “person” and “property”. Kelly said, “Interestingly, the questions raised by some of these technologies go back to some of the classic debates in Bioethics about, for example, the status of animals or embryos in law.” How is the law to respond to these challenges? The answers are not clear. She also said, “While the law exists as its own system, we, as students of law, have to ask, whether the changes in the environment make it necessary to bring out the assumptions in law itself. The law has to keep pace with technology.” She also said, that there has now been scholarly work that question the traditional boundaries of the “self”, given the interdependence on the use of technologies, and asked, “Are we not already “cyborgs”?!”

Ms Kelly Dhru, an alumnus of GNLU and University of Oxford, is currently a doctoral fellow at Albrecht-Mendelssohn- Bartholdy Graduate School of Law, and a Research Associate at Hamburg University in Germany. Her PhD thesis focuses on the Ethics of Neurotechnology. Earlier, Kelly was the Fulbright-Nehru Master’s Fellow in Public Health Law and Bioethics at Harvard Law School.

The event was organized under the aegis of the GNLU Centre for Law and Technology.

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