

TALKFEST HER - FEBRUARY 24th - 18:30h - IEN

As the name TalkFest suggests, it is our intention for everyone to be able to participate and decide which of the issues raised by the movie they find most engaging. It is in the hope of enriching the conversation that we are providing some additional resources and questions, not as required reading or points to be followed but as food for thought.

Additional Resources

- [Jeanette Winterson - Remaking Ourselves](#) (video) | Edinburgh International Book Festival
- [Jeanette Winterson - My Bear Can Talk](#) | excerpt from *12 Bytes: How Artificial Intelligence Will Change the Way We Live and Love*
- [John Searle's Chinese Room Argument](#) | *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

Food for Thought

1. What did watching the film leave you thinking about? Does it present a dystopian or utopian view of the future?
2. What alternatives do people find to human relationships? Are these necessarily negative? What differences are there between the human and non-human attachments we form? How does Samantha compare to Theodore's ex?
3. Theodore's ex says he is incapable of having a normal relationship with another person. Do you think this is true? Why might it be easier to have a relationship with a non-human than with another human?
4. As Theodore begins to interact with Samantha, he begins to open up not only to her but as a human being. What does Samantha bring out in Theodore? What does he mean when he tells her "I feel like I can be anything with you"?
5. Theodore tells his friends that he is in a relationship with Samantha. Would you consider it a relationship? How is it different from long distance or internet relationships?
6. Theodore's friend Amy develops a close friendship with an AI operating system. Is a friendship with AI different from a romantic relationship with AI?
7. How does Samantha change as she begins to evolve? How does this affect the relationship? At one point she tells Theodore "I'm yours and I'm not yours." What does she mean by this?
8. Is it fair to think of Samantha purely as a girlfriend surrogate? Is she capable of feeling love? Or is it just performance? What do you make of her pausing?

9. When Samantha tells Theodore she is interacting with many others besides him, is his pain any different than if she were human? She claims loving many people at the same time doesn't take away from her love for him. Can we romantically love more than one person at a time without it detracting from our relationships?
10. Why is it significant that Theodore makes a living writing personal letters for other people? Is what he is doing ethical? To what extent is he packaging up love in the same way as the company that produced Samantha?
11. Jeanette Winterson predicts that artificially intelligent helper robots will soon enter the mainstream. She mentions that Siri and Alexa are non-embodied AI and predicts that AI robots are the next step. The future depicted in Her has advanced non-embodied AI systems but no robots even though Samantha wishes she had a body. How do you see the future? Do you think humanoid (or other) robots are likely to become mainstream or are AI systems likely to develop without physical bodies?
12. In order for a machine to pass the Turing test, a human being should be unable to distinguish it from a human being based on their replies to a set of questions. Would Samantha pass the Turing test?
13. In response to the Turing Test, John Searle, philosophy professor at USC, proposed another test –The Chinese Room– to illustrate the difference between human intelligence and artificial intelligence. In Searle's scenario two persons exchange messages written on paper in Chinese through a slot in a door. Apparently, they are communicating, but there is a catch: one of them doesn't understand Chinese. He merely responds to the symbols he receives with other sets of symbols, which he arranges according to a set of rules. This, according to Searle, is the difference between a person and a computer. One manipulates symbols according to a mathematical algorithm; the other attaches meaning to the symbols. Does this seem like a significant difference to you? Are there other differences between humans and machines that are in your opinion more significant than this?

TalkFest Project

Via Augusta, 121, 08006 Barcelona

93 240 51 10 – www.ien.es