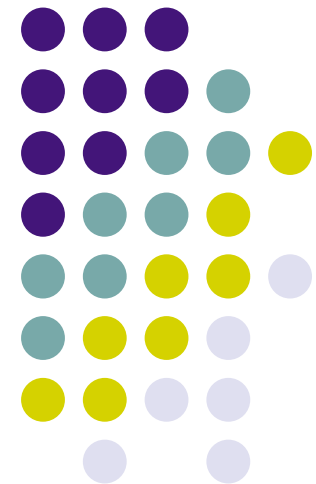# Leadership Agility in a Dramatically Changing World

Heart at work or just hard at work?
Leading as if people REALLY matter

Part B – Philosophy of Humans

Greg Latemore

27th April 2012

Opening Quote

"What sort of freak then is man!
How novel, how monstrous, how chaotic,
how paradoxical, how prodigious!
Judge of all things, feeble earth-worm,
repository of truth, sink of doubt and error,
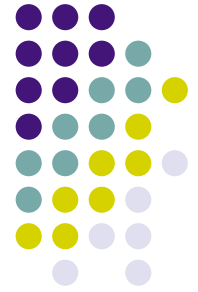glory and refuse of the universe".

Source: Blaise Pascal, 1623-1662,
'Pensees sur la religion' (1669)
French philosopher and mathematician.

Session Objectives

During this Session, you will be invited to:

1. Reflect upon what it means to be human;

2. Draft your personal philosophy/statement of human beings;

3. Consider how such a philosophy might matter when working as or with HR professionals.

"And now there go the Wilsons! . . . Seems like everyone's evolving except us!"
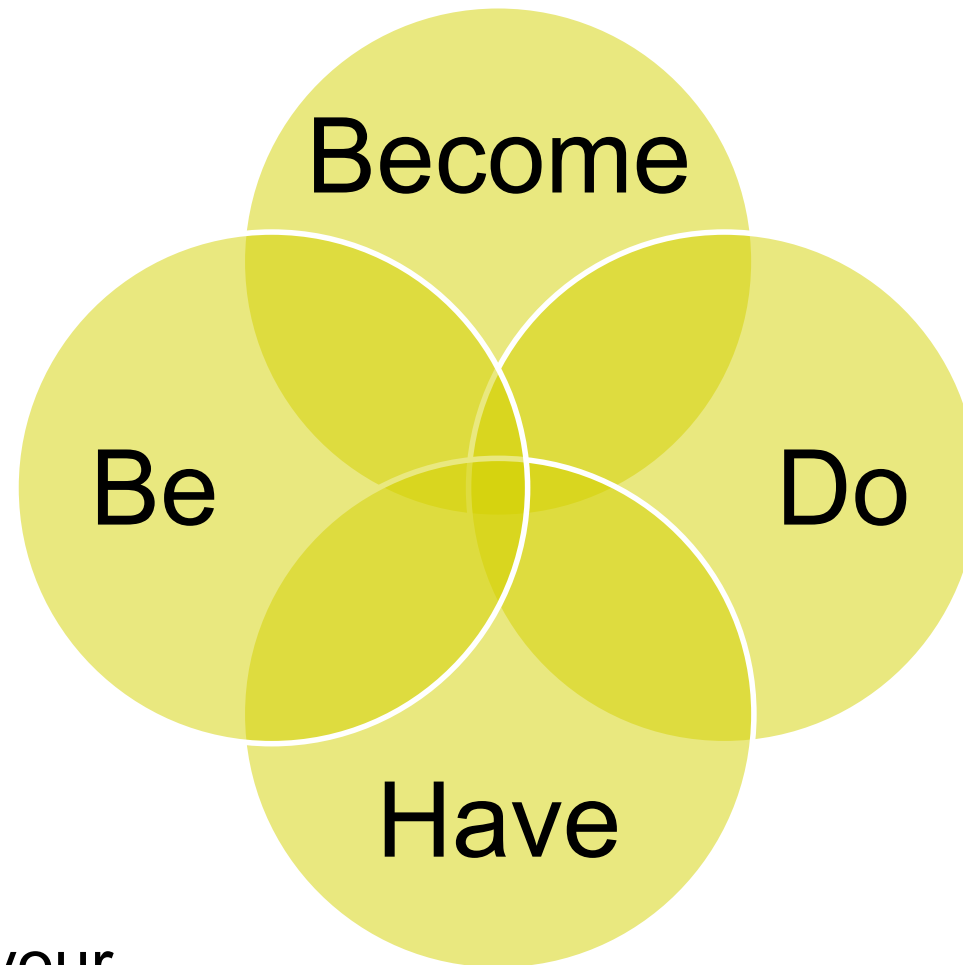
Two Existential Questions

Are you a human being or just a human having?

Source: Gabriel Marcel (1949)
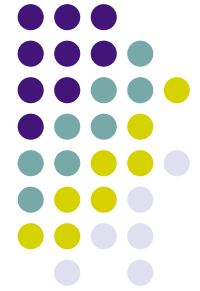
Are you a human being or just a human doing?

Source: William Cottringer (2001)

At Least 4 Existential Domains

So, what is your focus?!

Some Positive (Western) Philosophies

"You are a child of the Universe, no less than the trees and the stars. You have a right to be here." (*Desiderata* by Max Ehrmann, 1872-1945)

"You are sons and daughters of God" (Galatians 4: 1-7)

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and has crowned him with glory and honour." (Psalm 8: 4-5)

"Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for kindness." (Seneca, Roman philosopher)

"I have no patience with these gorilla damnifications of humanity." (Thomas Carlyle, 1795-1881, Scottish historian on Charles Darwin)

A More Negative (Western) Philosophy

"I have learned to look on nature,
not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing often-times
The still, sad music of humanity."

William Wordsworth, 1770-1850, British poet.
Lines Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey.)

The Guardians of Humanity – from a Woman's Perspective

"Women have always been the guardians of wisdom and humanity which makes them natural, but usually secret, rulers. The time has come for them to rule openly, but together with and not against man"

Source: Charlotte Wolff, 1904-1986, British psychiatrist.

Man's Inhumanity to Man

Why does man (sic) display such
'inhumanity to man'?

(First attributed to Robert Burns in a poem called
Man Was Made to Mourn: A Dirge, 1784)

And Now, to Modern Times

What can other
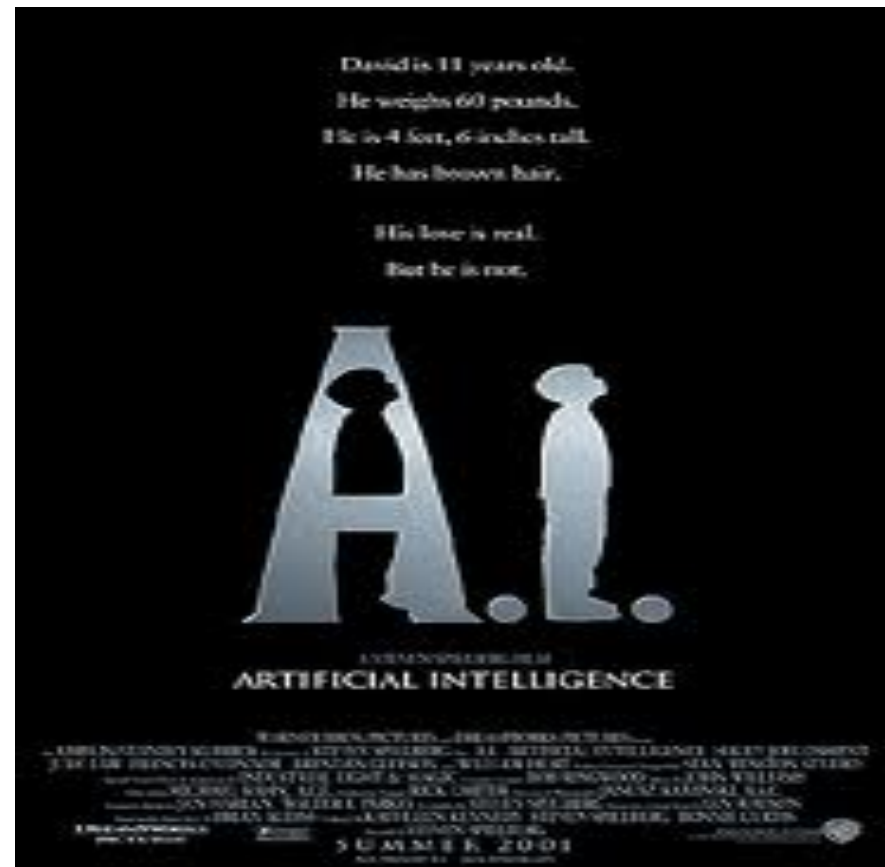genre's tell us about
being human?
Let's go to science fiction …

PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Artificial Intelligence

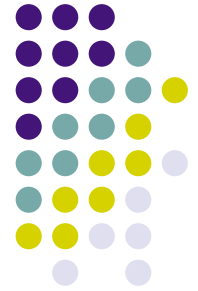**2001 - A Space Odyssey (1968)**

AI (2001)

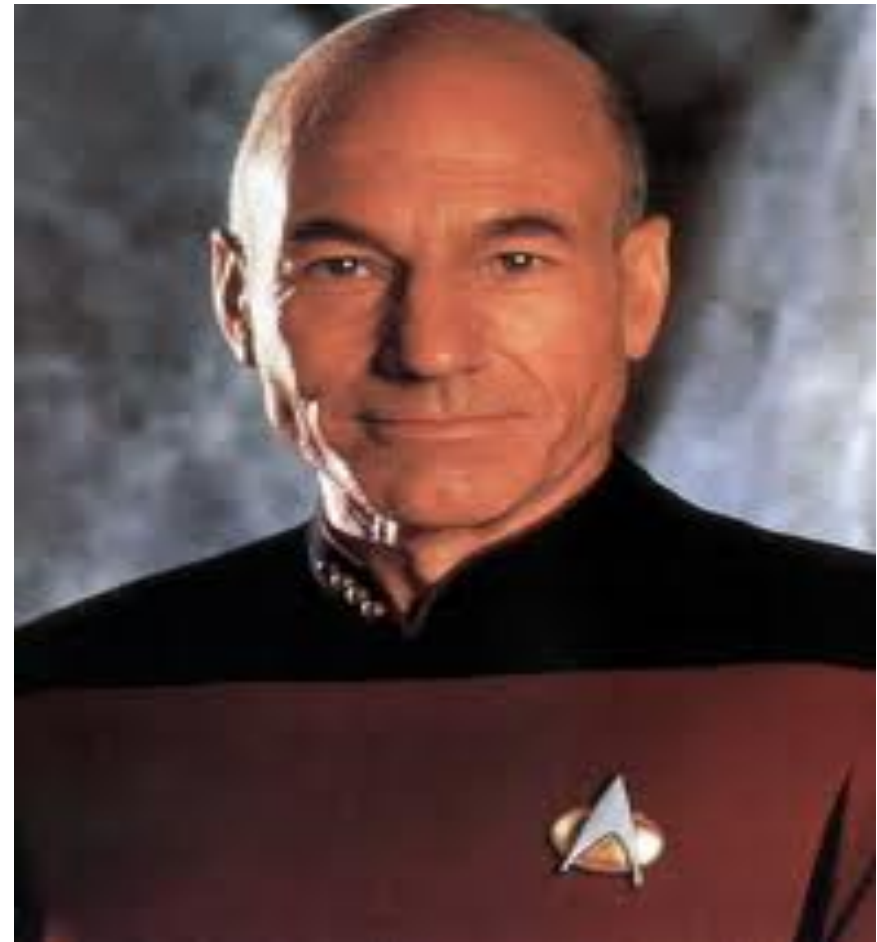# The Nature of Humanity?

"Data strived to be more than he was.
And so, he taught us what it meant to be human" ('Star Trek')
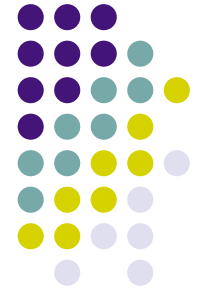
Commander Data

Captain Jean Luc-Picard

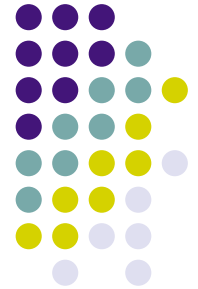# Humans or Replicants?

'Blade Runner '(1982)

Machines & Humans

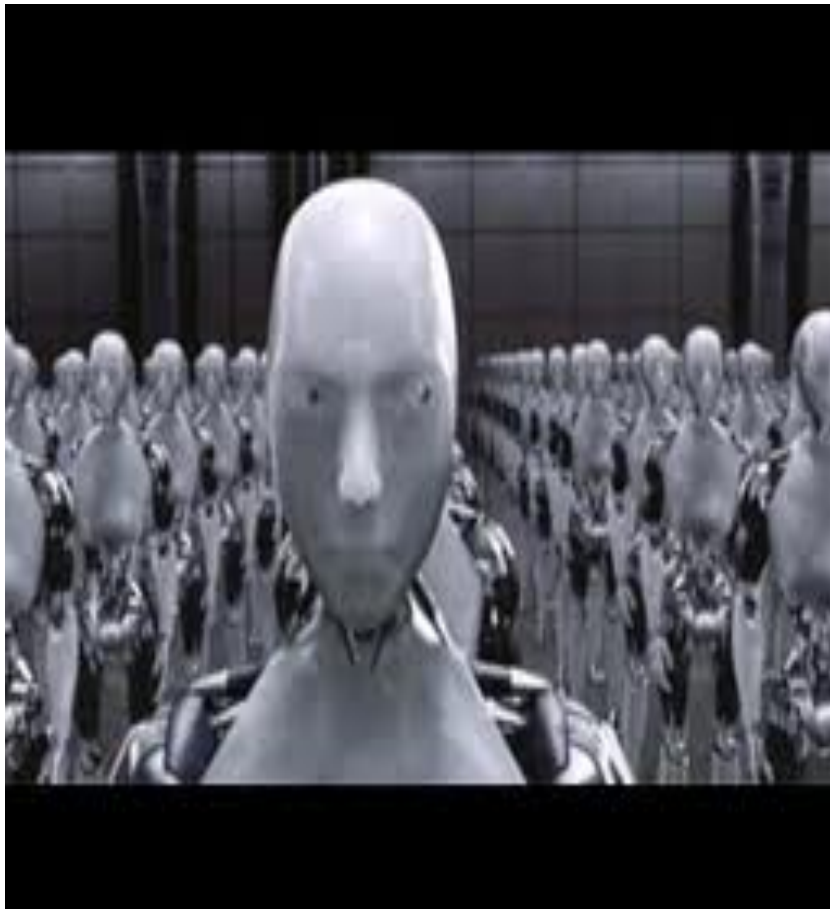R2D2 & C3PO
('Star Wars' 1978)

Jedi Knight
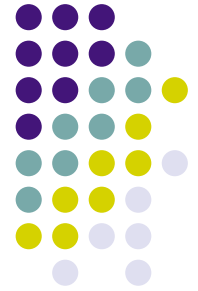('Star Wars' 1978)

Robots with Emotions?

'I Robot' (2004)

'Millennium Man' (1999)
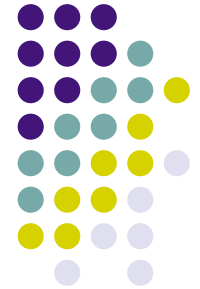
Are We Just 'Cyborgs'?

"If a Terminator can learn the value of human life, then maybe we can too…"

(Sarah Connor in the movie 'Terminator 2')

Aliens without/with Humanity?

'V'
(TV Series 2009)

'The Day the Earth Stood Still' (2010)

Really, How Human Are We?!

Caesar seems to display more humanity than do the humans in this movie …

('The Rise of the Planet of the Apes', 2011)

Human Courage & Heroism

"The important thing
is not how much time
we have but what we do
with the time we have."

(Gandalf to Frodo in
'Lord of the Rings:
The Fellowship of the Ring'
2001)

GANDALF the WHITE
(Wizard)

FRODO BAGGINS
(Hobbit & Ring Bearer)

The Most Human Human

Cautions for Us Humans
…

Brian Christian (2011)

A robot can't keep track of the coherence of its own identity.

Humans, adapted for a shifting, subtle environment, will sacrifice precision for timely decision.

Don't let computers [& cell phones] banalize you – keep fighting.

The HR Implications of Certain Philosophies

As mammals (able to survive & self- generate as physical beings)

As social animals (able to meet with & share with others)

As emotional beings (able to show passion & feelings)

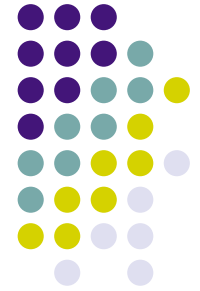As rational beings (able to think, know, problem-solve & research)

As spiritual beings (able to connect with something greater)

As communicators (able to talk, listen & connect with others)

As liberated beings (able to self-direct & manage one's own life)

As …??

What HR has said about People

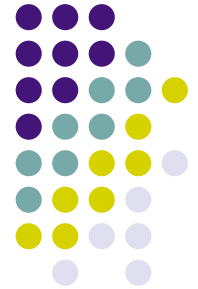|	
Pre- 1950	**Rates & Rations**
1960's	**Human Resources**
1990's	**Intangible Assets**
2000's	**Human Capital/Talent**
2010+	**People/Human energy**

The Loss of Humanity in HR?

Have we sacrificed our 'employee advocate'
role on the altar
of 'strategic partner'?!

… with apologies to Dave Ulrich (1997)

Remember, the origins of HR were not in
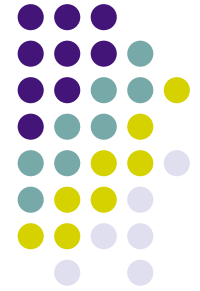'personnel' but in 'industrial welfare'!

Recent Research on HR Role

"The role of an Australian HR manager has become increasingly complex over time as the number and range of roles has expanded. Two of these roles, employee-centred and strategic partner, would appear to be a potential cause of difficulty but contemporary Australian HR managers have redefined the work of the former to be consistent with the latter role. The merging of the two roles may be evidence of the flexibility of the HR profession to transform itself sync with organisational dynamics in order to maintain HR's relevance. The next step is to evaluate the implications of this flexibility from the perspective of HR's stakeholders."

Source: Brown et al (2009)
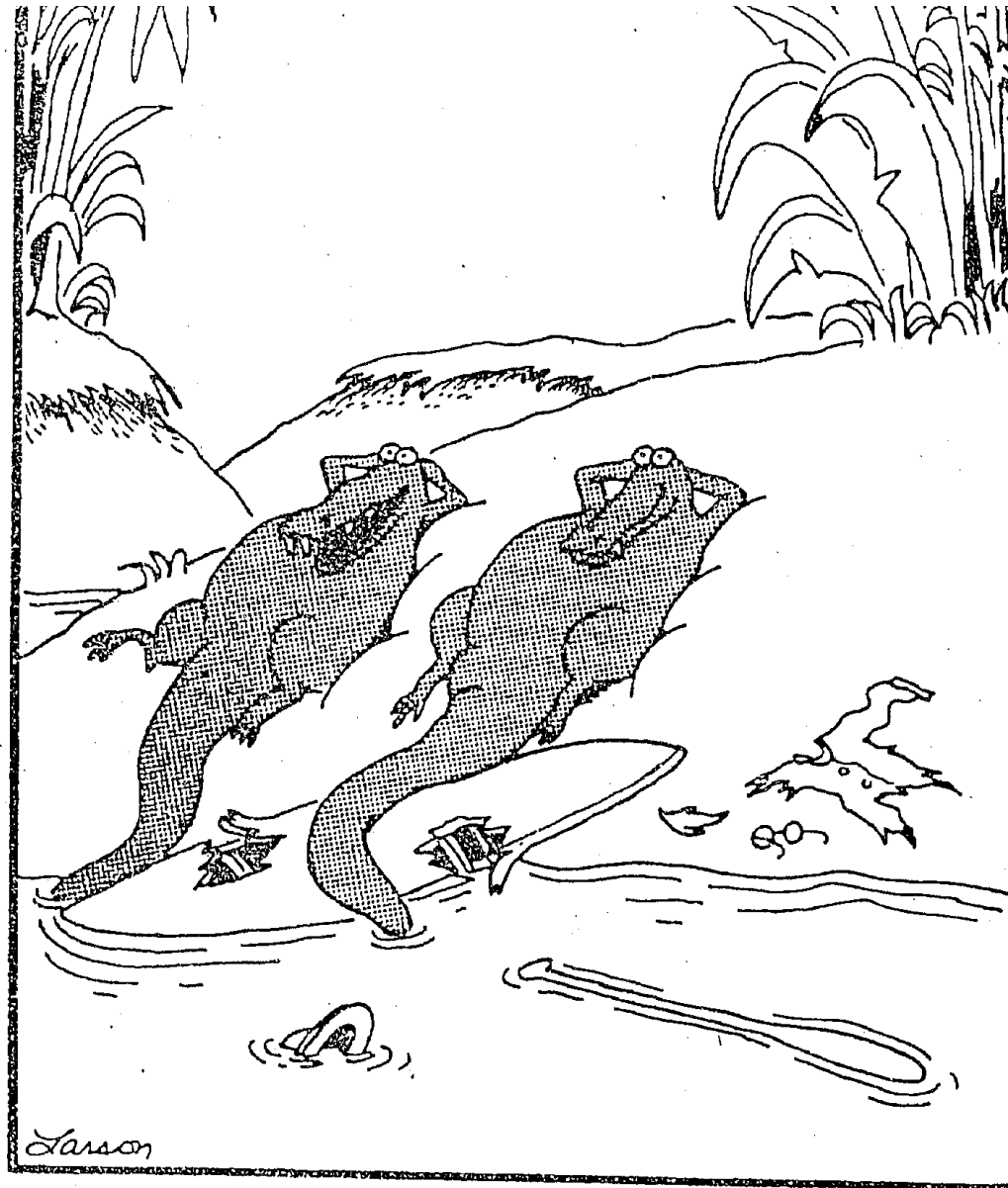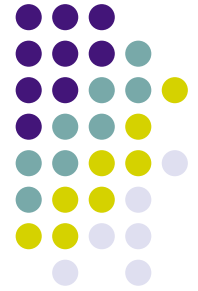
The Restoration of HR

At UQ in 2010-2011, I created and delivered two new SHRM subjects - MGTS7605 'Performance Leadership' and MGTS7611 'Employee & Organisation Development'.
These were based upon the 'paradigm of human well-being'.

Best practice might be the current thinking in HR … however, the best principle of human well-being ought underpin the HR profession.
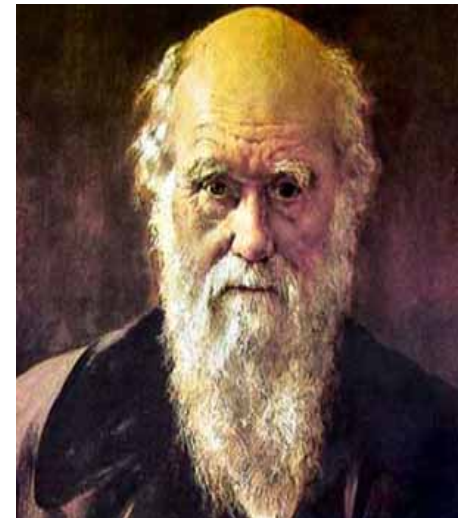
Source: Hartel & Fujimoto (2010)

"That was incredible. No fur, claws, horns, antlers, or nothin' . . . Just soft and pink."

A Humble Thought

"We must, however, acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man with all his noble qualities, still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin."

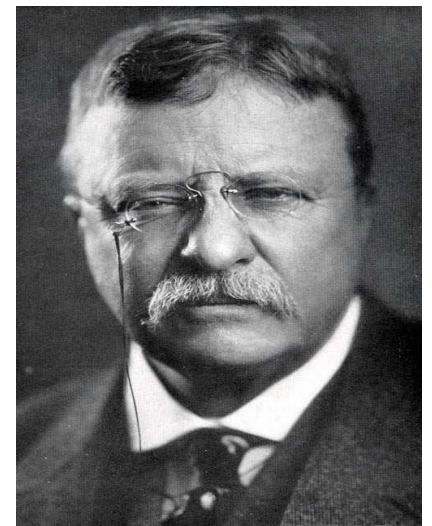Charles Darwin, 1809-1882, British scientist, Closing words in *Descent of Man,* Chapter 21.

An Invitation

"Let us rather run the risk of wearing out than rusting out!"

Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919)
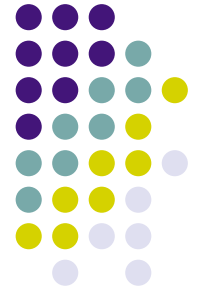The 26th American President

Humanity & Foolishness

"I wish … that I may seem,
though I die old,
a foolish,
passionate person."

Source: William Butler Yeats (1952)
Collected Poems
London: Macmillan

'Open the Pod Bay Doors, Hal'

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkyUMmNl4hk

In the movie, '2001 - A Space Odyssey' (1968), the 9000 on-board computer [Hal] challenges the Captain: "I'm sorry, Dave – I can't do that".

Artificial intelligence (AI) has come of age!

Being Human

Name: Data: Search for Humanity

Category: [Common Interest](#) - [Beliefs & Causes](#)

Description: What does it mean to be human? Do we even know? Are there no points in our lives that we reflect and say to ourselves: 'what is our purpose here?' There was someone who went on a search for his own humanity. The only problem was that he wasn't human. He was an android, programmed to try to be more like us. He was Data. And he taught us more about ourselves than we could ever have dreamed (Facebook, accessed 26th August 2011).

"If you prick me, do I not ...

leak?"

Data (The Naked Now)

2 Reflective Questions

1. What is your personal philosophy of 'human beings' – that is, what does it mean to you to be human?

2. Why would one's philosophy matter when working as or with HR professionals?

Please write your answers to these 2 questions on the cards. I propose to write them up as a post-conference paper. If you wish to be included, please leave them at the doors.
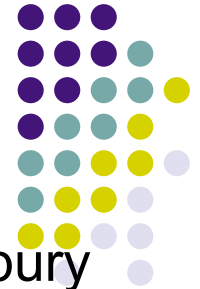
Postscript:
Technology for Human Beings

Piano Stairs

http://www.angelfire.com/ak2/
intelligencerreport/piano_stairs.html

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