care and machines  
**an interdisciplinary conference on caring relationships with technologies**

*University of Manchester, 20th-21st October 2017*

We live with machines. This has become obvious in contexts as diverse as medicine, education, military, leisure, food, and industry, where we form a range of complex relationships with technologies. By bringing researchers and practitioners from these contexts together, this conference invites reflection on practices of care that are developed and challenged between humans and machines, as well as other ‘nonhuman’ groups.

Machines with ever-advanced capabilities are now being developed and deployed to provide companionship and treatment for elderly people, as well as young children with autism and other conditions; they are being sent out to battlefields and hostile terrains to locate mines, patrol borders, and provide defence; and they have been outperforming humans in mass-scale industrial operations for many years now, replacing human labour in a number of processes. The increasing agency of machines, as well as efforts to increase their autonomy, may challenge the assumption that machines are inert tools, as they participate in increasingly complex relationships with humans.

Such relationships can be characterised or promoted by appeals to the notion of ‘care’, but critical reflection on this is needed in order to ascertain the *assumptions* behind the use of this term, as well as the *issues* that it raises as part of our engagement with machines.

**Call for papers**

In order to respond to the call to explore critically the meaning, significance, and future of care and machines, contributors from a range of disciplines are invited to propose papers on a variety of topics. As an indicative guide, topics and questions that might be explored include, but are not limited to, the following:

* Methodological issues
  + What is ‘care’ in relation to other concepts such as wellbeing, trust, or altruism? What do these reveal about our understandings of care and machines?
  + How can we discern or measure ‘care’ in a technological context?
  + What insights from the philosophy of technology can be applied, developed, or critiqued?
* Ethical issues
  + Do humans have a duty of care to one another? Can/should this be technologically mediated?
  + Do humans have a duty of care to nonhumans, including machines and animals? How do practices of care interact between different nonhumans, i.e. can/should machines care for nature or animals?
  + What, if any, are the reciprocal demands on participants – human and machine – in caring relationships?
* Practices in contexts
  + What specific questions are raised by different examples of care and machines? (I.e. mobile devices and ubiquitous communication/data mining; companion robots and projection of emotion/replacement of relationships with other humans; machines in medicine and trust/prompting of new moral dilemmas such as switching off life machines; etc.)
* Disciplines, traditions and receptions
  + How do historical relationships influence our present and future attitudes to care in technological contexts?
  + How do depictions of technologies in fiction influence our attitudes to care and machines?
  + What religious attitudes would support or challenge practices of care with machines?

Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words, together with a short author bio (of approximately 100 words), to [scott.midson@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:scott.midson@manchester.ac.uk). The closing date for proposals is **1st June 2017**, and authors will be notified of decisions by 1st July. Prospective presenters should be aware of the diverse audience of this conference, and ensure that their papers are accessible to researchers from other fields and disciplines. This should be reflected in abstracts and proposals.

*This conference is part of the* ***Living with and Loving Machines*** *project at the Lincoln Theological Institute, University of Manchester. For more information, please visit:* [*www.lincolntheologicalinstitute.com/living-with-loving-machines*](http://www.lincolntheologicalinstitute.com/living-with-loving-machines)