

BERGEN DEBATE (Norway) 03/09/12

With this discussion, targeted to a non-scientific public, we wanted to test different topics: **(1)** if they enjoyed the film, **(2)** if they understood the main idea and **(3)** if some philosophical questions could be raised. This was the most free-thinking discussion, we just released the main questions and let people to continue where they wanted.

What do you think about the film?

-The public gave us a realistic feedback

“Very striking, if you could see it as an ad you would stop what you are doing at home!”

-They focused on the ethical part of the film and the emotional aspects of it. The problem of loneliness was continuously repeated:

“There is a lack of balance between the way you feel and the way you show how you feel, since the watch takes the control of this part.”

“The technology doesn’t solve the problem, the man continues being sad.”

-They were also interested in the role of the biohacker, she is a character full of controversy:

“The biohacker really trusts the technology, maybe she should have taken more care about that.”

“Instead of caring her grandfather, she seeks an answer in the industry.”

“The biohacker takes a lot of roles in her life...for example, where is her mum?”

“Who is the real responsible one for the death? It could be the company if she doesn’t say anything!”

The main topic: cheater bacteria and monopoly

-After rating the film, they turned to the main point of the film. Surprisingly, their knowledge was quite high and their answers had an important meaning:

“Biosensors are machines, and the transduction signals passes through many steps. In each step, things can go wrong.”

“What does it mean a lying bacteria? Do they have any intention, any purpose?”

“There is an interest in the bacteria to mutate; it is really an energetic advantage. This is evolution. But they are not supposed to do it in these conditions (in a consumer product).”

“This is simplifying way too much [that they are cheaters], because what are the benefits to the bacteria after mutating? To send different signals?”

“Can we see bacterial reproduction maximization as a proof that they are lying? Can we translate this in a lying thing? I think yes.”

-Then, the monopoly and the powerful control made by big companies turned up:

“Liability promotes monopoly, because the more regulations you have the less are the actors than can act in the scene. After that you have a situation of monopoly.”

“If he [Craig Venter] is successful with this method [using synthetic biology] to solve most of the problems of today, then you can envision of course a future of big companies. This is a good example.”

Philosophical ideas

-Fortunately, several ideas from different points of view were raised:

*“Who takes the responsibility for this kind of death?...Who do you put the blame on?”
“You never know how the technology develops...Here we can see an example where a futuristic technology can be completely misused!”*

“Is it worth to live so long but in these conditions [like the old man in the movie]? Life quality is the most important thing.”

“Would these bacteria, as they evolve, have to develop some kind of morality? Do we have to insert some kind of morality [or a resembling emotion]?”

-The power of technology was also issued:

“If we could use this technology for almost every process that requires information (inputs and outputs) as it is being improved...could we take the control of a city with this?”

“It seems like in these situations, technology can be a gun!”

At the end of the discussion, which was roughly one hour long, we felt satisfied after hearing that from the public:

"Thumbs up for this movie! It really reaches its purpose!"