

## Are People Things? Final Debate of the Introduction to Philosophy Class, December, 2005

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2005年、十二月の一年生の哲学入門クラスで、“人類は物ですか”という討論を行った。その討論の実録と注解を提供するものである。その思考の深さを通じて、文本は2005年一年生の秀逸ぶりを讃えるものである。

The final meeting of the Introduction to Philosophy class of Fall Semester, in December 2005, featured a debate on the question of whether one can say that human beings are things. A transcription of the debate is provided along with commentary on a lightly edited version. This article celebrates the first year students of 2005 through their reflections on a deep and fascinating argument.

### Cast:

#### Yes! People are things!

Martin  
Rune  
Jezebel  
Sara  
Theodore  
Timmy  
Ray  
Henry

#### No! People are not things!

Judy  
Mary  
Zoe  
Ann  
Marjorie  
Fay  
Maggie  
Sally

When we teach at Miyazaki International College, we face the need to elicit spoken production from students who would often rather not speak at all. Perhaps we are dealing with cultural factors that encourage silence, tacit deixis, ambiguity. But we can fight ambiguity with ambiguity, can't we? One way to enjoy spoken response is resolutely to present students with ambiguities to resolve. For instance, one can use double aspect pictures (e.g. the duck-rabbit) and ask students to interpret or give their perspective. As in a question pattern of Chinese languages, when one presents a contradiction, one expects its resolution as a response (*Ni hao bu hao?* literally “You good not-good?” which expects the listener to reply with one of the alternatives). Thus for our philosophy class, one way to approach a deep series of issues about human culture and values is to insist throughout the course upon the ambiguous question of whether human beings are things or not. It is not the best question to ask about the matter, of course, but it is the clearest invitation to expressing a chosen interpretation. Tell us, in what respect are people things, or not things? In our class, after a semester of preparation, we staged a debate. Students were given the choice of team, or were assigned if they had no choice. After some team preparation, they held the following conversation. The names are changed to protect the individuals involved. The rules of the discussion stipulated that two pairs of contenders exchanged views, following which a round of general discussion was opened. This was repeated four times until all had their say and the final test session drew to a close. This teacher took notes and wrote up the debate as follows. The actual protocol is first presented, and subsequently a slightly revised version with light editing is offered along with brief commentary on the course of the students' considerations. I submit this testimony as a celebration of the extraordinary energy, insightfulness and teamwork of the students involved in the debate.

## Round One

- Henry: People are made of molecules just as other things because all of things are made of molecules and humans are made of many kinds of parts, for example bones, skin, etc. so skin and bones are things, because they are made of molecules. In the machine's case, too, machines are made of many of parts, for example, bolts and metal, so they are also made of molecules. So machines are made of molecules. We want to say the relationship of humans and machines is the same: made of molecules.
- Mary: Our definition is that a thing is an object in time and space. A thing is an object in natural time and natural space. So we define people are not objects in natural time and space. For example, horses run on land, fish swim in water, and birds fly in the sky. But people run, swim and fly, but it is not natural, because people fly not of oneself—it is not natural for people but we use materials like a plane. Horses can go 60 kilometers per hour, and humans can too, but it is not natural. We use materials, like a car. With a car, we save time. People control time and space, but not natural time and space.
- Timmy: Humans are things. People are things that have many kinds of skills. Mary's statement is about humans' skills. We don't agree that things have any skills is human.
- Judy: We define "things" as object exists in natural time and space. People are not natural time and space. Use of a car is itself not natural. We don't have artificial time and space, so we think people exist not natural time and space. Henry said, "People (are) made (of) molecules." We agree all things are made of molecules—robots are machines and molecules, but is different quality—and so this is not significant.

### General Discussion:

- Martin: What do you mean by "natural" time and space?
- Mary: We define that things is an object in natural time and space. We don't have artificial time and space.
- Sara: What is natural time and space?
- Mary: Time and space as they were.
- Sara: And what is artificial time and space?
- Mary: "Artificial" means something made by humans.
- Martin: Using a car is *not* natural... what?
- Judy: Because it is artificial.
- Martin: So you're saying only people do artificial things.
- Marjorie: For example, the sky is natural for birds but not for people—so use airplane gives us skill, but not natural for us—not natural time and space.
- Martin: Flying skill is to fly. It is a human skill; why is it not natural? Humans have their own human skills, for example, flying skills. Why mention this?
- Theodore: Why do you think living things exist in natural time and space are not things?

- Mary: The definition of “things” is “an object in time and space”: when we strongly think object is in natural time and natural space.
- Sara: You said: “Humans don’t have artificial time and artificial space. Humans are not in natural time and natural space,” right? So, where are humans in?
- Marjorie: Humans are in non-natural or artificial time and space.
- Sara: But we don’t have artificial time and space!!!!
- Henry: If we’re not doing things, what are we? So things means we exist the place so we can see each other and we speak, listen, move... if we are not things, we never exist on earth in the world, so instead of... What do you want to say instead of “things” that we are?
- Marjorie: What you said is not the subject of this debate—we’re just discussing, “Are people things?”
- Henry: If people are not things, what is...
- Judy: Humans are humans... can’t name for him.

## **Round Two:**

- Sara: Your idea is very paradox things. (You say): “It is not the same as natural time and space. We don’t have artificial time and space.” Answer this question: “Where are people in?” Which time and space are people in?
- My opinion is that people are ordinary things. Humans can be humans after learning various things. Do you know a girl grew by wolves? Finally, she could not learn about various things humans should learn.
- Humans are containers; like a computer, humans can’t work without a brain, or a chip—they are the container for content. Chip is molecules; content is molecules. People and computers are things.
- Ann: Animals act just by instinct. Animals’ purpose is to give birth. Humans keep trying to develop their techniques.
- Rune: Ann said that animals have instinct, but humans are the same, acting just by instinct. Acting just instinct is brain. Animals act just by instinct: it is the same as people. Humans think about something.
- Sally: People create new things because people want to live more easily. People can make many a lot of inventions. For example, car, train, plane, etc. including computers. Things are necessary for human life to live easily. So people can create new things.

## **General Discussion:**

- Sara: Do you think animals are things?
- Judy: Just people are not things.
- Sara: Animals’ purpose is to give birth?
- Judy: Basic...
- Sara: Humans’ purpose is that too!
- Judy: Not only! Humans want to make more. They keep trying to develop techniques, animals are not are this way.

Sara: Can you prove it?

Judy: Humans make cell phones more better. Animals don't have them.

Henry: A long time ago, humans can't make them, like animals. Do you know chimpanzees can use tools? But the tools are very simple—in the past, humans also use simple tools but their brain develop. They get ability which they make new development things of tools. And do you know the difference of chimpanzees and humans? The capacity of brain is different. Human brain capacity is too small, like lemur.

Brains have many functions—thinking more deeply—discover new things—the more capacity things have, they discover or make new things. What I wanna say is: you say only humans develop techniques, only humans are not things, and animals are not things; but the system of their body is similar to humans. I think the difference of humans and mammals is the capacity of the brain.

Judy: So you want to say, humans' brain is different?

Henry: No difference, only capacity.

Sara: Things around us are made by humans. If humans are not things where do humans come from?

### Round Three:

Ray: I think people are things. Humans by our brain. Brain is like chip.

Fay: People can control earth. People control better condition. People make things that never return to soil, that is garbage. Therefore people are different from things.

Theodore: The idea of developing and making cars comes from our brain—our brain are made of molecules. These ideas come from things. People are things. We can burn all sorts of things in this world. If not things, they cannot burn. People can burn. So people are things.

Maggie: By definition, things exist in space and time. Things can be identified in space and time: for example, chairs, desks... People have brain and molecules, but humans' mind has something not identified in space and time. People can answer own questions, think of future, make effort to realize own goal. They believe god. These are not identified in space and time; they exist in humans' mind. Humans have something not exist in space and time. Things are completely identified in space and time. But people are not completely identified in space and time. People are not things.

### General Discussion:

Mary: You said about human and computer as an example. But this is just a point in common between things and humans. We can't say that having a few points in common equals saying that people are things. Of course all things and people came from the same place (it is earth). However, having a few points in common isn't saying something equals something. We learned about the spectrum. Can't you tell the difference between red and violet? They are on the same line but are different from each other. So the relation between humans and things is like on a spectrum (the same spectrum relationship).

Sara: Could you say the difference between red and violet again please?

Mary: We can tell the difference between colors. This is not difficult for us, is it?

- Henry: Why did you say the example? The sentence you said before...
- Mary: Of course, all things and humans came from the same place, earth, but there is a difference between things and humans in spite of the same place they came from. We have an example about the spectrum. People and things are from the same place, earth.
- Sara: Where is the same place?
- Mary: Earth.
- Sara: Earth?
- Henry: Spontaneously?
- Mary: Yes.
- Sara: So, you said people came from earth spontaneously. Where are things come from, so people are also things.
- Mary: Things and people has many things in common, I agree. However, having a few common points is not the same as being the same.
- Henry: What I want to say is that humans' body is container, and computer is also container. Humans' brain is computer—is the same as computer's chip—if there are no chip in computer, then computer don't move. If there is no brain in human's body, humans can't move. People and machine are containers—both are things.
- Marjorie: If you say so then you are saying that brain and computer is the same as a container, but humans contain contents for the containers. So if you say so, it doesn't make sense. Who contains the contents to the containers? You said chips and brains are containers, so empty containers—who...
- Martin: Did you say brain and chips are empty containers? Who said that? Chips and brain are content...
- Sara: Brain is content, body is container...

#### **Round Four:**

- Jezebel: People are things because people are animals. People are things made of earth. If we are not things then only air in us.
- Marjorie: You said humans are animals. Well, I don't think so! In English, when you use relative clause, you use "which" or "where"—if you use... when you say about animals using relative clause, use "which." That's for things, but when you say humans you use "who." From this respect, people are not things.
- Martin: Imagine seeing the earth from a high place. You see things. You don't realize they are people. They exist the same way as things. Think about the definition of things which we make: this definition exists in time and space. I don't know about the difference you make. People are things—existing in time and space; it means the same as "people are things." Then, think about the world of animals and humans. Animals, we call things. Humans are called things. If you say animals are things, then what's the difference?
- Anyway...
- I think humans' name is just name of a thing—like a container...which...humans are things which have special things...just a thing.

動物 is “moving things”—it means “animals”... forget about it...

You are talking about do things realize special... it doesn't matter to think about people are things: we see people, we know it is thing. It is the way we see things. From high up... the ground, things, ... liquid...molecules, even though flowers grow we can also compare rocks and people. Rocks do not move. Why do we compare these two words? People are things that can think and move.

Can't imagine the definition of humans without things. “Human” is the name of a thing. A category we call—we know that humans are different from other things; we could call these things human as we are human.

We categorize: see shapes... we know it exists... how we categorize as humans is like stones, trees, etc.

People are things.

Zoe: Computers have chips. Humans have brain. They come from molecules. But compare: computers not way of flexible. Generally speaking, computers just deal with problem. The way of flexible means a new solution. Animals just by instinct. Humans develop technique to live more easily, create and invent new things. Humans have each opinion. If all think same thing, behave same way, then they are robots.

### General Discussion:

Marjorie: Humans have their own world. Animals do too. People develop techniques, but animals don't develop skills. Animals do not make machines, cannot develop the world, but people can. Give them the idea, we can control give birth (the earth?). If there are animal species, we can try to stop decreasing, and human population, but things and computers cannot do this.

Martin: You say humans have special skills, that's why not things.

Marjorie: Yes, and it is different from computers' action.

Martin: Computer is computer. Human is human. They are different.

Marjorie: Computers have no flexible thinking.

Sara: What is flexible?

Marjorie: A computer just calculates. But people express themselves, using language, but computers cannot express themselves.

Martin: Computers cannot imagine or see, but someday if computers become systematically like brains, we can say it's like humans. Someday they might have dreams. We find it made bones, skins, bodies... and then robots have humans' brain, and it is connected. Then do you say it's human or robot?

So...

Marjorie: I don't think so. It's still thing.

Martin: Brain's working is not connected to humans.

Marjorie: Using a real human brain?

Martin: Maybe, or you make it. We know it is made of molecules...  
...never mind...

## COMMENTARY

Let us examine the background to this discussion, by way of commentary on these students' views.

### Round One:

Henry: People are made of molecules, just as other things, because all things are made of molecules, and humans are made of many kinds of parts, for example bones, skin, etc. So skin and bones are things, because they are made of molecules. In the machine's case, too, machines are made of many of parts—for example, bolts and metal—so they are also made of molecules. So machines are made of molecules. We want to say the relationship of humans and machines is the same: made of molecules.

**Comment:** The question whether humans are things or not invites an initial position from the obvious point that the human body shares physical properties with other things, such as extension and location in time and space, as well as other physical and chemical properties of inert objects. Fortunately, the “yes” team won the flip of the coin and began with this position clearly stated by an able speaker.

Mary: Our definition is that a thing is an object in time and space. A thing is an object in natural time and natural space. So according to our definition, people are not objects in natural time and space. For example, horses run on land, fish swim in water, and birds fly in the sky. But people run, swim and fly, in ways that are not natural, because people do not fly by themselves—it is not natural for people but we use materials like a plane. Horses can go 60 kilometers per hour, and humans can too, but it is not natural for us. We use materials, like a car. With a car, we save time. People control time and space, but are not limited by natural time and space.

**Comment:** Mary prepares to make her team's point that a physical description of human life is necessary but not sufficient to understanding the human condition. She points out that human culture is by definition not natural, but also that, paradoxically, humans naturally live in a culture.

Timmy: Humans are things. People are things that have many kinds of skills. Mary's statement is about humans' skills. We don't agree that any skills that human beings have proves that they are not things.

**Comment:** Timmy is certainly correct about this point. He's not going to be party to any kind of sophist shell-game here.

Judy: We define “things” as objects that exist in natural time and space. People are not limited to natural time and space. Use of a car is itself not natural. We don't have artificial time and space, so we think people exist in something that is not natural time and space. Henry said, “People (are) made (of) molecules.” We agree all things are made of molecules—robots are machines and molecules, but humans have a different quality—and so this is not significant.

**Comment:** The relevant difference is qualitative, so the strategy of materialism probably cannot find the terms within itself to address the core issue, such as Judy has clearly challenged them with.

### General Discussion:

Martin: What do you mean by “natural” time and space?

Mary: We define that things are objects in natural time and space. We don't have artificial time and space.

Sara: What is natural time and space?

Mary: Time and space as they were.

Sara: And what is artificial time and space?

Mary: “Artificial” means something made by humans.

Martin: Using a car is *not* natural... what?

Judy: Because it is artificial.

Martin: So you’re saying only people do artificial things.

Marjorie: For example, the sky is natural for birds but not for people—so using airplanes gives us skill, but it is not natural for us—not natural time and space.

Martin: Flying skill is to fly. It is a human skill; why is it not natural? Humans have their own human skills, for example, flying skills. Why mention this?

Theodore: Why do you think living things that exist in natural time and space are not things?

Mary: The definition of “things” is: “objects in time and space”—when we strongly think of an object, it is in natural time and natural space.

Sara: You said, “Humans don’t have artificial time and artificial space. Humans are not in natural time and natural space,” right? So, where are humans?

Marjorie: Humans are in non-natural or artificial time and space.

Sara: But we don’t have artificial time and space!!!!

**Comment:** The “no” team is attempting to point out that we are accustomed to dealing with non-physical objects such as numbers, logic, ideas and values that are not simply located in space and time, but rather in number-space, logical space, idea-space, value-space, etc. It doesn’t have to be treated Platonically. Yet, how can this possibly be addressed materialistically? However, Sara on the “yes” team senses the inadequacy of the opposition’s expression of this matter and, picking up on infelicitous remarks they have made, drives home her objections, sending a shiver of fear through her opponents’ hearts.

Henry: If we’re not doing things, what are we? So “things” means we exist in a certain place so we can see each other, and we speak, listen, move... if we are not things, we never exist on earth in the world, so instead of... What do you want to say that we are instead of “things”?

Marjorie: What you said is not the subject of this debate—we’re just discussing, “Are people things?”

Henry: If people are not things, what is...

Judy: Humans are humans... can’t name them.

**Comment:** The opening position, that human beings have their physical bodies that are obviously things, was simply too obvious to attract further attention. The discussants attempt to understand the more challenging question of whether human beings are their bodies, or more exactly, whether they are only bodies. The “no” team establishes various senses in which human life is more than the physical body; human life is more than the natural, physical basis but instead is open and creative. The real question, of course, is to what does one attribute the qualitative difference. Henry already senses the necessity of a functional reading of the difference, but cannot express it clearly.

## Round Two:

Sara: Your idea is very paradoxical. (You say): “It is not the same as natural time and space. We don’t have artificial time and space.” Answer this question: “Where are people”? Which time and space are people in?

My opinion is that people are ordinary things. Humans can be humans after learning various things. Do you know of a girl who was raised by wolves? Finally, she could not learn about various things humans should learn.

Humans are containers; like a computer, humans can't work without a brain, or a chip—they are the container for content. Chip is molecules; content is molecules. People and computers are things.

Ann: Animals just act by instinct. Animals' purpose is to give birth. Humans keep trying to develop their techniques (such as technology).

Rune: Ann said that animals have instincts, but humans are the same, acting just by instinct. Acting just by instinct is what the brain does. Animals act just by instinct: it is the same as people. Humans think about something.

Sally: People create new things because people want to live more easily. People can make a lot of inventions. For example, cars, trains, planes, etc. including computers. Things are necessary for human life to live easily. So people can create new things.

### **General Discussion:**

Sara: Do you think animals are things?

Judy: Just people are not things.

Sara: Animals' purpose is to give birth?

Judy: Basic...

Sara: That is humans' purpose too!

Judy: Not only that! Humans want to make more. They keep trying to develop techniques. Animals are not are this way.

Sara: Can you prove it?

Judy: Humans make better and better cell phones. Animals don't have them.

Henry: A long time ago, humans couldn't make them, like animals. Do you know chimpanzees can use tools? But the tools are very simple—in the past, humans also used simple tools but their brains developed. They got the ability from which they made new developments of things like tools. And do you know the difference of chimpanzees and humans? The capacity of the brain is different. Human brain capacity is too small, like lemurs.

Brains have many functions—thinking more deeply—discovering new things—the more capacity things have, the more they discover or make new things. What I want to say is: you say only humans develop techniques, only humans are not things, and animals are not things; but the system of their body is similar to humans. I think the difference of humans and mammals is the capacity of the brain.

Judy: So you want to say, humans' brains are different?

Henry: No difference, only capacity.

Sara: Things around us are made by humans. If humans are not things where do humans come from?

**Comment:** Here the discussion is trapped in the paradoxical distinction of nature and culture. Henry wants to push it towards a functionalist expression, as he correctly senses this as a possible solution to the difficulty, and he sees that the problem of nature and culture his classmates have opened is also not capable of clear resolution in these terms alone, but hints at a functional interpretation. The difference is one of "capacity," function or organization. Then the question of "are people things or not?" would not be particularly pertinent to further discussion.

### **Round Three:**

Ray: I think people are things. Humans are human because of our brain. The brain is like a micro-chip.

Fay: People can control earth. People improve the earth's condition. People make things that never return to soil, that is garbage. Therefore people are different from things.

Theodore: The idea of developing and making cars comes from our brain—our brains are made of molecules. These ideas come from things. People are things. We can burn all sorts of things in this world. If they are not things, they cannot burn. People can burn. So people are things.

Maggie: By definition, things exist in space and time. Things can be identified in space and time: for example, chairs, desks... People have brains and molecules, but humans' mind has something not identified in space and time. People can answer their own questions, think of the future, make efforts to realize their own goals. They believe in god. These are not identified in space and time; they exist in humans' minds. Humans have something that does not exist in space and time. Things are completely identified in space and time. But people are not completely identified in space and time. People are not things.

### General Discussion:

Mary: You said about humans and computers as an example. But this is just a point in common between things and humans. We can't say that having a few points in common equals saying that people are things. Of course all things and people came from the same place (it is earth). However, having a few points in common isn't saying something equals something. We learned about the spectrum. Can't you tell the difference between red and violet? They are on the same line but are different from each other. So the relation between humans and things is like on a spectrum (the same spectrum relationship).

**Comment:** Finally, Mary states clearly and forcefully that being a thing is a necessary but not sufficient condition of human life. Having a body is part of but not all of human experience. Mary attempts a sophisticated metaphor whereby human existence extends from its natural base so that culture can be placed on a continuum with natural phenomena.

Sara: Could you say the difference between red and violet again please?

Mary: We can tell the difference between colors. This is not difficult for us, is it?

Henry: Why did you say the example? The sentence you said before...

Mary: Of course, all things and humans came from the same place, earth, but there is a difference between things and humans in spite of the same place they came from. We have an example about the spectrum. People and things are from the same place, earth.

Sara: Where is the same place?

Mary: Earth.

Sara: Earth?

Henry Spontaneously?

Mary: Yes.

Sara: So, you said people came from earth spontaneously. Where do things come from? So people are also things.

**Comment:** Sara goes, unsuccessfully, for the *reductio ad absurdum*. But Mary's point has already blocked this argument.

Mary: Things and people have many things in common, I agree. However, having a few common points is not the same as being the same.

Henry: What I want to say is that the human body is a container, and the computer is also a container. The human brain is a computer—is the same as a computer chip—if there

are no chips in the computer, then the computer won't move. If there is no brain in a human's body, humans can't move. People and machines are containers—both are things.

**Comment:** Henry continues to hammer away at the functional analysis that would rid the discussion of what he considers a useless ontological distinction between things and non-things. However, he cannot articulate this clearly enough within the limiting context of the debate topic, and falls back on talk of “things.”

Marjorie: If you say so then you are saying that brains and computers are the same as a container, but humans contain contents for the containers. So if you say so, it doesn't make sense. Who contains the contents to the containers? You said chips and brains are containers, so empty containers—who...

Martin: Did you say brain and micro-chips are empty containers? Who said that? Chips and brains are content...

Sara: Brain is content, body is container...

#### Round Four:

Jezebel: People are things because people are animals. People are things made of earth. If we were not things then there would be only air in us.

Marjorie: You said humans are animals. Well, I don't think so! In English, when you use a relative clause, you use “which” or “where”—if you use... when you talk about animals using relative clauses, use “which.” That's for things, but when you say humans you use “who.” In this respect, people are not things.

Martin: Imagine seeing the earth from a high place. You see things. You don't realize they are people. They exist the same way as things. Think about the definition of things which we make: this definition exists in time and space. I don't know about the difference you make. People are things—existing in time and space; it means the same as “people are things.” Then, think about the world of animals and humans. Animals, we call things. Humans are called things. If you say animals are things, then what's the difference?

Anyway...

I think humans' names are just the names of things—like a container...which... humans are things which have special things...just a thing.

動物 is “moving things”—it means “animals”... forget about it...

You are talking about do things realize special... it doesn't matter to think about “people are things”: we see people, we know they are things. It is the way we see things. From high up... the ground, things, ... liquid...molecules, even though flowers grow we can also compare rocks and people. Rocks do not move. Why do we compare these two words? People are things that can think and move.

Can't imagine the definition of humans without things. “Human” is the name of a thing. A category we call—we know that humans are different from other things; we could call these things human as we are human.

We categorize: see shapes... we know it exists... how we categorize as humans is like stones, trees, etc.

People are things.

**Comment:** Marjorie having made the linguistic turn, drawing on the linguistic universal distinguishing animate from inanimate, and citing evidence from English, Martin is prompted to respond with a Japanese example purporting to show that “butsu” means things—this, however, is none too clear: although it is in fact the word used in “physics” in East Asia, on the

other hand this concept has a very long history from ancient China meaning “symbol” or “emblem.” It is not so easy to make a flat assertion in this form. Martin is attempting an interesting, though probably ultimately not defensible, “nominalist” reading of the problem. He is just stating the obvious, though, since the fact that people are things in the sense of his argument is not at issue. However, we can see that Martin is, in this way, just getting warmed up. In his reply, during the general discussion below, he conducts a radical thought experiment to challenge his opponents to state their own convictions in very strong terms. Had this part of the debate continued, the participants would be right at home in the current state of research on mind, brain and consciousness.

**Zoe:** Computers have chips. Humans have brains. They come from molecules. But compare: the way that computers act is not flexible. Generally speaking, computers just deal with problems. A flexible way means finding a new solution. Animals just act by instinct. Humans develop techniques to live more easily, create and invent new things. Humans have individual opinions. If all think the same thing, behave the same way, then they are robots.

**Comment:** Here the otherwise silent Zoe hits upon the critical point that even with a functional reading of the question, the human situation is unique. But by avoiding the ontological framework, one can express the human situation more realistically.

### **General Discussion:**

**Marjorie:** Humans have their own world. Animals do too. People develop techniques, but animals don’t develop skills. Animals do not make machines, cannot develop the world, but people can. Give them the idea, we can control the earth. If there are endangered animal species, we can try to stop them decreasing, and control human population, but things and computers cannot do this.

**Martin:** You say humans have special skills, that’s why they are not things.

**Marjorie:** Yes, and it is different from computers’ action.

**Martin:** A computer is a computer. A human is a human. They are different.

**Marjorie:** Computers have no flexible thinking.

**Sara:** What is flexible?

**Marjorie:** A computer just calculates. But people express themselves, using language: but computers cannot express themselves.

**Martin:** Computers cannot imagine or see, but someday if computers become systematically like brains, we can say it’s like humans. Someday they might have dreams. We find them made of bones, skins, bodies... and then robots have human brains, and it is connected. Then do you say it’s human or robot?

So...

**Marjorie:** I don’t think so. It’s still a thing.

**Martin:** Brain’s working is not connected to humans.

**Marjorie:** Using a real human brain?

**Martin:** Maybe, or you make it. We know it is made of molecules...

...oh...never mind...

**Comment:** Is it a pun? is it the discussion speaking of itself through the discussants? is it super-mind? We may never know. No matter! In this argument, however, clearly everybody was a winner.