

LITERATURE, ETHICS, AND AUTHORITY
15.269

Class #18: Monday 23 April 2001

Read:

Bill Joy, "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us" (course packet)
"U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (handout)

Study Questions:

1. In "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us," Bill Joy argues that we should "relinquish" certain existing technologies, and the opportunity to develop others. Does this make good business sense, given the market possibilities in some of the areas Joy explores?
2. Joy himself admits that none of his concerns is new. Why write them up, then? Do a quick Web search to see what kinds of things people have said/written in response to this piece, which generated considerable discussion. Bring to class a reference and a quotation or two that seem to you appropriate complements or responses to Joy's essay.
3. What are the connections among the film *Blade Runner*, Joy's essay, and the "U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights"? What does it mean to be human, in each of these three cases?