

## Technologies of Imagination: Fifty years beyond *Man and His Future* April 5, 2013, 8:30-4:00

**Location: Institute for Humanities Research, Social Science Rm. 109, ASU**

In 1963 the Ciba foundation published the proceedings of a conference on *Man and His Future*. The purpose of the conference was to predict the trajectories—biological, social, political and moral-- of the human evolutionary future, and to explore the corollary possibilities for (and imperative of) managing that future through biotechnological control. To this end, it gathered together scientific luminaries including Joshua Lederberg, Francis Crick, Julian Huxley and others. An expert assessment of the potential of bioscience and technology to shape the human future, *Man and His Future* was at once an appraisal of the aims, aspirations and moral imaginations appropriate to such an undertaking.

The conference preceded a period in which the biosciences were increasingly a focus of public attention and controversy. The promise of biotechnology elicited predictions of risks and benefits—physical, social and moral—and associated uncertainty over how best to govern them. Ideas articulated at and around the conference shaped the future that followed, informing trajectories of innovation in science and technology, but also shaping corollary developments in democratic deliberation and governance. In the decades that followed, the issues over which the *Man and His Future* conferees claimed to be expert spilled over into other social spaces—flaring in public controversy over technologies like recombinant DNA and human cloning, settling into professionally delineated routines and discourses of bioscience research and bioethical governance, and ascending in imaginations of the centrality of the biosciences to the advancement of human wellbeing and global economic development. The role of elite scientists in imagining the human future -- as public intellectuals, as suppliers of policy-relevant knowledge, and as adjudicators of the possible and the actual—too has evolved.

This workshop marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *Man and His Future*. Its project is to reflect upon these changes, and on the forms, idioms and practices of imagination that have come to figure in governance of science and technology in the last half-century. It will explore the construction of imagined futures in a variety of forms, from the routines of risk governance to the politics of science policymaking, and from the formalized discourses of law and bioethics to the imaginaries that underlie public controversy. An animating premise of the workshop is that imperatives of action and projects of governance in the present are often articulated by imagining futures—though such imaginations may manifest in a range forms and may not be readily evident as such. The futures imagined in the 1963 volume privileged particular constructions of human insecurity and corollary agendas for technological and social response. Fifty years later, what forms of imagination have come to do similar work? Performed by whom, in what spaces, with what authority, and with what consequences for our world? And what lessons can we learn about our scientific, cultural and political institutions from attending to such practices of imagination—past, present and future?