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A Transgender, Biotech-Running Cybercreator Debates Artificial Intelligence

By Nancy Szokan

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The ever-fascinating Martine Rothblatt is a colorful figure on the Washington scene — lawyer, author, founder of Sirius XM, founder and chief executive of United Therapeutics, co-creator of a head-only robot modeled on her wife of 30-plus years (they were married before Rothblatt’s sex reassignment surgery), pilot, piano player. . . .

[\[She invented Sirius XM, a biotech and a religion. For starters.\]](#)

Rothblatt, whose most recent book is “[Virtually Human: The Promise — and the Peril — of Digital Immortality](#),” will take the stage at New York’s 92nd Street Y on behalf of one of her passions: artificial intelligence.

She will be one of four experts on two teams debating whether pursuit of superintelligence and autonomous machines may result in dangerous unintended consequences, or whether fears of that outcome will prevent technological progress. It’s the latest in the [series of fast-paced, provocative debates](#) put on by the public affairs program IQ², or Intelligence Squared.

The motion on the table will be: “Don’t trust the promise of artificial intelligence.” As usual at IQ² events, the audience will vote on whether they agree with that statement before the debate; afterward, they vote again, and the team that has changed the most minds is declared the winner.

Arguing for the motion will be Jaron [Lanier](#), a computer scientist and author of “[You Are Not a Gadget](#),” and Andrew Keen, an Internet entrepreneur, CNN columnist and author of “[The Internet Is Not the Answer](#).” Arguing against it are Rothblatt and James Hughes, director of the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies.

The debate begins at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 9; you can watch it live-streamed at [intelligencesquaredus.org](#).