Chapter 2
The Tension Between Human and Cyborg Ethics

Anne Gerdes
University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

ABSTRACT

This article makes no argument against progress but stresses the importance of making it with foresight. The connection between biotechnology, treatment, and enhancement is discussed, stating the need for regulation. Next, the ideas of transhumanism are presented as a framework for an examination of our human condition and it is illustrated that cyborgs will possibly develop other values than Homo sapiens. Thus, the second part of the article discusses what it means to be an ethical being from the perspective of Francis Fukuyama's ideas of the importance of human nature to our humanity, and further elaborated on by bringing attention to the significance of the vulnerability to moral reasoning. Furthermore, the article suggests a near connection between embodiment and morality. In the light of this assumption, one can ask about ethical values and democratic cohesion in a world with sub-cultures of cyborgs. Thus, John Rawls' theory of justice is introduced as a framework for reflections about inter-human costs of a posthuman condition. It is concluded that science need democratic regulation, in order to avoid technocratic decision processes, and guidelines for a regulatory body is given.

INTRODUCTION

This article makes no argument against progress but stresses the importance of making it with foresight. In the first part of the article, the connection between biotechnology, treatment and enhancement is discussed, stating the need for regulation, well aware of the fact that it is hard, but not impossible, to draw a firm line between a therapeutically and a enhancing use of biotechnology. Next, the ideas of transhumanism are presented as a framework for an examination of our human condition. Here, it is pinpointed that we cannot know anything essential about basic conditions of cyborg ethics. Still, the idea that the technology-enhanced human being in a cyborgian version will develop other values than Homo sapiens is straightforward. Thus, the second part of the article discusses what it means to be an ethical

being from the perspective of Francis Fukuyama's ideas of the importance of human nature to our humanity (Fukuyama, 2003), and further elaborated on by bringing attention to the significance of our vulnerability to our moral reasoning (Macintyre, 1999). Following this line of argument, the article suggests a near connection between our embodiment morality, viewed as formed by human nature and further shaped through social interaction. Thus, values and norms can be seen as being universally shared by human beings, who, from a phenomenological point of view, have common preconditions for acknowledgement and thus possibility for understanding their fellow humans. In the light of this assumption, one can ask about ethical values and democratic cohesion in a world with sub-cultures of cyborgs? To elaborate on this issue, section 4 introduces John Rawls' theory of justice (Rawls, 1999) as a framework for reflections about inter-human costs of a posthuman condition. It is concluded that science needs democratic regulation, in order to avoid technocratic decision processes, and guidelines for a deliberative body for regulation is given.

The Technology-Enhanced Human Being

Today, bio and information technology provide us with tools enabling us to become controllers of our own evolution. That means that even though we decide not to modify our bodies, it is an active choice or non-choice. To most of us, discussions about cyborgs appear to be speculative, but while we try to predict the future, it is already being invented. Over a number of years, Professor Kewin Warwick has carried out experiments with neural implants on his own body. In one of his famous experiments, a micro electrode array was implanted into the median nerve fibres of his arms. By means of signals detected by the array, Warwick was able to control different devices in the environment. In another experiment, signals were transmitted from Warwick's nervous system, located in New York

to England, thus allowing Warwick to control a robot hand located on another continent. On that occasion, Warwick noted with satisfaction that his nervous system is no longer limited by his body but by the internet link's reach (Warwick, 2003, p. 135)! In a similar experiment, researchers at Duke University Medical Center implanted electrodes into the part of a macaque's brain governing the hand's motor function. Electronic impulses from the macaque's brain were transferred to a computer, and thus the macaque became able to play simple computer games by the "force of thought" alone and without using a joystick.

Warwick has used his experiments to discuss cyborgs, and, to a lesser extent, to discuss the ethical questions arising in the wake of his experiments. He joins transhumanism and expects a bright future, in which we, if we choose to upgrade to cyborgs, will be able to explore the universe, just as we will increase our intelligence and eventually even give up on individuality and *"become mere nodes on an intelligent machine network"* (Warwick, 2003, p. 136). Here, we deal with posthumanist thinking that challenges the idea of our self-conception by predicting sophisticated cognitive enhancement including the dissolution of the "I" in favour of distributed intelligence. Warwick is both famous and notorious for his experiments, and by many he is considered more of a visionary dreamer than a researcher. Nevertheless, the character of his experiments has clearly and concisely formulated ethical problems and the extent of research in relation to technology enhancement.

Thus, in what follows, I will pay special attention to the ethical problems to curing versus improving; that is, ethical problems in a context of treatment, where the functioning of the body is re-established in connection with handicaps or illness vis-à-vis the ethical questions arising when we speak of technology enhancements to make ourselves better than well (Sandel, 2007, p. 6). Further, we have to relate to cognitive enhancement in the above mentioned sophisticated version

10 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/tension-between-human-cyborg-ethics/67910

Related Content

Measuring the World: How the Smartphone Industry Impacts Cyber Deterrence Credibility
Dirk Westhoffand Maximilian Zeiser (2019). *Multigenerational Online Behavior and Media Use: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 474-492).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/measuring-the-world/220957

Susceptibility to Email Fraud: A Review of Psychological Perspectives, Data-Collection Methods, and Ethical Considerations
Helen S. Jones, John N. Towseand Nicholas Race (2015). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning (pp. 13-29).*
www.irma-international.org/article/susceptibility-to-email-fraud/134387

Smartphone Dependence of University Students and Parental Rearing Attitudes
Masahiro Toda, Satoko Ezoe, Kanae Mureand Tatsuya Takeshita (2018). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning (pp. 25-32).*
www.irma-international.org/article/smartphone-dependence-of-university-students-and-parental-rearing-attitudes/216981

Psychological Correlates of Perfectionistic Self-Presentation Among Social Media Users
Anantha Ubaradka, Ayesha Fathimaand Shreya Batra (2023). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning (pp. 1-13).*
www.irma-international.org/article/psychological-correlates-of-perfectionistic-self-presentation-among-social-media-users/324089

Online Orthographies
Christiana Themistocleous (2010). *Handbook of Research on Discourse Behavior and Digital Communication: Language Structures and Social Interaction (pp. 318-334).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/online-orthographies/42788