

Ethical Observations on Cyborg Technology: Challenges and Reflections in Technological Post-Humanism

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Abstract

The article introduces the concept and value of cyborgs against the backdrop of the technological revolution and offers a humanistic reflection on them, ingesting ethical issues regarding social justice and privacy discussions, as well as philosophical reflections on cyborgs in the context of technologized environments, with profound theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords

Technology; Cyborg; Ethical Issues; Philosophical Reflections.

1. Introduction

After the industrial revolution, human beings have become increasingly close to machines, and it can even be said that the development of human beings today has been inseparable from machines, only those machines exist more as tools. At the beginning of the 21st century, under the wave of information technology, the function and nature of machines have undergone profound changes. When technology is widely used on top of the human body, we ourselves have been revolutionised, and the high dependence on machines and computers has led to human actions and thinking being limited by them instead, to the extent that we often feel more like machines (Verbeek 2008). On the other hand, with the development of a new electronic circuit that can mimic the activity of the human brain, it is no longer a fantasy that robots will be able to think like humans in the future. And this combination of man and machine, Cyborg, will be the subject of this article.

2. What's Cyborg?

How do I understand the concept of Cyborg? The term Cyborg was first defined in the dictionary as a person whose physical abilities are mechanically expanded beyond the limits of the human body. When analysed further, cyborg can be defined in both a broad and a narrow sense. Narrowly speaking, cyborg is the use of various types of high-tech to create some specific functions of the machine, and then combined with the product of the human self, this kind of product can even be called a new species. In a broader sense, the definition of Cyborg is very wide, especially those who make up for their own defects and strengthen their own ability through artificial technology can be called Cyborg, such as those who like to wear contact lenses, those who need to wear a heart rate adjuster because of certain heart problems, or those who need to install a prosthesis because of a car accident that took away their legs, and they have seen these tools as part of their bodies in the process of long term dependence on these products of artificial technology. They have come to regard these tools as part of their bodies (Warwick 2003). It can even be said that they could not live without these tools, but this technology also allows them to overcome many obstacles to live comfortably.

Cyborgs bring more than technology and value to the table; they bring a new era, which has been called the "post-human era". Typical post-humans are those who are able to integrate machinery, electronics, electronic software and the human body into an organic whole, and who

signify the future direction of the entire human race. This raises an ethical question: do humans have the freedom to use cyborg technology to control and transform their physical bodies to make them more valuable?

According to the types of cyborgs, ranging from the therapeutic type used in medical technology, to the re-equipped type used in everyday life, to the functional type installed inside the body, the values loaded on cyborgs are positive, bringing welfare and help to human beings (Warwick 2003), and belong to the good side of the technology. However, we can see that even this type of technology is now increasingly highlighting various ethical issues. For example, Internet technology has made people more and more lack of privacy, the development of communication technology and computer technology has made us inseparable from the screen, and the prolonged use of the screen has led to all kinds of psychological and physical illnesses in our lives. These are all value issues discussed in the broader sense of Cybernetics, which can still be controlled to a certain extent. However, enhanced Cybernetics makes us must face greater challenges, and human beings themselves have become different because of the technology, which enables us to prolong our lives, become powerful, control others, and even "modify" our own brains and control other people's minds! And so on. The emergence of cyborgs that augment normal human functioning through cyborg technology has led to a further breakdown of the boundaries between man and machine, as shown in Haraway's (1985) book. When such a technology does appear, how will we face it and how exactly will the relationship between humans change? Morally, will we still be able to look at it in the traditional way? Should we effectively control the progress of the development of this technology? These are the key points we must focus on.

3. Ethical Issues Posed by Cyborg Technology

Among the ethical issues raised by cyborgs, the discussion of social justice and privacy has never disappeared, and these are two crucial ethical issues that almost all posthumanism technologies will inevitably talk about.

In the future development of science and technology, Cyborg technology is looked forward to by us because it can indeed provide another brand-new way for the development of human society, but we must not overlook the issue of the dignity of natural man. Once the Cyborg appears, it will have more powerful abilities than the natural man, and the survival of the natural man is bound to be seriously affected. When soldiers equipped with robotic arms easily topple a car, and when prosthetic athletes begin to outperform their non-disabled competitors (Park 2014), people begin to question whether cyborg technology creates an undue competitive advantage. The mass application of Cyborg technology would exacerbate and entrench social inequality. To society at large, the primary purpose of Cyborg technology is to target disadvantaged groups such as the congenitally disabled and battlefield casualties for rehabilitation. However, it is not difficult to find that while Cyborg has brought about a revolutionary leap in medical treatment, it also implies a tendency to overstep or shift the boundaries of "human enhancement". Repair aims to "compensate" for human defects, while enhancement aims to "improve" human characteristics and capabilities. As Hayles (1999) suggests, these technologies are simply repairing and modifying human defects, but the conceptual limits and boundaries of this are complex. When the role of cochlear implants is no longer limited to repairing the hearing deficits of disabled people but is being used to enhance hearing in normal people, we cannot ask designers and manufacturers to limit functionality only to a certain extent - just only to allow disabled people to have the same senses and abilities as normal people (Park 2014).

Not only that, but according to Haraway's (1985) description, human lifespan could be extended in this way by consistently creating artificial organs with a longer lifespan that could

be used to replace parts that are vulnerable to injury or have been injured. The development of Cyborg technology could create a new social underclass. Families of different social status do not have equal opportunities before extending their life span in this new way. Whereas in the past, the greatest equality between people was that whether they were rich or poor, they all died in the end, in the case of cybernetic life extension, the gap between rich and poor in society will no longer be limited to the economic level but will truly be a matter of life and death. As such, this will add a controversial new dimension to equality at the socio-political level. Who has the right, or who has the duty, to die? Is it just a question of money? The cost of health care is likely to rise sharply at that time, and the investment of health care resources will be shifted from the sick to the healthy. Healthy people will obviously do everything they can to enhance themselves and make sure they are always healthy, and the cost of treating the un-ill will be even higher than the cost of treating the ill. Could this approach to longevity, affordable only to the super-rich, lead to a society in which "the majority of short-lived mortals" and "a few immortals" live in the same society, and as Harris (2007) describes it - a new underclass emerges.

The most important feature of Cyborg technology implanted devices is their covert nature. Privacy can be obtained without the person's knowledge. For example, when Google smart glasses with filming function were released, an organisation called "stop the cyborg" started to issue signage to restaurants to prohibit the use of such devices in their restaurants, so as to prevent them from being photographed or filmed without their knowledge. The covert nature of this access to other people's privacy makes cyborg devices vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous individuals in actual use, so what can be done to regulate the use of cyborg devices? Does prohibiting the development of cyborg devices with covert nature violate the privacy rights of persons with disabilities themselves? Persons with disabilities have the right not to show their disabilities to other people. If only Cyborg devices with obvious signs are allowed to be developed, this is tantamount to exposing the disabilities of persons with disabilities to other people, and the disabilities also belong to the privacy of the persons with disabilities, which is a clear infringement of the privacy of persons with disabilities. Concealed cyborg devices lead to conflicting ethical dilemmas about the privacy rights of both parties.

4. Philosophical Reflections on Cyborg

In modern society, human subjectivity is based on the dependence on things, and it is the stipulation, constraint and even domination of things over human beings that makes it impossible for subjectivity in such a state not to be extremely ambivalent in nature, and sometimes even with the characteristics of alienation. Hardy (1975) has raised such questions as whether human beings are masters or slaves with regard to technology in a technologised environment? Does technology limit human development or does it set human beings free? The initial purpose of installing artefacts in human beings was to perfect the human body and make it sounder. However, with the development of technology, humans began to embed chips in their skin as a way to control the external world. If a person is a machine except for his brain, is he still a human being in the biological sense? What would the world be like if there were human beings who actively replaced their organs with certain undesirable purposes, or who actively added certain machines? Will the existence of Cyborgs technologise mankind so that man's freedom, dignity, and morality will continue to be lacking and gradually be controlled by machines connected to mankind? In a long process of interdependence with the machine, we seem to have become one with the machine, which also leads directly to a shaking of the position of the human being, and in this process of interpenetration, a series of philosophical reflections on ontology and the idea of the cyborg body are triggered.

Postmodernism argues that the subject as cyborg has been dissolved, meaning that modernism, with its intrinsic integrity and central subjective role in intellectual activity, no longer exists. Machines are becoming more and more "human" and people are becoming more and more "machine-like". Human subjectivity has been alienated by technology, and the boundaries between human and machine are becoming increasingly blurred; technology as machine has transformed its role in human technological activity, and even has the potential to take over the position of human subjectivity. Cyborg ethics also makes us doubt ourselves as "subjects". In the long practice of human beings, we have formed a kind of self-consciousness and self-confirmation, and human beings have always viewed and examined all things in the universe in accordance with their own values and interests, which is exactly what we should re-examine.

In fact, both posthumanism and de-anthropocentrism emerged from post-structuralism, and have developed into a new dialectical ontology - breaking with anthropocentrism and all kinds of "centrisms" that have been present throughout the history of mankind and ushering in a post-human society - the Cyborg society. Traditional Western philosophy sees the human being as the subject of thought. Post-structuralism rejects this ontology and structures the traditional ontological idea of the "human being" in order to de-anthropocentrise it, i.e., to put human beings and objects on an equal footing in an "ontological state". Posthumanism, on the other hand, emphasizes that body parts can evolve into new species through technological combinations. In this way, human beings have entered the posthuman era as new human beings who do not belong to a "fixed ontology". For the study of the body, the most important significance of Cyborgian bodily thought is the ontological recognition of the body as a body that crosses boundaries, and Kull (2004) suggests that Cyborg is our ontology, our structure and identity, and the recognition that technoscience makes who we are. Cyborgian bodily thought is a break with the longstanding Western view of the solid body, completely different from the previously closed view of the material body, and constructs an ambiguous, dynamic, and relational theory of the body.

With the personification of technology comes a post-humanist "ontological turn" in philosophy. Posthumanist ontology does not provide a theoretical explanation for the existence and disappearance of objects, but rather re-examines the relationship between man and nature, between subject and object, on the basis of a break with dualism. By questioning and rejecting various dualisms and the boundaries between the body and the world, Cyborg's thought constructs a conception of the body that is completely different from the traditional Western mechanical body theory and dualistic view of the body and mind. The traditional Western view of the body is realised through the process of defining boundaries and thus establishing a distinction between the self and the other. While this view of the body is a withdrawal of the body from the mundane world to the extent that Heidegger argues that previous European philosophies have studied static beings rather than the dynamic existence of human beings, Cyborg's body thought, by placing the body back into the living world, establishes a true and indissoluble connection between human beings and the world, between human beings and the other, and between human beings and things. "Who I am" no longer derives from "who I am not", but from my relation to the world, to the other, to things.

It follows that "as we construct the world, the world constructs us in the same way". This is a generative ontology, which Pickering (1996) calls a "dialectical new ontology", which is posthumanist in the sense that it puts nature, culture, human beings, machines, subjects, objects, politics, etc. in a dynamic network of heterogeneous heterogeneity, and becomes a new ontology of heterogeneous heterogeneity that clashes dialectically. The subject acquires a new identity because of being in a new social relation, and these are produced in a process of practical and historical construction.

5. Conclusion

Under the wave of technologisation, emerging technologies have been a hot issue in the academic world. As an important representative of technology's turn towards the internal development of the body, the cyborg is involved in the controversy of embodiment, posthumanism, the view of the body, social inclusion and so on. Posthumanism uses the Cyborg subject as its image and methodology to fulfil its powerful cultural deconstruction impulse and highlights the possibility of creating a new type of subject based on the symbiotic relationship between humans and machines, which is its value. The recognition of technological subjectivity provides an important theoretical cornerstone for posthumanism and a new impetus for the overall stagnation of contemporary cultural theories since the "post" school of thought. Cyborg's philosophy of the body has many unique perspectives compared to dualistic and non-dualistic philosophies of the body. Cyborg's body can be reconstructed. The boundaries of the body are constantly blurred and can even be challenged across borders. Thus, the cyborg cannot be understood as a mere mixture of human and machine, but as a being with multiple subjects and multiple objects at the same time. When reflecting on the cyborg, the first thing we need to face is a series of complex and profound issues facing the body itself in the encounter between technology and the body, including the changes to the body and the challenges to the ethics of the body. The study of Cyborg's ethics of the body is of great theoretical significance as well as practical significance.

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