

Neuroethics and the Ethics of AI. Enhancing and Extending Humanity

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A vexed question in neuroethics has been the so-called ethics of neuroenhancing (EN), i.e. the moral permissibility of using neurotechnologies to enhance one's brain's capacities and functioning (Roskies 2016). This paper puts forward an argument for neuroenhancing, by borrowing from a different, but related, field, namely the ethics of artificial intelligence (EAI) (Bringsjord and Govindarajulu 2018).

In both EN and EAI the boundaries and the meaning of humanhood are at stake. What is a normal human being? What are the boundaries of humanhood and human mentality? These issues are recurrent in the discussion about the supposed unnaturalness of neuroenhancement. Critics often assume that neuroenhancement has the effects of trespassing the boundaries of humanhood and that this is a hubristic and morally impermissible attitude (Habermas 2003; Sandel 2009). In EAI, the notion of 'humanity' seems to be extended to entities whose human status has been hitherto denied, i.e. chatbots, computer programs, robots. On this issue, two views have been put forward. For some, these entities are simply forgeries – they are virtually human, not human (Burden and Savin-Baden 2019). For others, these entities are transhuman or posthuman – and their condition is the next step of human evolution (Moravec 1988; More and Vita-More 2013). We argue for a third view – extended humanity, according to which the current hybridization of human bodies with technological devices shows how humanity can be extended to artificial-natural complexes (Haraway 1991). We use this notion to argue in favor of neuroenhancement, resting on an analogy between enhanced minds and artificial intelligences. The argument defended is that, as humans have already an extended mind, constituted of, or supervenient on, the physical brain and the complex environment in which this brain works (Clark 2003; Garasic and Lavazza 2015), further extensions of human minds through neuroenhancing and mental uploading do not amount to transhuman or posthuman developments, but simply to progressive completions of a path humans already are in. Human minds, we contend, are already partially artificial. Artificial minds may be considered as genuinely human minds, not simply as virtually human. As a consequence, neuroenhancement is not a distortion of our human shape.

References

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