Chapter 6
Cyborgization: Pros and Cons

Liudmila Vladimirovna Baeva
Astrakhan State University, Russia & Saint Petersburg State University, Russia

ABSTRACT

The image of the cyborg in modern society is being formed from the standpoint of modern scientific developments and media culture: the various phenomena of e-culture. The article presents an overview of current research related to understanding the nature of cyborgs, a philosophical analysis of the socio-humanitarian aspects of the process of cyborgization, the arguments pro and contra. The problem of cyborgization considered in the context of transformation of gender, immortality and ethics, etc. Special attention is paid to the study of the image of the cyborg in modern mass culture, from cinema to computer games.

INTRODUCTION

Modern scientists are giving their full attention to the potential benefits and risks of the ongoing convergence between human nature and advanced technology. The social and ethical aspects of potential technological transformations of the human body have spurred intense scientific debate and led to opposing conclusions. The matter of cyborg creation, the replacement of body parts with high-tech analogues (many of which are already available in today’s age of robust IT), and the development of bioengineered technologies have attracted more and more attention from researchers in scientific, humanities and cross-disciplinary fields. The relevance of research directed at problems of society’s “cyborgization” is reflected in media culture. The image of the cyborg emerged as influenced by scientific developments and the
development of media culture. Contemporary media culture shows contradicting views of the cyborg. The cyberman stands in media space as both a Stranger and a Friend. Using a philosophical and anthropological analytical approach, the author presents a modern research review connected with understanding the essence of cyborgs, their role in the society of the future as well as an analysis of the social and humanitarian aspects of the societal cyborgization process. The development of cyber technologies is analyzed on the basis of their further implementation: gender transformation, demographic transition, immortalism, etc. The author pays special attention to the image of the cyborg in media culture, from cinema to computer games. The image of “cyborg” has been defined in modern culture by industrial production and its gradual legitimization in the consumer's consciousness, which leads to a shift in the ontological boundaries of human existence and a statement of new existential issues of post-identity.

BACKGROUND

The Problem of Immortality and Gender in the Modern Social Sciences

The study of cyborgization is a relatively new branch of cross-disciplinary studies, combining biotechnology, nanotechnology, cybernetics, medicine, anthropology, sociology, philosophy and even theology. Current research is directed towards the future, with development being the priority. The leading centers currently studying the social and humanitarian aspects of cyborgization are the University of California (Santa-Cruz), Brooklyn University, University of Milan, University of Toronto, and in Russia, the Institute of Information Society and Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Science.

Manfred Clynes, an aerospace inventor, and Nathan Kline, a doctor, introduced the terms “cyborg” (a portmanteau from the English phrase “cybernetic organism”) and “cyborgization” in 1960. They were researchers at the Dynamic Simulation Laboratory in New York and were exploring information technology systems that could complement the human body during space flight (Clynes & Kline, 1960). The term became fixed in both scientific literature and mass culture thanks to numerous science-fiction books and films. In science, the notion of a dual human-robot, with its parts combined as one, has become more plausible thanks to developments in medicine and transplantology of bio-artificial organs, new materials creation in nanotechnology and information and cognitive technologies. The theoretical background might include ideas from Russian cosmism, directional evolution in the spirit of noosphere, the modern theory of transhumanism, and, singularity, a rapid
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