Ethics of Human Brain Uploading Critical Analysis

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Randal Koene's idea of replicating the human brain as a mechanical system leads to an ethical dilemma, representing the choice between right and wrong. Koene's emphasis is on making the human brain immortal so it could exist forever. The author's credentials, including his affiliation with the Neural Engineering Corporation of Massachusetts and specialization in Computational Neuroscience and Information Theory, add weight to his argument. The concept of mechanical transformation of the human brain involves an ethical debate about its moral implications. Koene's research suggests that mapping the brain and reducing its involvement in computational activities will allow humans to live indefinitely. The possible adoption of Koene's idea will influence society and produce repercussions. His focus is not only on artificial intelligence but also on downloading a human brain to a computer. Ethics of life extension rejects the idea of immortalizing the human brain, and people supporting this view lack moral obligation.

Unequal Access to Immortality

The ethics of existence argues that Koene's idea of replicating the human brain is unethical because it leads to unequal death. Death is an intrinsic good and is God-given, reflecting moral obligations. People unable to avail themselves of the extension would die naturally, while others would be able to enjoy the benefits. The moral theory of extension disagrees with Koene's idea due to the concept of injustice. Replicating the human brain will further increase inequality between the rich and the poor, as the poor will never be able to avail themselves of the advantage. The theory of extension stresses the extension of planned behaviors in moral domains. Professors of ethics Pijnenburg and Leget mention, "If immortality or increased life expectancy is good, it is doubtful ethics to deny palpable goods to some people because we cannot provide them for all" (Pijnenburg and Leget). Pijnenburg is a professor of philosophy and history of medicine in the ethics department at Radboud University, Netherlands, and Carlo Leget's affiliation with the University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht, adds validity to the claims. The claims presented by the authors highlight the negative role of life extensions. The hypothetical situation suggests that the adoption of a model will divide the human race into two categories: those accepting the opportunity and those rejecting the idea under the influence of immorality. People who select the opportunity will be able to use and preserve their brains, thus creating a disadvantage for other humans (Pijnenburg and Leget).

Distributive Justice and the Limits of Neuroscience

Uploading human brains raises the question of distributive justice, thus making the idea immoral. Ethics of existence emphasizes that medical invention must provide benefits to all, irrespective of their differences. Pijnenburg and Leget justify their argument by using their philosophical knowledge: “new scientific developments may be applied but must also confront the question whether these developments contribute to a more just world” (Pijnenburg and Leget). The quote reflects that bioethics does not consider the limitations of benefits. It represents the threats of global inequality, such as people in developed countries having increased life expectancy compared to the populations of underdeveloped countries. The idea of uploading the brain is not convincing, as the current knowledge of neuroscience does not support it. According to neurologist Miguel Nicolelis, the brain functions in an unpredictable and non-linear manner that makes uploading to the cloud impossible. He claims that the most efficient supercomputers also display limitations in accurately modeling stock markets, thus making the concept less realistic. Nicolelis mentions, “You could have all the computer chips ever in the world, and you won’t create a consciousness.” He highlights the issues of hurting brains, and the role of consciousness poses further risks. The discussion highlights the concerns regarding limitations in creating consciousness. Uploading brains will affect the freedom of choice and relationships of people with others. The social nature of human beings imposes moral obligations, so their decisions to choose artificial intelligence will depend on their moral philosophy (Nield).

Animal Experimentation, Privacy, and Human Risk

Another claim supporting the main argument involves the experimentation conducted on animals before moving to humans. Brain emulation and the creation of artificial intelligence always involve complex experimentation, as proved by experimentation and supported by Nicolelis. In an article on ‘Uploading Brains,’ Netcom, one of the leading IT companies, highlights concerns regarding uploading the brain as it states, “vitrification process to preserve a brain well enough to leave hope of accurate upload or revival, it has to be carried out at the moment of death” (Hern). The process of vitrification causes pain and involves fatalities reflected through experimentation on the rabbit. Other claims suggest that artificial intelligence raises the issues of vulnerability, self-ownership, and privacy. The idea of Koene is also unethical because it represents threats to human life. Uploading the human brain to live forever involves experimentation and testing that can harm humanity, thus exhibiting a violation of ethics (Miller and Rosenstein).

Social Repercussions and the Responsibility to Reconsider

Any invention that creates more problems than benefits is immoral. The central claims reflect that Koene fails to apply his model to the masses. Itskov identifies serious concerns: “scientists who are

involved in these methods have the responsibility to think ahead. Mind uploading would usher in a world fraught with risks" (BBC, 2006). The claim presented by Itskov in the source depicts the need to rethink the development of Koene's idea. Replicating the human brain is not ethical, as it will violate the ethics of human existence. The concept involves moral repercussions for society, depicting the need to drop the idea of uploading brains into clouds. Dmitry Itskov is the owner of a web-based company and is taking the initiative to address cybernetic immorality. The article "The Immoralist: Uploading the Mind to a Computer" mentions, "For the next few centuries, I envision having multiple bodies, one somewhere in space, another hologram-like, my consciousness just moving from one to another" (BBC).

The Ethical Case Against Brain Replication

The arguments state that the idea of uploading the brain to live forever is ethically wrong. Different claims support the arguments, while the argument of distributive justice remains the strongest. Adopting Koene's idea of replicating brains will make the world a less fair and just place. The theory of ethics reflects that the choice of brain replication involves experimentation that will cause pain to humans, reflecting the unethical side. The social behavior of humans also depicts the role of moral ethics, thus leading to the rejection of Koene's concept.

Work Cited

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