ABSTRACTS

C7.5 Philosophy of Medicine + C8.4 Metaphilosophy

Making Better People through Technologies and Without Norms - Disciplinary Transfers from Medicine to Enhancement

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The key concept in the literature of biomedical enhancements is making better people by the use of such technologies. It is suggested that many characteristics such as intelligence, optimism, self-discipline, a sense of humor, or general well-being, could be increased by the use of genetic engineering or chemical neuroenhancement. In this paper, we examine the disciplinary paradigm of biomedical enhancement. The paradigm of enhancement situates itself in the discipline of medicine, but it remains a question whether it shares any relevant epistemological and normative framework with medicine. Therefore it is of importance to locate this disciplinary paradigm within the one of medicine. Medicine has a long history, and even if it is not a unified discipline, its object appears clear: cure individuals by making them reestablish their normal state. Indeed, medicine is defined by both the clinic (defining a disease through a diagnosis) and the therapeutic (assessing a remedy).

While, enhancement paradigm focuses mainly on technologies that should improve the life of individuals. By doing that, enhancement paradigm escapes from normative questions constitutive of medicine, allowing such paradigm appearing free from normative aspects and then being neutral. In this paper, we exhibit the disciplinary transfers between these two paradigms showing that enhancement only borrows from medicine the remedy-oriented language evacuating the diagnosis one, leaving the objects of the paradigm undiagnosed as if there was a common agreement on their definitions. In the second section, we examine the implications of such disciplinary transfers by questioning the hidden norms of enhancement. Hence, we urge the enhancement paradigm to build, through the use of other disciplinary transfers, the diagnosis part which is missing and weakening its suggested power in improving individual lives.

A formal definition of ontological categories

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A recent revival of interest in metaontology has exposed a number of issues one encounters if a precise and informative characterisation of ontological categories is demanded. The three main contenders here:

1. the accounts that attempt to find the appropriate level of generality for ontology, e.g., (Norton 1976);
2. the accounts of ontological categories based on intersubstitutability, e.g., (Sommers 1963);
3. the identity-driven accounts, e.g., (Lowe 2006)

seem to be inadequate as far as the history and the present status of ontology is concerned (Westerhoff 2005). As an aside, the definition constructed by J. Westerhoff hinges upon the possibility of substitution in the domain of states of affairs.

Refreshing the traditional construal of ontology as the most general philosophical discipline I will advocate a type 1 account, where the notion of ontological category is defined in terms of ontological
dependence. Instead of providing necessary and/or sufficient condition for being an ontological category, I will develop a framework to identify ontological categories (if any) within a given set of categories. To this end I will employ the notion of mode of existence to posit that two entities belong to the same ontological category only if one of them exists in the same way as the other. The notion of mode of existence will be further characterised in terms of ontological dependence: two entities share the same mode of existence if they depend on entities from the same categories. This informal account will be formalised by means of a two-sorted first-order language where “ontological dependence” is taken as a primitive term.

Bibliography