

[Pdf free] Bioethics in the Age of New Media (MIT Press)

Bioethics in the Age of New Media (MIT Press)

Joanna Zylińska

*DOC | *audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub*



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#2562454 in eBooks 2009-03-20 2009-03-20 File Name: B002QXMGO2 | File size: 67.Mb

Joanna Zylińska : Bioethics in the Age of New Media (MIT Press) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bioethics in the Age of New Media (MIT Press):

5 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Morality-free ethics, a non-starter
By GRickMSometimes one reads a book wherein the content simply does not "come together" for the reader. Such is the case with "Bioethics in the Age of New Media". In approaching a book with this title one would expect to find a framework developed that provides the scope of the inquiry along with the types of questions it should address. One would also expect to find a discussion of some of the more important questions. But no, what one finds here is a highly cursory discussion that flits about the titular topic but never becomes grounded in it. In this sense it is frustrating to read. One expects the creation of a way

to ask and answer questions as to the "rightness" or "wrongness" of a bioethical situation. But no, that is not what we get. The author says, for example, "I realize there may be something rather frustrating about a bioethics that refuses to evaluate the morality of the actions in which the producers, participants, and audiences of the radical makeover show 'The Swan' are engaged." Frustrating indeed, when evaluating the morality of such a situation is exactly what ethics is about. Instead we have "a content-free obligation that these other bodies and lives make on me, and that call on me to respond to them. The ethical response would consist in the minimization of violence, it would be a form of hospitality toward alterity that responsibly negotiates, always anew, between the self's desire for sovereignty and self-sufficiency and the other's challenge to this sovereignty." What the "response" and "challenge to this sovereignty" mean are not further explored. This work is rooted in the ideas of the 20th century French philosophers Levinas and Derrida, modified and reshaped by ideas drawn from many other 20th century philosophers. One gets the sense that the ethical framework is melded in some fashion with politics, including feminism and Marxism. This is a notion with which this reviewer wholly disagrees. Politics, as with any other human activity, should be guided by ethics, not be part of it. Marxist politics, a magnificent failure and the biggest single cause of human misery the world has known, is especially to be avoided, yet the author specifically references it, saying "it may provide a valuable perspective for conducting this sort of investigation" into her "alternative bioethics." Let us turn to the "age of new media" that this bioethics is to consider. The discussion touches on several areas of interaction of people and technology. Specifically considered are blogging, "life management" via medical technology, and bioart, such as the "Swan" referenced above, that is, the use of the body as a medium. Blogging is analyzed from several perspectives, but one cannot find a specific connection to ethical behavior. The author asks and answers, "Are they ethical? Possibly. But, also, perhaps, rarely." What does "ethical" mean here? This reviewer could not tell. Regarding "life management" there is an extended discussion of modern technology as applied to decoding "the secret of life." Here again one sees a mix of philosophy and politics, perhaps a criticism of capitalism, described as the "corporatization of the biotech industry" and "the biopolitical machinery of technocapitalism, with human and nonhuman lives all assigned a biovalue that determines their visibility and legitimacy." What ethical considerations one can take away from the discussion is difficult to say. In the area of bioart topics such as genetic manipulation and integration of technology with biological systems are explored. Once again, one searches in vain for a framework to evaluate the ethics of a work of bioart. Instead, the author speaks of "the question of responsibility without needing to rely on the preestablished value system that legislates it or resort to an unreconstructed a priori moralism." What can we take away from this book? The jacket liner says "In this provocative book, Zylinska examines many of the ethical challenges that technology poses to the allegedly sacrosanct idea of the human. In doing so she goes beyond the traditional understanding of bioethics as a matter for moral philosophy and medicine to propose a new 'ethics of life' rooted in the relationship between the human and the nonhuman (both animals and machines) that new technology prompts us to develop." Does she actually do this? If yes, this reviewer does not see it. What he sees instead is an extended discussion of philosophical concepts mingled with ideas about the relationship of those concepts with modern technology. Along the way are hints about the author's conception of "bioethics," principally that ethical considerations are all situational, that there are no moral absolutes, hence each situation requires a separate analysis to formulate an ethical position. All this is conveyed in "academic lingo," which is to say, complex writing and word use, and an assumption that the reader is well versed in 20th century continental philosophy. Is the book provocative? Yes it is, but perhaps not in the way the author intended. This reader, at least, came away wondering what was the point of it all.

Bioethical dilemmas--including those over genetic screening, compulsory vaccination, and abortion--have been the subject of ongoing debates in the media, among the public, and in professional and academic communities. But the paramount bioethical issue in an age of digital technology and new media, Joanna Zylinska argues, is the transformation of the very notion of life. In this provocative book, Zylinska examines many of the ethical challenges that technology poses to the allegedly sacrosanct idea of the human. In doing so, she goes beyond the traditional understanding of bioethics as a matter for moral philosophy and medicine to propose a new "ethics of life" rooted in the relationship between the human and the nonhuman (both animals and machines) that new technology prompts us to develop. After a detailed discussion of the classical theoretical perspectives on bioethics, Zylinska describes three cases of "bioethics in action," through which the concepts of "the human," "animal," and "life" are being redefined: the reconfiguration of bodily identity by plastic surgery in a TV makeover show; the reduction of the body to two-dimensional genetic code; and the use of biological material in such examples of "bioart" as Eduardo Kac's infamous fluorescent green bunny. Zylinska addresses ethics from the interdisciplinary perspective of media and cultural studies, drawing on the writings of thinkers from Agamben and Foucault to Haraway and Hayles. Taking theoretical inspiration in particular from the philosophy of alterity as developed by Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, and Bernard Stiegler, Zylinska makes the case for a new nonsystemic, nonhierarchical bioethics that encompasses the kinship of humans, animals, and machines.

Zylinska's profound and vibrant criticism of the often unreflective and managerial culture of bio-ethics is as intelligent

as it is timely. Working from a deeply philosophical insight into theories of life Zylinska develops her important work on ethics in the age of new media to provide a stunning intervention into this lively field of inquiry. Although this book is essential reading for anyone working in bioethics applied ethics and new media it is also illuminating and engaging for anyone interested in theory and cultural studies. This will prove to be a landmark text in its capacity to be informed by philosophy while remaining attentive to popular debates and discourses. (Claire Colebrook, Department of English Literature, University of Edinburgh)About the AuthorJoanna Zylinska is Reader in New Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London. She is the author of *On Spiders, Cyborgs, and Being Scared: The Feminine and the Sublime* and *The Ethics of Cultural Studies*. [as of 7/21/08]Carolyn Y. Wei is a doctoral student of TechnicalCommunication at the University of Washington.Her research interests include virtual communitiesand technology adoption.Beth E. Kolko is an Associate Professor of TechnicalCommunication at the University of Washington and a former Fulbright scholar in Uzbekistan. Her researchinterests include cross-cultural issues of technologyadoption and virtual communities.Jan H. Spyridakis is a Professor of Technical Communicationat the University of Washington and aFellow of the Society for Technical Communication.Her research interests include international communicationand screen design.