Ethical challenges of the future

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The future will not be the same as the past.
Future corruption will be data and technology driven, online, cybercrime, phishing, spear phishing, spamming, hacking, online stalking, to mention a few.
We do not have a clear understanding of the possibilities of the application of future technology, and therefore we do not have a clue of future ethical dilemmas. "The prevailing feeling is that too many opportunities are opening too quickly and that our ability to modify genes is outpacing our capacity for making wise and far-sighted use of the skill" (Harari).

OUR FAST-PACED WORLD

Technology has developed so fast during the last decades that the social sciences have not kept up with ethical challenges. e.g. cyborg technology, artificial intelligence, cloning, biological engineering, engineering of inorganic life (e.g. personal computer viruses).
Cyborgs are beings that combine organic with non-organic parts, such as humans with bionic hands (Harari).
Artificially intelligence refers to "the study and creation of information systems capable of performing tasks that resemble human problem solving capabilities, using computer algorithms to do things that would normally require human intelligence, such as speech recognition, visual perception, and decision making" (Goodman).
We already use bionic parts, e.g. glasses, steel pins to support broken bone fractures, and pacemakers managing our heart rhythms.
Genetic engineering raises a number of ethical questions.
DNA analysis is already available to change the future of humans: Should we be allowed to develop super humans? What will be the long term ethical and socio-economic implications? Should people that are prone to certain diseases, e.g. cancer, be allowed to have children?

THE EXAMPLE OF THE VOLE

Let us look at some more examples to illustrate some of our future ethical dilemmas.
Voles are small rodents resembling mice, and most are promiscuous. However, there is one species where the male and female form monogamous relationships. Genetics claimed "to have isolated the genes responsible for vole monogamy".
If the addition of a gene can turn a vole Don Juan into a loyal and loving husband, "are we far off from being able to genetically engineer not only the individual abilities of rodents (and humans), but also their social structures?" (Harari).

QUESTIONS ABOUND

We are humans and we should have choices. Should we limit our choices in order to become more ethical? Should we change our genetic makeup to become less prone to diseases and social disorders? What will be the consequences of such decisions? These type of questions will become hotly debated issues.
How will insurance companies respond if they know that you have some genes that can cause cancer and/or other life threatening diseases? Will it be ethical for an insurance company to ask a premium due to your genetic fault lines?
What about euthanasia? If people do not want to live longer because they are in a coma, or experience so much pain that life is not a pleasure for them, should they be allowed to end their life? If they cannot make these choices themselves, should the family be allowed to make it for them?
If we are capable of downloading a person's memory on a laptop before he or she dies, should we do it? If we can enable robots to resemble emotions, should humans have emotional and social bonds and even sexual relationships with robots?
How will future technology affect our relationship with robots and with other human beings?
It is most appropriate to conclude with the words of Dixon: "Ethics is the most important face of the future."

• References
Russel, A. (1999). Big Men Little People: Encounters in Africa. London: Macmillan.

Die Republikein 2 September 2016