



## МОРАЛЬНЫЕ ДИЛЕММЫ В ЭПОХУ ВЫСОКОТЕХНОЛОГИЧЕСКОГО ОБЩЕСТВА

### MORAL DILEMMAS IN THE ERA OF HIGH-TECH SOCIETY

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#### CORPOREALITY AND THE SELF: DISSOLVING BORDERS WITH TECHNOLOGY

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**Abstract.** This paper describes the concept of corporeality in the context of science art and the role of technology in contemporary culture. Human corporeality is a body endowed with soul and meaning. It results from personal and social experience, historical development, or cultural context and its implicit impacts. The subject of this research is corporeal code that organize the nature of modern artistic productions and human being identity. Contemporary artists use the strategies of participation and interaction, forms of interventions to make art an agent of social change and to become active drivers for the new identity process activation. Problems of identity make up a significant layer in contemporary art. The identification process develops in them in various directions. We can characterize its evolution as a change of identities. Recognizing the role and intense impact of technology on contemporary culture, we can trace two main directions: one involves extension of human senses and abilities by creating new solutions, software and tools, that let us get advanced understanding of the reality, and the second one is based on presupposed physical capacities of the human corporeality. According this approach the understanding of reality as a reality given in sensations is disappearing. The virtual world comes to replace it, our essence becomes involved in the process of mixing and indistinguishability until its complete disappearance.

**Key words:** corporeality, science art, technology, ethics, identity

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*If thence the wrath of Heav'n on me is bent,  
May Heav'n conclude it with one sad event;  
To an extended serpent change the man:  
And while he spoke, the wish'd for change began.  
His skin with green spots was vary'd 'round,  
And on his belly prone he prest the ground.  
Golden scale,  
And his shrunk legs are clos'd in a spiry tail*  
(From "Methamorphosis", Ovid)

*"Today, I'm tired of ex/changing identities in the net.  
In the past 8 hours, I've been a man, a woman and a s/he.  
I've been black, Asian, Mixteco, German and a multi-hybrid replicant.  
I've been 10 years old, 20, 42, 65. I've spoken 7 broken languages.  
As you can see, I need a break real bad, just want to be myself for a few minutes.  
ps: my body however remains intact, untouched, unsatisfied, unattainable, untranslatable"*  
(From "Friendly Cannibals", Guillermo Gomez-Pena)

### **Introduction**

The corporeality has been investigated for a long time ago. And forms of its representation have changed a lot. According to the anthropological concept of the human being the corporeality can be understood as a specific characteristic, greatly expanding the meaning of the human body and its physical reality. The body can represent far more than just a physical or biological reality.

Human corporeality is a body endowed with soul and meaning. It results from personal and social experience, historical development, or cultural context and its implicit impacts. Physical reality is a meta-reality that combines biological, psychological and social. It is an integral part of human existence. Physicality cannot be limited only to physiological, it is not reduced to the concept of "body-organism", i.e. biological substrate, and includes besides psychophysiological components (reflexes, body patterns, postures, the body's ability to move and act), conscious and unconscious, images, symbols, ideas, experiences. It is theoretically defined concept from the standpoint of various disciplines. The subject of this research are corporeal codes that organize the nature of modern artistic productions and human being identity: complicated ambivalence, hyperbolization, the functioning of a particular cybernetic or new media space.

### **Dissolving Bodily Boundaries**

The mechanistic theory of Rene Descartes can consider as one of the most significant theories of the structure of the human body. It had a great influence on the further development of bodily discourse. Descartes introduces a cartographic description of corporeality which will later be used by Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze. His topological method of describing physicality based on anatomical practices. But it is important to note that the object of anatomy's attention is divided into parts and not presented as a whole body. With the development of medical knowledge and autopsy techniques, a different understanding of the body and its death has emerged: death as a disruption of the body-machine operation. However, this perception of the body as a machine

produces a troublesome dilemma. On the one hand, we still believe in unlimited possibilities of medicine, that can fix the broken body-machine, and on the other, we assume a priority of the soul and the failure of the body itself. “A clock constructed with wheels and weights observes all the laws of its nature just as closely when it is badly made and tells the wrong time as when it completely fulfills the wishes of the clock-maker. In the same way, I might consider the body of a man as a kind of machine equipped with and made up of bones, nerves, muscles, veins, blood and skin in such a way that, even if there were no mind in it, it would still perform all the same movements as it now does in those cases where the movement is not under the control of the will or, consequently, of the mind” [1. P. 82].

With modern culture, the perception of the body and its further interpretation are not so unambiguous. And if in the traditional culture we can talk about the binary nature of the concept of reflection in perception, then in modernity we can identify the body as reconstructed, ruined, lost and fragmented.

In their joint work “Capitalism and Schizophrenia”, consist of two volumes “Anti-Oedipus” (1972) and “A Thousand Plateaus” (1980), Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari formulated the “body without organs” concept. They use this term to underline the particular conception of a virtual dimension of the body, an opposite to physical reality.

“There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together. Producing-machines, desiring-machines everywhere, schizophrenic machines, all of species life: the self and the non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatsoever” [2. P. 9]. To Gilles Deleuze, the body can be presented by anyone or even anything: from the animal to a body of sounds, a soul, or a body of an idea, etc. If everything is a body, then there is no such thing as a living body with a specific identity. Using the “body without organs” idea, they suggested the expansion of human capacities through the meaningful and intensive development of the “virtual body”. Such evolution involves experiments and, above all, the possibility of a detached perception of one’s own corporeality.

Problems of identity make up a significant layer in the texts of culture. The identification process develops in them in various directions. Its evolution can be characterized as a change of identities, and the identification processes in culture are multi-layered and contradictory.

Deleuze’s concept of “virtual body” was later presented in a collaborative project made by visual artist Diane Gromala, choreographer Yacov Sharir, and composer Russell Pinkston. Their work “Dancing with the Virtual Dervish: Virtual Bodies” explores “concepts and experiences of the body on many levels. Visually, sonically, and behaviourally, it was created to provoke reminiscences of the body, of skin, of materiality, growth, and decay” [3. P. 50]. Wearing a video helmet and dataglove, the spectator can join Diana’s body, swims through digitized inward parts of her body, and at the same time reads the author’s philosophical thoughts about human passions and suffering. To do this, the viscera of Diana were digitized and animated, and the programmers provided the technical execution of the project. Through this artwork, represented in different dimensions and chambers, participants were invited to create space for a new relationship

to themselves and to their virtual and physical bodies. A spectator was invited to open up the senses, to create particular aesthetic experience, to increase inner perception as well as perception of the outer world and of the corporeality.

In 1970, the pioneer of Japanese robotics, Masahiro Mori, described the phenomenon called “Uncanny Valley”. He supposed that humanoid robots will be cute to us to only a certain level. When the appearance and behavior of such mechanisms are developed with almost complete realism, the person will experience vehement hostility towards them. But as soon as it achieves complete realism, our perception will again change to positive or neutral [4].

We have not yet clarified the source for this psychological phenomenon. Perhaps the problem is that a person is arranged in such a way that subconsciously can catch the tiny deviations from “normality”. Maybe the reason is that at a certain level of similarity between a robot and a person we perceive it as a human being with all the stereotypes and prejudices in perceiving the Otherness. An art organization “La Pocha Nostra”, founded in 1993 by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Roberto Sifuentes, and Nola Mariano in California, provides a base for rebel artists from various disciplines. By examining their activist performances, we can trace few most commonly elaborated ideas likes of personal experience, ethnical identity, social stereotypes of otherness, foucauldian power discourse and society's obsession with technology. The last one can cause a distancing people from reality, their own ethnical, racial or other identities. In 1997—1999 Guillermo Gómez-Peña and his ethno-community art group based on the data, collected through the online questionnaire (on the website [www.mexterminator.com](http://www.mexterminator.com)) created “The Mexterminator project”. “Each ethno-cyborg is displayed in its own distinctive ‘habitat’, a platform outfitted with gadgetry and objects appropriate to the specimen. Roberto poses as a new, upgraded ‘Cybervato’, a teched out ‘robo-gang member’ manipulating (fake and real) technology and weapons. His diorama employs a projection screen as a backdrop, and he controls the display by punching commands into a computer keyboard” [5. P. 284]. This phenomenon of “ethno-cyborg” has expanded in later artworks of artists Alex Rivera and art group “Los Cybrids: La Raza Techno-Critica”, who continue to scrutinize the questions of a human being and identity issues in Ibero-America context [6].

### **Towards a symbiotic relationship: between organic and synthetic**

Transformation or evolution of the human body into some specific and perfect form was discussed by different authors during almost all human existence. The project of a new man has been represented in artworks and novels from the ancient myth of Pygmalion to Francis Picabia’s “La fille née sans mère”, from Ovid’s “Methamrfofosis” to Mary Shelley’s “Frankenstein, or Modern Prometheus” or Howard Phillips Lovecraft’s “The Shadow over Innsmouth”. Trying to develop the potential of biological structure, artists find out technological solutions, made projects balanced between science and art. We can define their works as a search for new forms and perspectives of human evolution. The symbiotic relationship between organic and synthetic becoming an important step in the development of mankind.

The matter of technology itself was mentioned in different texts during the last centuries. In 2005 the Symbiotic Art Manifesto by Leonel Moura has appeared. He proposed six basic statements:

- 1) *Machines can make art*
- 2) *Man and machine can make symbiotic art*
- 3) *Symbiotic art is a new paradigm that opens up new ways for art*
- 4) *It involves totally relinquishing manufacture and the reign of the hand in art*
- 5) *It involves totally relinquishing personal expression and the centrality of the artist/human*
- 6) *It involves totally relinquishing any moralist or spiritual ambition, or any purpose of representation* [7. P. 8].

Moura's statement on the concept of the symbiotic artist has done much to trouble a classical conception of the autonomous individual and object-based approach to art-making. "Humans are no longer concerned about the direct production of objects but dedicate all their knowledge and energy to create and cooperate with an imaginary, non-human life that is devoted to art-making" [7. P. 8]. He declares that robots that create artwork are not only questioning the idea of art, but they are also posing the question of the human being. "Why bother continuing to do something that machines can do better and more consistently? If art has no purpose, as all the modern and post-modern theories declare, then machines are the best creators" [7. P. 9]. This narrative of the superiority of machine over the man is found in a systematic or fragmentary form in different futuristic artworks, novels, texts. In "Man and Machine" Nikolai Berdyaev tries to analyze the meaning of a human being regarding that human spirit may be released thanks to technology. His vision extends to the future, where man through spiritual dominant will rise again above his creation, subordinating it to the good of humanity. "It is no exaggeration to say that technology has become a question of the fate of man and the fate of culture. In the age of lack of faith, in the age of weakening not only the old religious faith but also the humanistic faith of the 19th century, the only strong faith of a modern civilized individual remains faith in technology, in its power and its endless development. The technique is the last love of man, and he is ready to change his image under the influence of the object of his love" [8. P. 12].

Strengthening any of our sensations changes the way we think and act and therefore, changes our perception of the world. When this attitude changes, so does a person. Experiments with the modification of corporeality and its reconstruction are carried out by many contemporary artists who stay essentially in an intermediate position between art and science. One of the possible directions for the further development of the concept of corporeality can be proposed in the study of new technologies and media, and in transgenic modification of the body.

### **Body-machine mythology in modern artistic practices**

The human body is the site of transformation: it changes throughout life, and these changes are genetically programmed. At the same time, they are superficial and depend little on the person and his desires. In the 1970s, archaic body modification practices such as piercing, and tattooing became popular. The body became a space for creativity,

for all kinds of changes [9. P. 127]. Other methods of body modification, such as artificial scarification, expansion of implants and prosthetic appliance will spread more and more. Contemporary artists inspect the philosophical questions of the corporeality and human being transformation in modern culture. They concentrate efforts on the interaction between humans and new technologies to find and to show what does it mean to live under these conditions.

Stelarc (nee Stelios Arcadiou) takes the human body, which is limited in possibilities, as the basis of his work. Trying to develop the potential of biological organization, he develops technological solutions, works at the intersection of science and art. His projects result from new forms of human evolution research. The symbiotic relationship between organic and synthetic, according to Stelarc, is becoming a new step in the development of mankind.

In his interview Stelarc notes: “The more and more performances I do the less and less I think I have a mind of my own — nor any mind at all in the traditional metaphysical sense. What you have here is an obsolete body that seems to have evolved as an absent body and has now been invaded by technology, a body that is hollow, that now performs involuntarily for remote people over the Internet. These alternate and involuntary experiences with technology allow you to question what a body is, what it means to be human” [10]. In a now iconic research “How We Became Posthuman”, published in 1999, N. Katherine Hayles confirmed, that the boundaries of the human body are not presupposed anymore — they are lining up according to circumstances. She stresses that the structuring communication process and information flow changes the predetermined biological features. For her, the possibility of building the boundaries of the human being has far-reaching consequences, as opposed to looking at the existence of the world as an “autonomous” and “independent of the environment” being. But the deconstruction of the boundaries is frightening with the possibility of dissolving and losing one’s own self [11. P. 9].

Stelarc embodies Herbert Marshall McLuhan’s following statement: “Now man is beginning to wear his brain outside his skull and his nerves outside his skin; new technology breeds new man” [12]. Stelarc’s person uses an external, muscularly reinforced skeleton, equipped with a mass of antennas, increasing his field of vision and hearing, equipped with a brain implant or a genetically modified brain that is not inferior in its properties to a supercomputer. The skeleton is durable, flexible and able to function in any conditions, with different gravitational pressure and electromagnetic field. Such a high-tech adaptation extends human capabilities protecting him from an environment. The merging of technology with virtual reality simulation systems, the use of special equipment for transmitting tactile messages (virtual glasses, gloves, and suits) also raised the phenomenon of bodily presence. Or rather, the phenomenon of a new human corporeality. In a society where questions about the unconscious transition of humanity into virtual space, about the impact of technology on everyday existence are constantly being heard, the actualization of the problem in the works of Stelarc does not yet form a negative attitude, although it is perceived rather skeptically.

A similar strategy has been applied by Canadian artist David Rokeby. In 1986, at the Venice Biennale, the artist presented a work entitled “Very Nervous System”.

He developed an interactive environment used video cameras, image processors, computers, synthesizers, and sound systems to create a space in which movement of a person in a video converted into real-time interactive sound environments.

With these strategies artists try to facilitate the awareness of the gap between the virtual representations or avatars and the real body and its sensations. By creating multiple identities in the Web, we transform our personality, going back to the Cartesian dualism, where the body has been represented as a tool, an instrument or a machine, or an avatar for something more like a soul or the God.

In Donna's Harraway updated essay "Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century", created in 1991, evolution of communication and information technologies, genetic, medicine and other areas of scientific researches have made the world a more complicated structure. The post-humans concepts illustrated with artists' projects made from the beginning of the 1990s underline that "we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" [13. P. 150]. Thus, Catalan cyborg choreographer Moon Ribas, installed an online sensor into her left elbow in 2013. From that moment she feels different vibrations, depending on the magnitude of seismic waves. She feels over 50 earthquakes per day and each this intervention lead her dance movements. In a deliberate attempt to break through the limits of human body, she experimented with her own human senses by applying different extensions to the body, from a pair of kaleidoscopic glasses allowed her to see colors to speedometer glove, let her get the speed of the movement around. These projects became her attempts to change both the mind and the body. Through these experiments she feels being closer connected to nature, trying to adapt to the world as other species have made.

The cyborg myth become a new strategy of corporeality formation. It is unfinished, and we cannot reach a specific point, we see the direction of evolution.

### **Conclusion**

The ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras once remarked, that man is the measure of all things: of things which are, that they are, and of things which are not, that they are not. Recognizing the role and intense impact of technology on contemporary culture, we can trace two main interpretations of the Protagoras' statement in artists practices. The first one involves extension of human senses and abilities by creating new solutions, software and tools for the body, that let us get advanced understanding of the reality, saturated with earlier subtle images and forms and possibilities of communication. The second one is based on presupposed physical capacities of the human corporeality. According this approach the understanding of reality as a reality given in sensations is disappearing. The virtual world comes to replace it, our essence becomes involved in the process of mixing and indistinguishability until the complete disappearance. The role of communication rises steadily, but through the artistic processes it is still influenced by stereotypes and clichés.

"The man differs from the thing, and especially from the machine, in that it names it, integrates it into a system of signification and values, even when it decides to see in it a value superior to his own" [14. P. 115]. However, the basic question of our exist-

ence which must be answered, the question, that will help us understand better the meaning of our lives, identity and existence must be posed. These problems require philosophical reflection on the limits of permissible intervention in the physical integrity of a person and the living world, on the transformations of the boundaries of art and its status, on the need for the ethical and legal regulation of projects in science art and body-machine interactions. For robots that carry out human orders, or technology that allows us to expand our capacities, this means a step forward. But the manifestation of the creative will of technology implies the unpredictability of the consequences and therefore shows a loss of control.

Artists actions, performances and researches, through their particular artistic status, addressed directly to the viewer himself, posing the questions on what is normal and what is not or, what is allowed and what we should stop. Contemporary artists use the strategies of participation and interaction, forms of interventions, tend not to dissolve art in life or technology, as it was a long time before, but, on the contrary, to make it an agent of social change and to become active drivers for the process activation.

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## ТЕЛЕСНОСТЬ И САМОСТЬ: РАСТВОРЕНИЕ ГРАНИЦ ПОД ВЛИЯНИЕМ ТЕХНОЛОГИЙ

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Эта статья посвящена концепции телесности в контексте science art и роли технологии в современной культуре. Человеческая телесность — это тело, наделенное душой и смыслом; она зависит от личного и социального опыта, исторического развития общества, культурного контекста. Предметом исследования становятся телесные схемы, определяющие природу современных художественных произведений и влияющие на идентичность человека. Современные художники используют новые стратегии участия и взаимодействия, интервенционные практики, чтобы стать агентами социальных изменений и активной движущей силой процесса поиска и актуализации новой идентичности. Проблемы идентичности составляют значительный пласт в современном искусстве. Процесс ее поиска идет в разных направлениях, а ее эволюция может быть охарактеризована как смена идентичностей.

Признавая роль и интенсивное влияние технологий на современную культуру, мы можем проследить два основных направления: одно включает расширение человеческих чувств и способностей путем создания новых решений, программного обеспечения и инструментов, которые позволяют нам глубже понять реальность, а второе основывается на предполагаемых физических возможностях человеческой телесности. При таком подходе понимание реальности как реальности, данной в ощущениях, исчезает. На смену реальности приходит виртуальный мир, в котором границы человеческой идентичности размываются.

**Ключевые слова:** телесность, science art, технологии, этика, идентичность

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