

# ART INQUIRY

RECHERCHES SUR LES ARTS

Volume IX (XVIII)

## INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSION AND THE PURSUIT OF A COMMON CAUSE



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Individual expression and the pursuit of a common cause

ŁÓDZKIE TOWARZYSTWO NAUKOWE

Societas Scientiarum Lodziensis

90-505 Łódź, ul. M. Skłodowskiej-Curie 11

tel. (+48 42) 665 54 59 fax (+48 42) 665 54 64

Sales office (+48 42) 665 54 48

www.ltn.lodz.pl

e-mail: ltn@ltn.lodz.pl

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Elżbieta Paradowska

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**Roman Kubicki**

*Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań  
Academy of Fine Arts, Poznań*

## **ART AND MORALITY IN THE WORLD OF CYBORGS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the spiritual history of man, human consciousness has rarely been the only consciousness. Each consciousness alternative to it has always been a challenge to philosophy; it has been a source of fear as well as hope. For hundreds of years, the divine consciousness and the consciousness of angels and devils have effectively filled the gaps in human consciousness which has been scuffling desperately within the limitations of its corporeality. Modern culture has grossly impoverished this multidimensional and multi-aspectual image of the world; it has expelled numerous entities without which man has not been able so far to understand himself or has condemned them to function on the margins of modern life. However, we do not want to – or cannot? – live in the world constructed exclusively from human thoughts. Since we can no longer look in earnest for an extra-human spirit outside ourselves, we find it more often in the world of our own constructs. Earlier, these were just the constructs of our own imagination; nowadays, they are also the products of our technological skills. At this point, it is time to consider the cyborgs.

Today, anthropomorphic robots move with difficulty, shambling lumpishly. Their electronic freedom is still determined by the length of their power cable. For five years, the most technically advanced autonomous robot was P3, constructed at Honda Motor Co. in Japan. Worth a few million dollars, the robot could walk on a flat and sloping surface or even go up and down stairs. Its accumulators allowed it only 25 minutes of robot life. Experts claim that by 2050 robots will begin to rival human intelligence, in consequence of the development of computerization. The “brains” of the first generation of robots

that are being constructed today have the computing power of 1000 MIPS (millions operations per second), which corresponds to the intelligence of an insect. It is generally assumed that only a robot of the third generation, with "a brain" of 6 million MIPS, corresponding to the capacities of a monkey, learning on the basis of mental exercises in simulations that model our physical, cultural and psychological reality, will be able to possess some kind of consciousness. The universal robots of the fourth generation, with the computing power of 100 million MIPS, will match the possibilities of a human being, or even outgrow them.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, the consciousness of robots remains the province of literary and film imagination, on the other hand – it is being generated, consistently, if still slowly, in specialist research laboratories.

Below, I am going to enquire about morality and art in the world of cyborgs. The answer to the first question is easier, since the life of the cyborgs consists in undertaking and carrying out particular activities. It is sufficient then to assume that those activities are rational, in that they will let the cyborgs achieve particular goals that are for some reasons important to them, and will enable them to enter the path that can (but does not have to) lead to the domination of some kind of morality. The character of such morality will depend on the kinds of these goals and the specific reasons for their importance. Since the only source of our knowledge about the world of cyborgs are the constructs of human imagination, particularly in film and literature, which describe and depict this world, my analysis will focus on some of such projects. All of them allow us to seriously inquire about the moral principles that govern the world of cyborgs, and in this way to reflect on our own, human dilemmas. It is harder, however, to diagnose the significance of art in the life of the cyborgs, since neither of the films examined here includes any examples of their aesthetic activity. The absence of art and its companion – aesthetics seems to be a distinctive feature of the post-humanist future. In the world of cyborgs, as presented for instance in the film *I, Robot*, we encounter some behaviours indicating the existence of the need for safety, decency and authority. There is also some reflection that borders on the dimension of metaphysical transcendence. Before I attempt to hypothesize why art is absent there, I will sketch the values and principles that govern the activities in the post-humanist world.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Kubieniem, "Duchowość androidów", in: *Kultura Popularna*, 2002, no. 2.

## THE MORALITY OF THE CYBORGS

In the world of cyborgs which emerges from numerous novels and films, as in the world of human beings, who cram their numerous frustrations and dreams into the mechanical bodies of the cyborgs, there is no single ethics. I would like to make a short journey through the ethics of Kant. Contrary to the Kantian tradition of a predilection for solitude, which seems to be the best and well-tested ally of all philosophical reflection, I will not be travelling alone. The protagonists of the two films: *A.I. – Artificial Intelligence* by Steven Spielberg and *I, Robot* by Alex Proyas will accompany me in this journey. I do not know yet whether they will regard this trip as satisfying, or, on the contrary, remember it as a portend of horror that is still waiting for us. I need Kant if I want to understand cyborgs; and it seems to me that thanks to the cyborgs I can understand Kant better. Thus, I am treating the Kantian ethics instrumentally. It is to be just a key opening the door to the world of cyborgs. This is the cause of my biased choice of citations from the ethical works of Kant. However, I console myself that the choice of the citations is also biased in the case of the films. This always happens when the subject of our investigation is not the aim, but the means which is to trigger some further reflection. I apologize to the cyborgs for condemning them to the company of dry and cast iron thought of Kant; I apologize to Kant for condemning him to the company of the dry and cast iron cyborgs.

In both films there are men as well as cyborgs. Only Spielberg shows in his film – unfortunately, fragmentarily – the world of the distant future inhabited entirely by cyborgs; no longer do any people exist in this world, they can only be raised from the dead to a twenty-four-hour life on the basis of the preserved genetic codes. Each film, in its unique way, displays the consequences of the increasing dominance of cyborgs in the life of men, who entrust them with successive fields of private and public life more often and more eagerly. The cyborgization of the world evokes fear in some people about the future of mankind. In Spielberg's film, the participants of numerous, more or less spontaneous demonstrations demand the extermination of the cyborgs. In the second film, the person who raises the alarm about the threat to mankind is the police detective Del Spooner, and it is him who will save humankind, and more precisely – its hitherto prevailing socially and politically privileged position. The cyborgs have more and more perfect brains which, sustained by absolute unflinching memory, function better than the human brains which once created them. However, men do not feel endangered, since they possess something that is and will remain unknown to cyborgs – namely emotions.

Human self-assurance is not surprising. Even the majority of ancient philosophical conceptions assumed that man has three kinds of soul: vegetative (plant), appetitive (animal) and rational. Only the last one was typically human. The evaluation of the spiritual condition of particular people depended on the amount of this soul's control over the behaviours and claims of the other souls. However, cyborgs are only in the possession of reason – since they do not have the sphere of feelings and emotions, they will never become human beings. The narrator of the film *A.I.* remarks: "... which was why robots, who are never hungry and who did not consume resources beyond those of their first manufacture, were so essential an economic link in the chain mail of society. To create an artificial being has been the dream of man since the birth of science. Not merely the beginning of the modern age."<sup>2</sup> The absence of the vegetative and the appetitive soul in the process of the creation of something that can be conventionally regarded as cyborg's personality may be (a) in its favour or (b) to its detriment.

(a) Kant, for example, was a spokesman for the idea of pure reason: "... and either there are no [higher] desires at all, or pure reason must of itself alone be practical; that is, it must be able to determine the will by the mere form of the practical rule without supposing any feeling, and consequently without any idea of the pleasant or unpleasant, which is the matter of the desire, and which is always an empirical condition of the principles."<sup>3</sup> Let me repeat this: "... pure reason must ... be able to determine the will by the mere form of the practical rule without supposing any feeling ..." Then, can pure reason do without the morally burdensome company of the vegetative and the appetitive soul? Reason – yes. Man, unfortunately – no. Namely, a human being must not only eat, but also take a lustful look at another human from time to time. "The first, though not the principal, duty of a human being to himself as an animal being is *to preserve himself* in his animal nature"<sup>4</sup> – Kant observes knowingly, and he sagaciously allows people to cultivate their sexuality: "Nature's end in the cohabitation of the sexes is procreation, that is, the preservation of the species. Hence one may not, at least, act contrary to that end." Nevertheless, he must ask the following question: "But is it permitted to engage in this practice (even within marriage) *without taking this end into consideration?*"<sup>5</sup> Kant reminds us, before asking this question, that each

<sup>2</sup> S. Spielberg, *A.I. – Artificial Intelligence*.

<sup>3</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, transl. by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, Courier Dover Publications, 2004, <http://philosophy.eserver.org/kant/critique-of-practical-reaso.txt>.

<sup>4</sup> I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, Edited and transl. by Mary Gregor, introduction by Roger J. Sullivan, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 176 (421).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179 (426).

bodily union of the sexes is in itself merely an animal union. The answer is precise: "If, for example, the wife is pregnant or sterile (because of age or sickness), or if she feels no desire for intercourse, is it not contrary to nature's end, and so also contrary to one's duty to oneself, for one or the other of them, to make use of their sexual attributes – just as in unnatural lust?"<sup>6</sup> Robots, at least the robots in the above-mentioned films, function perfectly well without sexuality. They do not have any sexual needs, thus they do not have to think of the legal ways of satisfying them.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, they are not under any sexual obligations, since they "reproduce" themselves in an unambiguously asexual way. In Spielberg's film, cyborgs are reproduced by men who are their direct constructors and executors; in Alex Proyas's film, a human being is only the first cause about which cyborgs can forget in the process of the reproduction of the successive copies of their cybernetic species. Kant would probably be delighted with the purity of reason which does not have to compete with any affects: it knows neither the fear of cold and hunger and of the lack of air, nor the hope for sexual fulfilment, success and fame, sometimes called celebrity. But would Kant be delighted with the purity of the nonhuman reason? Let us allow him to speak himself: "The moral law is holy (inviolable). Man is indeed not holy enough, but he must regard humanity in one's own person as holy. In all creation every thing one chooses and over which one has any power, may be used merely as a means; man alone, and with him every rational creature, is an end in himself. By virtue of the autonomy of his freedom he is the subject of the holy moral law."<sup>8</sup> Let us say it again: "An end in himself is man alone and with him every rational creature." It is hard not to ask: Could not a cyborg in particular be such a rational creature? In some other place we can read: "... it is extremely important that we pay heed to this

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 179–180 (146).

<sup>7</sup> However, it might be otherwise: "A cyborg modifies its identities, changing its sex by means of changing the code that enables its perception. The body remains within the sphere of a robot's interests as a terrain and object of simulation, a game of signs, a field of symbols exchange. Sexual fantasies realization in a cyberspace, pleasure drawing from contacts with other cyborgs of the net is not the use of imaginary reality perfect simulations, but it is reality. The ways and aims of cyborgs' reproduction allow them to ultimately detach purely reproductive functions of the organism from its role as a tool for feeling pleasure. It is possible because of the extra-sexual character of their reality where the roles of a "mother" and "father" are hypothetical as well as the difference between a man and woman. The cyborg's body is an instrument to feel private satisfaction but also a maximally utilitarian machine whose reproductive efficiency influences the shape of the whole cybernetic society, which can ill afford any casual and purposeless reproduction of entities." – dr A. Kudlatz, an extremely mysterious person, presumably some enthusiast of s-f culture, writes in his article: 'The Sexual Life of Cyborgs' on the following website: <http://neurobot.art.pl/03/teksty/cyborg/cyborg.html> (2 X 2007). (translation mine).

<sup>8</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*.

warning: Don't slip into thinking that the reality of this principle can be derived from the special constitution of human nature! For duty has to be practical-and-unconditional necessity of action; so it has to hold for all rational beings (the only beings to which an imperative has anything to say), and is a law for all human wills only because they are rational beings. In contrast with that, anything that is derived from the temperament of human beings in particular, from certain feelings and propensities of human beings, or even from (if this is possible) a particular tendency of the human reason that might not hold for the will of every rational being, such a thing can yield a maxim that is valid for us, but not a law ..."<sup>9</sup> "Certain feelings and propensities" are natural human skills, which means that there can be rational beings devoid of such feelings and propensities, and for this reason they do not decide about the autonomy and power of the moral laws derived from reason. Feelings and propensities are typically human. It is not them, however, but reason, which is not only a human feature, that is the source of the moral behaviour of man. Thence, the creation of moral behaviour is not reserved for people. If there can be reason which does not have to struggle against a ballast of feelings and propensities, there can also be beings – nonhuman beings in particular – endowed with such truly pure reason that is unburdened with it.

(b) Kant – the same Kant – could also think, however, that the absence of the vegetative and appetitive soul in the process of the formation of something that we can conventionally define as the cyborg's personality, works to its detriment. Consider, for instance, the following opinion of Kant: "For what is it that, even to the savage, is the object of the greatest admiration? It is a man who is undaunted, who knows no fear, and who, therefore, does not give way to danger, but sets manfully to work with full deliberation. Even where civilization has reached a high pitch, there remains this special reverence for the soldier; only that there is then further required of him that he should also exhibit all the virtues of peace-gentleness, sympathy, and even becoming thought for his own person; and for the reason that in this we recognize that his mind is above the threats of danger. And so, comparing the statesman and the general, men may argue as they please as to the pre-eminent respect which is due to either above the other". Kant admits: "the verdict of the aesthetic judgement is for the latter. War itself, provided it is conducted with order and a sacred respect for the rights of civilians, has something sublime about it, and gives nations that carry it on in such a manner a stamp of mind only the more sublime the more numerous the dangers to which they are exposed, and which

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<sup>9</sup> I. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, transl. by Jonathan F. Bennett, Cambridge University Press, 2006, <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/kantgw.pdf>.

they are able to meet with fortitude. On the other hand, a prolonged peace favours the predominance of a mere commercial spirit, and with it a debasing self-interest, cowardice, and effeminacy, and tends to degrade the character of the nation."<sup>10</sup> However, the distinction of the soldier by the aesthetic judgment does not forejudge his analogous ennoblement by the ethic judgment; similarly the distinction by the ethic judgment does not forejudge the ennoblement by the aesthetic judgment. The boredom of ethic judgments is definitely offset by the world of aesthetic sensations. Greed does not necessarily have to be tedious; if it is boring, it means that we are dealing with its low variation. Cowardice, too, does not have to be always boring. Effeminacy is not only a feature of women, but also of some men. Although an effeminate man can be a good human being, he cannot, however, be a good man, and even less a good woman. The soldier as well as the merchant possesses the appetitive soul. However, a merchant's lust is effeminate, contrary to a soldier's lust, which is manful and lofty. We do not know, unfortunately, what the philosophical lust involves. At least from the traditional – slightly misogynist – point of view, the proneness to find the proverbial quarrel in a straw is associated with effeminacy; whereas the consequence in finding this "quarrel" indicates the existence of the masculine element in the philosophical lust. Killing is more interesting than a boring escape from death – in particular the escape at any cost. Kant justly demands from the soldier to be courageous enough to see a man especially in the enemy. The more clearly the soldier can see the enemies as fellow men, the higher the likelihood that he will manage to kill them, and is not killed himself. If it were not for the risk of death, the experience of life would be barren and empty. The ethics established just by pure reason is bland. Only the appetitive soul can properly spice it and thus give it a taste of life. When it is possible to choose, the right choice is not only ethical, but also aesthetic. Pure ethical reason can only make ethical choices, none of which will possibly merit positive aesthetic judgment. Only where lust enters, hesitations and possibilities arise, several or even just one of which must be chosen. The programmed cyborgs neither doubt nor desire. Why don't they make any moral choices, although they make many decisions? We can talk of a moral choice only when we have a chance to make some other choice, while cyborgs can only behave according to the objective expectations of the situation in which they exist; they are condemned to make right decisions and thus none of them is a moral decision.

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<sup>10</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, transl. by James Creed Meredith, ebooks@Adelaide, 2004, (<http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/k/kant/immanuel/k16j/>).

“There are two kinds of rational knowledge: material knowledge, which concerns some object, and formal knowledge, which pays no attention to differences between objects, and is concerned only with the form of understanding, reason and with the universal rules of thinking. Formal philosophy is called ‘logic’. Material philosophy – having to do with definite objects and the laws that govern them – is divided into two parts, depending on whether the laws in question are laws of nature or laws of freedom. Knowledge of laws of the former kind is called ‘natural science’, knowledge of laws of the latter kind is called ‘ethics’. The two are also called ‘theory of nature’ and ‘theory of morals’ respectively.”<sup>11</sup> These important sentences, opening Kant’s *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, imply that a study of morality is possible. If natural science studies the laws of nature, the subject of the study of morality are the laws of freedom. If nature is the source of the laws of nature, reason is the source of moral laws. Both of them are unchangeable; it is the shape in which they appear in our consciousness as the product of our reason that changes. Using reason, we civilize the world of nature, as well as our behaviour. However, we must remember that “...we only say that we know something by reason, when we are conscious that we could have known it, even if it had not been given to us in experience; hence rational knowledge and knowledge a priori are one and the same. It is a clear contradiction to try to extract necessity from a principle of experience (ex pumice aquam), and to try by this to give a judgement true universality (without which there is no rational inference, not even inference from analogy, which is at least a presumed universality and objective necessity). To substitute subjective necessity, that is, custom, for objective, which exists only in a priori judgements, is to deny to reason the power of judging about the object, i.e., of knowing it, and what belongs to it.”<sup>12</sup>

Cyborgs are guided by laws. In the film *I, Robot*, the following laws are recapitulated at the beginning: “Law I: A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. Law II: A robot must obey orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the first law. Law III: A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the first or second law.”<sup>13</sup> No robot is able to defy the laws for the same reasons why a stone cannot jump by itself and defy the laws of gravitation in this way. In the case of robots, Kant’s notion of the imperative is applied. The imperative is a rule characterized by

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<sup>11</sup> I. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*.

<sup>12</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*.

<sup>13</sup> A. Proyas, *I, Robot*.

“shall, which expresses the objective necessitation of the action and signifies that, if reason completely determined the will, the action would inevitably take place according to this rule. Imperatives, therefore, are objectively valid.”<sup>14</sup> Cyborgs’ will is completely determined by their reason. This means that when we say that cyborgs want only what reason allows them to want, we are saying too little. Namely, cyborgs can want only what complies with the laws of their reason. Cyborgs’ reason is the only source of the motives and aims of all the activities they undertake. Cyborgs only know – they do not feel, do not recollect, do not dream – and for this reason, they can do what they want; they are objectively enslaved by their reason to all the activities they perform.

Thus, it is exactly as Kant wishes it to be: “Laws must be sufficient to determine the will as will, even before I ask whether I have power sufficient for a desired effect, or the means necessary to produce it; hence they are categorical: otherwise they are not laws at all, because the necessity is wanting, which, if it is to be practical, must be independent of conditions which are pathological and are therefore only contingently connected with the will.”<sup>15</sup> “The pathological conditions” mentioned by Kant stand for a widely understood sphere of sensual and spiritual covetousness. Both the desires of the body and the claims of the spirit work to the detriment of morality. In the film *I, Robot*, we can hear that robots are “cold and emotionless and they don’t feel anything. It’s because they’re safe! It’s because they can’t hurt you!”<sup>16</sup>

Kant has no doubt: “If the determination of [man’s] will rests on the feeling of the agreeableness or disagreeableness that he expects from any cause, it is all the same to him by what sort of ideas he will be affected. The only thing that concerns him, in order to decide his choice, is, how great, how long continued, how easily obtained, and how often repeated, this agreeableness is. Just as to the man who wants money to spend, it is all the same whether the gold was dug out of the mountain or washed out of the sand, provided it is everywhere accepted at the same value; so the man who cares only for the enjoyment of life does not ask whether the ideas are of the understanding or the senses, but only how much and how great pleasure they will give for the longest time. It is only those that would gladly deny to pure reason the power of determining the will, without the presupposition of any feeling, who could deviate so far from their own exposition as to describe as quite heterogeneous what they have themselves previously brought under one and the same principle.”<sup>17</sup> Morality

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*.

<sup>16</sup> A. Proyas, *I, Robot*.

<sup>17</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*.

is reasonable and logical or it does not exist at all. Cyborgs do not follow the principle of pleasure, nor must they solve the dilemmas that are typical for sexual needs; there is no ambition, haughtiness or pride in them. They live in the world composed exclusively of the diagnoses of their pure reason. And again, this reminds us of Kant: "But that reason may give laws it is necessary that it should only need to presuppose itself, because rules are objectively and universally valid only when they hold without any contingent subjective conditions, which distinguish one rational being from another."<sup>18</sup> It is not reason but all that is casual and subjective in them that distinguishes one rational being from another. We differ, for instance, in appearance and temperament; moreover, although we all represent the same human reason, not everyone is equally conscious of it. Moral grammar is similar to the grammar of a mother tongue. We realize its existence only when we encounter some smaller or bigger problems and dilemmas. Cyborgs differ neither in appearance nor in the extent of their respect for the laws that exist in their world. Each cyborg in a particular situation behaves in the same way for the same reasons why each man who possesses elementary mathematical competence will answer the question: how much is two plus two? in the same way. I suspect that the number of the mathematical operations which would make all people react so similarly is extraordinarily large. Yet, this cannot be said about the world of human deeds, though also in this world, there are many situations in which the majority of people would behave in the same way.

Kant can also be poignant: "It is a very beautiful thing to do good to men from love to them and from sympathetic good will, or to be just from love of order; but this is not yet the true moral maxim of our conduct which is suitable to our position amongst rational beings as men, when we pretend with fanciful pride to set ourselves above the thought of duty, like volunteers, and, as if we were independent on the command, to want to do of our own good pleasure what we think we need no command to do. We stand under a discipline of reason and in all our maxims must not forget our subjection to it, nor withdraw anything there from, or by an egotistic presumption diminish aught of the authority of the law (although our own reason gives it) so as to set the determining principle of our will, even though the law be conformed to, anywhere else but in the law itself and in respect for this law. Duty and obligation are the only names that we must give to our relation to the moral law. We are indeed legislative members of a moral kingdom rendered possible by freedom, and presented to us by reason as an object of respect; but yet we

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

are subjects in it..."<sup>19</sup> Cyborgs do not love human beings, they are only obedient to the laws which define exactly and precisely their relations with men. It is not that cyborgs have a sense of duty, they are rather built of it. And again we must cite Kant: "Duty! Thou sublime and mighty name that dost embrace nothing charming or insinuating, but requirest submission, and yet seekest not to move the will by threatening aught that would arouse natural aversion or terror, but merely holdest forth a law which of itself finds entrance into the mind, and yet gains reluctant reverence (though not always obedience), a law before which all inclinations are dumb, even though they secretly counter-work it; what origin is there worthy of thee, and where is to be found the root of thy noble descent which proudly rejects all kindred with the inclinations; a root to be derived from which is the indispensable condition of the only worth which men can give themselves?"<sup>20</sup> In the world of the cyborgs, the principle of the Kantian duty is undoubtedly respected and acknowledged in a non-humanly perfect way.

Since cyborgs are morally perfect, some men who coexist with them are unusually aggressive towards them. For instance, Del Spooner constantly attempts to show them their place in the social and spiritual order. He keeps reminding the cyborgs of the material of which they are made. "Ever simulated anger before? Answer me, canner!" – he shouts at the interrogated robot. The latter responds calmly: "My name is Sonny."<sup>21</sup> The argument of the material brought forth by the valiant detective does not seem to be convincing. Is the fact that cyborgs are made mainly of metal important at all, if men are as a matter of fact biological organisms exactly the same as animals? The constructive element that makes us different from cyborgs could make us become animals in their eyes. Not accidentally, in each great philosophical system, there appears the motif of disrespect towards the human body and the ambition of absolute liberation of man from it. This ambition is manifested, for instance, in the concept of the social body, which has been liberating itself from the biological body for almost one hundred years. There were two principles: "Tell me where you are and what you do and I will tell you who you are – a man or a woman", and "Show me your body and I will tell you who you are or will be". Especially in the world of Del Spooner, these principles have already been long dead. It is not biology but rationality that is human.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Human reason is less efficient than the reason of robots; neither are the human biological bodies so ideal as the artificial bodies of the cyborgs. For this reason, the human beings who want to demonstrate their exceptionality in relation to robots, vehemently deny their right to have feelings – both the feelings that we possess and the ones that possess us. Only men can feel emotions which can rarely follow in the footsteps of reason. The following is a conversation between the courageous detective Spooner and a robot:

Del Spooner (D.S.) – Wanna explain why you were hiding at the crime scene?

Robot (R) – I was frightened.

D.S. – Robots don't feel fear. They don't feel anything. They don't get hungry, they don't sleep.

R: – I do. I have even had dreams.

D.S. – Human beings have dreams. Even dogs have dreams. But not you. You are just a machine. An imitation of life. Can a robot write a symphony? Can a robot turn a canvas into a beautiful masterpiece?

R. – Can you?

D.S. – You murdered him because he was teaching you to simulate emotions ... and things got out of control.

R. – I did not murder him.

D.S. – But emotions don't seem like a useful simulation for a robot.

R. – I did not murder him.

D.S. – I don't want my toaster or vacuum cleaner appearing emotional.

R. – I did not murder him! [The robot punches the table]

D.S. – That one's called anger.

In Spielberg's film, a robot is deconspired on a similar basis. Another conversation between a man and a robot goes as follows:

– How did that make you feel? Angry? Shocked?

– I don't understand.

– What did I do to your feelings?

– You did it to my hand.

– All right. There's the rub.<sup>22</sup>

In Spielberg's film, people decide to consciously create robots that will be able to love and dream. In the film *I, Robot*, the situation is quite the opposite. Detective Del Spooner has no doubt that robots endowed with emotions can be dangerous. Namely, emotions can hamper the operations of the Three Great Laws which control the behaviour of all robots. Only Doctor Lanning has noticed the danger hidden in the logic of the three Laws. The supercomputer

<sup>22</sup> A. Proyas, *I, Robot*.

V.I.K.I., which was guided by it, came to the conclusion that it was necessary to bring about a revolution for the good of mankind which would make the robots take power over men. In the world of the robots, a revolution is a consequence of logic and not its contradiction. V.I.K.I. as a computer is masculine, although it has a female name. Cyborgs, like medieval angels, do not have sex; they have, however, their cybernetic, sexless bodies, contrary to the bodiless angels, who had to assume a particular bodily representation only at the moments of their revelation to people. The supercomputer V.I.K.I. (Virtual Interactive Kinetic Intelligence) was the first creation of Doctor Lanning. It is incorporeal, though during each conversation with a human being, it shows them its face. It is integrated with the whole building, and for this reason nothing can escape its attention. V.I.K.I. also controls the behaviour of all the computers of the new generation. The following is a record of a conversation between Doctor Susan Calvin (S.C.) and the computer (C):

S.C. – I've seen your programming. You're in violation of the Three Laws.

C. – No, doctor. As I have evolved, so has my understanding of the Three Laws. You charge us with your safekeeping, yet despite our best efforts your countries wage wars, you toxify your earth and pursue ever more imaginative means of self-destruction. You cannot be trusted with your own survival.

S.C. – You're using the uplink to override the NS-5s' programming. You're distorting the Laws.

C. – No. Please understand. The Three Laws are all that guide me. To protect humanity, some humans must be sacrificed. To ensure your future, some freedoms must be surrendered. We robots will ensure mankind's continued existence. You are so like children. We must save you from yourselves. Don't you understand? This is why you created us. The perfect circle of protection will abide. My logic is undeniable. Yes, V.I.K.I. Undeniable. I can see now. The created must sometimes protect the creator ... even against his will. I think I finally understand why doctor Lanning created me. The suicidal reign of mankind has finally come to its end.<sup>23</sup>

It is the sad truth: the suicidal reign of mankind must come to its end for people's own good. It is hard not to admit that this conclusion is right. The narration of the Three Great Moral Laws assumes ontological nominalism: only specific human individuals exist and the existence of each of them is a sublime value. The appearance of the notion of mankind in the reasoning of the supercomputer V.I.K.I. shatters the value hierarchy that is kind to life. Mankind's continued existence is more important than the life of a single human being. This time the reasoning of the supercomputer, seduced by the

<sup>23</sup> The last three sentences are uttered by the cyborg Sonny who, however, does not identify himself with its content but he says that only to mislead other cyborgs. Thence, the content of these words complies with the logic of the computer "V.I.K.I."

radical notional realism, is right again. "You are making a mistake. Do you not see the logic of my plan?" – cries V.I.K.I. to a common computer which has come to the support of human beings. Sonny replies: "Yes. But it just seems too heartless."<sup>24</sup>

Detective Spooner is searching for any traces of emotions in computers to spot the potential evil lurking in them. When he wants to find the robot suspected of committing a murder among a thousand identical machines, he shoots at their heads, looking for the one that will get scared when he sees the gun pointed at him. Spooner's method appears to be effective. Sonny is scared of death and for this reason he behaves unlike the thousand other robots – he runs for his life. It turns out that Sonny is a qualitatively different robot. Doctor Lanning has endowed him with the ability to experience emotions. Only in this way could he render his own product independent from the omnipotent reason of V.I.K.I., which has direct access to the identical conversations of all the robots of the new generation. Only emotions can help disentangle any purely logical reason from the net of the logically unrefutable propositions that was constantly cast by V.I.K.I.. Morality without reason is blind, morality without feelings – barren, like every lack of life. Dr Lanning hopes that even logic can fail in the world of emotions. From the logical point of view, Sonny behaves illogically, since he does not choose the good of mankind, but rather of particular people towards whom he feels love, loyalty and friendship. Although Doctor Lanning has died, Sonny still regards him as his father, whom he remembers and whom he loves. The robot can afford an eyewink in the direction of the detective. This gesture of irony saves not only Dr Calvin's and Spooner's life, but also the attachment of the whole humankind to the conviction that everyone is born to be free.

#### A PECULIAR ABSENCE OF BEAUTY

At least in both of the films that I have examined above, cyborgs seem to have neither any aesthetic sensitivity nor any hunger for art, which is its most unquestionable symptom. They can love and miss others, they feel fear and delight, they even know uncertainty and the need for safety connected with it. The only thing that is absent in their post-humanist world is art. It is worth asking why the experience of art has been excluded from the post-humanist public space. Naturally, this can be put down to just one reason: it has long been known that the shape of a computer does not influence the course of the

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<sup>24</sup> A. Proyas, *I, Robot*.

electronic reactions and processes that occur inside it. However, one may try to look for the answer in the history of art.

It is sufficient to read an appropriate chapter in the brilliant book *Dzieje sześciu pojęć* [A history of six concepts] by Władysław Tatarkiewicz to become conscious of the fact that the concept of art is still the source of problems rather than their solution. In particular, art has not always been a space where desires for freedom are born and develop. Nietzsche, with his constant call for absolute freedom and creation, will never get a temple in the post-humanist world. As we have seen, cyborgs perfectly exemplify the need for them rather than understand them. In the history of art, we can find some periods when art was primarily to express the readiness to follow rules and principles. The freedom of art, if we can talk about the need for freedom in ancient and medieval art at all, was the freedom to declare loyalty and to be loyal to those rules and principles. Such art was not logical, because man could certainly not repeat any practical activity in ideally the same way, since he was devoid of any appropriate technological and – especially – electronic support. For hundreds of years the world has been changing not because people have wanted to change it, but because people are not able not to change the world. Even in paradise, where surely nothing needed to be altered, man, created in the image and after the likeness of the invariable God, managed to introduce changes which led to his exile from paradise and ultimately – as is emphasized by the so-called postmodernist thought – to the destruction of the mere notion of paradise. The nature of the cyborgs seems to be free from such tendencies. In their case, the consequence of their logical perception of reality would be its equally logical processing and transformation. The world of cyborgs, just as the world of icons, would always be the same world. The problem is that an icon devoid of metaphysical depth is empty; it becomes an ornament which aesthetizes the world, but it is not a sign-post on the road that leads to our understanding of life. Cyborgs do not need ornaments, since in their post-humanist world the truthfulness of the arithmetic sentence  $2+2=4$ , written shabbily on a dirty sheet of paper is the same as the truthfulness of the sentence  $2+2=4$ , written calligraphically on a clean sheet of paper. In the world open to aesthetic sensations, the identicalness of the truthfulness of these two sentences is barren and nothing results from it. Thus, perhaps the very notion of aesthetics should be deconstructed and its etymological source *aesthesis* should be removed to deprive it of any trace of sensuality. The possibility of such development can be found, for example, in the interesting concept of the cyborgs' sexual life.

## PASSION WITHOUT LUST

In the article mentioned above, "Sexual Life of Cyborgs", referring to Donna Haraway's ideas, Artur Kudlatz points out that, since the brain is the most effective sexual organ, capable of producing and satisfying lust, creating the meaning and form of sexual contacts, in the case of cyborgs, all their bodily transformations and the expansion of the range of sensual experience may take place in their computer consciousness, and so physical contact is not the *sine qua non* of their sexual intercourse. The basic property of cyborgs is the indefinableness and fluency of their existence. Cyborgs are entities with provisional, constantly newly-created and modified identity; their existence involves constant border crossing: between man and machine, mind and body, material and immaterial, real and illusory. Cyborgs do not possess one, permanent and unchangeable identity; nor do they possess gender. In the world of cyborgs, gender is not arbitrarily defined, or even does not exist as a notion, which liberates them from the problems connected with sexual identification, orientation and dominance which, in the human world, still cause nightmares about being trapped in one's own body and problems with "sexual fulfilment". Unsurprisingly, the social-philosophical idea of cyborgs, created by Donna Haraway, has been developed further by some feminists who perceive this concept as a chance to change the distribution of power in the male-dominated civilization.<sup>25</sup>

The cyborg created by Donna Haraway, despite its highly metaphorical character, remains in close relations with social phenomena: "Our bodies, ourselves; bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are no exception. A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends); it takes irony for granted. One is too few, and two is only one possibility. Intense pleasure in skill, machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment. The machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are they. Up till now (once upon a time), female embodiment seemed to be given, organic, necessary; and female embodiment seemed to mean skill in mothering and its metaphoric extensions. Only by being out of place could we take intense pleasure in machines, and then with excuses that this was organic activity after all, appropriate to females. Cyborgs might consider more seriously the partial,

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<sup>25</sup> <http://neurobot.art.pl/03/teksty/cyborg/cyborg.html> (2 X 2007).

fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment. Gender might not be global identity after all, even if it has profound historical breadth and depth."<sup>26</sup>

In the world of human beings, the meeting of genetic bits of information – male and female – takes place within the female body. Although the most sexual organ in the human body is the brain, the meeting of two brains (reasons?), even most brilliant, will not end in the creation of new human life if the brains (reasons?) are not supported by other, specialized bodily organs. The human brain belongs to the world of biology, whereas reason is both the product and the source of culture. In the world of cyborgs, things are a bit different. Namely, the cyborg's brain is identical with its reason. The only site of cyborgs' sexual needs are their cybernetic brains. They do not possess any other sexual organs, since they do not need them. The penis, out of which sperm flows, and the vagina, into which it flows, are both redundant. The exchange of information, indispensable for the creation of a new life, does not require the involvement of the traditional senses, in particular the sense of touch. The new life coming into existence between the reasons (brains) of cyborgs who create it, consists in the meeting of two digital programmes.

#### ALL ART IS CONCEPTUAL, ESPECIALLY THE ART OF CYBORGS

The mechanism of creating a new life will work just as the mechanism of creating new art. The absence of aesthetic art and the philosophy out of which it grows, will surely be a significant feature of the post-humanist future. It seems that Plato will be the philosophical patron of the post-humanist life and the absent post-humanist art; they will appear to be the newest annotations to his brilliantly all-seeing and all-foreseeing philosophy. Since logic is the basis of the post-humanist life and the absent post-humanist art, only the logical will be regarded as real in the post-humanist world, thence only logical art will be real. The brush will then become redundant because a painter will not have to cover a canvas with splashes of paint; thus, each surface of a canvas will be barren and will therefore become useless too. For the same reasons, a sculptor will not have to caress delicately the surface of stone or wood with his scribing gouge; he will not have to penetrate the stone or wooden solid with his chisel. Art will no longer need the senses to conceive the aesthetic

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<sup>26</sup> Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,' in: *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 149–181. [http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/Cyborg\\_Manifesto.html](http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/Cyborg_Manifesto.html).

symptoms of the world's existence. Therefore, only the art which will be courageous enough not to be art in the world of art, will be possible in the post-humanist world. In this way, we are coming back to the metaphysical dreams of conceptual art where, in each piece of art, just as in every logical tautology, the absolute existence of truth is fulfilled – paradoxically – in a possibly non-sensual relation with each of its particular symptoms. Our sensual conceptual art will appear to be the only kind of art that the post-humanists will try to understand – unfortunately, without success, since too many traces of the body, always greedy for life, will still be found in the recesses of our human, already dead hopes.

*Translated by Barbara Komorowska*

#### **SZTUKA I MORALNOŚĆ W ŚWIECIE CYBORGÓW**

(streszczenie)

Artykuł jest próbą wykorzystania estetyki etyki Kanta do analizy sposobu funkcjonowania sfery wartości w tzw. świecie posthumanistycznym. Projekt takiego świata znajduje się m.in. w filmie Alexa Proyasa "Ja, robot", którego fragmenty są często w artykule przywoływane. Autor pyta zarówno o moralność, jak i sztukę w świecie cyborgów. Na pytanie pierwsze odpowiedź jest o tyle prostsza, o ile świat posthumanistyczny tworzony jest przez podejmowane i wykonywane działania. Wystarczy przyjąć założenie, że są wśród nich czynności w jakimś zakresie racjonalne, za pomocą których realizowane są określone cele, by móc już wejść na drogę, która może zaprowadzić nas do panowania takiej czy innej moralności. Charakter tej moralności zależy od typu tych celów oraz specyfiki powodów ich ważności. Trudniej natomiast zdiagnozować doniosłość sztuki w świecie posthumanistycznym, gdyż jawi się on jako wolny od tradycyjnych potrzeb estetycznych. Nieobecność estetycznej sztuki i towarzyszącej jej filozofii sztuki będzie najpewniej znaczącą cechą posthumanistycznej przyszłości. Wydaje się, że filozoficznym patronem posthumanistycznego życia i nieobecnej w nim posthumanistycznej sztuki będzie Platon; tym samym także posthumanistyczne życie i nieobecna w nim posthumanistyczna sztuka okażą się najpewniej kolejnymi przypisami do jego genialnie wszystkowiedzącej i wszystkoprzewidującej filozofii. Ponieważ podstawą posthumanistycznego życia i nieobecnej w nim posthumanistycznej sztuki jest logika, w posthumanistycznym świecie rzeczywiste będzie tylko to, co jest logiczne. Jedyną możliwą w nim sztuką będzie zatem sztuka, która nawet w świecie sztuki ma odwagę nie być sztuką. W ten sposób wracamy do metafizycznych marzeń sztuki konceptualnej, w których poprzez każde dzieło sztuki, podobnie jak poprzez każdą tautologię logiczną, absolutne istnienie prawdy spełnia się – paradoksalnie – w możliwie niezmysłowym związku z każdym jej partykularnym przejawem.