

Prompt

How would the one major ethical aspect of this technology be evaluated by the different ethical perspectives? Please summarize each perspective (Kantism; Act Utilitarian; Rule Utilitarian; Social Contract Theory; and Virtue Ethics) with 1-2 paragraphs for each ~750 words.

Essay 3

Word Count: 800

Kantianism theory is the theory produced by German philosopher, Immanuel Kant. This theory states that an individual's actions should be guided by moral laws and that these moral laws should be universal. In other terms, an action cannot be right for you, if it would not be right for other individuals in the same or similar situation. Under Kantianism and the Categorical Imperative, the rules that all individuals should follow regardless of their circumstances and goals, the second formulation states that individuals should treat themselves and others as an end to themselves, and never only as a means to an end. Knowing that it is morally wrong to use individuals under Kantianism, not granting brain emulations human status as well as human rights, no matter the medium, is unethical.

Before a brain is emulated, that particular person has rights and is seen as human. How can the status of someone's human identity and their rights be revoked when they have already been accepted as being human in the past? Currently, corporations are seen as people and have rights which enable them to make decisions based on religious and political views, despite not identifying as human. While the situation is not identical, it is similar. Corporations are not humans, yet, we give them the same rights as we do to actual humans. Based on Kantianism, the laws that govern and are extended to humans as well as corporations, should be universally extended to brain emulations as well.

Act utilitarianism theory states that an action is ethical if its overall impact creates more happiness than unhappiness. On the contrary, an action is unethical if the harm exceeds the benefits. When it comes to brain emulation, the emulated brain and the uploaded consciousness would be happy if given the same rights as other humans and an extended stay with others. With that, original humans would be happy that their friends, spouses, children, and family get to live on through an alternative medium. The number of happy individuals would outweigh the number of unhappy individuals, making brain emulation ethical.

On the other end of the spectrum, does a brain emulation fall under the spectrum of a certain sex or race if it is put in a more neutral medium that is not a human body? For example, if a brain emulation does not have to deal with issues such as racism, sexism, and ableism due to its neutral medium, some might say under act utilitarianism that it is harmful, dismissive, and unethical to give an emulated brain human rights when original humans actually need and benefit from human rights.

Rule Utilitarianism theory argues that we should follow moral rules, and that if followed by everyone, will result in the greatest overall happiness. This theory focuses on the long-term consequences. Using this theory, we can deduce that granting brain emulations human status as

well as human rights, is unethical. One example would be if we give brain emulations in different mediums, human status, we risk overpopulating the world. The earth thrives on individuals being born and dying. While the population fluctuates, there is no major influx of births or deaths. If brain emulations are considered humans with rights, then there is no limit to them copying themselves and it is plausible that they become immortal, thus draining the earth of valuable resources.

Social contract theory is based on the theory that morality consists of a self of rules, that a rational person would accept, on the condition that others accept them as well. Following this theory, brain emulation would be seen as unethical based on the principle of limited rights. Limited rights are rights that are restricted based on circumstances. Knowing that brain emulation is a limited right that cannot be achieved by everyone due to class divides and financial differences, it is unethical for an emulated brain be given more rights than those who cannot afford to emulate their own brain. With these emulated brains living as humans with rights, they diminish the hardships of those who cannot afford emulation and further divide the classes.

Virtue ethics theory says that an action is ethical if the character of the individual is morally sound and they carry out their virtuous character through their actions. This approach would conclude that brain emulation is not virtuous for a couple reasons. First, brain emulation is being done out of selfishness. Knowing that the original individual whose brain is being emulated, would not live forever, it is selfish to extend a life that could and would not normally be extended. Second, it is unethical and not virtuous to give human rights to a brain emulation when there are currently individuals living with limited human rights based on systemic levels of oppression such as their race, sexual orientation, and etc.