Contents

1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
  1.1 The Experience of Risk and Vulnerability .............................................. 1
  1.2 The Struggle Against Risk and Vulnerability ......................................... 2
  1.3 Technological Risk and the Ethical Evaluation of New Technologies .................. 5
  1.4 Risk, Vulnerability, and Technology ...................................................... 7
  1.5 Transhumanism ...................................................................................... 9
  1.6 Outline of the Book ............................................................................. 10
References .......................................................................................................... 15

Part I Descriptive Anthropology of Vulnerability

2 The Transhumanist Challenge ........................................................................ 19
  2.1 The Ethical Discussion About Human Enhancement and Its Assumptions About Human Being and Vulnerability .............. 19
    2.1.1 Transhumanists Versus Bioconservatives and Infoconservatives: The Anthropological Issue .................. 20
    2.1.2 Fighting the Dragon or Accepting What Is Given by Nature or God? The Question Concerning Human Vulnerability and Technology ................................ 21
  2.2 First Response to the Anthropological Issue ........................................... 23
    2.2.1 Human Nature Has Always Changed .............................................. 23
    2.2.2 Technology Has Always Changed Who We Are .......................... 27
    2.2.3 Philosophical Anthropology Has Always Been Normative .................. 28
    2.2.4 From Human Nature to Human Being: From Essence to Existence .............................................................. 31
References .......................................................................................................... 35
3 Anthropology of Vulnerability ............................................................... 37
  3.1 Standard Dualist Views of Risk and Vulnerability ......................... 37
    3.1.1 Objectivist Views: Risk Science, Medicine,
          and the Psychology of Risk.............................................. 37
    3.1.2 The Social Construction of Risk and Cultural
          Theory of Risk .................................................................... 39
  3.2 An Existential-Phenomenological Alternative:
    A Relational Anthropology of Vulnerability ................................. 42
    3.2.1 Existential Vulnerability: Preliminary
    Phenomenology of Risk and Vulnerability .............................. 43
    3.2.2 Existential Vulnerability: Being-at-Risk, Fear,
          and Care (Using Heidegger 1) .......................................... 54
    3.2.3 Existential Versus Existentialist
          (Not Using Heidegger 2) .................................................. 56
    3.2.4 The Tradition of Philosophical
          Anthropology: Plessner.................................................. 59
References................................................................................................. 61

4 Cultures and Transformations of Vulnerability ................................... 63
  4.1 Culture(s) of Vulnerability ............................................................... 63
    4.1.1 Experience: Imaginations of Vulnerability .......................... 63
    4.1.2 Praxis and Habitus: Imagination as Representation
          Versus Imagination in Action.............................................. 66
  4.2 Vulnerability Transformations ......................................................... 69
    4.2.1 Spiritual Technologies and Religious Culture ...................... 70
    4.2.2 Material Technologies and Technological, Financial,
          and Economic Culture..................................................... 72
    4.2.3 Social Technologies and Political Culture .......................... 75
    4.2.4 Technologies of the Self and Self-Culture ........................... 79
  4.3 Conclusion: Vulnerability Transformations
          as Transformations of a Form of Life .................................. 81
References................................................................................................. 82

Part II Normative Anthropology of Vulnerability

5 Ethics of Vulnerability (i): Implications
  for Ethics of Technology ...................................................................... 87
  5.1 Vulnerability and Ethics................................................................. 87
    5.1.1 The Value of Vulnerability and the Vulnerability
          of Value............................................................................. 87
    5.1.2 Evaluating Vulnerability Transformations.............................. 93
  5.2 Ethics of Technology as an Ethics of Vulnerability ....................... 96
    5.2.1 Standard View: Human Values Versus
          Technological Means ....................................................... 96
5.2.2 Alternative: Learning to Be-at-Risk ..................................... 97
5.3 The Design and Growth of Human Vulnerability ....................... 98
References ................................................................................................. 99

6 Ethics of Vulnerability (ii): Imagining the Posthuman Future ........ 101
6.1 The Possibility of a ‘Posthuman’ Ethics ........................................ 101
   6.1.1 Dependent Values: A Proposal for a Modest Ethics ............ 101
   6.1.2 Imagining Future Vulnerability Transformations
       Under Conditions of Epistemic Opacity .............................. 102
   6.1.3 Visions of Extensions and Enhancements:
       Mysticism, Violence, and Science Fiction ......................... 106
   6.1.4 Conclusions for the Discussion About Human
       Enhancement and Transhumanism .................................... 115
6.2 Exploring Posthuman Vulnerabilities ............................................ 118
   6.2.1 Physical Vulnerabilities .................................................. 119
   6.2.2 Material and Immaterial Vulnerabilities .......................... 120
   6.2.3 Bodily Vulnerabilities ................................................... 120
   6.2.4 Metaphysical Vulnerabilities ......................................... 121
   6.2.5 Existential and Psychological Vulnerabilities ................. 122
   6.2.6 Social and Emotional Vulnerabilities ............................. 122
   6.2.7 Ethical-Axiological Vulnerabilities ............................... 123
   6.2.8 Conclusion ..................................................................... 124
References ................................................................................................. 125

7 Ethics of Vulnerability (iii): Vulnerability in the Information Age .... 127
7.1 Bodies, Others, and Reality in the Information Age:
   Is the Internet an Anti-vulnerability Tool? ................................. 127
   7.1.1 Disembodiment, Disengagement, De-socialisation,
       Virtualisation, and Transcendence .................................... 127
   7.1.2 Being Online: Why ICT Fails as an Anti-vulnerability Project ........................................... 129
7.2 Beyond Cyber Security ............................................................... 135
   7.2.1 Dualist Views of Cyber Security: Autonomous
       Castles and Their Firewalls .............................................. 136
   7.2.2 A Non-dualist View of Informational Vulnerability:
       Ubiquitous Vulnerability in Cyber Ecologies ...................... 139
7.3 New Vulnerabilities in Medicine and Health Care ...................... 141
   7.3.1 Wired Patients: Cyborgs in the Intensive Care
       Ward and Robots for the Elderly ....................................... 141
   7.3.2 New Vulnerabilities: Objectified by Technology,
       Disabled by Nature ....................................................... 142
References ................................................................................................. 145
8 Politics of Vulnerability: Freedom, Justice, and the Public/Private Distinction .............................................. 147
  8.1 The Idea of a Politics of Vulnerability .................................................. 147
  8.2 Freedom and Vulnerability ................................................................. 152
    8.2.1 The Hobbesian Problem of Social Order: Neo-feudal Power Structures in Cyberspace ...................... 152
    8.2.2 Alternative: Why Cyberspace Is Already Social ........................................................................... 154
  8.3 Justice and Vulnerability: The Case of Human Enhancement .................. 157
    8.3.1 Towards a Fair Distribution of Genes or Vulnerability? .............................................................. 158
    8.3.2 Capabilities and Vulnerability Transformations: Human Enhancement and Human Development .... 168
    8.3.3 Ecologies of Vulnerability and Ecological Justice ................................................................. 174
  8.4 Transformations of the Political in the Information Age: Public and Private .................................................. 177
    8.4.1 Standard View: The Public Sphere as a Sphere of Invulnerability .............................................. 177
    8.4.2 Alternative: Bio-politics and Info-politics. Bloody Democracy and Silicon Voices ......................... 179
References ......................................................................................................................... 181

9 Normative Aesthetics of Vulnerability: The Art of Coping with Vulnerability .................................................. 183
  9.1 Introduction .......................................................................................... 183
  9.2 The Idea of a Normative Aesthetics of Vulnerability: From Representations of Vulnerability to the Art of Coping with Vulnerability .................................................. 184
    9.2.1 Fate, Technology, and Modernity: From Greek Tragedy to Cyberpunk ........................................... 190
    9.2.2 Space and Vulnerability: Anti-vulnerability Architectures and Designs ........................................ 192
    9.2.3 Uncanny Mirrors: Animals, Cyborgs, and Robots ....................................................................... 195
  9.3 Beyond the Human: Environmental and Ecological Vulnerability ........................................................................ 197
References ......................................................................................................................... 199

Part III Conclusion

10 Conclusion: The Heel and the Arrow .......................................................... 203
Reference ....................................................................................................................... 205

Author Index ............................................................................................................... 207

Subject Index ............................................................................................................... 209
Human Being @ Risk
Enhancement, Technology, and the Evaluation of Vulnerability Transformations
Coeckelbergh, M.
2013, XIV, 218 p., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-94-007-6024-0