

Human Enhancement: A Role for Philosophers of Science, Janet A. Kourany

Human enhancement—the quest to improve or even transform human beings through technological means—has been called the most important issue of the twenty-first century. Yet, the public is ill prepared to deal with it. True, the issue has been publicly discussed for years by experts in fields as diverse as bioethics and medical research and information technology and nanotechnology and cognitive science and economics and political science and public policy and history and the law and even science fiction writing and philosophy of mind. But the discussion has been marred by serious shortcomings, empirical as well as normative. As a result, the public has been offered wildly divergent, incompletely argued recommendations regarding human enhancement from the various experts rather than a coherent, well-developed plan of action. I shall argue that there are at least three important ways in which philosophers of science—philosophers who have thus far been visibly absent from the enhancement debate—can contribute to it. And I shall try to cajole my fellow philosophers of science into doing so.