Summary and reflection of ‘future

The chapter takes the reader through an imaginative journey of medicine in the future. Although some of the possibilities proposed appear like material from a science fiction novel, they are based on emerging scientific breakthroughs. One of the themes discussed in the chapter is the increasing mastery of human beings to ‘ play God’. Evolving new technologies allow the medical professional to perform astounding feats of genetic engineering. This could happen at various stages of life – from neonatal to palliative. With this capability, people can augment their life spans, develop immunity to various viruses and even thwart cancer using nanotechnology.

In chapter 3, Michio Kaku makes predictions and depictions of future of medicine in all its possible manifestations. We read of ‘ nanobots’ that would operate at sub-molecular levels in dealing with infections and diseases. The author also envisions advancement in stem cell extraction and utilization, whereby, new organs can be ‘ harvested’ merely with the seed of a few stem cells. If this becomes a reality then the need for organ transplants will be reduced. More importantly, by using organs from the patient’s own stem cells, post operative complications are diminished. There is consensus within the scientific community about the use of such technologies for benign and remedial purposes. However, questions and doubts are raised in using these technologies for cosmetic or enhancement reasons. These enhancements are above and beyond what a healthy human existence requires. They are meant to give ‘ competitive’ advantage over peers in the evolutionary game of selecting the ‘ fittest’ genes.

The author’s projections into the future are based on extrapolations of technologies that are in their nascence. Hence there are numerous factors

that bear on their future development, chiefly along political, socio-cultural, legal and ethical dimensions. But, disappointingly, Michio Kaku does not deal with the intersection of these domains upon the future prospects of a technology. In particular, it is fairly obvious that the author’s primary concern is not the ethical issues surrounding these medical developments. To this extent, the chapter in question, and the book as a whole, is incomplete. They are at best, selective and wishful anticipations of what will unravel in future technological societies. It falls short of showcasing our species’ future as an inevitable submission to technocracy.

In conclusion, the work makes for an interesting read but lacks the conviction that accompanies fact. Despite this flaw, one cannot dismiss it off-hand, for it offers key insights into many of the cutting-edge technological innovations that have taken place in recent years. For a general audience that is not acquainted with scientific terminology, understanding these concepts can be difficult. To the author’s credit he alleviates this problem by keeping the jargons to a minimum. He also uses lucid expressions and easy logic to flesh out his arguments. Overall, reading the chapter will be a thrilling yet thought-provoking experience for the reader, as it had been for me.

Reference:

Kaku, Michio (March 2011). Physics of the Future: How Science Will Shape Human Destiny And Our Daily Lives by the Year 2100. Doubleday.

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