

Words on Monday

The *Nature* Debate: Enhancing the Body

Curated by *Nature*

Experts in science, science policy and science ethics hand-picked by the leading weekly international journal of science *Nature* debate the risks, benefits and extent of how far research can extend our mental and physical abilities:

The second of two panel events focuses on research underway that is extending the human body: from speed, strength and healing to heat tolerance, pain thresholds and more. What are the risks and benefits to the individual and to society of these developments? Should athletes, soldiers, the elderly or aid workers have access to such technology? Why, when and why not?

Come along and take part in this body-boosting evening.

nature

Forever young?

“I’m not afraid to die; I just don’t want to be there when it happens.”

Woody Allen

Designer babies, artificial organs, extended lifespans, genetically-enhanced athletes: enhancement technologies promise – or threaten – to radically change our society. How should we respond? Will we become a cyborg species, or come down against the idea of boosting our bodies with technology?

We already enhance our bodies by visiting the gym, taking vitamin pills, putting on make-up, or even going under the surgeon’s knife. Now, a slew of new scientific possibilities is emerging – enabled by genetic engineering, stem cell biology, nanotechnology and computing – but will these technologies just be seen as a natural extension of our current ‘self-improvement’ methods, or do they represent an altogether different (and troublesome) stage in the development of our species? Will they change what it means to be human?

Take life extension. Most people in the developed world live longer now than ever – average life expectancy is increasing by 2% each year in the UK, according to the Office of National Statistics. But is there an upper limit? If we agree that longer is better, when should we start prolonging life – before birth with genetic modifications, throughout life with environmental tweaks and fixes, or two-thirds through, using technologies that can turn the clock back? What kind of life would a long life be? 1000 years of being elderly and infirm might not be desirable; but what about 1000 years of living like a twenty-something?

Living forever would change what it means to be human. All human endeavour is built on the idea that life is precious, finite, fleeting, and in the final assessment, ephemeral. Art, culture and music would almost certainly not have the same significance if mortality were not an issue. Would life be boring? Humans are always striving for betterment; ways to come closer to perfection. But what is perfection? How can we agree on it? And who decides?

Should we extend our lives, or simply face up to our fear of death?

PANEL

Aubrey de Grey is Chairman and Chief Science Officer of the Methuselah Foundation, a 501©(3) non-profit charity dedicated to combating the ageing process. He is also Editor-in-Chief of *Rejuvenation Research* and author of several books. His research interests encompass the accumulating and eventually pathogenic molecular and cellular side-effects of metabolism that constitute mammalian aging, and the design of interventions to repair and/or obviate these changes. He has developed a plan for such repair, termed Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence (SENS), which breaks the aging problem down into seven major classes of damage and identifies detailed approaches to addressing each one.

Andy Miah is Reader in New Media & Bioethics, School of Media, Language & Music, University of the West of Scotland, as well as a Fellow of FACT, the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, Liverpool. His research is in applied philosophy, technology, and culture. He is author of *Genetically Modified Athletes* and *The Medicalization of Cyberspace*, and co-editor of *Human Futures*. He is a member of the editorial board of *Genomics, Society & Policy*, *Health Care Analysis* and is associate editor of *Studies in Ethics, Law and Technology*.

Kevin Warwick is Professor of Cybernetics at the University of Reading, UK, where he carries out research in artificial intelligence, control, robotics and cyborgs. As well as publishing over 500 research papers, and several books, including *March of the Machines* and *I Cyborg*, Warwick’s experiments into implant technology led to him being featured as the cover story on the US magazine, *Wired*. He was presented with The Future of Health Technology Award at MIT and in 2004 received The IEE Achievement Medal. In 2000 Kevin presented the Royal Institution Christmas Lectures, entitled: ‘The Rise of the Robots’.

CHAIR

Kerri Smith is a science-writer and journalist and edits and presents *Nature’s* weekly podcast. She took degrees in human sciences and neuroscience at the University of Oxford, and also studied science communication at Imperial College London. Kerri has written for many publications including *New Scientist* and *The Times* of London.

This Week at Kings Place

Mon 10 Nov Hall One 7pm	Words on Monday The <i>Nature</i> Debate 2: Enhancing the Body Curated by <i>Nature</i>
Tue 11 Nov Hall Two 8pm	This is Tuesday The Sound Source: 'The Art of Sampling' - Featuring Carl Stone and People Like Us & Ergo Phizmiz
Fri 14 Nov St Pancras Rm 6.20pm	Scene Norway Ice Music with Terje Isungset and Lena Nymark FREE
Hall One 7pm	Scene Norway London Sinfonietta featuring Arve Henrikson
Sat 15 Nov Hall Two 2pm - 5pm	Scene Norway Isglem + SVIV Dance Company
St Pancras Rm 5pm	Scene Norway Ice Music with Terje Isungset and Lena Nymark FREE
Hall One 7.30pm	Scene Norway Mari Boine + Isglem
Hall Two 10pm	Scene Norway Bugges Room: Bugge Wesseltoft & Friends
Sun 16 Nov Hall Two 11.30am/3.30pm	Scene Norway The Little Prince
Hall Two 8pm	Scene Norway Susanna and In the Country
Hall One 6.30pm	London Chamber Music Series Angell Piano Trio In partnership with The London Chamber Music Society
Mon 17 Nov Hall One 7pm	Words on Monday An evening with Ketil Bjørnstad Curated by Fiona Talkington

Exhibitions

Kings Place Gallery	Nicolaus Widerberg	Past in Future
	Albert Irvin	Six Paintings

GREEN&FORTUNE

Located in the atrium, the central hub of Kings Place, our cafe offers wonderful homemade cakes, soups and hot carved sandwiches. Fresh fruit smoothies, aromatic coffees and teas are available in this welcoming and spacious cafe.

www.greenandfortune.co.uk 020 7014 2850

Opening Hours
Monday to Friday 7.30am to 7.30pm
Saturday and Sunday 10am to 7.30pm

ROTUNDA

BAR - RESTAURANT - PRIVATE DINING

Rotunda Bar & Restaurant sits within the impressive rotunda at Kings Place. With waterfront views and al fresco seating, it is the ideal setting to enjoy contemporary British cuisine.

Our restaurant offers a la carte menus with daily and weekly specials. A particular emphasis is placed on sourcing sustainable British produce.

www.rotundabarandrestaurant.com 020 7014 2840

Opening hours:
Rotunda Bar 11am to 11pm
Rotunda Restaurant 12pm to 3pm / 5pm to 11pm

Concert Bar
Open from 6pm until end of interval

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