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OPINION

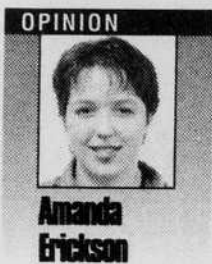
editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

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All work and no play makes Jack a dull

BORG

The computerization of society might come at the price of our humanity



We are "Hugh," right? As much as we like to think we are unique, time and technology are turning us into "One of Five." I'm referring to an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in which the Starship Enterprise takes on board an injured Borg. The Borg are a collective, and their prime objective is to assimilate new cultures into their hive and transform them, through a myriad of implants, into Borgs.

The crew of the Enterprise studied their captive and, over time, one of the crew members developed a relationship with the Borg, resulting in a sort of individuality previously unknown in the Borg who begins to refer to himself as Hugh.

The notion of melding mind and machine is as exciting to some as it is horrifying to others. However, this is no futuristic notion. Currently, there are a number of devices and prosthetics, which are being used today to overcome things such as deafness or the loss of a limb. Pacemakers, replacement joints and digital hearing aids are fairly common. However, the goal of scientists studying "neural prosthetics and interfacing" is to find a way to seamlessly and safely apply machine to man.

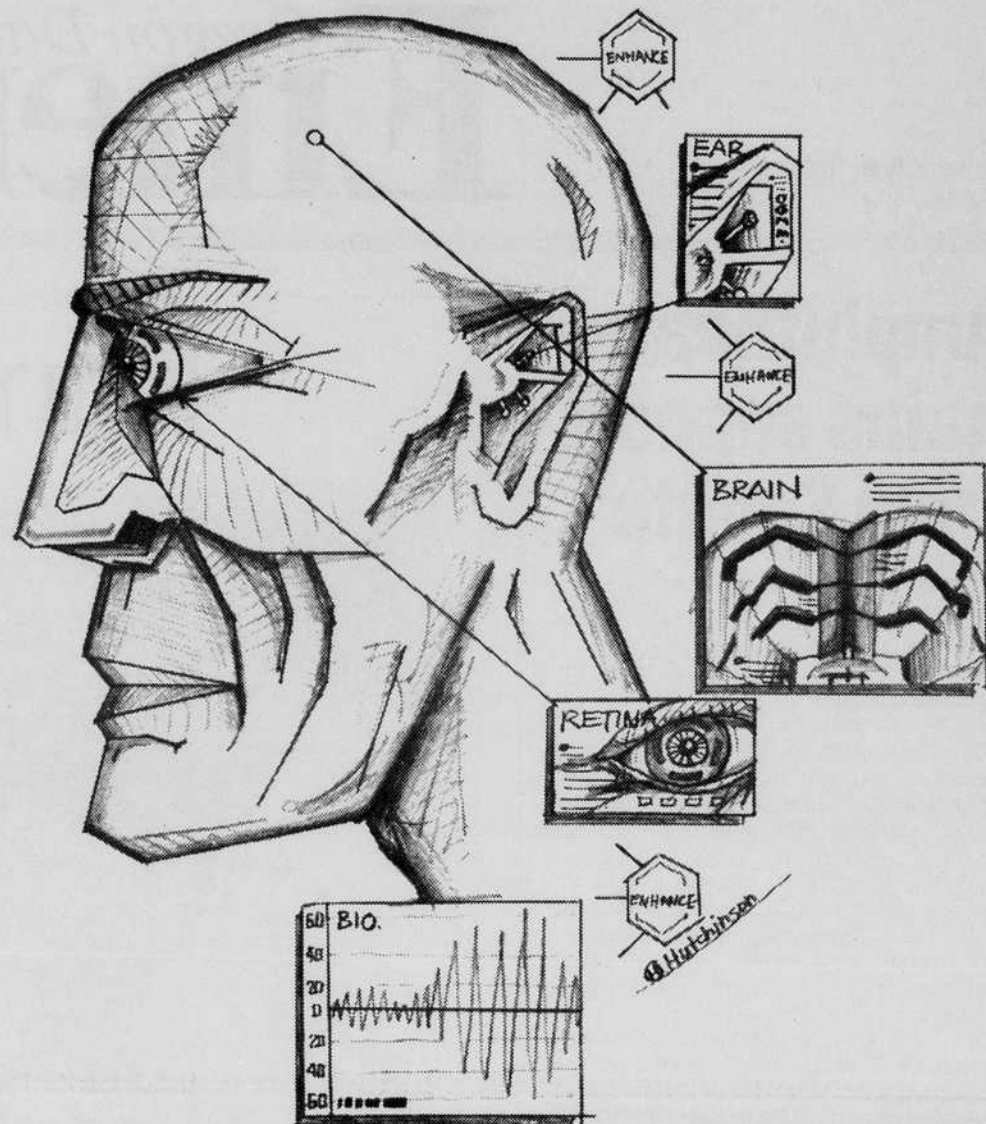
In the plans is a new hearing aid which works by snaking hair-thin wires deep into the brain stem; a micro-chip implant for the hands of police officers, which, coupled with the proposed "smart guns," will keep officers from being shot by their own weapons; and, for the sight impaired, there is the possibility of having electrodes implanted into the visual cortex to stimulate the rods and cones and whatnot. Some of these ideas seem very science fictional and, although they sound improbable, may actually be applicable within the next century.

Implants and other "add-ons" can be integral in helping those with disabilities; however, once these prosthetics become commonplace, what is to keep people from voluntarily augmenting their bodies?

For instance, there has been some talk about being able to work on your home computer using brain waves, receive e-mail in your ear and virtually browse cyberspace through your own eyes. There are those who not only think this is possible, but they believe it.

Technology has been, in the past, feared as much as revered. Today, however, technology is so friendly and fuzzy, especially the technology most people see everyday — their computers. PCs are now so easy to use, and they help us to see the world and meet people.

We talk to and through our computers. We love our computers. But do we want to be our comput-



ers? It is surprising how quickly information and connection have become a part of our daily lives.

Cell phones, pagers, e-mail, laptop computers, faxes — all these things keep us in touch with people every hour of every day. I'm surprised more people aren't completely annoyed with the invasion of privacy.

Nonetheless, these things are now commonplace and accepted. Now, what if we could make our bodies transducers of this information? We could have miniature cell phones implanted in our ears with wires connecting directly to the brain stem and then when we get a call, we could listen and just think our responses back. No need to even interrupt a meeting for an important call. It would be wonderful — so easy and safe.

Then, when I start cloning myself, I can just get special transmitting implants to connect myself to my adoring daughters so that they can learn to grow up just like me and have all my special interests.

That way I don't have to obsess about what kind of soul they are going to have because it will be perfect — just like mine. And, I'll always know when they break curfew.

But, I digress. If you surf the web today you will

find a lot of people out there who think that the majority of us are already Borgs. These people suggest that the World Wide Web works as a sort of neural net, and e-mail represents the direct line of communication.

Whether true or not, it is destroying face-to-face human interaction. Already, we have adapted to understanding that e-mail cannot present sarcasm, wit or any other emotion very well. We move around it, and we use things called emotions. By further connecting our bodies with machines, we can only become further detached from our bodies and our humanness.

While we are not going to become copies of the Terminator anytime soon, science is steadily marching towards that similarity. However, it is impossible to tell exactly what effect this will have on humanity; thus, we must wait and see. So, impress your friends: Be the first Borg on your block.

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READER VOICES

What is one thing your ticket will work for if voted into office as ASUO president and vice president?



"[I will] end the dominance of emotional, teary-eyed optimism in an office which should be reserved for clear thinkers and humble ambitions."

Sal 2000



"I promise I'll fight as hard as I could [for student interests]."

Andrew Oberriter



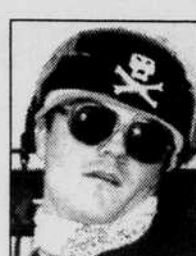
"Our focus is to make [the ASUO] for every single student."

Bill Miner



"We would like to implement a tram system to transport students along the bike paths and across the river."

Brandon Lee Smith



"We'd go for the jugular. That library is going to [stay] open until 12."

Brad Smith



"We want a Campus Watch program. Then hopefully crime on campus will go down."

Ryan Ositis

Letters policy

The Oregon Daily Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be typed, double spaced and include the author's name, signature, and phone number. The identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted. Submissions signed by more than three people must include at least one and no more than three names designated to represent the group.

Letters must be limited to 250 words or less. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, clarity, grammar and style.