# Module 9: Autonomy and the ethics of behavioral change

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Understanding Society

# This week

- Autonomy and the ethics of behavioural change

- First debating session!

# Debating Sessions

- How was debating skills training?
- The rooms
  - Gert: 0.09
  - Anuj: 1.09
  - Donovan: 3.02

| | A | B | C |
|---|---|---|---|
| Debating session 1 (Gert, 15u35-16u35) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Debating session 2 (Anuj, 15u35-16u35) | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Debating session 3 (Donovan, 15u35u16-35) | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Debating session 4 (Gert, 16u40-17u40) | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Debating session 5 (Anuj, 16u40-17u40) | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| Debating session 6 (Donovan, 16u40-17u40) | 16 | 17 | 18 |

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1) THEY SAY _____.

(2) I SAY _____, BECAUSE _____.

(3) ONE MIGHT OBJECT THAT _____.

(4) I REPLY THAT _____.

**Student details**

| Name(s) presenter | Group | Date |
|---|---|---|
| **Criteria** | **Assessment** (NS / S / G/E) | **Additional comments** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Organization and Clarity:** Viewpoints and responses are outlined both clearly and orderly. | | |
| **2. Use of Arguments:** Reasons are given to support viewpoint in a persuasive way. | | |
| **3. Use of Examples and Facts:** Examples and facts are given to support reasons, with references | | |
| **4. Use of Rebuttal:** Arguments made by others are responded to and dealt with effectively. | | |
| **5. Presentation Style:** Tone of voice, the right jargon, and level of enthusiasm are convincing to audience. | | |

1 to 4 will be assessed on group level, based on the slides/presentation of the argument and the actual debate. 5 will be assessed individually. It is therefore important that all members do one presentation. In 4 member-groups two out of three presentations need to be duo-presentations: an extra tab will be added by the lecturer to assess both presenters individually.
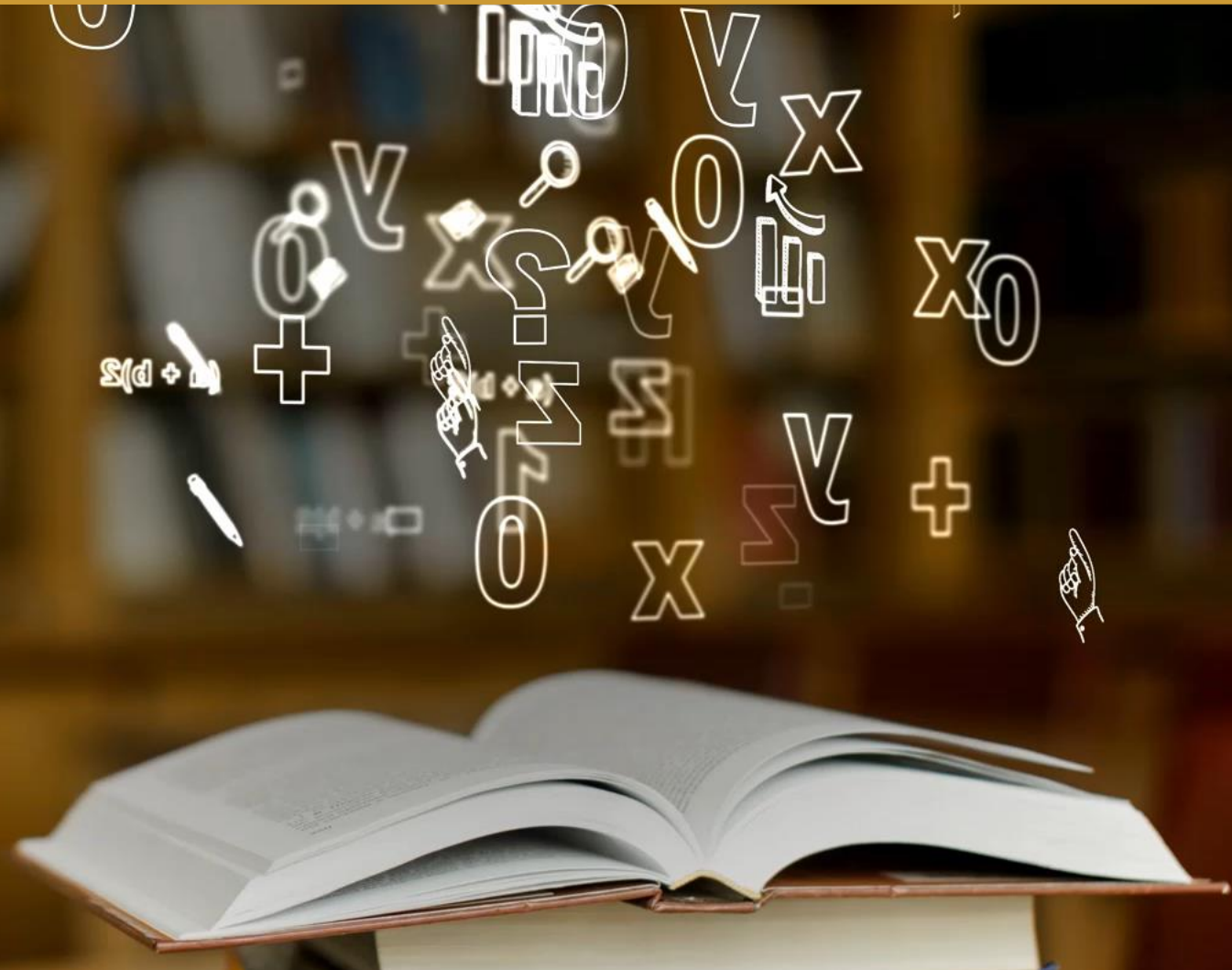
NS: <6/10

S: 6-7/10

G: 7-8.5/10

E: >8.5/10

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# Questions?

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# What makes actions ethically significant?

- Actions that make a difference to chance of having a good life
  - Cf. Riding on the right side of the road.
- Human choice
  - Cf. Earthquake
  - But: what about extreme weather due to climate change?
- More than merely good intention
  - Cf. The 'like' button on social media

Normative ethics

Virtue Ethics

Utilitarianism

Kantian Ethics

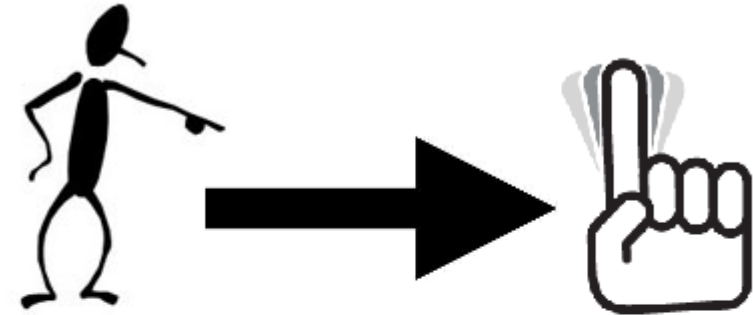Descriptive ethics

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# Normative and descriptive ethics

- ## Normative ethics
  - "How aught the algorithm be arranged for a good society?"

- ## Descriptive ethics
  - "How are algorithmic arrangements generating ideas of goodness, transgression, and society ought to be?"
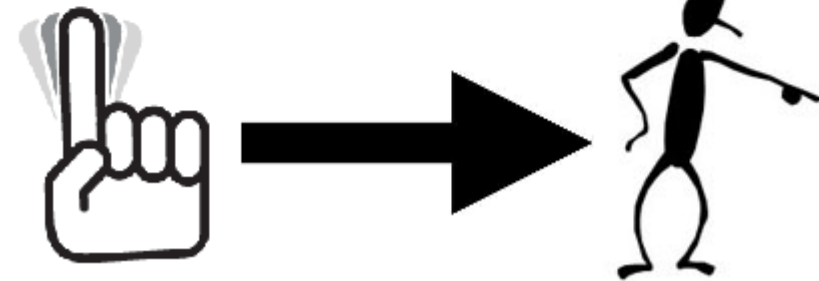
The Naturalistic Fallacy:

"is" implies "ought"

The Moralistic Fallacy:

"ought" implies "is"

Louise Amoore

Cloud Ethics

Algorithms
and the Attributes
of Ourselves
and Others

LOUISE AMOORE

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- "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." (universality principle)

- "So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means." (reciprocity principle)

- ["every rational being must so act as if he were through his maxim always a lawmaking member in the universal kingdom of ends." (Autonomy)]
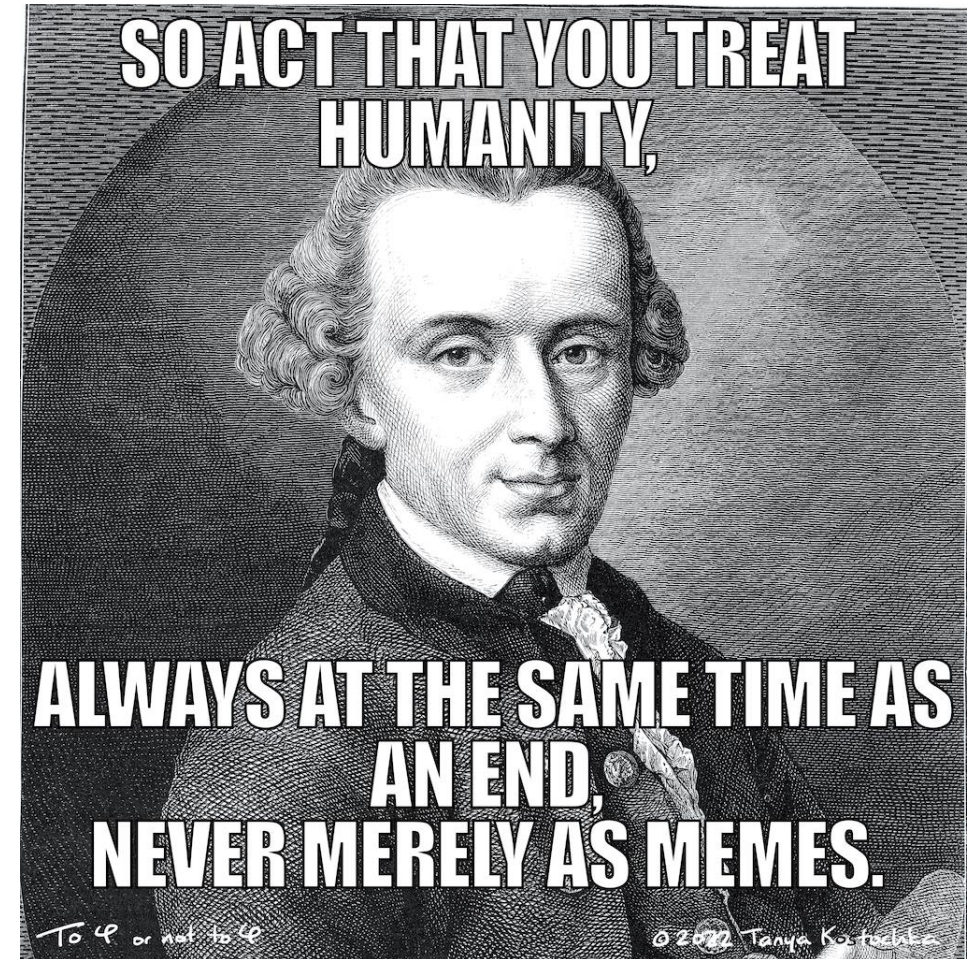


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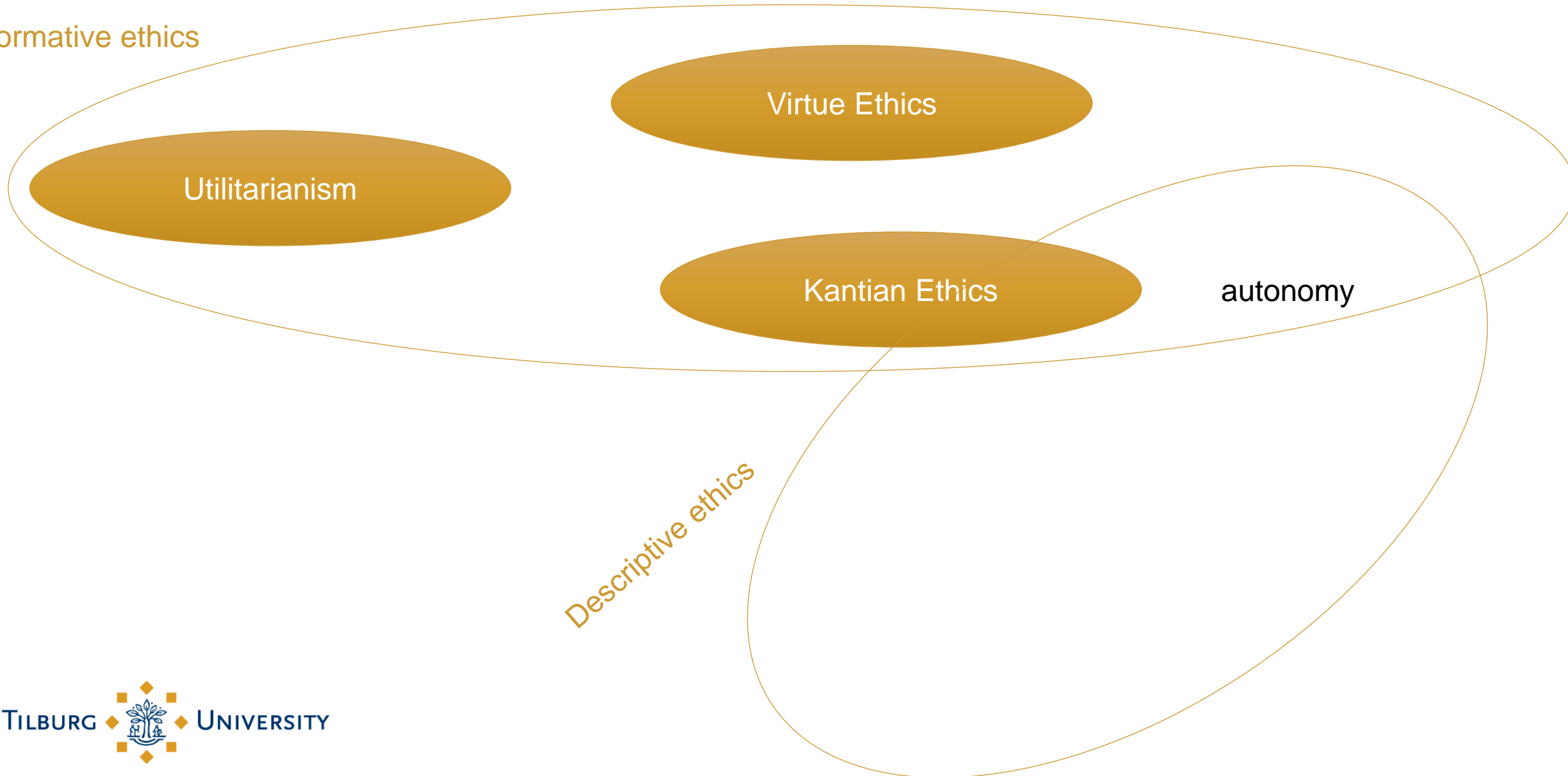- 'Autonomy is at root self-government'
  - Coercion or deceit
  - Adaptive preferences
- 'Under what conditions are people and their choices, preferences, and values properly understood as autonomous?
  - Autonomy of preferences and choice
  - Autonomy of persons

- Global vs. Local autonomy
- Capacity, exercise, autonomy as an ideal

# Algorithms and autonomy (2021)

- COMPAS
  - Risk assessment tool
  - Pretrial recidivism, general recidivism, violent recidivism
- TVAAS
  - Teacher evaluation (VAM)
  - School-wide Composite Scoring
- EVAAS
  - 'no meaningful way for teachers to ensure that their invididual scores were calculated correctly.'
  - 'each teacher's individual score is dependent on all other teachers' scores.'

THE ETHICS OF AUTOMATED DECISION SYSTEMS

ALAN RUBEL, CLINTON CASTRO AND ADAM PHAM
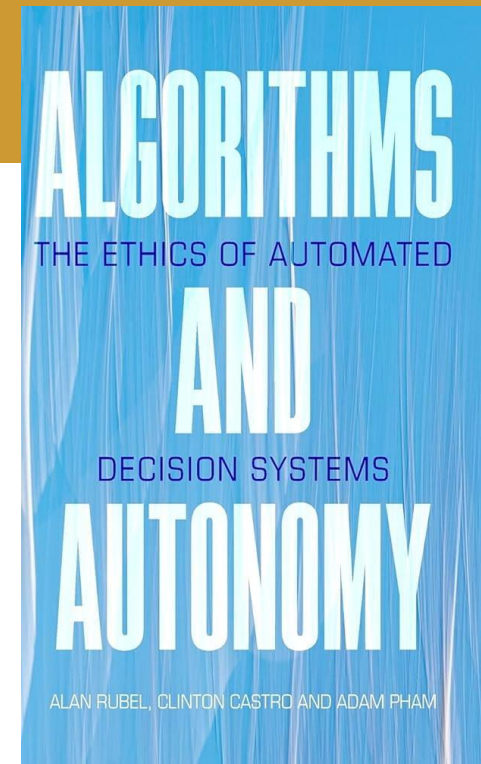
'[I]t is not straightforward to pin down wheterе the teachers were wronged (and, if so, why). It is certainly true that some teachers were harmed in each case, but that is not enough to conclude that they were wronged.'

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# Trouble with autonomy in behavioral insurance (Tanninen et al 2022)

- 'Instead of regarding "autonomy" as something universal and thus immutable, we suggest an alternative approach in which autonomous conduct "varies conceptually and materially over time" and is shaped by the prevalent "cultural equipment" with which it is performed (du Gay, 2005, pp. 395–396). Consequently, the idea of autonomy also provides an invaluable lens to examine how people situate themselves in the emerging socio-technological landscape through their personal experiences.'

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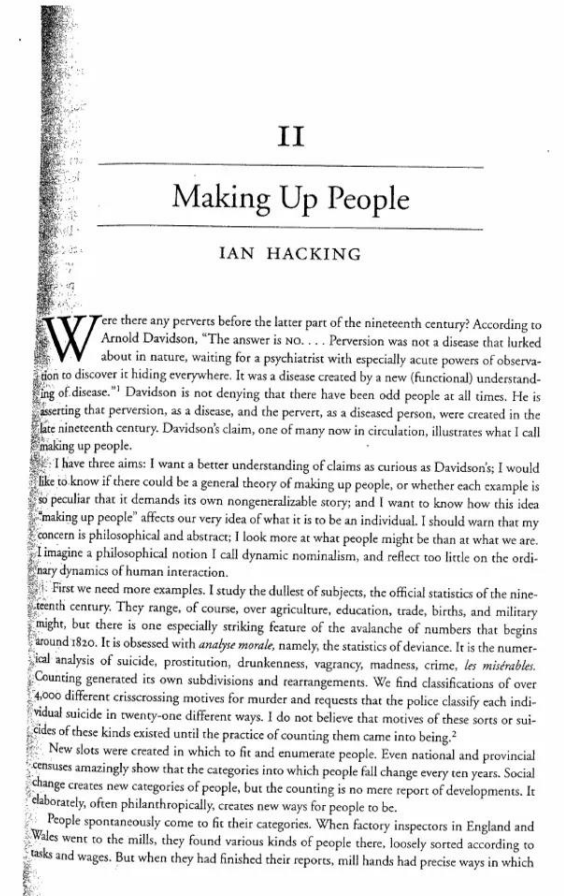
# Trouble with autonomy (2)

- 'we seek to understand how socio-technical change "creates new ways for people to be", in Ian Hacking's words (1986, p. 161)'

- How are new technologies impacting our lives?

- How do people experience the impact of technology on their autonomy?



**II**

**Making Up People**

IAN HACKING

Were there any perverts before the latter part of the nineteenth century? According to Arnold Davidson, "The answer is NO. . . . Perversion was not a disease that lurked about in nature, waiting for a psychiatrist with especially acute powers of observation to discover it hiding everywhere. It was a disease created by a new (functional) understanding of disease."¹ Davidson is not denying that there have been odd people at all times. He is asserting that perversion, as a disease, and the pervert, as a diseased person, were created in the late nineteenth century. Davidson's claim, one of many now in circulation, illustrates what I call making up people.

I have three aims: I want a better understanding of claims as curious as Davidson's; I would like to know if there could be a general theory of making up people, or whether each example is so peculiar that it demands its own nongeneralizable story; and I want to know how this idea "making up people" affects our very idea of what it is to be an individual. I should warn that my concern is philosophical and abstract; I look more at what people might be than at what we are. I imagine a philosophical notion I call dynamic nominalism, and reflect too little on the ordinary dynamics of human interaction.

First we need more examples. I study the dullest of subjects, the official statistics of the nineteenth century. They range, of course, over agriculture, education, trade, births, and military might, but there is one especially striking feature of the avalanche of numbers that begins around 1820. It is obsessed with *analyse morale*, namely, the statistics of deviance. It is the numerical analysis of suicide, prostitution, drunkenness, vagrancy, madness, crime, *les misérables*. Counting generated its own subdivisions and rearrangements. We find classifications of over 4,000 different crisscrossing motives for murder and requests that the police classify each individual suicide in twenty-one different ways. I do not believe that motives of these sorts or suicides of these kinds existed until the practice of counting them came into being.²

New slots were created in which to fit and enumerate people. Even national and provincial censuses amazingly show that the categories into which people fall change every ten years. Social change creates new categories of people, but the counting is no mere report of developments. It elaborately, often philanthropically, creates new ways for people to be.

People spontaneously come to fit their categories. When factory inspectors in England and Wales went to the mills, they found various kinds of people there, loosely sorted according to tasks and wages. But when they had finished their reports, mill hands had precise ways in which

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# Behavioral insurance: what is the promise of digital data?

Fine-tune risk management

Marketing tool

Behavioral change (towards healthier, less risky, behaviors)

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# Experiences of clients

- The importance of choice
- The desire to be controlled

- Nudging
  - Responsibility without autonomy
- Inaccuracies/sticky technology

- How is this affecting (experiences of) technology/autonomy/…?
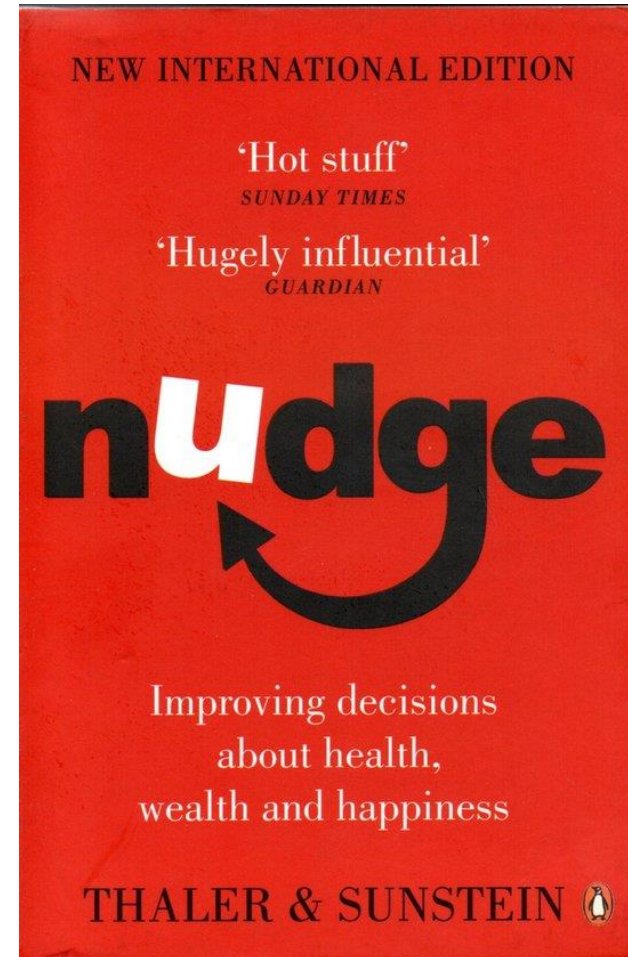
# And say the AI responded?

- Responsibility, agency, accountability… and autonomy

- Case study of CyberKnife
  - Ethnographic observations
  - Autonomy in AI/human relations

**And say the AI responded?
Dancing around 'autonomy' in
AI/human encounters**

Emma Dahlin

**Abstract**
The article explores technology-human relations in a time of artificial intelligence (AI) and in the context of long-standing problems in social theory about agency, nonhumans, and autonomy. Most theorizations of AI are grounded in dualistic thinking and traditional views of technology, oversimplifying real-world settings. This article works to unfold modes of existence at play in AI/human relations. Materials from ethnographic fieldwork are used to highlight the significance of autonomy in AI/human relations. The analysis suggests that the idea of autonomy is a double-edged sword, showing that humans not only coordinate their perception of autonomy but also switch between registers by sometimes ascribing certain autonomous features to the AI system and in other situations denying the system such features. As a result, AI/human relations prove to be not so much determined by any ostensive delegation of tasks as by the way in which AI and humans engage with each other in practice. The article suggests a theory of relationality that redirects focus away from questions of agency towards questions of what it means to be in relations.
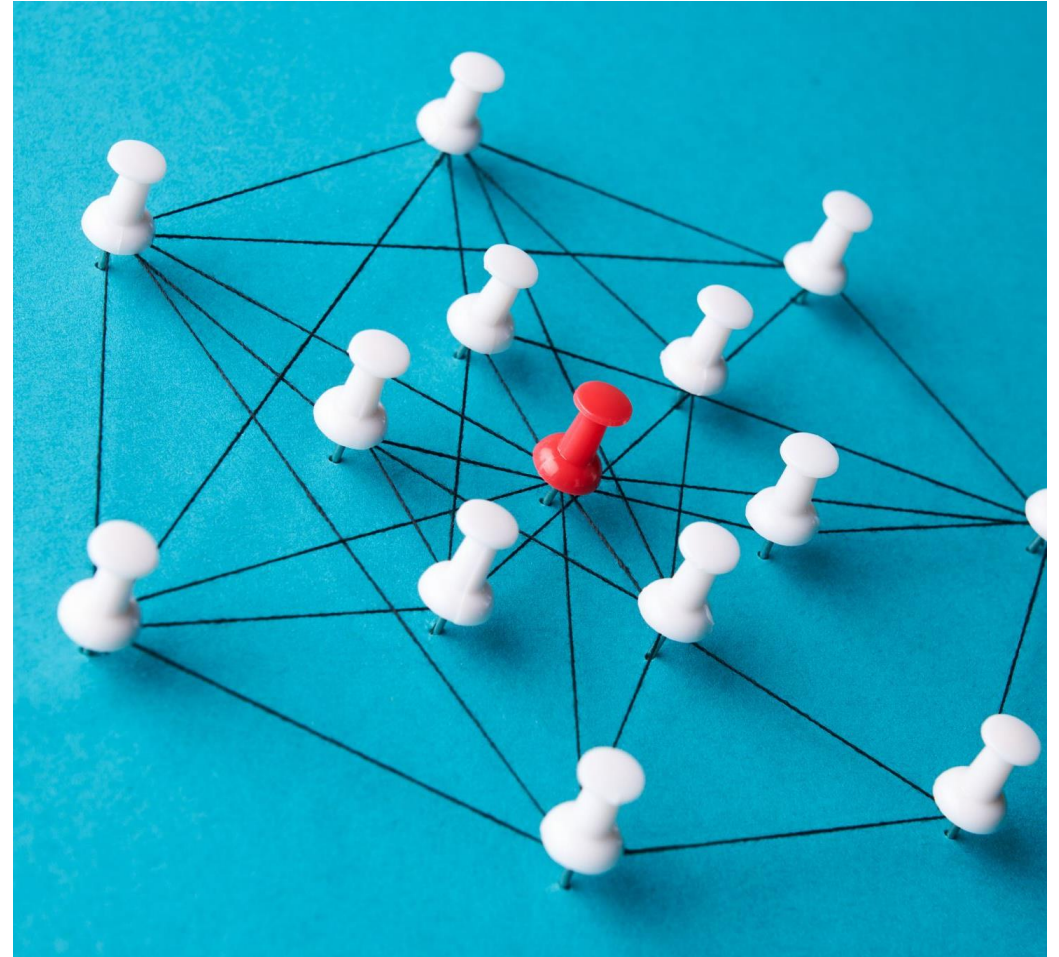
**Keywords**
artificial intelligence, autonomy, nonhumans, agency, AI/human relations

It's supposed to be automatic, but actually you have to push this button.

(Brunner, 1969)

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- Where does the AI start? Where does human agency stop?

- 'No entity is autonomous, or self-making. Entagled life depends on connections.'



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# CyberKnife (1)

- 'The CyberKnife system is a robotic radiosurgery device that plans and carries out radiation treatment to kill cancer cells and shrink tumours, and for treating other conditions where radiation therapy is indicated. What differentiates the CyberKnife system from conventional radiation therapy is that it delivers radiation to the target in small doses from a multitude of different positions.'

- 'Even though its name might indicate that there is cutting involved, the CyberKnife system does not involve any knives. The treatment that the system carries out is often described as radiosurgery. The term 'surgery' here refers to the precision of the delivery of radiation beams rather than excision with a knife.'

  - Treatment planning

  - Treatment delivery



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# Who is acting (autonomously)?

- "It was a human error. The robot never makes mistakes." (p.10)
- The humans continuously switch between registers
- Unclear who is responsible for which action.
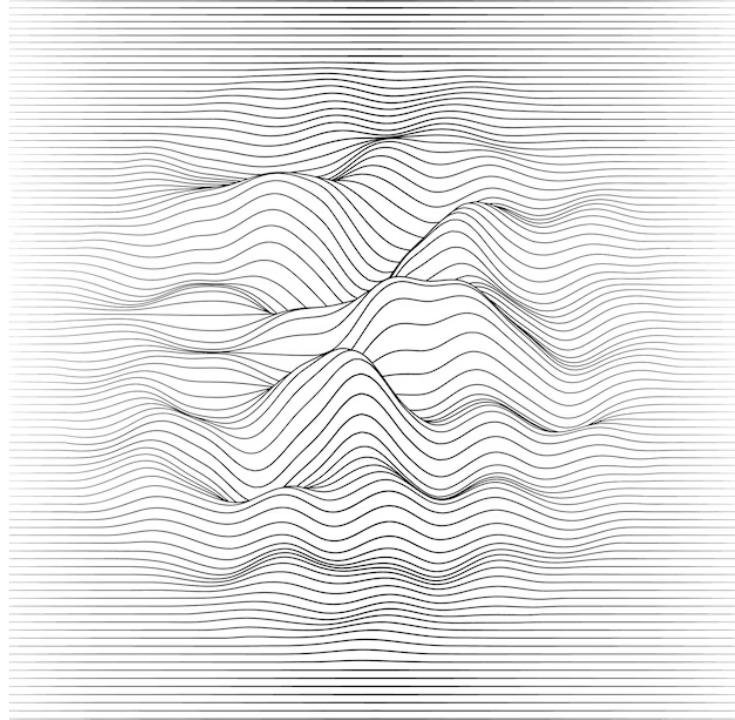
# Next week:

- Trust and trustworthiness in a data-driven context (Guest lecture by prof.dr. Esther Keymolen)
- Second debating session



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# Questions on Module 9?

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