

Henry Jacobs

CS 380 – Assignment 4

The Ethical Implications of AI in Modern Society

The articles from “The Ethics of AI category” highlighted both the positive and negative ethics that arise from modern instantiations of AI. Much of the positivity in these articles revolved around AI’s ability to bring widespread efficiency to preexisting systems (such as traffic), and how this increased efficiency can help lead to improvements in safety/reliability and even reductions in carbon emissions. The positive side of these articles stressed the need for designers of AI systems to be cognizant of the carbon cost that comes along with computationally intensive ML models and offered tips on how one can greatly reduce the carbon footprint of their system. The negative ethical side of these articles revolved around human susceptibility to accepting artificially generated false information and inherent biases in AI systems that rely on historical data to be trained. The primary concern with the latter is that AI systems which are trained with biased data will be fated to perpetuate these biases into the future as it relies on this data to continually make informed decisions.

I believe the largest societal impacts of AI, as it relates to this category, to be the use of AI to present information in a way that is biased and manipulates how users perceive the content they consume without the users being fully aware of the processes at play. The most common examples that come to mind are the algorithms that control media feeds on platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter. Much of what you see is dictated by complex algorithms that monitor your viewing behavior and seek to maximize some goal such as time spent on the application or engagement with content (liking/commenting on posts, sending content to friends, etc.). The danger that comes along with these algorithms is that they can be highly successful at achieving their goals by presenting only a substratum of possible information as it relates to a specific category. For instance, if you’re a 22-year-old user on Instagram and the algorithm recognizes you spend a lot of time looking at people your age, it might only stream content to your feed of individuals who are highly successful and appear to be living very good lives. If all you see is this substratum of people your age, you may begin to accept this as what’s normal (since again, you never are presented with contradictory evidence). Accepting these ideas as true can obviously have very negative implications as you might begin to wonder why you’re not any of these things.

The article that I found describes how social media feeds act as feedback loops, and how these loops can often exploit weaknesses in the human psyche.

<https://www.2civility.org/avoid-feedback-loop-social-media/>

Title: *Can We Avoid the Feedback Loop of Social Media?*

Author: Jayne Reardon

Date Published: 12/14/17

Link to Blog Post

https://learn.dcollege.net/webapps/discussionboard/do/message?action=list_messages&course_id=311712_1&nav=discussion_board_entry&conf_id=567074_1&forum_id=949067_1&message_id=15724336_1