Essay #2: Screamers & Intelligence

Analysis of Weekly media:

The movies screamers to me is an actual representation of how society could go if artificial intelligence got out of hand. In the movie, we see many different artificial agents that are acting on their own will and finding the hideouts of the group. The reptile screamer for example managed to go undetected from the group; Joseph is shocked when he learns this, and I believe this connects to my personal belief of how society can get to a point of no return. We build these machines that are capable of doing extraordinary things, not realizing the intelligence we give them can in turn backfire on us. This is even further proven when David the kid actually turns out to be a screamer. Not only did the group take him in, they had no idea that he was a screamer all along. I believe this is because technology and the screamer-design were so advanced; at that point it was too hard to tell the difference between humans and screamers. They also were shocked to find that they as a group had encountered 2 versions of these screamers (3 in all) but they had not come into contact with the 2nd version yet.

Just like in real-life outside of this movie, we have technology that we continuously upgrade and enhance for our convenience. Eventually, I feel the technology will become less reliant on humans for updates; the agent can begin to update itself and even more alarming: create other agents without human help. Another thing I believe that will happen in future as well is the possibility of a Sirius 6b. the year in the film is way after our current year; with at least 50 years between our time and the time of the film. By the year 2070, I believe humans will have found a way to thrive off of another planet with some form of agents on the planet like in screamers. Although screamers is a sci-fi movie, I believe there are certain principles in it that we as humans need to understand for our real world. One being just because we have created something very smart, does not mean that it will be very obedient. Another principle being to not always put too much faith into technology. As the creators showed in the film, the screamer agents were metallic-screeching robots of terror and this could be our situation in the distant future. Amazon prime uses drones and certain robots for their deliveries in Washington. If these agents have the capacity to deliver designated items to correct addresses, then the idea of them turning on their creators is not a far-fetched one to me. The question I think we should ask ourselves is how much intelligence do we really want our agents to have that carry out very important tasks for us? More intelligence means that this technology can perform better but it also means that it can think for itself. We as humans need to ask ourselves “just how intelligent do agents need to be to handle the task”? Then we should ask: “are we adding additional intelligence because it is necessary, or we want to expand and build”?

Analysis of weekly reading:

This week’s reading touches up something that humans all do and that is classify. Classification helps in our everyday life as well as our software life. When we see someone we do not know, but observe their outfit, how they walk, and how they talk, we immediately put them into a mental box in our head. The same is said in our world of code. One of the things we as programmers want to be is meticulous when naming variables and functions inside of a program. Without proper naming convention then uncertainty and error come in. Another interesting concept within this week’s reading is the concept of our agents to have a mind.   
The comparison of mind/body with software /hardware is a good one because the software is the brain. Without any instructions, the body is useless as it has no direction in which to move. I feel the connection with religion’s principle of having rules that are simple yet test the faith of those who believe. If we used this same principle with A.I. to me, it goes hand in hand. I think that we want our intelligent agents to only be given simple rules, not complex ones. Of course, not everything is black and white. Some instructions will be of more length, some error handling routines might take up more space than desired, but for the instructions that drive the A.I. into completing its task, I believe these instructions should be simple and concise.

I feel that as stated in this week’s weekly reading, humans always want to classify things we come across in life and maximize anything we have created to the best of our ability. I believe this is necessary because without this drive to want to innovate our current technology then we would not have gotten as far as a society. The one potential drawback to our nature however could be the faith we put into our creations. Since we want them to act and behave a certain way then we have to make a sacrifice as creators and give the technology that extra push. I feel screamers showed us how things can go for a society when humans put too much faith in artificial intelligence.

We may not face the extreme that the actors in the movie faced but I can see something to a lesser effect in everyday life. An example again would be the amazon drones. I would not be surprised if in the future some of the robots began setting their own designated courses; going different routes and potentially causing harm to civilians or drivers on the street. But since we as a society wish to continue advancing, I feel this is a drawback that we have to accept. It is a double-edged sword where we want our agents to be much more smart than us but yet also be obedient to us. If we as humans can find the medium for intelligence and obedience then I believe we have found the sweet spot for our involvement with A.I. I feel it is necessary to draw conclusions from the sci-fi movies we see that do not seem to far from our reality. Again, I do not feel that we will have to worry about agents trying to kill us like in the film, but I can however picture agents disobeying orders and causing trouble as a result.