Discussion-5 small contributions can complete significant projects

Discussion Topic:

Part 1:
Sunstein (2014) suggested that many people making small contributions can complete significant projects. There are several stories of an idea taken on by a small group of people and transformed into a very significant development (Bill Gates and Microsoft come to mind). Describe such an action and how this action affected technology and the world in a positive manner. Were there any downsides to the results?
Part 2:
Contributing to a project is an important part of working in a team environment. Consider a scenario where you're interviewing for a position and are asked to discuss your previous contributions to a team in an ethical context. How can you best convey your skills in working with a team while maintaining your ethical boundaries? Research appropriate interview styles and identify what interview style will work to convey your abilities in this area.

My Post:

Hello Class,

Part-1
Contributions have been an integral part of the computer science field. Open-source projects come to mind. For example, Linux is an operating system that is completely open source. It was created, in 1991, by Linus Torvalds, a Finnish student who set out to create a free operating system kernel (Cornell University, n.d.). Linux provided a free and open-source alternative to operating systems like Windows. Today it is also the backbone of the internet, powering the majority of web servers. This open-source culture provided stable, secure, and flexible operating systems ideal for the server and data center powering AI systems. The contributions over the years by many individuals have had a significant impact on the development and innovation of Linux. These contributions were and still are small and incremental improvements made by individuals. Contributions such as implementing patches, bug fixes, and new features; testing the system and reporting bugs; writing and improving documentation; and providing through a vibrant online community. The downsides of Linux and its open-source approach are very few. However, they can be listed as follows, targets only a specific community (IT and Software developer) not the public, the learning curve can be challenging, software compatibility is low, and the operating system can come in many flavors called distributions (e.g., Ubuntu, Fedora, Debian) making the overall Linux system complex and difficult to understand.

Part-2
I have not contributed yet to a project, if given the opportunity, I would like to contribute to the implementation of an open-source agentic AI project. I think in that kind of context, when interviewing for a development position contributing to the project's codebase, I will showcase my previous projects, my ability to work with a team, and my commitment to ethical principles. I will use the STAR approach. STAR stands for:

- **Situation:** Set the scene and give the necessary details of your example.
- **Task:** Describe what your responsibility was in that situation.
- **Action:** Explain exactly what steps you took to address it.
- **Result:** Share what outcomes your actions achieved

(Boogaard, 2024, p1)

Additionally, I will highlight the computer science ethical principles, connect them to agentic AI, and my adherence to them. Principles such as transparency, accountability, bias mitigation, safety/security, AI human oversight, and of course my commitment to open source for this project.

-Alex

References:

Boogaard, K. (2024, May 14). *How to use the STAR method to ace your next job interview*. The Muse. https://www.themuse.com/advice/star-interview-method

Cornell University (n.d.*). Cornell virtual workshop*. Cornell University. https://cvw.cac.cornell.edu/linux/intro/history