

Writing Assignment

PHI 40, Spring 2027 (Eliot)

In response to the following, write two paragraphs, with each paragraph containing at least 200 words.

Topic

First paragraph: Emrys Westacott suggests that machines can be fairer than people. But Kevin Macnish argues that AI-automated CCTV surveillance that involves humans in specific ways improves fairness, in comparison with both human and fully-automated-AI surveillance. How, according to Macnish, can partially AI-automated surveillance, involving a human observer, be fairer than fully-automated surveillance? What does he claim in support of that? In explaining that support, quote and cite one sentence or clause from Macnish that supports that he indeed claims what you say he claims about fairness.

Second paragraph: Pointing to a specific claim that Macnish makes in support of his conclusion, offer a reason or reason to doubt that claim, such that partly-AI-automated surveillance would not be the fairest option. Use that doubt to make a brief case that either (a) fully-automated or (b) fully-human CCTV surveillance (choose one of those) would actually be fairer than partly-automated surveillance. In explaining your case, quote and cite one sentence or clause from Macnish that supports that he indeed claims what you say he claims.

Style

Write as though you are addressing someone who is not in the class and does not have a background in philosophy. Do your best to explain the ideas concisely and precisely. Use a brief, illustrative example if that might help explain an idea.

Make sure to present arguments clearly, showing (1) what is serving as a premise or supporting reason, (2) what is the conclusion, and (3) how reasoning connects them. Also remember that a criticism of an argument cannot simply describe a different perspective or offer support for a different conclusion; instead, it must argue that there is a problem with the target argument. The two main kinds of problems with arguments we have discussed in class are problems with logic or problems with the truth of premises.

A few additional remarks about style are in the “Writing Philosophy” handout on Canvas.

Submission

Follow the link to this assignment, #0, under “Assignments” on the course Canvas site. Upload your writing assignment to Gradescope by pasting your paragraphs into the text box on the linked page. While it is possible to type your answers directly into that text box, that is very risky, because a browser crash or myriad other mishaps could delete your work. I recommend writing in a separate text editor or word processor.