

## CS/PHIL 201 Discussion Prompt Response

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Response to Prompt for Module # 8 on topic War

**Even though I have provided limited information about the scenario, here is what we know. Lethal autonomous weapons misidentified an innocent civilian and killed her during a routine military mission. Having only that information, what principles could you use to begin to evaluate the ethical permissibility of this act (hint—look to just war principles)? Do you think it is overall permissible for strongly autonomous AI to make decisions of life and death?**

There are a few principles that could be used to evaluate the ethical permissibility of the act that occurred. Just cause, proportionality, and right intention could be used to investigate whether the innocent death is justifiable and forgivable.

I do not think that it is permissible to give a strongly autonomous AI to make life and death decisions. Although the AI would, presumably, equal to a human in the sense of intelligence, I do not think that the AI is conscious. Thus, it would not have an awareness of others as beings in of themselves. This being said, how would the AI be able to explain why it took the actions that it did. A human is able to go through their thought process and understanding while the AI would most likely just be able to state the facts and possibly provide evidence.

Because of this lack of understanding and explanation, I do not think it would be permissible to allow the strongly autonomous AI to make these life and death decisions on their own.

**More information is uncovered and it turns out the autonomous weapons made an error. The company that developed them is saying they hold no responsibility because the machines are sufficiently autonomous. The military has made plans to decommission the “troops” involved, so they don’t repeat this same mistake. Like the tech developers, they deny major responsibility as the machines are strongly autonomous. Who do we hold accountable? What moral tools do we have in our toolkit to do so? If no one can be held accountable, should these weapons of war be employed?**

I would hold the military accountable for the machine that took away an innocent life. The military is the legitimate authority of the autonomous weapons and should then be held accountable. Thus it is their responsibility to determine whether keeping the weapons remains with a reasonable prospect of success and whether the ends are proportional to its means.

If no one can be held accountable for the events that occurred I do not think these weapons of war can be employed. Vice versa, if there is no legitimate authority over an event, then in the case of autonomous machines, no one can be held accountable. Someone should always be held accountable and be the legitimate authority of decision.