THE SURVIVAL AND ETHICS OF HUMANITY AS A HIVE MIND

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Lakshya (2017EEB1149)

Sibee Sanchay (2017EEB1170)

Yajurmani Sharma (2017EEB1180)

Bijoy H. Boruah

Professional Ethics HS104

In the history of mankind, we have always regarded *homo sapiens as* the most cognitively able and intelligent species known to exist (and it has almost always played in our favor). However, it has not always been so. A few million years ago, there was immense evolutional pressure of survival on our ancestors which led our development to be focused upon the cognitive abilities to an extent never seen before in any species that we know of. Over thousands of years, we've developed so deeply into this highly intellectual species that currently we are at the brink of a new era, the era of artificial intelligence. Now, we can only speculate what this technology might evolve into in the coming decades but there is a high chance of being dethroned from the top of the *intelligence spectrum* as a species. The creation of an AI is inevitable. This can become evident from the fact that humans have not been the best at avoiding development of technologies that have the potential of harm. As history shows it, the most intelligent of the species has the power to alter the lives of other species that may not be as intelligent. The scenario is that we will be forced again by the pressure of evolution to develop so as to exist in the only way we have ever known to exist, at the top of the *intelligence spectrum*. The only caveat is that this time around, we won't have millions of years to develop, rather we would only have a few decades. Louis Rosenberg, the CEO of Unanimous AI proposes an idea based on biomimicry.

The Hive Mind

Each human has billions of neurons forming trillions of connections that grant us the cognitive ability to do remarkable things such as coming up with ideas and imagining stuff that may not even exist. Looking at other less intelligent species and how they have been able to cope with this evolutional pressure, we observe the development of a *swarm intelligence* or a *hive mind.* Smaller fish and insects like bees have been able to solve mind numbingly complex problems despite having brains smaller than a grain of sand and thousands of times lesser number of neurons than us humans. The way they do this is that they arrive at an optimal solution based on the combined knowledge of the swarm. According to trials done by Rosenberg to mimic this natural phenomena, they have been able to take enthusiast (not experts) in a particular field and have been successful in predicting solutions to problems so complex that it was traditionally left to chance to arrive at any optimal solution. The proposal is that, we as humans have a much more complex and higher level cognitive ability as an individual and if we further evolve to a level of super intelligent species by forming a hive mind using our current technology to communicate between the entire human populace, we would be able to solve problems that we might not even be able to perceive as an individual.

The ethical dilemma in this approach is *can we trust the entirety of a species to make decisions* when we almost daily witness a "swarm" of educated people on social media platforms such as twitter forming opinions and comments on topics that they don't have the proper understanding of, leading to much more severe actions such as public defamation of people just because the "hive" decided so.

Since we are talking about an ethical field concerning AI, it would be helpful to get an insight about what ethics concerning the usage of AI would be like in the near future.

The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

There is a lot of commotion regarding how humans will fare in an AI endowed world in the near future, they are mistaken. AI is already here and it's here to stay. The only reason that AI has not yet become a central part of our lives is because of its specificity. Various AIs have been developed to be groundbreaking in their field, but that is it. The latest world class chess AI Google's *Deepmind AlphaZero* is intelligent, but only at chess. It doesn't have the ability to learn how to make a coffee or how to use a toaster. Such AIs are called *Domain-Specific AI.* The difference between hardcoded algorithms and AI is that trained people can track back the result of a hardcoded algorithm to find what caused it. It is almost impossible to do so in an AI system. This characteristic of a system is called "Transparency". It is not only a desired feature in an AI, it is essential because the results that it produces should be predictable to those whom it affects. Let's take an example of a Judicial AI. Predictability in a judicial system is of utmost importance because that is the basis of how contracts are made. The job of the judiciary system is not to create an optimized society, but to create a predictable society in which people can optimize their lives. There is also a lack of responsibility as if things go south, one wouldn't know whom to blame-the programmers-the user or someone else.

A totally different set of issues arise if we compare an AI's existence to, let's say, our own. A human person can be said to have a *moral status*. A moral status defines how much of the subject's interest we consider before taking action on that subject. A human has a high moral status, this means that you would have certain moral constraints if you try to deal with him, give heed to his wellbeing, not murder him or steal from him. A chicken, however, would have a much lower moral status, its whole existence would serve the purpose of feeding humans. How would one deal with the moral status of an AI? For that we would have to take into consideration the weakly defined guidelines that govern the moral status of an object.

Sentience: the capacity for phenomenal experience or qualia, such as the capacity to feel pain and suffer.

Sapience: a set of capacities associated with higher intelligence, such as self- awareness and being a reason-responsive agent.

Any sentient AI could not be treated as an inanimate object. It would have to be treated more like an animal. An AI having sapience would have to be treated much more like humans because that is the characteristic that defines us humans as a particular species. These points however wouldn't even come close to painting a complete picture of the study of moral status as it assumes that all intelligence, including AI, would be similar to humans (biological life in general), which can be a gross assumption and would require a much deeper study.

References:

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