

Homework 1

Kevin Boudreaux

KCB180002

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Bill Joy was the Chief Scientist at Sun Microsystems at the time of the paper being written. He claimed he is more of a computer architect than a scientist. He also wrote the text editor vi which was widely used (Why the future doesn't need us, Page 5). He also participated in the creation of Java and Jini.

Ray Kurzweil was the inventor of the first reading machine for the blind. Joy learned that Ray believed humans will fuse with robots in the near future (Why the future doesn't need us, page 1).

Joy said he "always let sentient robots were in the realm of science fiction" (Why the future doesn't need us, page 1) but he was shocked when someone he respected was giving a strong argument that it would be a near-term possibility.

Joy's opinion is that humility is needed when developing technology because we need to think about how this technology can be used. I agree with this because if we keep creating without thinking about how it will be used, we could accidentally create something that will ruin countless lives. When creating something new we need to look at how this technology can be used, is it a weapon that can only be used to cause harm? Or is it a tool that can only bring good? Most technology is somewhere in between these two extremes.

Knowledge can lead to a better life for the masses but can also lead to the destruction of life as we know it. When comparing it to Oppenheimer, Joy says Oppenheimer only started developing the nuclear bomb because he perceived a grave threat to Western civilization from the Third Reich. Because of this Oppenheimer led the development of the nuclear bomb in America to counteract this threat (Why the future doesn't need us, page 10).

Joy's main thesis is developing technologies provide a much greater danger to the human population than any technology before has presented. Joy is right and wrong in this regard. Each new technology has the possibility to destroy humanity, as well as save it. Joy mentioned Oppenheimer in his paper and how he led the development of nuclear weapons. There is a famous quote of Oppenheimer that is as he watched the first detonation of a nuclear bomb he said, "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds". This can be seen as Oppenheimer realizing what he has released into the world, a weapon so strong it can level entire cities, destroy entire populations in the blink of an eye. But the development of the nuclear bomb was not all bad in terms of humanity, it helped pave the way for nuclear powered reactors. By having funding from the Government, develop of nuclear technologies leaped forward, towards nuclear bombs but also towards stable nuclear reactions. Thanks to this destructive technology we can better understand how nuclear reactions work and benefit as a species from them. In this example good came from a "evil necessity".

An example of an evil use coming from a good technology is the internet. The internet can be used to connect to other people across the world and form friendships to people you would rather never have known of. This is a clear good use of a technology; on the other side the internet can be used for evil in many ways. One way is being able to negatively influence people you don't know; If you tried you could convince someone to hurt themselves intentionally or hurt others because of what you tell them on the internet.

The two examples above show that technology is not a weapon to wield or something to be afraid of; technology is a tool that is used by its creators. Tools are inherently neither good or evil; they only become good or evil when their user uses them to perform acts of good or evil.

When speaking to future generations about why they are facing less economic prosperity than their parents because we decided to curtail the technological development that drives economic growth, we could argue that as a species we are not yet socially and morally ready to hold this burden of continual technological development. Meaning that as a species we are not mature enough to come to a rational decision and not mature enough to safely handle the technical development.