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Ethical Issues in Artificial Intelligence

Certainly, artificial intelligence is transforming people’s lives for the better. Artificial Intelligence, AI, is a branch of computer science, which produces machines that can learn, sense, reason, adapt, and act to the real world, to automate dangerous or tedious tasks and amplify human capabilities (Margulies, 7). From detecting fraud, optimizing logistics, producing weapons, performing research intelligent systems are being utilized in various fields to achieve higher productivity. Yet, computer science experts state the world is yet to tap into the full potential of artificial intelligence. With the advent of further innovations and advancements of Internet of Things(IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI) is expected to transform how the society operates, not only by replacing for routine tasks but also by enhancing and supporting human activities and decision making. Today, from SIRI, self-driving vehicles, IBM’s Watson autonomous weapons, to Google’s search algorithms, artificial intelligence(AI) is progressing rapidly. However, even with the out lined advantages, various ethical dilemmas arise from the integration of artificial intelligent systems to the society. An enthralling debate is ongoing regarding the future of AI and what it will and should mean for humanity. There are fascinating controversies where some of the leading experts in today’s world disagree on ethical claims. While the widespread adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has given rise to numerous benefits, various code of ethics reveal that AI’s impact on the job market and work environment, the emanating wealth imbalance in the society, as well as loss of lives resulting from advancement in weaponry, nullify the perceived gains of this technology.

One are fraught with ethical concerns is the job displacement. AI produces robots that are tasked with performing complicated jobs, thereby displacing a large number of human workers. For example, in 2013, there were an estimated 1.2 million robots is use (West). This figure surged to around 1.5 million in 2014 and is projected to increase to about 2.2 million in 2018 (West). Companies are increasingly using these robots to achieve higher productivity and maximize profits. For instance, China’s Foxconn Technology Group, a firm that supplies Samsung and Apple, outlined its plans to replace 60,000 factory operators with robots, while Ford’s factory in Cologne, Germany places robots right on the floor alongside human workers (West). Besides, making teaching more efficient results in reduced demand for educators. With the advent of Massive Open Online Course, MOOCs, the size of the class is no longer as much of a determinant in quality education, and even at the K-12 level, the implementation of AI result in a decrease in demand for teaching aids and assistants.

Evidently, substituting of human workers with machines causes large scale unemployment. Indeed, this contradicts the second requirement of the “Public” principle in the Software Engineering Code of Ethics and Professional Practice, which professionals to “moderate the interests of the software engineer, the employer, the client, and the users with the public good” (ACM). Unemployment is a socially undesirable phenomenon. Thus, replacing human workers with machines is against the public interest of having decent occupations to cater for the daily needs. Idleness among people can result in the destructive utilization of their creative minds. Today, the world still needs technology professionals to program the computers that continuously automate daily activities. Even very powerful AI applications are still base on software written by programmer, algorithms designed by human beings, and data sets curated and customized by people. Nonetheless, as AI ultimately approaches the singularity level and has the ability program itself, and as it manufactures and designs the robots required to develop its physical computing infrastructure, the role that humans will play in this gritty new setting is uncertain. Unemployed programmers can shift to unlawful activities such as identity theft to make ends meet. By doing so, they will be violating the third requirement of the “Public” principle in the Software Engineering Code of Ethics and Professional Practice. This regulation requires experts only to use applications “if they have a well-founded belief that it is safe, satisfies specifications, passes appropriate tests, and does not diminish the quality of life, diminish privacy or harm the environment” (ACM).

Besides, another ethical concern resulting from the use of artificial intelligent applications is the negative work environment and its impact on remaining workers. When automation is introduced into a company, the workforce is reduced, only leaving a few workers who will be in charge of controlling and maintaining the intelligent system, In his book, David Benatar, a professor of philosophy, states that three things give people meaning in their lives (Benatar, 12). These include meaningful relationships, passionate interests, and meaningful work. According to the professor, meaningful relationships built by interacting with fellow workers is an important element of someone’s identity (Benatar, 13). The author states that in factories where the workforce has been reduced, the surviving staff often experience increased the risk of stress and depression. Turner & Tammy (22) stated that behaviors and attitudes of surviving staff are adversely influence by layoffs, which cause increased workload, stress, less commitment, morale, trust in management, violation of psychological contract, and depression. This results from the lack of personal connections with other human beings. Some machine operators can spend the entire day operating machines and computers, with no one around them to interact with. As a result, they eventually become lonely and depressed. Besides, one of the most common consequences of company downsizing endeavors is job insecurity, as the increased probability of being laid off results in job insecurity.

In addition, artificial intelligence results in inequality which is generated by wealth imbalance. Since today’s economic system is based on compensation for contributing to the economy (hourly wage), unequal distribution of wealth is experienced when artificial intelligence drastically reduces the rate of which organizations depend on the human workforce, as primarily, revenues will only go to a few individuals. Besides, these people will grow to be richer, while the unemployed continue to languish in poverty, ultimately widening the gap between the poor and the rich. After implementing AI systems, company owners receive bigger profit margins, as wages initially spent on staff will be significantly reduced and productivity will be higher due to the automated processes. Indeed, it is unethical to be making more profits, while other members of the society lack basic life necessities. Moreover, this is against the eighth requirement of the “Management” principle in the Software Engineering Code of Ethics and Professional Practice, which requires professionals not to unjustly hinder an employee from taking a position for which that individual is suitably qualified (ACM). By creating a system/robot that can perform the duties of a particular person, the expert will be replacing that individual with a robot, thus preventing them from gaining employment.

In addition, artificial intelligence systems are increasingly being used as tools of mass destruction. Lethal autonomous weapons (LAWs) refer to military robots designed to choose and attack military targets (installations and people) without a human operator intervening. These applications that are designed to kill. When they are accessed by malicious individuals, these weapons can quickly cause mass casualties. Furthermore, an artificial intelligence advancement can result in powerful weapons, which could be used during war among nations, therefore resulting in mass casualties. Besides, to avoid being de-armed by the opponent, these weapons are usually

be designed to be remarkably challenging to turn off, so human beings can understandably lose control of such a condition. Hence, even if die right authorities manage to locale such a weapon, efforts to disarm these devices could prove to be futile. LAWS should be prohibited as they are motivated by deontological and consequentialist rationalizing. On the deontological view, delegating the judgment of targeting a person or group of people, to a machine violates human dignity, and that human beings have the right not to be killed by a machine (Walker. 16). On the other hand, by adopting a deontological approach, one can argue that even when it can be proved that on average and in the aggregate, they will save lives, the main issue remains that it is essentially incorrect to allow autonomous machines make the choice of who is supposed to die and when they should be kill. This is also supported by that fact that use of AI to kill human beings also violates the third requirement of the of the “Public” principle in the Software Engineering Code of Ethics and Professional Practice, which requires experts to only use applications if they have a well-founded belief that it is safe, does not diminish quality of life, diminish privacy, or harm the environment(ACM).

In summary, although the widespread adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) made the world a better place, violation of the various code of ethics nullify the perceived benefits of this technology. Firstly, while intelligent systems result in higher profits in modern organizations, they render many individuals in the society jobless, and the few surviving workers are left lonely and depressed. Besides, AI widens the gap between the rich and the poor, therefore creating a wealth imbalance in the society. Moreover, advancement in weaponry has led to the production of lethal autonomous weapons, which have rampantly increased loss of lives.

Works Cited

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