

Killer Apps and Killer Robots

An Ethical Framework for Answering Questions of Automation

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Abstract—In the following paper, we carry out an examination of two related ethical quandaries concerning the increasing degree [1] of automation in the modern world. First, we consider the ethics of existing systems, exploring the case in which automated systems make choices apparently on their own, and what kind of moral reasoning we face in such situations. We consider the idea that systems may act as moral agents, or as proxy agents [2] for the humans involved in their design and deployment. Secondly, we examine a somewhat more fundamental issue: is it right to automate these tasks in the first place? Rather than trying to achieve answers both general and correct, we will instead lay out a framework which may be put to use in the pursuit of answers for specific questions.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. BACKGROUND

OUTLINE

The main idea of this paper is to connect

Talk about how social issues are intimately connected to automation and industry. That is, we cannot disconnect any innovation from the changes it drives in society, and we seek to give examples of that sort of thing.

compare industrial revolution to automation and such

Talk about how economics, and the concept of the economy of scale, demands ever-increasing levels of efficiency and innovation

(probably connect that to primitive accumulation to connect to the next bit)

Related to that, talk about the need for a concentration of capital. Specifically, discuss how Japan, the Soviet Union, China, and the West achieved it differently, and the costs related to each of those situations.

Talk about the legacy of those approaches, and how they inform our current economic status and sociopolitical climate. Name the winners and losers, and mention that we're going to keep an eye on history when we get to the point of identifying stakeholders.

Probably mention Elizaeth's point, in that there are many current groups who see the path we're on as reflective of certain different parts of history. That is, they each take particular lessons from that history, and the lesson they consider to be most important tells us something about their approach.

III. THE CURRENT SCENARIO

IV. A REVIEW OF PRESENT SOLUTIONS

A. *The Hope of the Singularity*

B. *Bill Joy*

C. *Jason Lanier*

D. *The Amish*

E. *Deep Green Resistance*

Deep Green Resistance is a group primarily identified by their beliefs and behavior with regard to specifically environmental matters, rather than more general opinions about technology. Specifically, DGR subscribes to the notion that industrial civilization poses too great of a threat to life on the planet earth, both human and otherwise, to be allowed to survive. The ultimate goal of DGR is the destruction of industrial civilization and a return to an earlier stage of societal and economic development.

DGR's philosophy draws from the Deep Ecology movement, which holds that an anthropocen-

tric analysis of ecology, defining other forms of life in terms of their utility to humankind, does not do an adequate job of describing the complexity of ecological systems. DGR takes this a step further, in declaring all life to be equal to human life. Starting at the problem of inequality among life, they turn to ideals similar to the political stance of anarcho-primitivism: the idea that human society, industrial capitalism in particular, cannot be reformed into a more beneficial form.

Such a philosophy stems from an agreement with Friedrech Engal’s seminal anthropological work on early civilizations [3], specifically the assertion that early gatherer-hunter societies were unable to produce structural inequality without the ability to acquire surplus wealth. Unlike Engals, modern Marxists, and even their fellow anarchists, DGR and anarcho-primitivists do not believe that a society can ever reach a level of egalitarianism and freedom from oppression that they are comfortable with. Rather, they believes that the only truly equal societies that have ever existed were only able to function without the trappings of civilization. Therefore, they are willing to advocate any means to right the wrongs they see with the world. To them, technology is not evil per se. Rather, technology is another product of a system with which they cannot make peace, and as such, it must fall by the wayside.

Later in our paper, we advance an ethical framework for the analysis of decisions regarding technology and automation. In so doing, we emphasize that we must look to the past when examining possible consequences of an action, basing, wherever we can, our reasoning on historical fact. In this case, we would be remiss if we did not qualify our description of the views of DGR with the caveat that their views ultimately reduce to something chillingly familiar. A return to pre-industrial levels of technology would necessitate either the death of billions, or the restriction of new births to a fraction of their current levels. Without modern medical technology, it becomes a disturbing fact that disabled people will not be able to survive in such a world: this means DGR endorses either genocide or eugenics.

V. A COHERENT ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Identifying Stakeholders

B. General Classes of Stakeholders

C. Defining a Coherent Value System

D. Synthesis

VI. SELF-DRIVING CARS: AN APPLICATION OF OUR FRAMEWORK

VII. CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

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- [2] Deborah G Johnson and Thomas M Powers, “Computers as surrogate agents,” *Information technology and moral philosophy*, pp. 251–269, 2008.
- [3] Friedrich Engels and Tristram Hunt, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Penguin UK, 2010.