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Should There be a Governing Committee to Define and Impose Computer Ethics?

Prelude:

The idea behind standardizing ethical consideration in the field of computer science is nothing new; Robert Martin, a co-founder of the Agile Manifesto, gave an eye-opening lecture on the future of software design[1] where he lays out the example of one logical flaw making it into the production of a jumbo jet that causes an auto pilot to crash a plane in a major densely populated city in the USA. At the end of this example Robert Martin states that it is inevitable that an organization legally mandating the ethical responsibility of computer scientists will arise. How well does this inevitable future match with our notion of infinite possibilities that computers have from the biased technocratic prospective of computer scientists?

Reflection Essay:

"There should be oversight because we don't know where the line is." was how Mark Zuckerberg put it in front of congress with his testimony regarding the Cambridge Analytica breach. This has brought to the forefront the debate on where or not there should be an organization imposing ethical standards like lawyers and engineers. Imposing government legislation could enforce an ethical standard but it will change the nature of the field. This idea of government oversight will destroy the freedom of information which is the heart of the computer science. In addition, it will impose limits to the potential advancement and growth of the information technology field.

The creation of any government oversight, in any form, will change the nature of the computer science field. Currently some of the more famous names of industry leaders are form college dropouts who followed their passion and shaped the world. Imposing an organization such as Quebec's OIQ, Ordre des ingenieurs du Quebec, would break this tradition. In order to have access to the OIQ, one must graduate an affiliated educational institution, sworn an oath to the order, and pay membership dues. Having meet all the requirements who then have the legal right to call yourself an engineer. This is contrary to the freedom to information which is an ideal held by the fact many coders, programmers, and developers (who may in fact do the exact same job as a software engineer) are self-taught and have gained access to the to the field from reading material shared on the internet for everyone. This opportunity comes from the freedom of information which is the spirit in the industry where main of the leading software's are open source.

Forcing all computer scientist to be registered to a group imposing ethical standards would also decrease the growth of technologies. The field has been growing of the last two decades but the demand for new employees far outweighs the supply of experienced workers. Current this gap in

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[1] "Uncle" Bob Martin - "The Future of Programming" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecIWPzGEbFc)

experience is being filled by many graduates having amply of experience because they are able to participate in the field freely on their own. There would have to be an apprenticeship system emplace in order for those who want to gain access to the field to have that opportunity to learn, however this may not be feasible due to the shortage of experienced workers to train the next generation. This lack of entry to the field and limitation to the formation of new ideas and practices will slow down the growth of the field.

Government oversight of computer science and its subsections as a means to impose ethical standards may be considered inevitable but raises major concerns. It will suppress the spirit of freedom of information as only those who are a member of the order will have the legal ability to create, modify and invent new programs and software. The lack of accessibility into the field which is currently open to everyone will become high restricted and amplify the shortage of experienced workers available. The concept of government oversight as a means to enforcing ethical practices is contrary to the premises of computer science and could be detrimental to the field.