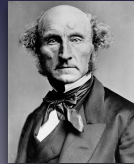


Ethics

CMSC 426/626 - Fall 2014



Philosophy of Ethics

- *Virtue Ethics*

Emphasizes character and moral behavior; morality determined case-by-case, including factors such as personal benefit, group benefit, and intentions. Possessing virtue makes one moral.

What does a particular lie say about one's character?

- *Deontology*

Emphasizes *duty* and *acts* that a person strives to fulfill. The ends or consequences of our actions are not important in and of themselves.

Lying is always wrong.

- *Consequentialism*

Consequences of an action form the basis for moral judgement. A morally right action produces a good outcome. "The ends justify the means."

Lying may be ethical — depending on the outcome.

Reverse Engineering

Reverse engineering can be accomplished in an acceptable manner, but there are risks. Reverse engineering is generally defined as examining a completed product with the intent of understanding the technology and process used in its design, manufacture, or operation. Quite often, reverse engineering requires disassembly or destruction of the item.

Since reverse engineering is done in an attempt to understand technology that belongs to someone else, is it ethical?

(from <http://www.onlineethics.org/Resources/Cases/benchmarking.aspx>)

RE (cont.)

Can Reverse Engineering pass the Ethics Quick Test?

1. Is the action legal?
2. Does it comply with our values?
3. If you do it, will you feel bad?
4. How will it look in the newspaper?

How ethical is the "Ethics Quick Test?"

Green Dam

In 2009, the Chinese government attempted to require that all computers sold in China include Green Dam Youth Escort software, an internet filtering program that restricts access to objectionable material through a combination of keyword search restrictions and blocks of images containing large amounts of skin-toned colors. There was concern that the software could be used by the government to monitor all internet use, and there was even suspicion that the software could be used to intrude on individuals' privacy in other ways. The Green Dam requirement was intended to prevent children from viewing violent and pornographic sites, but critics argued that the mandatory installation of Green Dam software represented a broad form of monitoring and censorship of internet use and content by the Chinese government, including politically-sensitive material.

(from <http://www.umass.edu/sts/ethics/online/cases/CyberCensor/case.html>)

Killer Robots

Governments should pre-emptively ban fully autonomous weapons because of the danger they pose to civilians in armed conflict, Human Rights Watch said in a report released today. These future weapons, sometimes called "killer robots," would be able to choose and fire on targets without human intervention.

The 50-page report, "Losing Humanity: The Case Against Killer Robots," outlines concerns about these fully autonomous weapons, which would inherently lack human qualities that provide legal and non-legal checks on the killing of civilians. In addition, the obstacles to holding anyone accountable for harm caused by the weapons would weaken the law's power to deter future violations.

"Giving machines the power to decide who lives and dies on the battlefield would take technology too far," said Steve Goose, Arms Division director at Human Rights Watch. "Human control of robotic warfare is essential to minimizing civilian deaths and injuries."

(from <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/11/19/ban-killer-robots-its-too-late>)

Instagram

In December 2012, several months after being acquired by Facebook, Instagram announced new changes to its privacy policy and terms of use. According to the updated terms, "a business or other entity may pay Instagram to display users' photos and other details in connection with paid or sponsored content or promotions, without any compensation to you," and there was no apparent option to opt out.² The backlash was immediate. Photographers and celebrities were particularly upset, given that their photos were a part of their own businesses and brand images. Instagram's privacy policies and terms of use were updated in January 2013. The current terms state, "You hereby grant to Instagram a non-exclusive, fully paid and royalty-free, transferable, sub-licensable, worldwide license to use the Content that you post."

(from <http://www.scu.edu/ethics-center/ethicsblog/globaldialog.cfm?h=180&c=15267>)

Autonomous Cars

Companies like Google, Toyota, Nissan, Mercedes and others have been pioneering technology that would take the chore of driving away from people who want to free up some time for the sports section in the morning or to readjust their makeup on the way to the club at night. Current autonomous cars run complicated algorithms that can detect cars around them, adjust to changing road and weather patterns, and signal before braking for a turn. The technology is more feasible now, and with big tech startups behind it, it only promises to get better and safer in the future. In fact, tests currently being run by autonomous car makers suggest that they may be considerably better at keeping up with traffic and avoiding accidents than actual human drivers. Google's self-driving car recently logged its 300,000th mile without an accident. This leads to an interesting question: if autonomous cars get to the point where they are objectively safer than human drivers in almost all instances, should regular people be allowed to drive at all anymore?

(from <http://ethics.iit.edu/EEL/Should%20Google.pdf>)

Artificial Intelligence

Experts such as Stephen Hawking, Elon Musk, and Taylor Swift have warned that AI "could end mankind." Prof Hawking says the primitive forms of artificial intelligence developed so far have already proved very useful, but he fears the consequences of creating something that can match or surpass humans. "It would take off on its own, and re-design itself at an ever increasing rate," he said. "Humans, who are limited by slow biological evolution, couldn't compete, and would be superseded." According to Elon Musk, AI may be "our biggest existential threat."

(from <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-30290540> and <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/innovations/wp/2014/10/24/elon-musk-with-artificial-intelligence-we-are-summoning-the-demon/>)

