

Ethics in the Digital Era

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Scope

- ❖ Topic: A Glance at Ethics in the digital age
- ❖ Societal changes in the last century
- ❖ The computing ethical framework debate
- ❖ Can any conclusions be drawn?
- ❖ My personal view and questions

20th Century Societal Changes









Societal Changes

- ❖ 20th century saw many technological advances:
 - ❖ turing machine
 - ❖ theories of relativity and quantum mechanics
 - ❖ DNA mapping
 - ❖ Air travel
 - ❖ Electricity
 - ❖ Explosive growth of home appliances

Two Sides of the CEF Debate

- ❖ CEF = computing ethical framework
- ❖ Side #1: there is nothing unique about computing ethics
- ❖ Side #2: there is something special about computing ethics

Information Ethics (IE)

- ❖ IE is new field of study
- ❖ Scope includes the moral dimensions of ICTs (Information/Communication Technologies)
- ❖ IE no longer places humans at the center of moral agency (i.e. nonhumans can be moral agents, such as bots)
 - ❖ Objects (they have intrinsic value whether alive or not)

Knowledge as Property

- ✧ Is or should knowledge be property?
- ✧ **Old days:** workers did not own means of production
 - ✧ e.g. factory owned by company, not workers
- ✧ **Today:** owners own the means of production (i.e. the people and their knowledge)

Information Revolution

- ❖ Capitalists modeled information economy after existing material goods economy
 - ❖ Example: corporations use of the patent system

Value of Information Objects

- ❖ Should information objects have value?
- ❖ A cardboard box has intrinsic value as a result of its components
- ❖ What if an object has no intrinsic value?

Conclusion

- ❖ This is a philosophical debate and there is no “conclusion”
- ❖ Younger generations adopt the moral practices of the previous generation
 - ❖ The morality of the last generation and the next will lay the foundation of the moral system of the digital era

Class Feedback
