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