

Title: Machine(s) learning morals

Google's search engine, Facebook's News Feed, Amazon's Echo: many of our everyday technologies contain Artificial Intelligence (AI). Autonomous robotic vacuum cleaners and robot lawn mowers help us at home, robotic surgical systems perform operations, and therapy chatbots such as Woebot are always ready to 'listen'. We can even delegate moral decision-making to Artificial Moral Agents.

The combination of robots and AI leads to numerous possibilities, which, in turn, also raise compelling ethical questions. Which decisions do we delegate to machines and which preferably not? And how and from 'whom' do self-learning AI systems actually learn?

Every designer makes numerous choices. Not just functional choices but also moral ones. Morality and technology are not separate domains at all: they are strongly interwoven. Designers, engineers, computer scientists, and programmers often see themselves as neutral and working in the exact domain. Yet, they can take their own worldviews, moral framework, or gender as the default setting. Only by paying explicit attention to the ethical aspects of a design blind spots and biases can become visible.

For a long time, ethical questions concerning technology were regarded as something that came later, namely after technology had been developed. But ethical questions must be asked prior to and during the design process. Every product made by humans is 'made with morality'.

The purpose of this talk is to look at which ethical rules are needed: rules that robots and AI-systems must follow themselves, but also the rules for designing them, in order to assure that the design is ethical from the beginning. After all, innovation is not only about technological progress, but also about recognizing the moral choices that technology carries and consciously dealing with them.

Best wishes,
Katleen

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