TEC 154 2014S, Class 15: Perspectives (3)

Overview

- Preliminaries.
  - Admin.
- Joy and his Critics.
  - Clarifications.
  - Joy.
  - Brown and Duguid.
- Further explorations.
  - New lenses.
  - Responding to B&G.

Preliminaries

Admin

- Note takers (send me five main points): DB and AF.
- Some day we'll all recover from campus crud.
- Readings/skimmings for next week
  - Monday: Norman Preface, 1-2 (80 pages)
  - Wednesday: Norman 3-4 (90 pages)
  - Friday: Norman 5-6 (90 pages)
- Congrats to our men's BB team for making the MWC tournament
- Extra credit:
  - Town hall meeting Tuesday at noon or 7pm
  - Royce Wolf concert Wednesday at noon

DB's List of Key Points

The potential problems Joy sees consist of particular technologies and their self replication. Examples include nanotechnology, A.I. (Artificial Intelligence), and genetic engineering.

Joy seems to be most concerned about who is building/can build these technologies, our reliance on certain technologies being too heavy, and the questionable goal of living forever.

He argues for the identification of dangerous technologies, ethical responsibilities of technologists, and stricter laws concerning technology.

Brown and Duguid argue that Joy is too linear in his thinking and that we are still far from such advances in nanotechnology, but they fail to respond successfully to Joy's comments on technology reliance, replication, and the seriousness of risks (such as human extinction).

Based on these two articles we can now raise questions concerning the extremity of technological dangers and detachment from certain technologies. [Sam isn't sure what DB means by "detachment from".]

Some Clarifications

A chance for you to ask clarification questions, not all of which I'll be able to answer

Joy talks about him being "more a computer architect than a scientist." What does he mean by this?

It's the engineer vs. scientist or technologist vs. scientist idea. Scientists discover new knowledge, technologists build things

What is 'tunnel design'? (Page 141)

Probably a narrow approach to something. Probably a variant of "tunnel vision". Also design for self, rather than for others.

Bill Joy

What does he see as potential problems?

- Particular technologies - Self replicating

    - Nanotechnology/nanomachines
    - Artificial intelligence/robots - "smart" programs
    - Genetic engineering - changing definitions of life

- Concerns

    - Self-replication
    - Who is building them? Who can build them?
    - We rely on them so much that we can't turn them off, even when they are harmful
    - Is the goal of "living forever" a good goal? (quote on p. 123)

- Thinking about related technologies

    - Like nuclear power - can destroy us all
    - Unlike previous technologies, self-replication is different
    - Military applications

- Addressing these issues

- ○ Identify technologies that are too dangerous (e.g., chemical and biological weapons) - collective foresight
- ○ Technologists should develop professional ethics and refuse to work on these things
- ○ Laws and international agreements about technologies.

Brown and Duguid

How do his Brown and Duguid respond to Joy?

- Don't be too linear/simplistic in your thinking
- Being able to do certain tasks does not make you more human, nor give you general abilities, nor give you particular power over the world.
- Considering nanotechnology/nanomachines (and the other technologies): It's not going to happen because you're making way too much of a leap
  - ○ Can we really program "the ability to learn"
  - ○ Nanotechnology is on the drawing board
- Society will respond and push people (technologist) to behave differently. E.g., people, laws, protests, etc.
  - ○ And concerns about technologies galvanize these reactions
- There is still a social/human element

Are their responses appropriate to Joy's main theses?

- Reliance on technology.
- He's already said that society can respond - he mentions chemical treaties and such.
- These are fundamentally different technologies
  - ○ They can't be rolled back
  - ○ Some can be built with much less infrastructure

And in some ways, yes, because they do suggest that the only way we get changes is when people raise concerns.

New Lenses

What new or modified questions we might ask about technology based on these two articles?

- With technology, being aware of danger is useful, and we need to think about how extreme the dangers are.
- As technology advances, the potential impacts become even greater, and so our caution should advance.
- Can we detach ourselves from this technology? (E.g., cell phones.)
- Alternate view of relationships between technology and society? Society evolves responses to technology's dangers

We can be prospective

- Biological weapons treaties
- Cloning etc. regulation