Chapter 5

Humans Versus Computers, Systems, and Machines:
A Battle for Freedom, Equality, and Democracy

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ABSTRACT

The present chapter introduces a new existential philosophy of how computers, systems and machines operate within society, and in terms of the provision, furtherance and/or obstruction of human rights/ freedoms and open life-potential(s). We explore the relationship(s) between the design of artificial systems and the existence/form/implementation of democracy; and from the key perspective(s) of individual and collective freedom-of-thought/action. A basic premise is that humans are increasingly disadvantaged as a result of, or slaves to: unfettered automation, objectivity, abstraction and fragmentary thinking; as promulgated/aided by computers/systems/machines. We explain how related processes create conflict/ opposition/barriers to/with natural and harmonious socialization activities/processes; and hence strongly influence our collective destiny.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The nature of human-machine relationship(s) is a central issue in human affairs; and related problems have been debated for hundreds of years. In a great variety of books and papers etc; numerous experts have noted the apparent (and often real) opposition between life and artificial systems. On a phenomenological level, humans and machines are very different. Machines are patently not conscious, do not possess free-will, represent unfettered abstraction (often), manifest universal and objective viewpoint(s), deal with isolated micro-worlds as opposed to the fully integrated embodied human 'big' world, and operate 'everything else being equal'. But things are never equal, because the happenings of life are

too rich, varied, and chance-ridden; hence universally saturated with desires, wishes, joy and pain, plus first-person-viewpoints etc.

Accordingly, in this chapter we uphold/defend the humanistic viewpoint. Needed is careful planning, to ensure that humans be the masters—not of each other—but of our machine slaves, and it must not turn out to be the other way around! We postulate a technological society so arranged as to benefit all; and name such a society the Technopia. Introduced are the Theories of Natural and Machine-Implanted Thoughts, founded on standard human rights; which may be implemented in a Techno-rights format to combat rampant mechanization of human life; and provide for the free, open and frictionless sharing of thoughts, ideas, and most importantly, votes.

Terms Introduced: Technopia, Techno-rights, Atomic Network, Theories of Natural and Machine-Implanted Thoughts

As we become ever more involved with, and dependent upon, computers; it may be that our essential nature is being shaped and/or changed as a result. It is prescient therefore to study the nature of an emergent phenomenon; the self as computer (merging of self with computer), and in terms of a deeper, broader and more comprehensive inquiry.

Ergo we can learn: who we were, who we are and who we may become.

This chapter concerns the nature of mankind's relationship(s) to/with machines. Probable is that our survival and ultimate destiny as a species, depends on the development of appropriate technologies (and especially computers). Thus careful planning is essential when it comes to our technological future. To get the ball rolling, we formulate a strategy for an ideal human-computer relationship, and postulate a society so arranged as to benefit all; and we call such a society the technopia. A key feature of the technopia is the establishment of natural human rights (techno-rights) with respect to a technological society; combined with appropriate and human-centric information usage; and so to ensure that machines interact harmoniously with humanity (Wiener, 1950)

Wiener urged us to ask the right questions with respect to machines, and this chapter is an attempt to do the same. Our approach is to find human-centric solutions for the problems of an increasingly computer-centric future. But the future is at the same time marvelous and dreadful, known and unknown. The issues are complex because technological issues are intermingled with social, economic, and environmental ones etc. Yet the stakes are so high, that it is beholden on each writer to make his position known. Paramount, in my view, are three (new) human rights:

- Ownership of one's own thoughts
- Atomic organization of, and free access to, all knowledge
- Open (atomic) publication of ideas/votes

Thought ownership is key, and to ensure that the thinker is rewarded for useful contributions, and not punished or disadvantaged in any way. Knowledge should also be free and open, accessible and flowing everywhere and anywhere without limitation. Unfortunately, current systems often fail to provide for the frictionless creation, publication and use of ideas. Desired are new systems which transcend current computers with respect to the free and open exchange of thoughts, opinions and votes.

Questions are easy to spot for today's systems. For example; are the amalgamated ideas of humanity not the shared heritage of every new born child? Where is the world-library and/or universal knowledge

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