

BIGMUN 2018
General Assembly 6th Committee – Legal

Research Report

Topic 2: The universal legal rights of future non-biological sentient entities



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Introduction

The field of artificial intelligence is advancing at a rapid rate, with newer and more intelligent pieces of software being produced on an annual basis. AI is also in the crosshairs of pop-culture, with movies like Terminator and Blade runner depicting dystopian futures, with robots functioning on the same level as human beings. This begs the question as to how we should treat AI, if they reach these high levels of sentience, and to what extent their rights, match those of a human.

Key Terms

AI: Artificial intelligence, the capability of a machine to imitate intelligent human behavior

Android: An android is a realistically human looking robot that acts and behaves like a human being.

Background Information

Short History of AI

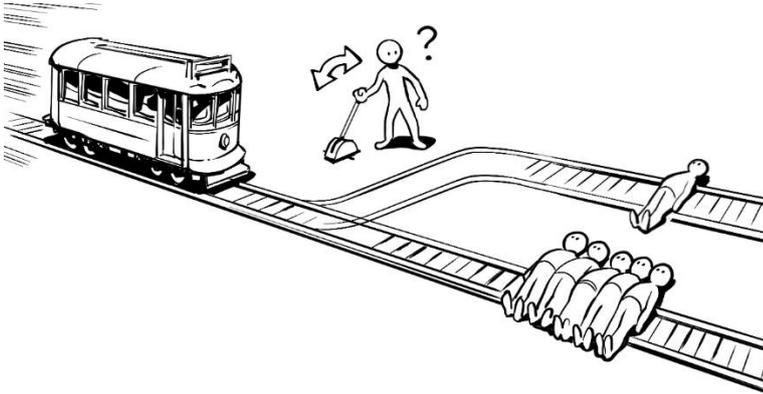
The first real AI was created at Dartmouth University in 1956. Compared to now, it was quite a simple bit of software, that would learn various checkers strategies. Thereafter various different AI's were developed with Deep Blue being one of the more notable AI's that was famous for its proficiency in chess, and having beaten the world-famous chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov. Recently AI has come into the public's spotlight, with the integration of AI into Tesla's electric cars, described as self-driving. Other AI's include Amazons Kiva, which are small robots, used to transport products around their warehouses. AI has obviously made huge advancements over the past 50 years, but we have yet to develop a piece of software that is completely sentient.

Importance of legal framework regarding AI

Even though we have not reached a point at which robots are roaming the streets, with thoughts of their own, it is important that the international community has standards set, in terms of how to handle this eventuality. There needs to be an agreement on where to draw the line, that defines the point at which a robot transforms from a mindless automaton, into a sentient being with thoughts and needs. The international community also needs to consider the danger of giving AI too much freedom, because in the words of Stephen Hawking; A.I. could be "the worst event in the history *of*

*our civilization*¹. As was mentioned in the introduction, the movie “Blade Runner” gives a good, albeit romanticized, look into the ethical dilemmas that occur with the development of completely sentient AI. Should they be treated as fellow humans? Or does their artificial nature make them disposable? There is a plethora of questions that can be posed and debated regarding the topic.

One of the most common problems that is currently being addressed regarding AI, is the decision-making process of self-driving cars. The question which has been posed, is what a self-driving car should do, if it is faced with the dilemma of being put in a situation with two outcomes, where one results in the death of the person in the car, and the other results in death of a pedestrian outside the car. This is also known as the trolley dilemma, and is depicted in the diagram below;



Situations like this may occur in other shapes and forms, and with the development of truly sentient AI, the question as to how to handle these situations is extremely important.

Relevant countries and organisations

Normally a research paper would list specific countries that this problem pertains to, but in the case of sentient AI, the entire world has a stake in how this problem is handled.

In terms of advancement within the field of artificial intelligence there are three countries that are seen as frontrunners, which may have an impact on how relevant the issue of ethics is to them.

These countries include;

USA: Silicon Valley is one of the focal points of the international tech boom. Various American and International tech companies are based out of Silicon Valley, CA, including Apple and Google

¹ Kharpal, Arjun. “Stephen Hawking says A.I. could be 'worst event in the history of our civilization'.” CNBC, CNBC, 6 Nov. 2017, www.cnbc.com/2017/11/06/stephen-hawking-ai-could-be-worst-event-in-civilization.html.
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(both of whom are developing forms of AI). Another major developer of AI and Humanoid robots is Boston Dynamics².

India: Many jobs that have been outsourced to India (IT/Tech support) are being replaced by Artificial Intelligence and Chatbots.³

China: The Chinese Government has chosen to give massive subsidies to the tech industry, to promote development and growth, this includes Artificial Intelligence.⁴

As of now, there are no organizations which are directly involved in the legal rights of AI, because of the fact that we have not developed AI to a level where it is necessary. The UN has hosted a summit where various aspects of AI were discussed, including ethical considerations surrounding AI.⁵

Although there are no organizations directly involved in the legal rights of AI, the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX Elon Musk, recently released a letter where he strongly urged that AI be banned in relation to weapons and warfare.⁶ This shows that this problem is definitely becoming relevant to the global community.

² "Boston Dynamics." Boston Dynamics is changing your idea of what robots can do. | Boston Dynamics, www.bostondynamics.com/.

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³ "India's IT outsourcing industry under pressure from AI, automation." Channel NewsAsia, 29 Nov. 2017, www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/india-s-it-outsourcing-industry-under-pressure-from-ai-9452266.

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⁴ "The big tech projects China is pinning its global ambitions on." South China Morning Post, 28 Dec. 2017, www.scmp.com/news/china/economy/article/2126029/big-data-and-ai-projects-china-pinning-its-global-tech-ambitions.

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⁵ "UN artificial intelligence summit aims to tackle poverty, humanity's 'grand challenges'." UN News Center, United Nations, 7 June 2017, www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56922#.WlkBMt-nFPY.

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⁶ The three countries are leading an artificial intelligence (AI) revolution. "Robot race: These three countries are winning." CNNMoney, Cable News Network, money.cnn.com/2017/08/21/technology/future/artificial-intelligence-robots-india-china-us/index.html.

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Relevant UN resolutions

As of January 2018, the United Nations has not passed any resolutions pertaining to the issue regarding the legal rights of AI/Sentient Non-Biological Entities. This allows for a fairly large degree of freedom within committee, considering there isn't a set precedent for how the problem is handled. A delegate may want to look into the United Nations universal declaration of human rights and consider how they would want to apply them to a non-organic, but fully cognitive lifeform.⁷

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⁷ "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/.

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