

Containing China? Feedback on AI, Human Nature

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Short Pieces

[Killer Robots Won't Doom Humanity—But Our Fears of AI Might](#)

Just how worried should we be about killer robots? To go by the opinions of a highly regarded group of scholars, including Stephen Hawking, Max Tegmark, Franz Wilczek, and Stuart Russell, [we should be wary](#) of the prospect of artificial intelligence rebelling against its makers.

Published in *Quartz*. Read it [here](#).

[Protecting Civilians: Response to Hajarr](#)

Lisa Hajjar has positioned an op-ed I wrote as a next step in a multifaceted Israeli campaign to bring “its violence into the law.” In response, I first outline the motivation for the op-ed, and then try to address – within the space given – what I see as the underlying issue, and how it might be addressed.

Published in *Global Dialogue*, Newsletter for the International Sociological Association (available in 16 languages). Read it [here](#).

Your Responses Are Requested

Ten years from now, do you expect that the majority of the people who recently immigrated to Europe will be well integrated, a source of some conflict, or follow some other course? And what should European societies do to help the transformation? What do you think about the notion that the legal and ethical right to asylum means that the person has to be provided a safe haven, but not necessarily in your country? Send your comments to icps@gwu.edu by July 5. We plan to include your comments in the next Communitarian Observer. Look at the issues from earlier this year to see previous questions and feedback: <https://communitariannetwork.org/communitarian-observer>

Longer Piece

[The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: A Case Study in Multifaceted Containment](#)

Although some analysts have emphasized the importance of China’s becoming a “responsible stakeholder” in the international order, the United States has in effect blocked China’s full participation in a range of existing international institutions and attempted to undermine China’s efforts to create and lead new international institutions.

Published in *Asian Perspective*. Read it [here](#).

By Fellow Communitarians

Take note of these two books on communitarianism from Brazil:

[Comunidade & Comunitarismo: Temas em Debate](#)

João Pedro Schmidt, Inácio Helfer, Ana Paula de Almeida de Borba, organizadores

[Instituições Comunitárias: instituições públicas não-estatais](#)

João Pedro Schmidt, organizador

Some Recent Tweets

Obama is hailed for speech in Hiroshima calling for zero nukes, as his gov invests \$20 billion/ yr in US nukes. You can fool me once...

Uber and Lyft failed to bully Austin because of town’s strong local identity and sense of community: <http://ow.ly/wJD300kR3M>

Dems may not need working class white votes to win in Nov, but Trump campaign shows the danger of ignoring them <http://ow.ly/RNnu300fKu6>

New Video

[Issues in Science and Technology: Transforming the Active Orientation](#)

from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine



Forthcoming

Amitai Etzioni will be participating in the event "Israeli Hope: Vision or Dream?" on June 14 at the home of the Israeli President Reuven Rivlin. Etzioni will be speaking at the 2016 Herzliya Conference on June 15 at 3:30 p.m. as part of the panel on "The 2016 U.S. Presidential Election Campaign." The program may be viewed [here](#).

[Foreign Policy: Thinking Outside the Box](#) will be released this month!

Feedback: Human Nature

Last month we asked the following:

What is the conception of human nature you hold scholars and policy makers should draw on: *Homo Economicus*, *Homo Sapiens*, the "Moral Wrestler," or others?

Homo Economicus collects information, processes it well, and draws logical conclusions, is rational. *Homo sapiens* processes information poorly, is not rational, and is influenced by passions.

"Moral Wrestler" views the person as being subject to an irreconcilable conflict between the quest for happiness (of one kind or another) and the quest to live up to their moral values. For more discussion, see [Happiness is the Wrong Metric](#).

Here are some responses:

Douglas Medin, Professor of Psychology, Northwestern University

I think the most relevant component of human nature is the part that guides our conceptions of where we fit in the grand scheme of nature. If one goes to Google images and enters "ecosystems" about 98% of the images generated will not include humans and half the remaining will have children looking through a magnifying glass and saying "I spy an ecosystem." For many of us a bird nest is a part of nature but a human

house is not.

Why does this view of humans as separate from the rest of nature matter? Because it seems to lead to models of environmental activism that focus on the ideal of minimizing harm (think "carbon footprint") as opposed to seeking harmony with the rest of nature. Even global climate change would profit from getting away from the light footprint model.

Darcia Narvaez, Professor of Psychology, University of Notre Dame

Baselines for Human Development and Human Becoming

The conceptions of human nature typically discussed – i.e., *homo economicus*, *homo sapiens*, moral wrestler-- ignore baselines for human nature and for human development. They draw conclusions from human beings raised in species-atypical ways.

Humans are social mammals of a particular sort, one that is extremely epigenetically shaped in the early years of life. Like all animals, humans evolved a nest for their young that matches the maturational schedule of the young which for social mammals, is particularly intense.

The species-typical human nest for young children includes: soothing birth experience; years of breastfeeding on request; comforting, responsive caregivers; nearly constant physical touch or presence; self-directed free play with multi-aged mates; multi-aged daily life with positive social support; multiple responsive adult caregivers; lack of coercion. All of these practices are now shown to shape the neurobiology of brain and body development in the first years of life. In my lab, we find that the components of the early nest are related to wellbeing, and to social and moral development in children and adults.

Where are the species-typical humans and what are they like? Small-band hunter-gatherers (SBHG) are the type of society in which the human genus spent 99% of its history. They raise their children in the species-typical manner. From all accounts, members of SBHG societies generally are generally good-natured, generous and communal but also highly autonomous. They move *with*, not *against*, others and the rest of nature. Virtue is part of development and required for survival.

The models of human nature usually mentioned are based on humans raised *atypically*, those who have missed the evolved nest (degraded in various ways over the course of civilization development, including especially recently in the USA where, for example, traumatic birth, lack of play or social support have become the norm). The result is a different human nature, more self-centered, stress reactive and reckless, from the nature of those raised in species-typical nests.

In other words, it is important to attend to the baselines for normal human development. Humans are part of the social mammalian line that evolved with particular parenting practices over 30 million years ago, which further intensified over the course of human evolution. When the evolved nest is not provided, we should not be surprised that we end up with individuals and groups that look like *homo economicus* or "wrestle" with their morality.

More information:

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[Evolved Developmental Niche](#)

Blog at Psychology Today: [Moral Landscapes Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality: Evolution, Culture and Wisdom](#) [Evolution, Early Experience and Human Development](#)

Feedback: AI

People have shown interest in [Keeping AI Legal](#) and [AI Assisted Ethics](#). Below are some comments we have received:

Robert Geraci, Professor of Religious Studies, Manhattan College

These essays importantly recognize that AI improvements won't simply obviate social problems, but actually bring some new ones. We should not fall into the trap of thinking that AIs will do their jobs so well that ethical problems, such as how to respond to road hazards, won't exist. Whether AI guardians or AI ethics bots are practical and liable to solve our problems, however, is open to debate. It's true that an AI guardian could evaluate other AIs faster than a human being could. And it's true that successfully developing a bot to match a user's preference could help align the ethics of machine behaviors with user behaviors. However, using one impenetrable technology to guide another still leaves human users on the outside, now one step further removed from the actual process. At that point, we don't understand the operational AI or the monitoring AI.

Such a situation is unlikely to solve the question of legal liability, with the possible exception of making end-users even more likely to be held responsible. After all, if the AI sought to align its behavior with the user's preferences, then it could be reasonable to hold the user most accountable...even if the user might have chosen otherwise in the circumstances.

Fundamentally, the authors wrestle with AI ethics in an age where there is no consensus on human ethics and little consistency even within the ethical decisions of individuals. People often do the very things that frustrate them when done by others. People often fail to live up to their own moral expectations. People often fail to apply logic consistently across ethical domains (e.g. if abortion is killing of a person and thus murder, shouldn't every single anti-abortion activist be an ardent anti-war activist and an active supporter of social services for the homeless and hungry?). Even worse might be the outcomes of machines that support an individual's deliberate desire to benefit at the expense of others, making that person far more capable of social harm than he or she would have been alone.

Given the messiness of human ethical decision-making, the goal of producing machines that can ethically guide other machines seems distant to the point of impossible. And given that monitoring AIs further remove human beings from both decision-making and behavior in the world, they might only exacerbate the problems looming on our horizon.

---Robert M Geraci, Professor of Religious Studies at Manhattan College, author of *Apocalyptic AI: Visions of Heaven in Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, and Virtual Reality* (Oxford 2010)

Jonathan Grudin, Principal Researcher, Natural Interaction Group, Microsoft Research

It is true that "it is very rarely phrased this way, civil societies do not seek full law enforcement," but it is sometimes phrased that way. Robert Ellickson's wonderful book *Order Without Law* is a deep analysis of this issue. The authors note that the law serves functions other than to be obeyed, yet also acknowledge that an "AI Guardian" will be obligated to enforce the law. And the fact is, an "AI Guardian" that enforces the law would render autopiloted cars of zero appeal in my city, where highway speeds are virtually never even close to the speed limit. And while a driverless car might be safer, a professional driver or you who can handle higher speeds won't get far with the same argument in court even if true. It takes minimal insight into human nature to see that no one will favor giving machines preference over humans on the highway. Lanes devoted exclusively to people wealthy enough to afford high end cars in which they can cruise while Facebooking or day trading is not something I will live to see. As I recall, in the U.S. Constitution, just following the right to bear arms, is the right to drive cars, and tinkering with that in any way will draw a strong response.

J.B. Ruhl, the David Daniels Allen Distinguished Chair of Law at Vanderbilt University, wrote a piece in reference to *Keeping AI Legal* called "Can AI Make AI Obey the Law?" It may be read [here](#) (and is included here with his permission.)

A Comment on [Happiness is the Wrong Metric](#)

Dorothy Denning, Distinguished Professor, Department of Defense Analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School

Another reason for distinguishing between operating out of pleasure vs. moral/altruistic is neurobiological. Different parts of the brain are triggered. Based on some notes I have for a course I teach, I think I first read about this in Brafman and Brafmans' book *Sway* (Ch 7) and Dan Ariely's book *Predictably Irrational* (Ch 4). In *Sway*, the authors note that the pleasure center and altruism centers of the brain cannot both function at the same time. They describe experiments where people were more cooperative or performed better when appealed to for social reasons than when offered money.

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