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HUL 494 - Planetizing Citizenship

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Final Project: Group Oral Presentation and Project Reflection

Humanities Week Project- Jacobo Menendez

When we originally did our first presentation about the robot Sophia, who is the first non-human to get a citizenship, we realized that a lot of people in our audience were very uncomfortable with the prospect of AI being integrated to the point that it's a part of their daily lives and/or treated as humans alongside them. According to Hanson Robotics, the company that made Sophia, it "personifies our dreams for the future of AI. As a unique combination of science, engineering, and artistry, Sophia is simultaneously a human-crafted science fiction character depicting the future of AI and robotics, and a platform for advanced robotics and AI research." Our original presentation had five questions that were made to make the audience think more about the real possibility of human, robot integration. This presentation was based on a book and podcast headed by Ted Change, who based his book on the idea of child-animal hybrid AI that was made to have a bond with the user and were meant to be taken care of. A lot of the questions posed in this presentation made the responders clearly uncomfortable, which gave us the idea to take it on a more grand scale.

To start with, we knew going in that if we were to open up with the hard hitting questions that we gave to our audience in the original presentation, it would be more likely than not that no one would respond to them. That's why we decided early on to focus on a single question that had a yes or no answer that would allow even a passerby to answer it while they walked to their respective class. The question was "if you were about to die, would you allow an AI to save your life?" On the surface, this seems like an innocent question. However it became very clear that those who actually stopped to think about the question could not realistically make up their minds on it. The majority of the responses we received with this format were squarely "no" and that they had a lot of concerns when asked specifically what they were. I personally had a very long conversation with someone about this and their main concern was that it was not a human making the final decision on whether or not they'd be allowed to live. Robots only do what they're told, and that's what ultimately made him not want one to operate on him, as they lack any sort of morals or understanding.
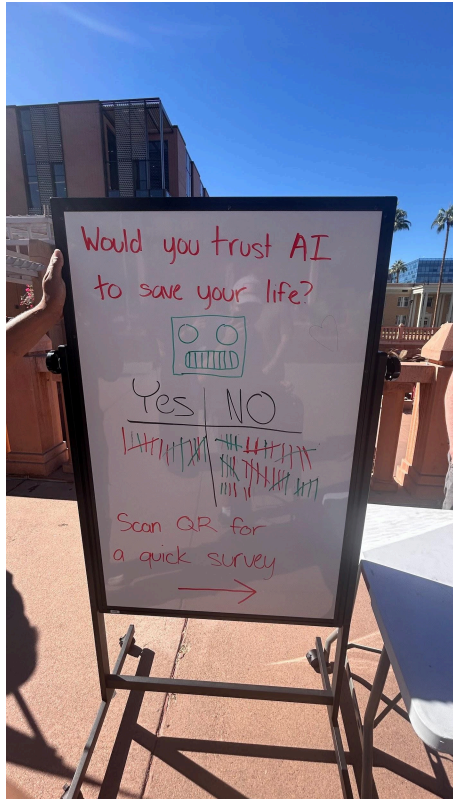
We also had a survey that was optional and that allowed other people to answer more in depth with the questions presented if they so choose. While we only got six total responses, it was enough to see that people were seriously considering the possibility that AI could be better for the world in terms of safety, but that it would be impossible to realistically create a bond with it. One of the questions that we put into the survey was, "Did you know that asking Chat GPT a question is equivalent in energy to charging your smartphone? Does that change your outlook on robot rights if they take so much energy to operate if they were semi-autonomous?" While this was not the main focus of Humanities week, it was clear from the responses that this was the question people took the most seriously. One of the answers given was, "Ai wasn't created for energy efficiency & that wasn't a goal for it, its main purpose (from creation) has been to serve humans intellectually, or otherwise."

The answer to this question got the ball rolling for our final project, that being about the amount of energy that AI tends to use and how it negatively impacts the environment. We actually opened our final presentation with a survey that encouraged people to use Chat GPT in order to answer some homework questions from our group. We then told them how much energy they used and compared it to other energy sources that either used a lot less energy or used it in a longer time frame. This approach, we believe, allowed us to create an engaging hook to our final presentation and let us have our Humanities Week project be a great starting point for not only our project but for a lot of other projects as well. We were actually reached out to by another group who wanted to use our results from our survey as it would greatly benefit their group's final project which was about whether giving robots rights was fair if we don't want to do the same for nature or other humans.

Podcasts(s): - Carlos McClaren

       Throughout the many weeks of this course, we have absorbed from class as well as outside information that was used for our two podcasts. The information we usually used for our podcasts came from various informative sources such as colleges like Harvard or MIT, more news-based sites such as the Scientific American website or the UN environmental program website. A couple of the websites we used were government related sources. The various websites we used for both podcasts had graphs and statistical based data to show what we were talking about. This also includes various research teams collecting data for the university or companies they work for. We talked about various topics in our podcast including fracking or mining for minerals to make electric cars, or processing machines using water and heating it up then putting it out into the environment which in turn harms freshwater ecosystems. Also, companies are cutting down trees (in forested areas like Oregon) or making other areas more barren for warehouses and various other company related locations to make room for their AI/robot related processing centers. Furthermore, when taking in information and relating it to the class whether it was for our podcast or our oral presentations we briefly went over facts relating to the ethical implications of AI and the importance of regulatory frameworks. Reflecting on these findings, I considered how they might influence public policy and future technological developments, ultimately shaping a more informed perspective on the issue.In addition to these topics, we also explored the impact of renewable energy sources and their integration into existing power grids. This included discussions on solar and wind energy, and the challenges of storage and distribution. Another significant area of focus was the role of technology in addressing climate change. We delved into innovations such as carbon capture and storage (CCS) and the development of more efficient battery technologies. These advancements are crucial for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to a low-carbon economy. We also considered the potential of emerging technologies like hydrogen fuel cells and their applications in various industries, from transportation to manufacturing.Our podcasts also touched on the social and economic implications of environmental policies. We discussed how transitioning to a green economy could create new job opportunities and drive economic growth, but also acknowledged the challenges faced by communities dependent on fossil fuel industries. This led to conversations about the need for just transition strategies that ensure fair treatment and support for workers and communities affected by the shift to sustainable practices.

       Overall, the extensive research and diverse sources we engaged with throughout this course have significantly enriched our understanding of various critical issues. This is included in the discussions we've had, including the ethical implications of AI and the necessity for robust regulatory frameworks underscoring the importance of responsible innovation. These conversations not only broadened our knowledge but also encouraged us to think critically about the consequences of technological progress. It is also clear that the information we gather has the potential to influence public policy and guide future technological developments. By understanding the ethical and environmental dimensions of these issues, we can contribute to shaping a more sustainable and fair future. Ultimately, the knowledge and skills we have gotten will serve us well in our future, enabling us to navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of technology and its societal impacts with greater awareness and responsibility. Moreover, the interdisciplinary approach of this course has allowed us to see the interconnectedness of various fields and how they collectively impact society. For instance, our exploration of AI's ethical implications was not limited to theoretical discussions but extended to practical applications and

real-world scenarios. The emphasis on critical thinking and ethical considerations has been particularly valuable. In an era where technological advancements are rapidly transforming every aspect of our lives, it is crucial to remain vigilant about the potential risks and unintended consequences.Furthermore, the collaborative nature of our projects has underscored the importance of teamwork and effective communication. Working together on podcasts and presentations has not only enhanced our research and analytical skills but also taught us how to convey complex ideas clearly and persuasively. These experiences have prepared us to contribute meaningfully to interdisciplinary teams and to advocate for informed, ethical decision-making in our professional lives.Reflecting on our journey, it is evident that the knowledge and skills we have acquired extend beyond the classroom. They have shaped us into more informed and conscientious individuals, ready to tackle the pressing issues of our time. As we continue to engage with the evolving landscape of technology and its societal impacts, we will carry forward the lessons learned from this course, striving to make a positive difference in the world.

Class as a whole and what he did to get to where we are - Fabian Avilez

I think all four of us as soon as we sat at the table were intimidated and kind of lost about what this call would hold and what we would have to do to be successful. Also very surprised by the amount of group projects we had to do and what they had to include like the podcast and humanities week for example, they were so fun to do. We would meet up at least 2 days a week to discuss and prepare what we were either going to present or say. We stuck together all semester and it got easier and easier to work together as a group. I loved the topic we chose and stuck with because who knew robots and AI were going to have such an impact on the world and how it is already taking over. Jacobo kinda always took the lead, I think we felt as he knew the most about the topic and he was definitely a huge part of our success. The 2 days of the week we met up to work on our projects we got together for at least and hour and a half to two hours brainstorming and writing out how we were going to execute. The project that stood out to me the most that we worked on the podcast and I say this one because of how much we talked and talked about how we were going to execute it before we actually did it, and the funny part was we had all of our information but we just couldn't decide whether to make it formal or informal or maybe should we have camera or not it was a mess. Ultimately we just decided to throw down the voice memos app on the table and just talk about what information written down and it was perfect it flowed perfectly like if we were just having a discussion to each other it was definitely the most fun project ,in my opinion.

We took lots of inspiration from other groups we were often worried about if they would think we were copying them but the whole class and all the project we saw throughout the semester were amazing. We took individual notes when other groups would be up presenting and try to incorporate that into our work and projects. We would also often worry about getting things done in time we had so many ideas that we couldn't do because we kind of got freaked out with time but overall think we did so great with what we had down. There also might of been

some arguments here and there about how we could do things but at the end we put out work we were proud of and overall I can say it was all a success.

Closing Thoughts – Tyler Discianno

Our topics over the past couple months have been based around AI and robots, how society has been progressing forward regarding implementing these systems into daily human life, and how this in turn affects us as humans and the environment. Our final project was centered around how manufacturing these evolving technologies consumes an unimaginable amount of energy and produces an immense amount of greenhouse gases. We included and briefly spoke about ways that bigger companies and corporations are using important resources to develop robots and continue "improving" AI. In regards to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), our topic has the ability to cover more than half of the topics. To be more specific, each goal our topic can be related to are: #6 "Clean Water and Sanitation", #7 "Affordable and Clean Energy", #8 "Decent Work and Economic Growth", #9 "Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure", #10 "Reduced Inequalities", #12 "Responsible Consumption and Production", #13 "Climate Action", #14 "Life Below Water, and #15 "Life on Land". Out of these nine goals we believe "Reduced Inequalities" and "Climate Action" are the two most important that us as a society should focus on. In our podcast project one of our main focuses was Sophia, the first integrated AI robot to obtain citizenship not only in Saudi Arabia, but across all countries. Ironically, and honestly very disappointing, women in Saudi Arabia have a severe lack of rights, making Sophia, who is physically modeled off of a woman, obtained rights in this country very shortly after being created. This entire situation sparked major controversy as to why a robot, a non-living being, was granted rights in a country over real living women, who struggle in their day to day lives. Assuming robots and AI will continue to evolve as we get older, us as humans need to understand the importance of human compassion, feelings and equality if we want to come even close to growing as a nation because this is just a single country, out of the 195 across the globe. Climate Action being next on the list is also very important. Technology is going to continue to evolve forever, that's just how it works, and along with these advancements comes a higher chance of mass production of certain products, this case being robots. More factories will be established, and unless the general concept of a factory changes, the amount of greenhouse gases that will in turn be released into the atmosphere will skyrocket. Climate change is a sensitive topic as it is, with people continuing to firmly believe that it truly is not a real issue. With an increase in the number of factories and production plants, there really is no telling how badly of an effect they could have on our environment. In a way it's a bit hard to say this specific topic is up to us as people because we believe it relies more on technology advancing enough to cut back on air and land pollution. If our group had more funding, to be honest I'm not exactly sure how we would get this topic and discussion to reach a wider population. We think one of our best options moving forward would be to try and convert everything within our control over to solar energy or wind energy, as those are our most effective while also being our most basic forms of renewable energy. But factories and production plants have been running on fossil fuels for generations, and the concept of change is something that is

not easily accepted by a majority of people. There's a sense of comfort in routine, but if we want to be able to save our planet, with the way things are headed now, there truly is not a lot of time before irreversible damage takes place.

Sources

- "Sophia." *Hanson Robotics*, 1 Sept. 2020, www.hansonrobotics.com/sophia/.

- https://sdgs.un.org/

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