


Chapter 5

What We Should Have Learned From Cybersyn: An Epistemological View on the Socialist Approach of Cybersyn in Respective of Industry 4.0

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ABSTRACT

Currently, a major topic is what changes will digitalization and the fourth industrial revolution bring to our society. It is clear that digital transformation of society and the introduction of new technologies will make many jobs obsolete. This process logically leads to the idea of a universal basic income (UBI). In this respect, the socialist project, Cybersyn, is of great interest because it constituted a prototype of a data- and people-related idea to solve this problem. The aim was to increase the country's production, while counteracting rising unemployment through a socialist paradigm, which is obviously pertinent to the development of Industry 4.0. Although Cybersyn can be considered as an early prototype and catalyst, today's exponentially greater computational power has made such systems real, and humans are often excluded from them. Human beings are also positively affected by digital transformation. Herein, the current work contributes to the ethical debate concerning the digital transformation of society.

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INTRODUCTION

We live in a time where the digital transformation is causing a massive transformation of life as we know it (Stowasser, 2019). Technology has converted mankind into a real-time sensor that can measure almost everything and collect large amounts of data (Tegmark, 2017, pp. 23-31). This leads to a new evolutionary step, as promoted by Max Tegmark in *Life 3.0* (Tegmark, 2017). In fact, this would mean that data and humans would form a new symbiosis, in which the distinction between man and machine would be removed. In addition Yuval Harari declares in his book *Homo Deus*, that *Homo Sapiens* will be replaced by a new entity (Harari, 2017). If this constitutes a desirable future is not yet clear and is ultimately up to each individual to decide. However, this symbiosis, which has not yet occurred, is based on human-machine relations and its evolutionary process. This addresses the ethical problem of the relation of man and machine in the 20th Century.

An interesting difference in approaches of understanding the relation between humans and machines has been identified by Thomas Lamarre (Lamarre, 2012). Lamarre perceives two different types of relations of man to machine, one which refers to Martin Heidegger and the other to Norbert Wiener. Heidegger promotes a deconstructionist understanding of an “essence of technology” from a linguistic perspective, which considers everything through the lens of law (as a moral view) and being. Andreas Luckner writes that technical thinking and acting are therefore already contradictory forms of work, to the extent that they concern making use of available means to transcend labor (Luckner, 2008, p. 45). On the other hand, historically, the development of more efficient machines has aimed to increase commodification in order to make existing work more effective. Only the development of an Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) would finally succeed in the goal set by Andreas Luckner, i.e., to overcome the labors of work. Whether or not human beings would then achieve happiness constitutes a different question. Especially, the definition of happiness presents challenges, as different cultures probably possess different understandings of happiness, which leads to a general ethics problem in developing the goals for an AGI. For further exploration of Heidegger and his ideas about human-technical relations, please see Luckner (2008).

Norbert Wiener, however, employs a different approach. With his cybernetic model, Wiener explores the distinction between animal and machine. This, in the view of the French philosopher Gilbert Simondon, is dangerous as it reduces human beings and society to a machine (Lamarre, 2012). Simondon’s contention is probably related to a tactical mistake (Glanville, 2012) made by Norbert Wiener, who published the book *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Wiener, 1948) prior to his publication of *The Human Use of Human Beings* (Wiener, 1954). Ranulph Glanville assumes that if Norbert Wiener had

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