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MUSIC 265A

Reading Response Chapter 8

Overall, this chapter gave me hope for the future of design, and technology as a whole. But one thing that personally scared me a little was Ge’s quote “Technology offers **vast, new possibilities**… while promising **nothing**, and yet somehow this **suits** us.” (Page 400). I’m really not sure that this suits *me* the way Ge thinks it does. After reading this sentence, I had to put the book down and think for a while. When it comes to creating, I think I like to play it safe, which I didn’t realize until I read this quote. The thought of trying to make something without the promise of it being possible scares me. I like to know what I’m doing and how I’m going to do it before starting, because I don’t want to invest my time in something impossible. I like knowing that my work will create something that works, instead of starting down on a path and hoping for the best. But I think this is holding me back. If everyone had these same hesitations, we as a society would never make any advancements, because we would only create what we already know to be possible, and we would never create anything *new*. But I also don’t know how to be more adventurous in terms of design. I hate the idea of wasting time on a fruitless exploit, and it’s hard for me to get around this hesitation. But maybe this is something to work on.

I also want to talk about Asimov’s Laws of Robotics, in terms of the idea of humans being no more than complex robots. Do humans follow these three laws? In a perfect society, we would follow Rules 1 and 3, but this is simply not the case. Our world has, and has always had, murderers, which no matter the circumstances, violates Rule 1. This is not to say that murder is never justified, but every time someone harms another human being, even in self-defense, Rule 1 is broken. Then there’s also the problem of suicide, which by definition breaks Rule 3. If humans are considered complex machines, can we classify these instances in “bugs” in our “code”? And how can we apply Rule 2 to human beings? Taken literally, it would imply that humans must always take orders given to them from a human being (as long as those orders don’t hurt a human being). We all know that this most certainly isn’t the case – we have all been asked to do something and forgotten, or decided that we didn’t *need* to “follow that order”. We could also understand orders as societal rules, such as governmental rules, but we all break those too (jaywalking, for example). Rule 2 could also be understood, instead of “orders given to [human beings] by human beings”, as “orders given to [human beings] by a higher being”, which could mean a universal force or a God of some kind. But even in this case, religious people seldomly completely follow the rules of their religion (Christians aren’t technically allowed to eat shellfish, but most people do not take this literally). If humans don’t follow any of these rules, can we say that they aren’t robots? Or are we so “complex” that we can take these rules as guidelines, but because of our free will, we’re allowed to break them? I like to think that humans are more than machines, although the more I learn about computers, the more I can see the similarities. I think that one day, maybe in the not-too-distant future, we will be able to build very realistic humans (not only on the outside, but on the inside too!). At this point, if humans are able to be “built”, what separates us from machines? At that point, I just don’t know.