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The Use of Advanced Technologies In Government to Promote the Ethical Growth of People

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ABSTRACT
Digital Transformation, like Business Process Reengineering, seeks a radical change of processes within organizations. Digital Transformation however is different in it seeks to use advanced information technology, such as artificial intelligence, to empower the revised processes in which technology replaces human actors in performing functions. This has become major effort within governmental organizations. While governments had slowly moved to adopt such technologies, the COVID-19 restrictions demonstrated the ability of these technologies and driven a widespread interest on the part of citizens to have these technologies implemented. Governments are therefore seeking to not just “do digital” but “be digital”. This move toward increased use of advanced technology creates new ethical challenges for governmental organizations. Implemented incorrectly, we could be headed in the direction of several different dystopian potential futures predicted by science fiction such as dehumanized people living under the control of technology (Logan’s Run), humans merged with and under control of technology (Star Trek Borg), near eradication and enslavement of humans (The Matrix), a robot uprising (I Robot, Terminator, Colossus: the Forbin Project). While none of these potential futures is anywhere near to being realized, it is necessary now to begin the conversation around how advanced technologies will be employed. The question is how can we implement technologies such as AI, IoT, and data analytics in government such that government becomes more efficient and effective while preserving our essential humanity and dignity?

This paper examines how digital transformation of governmental organizations can ethically be done through the lens of a virtue ethics-based approach which seeks to ensure that as our society transforms through the use of information technology, we can retain our humanity and even flourish as people. In the paper, we examine the nature of ethics and virtue ethics, and the role of government in supporting individuals in pursuing ethical development. Then we examine various technologies and how they could be implemented as part of a digital transformation of government with their potential impact on their ability to live as fully functioning humans and those avoid the dystopian futures of science fiction.

We conclude that virtue ethics teaches us that we need to implement such advanced technology within government in a way that is anthropocentric, where technology exists to support humans and is under the control of humans; provides support for basic human rights such as those articulated by the UN Declaration of Human Rights (United.Nations, 1948) so that humans can have the freedom to pursue their goals and experiment with their lives within a stable society; and digital transformation of government should be not used if it would result in the dehumanization of people through the short circuiting of their moral development or reducing humans to the servants of machines. Rather, these technologies should be used to extend and enhance human capabilities to allow humans to be able to accomplish more and to advance in becoming fully human.

KEYWORDS
Digital Transformation, Government, Virtue Ethics, Anthropocentrism, AI

REFERENCES