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A case study of 'Human-Centric' Artificial Intelligence: Using different normative ethical perspectives to discuss Man-Machine Teaming and Meaningful Human Control

The European Commission's High-Level Expert Group on AI advocates a 'human-centric' approach to developing and deploying AI systems; 'resting on a commitment to their use in the service of humanity and the common good, with the goal of improving human welfare and freedom' (2019). This ambition is worthwhile indeed, e.g., to provide an alternative to business-driven or state-driven approaches to the development and deployment of AI, associated with the US and China respectively. But what exactly do we mean when we say that we want a 'human-centric' approach to AI? And what could a 'human-centric' AI system look like in, say, a delicate case?

We looked at one particularly delicate case, in which Man-Machine Teaming and Meaningful Human Control are paramount: 'three soldiers and a drone': three troops are out in the field, with a mission to protect a specific area against enemy troops; they use an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (with a camera; but without weapons) to support them in their task. We used four normative ethical viewpoints to look at this case: consequentialism, deontology, relational ethics, virtue ethics. For each viewpoint we developed an optimal scenario ('What would Bentham, Kant, Gilligan, Aristotle do?'), e.g., with an 'appropriate allocation of agency' between people and technology, and in line with military 'command and control' structures and processes.

Based on these scenarios we discuss ways in which mobilizing different normative ethical viewpoints can help to clarify cases like this, both theoretically and practically.