Review of: "[Commentary] Programming and Kant"

Piotr ROSÓŁ[1]

1 Academia Pedagogiki Specjalnej

The poetic and imaginative narrative the author uses makes the reader think about "Ghost in the Shell" and "Psycho Pass" - philosophically engaged cultural depictions of interactions between technology and society, programming and its normative consequences. In "Psycho Pass"'s imagined society relies on code and highly advanced programming to provide moral code and tools of norm enforcement. In So Kataigiri article we read that "ethical God" "embodies the ultimate good code". I think that this is a goal which is impossible to attain. The good code is good for a particular purpose - for example to program a robot to respond in a particular manner to actions of its users, but code can not be modelled after categorical imperative, since it is alway instrumental for human aims. Whereas categorical imperative shall provide moral framework not only for the ultimate good behaviour, but also for choosing morally valuable goals, as well as for the non-instrumental treatment of other human beings. The last two expectations are impossible to fulfil in programming and make ultimate good code in Kantian sense something impossible to achieve.

The philosophical frameworks which could be of better use to achieve the goal of describing the good code would be "communicative reason" as described by Jurgen Habermas, Bruno Latour's "modes of existence" or "aim oriented empiricism" by Nicholas Maxwell. In all those cases there would be some space to negotiate between different programming styles and between different purposes to which programming is used. In the eyes of the reviewer Kant's categorical imperative is better in making programmers and computer engineers more conscious of their responsibility - as in such a statement "program in such a way that your programming would be impossible to use to instrumentalize other human beings" and not as a way to justify common programming code of good practises.