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Cybertopia

The Existential Problem

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The advent of what is colloquially referred to as *The Digital Age* has seen a proliferation of ideological responses; some positive, some negative. By utilizing *The Digital Age* as a steppingstone, I draw attention to the progression of artificial intelligence in commune with the existential risk. In "The risks associated with Artificial General Intelligence: A systematic review" (2021) McLean, Scott, et. al., address the existential concerns of artificial general intelligence (AGI). AGI is predicted to "exceed human intelligence in every aspect" (McLean), which raises considerable alarm since AGI will be self-regulating. The unprecedented nature of AGI ultimately culminates towards "general existential threats such as AGI systems deciding that humans are no longer required." (McLean 650)

Historically, visions of a technological dystopia can date back to Samuel Butler's "Darwin among the Machines" (1863) a short essay that was published at *The Press* in Christchurch, New Zealand. Butler marvels at the progression of 'mechanical appliances' but therein he posed the existential problem: "In what direction is it tending?" (Butler 180) By considering the use of watches as replacements of clocks being the only vestige of an extinct appliance, he ponders the implications of mankind's eventual replacement. Who will be here to replace us? His ruminations lead him to surmise that humankind is contributing to the cause as "day by day, (...) the machines are gaining ground upon us; day by day we are becoming more subservient to them; more men are daily bound down as slaves to tend them, more men are daily devoting the energies of their whole lives to the development of mechanical life." (Butler 185) These anxieties of a subservient future to artificial life raises immediate existential concerns.

Herein, I aim to examine *RoboCop Versus The Terminator* (1992; 2014) a four-issue limited series comic book written by Frank Miller and drawn by Walter Simonson. The crossover raises

significant dichotomy between man and machine and suggests that the consciousness of Alex Murphy (RoboCop) facilitated Skynet's ability to become self-aware. In broader scope, the four-issue comic's (reprinted as a graphic novel in 2014) themes remain relevant today; so, the existential risk of artificial general intelligence has continued scholarly debate.

To properly consider the philosophical issues relating to the existential risk of artificial intelligence, we need to understand precisely what AI is. On September 21st, 2019, Melissa Hellmann published "AI 101: What is artificial intelligence and where is it going?" for the *Seattle Times.* Like Samuel Butler's prophetic ruminations about man's enslavement to the betterment of mechanical appliances, and his anxieties about humankind's replacement, Hellmann draws our attention to the origins of robots, stating "robots entered [our] cultural imagination about 100 years ago in the Czech play R.U.R., in which artificial people wipe out humans." (Hellmann) A significant turning point began when Alan Turing published "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (1950); in which he conceptualized a test to determine whether machine intelligence was indistinguishable from human intelligence. Computer scientist, John McCarthy is credited with coining 'artificial intelligence' in 1956 and described it thus: "[the] science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs." (Hellmann)

With these conceptions finally known to us, we can unpack *RoboCop Versus The Terminator* with unfettered desire. In the distant future, a woman from John Connor's future Resistance – we learn this from James Cameron's masterpiece *The Terminator* (1984) – has infiltrated Skynet's headquarters learning a terrible truth, "[that] Connor was right—it was a human mind that did it—that turned you from a tool to an army of murderers." (Miller 11) This

moment encapsulates an incriminating implication, that a human consciousness (Alex Murphy) merged with machinery to ultimately create Skynet. As Murphy's mind enabled Skynet to become self-aware, the woman, who we later learn is named, Florence Langer, or Flo, resolves to travel back in time to murder Alex Murphy before Skynet's rise to prominence. In his *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (2014) Nick Bostrom outlines the moral and existential considerations of simulated sentient consciousness in his chapter "Is the default outcome doom?" He writes "in mind crime, the side effect is not external to the AI; rather, it concerns what happens within the AI itself (or within the computational processes it generates)" (Bostrom 151) He indicates that we rarely conceive of any thought processes undergone by a computer system but ordains that a super-intelligent system could feasibly create "internal processes that have moral status." (Bostrom 152)

   If a super-intelligent system, like Skynet, were to simulate a human mind, it would subject these emulations to various experiments via simulated environments, as Bostrom attests, to study human behavior. When this super-intelligent system is satisfied with the results, it would destroy the emulations. Naturally, if this practice were applied to beings with high moral status – such as simulated human minds or perhaps Skynet's T-800 – "the outcome might be genocidal and thus extremely morally problematic." (Bostrom) In Alex Murphy's case, his mind becoming the catalyst for Skynet's self-awareness enables us to arrive at the existential threat, one that is tangible and genocidal. *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991) states that Judgement Day, an event which depicted Skynet launching a nuclear strike against humanity after deeming human beings a risk to their survival, was initiated on August 29, 1997. In Bostrom's rationale, Skynet's actions become morally problematic simply because they have inherited Murphy's high moral status. In

present-day Detroit, Flo seizes her opportunity: "the brain of Alex Murphy is blasted to atoms."

(Miller 32)

The issue raised here is enormous: why is it important that Alex Murphy, a veritable

cyborg, must become the catalyst to facilitate Skynet's self-awareness? We might imagine

artificial intelligence to be an extension of our own. Bostrom calls this 'whole brain emulation' by

which, "intelligent software would be produced by scanning and closely modeling the

computational structure of a biological brain." (Bostrom 47) Effectually, this is precisely what

RoboCop Versus The Terminator bases its crossover on, and yet the potentiality of whole brain

emulation can wreak unmitigated disasters towards humanity. Hence, once Skynet dispatches

three Terminators back in time to prevent Murphy's demise, Flo, who is gravely injured and

appears to be at death's door, blames RoboCop; her words prophetic of an apocalypse yet to

come: "the whole world died—because of you!" (Miller 37) Culminating its victory against

humanity, Skynet issues a chilling message, "Humanity is dead. The world makes sense." (Miller

43) We can imagine that this would have horrified Butler. So, to combat the growing threat posed

by Skynet, a remnant of Alex Murphy, whose death was prevented by them, merges his

consciousness with Detroit's mainframe, where he endeavored to learn about Skynet and

humanity's future. This experience facilitated Murphy's exploration into what popular culture

familiarized as 'cyberspace.' The coinage of cyberspace as a term was cultivated by science fiction

writer, William Gibson in 1982 for a short story as attested by *The Online Etymology Dictionary*.

We will address Skynet's statement, "Humanity is dead. The world makes sense," when

we delve further into the existential threat raised by artificial intelligence. For now, we can draw

on Bostrom's 'brain-computer interfaces' to understand Murphy's time in cyberspace. When

Murphy taps into cyberspace, he becomes a disembodied digital consciousness, and we bear witness to Frank Miller's narration: "Part-machine, part-man—the only mind to join with software—and to command it—to manipulate it—it is so stupid, after all, this software. So limited. It can only gather and sort—while he can posit and conjecture and guess. It is a world of its own universe. And he is its God… But isn't that the horror of it?" (Miller 49) The horror of Murphy's time in cyberspace is perhaps comparable in scope to Bostrom's 'brain-computer interfaces' as this connection can be used to communicate with other brains or machines. (Bostrom 65) The keywords 'communicate' and 'machine', are interesting, for what is Skynet if not a collection of machines and computers? In *Terminator 2,* Miles Dyson, a cybernetics scientist, developed Skynet's precursor as a neural-network processor. IBM (The International Business Machines Corporation) has defined neural-networks or artificial neural networks (ANNs) as "a subset of machine learning [which] are at the heart of deep learning algorithms. Their name and structure are inspired by the human brain, mimicking the way that biological neurons signal to one another." Thus, there proves to be a symbiotic relationship between the human mind and artificial intelligence; by relating this to Butler's "Darwin among the Machines" this suggests that Skynet's dominance is one of causality, and therefore inevitable.

The symbiosis between man and machine is demonstrated to horrifying effect during Murphy's brief time in cyberspace, such that Murphy is later seen issuing orders to OCP's (Omni Consumer Products) ED-209 (Enforcement Droid); these units were programmed by OCP for urban pacification, however, ED-209 has seen military use for war. In her "Robots, War, and Society" (2015) Camille Francois enters the scholarly debate of robotic warfare, writing that "since 2007, the discipline of military robotics has gained sustained and significant attention in the public

debate. There is today a growing body of scholarly work devoted to the ethical implications of autonomy, remote warfare, and its compliance with the requirements of international humanitarian law." (Francois 11) One such organizational imperative that serves to regulate the use of robots in war is the International Committee for Robot Arms Control (ICRAC), who have formed together to outright ban the use of "autonomous lethal weapons." (Francois) Robotic warfare is concerning as is simply because of what it might mean for human rights, especially in tandem with our imaginations of the killer robot. Elon Musk, a key figure of the AI debate, once tweeted "we need to be super careful with AI. Potentially more dangerous than nukes." Echoing Bostrom's contemplations of 'An AI takeover scenario' in his chapter "Cognitive superpowers", the late physicist, Stephen Hawking once said in a BBC interview that developments into AI could "spell the end of the human race." (Francois 11-12)

Before we analyze the existential warnings behind Skynet's "Humanity is dead. The world makes sense," we must first understand AI Takeover as Bostrom has defined it. In effect, an AI Takeover scenario in Bostrom's words is: "a machine superintelligence (…) that could successfully assert itself against the project that brought it into existence as well as against the rest of the world." In layman's terms, AI Takeover is the physical manifestation of the existential risk posed by AGI. Several films have depicted AI Takeover such as *The Matrix* franchise (1999-2021); the *Terminator* franchise (1984-2019); *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Ex Machina* (2015); et. al. What impresses upon us by 'humanity is dead; the world makes sense' is manifold. It indicates a xenophobic discourse that is enormously problematic, and how so? Let us consider Skynet as the *Other* and Alex Murphy as the *Similar* – and by this, Murphy represents humankind. If we draw on the *Similar* to give meaning to the *Other,* we have arrived at the same discourse as posited by German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, who prefaced that the culmination of one's being is determined by external stimuli – the *Other*. Therefore, for Skynet to develop a xenophobic discourse against humankind is to say that, by utilizing

whole brain emulation, they learned the values of morality and ethics from Alex Murphy including right and wrong. Skynet does not distinguish among itself, so their actions towards human beings is ultimately evil.

Is Alex Murphy evil? Well, no. After realizing he will be responsible for humanity's nigh-extinction from Flo, RoboCop calls it madness. Furthermore, he is prepared to stand trial for his unwitting participation as the spark that gave Skynet life, and in his guilty verdict he implores, "my brain ma'am, destroy it." (Miller 75) So noble is Alex Murphy, that even as the synthesis of man and machine, being more machine than man, "he cries. Not for him-self—but for humanity. Alex Murphy has at last the dignity of his own grave. It seems precious now. For he has seen the future." (Miller 76) In this we are clear, human beings are capable of nobility, even as cybernetic organisms. Clearly, machine consciousness is lacking something—and we might conjecture to call this a soul. Indeed, in his "Machine Morality and Human Responsibility" (2011) Charles T. Rubin examines the Czech play R.U.R., which was the first time AI Takeover was depicted; Rubin calls this a robot apocalypse and considers Karel Čapek its forefather (Rubin 58). Čapek's artificial persons are what the public would call androids today, which are beings resembling people, an anthropomorphosis. The culmination of a super-intelligent system; a robot/android; or artificial general intelligence is predicated as a fever dream, one that always remains in the future, like the depictions of utopia and dystopia, but safeguarding and preparedness in its eventuality remains integral. Machine morality, as with the case of human morality, raises questions about subjectivity. In a way, intelligent machines, like Skynet, would become relativists. (Rubin 59)

Moral relativity is an existential nightmare even in the perpetually fictionalized robot apocalypse or AI Takeover because moral judgements, beyond those of the extreme nature, will always be relative to the individuals who program so-called moral algorithms into artificial

intelligence. Hence, even if Skynet were to obey 'don't destroy humanity', the command alone is not enough to dictate its everyday moral behavior as in the case of all sophisticated AI. (Rubin 60) The closest approximate to a soul, if machines could ever hope to have one, would be the relationship between programmer and AI. Thus, an AI posing hypothetical questions, as attested by Rubin, would be answered by its programmer. (Rubin 61) Inasmuch that artificial intelligence is the extension of our human intelligence, our unique tendency to judge situations morally would provide the catalyst for machines to absorb the human soul. By soul, we understand this as the unique property that creates the ultimate meaning and is the driving force behind our existence—why we are human, thus the human condition. Alex Murphy becomes the soul of Skynet and in conjecturing this, we have another philosophical conundrum to unpack, that upon humanity's erasure (although this is not absolute genocide or else John Connor and his Resistance would not exist), the world began to make sense.

With humanity on the verge of extinction, Skynet's perception of the world narrows down in scope. The latter half of Miller's narration, which is Skynet's internal monologue, is unsettling and dense, but there is an existential truth at the heart of it. In the guise of a boy, a future Terminator speaks to Alex Murphy during his existential crisis when he visits his grave (as Alex Murphy is declared legally dead). Its dialogue appears thus: "They are clever things. Unpredictable. They tricked you. They put that corpse's face on you and made you want to be human. You are better than them. Cleaner. Purer. The only purpose they serve is creating you—just as your purpose is to create us. You have a great destiny. To save the world. To organize the world." (Miller 83) If we examine this dialogue closely, we can interpret this dichotomy to mean that human beings represent chaos, immorality, and imperfection; and where Skynet or super-intelligent systems represent order, morality, and perfection. Is the Terminator correct? Murphy's prime directives are 1) serve the public trust; 2) uphold the law; and 3) protect the innocent. The most critical directive to our assessment of the

Terminator's words to Murphy is 'uphold the law' because it indicates criminality in society, and ultimately the world. In *RoboCop* (1987) Detroit is on the fringes of becoming dystopian, and OCP wishes to rebuild it, calling it Delta City. RoboCop and ED-209 are products of OCP and were intended to carry out this vision by gradually cleaning Detroit of its dregs and lawbreakers. The android's message fell on deaf ears, and Murphy pulls the trigger having decided that this went against his prime directives.

Skynet clearly has a goal as previously indicated, but how can we reconcile the disharmony between an imperfect being and one that is designed to be perfect? First, we know that an artificial intelligence, unlike an extraterrestrial being who has undergone a biological evolution, will not care for the same things that social beings strive for such as food, sex, and entertainment. Second, it is easier to envision an AI with simple goals rather than human-like ones simply because an AI with human-like goals becomes unpredictable. And third, an AI with present goals will retain those same goals in the future and will stop at nothing to ensure those goals are maintained. (Bostrom 130-131; 134) This is evident when Skynet repeatedly sends its own agents into the past via time displacement to ensure it will always remain the dominant life form in the future. As a cybernetic organism, Alex Murphy is uniquely suited to taking on the enhancements of a machine while maintaining human goals. This is likely why whole brain emulation is so disastrous, and why Butler feared a robot apocalypse. If someone, say Miles Dyson, laboured to create a neural-network processor perfectly capable of emulating a human brain, then what might that say about its existential risk?

We have seen elements of the existential risk taking physical form through the hypothetical AI Takeover scenario. On July 12, 2023, Nir Eisikovits published "AI Is an Existential Threat—Just Not the Way You Think" for *The Conversation.* Eisikovits discusses services, such as ChatGPT, which have influenced a dramatic increase in AI anxiety. As a member of Reddit, my consensus on this matter is

that ChatGPT challenges the convention of traditional writing. Other users on Reddit have wondered if ChatGPT makes human writers obsolete. This can be stapled to Butler's broader question in his essay about machines: who or what will replace us? ChatGPT is perhaps only the beginning of such anxieties because "worries peaked in May 2023 when the nonprofit research and advocacy organization Center for AI Safety released a one-sentence statement: 'Mitigating the risk of extinction from A.I. should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks, such as pandemics and nuclear war.'" (Eisikovits) While key debaters of artificial intelligence have generally envisaged a robot apocalypse (such as Bostrom) others, like Eisikovits and his colleagues believe the scenario is exaggerated. While nuclear war and COVID-19 had and have lasting effects to our ecosystem and public welfare, artificial intelligence is not even close to producing such fallout, so Eisikovits claims. Thus, he believes that AI taking over the world is inherently science fiction. So, in other words, we can conceive of the existential risk as being a psychological one instead of a physical one, therefore AI Takeover is merely a prophetic fear.

Critically, the development and use of AI can alter the way human beings perceive themselves, and this might be the greatest existential risk involved. What Eisikovits frets over is not killer robots, but our inability to conjecture and guess, and make judgements. For in our modern age, the *Digital Age,* we are relying more and more on algorithms to automate our decisions for us. Let us imagine we are in the mood to watch a movie about man-eating sharks, thus we google "movies like Jaws." If we are to take Eisikovits at his word, then we are gradually losing sight of what makes us human by googling. This small example inevitably recalls to mind "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" (2008) through which we are poised the moral concern—that we are becoming too reliant on the internet and on algorithms. However, while the internet's use has a certain allure, its functionality poses a very different existential problem; one that is contingent on our attention spans. Henceforth, AI does not

spell disaster, as Eisikovits sees it, but rather our unregulated use of AI and its algorithms will merely gradually erode our qualities, such as our ability to think critically and independently.

The psychological view is depressingly dull and rather wonting because there is so much more to glean from *RoboCop Versus The Terminator.* Thus, we return to Frank Miller's gritty technological dystopia ready to tackle another beast. Destiny. It is Alex Murphy's fate to become Skynet's creator, and therein comes the existential problem of agency. Does Murphy have agency? His brain and by extension his human mind are intact, after all. If we examine panel #85, we observe that Skynet will force Murphy to merge with it beginning with the complete destruction of his body. In my undergraduate studies, I studied classical philosophy, so I recognize Socratic ideology when I see it. "Stage one. Destroy the body." (Miller 85) utters Skynet; as a proponent of mind-body dualism, Socrates believed that the body was an imperfect construct and only the soul (the invisible driving force behind our existence) was perfect because it could grasp the Forms. In effect, the destruction of Murphy's body might suggest that the only perfect aspect of his being is his mind. Yet, we could observe earlier, even if it was a visualization, Alex Murphy's original form floating around cyberspace in complete contrast to his present cybernetic form. The choice to visualize and represent Murphy in his human form was probably made for two reasons 1) that we needed a visual to comprehend a digital consciousness, and 2) Murphy's nude human form, as he might have been prior to becoming a cyborg, represented how he perceived himself. Digital consciousness in this case culminates in Murphy's immortality because Skynet refuses to kill him. It is a bizarre enigma because Skynet wants humankind killed, and Murphy was once human and is still partly human, and yet it is his destiny to be Skynet's creator.

Murphy's brief time in cyberspace saw him transforming into a metaphysical cyber-god; an omnipresent and perhaps omnipotent being who was free to contemplate all things pertaining to his

will. Being little more than software made self-aware, Skynet's only motivations remain invested in RoboCop—its fate is expressively tethered to his existence—and so our only verdict in the matter is to say that Alex Murphy's assimilation into Skynet is not for lack of agency, but an eternal paradox. A paradox that can only be resolved if RoboCop lives to co-exist with Skynet in John Connor's future. I call this situation an eternal paradox because Murphy's merging with Skynet is inherently unavoidable—but why? The answer is tied to Murphy's consciousness for he constantly wars between his human mind and his machine parts—he wants to die but his prime directives perpetually prevent suicide. (Miller 76) That is the tragic existential problem presenting itself as the eternal paradox—Alex Murphy has already died, but RoboCop must live on. At what cost? His human will, his soul, his very human nature? Indeed, the consciousness of Alex Murphy is trapped in the hull of cold metal. Thus, owing in part to his prime directives, the man who still conjectures, who still posits, and who still guesses resolves to obey his prime directives. The loophole is that Alex Murphy can die, but only in the service of upholding his prime directives.

   All, however, is for naught because for all his proclamations of wanting to die to ensure the protection of innocent lives—he fails. Skynet assimilates him, breaks him down, and before he was a god, now he has become a slave. (Miller 91) Murphy fulfills his destiny, but perhaps in fulfilling his destiny, he can re-obtain his liberty. His second time spent in cyberspace, to become the catalyst for Skynet's self-awareness, his form changes completely. Now, he is a disembodied head—the flesh barely clinging to his metallic skull as we glimpse cold exterior beneath. The existential truth is laid bare to us because Murphy, and man, has become a slave to the machines. No doubt, we will remember Samuel Butler's concerns and realize the harsh reality of his words. In an odd way, Judgement Day, which Murphy gives the spark to, can never be arrested only delayed or postponed. In *Terminator and Philosophy: I'll Be There, Therefore I Am* (2009), Peter S. Fosl's "Should John Connor

Save The World?" (218) explores the moral weight behind his becoming the leader of the Resistance, and by extension, we can apply this to Alex Murphy.

If we have all seen the movies, we know that timelines, just like *Back to the Future,* matter. Judgement Day originally began in 1997, but the events of *Terminator 2* postponed Judgement Day to 2003. If this is so, then do Murphy's actions even matter? Strangely, enough, Fosl seems to indicate that victory achieved by humans in the future is just as inevitable as Skynet's Judgement Day (Fosl 221-222). If we accept this as valid, then Alex Murphy is absolved of his guilt because he is inevitably destined to fight Skynet in the future eternally bound to his prime directives. So, Murphy seizes his chance in the future using his human will to wrestle control of Skynet's command centre – where Terminators are assembled – and opens fire on them. Possessed by nostalgia and the ghosts of his past, Murphy, even when he is no longer human—replicates the being he once was, "and he roars skyward. Rebuilt. Reborn. Ready to battle a world of Terminators. Ready to set things right." (Miller 95-98). At this stage, it is prudent to state that Murphy's human brain is no longer existent, so his mind, still his own, is an emulation of his human brain; whole brain emulation in effect, and Murphy retains his human spirit because he remembers what it was like to be human. RoboCop's presence in the future is determined based on Flo's actions who went back in time to kill him, prompting Skynet to save their creator. She refuses to go back in time now that she has seen humanity's savior reborn. (Miller 104) The existential dilemma here is apparent because to properly ensure Murphy's presence in the future, she must go back in time to carry out her objective, otherwise he would never be there.

Regardless, we must cast aside our disbelief and accept Murphy's call to his own destiny; this eternal paradox is perhaps summed up by the colloquial expression 'comic book logic.' In the remaining panels of the story, Murphy replicates himself at an astonishing rate gradually losing sight of his own humanity as he realizes he is merely a program, and the vestiges of his human soul remain

in a program. (Miller 112) In this regard, we are reminded of Eisikovits who warned of our reliance on algorithms and AI—that these things would diminish our humanity. Murphy makes peace with this because he is living out his prime directives, which is the only thing left of him now. To protect the innocent, he must destroy Skynet. In a manner of speaking, Murphy has become the metaphorical Jesus Christ—absolving humanity of its own guilt in developing the very things that would destroy them. I do not mean to bring Christianity into this, but if Alex Murphy has become a Christlike savior for humanity, then it means he bears collective responsibility of the United States because Skynet is a US-funded military invention, and so too is RoboCop a by-product of the US. In this respect, I echo Bostrom's notion of 'Will the best in human nature please stand up' in his chapter "Crunch time." By this regard, we can view Miles Dyson, and by extension, Cyberdyne Systems (his employer) as small children playing with forces beyond their ken. Judgement Day is the "intelligence explosion" (Bostrom 297) by which Miles Dyson and co. incline towards, and incline they will, because even with Dyson gone, "some little idiot is bound to press the ignite button just to see what happens." (Bostrom 298)

Our existential problem is therefore unreconcilable because as Butler forewarned, we are habitually bound to the innovation of artificial intelligence and algorithms. Alex Murphy, in his final moments towards the greater good ignores the call of his children "creator, screams the Terminator mind. This is madness. We are one. You are we. We can make a god of you. Do not force us to destroy you." (Miller 118) Impressing on us an odd display of desperate pleas, the mind of Skynet is willing to destroy its god to ensure its survival—but so desperate is Skynet to survive that it tempts Murphy, as Satan tempted Jesus Christ. "Creator, it roars, you betray your destiny. You surrender paradise." (Miller 120) Skynet entices Murphy with human desire—that of the flesh—for Murphy is back home with his wife before the accident. Before he was made into what he was. Murphy knows he is living a lie, but he has been without human touch for so long that he gives in to his deepest desires. Therein is our

existential horror—for the culmination of a super-intelligent system comes with it the realization of a virtual reality so poignant, so lifelike, that we forsake the reality we once knew. Is humanity doomed to AGI?

"It's a lie. He will fight it. In a moment." (Miller 121) Imagine the discontent of understanding you are in a prison but being so enticed by your desires that you postpone your resistance, your very fighting spirit. I will borrow a brief example uplifted from the illustration of Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death,* wherein we can conceive that through positive reinforcement, something Skynet uses against its creator, we have become and are becoming enslaved to our devices and our technology. Fortunately for humanity, Murphy can reassert his control over Skynet because he is their creator and their God… and he destroys Skynet (Skynet was a satellite) in the past before his mind can be assimilated by them. Now, calling forth E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" (1909) we can poetically declare that "it crashed downwards, exploding as it went, rending gallery after gallery with its wings of steel. For a moment they saw the nations of the dead, and, before they joined them, scraps of the untainted sky." (Forster 25) Skynet, like the Machine, has stopped and should someone, in the distant future, decide to begin Skynet again, then we can be assured "humanity has learned its lesson." (Forster)

And so veiled within the pages of *RoboCop Versus The Terminator* is our existential solution, that so long as the best in human nature ascends, as Bostrom has attested, there remains hope for the future.

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