A Schizoanalytic Alternative of Ethics to Effective Altruism

Effective Altruism is the newest and hippest pseudoethical model produced by the new money Silicon Valley elite. This ethical model is directly derived from the work of philosopher Peter Singer. Singer, a vegan ethicist best known for his work *Animal Liberation*, now actively promotes the idea of effective altruism, as an extension of his own ethical position. His ethical model, a "negative utilitarian" model, is a model that focuses on reducing suffering in individual agents, and is rooted in discourse surrounding abuse in industrial meat production. Singer transforms the concept of suffering into a vague calculus that can be constructed and built upon by ethical "economists" to determine how to reduce suffering overall in a population. However, his ethical model has been extensively criticized, especially by those within the disability community. This is especially concerning due to effective altruists already trying to stake territories within the medical economic sector. Let's explore why Peter Singer and his ethics are questionable, and how the work of Félix Guattari can challenge things.

ISSUES WITH PETER SINGER'S MODEL

Peter Singer is an ethicist - a kind of philosopher who focuses on what is the "right" thing to do. Singer bases his model on consequentialism, or the idea that the right thing to do is based on the results of an action, rather than what the action is or other things. In that sense, I think that Singer and I agree - however, Singer then constructs a sort of calculus that can be used to identify and redistribute suffering, a form of negative utility, and essentially transforms suffering into a form of economics. The question then becomes, how can we reduce suffering as a society, and what consequences does Singer's approach result in?Here, I want to explore two of Singer's main arguments when dealing with this question, to clearly explain what his argument actually is, and the consequences of the way he particularly constructs his model: first, the belief that animals experience similar things to humans, and some may even experience consciousness similar

to humans; and second, that some humans likewise are not as capable of these similar experiences, such as certain kinds of disabled people. Both of these can be understood through the concept of proximity - essentially, Singer thinks that experiences that are more similar to our own should be prioritized; however, instead of the proximity being based on species, he believes the proximity should be based on individual lived experience.The first claim is that animals have similar experiences to humans. To Singer, because animals have similar experiences to humans, and because they can suffer like humans can, it should be wrong to have factory farms. This is a simple, straight forward and easy to understand argument. This seems all well and good, but I think there are a few very serious flaws with this particular argument. Let me emphasize that I also agree that factory farms are horrible places full of suffering - it's really the way the problem is modeled that I disagree with.One problem is that it seems to imply that experiences more similar to ours are more important than others. So the experiences of mammals, like cows and pigs, are more important than birds or fish. Oh, sure - they can still feel pain and

may have something resembling consciousness - but birds and fish have completely different neurological structures and sociological evolution, so they likely do experience more differences between that mental state and humans than those with other mammals, which may cause us to minimize their welfare in other, more subtle ways - this is quite apparent within exotic pet keeping and the complexities of quality care. But this leads to an even bigger problem. This kind of reasoning does not really give an explanation for why some actions, like having very... uh, "romantic" relations, we shall say, with animals, is not ethical. In fact, Singer brushes this aside later in his career by implying this prohibition exists just because of taboo[1], but I think this is a seriously ethically sticky situation to get involved in, because we also share a similar, and *even closer* proximity to teenagers and children - in fact, I find it hard to believe that an animal shares more in common with us than teenagers - and thus, by extension, what exactly about Singer's logic denies that these kinds of relations with children is wrong, too? As you can see, there are a lot of problems with this approach.Another big problem

focuses around the question of consciousness. We can see this strongly by those influenced by Singer's ideas, such as the propaganda channel Rational Animations - the examples they focus on almost always fixate not only on a particularly niche focus on factory farms, indicating their theoretical inspiration - but also an emphasis on exploring other kinds of consciousnesses, especially those in computers or economics. But I think this is a trap. Not that computers or economics can't have intelligences or anything resembling consciousness - I'll discuss that later. However, the problem is that, while consciousness is a very fascinating phenomenon, it also has limitations as a concept. First, unconscious things, which go beyond what might be captured in the description of a psychoanalytic unconscious described in relations between family or structures, definitely have an influence on our behavior. The reason why psychoanalysts are interested in things like dreams, jokes, slips of the tongue and sexuality is because they believe these reveal structures of the unconscious that actively impact the conscious experience. While it may be debated whether a

particular arrangement works or not, I think that psychoanalysts are correct to point out that consciousness does not account for all of what we experience. Even if psychoanalysis is not your cup of tea, no modern model of psychology or theory of mind assumes people know *everything* about what is constructing their lived experience - after all, we all know ignorance and denial exist. Furthermore, humans are not always conscious beings. Anyone could potentially be knocked unconscious for a bit - does this mean that unconscious people, due to their temporary lack of proximity to consciousness caused by being knocked out, are temporarily not moral subjects? This has very serious implications within the context of assault and unwanted touching. And most concerningly - which leads to the second claim - does this mean that people who do not form consciousness, struggle to form consciousness or are disconnected from other consciousness lose their status as moral subjects?This leads to the second claim - that Singer insists that there are cases that it is, in fact, not morally incorrect to favor a particular life over another. This may be true in some sense, but his reasoning is cold,

methodical and completely disregards life. He implies that people who struggle to compose consciousness - such as people with serious developmental or physical disabilities, but by indirect extension, those who experience schizophrenia or autism, which interferes with people's ability to compose a self or a "me" in the social context, as sometimes being morally acceptable to kill. As mentioned in my last video, Singer has stated: "killing a disabled infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person. Very often it is not wrong at all."[2] However, considering that consciousness can be transient even among so-called "normal" people, I think this lends Singer way too quickly to assume that the correct way to minimize suffering in society is to reroute resources away from "unconscious" people towards people who can have more increased sensations of happiness and decreased suffering, with less input.Singer's disgusting comments towards disabled people are often attributed as him saying that we should cull disabled children as a result of their disability, but this is a misinterpretation of his ideas. Actually, what is happening here is he is saying that disabled people

are not as good of an "ethical investment" than projects that have a higher chance to decrease suffering in many conscious agents, because these disabled people do not experience a higher level of consciousness as the rest of society does, and so do not process the value as effectively, according to Singer. Yeah I know. Big assumption. In other words, because he believes that people with transient or without conscious thought cannot comprehend difference between suffering and pleasure, there is no moral subject to these people. In this way, it makes complete sense that Singer would believe that everyone going vegan would have a much higher decrease to suffering in the world than giving resources to disabled people - because ending factory farms ends suffering for many millions of animals, versus expensive treatments to help treat individual disabled people who, in his mind, may not even be able to truly comprehend the charity they receive. However, this conceptualization is not based on material reality, ignores the real world lived experience of these kinds of disabled people and the impact on the people around them, and is an extreme threat to anyone without a socially

normalized body or psychology.First, I find it hard to believe that Singer ever considered the mother, the father, the rest of the family or the local community surrounding the disabled infant that he claims the outright murder of is not morally equivalent to killing a person - despite being a literal baby person. Even if we treat the baby as a nonperson - absurd for a so-called ethicist, I know - the mother had to carry the baby for many months only to discover that the child has a terrible illness where she will not receive almost any social support from society to help her and the child have a good life. She and the child are essentially left for dead in regards of support. His perspective comes off as very misogynistic and unsympathetic to the community for this reason. Additionally, while medicine and accessibility changes can be expensive to implement and take more time to develop, they not only have extended benefits for people who are not disabled, an effect known as "curb-cutting", but the development of these technologies can create new possibilities for disabled living in the future. For example, focusing research on helping treat and manage psychosis has allowed many psychotic people to maintain and manage their condition to function in society, so they don't have to be forced into highly restricted lives in institutions. Without this research and development, many psychotic patients would struggle to form a conscious thought or take care of themselves - even temporary intervention can have a significant impact. Just because it's a hard problem to solve doesn't mean that we should just give up! Another example - innovations in accessibility, orientation and mobility techniques and technology changed what living as a disabled person could be - in comparison to ineffective investments from wealthy businessmen and bankers trying to make a profit off of an industry that doesn't really pay off - something I will discuss this in more detail later.I think the real issue with Singer's model is both his obsession and emphasis with consciousness, and the emphasis on individual, serializable subjects with seemingly fungible suffering. Because consciousness is fickle, incomplete and hard to define, it is a construct that is rife with problems trying to analyze it. Not only this, but "suffering" itself as a concept is problematic too -

defining suffering in a universal way is really difficult, because suffering is experienced inside of our heads, and can be difficult to determine on the outside - such as with older exotic pet keepers in the past who did not realize their care may lead to major stress and even early death. Instead, an alternative to analyzing consciousness is analyzing *subjectivity* and what produces it.Subjectivity can be understood loosely as an internal function of what the subject experiences. For example, think about the sentence, "Bob is walking to the store". Bob is the subject in that sentence - he is part of a larger narrative that constructs his relation to the store, through the action of walking. What Bob experiences that leads him towards walking to the store is subjectivity - for example, perhaps previously he thought he needed some milk. As you can see, everything that has consciousness also has subjectivity - just because of how we model consciousness in general. But not every subject necessarily has consciousness! Think of the sentence, "The rock falls down the hill". In this case, the rock is the subject, and it has the same kind of narrative relations as the last sentence about going to the store. But I think you would be very hard pressed to find a rock with anything resembling consciousness. However, the rock's subjectivity is constructed by things like mass, the physics of gravity and inclines, and its position. Likewise, disabled infants, psychotic people, severely autistic people and people with serious brain damage or hydrocephalus may or may not experience consciousness, but they certainly still have subjectivity. These subjectivities could even be extremely intelligent, even without a self-referential structure like a "me".So, by rearranging the problem to use a more abstract and more consistent unit of measure, that means we can calculate the suffering of individuals more easily, right? Wrong - Remember what I said about how we can't know exactly what suffering is? Well, we don't really have access to the internal structure of subjectivity of things that aren't ourselves - heck, we don't even know everything about our own subjectivity! We can't know what it really feels like to "be a bat" as that thought experiment goes, unfortunately - we can only make a guess. So trying to calculate individual suffering is out the window, but this is probably for the best, since measuring the

problem through individuals also has its own problems - what about the suffering of whole peoples, such as those who suffer genocides? How can we measure the suffering of a whole people? The Nazi regime was not only terrible because of the people who died, but because of the lasting effects it had on victim populations, like Jews, homosexuals, disabled people and political targets, and even how their actions influenced political developments in the 20th century. In comparison to consciousness, we can use subjectivity to 1) analyze the subjects of whole groups - think of a sentence like, "millions of Jews lost their lives or fled the Nazi regime" - and 2) we don't need to know what each individual case of suffering is like among that population to understand that something bad happened. But if measuring the suffering from individuals is not a good way to solve the problem, what can analyzing subjectivity provide that actually does help us solve it?
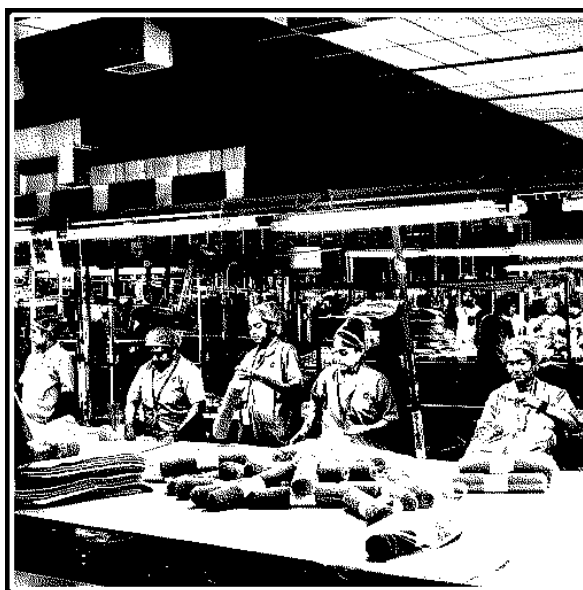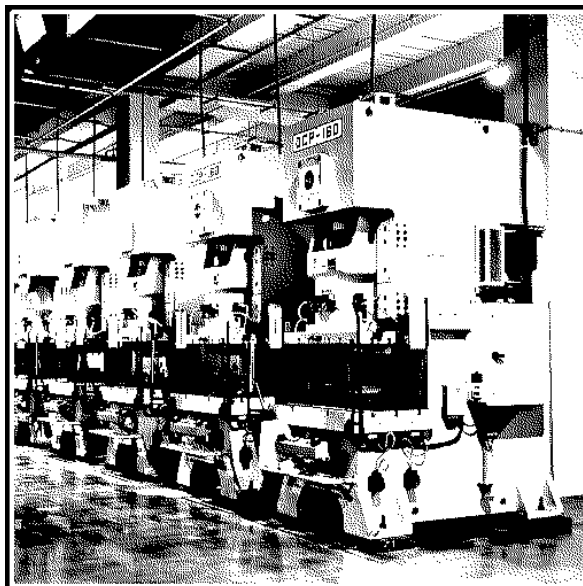
SUBJECTIVITY INSTEAD OF CONSCIOUSNESS

My man Félix Guattari always has some good ideas to mess around with - that's kind of his thing, building concepts, cooking new ideas - and his specialty is how subjectivity is produced and how it can change over time. And if those tools can't be useful, then what good are they? He thought the same thing[3]! So it's time to put those tools to work. See, instead of fixating on interpreting the internal states of something he really doesn't have access to, Guattari instead focuses on how arrangements of what he calls "abstract machines" are interacting with each other. So, a way you can think of this is that IS instead of analyzing suffering as a problem with a bunch of individuals suffering that needs to be solved by putting ethical value in the right places, he would analyze it as a bunch of systems having inputs and outputs interacting with each other - almost like, well a machine! And it's not just one machine, but the intersection of a bunch of machines - and all of those machines connect together in a bunch of complex ways to generate the processes that produces the suffering in the first place. Really, he wants us to be subjectivity engineers! Let's take the example of an animal in a factory farm. It is suffering a lot, but it's suffering is not just the junction of its feelings about being trapped in a cage. It is also part of a larger industrial process that produced its breed, makes it live for only 60 days before slaughter, live in tight conditions, and production of billions and billions of birds. Not only is the bird suffering because it's in a cage and forced to produce eggs, meat or feathers, but also because it's part of a capitalist process of production - a kind of analysis that

Singer avoids regularly and has very cold feet on - which involves many machines, including social machines, industrial machines, economic machines, biological machines and many, many others. Guattari believed that the subject forms at the intersection of all of these machines - so the bird and its suffering is actually the intersection of all of these productive forces in society and even the world at large. Our job as subjectivity engineers is to design a machine that makes things suck a little less. Obviously Singer's model isn't very good. And anyone who is an engineer for a living knows how much of a shit show that can be to make something good.Regardless, because of all of these issues with analyzing suffering, it may be better to analyze a different negative experience, that not only produces significant suffering, but can compound on itself to make things even worse - that of hopelessness. After all, I am skeptical that any ethicist would truly be able to eliminate suffering from existence, but I also believe most ethicists would agree that hopelessness is a condition that produces significant suffering - thus, logically, ethicists concerned about reducing suffering should make

hopelessness a priority. In many cases, suffering is unavoidable, and is a consequence of the unpredictability of life - although we can take steps to mitigate it, and the experience of suffering is very subjective. In comparison, hopelessness is a product of the current conditions, and can be modeled more accurately on the outside of the subject by focusing on what future possibilities can be produced by the subject. So, let's think about this for a second. A subject could project a bunch of possibilities - just interpretations of how things could go from their perspective. Then, by selecting one of those paths, they could realize it. Because there is no physical separation between the two modes, both the possible and real parts of this operation exist in a special, intertwined manner, where the possibilities produces the real arrangement of things, and the arrangement of the real world also influences the possibilities produced, at the same time - moving forward in an irreversible march. By continuously updating this process, this refreshes the state of the whole system with every development, and the entire state rearranges itself over and over, migrating structures over time. In other words, the

relationship between what really exists and what could possibly exist emanates, or emerges naturally in one piece from, all at once as one thing, constantly updating.So what is hopelessness in this possible-real modelization? Well, hopelessness is when the possibilities in the subject's "head" are reduced greatly in size, because the subject believes they are inaccessible. Again, while we can't access these possibilities in their "head", we can still project some possibilities from the outside more accurately than just "suffering". For example, being trapped physically in a cage means that you'll likely struggle to find ways to escape it. It might still be possible to escape with the right arrangement of abstract machines and events, but otherwise, your future prospects, in your mind, are quite limited. The real problem with industrial animal production is not that they are just mass producing suffering, but rather that the machines that produce the whole process transform animals that could have rich, complex futures and reduces them down to the production of their meat and bodies. The suffering is produced by the reduction of future possibilities. This is also why the solution to

saving these animals is not just merely culling them, but rather a more complicated solution - because culling them means ending all possibilities for futures, and their subjectivities collapse and deterritorialize upon death. It is interesting that Singer advocates for the rights of animals instead of culling them, but the inverse for disabled people, and gives no adequate reason why. Similarly, capitalism reduces human beings and workers down to the surface-level production of their bodies, which is why we as workers are more valued for what profits we can produce for a company (value that really should be for the workers) rather than beings with rich internal worlds that can map countless potential possibilities. Interestingly, Singer seems completely unaware of how the modern workforce is in a similar bind as the animals in factory farms.

# EXISTENTIAL TERRITORIES AND PROTO-SCHIZOANALYTIC MODEL OF ETHICS

We can model this problem through Guattari's toolkit with a concept he calls an "existential territory". But what the heck is an existential territory? Well, its complicated... very complicated... but he provides some detailed and very... complicated explanations in Schizoanalytic Cartographies to help us conceptualize this problem more readily. To Guattari, existential territories are like "cutouts" - basically, almost like a space cut out of reality where something can exist. They are finite, relatively stable objects, but also discontinuous, discrete blocks - unlike something like "flows" which are continuous and have no cut borders. In other words, it is a virtualized "space" that a subject's internal world is structured around and processed in. You, yourself, your subjectivity - that exists in an existential territory. Everything you know and can control in the world exists in it. So, we can imagine the extents and structure of this territory change over time as the situation changes and evolves. Oh, so now you have to stay at work for 8 hours - your existential territory is reduced to the workplace, of course unless you decide to make a run for it! And then when you get off work? Well, now you're driving home, or riding public transport, or whatever, and your existence passes through liminal spaces towards your destination. Or, perhaps you get so automatic in a task, such as walking to the store, that you notice yourself drifting off - your subjectivity is being broken apart into apparatuses of a larger process, a kind of "machinic enslavement". Either way, with each development, your model of the situation changes, and the extents of your existence evolve and adapt. And so, this territory is a virtual structure of what really, currently exists.Remember how I said that consciousness was a poor way to understand complicated intelligences? Well, the subjectivity produced in existential territories allows for all sorts of possible arrangements to have intelligence. For example, while a rock doesn't "think", it does

have properties and physical functions that it interacts with that produces the conditions of it falling. If this is the case, then it is not that consciousness can suffer that makes things so complicated, but that there are existential territories everywhere, intersecting all over the place, that have their own internal codes of reference, their own management techniques. In this sense, Guattari believes that intelligences are not just limited to beings with similar consciousness as ours - but potentially anything, including the relationship between galaxies, or the space between quarks[4].Now, let compare that to the actual state of what really, currently exists. The biggest difference between this and the existential territory is that there is no structure to the actual state, just continuous flows that direct where things could go. To use the machine example, we can separate a computer into parts, like the GPU, the CPU, the memory, the hard drive - but in the actual real world state of the computer, its just one big thing that "stuff" seems to flow through. This is true for automobiles, plumbing, etc, and also true for subjectivity. This is true for automobiles, plumbing etc., and

it's also true for subjectivity. In Schizoanalytic Cartographies, the difference between these two things is a property called "discursivity" - the existential territory "cutout" exists as a series of clear boundaries, while the flows exist as a continuous stream. You can kinda see now how these things can exist at the same time, but flows are plural, and these cutouts are unary. Now, this is all fine and dandy, but how exactly does this process update the existential territories and flows? This is where the concept of possibilities come in. See, up to this point, we have only been talking about what is real, what really exists currently as it does. But what is cool, is that both existential territories and their flows open up possibilities of future arrangements. This does something called "deterritorialization" - which is the breaking apart of a structure into a bunch of parts that can still represent it. You can think of it, for example, as breaking up all the parts of a computer to project all the possible ways that it might possibly function.So what happens with these territories and flows? Well, real existential territories are deterritorialized into *Incorporeal Universes* - yeah, that's a crazy

name, I know, but it's basically just a bunch of possibilities projected by the current existential territory. And flows? Well, they become deterritorialized into something called "machinic phyla", which are continuous and plural like the flows, but also represent a wide set of possible arrangements. To be fair though machinic phyla are pretty hard to grasp and I am kind of struggling to wrap my head around it too. Either way, I think you can get the idea - the state is updated by deterritorializing into a set of possibilities, and then is reterritorialized into a new state through effective selection of one of the possibilities to attempt to actualize. This is an oversimplification of course - Schizoanalytic Cartographies is a really tough book - but it gives us just enough to conceptualize a new model of ethics that addresses the issues with Singer's approach.
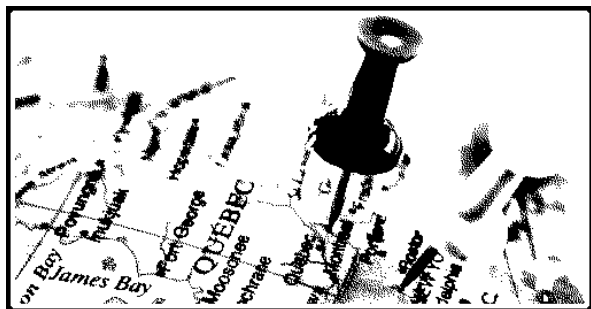
REAL WORLD EFFECTIVE FAILURES

So, with this new way to model ethics with Schizoanalysis, we now understand that really, Singer's approach is just one way to engineer the ethics to try to improve the situation, and it is a bad solution that causes a lot of problems. Think of it like a car that may get you from point A to point B, but it stalls randomly, emits a lot of exhaust and the transmission gear teeth are worn down nearly to smooth nubs - you're going to be in for a bad time. Maybe we can't design a race car, but maybe we can build something reliable that we can work with. With this realization in mind, we can now see what the real problem with trying to transform ethics into this economy really causes. With regards to disabled people, we shouldn't be taking away their futures just because the problems surrounding disabled people are expensive! Rather, we should be helping them exist, because the more futures they can potentially produce, the more those futures could help other people, too. In

fact, the last thing we should do is destroy disabled futures.After all, it was the hard work of blind people in the past, like Louis Braille, who developed his writing system in response to a sighted guy (Valentin Haüy) who thought blind books should be written to look like sighted characters. The sighted were threatened by this change of control, leading to resistance from teachers; and later, Braille's work was mass burned by the sighted school assistant director P. Armand Dufau, to try to maintain control over the student body through pushing a different reading system.[5] Or what about the work of Michael Curran and James Teh, creators of the free and popular screenreader NVDA, that actually innovated the blind way of life - as opposed to sighted people who assumed what was best for blind people, who often historically hindered progress. Or what about the revolutionary game design of VGStorm[6], whose innovations continue to be downplayed by a sighted industry? This is also true for many other disabilities, like autism. This is why a patient-oriented, rather than product-oriented, approach is necessary - only by interacting directly with patients can medicine produce what is necessary for treatment.

Even from a more medically oriented perspective, the preservation of disabled lives continues to contribute towards our knowledge of medicine and can help many more people than just the disabled person receiving individual treatment, and there is a growing interest in Western medicine in understanding and incorporating this experience. What this means is that a Guattarian approach to ethics involves the analysis of possible futures, and the rearrangement of systems to try to produce futures that have a better arrangement of subjects and the abstract machines producing them - kind of like a complex ecosystem but for subjects, not just for species - instead of converting one single problem - suffering - into a value form.Now, let's analyze the impact of earlier attempts to try to implement good will through investing resources through the extremely rich and wealthy. After all, transforming ethical problems, especially regarding disability, into an economic question of optimizing resources has serious problems in practice. Those with the resources to distribute not only are completely unaware and alienated from the needs of the people they are trying to "help",

but it also produces a situation where vulnerable people in a bad situation can be taken advantage of by opportunistic businessmen looking to clean up their image. Two major examples of how this impacts both medicine and accessibility - Theranos and Second Sight.Theranos was a highly publicized example of a company that claimed to make major disruptions in the medical industry, receiving a ridiculous amount of funding. This company attempted to produce a magical piece of medical testing equipment that could run hundreds of tests very quickly. At the time, and currently, medical testing for a wide range of conditions can take anywhere from a few minutes to get a result, to many weeks using complex, expensive giant machines, so if this product could really be produced and brought to market, it could be a huge game changer. Key word being could - what Theranos was proposing was completely impossible due to many technical limitations and conflicts between testing processes. The creator, Elizabeth Holmes, was more concerned about being a young female billionaire in tech than actually producing a functional product, and was so detached

from the medical industry and the production challenges of the device she was trying to manufacture that she believed that, like Elon Musk and Steve Jobs, that predatory, abusive labor practices could force something amazing into existence, and she could take the credit for it. However, in her case, it didn't pan out, because her product was completely impossible to make work because of material constraints, and she later was accused of fraud and had a very highly publicized trial. However, it was not until it became incredibly obvious that her company was held together on hopes and dreams that the investors actually saw a problem.Meanwhile, Second Sight actually did have a viable product. This company produced special bionic eyes that used cameras and a special implant on a patient's retina that would allow for a blind person to see vague light shapes - a great improvement for blind people who have lost all of their vision. The problem? The company went bankrupt in 2020, and quite literally left their over 350 users in the dark when the hardware failed, left hanging with no real recourse. They just randomly turned off one day and left their

users completely blind with a useless metal implant now embedded to their nervous system - the consequences of which are still poorly understood. Mind you, this is not just some trivial vaporware that discontinued service - these people implanted a medical device into their eye that is so privatized that updating, correcting or removing it is practically medically undocumented, it could be dangerous or result in chronic pain to remove, and impacts their ability to receive important medical testing such as MRI scans. Imagine being stuck with that in your body because a company went under, and not even have the courtesy to find out through a message - not even brand ambassador Terry Byland received the courtesy that his life changing device was now no longer supported and could end at any time[7]. This is the real world, material consequences of our bodies being used as test experiments by privatized business models.As you can see, Peter Singer has already been proven incorrect on how to handle these complex issues multiple times. Instead, what we need to do is focus on how to improve the prospective futures of existential

territories. It is impossible to prescribe a solution to all of these problems in a YouTube video, but that's the point - these kinds of problems need to be solved by people that they are related to. A one size fits all solution just simply does not work. While this ontology of a schizoanalytic ethics does not tell us what is necessarily the right thing to do, it does give us the tools to analyze the problem in a more sophisticated way - to allow us to attempt to rearrange the territories in a more conscious and proactive manner.

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