

## Some Limits on the Applied Ethics of Technology Considered as a Problem in Cognitive Design

### Abstract

Cognitive limitations and the complexity of social interaction limit what we should expect from applied ethics. We sketch five limitations linked to our research at UBC: 1. Hindsight bias makes us overconfident; 2. Conflict undermines communication and ethics; 3. Ethics is not a game theoretic equilibrium, so successful moral norms are conditional; 4 In open, liberal societies, conditional moral norms require cognitively/computationally intractable knowledge. 5. There are many possible equilibrium states/moralized social worlds so knowledge of better alternatives is likely to be spotty and the dynamics of transition very complex. We support these claims with a mix of informal behavioral economics and game theory, and our recent empirical research.