

A Working Paper Draft
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SOCIO-ENGINEERING PROBLEMS No. 25-A

A series of manuscripts on the social relations of engineering and related philosophical questions dealing with the interaction of science and society. Distribution is limited to reviewers and discussion groups for criticism prior to consideration for possible publication.

A CHECKING CHART FOR THE USE OF
COMPUTER ENGINEERS

DEVELOPED FROM A "GENERALIST"
DESCRIPTION OF CULTURE:
PART I

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"A Checking Chart for the Use of Computer Engineers
Developed from a "Generalist Description of Culture."

Abstract

Issues 25-A and 26-A are Parts I and II of the third version of SEP No. 1. This version is based upon revisions made after reading Stuart Chase's book: Things Worth Knowing-A "Generalist's" Guide to Useful Knowledge.

This version has been outlined in SEP No. 4 under Problem 4.4: How can the checking chart for developing an analysis of social responsibility be derived more logically from a "generalist" description of culture? The material of Part I is organized under the following sections:

Introduction (See Outline in SEP No. 4)

Divisions of Human Activities

Levels of Phenomena

"Spiral of Culture"

A Checking Chart for Social Responsibility

Example of Steinmetz

References

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ENGINEERS DEVELOPED FROM A "GENERALIST"
DESCRIPTION OF CULTURE: PART I.

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Introduction

Recently there has been some interest in the question of the social responsibility of engineers. A series of articles and letters to the editor appeared in the early part of 1958 in Computers and Automation.⁽¹⁻⁶⁾ These articles dealt first with whether a journal such as Computers and Automation should publish articles on the social responsibility of computer scientists. Then specific topics were discussed. These articles covered a broad range of viewpoints. Some computer scientists felt the social use of their work was not their concern, while others felt there are specified applications of computers which are unethical such as to merit engineers declining to work on some projects. Studies of the social consequences of scientific discovery have been conducted by Richard L. Meier⁽⁷⁾ and Edwin Layton.⁽⁸⁾

The Western Joint Computer Conference at Los Angeles, May 6, 1958,⁽⁹⁾ conducted a panel on "The Social Problems of Automation".

The various viewpoints appearing in Computers and Automation present an uncoordinated distribution of differing ideas. The views of the 1958 WJCC Panel on "Social Problems of Automation" have a certain amount of coherence. It would be desirable, if we could, to find some way of reviewing these different viewpoints in a more logical manner.