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Applied Ethics

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Interviewer: It's my pleasure to have you here today, Mr. Gyekye. May I please ask for a brief self-introduction from you?

Kwame Gyekye: Thank you for inviting me to this interview today. I mainly focus on African ethics, specifically in Akan philosophy. I am the author of "Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience" and previously worked at the University of Ghana. I retired about ten years ago (Dailynous, Weinberg).

Interviewer: Thank you so much. Our main topic today is the relationship between automation, artificial intelligence, and ethics. Several websites have recently published their predictions for AI developments in 2018 and beyond. While they all state that this trend of development will greatly improve people's daily lives, they also mention that it will cost large numbers of people their livelihoods, as jobs that previously required human labor can now be automated instead. So the question is, is the promotion of these technology immoral when the use of these technologies has such a significant effect on people's livelihoods?

Kwame Gyekye: I see. This is a really interesting question.

Interviewer: Yes, it is, and we really want to hear your perspective based on Akan consequentialism.

Kwame Gyekye: Okay, to start with, I would like to clarify the concept of immorality. We group them into two categories: *bone*, which is ordinary evil, and *musuo*, which is extraordinary. To put it simply, *bone* is to harm specific people, and *musuo* affect the entire community.

Interviewer: So lying would be ordinary evilness and murder would be extraordinary because it would terrify the community?

Kwame Gyekye: Yes, indeed. Let's say this first, do you think using technology is bringing negatively impacting society?

Interviewer: I don't think so. It's probably just influencing a group of people, and that population size might vary.

Kwame Gyekye: We have successfully excluded one of the possibilities. Now we only need to determine whether it's *bone* or *papa*, which means good.

Interviewer: I think the good of a community would be the sum of the goods of individuals within the community.

Kwame Gyekye: Ah, that is actually what distinguish Akan consequentialism from Western consequentialism. According to our communitarian consequentialism, the good of the community cannot be reduced to individual goods, and good acts are those that promote the well-being of society.

Interviewer: Then it means that since using technology is beneficial to the overall society, it should be considered good even though it might harm some members of the community?

Kwame Gyekye: Wait a minute. You're drawing the conclusion too quickly. If we say that social well-being includes social welfare, solidarity, and harmony, do you think popularizing automation satisfies this standard?

Interviewer: I think it satisfies "social welfare," but I'm uncertain about "solidarity" and "harmony."

Kwame Gyekye: That's a good answer. Though I mentioned earlier that the good of the community does not reduce to individual well-being, it is nevertheless not independent of it.

Interviewer: I think the only way will be to decide which to consider first, society or the individual, in order to have an answer to the question of whether promoting this trend is moral.

Kwame Gyekye: You know, when you first told me about this circumstance, it actually reminded me of the Siamese crocodile.

Interviewer: I wonder what that is.

Kwame Gyekye: It's a motif in Akan culture. It's a creature that has two heads but one stomach. The saying that goes with the symbol is that, although they have one stomach, the heads fight over the food that will eventually nourish both of them.

Interviewer: We are connecting it with what we are currently discussing because they both indicate how different parts within one are conflicting with each other?

Kwame Gyekye: You see what I'm saying. The symbol points to the conflicts that result from the existence of individual desires and needs, and all we need to think about is how to minimize such conflicts and at the same time allow room for the realization of individual desires and needs.

Interviewer: Then it's fair to conclude that it's a good characteristic that automation and artificial intelligence are developing.

Kwame Gyekye: Ah, be mindful with your wording. *Suban*, which is character, is something we use to describe a person's nature. The action is another layer that is different from *Suban*. One might do a bad thing, but it doesn't mean that they have a bad character.

Interviewer: Sorry for my inaccuracy. Then what I mean is that, in conclusion, we should consider the usage of automation and AI as moral, and it is the right thing to do to promote their development.

Kwame Gyekye: No worries. Yes, generally so. We realize how this action is bringing profit for the whole community and how an individual's goodness can depend on the community. As long as people's physiological needs are satisfied, society's welfare should be above other considerations, and livelihood becomes a problem that might affect individual living standards. It should be a concern that the government should consider and minimize the loss.

Interviewer: Great, thank you again for your time and your clear explanation.