

THE ETHICS OF ROBOTS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

The increasing presence of robots and artificial intelligence (AI) is a major development affecting individuals, organizations, and nations. How we work, shop, commute, are entertained, provide healthcare and conduct warfare are all affected. There is an awareness of both positive and negative aspects of this development. Public perception of the ethics of robots and AI will impact how effectively organizations and government can utilize such technology. This paper examines these issues and how trends in this field could be affected.

Keywords: Robots; Artificial Intelligence; Ethics

1. INTRODUCTION

While the Industrial Revolution is commonly thought of as a historical event which took place in the 18th and 19th centuries, it should be regarded as a transformational, ongoing development in which new technology alters not only production methods, but the nature of society itself. Inventions and innovations from the steam engine, the earliest railroads, and the telegraph, to robots, automation, and AI are all part of an ongoing process. How these developments are perceived by the public, and subsequent reactions, are affected by culture, and the economic, social, and political environment, as well as the historical experience in each society.

The advent of the Industrial Revolution, which began in Great Britain in the 1700s, was a major development which led to the modern world. In the years that followed in the 18th and 19th centuries other nations of Europe, the U.S., and Japan also industrialized and saw great prosperity and technological progress that surpassed the rest of the world. This still affects their relative positions in today's global economy as well as their technological, political, and military power. Of the 25 nations, or territories, of the world with a GDP per capita in 2019 of at least \$40,000.00 in U.S. dollars, most are European nations that experienced the industrial revolution shortly after Great Britain. The others are Japan, Hong Kong (a former British colony), Macao (a former Portuguese colony), the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand (former British colonies). The other two exceptions are Israel, which was a British protectorate before independence, populated by a high proportion of European settlers, and Qatar, an oil-rich Middle Eastern nation (MGM Research, 2019).

In the early 1800s in Britain a loose movement of workers, known as the Luddites, broke into factories at night to destroy machines. They had experienced the loss of their jobs due to new technology which eliminated the need for their positions (Sale, 1995). It should also be noted that they did not stop or even slow down technological progress by their actions. The significance of the Luddites is to demonstrate the reaction of people during the industrial revolution to new technology that disrupted their lives. This is analogous to our current and evolving situation in which it is predicted that 25% to 40% of those currently employed could find themselves without work due to advances in AI, robots, and automation (Gallo, 2019). One could come to the conclusion that currently in the U.S. blue collar workers would not be enthusiastic about robots and AI. For some, the lives of their ancestors were negatively affected by brutal working conditions, or suffered unemployment caused by the new machines of the industrial revolution. More recently, job loss and lower wages have been experienced by blue collar workers in the last three decades due to robots and automation, the movement of manufacturing overseas to countries with lower labor costs, and the increase in illegal immigration. The introduction of new, labor saving technologies would not be