

Joachim von Braun · Margaret S. Archer
Gregory M. Reichberg · Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo *Editors*

Robotics, AI, and Humanity

Science, Ethics, and Policy

OPEN ACCESS

 Springer

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ISBN 978-3-030-54172-9 ISBN 978-3-030-54173-6 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54173-6>

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Message from Pope Francis



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Artificial intelligence is at the heart of the epochal change we are experiencing. Robotics can make a better world possible if it is joined to the common good. Indeed, if technological progress increases inequalities, it is not true progress. Future advances should be oriented towards respecting the dignity of the person and of Creation. Let us pray that the progress of robotics and artificial intelligence may always serve humankind . . . we could say, may it “be human”.

Pope Francis, November Prayer Intention, 5 November 2020

Acknowledgements

This edited volume, including the suggestions for action, emerged from a Conference on “Robotics, AI and Humanity, Science, Ethics and Policy”, organized jointly by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (PAS) and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (PASS), 16–17 May 2019, Casina Pio IV, Vatican City. Two related conferences had previously been held at Casina Pio IV, Vatican City: “Power and Limitations of Artificial Intelligence” (December 2016) and “Artificial Intelligence and Democracy” (March 2018). The presentations and discussions from these conferences are accessible on the website of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences www.pas.va/content/accademia/en.html. The contributions by all the participants in these conferences are gratefully acknowledged. This publication has been supported by the Center for Development Research (ZEF) at Bonn University and the Research Council of Norway.

Contents

AI, Robotics, and Humanity: Opportunities, Risks, and Implications for Ethics and Policy	1
Joachim von Braun, Margaret S. Archer, Gregory M. Reichberg, and Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo	
Part I Foundational Issues in AI and Robotics	
Differences Between Natural and Artificial Cognitive Systems	17
Wolf Singer	
Foundations of Artificial Intelligence and Effective Universal Induction	29
Jörg Zimmermann and Armin B. Cremers	
What Is Consciousness, and Could Machines Have It?	43
Stanislas Dehaene, Hakwan Lau, and Sid Kouider	
Could a Robot Be Conscious? Some Lessons from Philosophy	57
Markus Gabriel	
Part II AI and Robotics Changing the Future of Society: Work, Farming, Services, and Poverty	
Robotics and the Global Organisation of Production	71
Koen De Backer and Timothy DeStefano	
AI/Robotics and the Poor	85
Joachim von Braun and Heike Baumüller	
Robotics and AI in Food Security and Innovation: Why They Matter and How to Harness Their Power	99
Maximo Torero	
Robotics in the Classroom: Hopes or Threats?	109
Pierre Léna	
Humans Judged by Machines: The Rise of Artificial Intelligence in Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	119
Frank Pasquale	
Part III Robotics, AI, and Militarized Conflict	
Designing Robots for the Battlefield: State of the Art	131
Bruce A. Swett, Erin N. Hahn, and Ashley J. Llorens	

Applying AI on the Battlefield: The Ethical Debates	147
Gregory M. Reichberg and Henrik Syse	
AI Nuclear Winter or AI That Saves Humanity?	
AI and Nuclear Deterrence	161
Nobumasa Akiyama	
Part IV AI/Robot–Human Interactions: Regulatory and Ethical Implications	
The AI and Robot Entity	173
Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo	
Friendship Between Human Beings and AI Robots?	177
Margaret S. Archer	
Robots and Rights: Reviewing Recent Positions in Legal Philosophy and Ethics	191
Wolfgang M. Schröder	
Human–Robot Interactions and Affective Computing: The Ethical Implications	205
Laurence Devillers	
Impact of AI/Robotics on Human Relations: Co-evolution Through Hybridisation	213
Pierpaolo Donati	
What Is It to Implement a Human-Robot Joint Action?	229
Aurelie Clodic and Rachid Alami	
Responsible Robotics and Responsibility Attribution	239
Aimee van Wynsberghe	
Regulating AI: Considerations that Apply Across Domains	251
Angela Kane	
A Human Blueprint for AI Coexistence	261
Kai-Fu Lee	



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Contents

Introduction	2
Foundational Issues in AI and Robotics	2
Overview on Perspectives.....	2
Intelligent Agents.....	3
Consciousness.....	4
AI and Robotics Changing the Future of Society	4
Work.....	5
AI/Robotics: Poverty and Welfare.....	5
Food and Agriculture.....	6
Education.....	6
Finance, Insurance, and Other Services.....	7
Robotics/AI and Militarized Conflict	7
Implications for Ethics and Policies	9
AI/Robotics: Human and Social Relations.....	9
Regulating for Good National and International Governance.....	11
References	13

Abstract

This introduction to the volume gives an overview of foundational issues in AI and robotics, looking into AI's

computational basis, brain–AI comparisons, and conflicting positions on AI and consciousness. AI and robotics are changing the future of society in areas such as work, education, industry, farming, and mobility, as well as services like banking. Another important concern addressed in this volume are the impacts of AI and robotics on poor people and on inequality. These implications are being reviewed, including how to respond to challenges and how to build on the opportunities afforded by AI and robotics. An important area of new risks is robotics and AI implications for militarized conflicts. Throughout this introductory chapter and in the volume, AI/robot-human interactions, as well as the ethical and religious implications, are considered. Approaches for fruitfully managing the coexistence of humans and robots are evaluated. New forms of regulating AI and robotics are called

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for which serve the public good but also ensure proper data protection and personal privacy.

Keywords

Artificial intelligence · Robotics · Consciousness · Labor markets · Services · Poverty · Agriculture · Militarized conflicts · Regulation

Introduction¹

Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics are accelerating. They already significantly affect the functioning of societies and economies, and they have prompted widespread debate over the benefits and drawbacks for humanity. This fast-moving field of science and technology requires our careful attention. The emergent technologies have, for instance, implications for medicine and health care, employment, transport, manufacturing, agriculture, and armed conflict. Privacy rights and the intrusion of states into personal life is a major concern (Stanley 2019). While considerable attention has been devoted to AI/robotics applications in each of these domains, this volume aims to provide a fuller picture of their connections and the possible consequences for our shared humanity. In addition to examining the current research frontiers in AI/robotics, the contributors of this volume address the likely impacts on societal well-being, the risks for peace and sustainable development as well as the attendant ethical and religious dimensions of these technologies. Attention to ethics is called for, especially as there are also long-term scenarios in AI/robotics with consequences that may ultimately challenge the place of humans in society.

AI/robotics hold much potential to address some of our most intractable social, economic, and environmental problems, thereby helping to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including the reduction of climate change. However, the implications of AI/robotics for equity, for poor and marginalized people, are unclear. Of growing concern are risks of AI/robotics for peace due to their enabling new forms of warfare such as cyber-attacks or autonomous weapons, thus calling for new international

security regulations. Ethical and legal aspects of AI/robotics need clarification in order to inform regulatory policies on applications and the future development of these technologies.

The volume is structured in the following four sections:

- *Foundational issues in AI and robotics*, looking into AI's computational basis, brain–AI comparisons as well as AI and consciousness.
- *AI and robotics potentially changing the future of society* in areas such as employment, education, industry, farming, mobility, and services like banking. This section also addresses the impacts of AI and robotics on poor people and inequality.
- *Robotics and AI implications for militarized conflicts* and related risks.
- *AI/robot–human interactions* and ethical and religious implications: Here approaches for managing the coexistence of humans and robots are evaluated, legal issues are addressed, and policies that can assure the regulation of AI/robotics for the good of humanity are discussed.

Foundational Issues in AI and Robotics

Overview on Perspectives

The field of AI has developed a rich variety of theoretical approaches and frameworks on the one hand, and increasingly impressive practical applications on the other. AI has the potential to bring about advances in every area of science and society. It may help us overcome some of our cognitive limitations and solve complex problems.

In health, for instance, combinations of AI/robotics with brain–computer interfaces already bring unique support to patients with sensory or motor deficits and facilitate caretaking of patients with disabilities. By providing novel tools for knowledge acquisition, AI may bring about dramatic changes in education and facilitate access to knowledge. There may also be synergies arising from robot-to-robot interaction and possible synergies of humans and robots jointly working on tasks.

While vast amounts of data present a challenge to human cognitive abilities, Big Data presents unprecedented opportunities for science and the humanities. The translational potential of Big Data is considerable, for instance in medicine, public health, education, and the management of complex systems in general (biosphere, geosphere, economy). However, the science based on Big Data as such remains empiricist and challenges us to discover the underlying causal mechanisms for generating patterns. Moreover, questions remain whether the emphasis on AI's supra-human capacities for computation and compilation mask manifold limitations

¹The conclusions in this section partly draw on the Concluding Statement from a Conference on “Robotics, AI and Humanity, Science, Ethics and Policy”, organized jointly by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (PAS) and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (PASS), 16–17 May 2019, Casina Pio IV, Vatican City. The statement is available at <http://www.casinapioiv.va/content/accademia/en/events/2019/robotics/statementrobotics.html> including a list of participants provided via the same link. Their contributions to the statement are acknowledged.