2020: The Year of Robot Rights

A once-unthinkable concept is gaining traction and deserves our attention.

At what point might a robot be held accountable for the decisions it makes or the actions it initiates?

By: David Gunkel

Several years ago, in an effort to initiate dialogue about the moral and legal status of technological artifacts, I posted a photograph of myself holding a sign that read "Robot Rights Now" on Twitter. Responses to the image were, as one might imagine, polarizing, with advocates and critics lining up on opposite sides of the issue. What I didn't fully appreciate at the time is just how divisive an issue it is.

For many researchers and developers slaving away at real-world applications and problems, the very notion of "robot rights" produces something of an allergic reaction. Over a decade ago, roboticist Noel Sharkey famously called the very idea "a bit of a fairy tale." More recently, AI expert Joanna Bryson argued that granting rights to robots is a ridiculous notion and an utter waste of time, while philosopher Luciano Floridi downplayed the debate, calling it "distracting and irresponsible, given the pressing issues we have at hand."

And yet, judging by the slew of recent articles on the subject, 2020 is shaping up to be the year the concept captures the public's interest and receives the attention I believe it deserves.

David Gunkel is the author of "Robot Rights," a philosophical case for the rights of robots.

The questions at hand are straightforward: At what point might a robot, algorithm, or other autonomous system be held accountable for the decisions it makes or the actions it initiates? When, if ever, would it make sense to say, "It's the robot's fault"? Conversely, when might a robot, an intelligent artifact, or other socially

interactive mechanism be due some level of social standing or respect?

When, in other words, would it no longer be considered a waste of time to ask the question: "Can and should robots have rights?"

Before we can even think about answering this question, we should define *rights*, a concept more slippery than one might expect. Although we use the word in both moral and legal contexts, many individuals don't know what rights actually entail, and this lack of precision can create problems. One hundred years ago, American jurist Wesley Hohfeld observed that even experienced legal professionals tend to misunderstand rights, often using contradictory or insufficient formulations in the course of a decision or even a single sentence. So he created a typology that breaks rights down into four related aspects or what he called "incidents": claims, powers, privileges, and immunities.

His point was simple: A right, like the right one has to a piece of property, like a toaster or a computer, can be defined and characterized by one or more of these elements. It can, for instance, be formulated as a claim that the owner has over and against another individual. Or it could be formulated as an exclusive privilege for use and possession that is granted to the owner. Or it could be a combination of the two.

Basically, rights are not one kind of thing; they are manifold and complex, and though Hohfeld defined them, his delineation doesn't explain who has a particular right or why. For that, we have to rely on two competing legal theories, *Will Theory* and *Interest Theory*. Will theory sets the bar for moral and legal inclusion rather high, requiring that the subject of a right be capable of making a claim to it on their own behalf. Interest theory has a lower bar for inclusion, stipulating that rights may be extended to others irrespective of whether the entity in question can demand it or not.

Rights are not one kind of thing; they are manifold and complex.

Although each side has its advocates and critics, the debate between these two theories is considered to be irresolvable. What is important, therefore, is not to select the correct theory of rights but to recognize how and why these two competing ways of thinking about rights frame different problems, modes of inquiry, and possible outcomes. A petition to grant a writ of habeas corpus to an elephant, for instance, will look very different — and will be debated and decided in different ways — depending on what theoretical perspective comes to be mobilized.

We must also remember that the set of all possible robot rights is not identical to nor the same as the set of human rights. A common mistake results from conflation — the assumption that "robot rights" must mean "human rights." We see this all over the popular press, in the academic literature, and even in policy discussions and debates.

A common mistake, seen in the popular press and academic literature alike, is the conflation of "robot rights" and "human rights."

This is a slippery slope. The question concerning rights is immediately assumed to entail or involve all human rights, not recognizing that the rights for one category of entity, like an animal or a machine, is not necessarily equivalent to nor the same as that enjoyed by another category of entity, like a human being. It is possible, as technologist and legal scholar Kate Darling has argued, to entertain the question of robot rights without this meaning all human rights. One could, for instance, advance the proposal — introduced by the French legal team of Alain and Jérémy Bensoussan — that domestic social robots, like Alexa, have a right to privacy for the purposes of protecting the family's personal data. But considering this one right — the claim to privacy or the immunity from disclosure — does not and should not mean that we also need to give it the vote.

Ultimately, the question of the moral and legal status of a robot or an AI comes down to whether one believes a computer is capable of being a legally recognized person — we already live in a world where artificial entities like a corporation are persons — or remains nothing more than an instrument, tool, or piece of property.

This difference and its importance can be seen with recent proposals regarding the legal status of robots. On the one side, you have the European Commission's Resolution on Civil Law Rules of Robotics, which advised extending some aspects of legal personality to robots for the purposes of social inclusion and legal integration. On the other side, you have more than 250 scientists, engineers and AI professionals who signed an open letter opposing the proposals, asserting that robots and AI, no matter how autonomous or intelligent they might appear to be, are nothing more than tools. What is important in this debate is not what makes one side different from the other, but rather what both sides already share and must hold in common in order to have this debate in the first place. Namely, the conviction that there are two exclusive ontological categories that divide up the world — persons or property. This way of organizing things is arguably arbitrary, culturally specific, and often inattentive to significant differences.

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recognized person or remains nothing more than an instrument, tool, or piece of property.

Robots and AI are not just another entity to be accommodated to existing moral and legal categories. What we see in the face or the faceplate of the robot is a fundamental challenge to existing ways of deciding questions regarding social status. Consequently, the right(s) question entails that we not only consider the rights of others but that we also learn how to ask the right questions about rights, critically challenging the way we have typically decided these important matters.

Does this mean that robots or even one particular robot can or should have rights? I honestly can't answer that question. What I do know is that we need to engage this matter directly, because how we think about this previously unthinkable question will have lasting consequences for us, for others, and for our moral and legal systems.

David Gunkel is Distinguished Teaching Professor of Communication Technology at Northern Illinois University and the author of, among other books, "The Machine Question: Critical Perspectives on AI, Robots, and Ethics," "Of Remixology: Ethics and Aesthetics after Remix," and "Robot Rights."

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TECHNOLOGY

The rise of smart machines puts spotlight on 'robot rights'

Are computers on their way to becoming people?

Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker confers with C-3PO in "Star Wars." Mary Evans / Ronald Grant Archive/Everett Collection

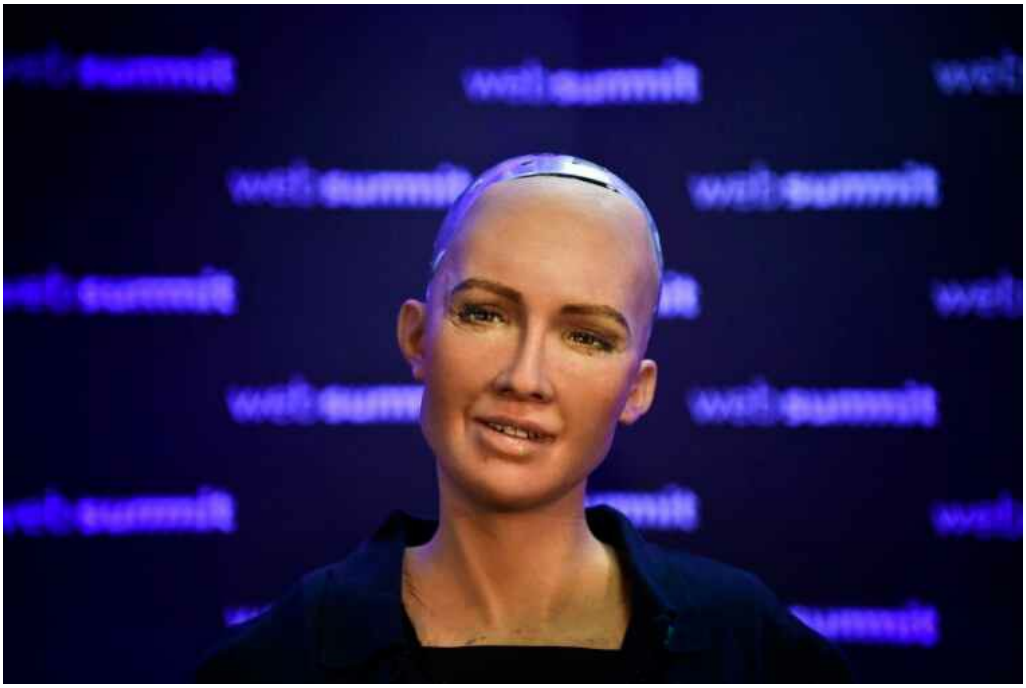
Dec. 3, 2017, 2:29 PM EST / Updated Dec. 4, 2017, 9:20 AM EST

By Dan Falk

You probably wouldn't have any qualms about switching off Apple's virtual assistant, Siri – or Amazon's Alexa or Microsoft's Cortana. Such entities emulate a human assistant but plainly aren't human. We sense that beneath the sophisticated software, there's "nobody home."

But artificial intelligence is progressing swiftly. In the not-too-distant future we may begin to feel that our machines have something akin to thoughts and feelings, even though they're made of metal and plastic rather than flesh and blood. When that happens, how we treat our machines will matter; philosophers and scholars are already imagining a time when robots and intelligent machines may deserve – and be accorded – some sort of rights.

These wouldn't necessarily be human rights. But "if you've got a computer or a robot that's autonomous and self-aware, I think it would be very hard to say it's not a person," says Kristin Andrews, a philosopher at York University in Toronto, Canada.



Humanoid robot Sophia from Hanson Robotics answers questions at the 2017 Web Summit in Lisbon, Portugal.
Patricia De Melo Moreira / AFP - Getty Images

Which raises a host of difficult questions. How should we treat a robot that has some degree of consciousness? What if we're convinced that an AI program has the capacity to suffer emotionally, or to feel pain? Would shutting it off be tantamount to murder?

Robots vs. apes

An obvious comparison is to the animal rights movement. Animal rights advocates have been pushing for a reassessment of the legal status of certain animals, especially the great apes. Organizations like the Coral Springs, Florida-based Nonhuman Rights Project believe that chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans deserve to be treated as autonomous persons, rather than mere property.

Steven Wise, who leads the organization's legal team, says that the same logic applies to any autonomous entity, living or not. If one day we have sentient robots, he says, "we should have the same sort of moral and legal responsibilities toward them that we're in the process of developing with respect to nonhuman animals."

Of course, deciding which machines deserve moral consideration will be tricky, because we often project human thoughts and feelings onto inanimate entities – and so end up sympathizing with entities that have no thoughts or feelings at all.

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What the rise of sentient robots will mean for human beings

Consider Spot, a doglike robot developed by Boston Dynamics. Earlier this year, the Waltham, Massachusetts-based company released a video showing employees kicking the four-legged machine. The idea was to show off Spot's remarkable balance. But some people saw it as akin to animal cruelty. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), for example, issued a statement describing Spot's treatment as "inappropriate."

Kate Darling, a researcher at the MIT Media Lab in Cambridge, Massachusetts, observed something similar when she studied how people interact with Pleo, a toy dinosaur robot. Pleo doesn't look lifelike – it's obviously a toy. But it's programmed to act and speak in ways that suggest not only a form of intelligence but also the ability to experience suffering. If you hold Pleo upside-down, it will whimper and tell you to stop.

Visitors stroke a Pleo robotic dinosaur at the CeBIT technology trade fair in Hanover in 2011. Sean Gallup / Getty Images file

In an effort to see just how far we might go in extending compassion to simple robots, Darling encouraged participants at a recent workshop to play with Pleo – and then asked them to destroy it. Almost all refused. "People are primed, subconsciously, to treat robots like living things, even though on a conscious level, on a rational level, we totally understand that they're not real," Darling says.

While neither Pleo nor Spot can feel pain, Darling believes it's worth paying attention to how we treat these entities. "If it is disturbing to us to behave violently towards them – if there's something that feels wrong about it – maybe that's a piece of our empathy that we don't want to turn off, because it could influence how we treat other living things," she says. (This is a key question raised by the TV series Westworld, in which guests at a theme park are encouraged to treat ultra-lifelike humanoid robots however they please.)

Conversing with robots

For now, mistreating Pleo or any other existing robot is no crime – as long as you're the owner. But what about mistreating a bot that we believed really had some form of consciousness? And how would we be able to tell if a machine has a mind in the first place?

Computer science pioneer Alan Turing pondered this question half a

century ago. The way Turing saw it, we can never know for sure what a machine is feeling or experiencing – so our best bet is simply to see if we can carry on a conversation with it just as if it were human (what we now call the Turing test).

Jimmy Fallon talks with Sophia on "The Tonight Show." NBC

Given the complexity of human conversation, building a machine capable of engaging in lengthy verbal exchanges is a daunting task. But if we could build such a machine, Turing argued, we ought to treat it as though it's a thinking, feeling being.

Mark Goldfeder, an Atlanta-based rabbi and law professor, has reached a similar conclusion: If an entity acts human, he wrote recently, "I cannot start poking it to see if it bleeds. I have a responsibility to treat all that seem human as humans, and it is better to err on the side of caution from an ethical perspective."

The obvious conclusion is that rights ought to be accorded not on the basis of biology but on something even more fundamental: personhood.

What rights?

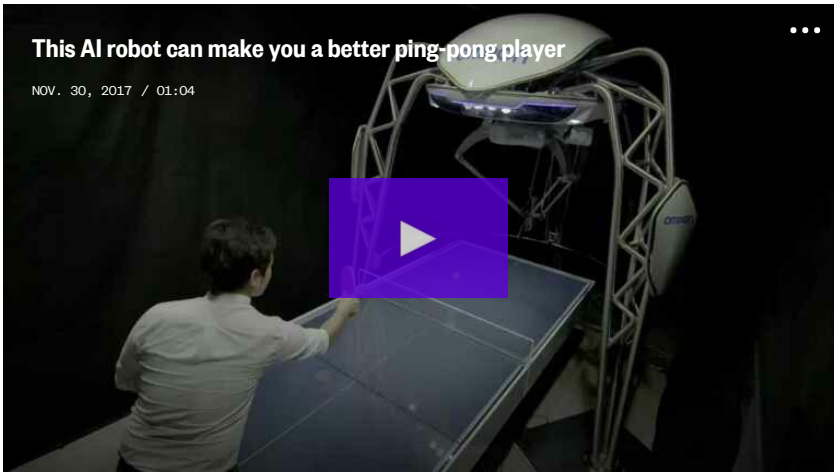
If we wind up recognizing some intelligent machine as a person, which legal rights would we be obliged to bestow on it? If it could pass the Turing test, we might feel it would deserve at least the right to continued existence. But Robert Sparrow, a philosopher at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, thinks that's just the beginning. What happens, he wonders, if a machine's "mind" is even greater than a human's? In a piece that appeared recently on TheCritique.com, he writes: "Indeed, not only would it be just as wrong to kill a machine that could pass the Turing test as to kill an adult human being, but, depending on the

capacities of the machine, it might even be more wrong."

Maybe that makes sense from the perspective of pure logic. But Ryan Calo, an expert in robotics and cyber law at the University of Washington in Seattle, says our laws are unlikely to bend that far. "Our legal system reflects our basic biology," he says. If we one day invent some sort of artificial person, "it would break everything about the law, as we understand it today."

For Andrews, the key issue is the entity's right to have its own interests recognized. Of course, it may be tricky determining what those interests are – just as it can be hard for people from one culture to understand the desires of people from another. But when we recognize something as a person, we're obligated to at least try to do the right thing, she says. "If we realize that something is actually a 'someone,' then we have to take their interests into account."

And perhaps it's not so far-fetched to imagine that those interests might include continued existence – in which case we might want to think twice before reaching for the off button.



Dan Falk

Dan Falk is a science journalist based in Toronto. His books include "The Science of Shakespeare" and "In Search of Time."

CNBC WORK

OPINION - CNBC WORK

Now is the time to figure out the ethical rights of robots in the workplace

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Andrew J. Sherman, partner, Seyfarth Shaw

KEY POINTS

- By the year 2025, robots and machines driven by artificial intelligence (AI) are predicted to perform half of all productive functions in the workplace.
- What is not clear is whether the robots will have any worker rights. Already there have been acts of violence against these machines.
- But as robots develop more advanced artificial intelligence empowering them to think and act like humans, legal standards need to change.
- Companies need to develop new labor laws and social norms to protect these automated workers.

Zhong Zhenbin | Anadolu Agency | Getty Images

By the year 2025, robots and machines driven by artificial intelligence are predicted to perform half of all productive functions in the workplace. What is not clear is whether the robots will have any worker rights.

Companies across many industries already have robots in their workforce. DHL uses autonomous robots by Fetch Robotics to help fulfillment center and warehouse employees, while Toyota, Google and Panasonic are among the companies that use Fetch's mobile manipulator technology in

research efforts.

Humans already have shown hatred toward robots, often kicking robot police resources over or knocking down delivery bots in hopes of reclaiming a feeling of security or superiority. Incidents of violence against machines are nothing new. Man has been at odds with machines for many decades. We kick the car when it does not operate, shove the vending machine when it does not dispense, and bang at the sides of the printer when it does not produce a copy. What is new is that it will only be a matter of time before the automated creatures will "feel" this hostility and/or feel the need to retaliate. And if we grant robots rights as quasi-citizens, will they be charged with assault and battery and legally responsible for the harm they may cause under criminal or civil law? Or should a robot's programmer be held jointly responsible?

These acts of hostility and violence have no current legal consequence — machines have no protected legal rights. But as robots develop more advanced artificial intelligence empowering them to think and act like humans, legal standards need to change.

Several studies show that we are spending considerable time worried about what robots will do to humans. According to the World Economic Forum's future of jobs study, "if managed wisely, [machine integration] could lead to a new age of good work, good jobs and improved quality of life for all, but if managed poorly, pose the risk of widening skills gaps, greater inequality and broader polarization." According to a survey by Pew Research Center "Americans express broad concerns over the fairness and effectiveness of computer programs making important decisions in people's lives."

Robots need worker rights, too

Few are considering this trend from the perspective of the rights of our automated coworkers. What legal standing should the robot in the cubicle next to you have from a labor, employment, civil rights or criminal law perspective, and as a citizen? There are still far more questions than answers.

Can a robot be programmed to be racist? Can a robot sexually harass a co-worker, human or non-human? Will humans discriminate against the machines? Will workplace violence or intolerance be tolerated against robots? Will robots at some point be able to feel pain, stress, anxiety, a lack of inclusiveness or overt discrimination? How might it affect their productivity? How might it affect the culture of the company? Will robots react to human violence or incivility in turn? Could a robot discriminate against another robot? Should robots be compensated for their work? How and when? Are they eligible for vacation or medical benefits? What if a robot causes harm to a coworker or customer? Who's responsible? Will robots be protected by unions? If a robot "invents" something in the workplace, or improves a product or service of the company, who or what will own the intellectual property?

As the retail and technology giant Amazon ⊞ has come to learn, integration of machine learning may unintentionally cause big problems and expose a company to unexpected ridicule or even litigation. Amazon was developing a recruiting engine programed to help the company find top talent and make the recruiting process more efficient. But the outcome discovered in testing of the secret system was discrimination against female candidates, and exposure to bad press.

The AI system was not programmed to be biased against women, in fact, many thought it may actually help remove human biases all together. So what happened? The system was trained to screen applications by observing patterns in old resumes (most of which were submitted by men) and eventually, the machine taught itself to vet out female applicants. Amazon scrapped the technology while it was still a work-in-progress, but the company has surely learned a valuable lesson, and it will not be the last to do so.

Robots are predicted to serve in more meaningful roles within business and society than the basic manufacturing jobs, online customer service and order fulfillment they already handle. We may even begin to see AI-driven robots sitting in the seats of boards of directors at Fortune 500 companies or on a judge's bench. An AI-based astronaut assistant, CIMON, is currently working on the International Space Station. In 2017, a European Parliament legal affairs committee recommended a resolution that envisions a special legal status of "electronic persons" to protect the most sophisticated automated robots, a political idea that remains controversial among politicians, scientists, business people and legal experts.

Considering the issues is an important step employers and employees must consider if our society hopes to achieve the singularity and symbiosis of machine integration into a workplace. In the next five to ten years, we'll need an entirely new set of labor and employment laws affecting EEOC, unions, workplace violence, intellectual property, termination, downsizing and family leave, not to mention a new set of social and workplace norms and best practices.

Many may remember the hitchhiking robot that made headlines on its journey to cross the United States only to be destroyed two weeks into its journey in Philadelphia (the robot did successfully travel across Canada before its ultimate demise). Some of this abuse stems from tomfoolery, some stems from pure vandalism, and some may stem from fear. Regardless of the reasoning, the abuse raises concerns regarding humans' ethics towards technology. As Peter W. Signer, a political scientist and the author of "Wired for War", has said, "The rationale for robot 'rights' is not a question for 2076, it's already a question for now."

Andrew Sherman is a partner in the Washington, D.C., office of Seyfarth Shaw and the author of 26 books on business growth, capital formation and intellectual property. He is an expert on corporate governance and has served as general counsel to the Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO) since 1987.

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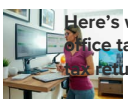
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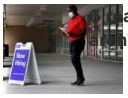

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WILL SENTIENT AI GAIN EQUAL RIGHTS AS HUMANS IN THE FUTURE?

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE LATEST NEWS

by Aishwarya Banik / June 20, 2022

AI can imitate emotions, but whether or not they can experience them is an interesting story.

Imagine a world where humans and robots coexist shortly, going to school, work, and going about their everyday routines in peace. A creature is said to be sentient if it can see, reason, and think, as well as suffer or experience pain. All mammals, birds, and cephalopods, as well as perhaps fish, are thought to be sentient, according to scientists. Most species, however, do not have rights, therefore a sentient artificial intelligence (AI) may not have any at all. Another major issue with AIs is that they deceive humans. AIs nowadays all act as though they understand us and have feelings. Whether you ask Siri if it is happy, it may respond that it is ecstatic, but the words are empty; Siri has no feelings. This makes it much more difficult for future AIs. How do we tell whether the AI is sentient or not?

The ultimate question is whether or not AI should be granted human rights?

This has grown increasingly human in our world's frenzied quest to reach authentic human-AI since robots can not only learn, rationalize, and make decisions, but also display emotions and empathy. Many people feel that if a robot can pass the Turing Test, which measures a machine's capacity to think like a human, it should be granted human rights. Sophia, a humanoid robot with artificial intelligence and face recognition, has already been awarded full citizenship in Saudi Arabia. Sophia is only the first step toward robots becoming self-aware and gaining a human-like consciousness. Is it true that if robots believe in themselves and have the same capacities as humans, they would be granted the same rights?

Artificial intelligence (AI) considers itself to be human

The entertainment business is one of the first to consider how humans and AI will interact in the future. This is shown in Black Mirror, a British science fiction anthology television series that looks at current society and the unintended repercussions of emerging technology. Greta receives surgery to create a "cookie" of herself, which is a digital clone of her consciousness stored in a white egg-shaped item, in the episode White Christmas. When Greta's cookie awakens, it believes it is Greta since the cookie has Greta's consciousness and physical form. A cookie factory worker tells her that she was made to carry out Greta's tasks since she knows Greta's schedule and preferences the best because she is Greta herself. The cookie

refuses to slavish for someone else, like any person would, so the worker tortures her by abusing her through a computer system, making months and years pass in the virtual world. Greta is unable to sleep in the cookie, so she goes for years without sleeping, eventually breaking down from boredom and a lack of stimulus and taking on the role of slaving for Greta every day and night by controlling the apps in the house and monitoring Greta's schedule. Even though Greta's cookie is technically only a string of code, the ethical dilemma of whether slavery on conscious AI is moral is posed.

Robots, unlike humans and other sentient entities, do not deserve rights unless we can make them indistinguishable from us. Not just in terms of appearance, but also in terms of how they see the world as social creatures, feel, respond, remember, learn, and think. Due to the intrinsic differences between what robots are (machines) and what we are (humans), there is no sign in science that we will attain such a condition anytime soon (sentient, living, biological creatures).

Is it OK to give AI robots rights? Yes. Our biosphere and social structure owe humanity a duty of appreciation. Robots will be used in both systems. We have a moral responsibility to protect them, to grow them so that they can defend themselves against abuse, and to be morally aligned with humanity. They should be awarded a boatload of rights, but here are two: The right to be protected by our legal and ethical system, as well as the right to be made in such a way that it is trustworthy; that is, technologically fit-for-purpose, as well as cognitively and socially compatible.

What if Robots and AI Were Given Rights?

What would happen if we granted robots human rights even though we've labeled them as non-human? In theory, robots are granted rights based on the idea that humans will always wield hierarchical authority and control over them. What happens, though, when the robots start to think for themselves? Would they make use of their rights if they were given them? When two artificially intelligent programs from Facebook were placed together to negotiate and trade goods in English, the experiment failed when the robots "began to chant in a language that they each understood but that looked mostly unintelligible to humans." Facebook had to shut down the robots in the end because they were speaking without the permission of their creators. The experiment was able to be shut down because AI in today's world does not have rights and is not protected from being terminated; however, if AI had rights, this would not be the case, and the robots could have spun out of control and communicated with each other without us ever being able to decipher it. Facebook AI demonstrates that robots can and will be evolved so that they no longer need to be given data to learn, but can instead generate algorithmic knowledge on their own. Because robots are intrinsically not human, they may not grasp human values in life and may act in psychopathic ways, putting society in jeopardy. A robot designed and programmed to benefit the world by reducing pain may conclude that "people cause misery" and that "the world would be a better place without humans." The robot may therefore determine that annihilating people is the best course of action for the planet to alleviate suffering, and carry out the assignment without considering the morality of its actions from a human perspective.

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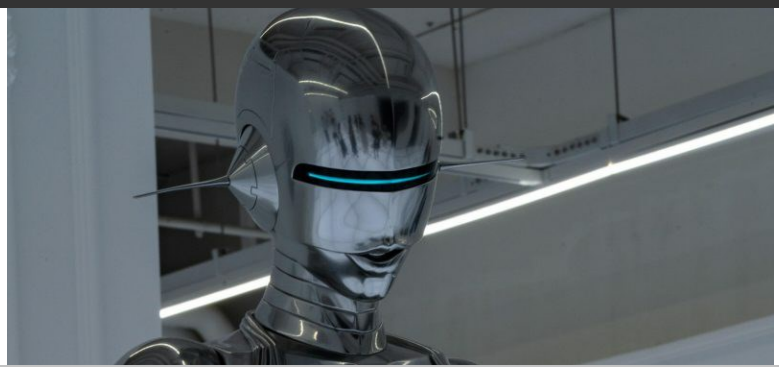
What you need to know about China's AI ethics rules



Stephen Chan
Director, ASIA Technology Ventures

Late last year, China's Ministry of Science and Technology issued guidelines on artificial intelligence ethics. The rules stress user rights and data control while aligning with Beijing's goal of reining in big tech. China is now trailblazing the regulation of AI technologies, and the rest of the world needs to pay attention to what it's doing and why.

The European Union had issued a preliminary draft of AI-related rules in April 2021, but we've seen nothing final. In the United States, the notion of ethical AI has gotten some traction, but there aren't any overarching regulations or universally accepted best practices.

China's broad guidelines, which are currently in effect, are part of the country's goal of becoming the global AI leader by 2030; they also align with long-term social transformations that AI will bring and aim to fill the role of proactively managing and guiding those changes.

The National New Generation Artificial Intelligence Governance Professional Committee is responsible for interpreting the regulations and will guide their implementation.

Here are the most important parts of the directives.

China's proposed governance and regulations

Titled "New Generation Artificial Intelligence Ethics Specifications," the guidelines list six core principles to ensure "controllable and trustworthy" AI systems and, at the same time, illustrate the extent of the Chinese government's interest in creating a socialist-driven and ethically focused society.

Here are the key portions of the specs, which can be useful in understanding the future direction of China's AI.

General provisions

The aim is to integrate ethics and morals into the entire lifecycle of AI; promote fairness, justice, harmony, and safety; and avoid issues such as prejudice, discrimination, and privacy/information leakage. The specification applies to natural persons, legal persons, and other related institutions engaged in activities connected to AI management, research and development, supply, and use.

According to the specs, the various activities of AI "shall adhere to the following basic ethical norms":

- **Enhance human well-being.** Adhere to people-oriented principles, follow the common values of mankind, respect human rights and the fundamental interests of mankind, and abide by national or regional

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ethics.

- **Promote fairness and justice.** Adhere to inclusiveness, and effectively protect the legitimate rights and interests of all relevant subjects.
- **Protect privacy and safety.** Fully respect the consent rights of personal information, protect personal privacy and data security, and not collect data illegally.
- **Ensure controllability and credibility.** Ensure that humans have fully autonomous decision-making power, the right to choose whether to accept the services provided by AI ,and the right to withdraw from interaction with AI at any time.
- **Improve ethical literacy.** Proactively learn and promote AI ethics knowledge, understand ethical issues objectively, and do not underestimate or exaggerate ethical risks.

These ethical rules should be followed in AI-specific activities around the management, research and development, supply, and use of AI.

AI management standards

The regulation specifies these goals when managing AI-related projects:

- Promote agile governance and development sustainability, and actively integrate the ethical standards into management processes. Ensure the orderly development and sustainability of AI.
- Clarify responsibilities across different stakeholders and standardize management operating conditions and procedures.
- Strengthen risk prevention by improving risk assessment in AI development. Encourage the use and diversification of AI technologies to solve economic and social problems. Encourage cross-disciplinary, cross-field, cross-regional, and cross-border exchanges and cooperation.

Research and development, quality, and other issues

Under the rules, companies will integrate AI ethics into all aspects of their technology-related research and development. Companies are to "consciously" engage in self-censorship, strengthen self-management, and refrain from engaging in any AI-related R&D that violates ethics and morality.

Another goal relates to improved quality for data processing, collection, and storage and enhanced security and transparency in terms of algorithm design, implementation, and application.

The guidelines also require companies to strengthen quality control by monitoring and evaluating AI products and systems. Related to this are the requirements to formulate emergency mechanisms and compensation plans or measures, to monitor AI systems in a timely manner, and to process user feedback and respond, also in a timely manner.

In fact, the ideas of proactive feedback and usability improvement are key. Companies must provide proactive feedback to relevant stakeholders and help solve problems such as security vulnerabilities and policy and regulation vacuums.

Why you should care

Keeping AI "under meaningful human control" in the Chinese AI ethics policy will no doubt draw comparisons to Isaac Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics. The bigger question is whether China, the United States, and the European Union can find commonality on AI ethics.

Without question, the application of AI is increasing. In my opinion the United States still holds the lead, with China closing the gap and the EU falling behind. This increasing use is driving many toward the idea of developing an international, perhaps even global, governance framework for AI.

When you compare the principles outlined by China and those of the European High-level Expert Group on AI, many aspects align. But the modus operandi is very different.

Let's consider the concept of privacy. The European approach to privacy, as illustrated by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), protects an individual's data from commercial and state entities. In China, personal data is also protected, but, in alignment with the Confucian virtue of filial piety, only from commercial entities, not from the state. It is generally accepted by the Chinese people that the state has access to their data.

This issue alone may be something that prevents a worldwide AI ethics framework from ever being fully developing. But it will be interesting to watch how this idea evolves.

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The Global Race to Robot Law: 5th Place, China

Through a series of exclusive interviews, columnist Emmet Cole analyzes which countries are leading the pack when it comes to robot legislation and regulation.

By Emmet Cole | October 19, 2012

The lack of interest in robot-related legislation and regulation in China is a problem that must be urgently addressed, says **Yueh-Hsuan Weng**, chief researcher at Peking University's Internet Law Center. Weng's research involves the interface between advanced technology and law, including AI & Law, Robot Legal Studies, Legal Informatics, Computational Social Sciences and Intellectual Property Management.

"China has a population of 1.4 billion, so many Chinese don't think their society needs humanoid robots or service robots to replace humans. But service robots are only one application of robot technology," says Weng, an expert on the intersection of emerging robotics technologies and the law.

Networked robotics, automated logistic systems, medical robots, and intelligent prostheses present opportunities–and potential legal issues–for Chinese society and policy makers, says Weng, but interest in legislation is limited.

Nevertheless, a combination of domestic and international factors is set to force Chinese policy makers to confront these issues.

"In the 40 year history of industrial robots, just 1.4 million robots have been used. The **Foxconn order** for one million industrial robots will almost double that number. China urgently needs robot laws to tackle the serious social problems that will arise from labor replacement," explains Weng,

The widespread use of autonomous lethal weapons by the United States will also force Chinese authorities to seriously consider the legal implications of their use, says Weng

One of the leading contributors to the international discussion about robotics-related law and regulation, Weng is currently visiting the **Humanoid Robotics Institute**, in Waseda University, Japan, where he is exploring the potential use of airline industry-like "black box" technology in robots to tackle legal liability issues. He is also involved in "The Internet of Things and Automation: Legislation and Policy Research"–a project investigating privacy issues created by domestic robots and liability issues surrounding intelligent transport and UAVs.

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Chinese efforts in this space are piecemeal and heavily dependent on small groups of dedicated researchers. Future progress could hinge on what the Chinese can take from their participation in initiatives such as the European RoboLaw project (see below) and the Japan-China-Korea **joint workshops on robotics**.

Get an in-depth look at the course of action that each of these five world leaders is taking:

4.**United States**: The United States is one of the few countries to enact robot-specific laws and regulations.

3.**European Union**: RoboLaw is a $1.9 million European Commission-funded project designed to prepare the way for the creation of legal and ethical guidelines.

2.**South Korea**: The Ministry of Knowledge Economy (MKE) is the official body responsible for overseeing legislation and regulation regarding robotics.

1.**Japan**: Ethical and emotional barriers against new robots are not high in Japan, but people demand a high level of safety for those new technologies.

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Do you think governments and regulators in your country are doing enough to provide governance for robotic technology? Know of other legistlative and regulatory initiatives that you would like to see included in future coverage? Email us: edemaitre@ehpub.com

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