

## **“Robot Revelations”: An Opportunity**

By Jeff Huggins

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A comment and opportunity, in response to the recent CFP regarding robots and ethics:

Perhaps the most foundational thing regarding human morality/ethics that one can “realize” in the process of considering, and designing, robots, has to do with the obvious problem that exists if a robot can’t—or doesn’t choose to—recharge itself as a matter of very high priority.

In other words, consider an electric robot that gets a “low battery” warning from its batteries when they’re low and need recharging. If the robot’s programming is such that it ignores the warning and chooses, instead, to spend its remaining juice mowing lawns, playing chess, or polishing its silver plating, you’ll soon have a dead robot on your hands. Or, if you think of such a robot as representing an entire species, then it can be seen to represent an unsustainable (and not all that smart) species.

Much can be seen, I believe, about human morality from such a simple illustration. Among other things, much can be learned about the relationship between “is” and “ought” with respect to a very central matter.

(The initial reaction of some people might well be, “it’s obvious that any self-respecting robot ought to recharge itself!”—using the term ‘ought’ here to represent the robot’s ‘ought’. But, just because something is obvious doesn’t mean that it doesn’t involve important insights, of course. And, to others, the matter might not seem so obvious.)

In any case, I’ve written a draft of a short (roughly five pages) paper with such an illustration, along with related questions for readers to consider and a few related comments. I call it “Robot Revelations”.

In my view, the paper would be most interesting, most accurate, and best received if it were polished and offered on a cross-disciplinary basis. In other

words, ideally, I'd like to "finish" it and publish it in collaboration with one or two other moral philosophers, an evolutionary psychologist, an expert in robotics and/or artificial intelligence, and perhaps even a primatologist.

So, if anybody is interested in such an endeavor—i.e., to help polish a very short (and fun) paper and submit it on an equal collaborative basis—please get in touch with me. I'd be happy to send you the current draft. And, if you know of a relevant evolutionary psychologist, or a robotics expert, at your place-of-higher-learning, I'd be open to their participation as well.

Thanks for your attention.

Be Well,

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