

Third Discussion Paper (Due Wednesday, May 10):

Write a five-page essay (1500 words) on one of these three topics.

1. Is it morally permissible to create fully humanoid artificial persons solely for the purpose of specific servitude?
2. As more responsibility for the care of the elderly and the infirm is handed over to robots, are we abdicating a fundamental human responsibility by depriving those in our care of genuine human interactions or are we achieving a social good by providing more competent and cost-effective care to a great number of people in need?
3. Is it conceivable that, at some future date, robots would be sophisticated enough so as to be granted moral and legal standing? What criteria would have to be met - technical, legal, social, etc. - for such a status to be granted? What would be among the chief consequences of our taking such a step?
4. As ever more sophisticated robotic technology and AI is incorporated in prosthetic devices, two challenges emerge: (a) The distinction between the natural and the artificial will start to blur. (b) We will go beyond the mere restoration of function to enhancement. What are the risks as we enter this new world? How far down this path should we go? Who will decide whether there are to be limits, and how will those limits be enforced?
4. What, in your opinion, are the main ethical challenges posed by self-driving cars, and what are the main ethical gains? Be sure think about every aspect of the technology, from programming and design to social impacts.
5. Will there be an AI singularity? Should we fear an AI apocalypse?
6. University of Washington law professor, Ryan Calo, has propose the creation of a Federal Robotics Commission, an agency that would provide technical, legal, and policy advice to congress and the executive branch. Assume that Calo's proposal has been accepted and that you have been hired as the Commission's first director. Your first job is to write a white paper summarizing the most pressing issues that the new commission should address, this document then forming the basis for the commission's work plan. Write that white paper. (Suggestion - do a few minutes of online research to familiarize yourself with the details of Calo's proposal.)