
Editorial: Artificial intelligence and ethics in business, finance and economics

International
Journal of Ethics
and Systems

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Our professional and our personal lives are being transformed rapidly by digitisation of communication and decision-making powered by artificial intelligence (AI). Already, the pandemic use of video conferences and recent developments in the use of AI for decision-making have demonstrated how technological disruptions can radically change human interaction. It has demonstrated how technology can be of immense benefit, but that we must be aware of its effects on our identity, our place in society and what it means to be human. In this context, it is therefore paramount to approach opportunities and risks with an open mind.

The severe warnings that, for example, AI systems with human-competitive intelligence could pose severe risks to humanity should thus be taken seriously, but it should not prevent us from taking advantage of the tremendous value and potential to significantly improve the world we live in.

Recent developments have shown that the ethical challenges of AI stem not only from its specific manifestations, but also from its broader implications for global politics. One pressing issue is the centralisation of AI capabilities among a handful of nations and corporations. This technological concentration risks creating a digital divide, where smaller nations are excluded from the benefits of AI while remaining vulnerable to its harms.

The significance of technological development is illustrated in the dramatic governance war of OpenAI in the autumn of 2023. OpenAI was founded in December 2015 as an NGO by a group of tech entrepreneurs and researchers including Elon Musk, Sam Altman, Greg Brockman and Ilya Sutskever. The primary motivation behind its founding was to ensure that artificial general intelligence (AGI) benefits all of humanity rather than concentrating power in the hands of a few.

At this early stage, it was unclear how they were to develop the AI. The initial funding was one million dollars. As it became clear that the AI would draw on LLMs requiring massive data set and immense processing power, the need for funding increased. Accordingly, the founders opened a for-profit subsidiary. This gave rise to conflicts between the board of the non-profit organisation and Sam Altman, who oversaw the for-profit organisation. Sam Altman was dismissed by the board and called back shortly after. Today, Open AI is a close partner of Microsoft. The original charter of the non-profit organisation and dilemma of the NGO board between securing the success of OpenAI and staying faithful to its founding principles indicates that the founders were aware of the potential significance of their endeavour.

The development from a one million investment and no clear idea of how to build an AI to the exponential growth of ChatGPT and other AI newcomers, illustrates the implications of these technological disruptions. Even though the original intention to create an AI as a public good which is safe, transparent and aligned with human values is at odds with the immense value of the company, the original intention shows that the founders were aware of its disruptive potential and of the importance of making this tool generally available.

The explosive rise of AI shows not only the immense potential but also the corresponding need for this technology. Research on the ethical dimensions of technological developments should therefore hold pace with the development.



International Journal of Ethics and
Systems
Vol. 41 No. 1, 2025
pp. 1-2
© Emerald Publishing Limited
2514-9369
DOI 10.1108/IJOES-02-2025-356

This issue of the *International Journal of Ethics and Systems* is a blend of articles submitted to a call for papers on Ethics of AI in financial and economic systems and articles submitted to regular issues addressing issues of AI or broader issues of future technologies.

Most of the articles in this issue explore the ethical implications of recent technological developments. It has been of utmost importance to the editors to select articles which reflect the diversity of the topic. In recent years, researchers have focused on identifying general issues of technologies. The research has provided a catalogue of challenges which is now imbedded in collective knowledge. They are, for example, bias and discrimination, privacy, autonomy and consent, accountability, transparency, job-displacement and de-skilling. These issues and challenges have been identified in numerous articles.

It is therefore the task for future research to provide more detailed accounts of their specific manifestations. Each era in which technology is enhancing existing functions and capacities and engendering new experiences and realities are subject to specific and contextual ethical issues.

Many of the articles in this issue aim to contextualise these ethical challenges. Only the context of each manifestation of technological development will enable researchers to balance opportunities and risks. Addressing the many opportunities of technological developments is therefore of equal importance to identifying risks. If AI can assist diagnostics in medicine and, for example, reveal the presence of tumours based on a blood sample instead of a CT or MRI scanning, holding back such a technology due to vague unclarified ethical issues would pose different ethical issues and require a strong justification. For this reason, it is paramount that research on ethical challenges also articulates its many advantages.

Technological surveillance of employees' bodily functions, for example, can thus be used to improve and optimise employee wellbeing. However, the very generation of data on bodily functions and mental processes raises questions of fundamental existential character. The implementation of technology is subject to issues of privacy, however, these issues are far from trivial, because they force us to question, how human interaction is changed in case of asymmetrical access to data on bodily and mental functions. Another implementation of new technologies is the detection of happiness levels for tourists, the consequences of which raises questions of ontological nature. If tourist sights are developed and adjusted to enhance the happiness levels of travellers, it raises the question of the nature of our reality. The new technologies thus connect to well-known philosophical inquiries, such as "the brain in a vat" – discussion. Here, a brain is removed from the body, placed in a vat of nutrients and stimulated by a computer which simulates reality. The thought experiment raises questions of the extent to which experiences should reflect reality and correspondingly, it raises the question of the purpose of travelling.

The question of the level of reality also requires attention in the context of social robots. The inherent deception and pretence of inviting the anthropomorphising of machines and the voluntary engagement with social robots, challenge perceptions of human charity. Their potential to support and relieve caring staff is nevertheless immense.

We believe these articles on contextualised ethical issues will contribute to developing the debate and address the possibilities and limitations which reduce risks and promote positive innovations in business and economics.

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