

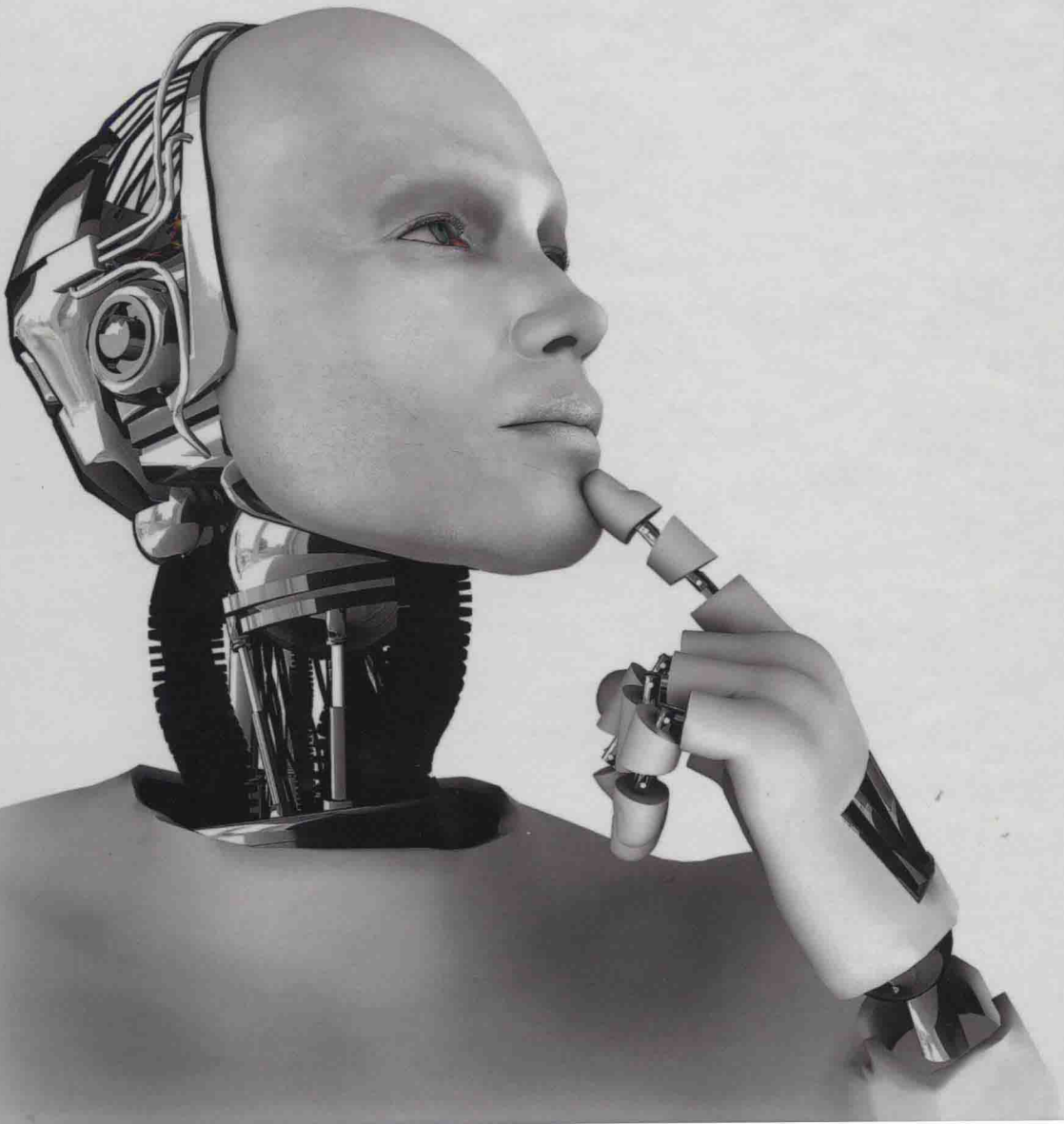
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# Cognitive Robotics

*Edited by*

Hooman Samani



# Cognitive Robotics

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# Contents

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Contributors xi

## SECTION I Ethical Aspect of Cognitive Robotics

### CHAPTER 1 ■ When Robots Do Wrong 3

---

DAVID LEVY

1.1	INTRODUCTION	4
1.2	BLAME THE ROBOT?	5
1.2.1	The Robot as a Quasi-Person	5
1.2.2	The Robot as a Quasi-Animal	5
1.2.3	The Robot as a Manmade Object	6
1.2.4	Punishing the Robot	6
1.2.5	Blaming the Robot — Summary	9
1.3	BLAMING HOMO SAPIENS	9
1.3.1	A Question of Trust	9
1.4	NEGLIGENCE AND PRODUCT LIABILITY LAWS	11
1.4.1	The First Robot Fatality	11
1.4.2	Robots and the Laws of Negligence	13
1.4.3	Robots and the Laws of Product Liability	14
1.4.4	When Robots Are Modified or Misused	15
1.4.5	Other Considerations of Legal Responsibility	15
1.4.6	Summary of Legal Considerations	15
1.5	ROBOT CARS	16
1.6	INSURANCE	17
1.7	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	20
1.8	BIBLIOGRAPHY	21



**SECTION II Philosophical Aspect of Cognitive Robotics****CHAPTER 2 ■ Designing Modular AI Robots Inspired by Amerindian Material Culture** 25

DOROS POLYDOROU and ALEXIS KARKOTIS

2.1	INTRODUCTION	26
2.2	EVOLUTION OF TECHNOLOGY AND IDEAS	29
2.3	THE AMERINDIAN WORLD AND THE TECHNO-ANIMISTIC PARADIGM SHIFT	30
2.4	ANIMISM: MATERIAL AND METAMOPRHOSIS	32
2.5	EGALITARIAN SOCIETIES	36
2.6	FORMATION OF A ROBOTIC COMMUNITY	38
2.7	CONCLUSION	40
2.8	BIBLIOGRAPHY	41

**SECTION III Chemical Aspect of Cognitive Robotics****CHAPTER 3 ■ A learning planet** 47

HANS SPRONG

3.1	INTRODUCTION	47
3.2	PERSPECTIVE	49
3.3	THE SECOND LAW	50
3.4	CONTROL OF FIRE	53
3.5	EMERGENCE OF LEARNING	55
3.6	OF MEN AND CENTAURS	59
3.7	GREAT ESCAPE	64
3.8	BIBLIOGRAPHY	66

**SECTION IV Physical Aspect of Cognitive Robotics****CHAPTER 4 ■ Embodiment in Cognitive Robotics: An Update** 71

PAOLO BARATTINI

4.1	INTRODUCTION	71
4.2	TALKING CHINESE, MEANING AND RECENT THEORETICAL DEBATE	73

4.3	RECENT PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATIONS OF THE EMBODIMENT OF EMOTIONS, MOTIVATIONS AND INTENTIONAL STATES	76
4.4	CONCLUSIONS	84
4.5	BIBLIOGRAPHY	85

---

**CHAPTER 5 ■ Imagined Physics: Exploring Examples of Shape-Changing Interfaces** 89

TIM R. MERRITT, MIE NØRGAARD, CHRISTIAN Ø. LAURSEN, MAJKEN K. RASMUSSEN, and MARIANNE G. PETERSEN

5.1	INTRODUCTION	90
5.2	SHAPE-CHANGING INTERFACES	91
5.3	EXAMPLES FROM OUR COURSES	91
5.3.1	Shape-Changing Tumbling Objects: bObles	92
5.3.2	Shape-Changing with Light	94
5.3.3	Shape-Changing Surfaces	97
5.4	IMAGINED PHYSICS	99
5.5	MOVEMENT AND INCIDENTAL EFFECTS OF ACTUATORS	103
5.6	FUTURE WORK	106
5.7	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	106
5.8	BIBLIOGRAPHY	107

**SECTION V Cultural & Social Aspects of Cognitive Robotics**

---

**CHAPTER 6 ■ Effects of Cultural Context and Social Role on Human–Robot Interaction** 115

PEI-LUEN PATRICK RAU and NA CHEN

6.1	INTRODUCTION	116
6.2	EFFECTS OF CULTURAL CONTEXT	116
6.2.1	Factors Influencing Human–Robot Interaction	116
6.2.2	Effects of Cultural Context on Decision Making	117
6.3	EFFECTS OF ROBOTS' SOCIAL ROLE: AUTONOMY LEVEL AND GROUP ORIENTATION	119
6.3.1	Social Robots	119
6.3.2	Autonomy Level of Robots	119
6.3.3	Group Orientation	120

6.3.4	Effects of Robots' Social Role on Decision Making	121
6.4	FUTURE WORK	123
6.5	BIBLIOGRAPHY	124

---

## CHAPTER 7 ■ A Cognitive Model for Human Willingness to Collaborate with Robots 127

---

BELINDA J. DUNSTAN and JEFFREY TZU KWAN VALINO KOH

7.1	INTRODUCTION	128
7.2	A COGNITIVE MODEL FOR DETERMINING HUMAN WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE WITH COLLABORATIVE ROBOTS	129
7.2.1	Determinants	132
7.2.1.1	Control Beliefs	132
7.2.1.2	Behavioral Beliefs	133
7.2.1.3	Normative Beliefs	133
7.3	CULTURAL ROBOTICS	134
7.4	FUTURE RESEARCH	136
7.5	CONCLUSION	137
7.6	BIBLIOGRAPHY	137

---

## CHAPTER 8 ■ Social Cognition of Robots during Interacting with Humans 143

---

ALEX YU-HUNG CHIEN and VON-WUN SOO

8.1	INTRODUCTION	144
8.2	SPEECH ACTS AND DIALOGUE CONTEXT	147
8.3	MODEL SPEECH ACTS AS DIALOGUE CONTEXT CHANGE	149
8.4	MULTIPLE DIALOGUE CONTEXTS	150
8.4.1	Physical Context	151
8.4.2	Emotion Model	151
8.4.3	Social Relation	151
8.4.4	Social Role	152
8.4.5	Personality	152
8.4.6	Preference	152
8.5	SPEECH ACT MODEL WITH MULTIPLE CONTEXTS	152
8.6	CONTEXT AWARENESS IN DIALOGUE	153

8.7	COMPUTATIONAL MODEL OF CONTEXT AWARENESS REASONING USING DBN	154
8.7.1	Noisy-OR Model	156
8.7.2	Isolated Contexts	156
8.8	EXPERIMENT	157
8.8.1	A Speech Act Model with Multiple Contexts	157
8.8.2	Infer Social Context from Dialogue	158
8.8.3	Noise in Dialogue Context Awareness	161
8.8.4	Pragmatic Prediction with Dialogue Contexts	164
8.8.5	The Most Likely Pragmatic Speech Acts Sequence	165
8.9	CONCLUSION	166
8.10	BIBLIOGRAPHY	167

## SECTION VI Psychological Aspect of Cognitive Robotics

CHAPTER 9	On the Crossroads of Cognitive Psychology and Cognitive Robotics	171
-----------	--	-----

---

ROY DE KLEIJN, GEORGE KACHERGIS, and BERNHARD HOMMEL

9.1	EARLY HISTORY OF THE FIELDS	172
9.1.1	History of Cognitive Psychology	172
9.1.2	The Computer Analogy	173
9.1.3	Early Cognitive Robots	174
9.2	ACTION CONTROL	175
9.2.1	Introduction	175
9.2.2	Feedforward and Feedback Control in Humans	175
9.2.3	Feedforward and Feedback Control in Robots	176
9.2.4	Robotic Action Planning	177
9.3	ACQUISITION OF ACTION CONTROL	178
9.3.1	Introduction	178
9.3.2	Human Action–Effect Learning	179
9.3.2.1	Traditional Action–Effect Learning Research	179
9.3.2.2	Motor Babbling	179
9.3.3	Robotic Action–Effect Learning	180
9.4	DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE	181

9.4.1	Introduction	181
9.4.2	Affordance Learning	181
9.4.3	Everyday Action Planning	182
9.5	CONCLUSION	183
9.6	BIBLIOGRAPHY	183

**SECTION VII Artificial Intelligence Aspect of Cognitive Robotics**

<b>CHAPTER 10</b>	<b>A Bottom-Up Integration of Vision and Actions To Create Cognitive Humanoids</b>	<b>191</b>
-------------------	--	------------

---

JÜRGEN LEITNER

10.1	INTRODUCTION	192
10.2	A COGNITIVE ROBOTICS APPROACH	196
10.3	PERCEIVING THE ENVIRONMENT	199
10.3.1	Object Detection: icVision & CGP-IP	200
10.4	INTERACTING WITH THE ENVIRONMENT	201
10.4.1	Collision Avoidance and World Model: MoBeE	203
10.4.2	Action Repertoire: TRM & LEOGrasper	204
10.5	INTEGRATION	206
10.5.1	Closing the Action-Perception Loop	206
10.6	RESULTS	207
10.6.1	Avoiding a Moving Obstacle	207
10.6.2	Reaching and Grasping Objects	208
10.7	CONCLUSIONS	209
10.8	BIBLIOGRAPHY	209

Index		215
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# I

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## **Ethical Aspect of Cognitive Robotics**



# When Robots Do Wrong

David Levy

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## CONTENTS

1.1	Introduction .....	4
1.2	Blame the Robot? .....	5
1.2.1	The Robot as a Quasi-Person .....	5
1.2.2	The Robot as a Quasi-Animal .....	5
1.2.3	The Robot as a Manmade Object .....	6
1.2.4	Punishing the Robot .....	6
1.2.5	Blaming the Robot — Summary .....	9
1.3	Blaming homo sapiens .....	9
1.3.1	A Question of Trust .....	9
1.4	Negligence and product liability laws .....	11
1.4.1	The First Robot Fatality .....	11
1.4.2	Robots and the Laws of Negligence .....	13
1.4.3	Robots and the Laws of Product Liability .....	14
1.4.4	When Robots Are Modified or Misused .....	15
1.4.5	Other Considerations of Legal Responsibility .....	15
1.4.6	Summary of Legal Considerations .....	15
1.5	Robot Cars .....	16
1.6	Insurance .....	17
1.7	Summary and Conclusions .....	20
1.8	Bibliography .....	21

**A**LREADY mankind has begun to embrace the “robot society.” In 2005 the government of South Korea announced its intention to have a robot in every household by 2020. And the Japanese Robot Association predicts that Next Generation Robots will generate up to \$ 65 billion of economic



activity by 2025. Also in Japan efforts have been under way for some time to ensure that, before long, elderly members of the population will routinely have robots to take care of them. Meanwhile, at many universities and other research centres, robots of just about every flavour are a hot topic.

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

---

Clearly robots will soon be assisting us in many different aspects of our lives, becoming our partners in various practical and companionable ways and entertaining us. An early example in the field of entertainment was a ballroom dancer robot that was unveiled in 2005 at the World Expo in Japan. It did not have usable legs but instead moved on three wheels.

Let us consider the following scenario, perhaps ten years from now, when dancing robots do have moveable legs and possess the skills for a variety of dance steps, such as waltz, foxtrot, rumba, ... One evening a young lady named Laura is at a dance, partnering such a robot. The band strikes up with the music for a cha cha cha but performs it so badly that the robot mistakes the music for a tango. So Laura and her robot partner are holding each other but dancing at cross purposes, and very soon they fall over. The robot lands on top of Laura and, being quite heavy, breaks both of her legs. Laura's father is furious, and calls his lawyers, telling them to commence legal proceedings immediately and "throw the book at them."

But at whom should his lawyers throw the book? Should it be the dance hall, or the online store that sold the robot to the dance hall, or the manufacturer of the robot, or the robot's designers, or should it be the independent software house that programmed the robot's tune recognition software, or the band leader, or even the whole band of musicians for playing the cha cha cha so badly?

Some months later the trial opens with all of these as defendants. Expert witnesses are called - experts on everything from robot software to motion sensor engineers to the principals of dance music academies. What do you think would be the result of the trial? I'll tell you - the lawyers do very nicely thank you.

As technology advances, the proliferation of robots and their applications will take place in parallel with increases in their complexity. One of the disadvantages of those increases will be a corresponding increase in the number of robot accidents and wrongdoings. How will legal systems be able to cope with all the resulting court cases? In fact, will they be able to cope? The answer, surely, is "No."

In this chapter, I am going to address the questions: What should happen when something goes wrong? Who, or what, is responsible? And above all, how best should society deal with an ever-increasing number of robot accidents. All developed countries will be faced with these problems, and all countries need to adopt legally and ethically sound approaches to finding solutions to them.