

Darius Meier

# The Future of Work

Ethical Evaluation of the Change of Human Labor  
in the Context of Advancing Automation



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## Abstract

This dissertation examines how human labor has been changed by recent developments in automation from an ethical perspective. To that end, it demonstrates how living a life with human dignity is a universal moral imperative, grounded by the principle of vulnerability, and develops an ethical point of reference to analyze advancing automation based on the capabilities approach while extensively discussing the role of work as part of the framework. In that sense, the different aspects of work, along with its significance to receive sufficient financial income, are evaluated. As a result, a revision of the ten central human capabilities list is proposed, explained, and subsequently justified. The following overall assessment presents ethical opportunities and challenges, outlining how key developments of automation affect the different capabilities to live a dignified life when work is conducted more and more by machines. Furthermore, policy instruments frequently discussed regarding automation of human labor are assessed from an ethical perspective, later applied in a guidance for Swiss public policy. In that effort, this dissertation emphasizes the importance of an active social assistance scheme to provide humans a dignified life when the availability of work becomes scarce.



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## List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
ADM	Automated decision-making
AI	Artificial intelligence
AIM	AI in medicine
AWS	Autonomous weapons systems
CDR	Corporate digital responsibility
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
CST	Catholic social teaching
DLT	Distributed ledger technologies
DQ	Digital intelligence
ESG	Environmental, Social, Governance
ETF	Exchange-traded funds
EU	European Union
FDA	US Food and Drug Administration
GDP	Gross domestic product
HDI	Human Development Index
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering
ILO	International Labor Organization
IT	Information technology
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
R&D	Research & Development
RAS	Robot-assisted surgery

*List of abbreviations*

RAV	Regionale Arbeitsvermittlungszentren
RPA	Robotic process automation
TSR	Technological social responsibility
UBI	Universal basic income
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
US	United States
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization