

Darius Meier

The Future of Work

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



Nomos

Ethik | Ethics

herausgegeben von | edited by

Prof. Dr. Peter G. Kirchschräger

Prof. Dr. Christine Abbt

Prof. Dr. Georges Enderle

Band | Volume 2

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The publication was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

a.t.: Luzern, Univ., Diss., 2023

ISBN 978-3-7560-0895-7 (Print)
978-3-7489-1642-0 (ePDF)

1st Edition 2024

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Published by
Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG
Waldseestraße 3–5 | 76530 Baden-Baden
www.nomos.de

Production of the printed version:
Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG
Waldseestraße 3–5 | 76530 Baden-Baden

ISBN 978-3-7560-0895-7 (Print)
ISBN 978-3-7489-1642-0 (ePDF)
DOI <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748916420>



Online Version
Nomos eLibrary



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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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Acknowledgements

On the evening of October 9, 2019, I met with Prof. Dr. Markus Huppenbauer at Zurich Main Station. He had previously been my mentor, having supervised my master's thesis at the University of Zurich. In 2019, I had been working as a technology consultant for one of the “Big Four” companies for a couple of years but was seeking further intellectual challenge. Markus Huppenbauer proposed, “Why don't you do a PhD on the basis of our successful collaboration during your master's thesis?” and we began to contemplate what specific research topic I could focus on. He recommended that I approach Prof. Dr. Peter G. Kirchsclaeger and ask him to become my main supervisor while he would assume a co-supervisory role. After my proposal was accepted, I initiated my research in February 2020. Markus Huppenbauer passed away unexpectedly five months later, and he remains sadly missed.

At this point, I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Peter G. Kirchsclaeger, for his continued support and confidence throughout this project's completion and for enlightening me with his expertise on the essential nature of the principle of vulnerability, highlighting the fragility that is common to all human beings. I am also grateful to Prof. Dr. Giovanni Ventimiglia, who was the second assessor of my thesis. Moreover, I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the Institute of Social Ethics ISE at the University of Lucerne for the lively debates that they facilitated during colloquium sessions at the Lucerne Graduate School in Ethics LGSE.

My time at Yale University was a crucial period in the development of my thesis, and I am particularly grateful to my sponsor Prof. Dr. Jennifer A. Herdt of Yale Divinity School for sharing with me her expertise on human dignity, which had a substantial influence on the course that my research took. In addition, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Thomas Pogge and the other fellows of the Yale Global Justice Program—in particular, Dr. Michal Apollo and Matheus de Vilhena Moraes—for their valuable input and excellent collaboration. I would further like to express my gratitude to Dr. Joseph R. Carvalko, Jr. and Prof. Dr. Wendell Wallach for their topical discussions on my research and for inviting me to speak at the Yale Technology and Ethics working group. Furthermore, I would like to thank

Acknowledgements

Nathaniel Raymond of Yale School of Public Health, Dr. Iason Gabriel of Oxford University, and Prof. Dr. Eduard Fosch-Villaronga of Leiden University for the discussions and for joining me as participants of the 2022 Yale Global Justice Conference.

In addition, I would like to express my appreciation for Tais Fernanda Blauth from the University of Groningen for the collaboration on the topic of autonomous weapons systems. I am also grateful to Prof. Dr. Omar Oswald Serrano, Prof. Dr. Katina Michael, Dr. Caroline Kuhn and Prof. Dr. Jean-Michel Bonvin for our discussions on various topics and to Dr. Jason Resnikoff, Prof. Dr. José van Dijck, Cornelia Diethelm, Peter S. Goodman, and Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Hoffmann-Riem for their publication-related input.

I would like to express gratitude to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Switzerland—specifically Urs Küderli, Johannes Dohren, and Fabian Fais-tauer—for their support over the course of this dissertation project and our fruitful discussions in recent years.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and dear friends for the enduring support over the course of this research project. They know who they are.

Zollikon/Zurich, 10.07.2024

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