A Human Touch

Dear Mr. Ackerman,

Alexander Pope, a renowned English poet, once stated, “To err is human” thus implying that imperfection is an elemental piece of human nature; hence, our creations have defects as well. Another fundament of being a human is the capability of interpretation. In comparison to humans, robots are more efficient, reliable, and cost-efficient in several lines of work such as policing. However, robots cannot analyze each situation because they are specifically programmed. Your article regarding artificial intelligence informs us about scientists developing a sort of mock nervous system with the sole purpose of training robots to feel pain and thus, appropriately react to numerous situations. I would advocate adding the ability to feel physical pain to robots because this would develop a robot’s ability to analyze scenarios and gauge various factors to help determine which course of action to take.

Pain is the first step in the process of getting robots to react to situations with context. According to Evan Ackerman’s article, two scientists from Leibniz University outfitted a robot arm with sensors that transmit pain signals whenever it performs a specific action. Over time, this robot arm learned to avoid the action that caused it pain. With the ability to feel pain, robots such as the one in Ackerman’s article undergo and gain the meaning of pain through experience. Pain allows robots to react to situations that they were not programmed for with the knowledge of potential consequences that they learned from previous experiences.

Giving a robot the ability to analyze the context of the situation is more important than efficiency because not everything in life is black and white. Not everything is certain or set in stone. One such example is my final confrontation with Omnicorp CEO Raymond Sellars. While attempting to kill Sellars was against Robocop’s programming, I had reason to seek his death to execute justice, as Sellars had helped orchestrate the car bomb that required me to undergo cybernetic treatment in the first place. It is an innovative idea for robots to experience pain because they would know when to avoid obstacles instead of engaging. Painful sensations would act as a motive for robots to avoid certain situations that instigate the pain. As humans, using our intelligence, ethics, and experience help shape our decisions. Incorporating this into robots would greatly progress technology and may very well prove to be revolutionary.

All in all, bestowing the ability of feeling upon robots can prove to be an advantage if we alter their programming in such a way that they perform in a human manner. Human beings perceive the world unlike any other creatures, and we are complex beings with a higher caliber of intelligence. Robots, while unwavering and consistent, can stick only to the program. If we rewired them to feel pain and apply this to scenarios in real life, not only would this improve our technology, but this would also allow us to continue to explore introducing sentience to robots.

Respectfully,

Alex Murphy