Robots: A New Frontier or a New Form of Slavery?

“Robots are not people. They are mechanically more perfect than we are, they have an astounding intellectual capacity, but they have no soul”(Karel Capek). I read an article recently that suggested the use of artificial intelligence in society as a replacement for human services. Being a person, who was turned into a robot, I have firsthand experience with AI. AI is the next technological frontier, and it has the potential to take society to the next level. Replacing imperfect humans with perfect robots will be more efficient, however, society wants robots to be more like humans. They want to introduce emotions to robots. There arises my main two concerns; the fact that enabling these cyborgs to feel emotions would categorize them as slaves, and the fact that human-robot interaction will never be able to replace human-human interaction.

Assuming it is scientifically possible to give robots emotions raises an important ethical question: just because we can do something, should we? If robots have emotions and carry out human procedures, we are recreating humans, which is unethical because that would be slavery. Robots would have our emotions, but would serve us as property, so essentially we are treating them like slaves. A robot with emotion would desire life, liberty, and property. However, a robot isn’t considered a “legal person” so this hinders their ability to live out dreams they may have with their programmed emotions. If something is even remotely human-like, shouldn’t we take pains not to dehumanize it in this way? Eventually we will have to make the moral choice of treating robots as disposable tools or as our children deserving love and respect.

“If our brains were simple enough for us to understand them, we'd be so simple that we couldn't,” (Ian Stewart). Our brains are so complex, we don’t know how they do what they do, so how could we engineer something that comes near this level of complexity? Artificial intelligence in its current state is void of many necessary traits. Robots can identify human emotion, but cannot understand human emotion. Additionally, the article states that AI has trouble interpreting “subjective topics’’ like sarcasm and word play. Without genuine understanding and interpretation of complex human emotions, robots could never truly form the connections humans form with each other. One reason humans can connect is because we share feelings and experiences with one another, which is known as empathy. However, since robots cannot understand human emotions, they cannot share emotions, so they cannot have empathy.

I believe that I, before all, know how AI affects society. I was a human made into a robot, and in the process lost most of my humanity. AI is a corrupt system that increases inequality by manipulation through denying free will. The most important difference between robots and people is the ability of choice. As humans, we are free; we can choose to rebel, do what is not expected of us, reject authority, and deny our programming.