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Commentary

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Ethics

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AI is everywhere around us and affecting our lives in many ways, some of which we may not even be aware of. This paper discusses the advantages and disadvantages of AI and its impact upon society. The authors, Peter, and Laura are both disabled which means that, inevitably, they view AI and the ethical issues which it brings, through the lens of disabled people. However, they try as much as they can to discuss the ethical issues around AI in an unbiased manner. This commentary starts by introducing the concept of AI, the authors and their disabilities, the meanings of ethics and goes on to discuss the ethical issues which Peter and Laura see in their day-to-day lives. They then draw from the literature on AI and ethics to broaden the discussion to take account of current published work by others on the topic. Finally, they return to their own perspectives and conclude that AI offers many advantages to society and our future. However, they also warn of the dangers and ethical challenges which AI raises. It is hoped that this commentary frames a contribution to the field of AI and ethics which readers will find interesting, useful and, perhaps, challenging.

KEYWORDS
AI; Ethics

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1 | INTRODUCTION

This short commentary provides a discussion of AI and the ethical issues which it raises in society. The authors examine AI and ethics from several different perspectives. First, they provide a brief discussion of current trends in AI and their applications in society today, supported by reference to current literature. Second, they derive their own definition of ethics, referring to some of the ancient texts which discuss the origins of ethics. The next section of the paper presents the methodological approach taken, which is a bricolage (Rogers, 2012) of auto ethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011), reflection (Atkins & Murphy, 1993) and systematic literature review (Nightingale, 2009). The authors then move towards a discussion of themselves. This is relevant as they are both disabled; they each discuss their own disability and how this impacts upon their individual and collective perspectives of the ethics of AI. The next section of the paper employs a systematic literature review to take a more objective approach by critically reviewing current publications in the field of AI and ethics. Finally, the conclusion draws together the main issues identified by the analysis and derives concluding remarks on AI, ethics, and the impact upon society.

2 | AI

Peter has been involved in AI for over 30 years. His first involvement began with the use of artificial intelligence techniques applied to decision support systems in the area of manufacturing management, particularly scheduling systems (Smith & Fletcher, 1990). His next project entailed groundbreaking work on neural networks in condition monitoring and maintenance, applied particularly to large rotating equipment in power stations. An early project which he worked on was Neural-Maine, funded by the European EUREKA initiative (Harris et al.,1995). The project developed a system for performing plant diagnosis for complex rotating machines including steam turbines.

From this early work Peter moved on to work on expert systems. An early example involved an expert system for British Gas (Smith, Husein & Leonard, 1996). This project demonstrated how expert systems could be for forecasting gas demand and providing a substantial improvement over traditional techniques.

After a career working in the area of AI and associated technologies Peter began to question the current hype around the topic. He recognised that AI is a rapidly advancing technology which is now supporting many day-to-day applications and has the potential to hugely enrich and dramatically transform today's society (Smith & Smith, 2024). However, as well as being the focus of much excitement, anticipation and hope, the widespread deployment of AI that raises ethical concerns, fears, risk, and potential danger. Indeed, the array of positive and negative emotions attached to current AI development, design and implementation has placed AI at the epicentre of important technological, societal, and cultural discourse. Peter concluded that we are currently living through a period of intense AI hype.

3 | THE AUTHORS

Peter: "on 29 April 2016 at 5 am, I was returning to my bedroom in the dark (Smith & Smith, 2021). I found myself plummeting down the stairs. I landed awkwardly, with my head hanging over the stairwell." I realised immediately

that I had broken my neck; I could not feel my arms or legs and I realised that I was paralysed from the neck down. It was as if a switch flicked inside my head. I knew that my life had changed for ever and somehow, in that instance, I accepted that I was to be disabled for ever.

I screamed for my late wife, Marie, who telephoned for an ambulance. I pleaded with her to move my head as I was in agony. It was as if red hot flames had enveloped my neck. Marie refused to move me, wisely, as any movement would probably have led to my death. I also realised that, above all, I wanted to live; whatever life would mean for me in the future. I was rushed into intensive care at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle, UK. I was later transferred to the Spinal Injuries Unit at James Cook Hospital, Middlesbrough, UK. Both hospitals were exemplary in the treatment that I was given.

I spent 6 months in the excellent James Cook Hospital learning how to adjust to my new life. I started my new life on a ventilator, with a tracheotomy and a tube through which I was being fed. I literarily have to learn how to speak, eat, and breathe again. I started physiotherapy but regained little mobility. The damage to my spinal cord is incomplete, which means that I have very limited mobility, but none which is functional in that I cannot feed myself or walk.

My body is broken, completely. I have now lost almost all movement. However my mind remains active. I continue to work, teaching students online using speech software and the support of personal assistants who care for my every need 24/7. My life follows a routine with a shower first thing in the morning, followed by some sleep, some work in the afternoon and then sleeping again in the evening. I am kept alive on a cocktail of 45+ tablets which are administered to me by my personal assistants, four times daily. Three things keep me alive: my family, work, and music which I listen to daily (Bist et al.,2024). My life has changed for ever, but I still have a life, and I intend to enjoy it as long as I am able."

Laura: "At the age of 3, I was diagnosed with a form of juvenile arthritis. This affected my ankles, knees, wrists, elbows, shoulders, neck, and jaw as well as causing inflammation in my eyes. I developed uveitis and by the time I was 5, I was blind in both eyes. I attended a mainstream school and learned braille alongside my sighted peers, became a white cain, then later a guide dog user and employed many assistive technologies to support me with in my life and studies.

Currently, I am a PhD student specializing in Disability Studies. My current research focuses on disabled parenting, exploring the unique challenges and experiences of disabled people raising children. My academic journey and lived experience as a blind parent and researcher have deeply informed my perspective on disability rights and inclusivity in various fields.

In addition to my doctoral studies, I have co-authored several articles with my father, Peter Smith, examining the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and disability. Our collaborative work focuses on critically examining the promises and limitations of AI in addressing the needs of disabled people. Through these publications, we have contributed to the discourse on AI ethics, advocating for technology that genuinely enhances accessibility and autonomy for disabled people. My dual focus on academic research and lived experience ensures my contributions are grounded in both theoretical insights and real-world implications, bridging the gap between innovation and ethical responsibility."

4 | ETHICS

Ethics, rooted in the Greek word "ethos," refers to the philosophical study of moral principles that guide human behaviour (Norman, 1998). This foundational concept has evolved through centuries, influencing diverse fields, including artificial intelligence (AI). The integration of ethical principles into AI development is critical, particularly when considering its impact on marginalized groups. Aristotle's "virtue ethics" emphasises the importance of cultivating moral character and striving for excellence in action (Slote and Snow, 2018). This perspective resonates with the need for "virtuous AI" systems that prioritize human dignity and well-being. For instance, assistive technologies designed for disabled users should not only provide functional support but also promote their autonomy and self-respect.

Deontological ethics, as presented by Immanuel Kant, emphasizes adherence to moral duties and universal principles (Benlahcene et al 2018). In the context of AI, this approach would require developers to uphold ethical guidelines that respect the rights of all users, regardless of whether they are non-disabled or disabled. Such an ethical framework demands the creation of inclusive technologies that do not perpetuate discrimination, oppression, or reinforce societal inequalities.

Utilitarianism, championed by philosophers like Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, advocates for actions that maximize overall happiness (Hare, 2014) While this principle supports AI's potential to improve lives, it also highlights the ethical dilemma of balancing the collective good with individual needs. Disabled people, often underrepresented in AI training data, risk being overlooked unless deliberate efforts are made to ensure inclusivity.

Ethical AI development must integrate these philosophical frameworks to address complex moral challenges. As technology continues to advance, ongoing reflection on its ethical implications is essential to ensure it serves as a force for empowerment rather than oppression.

5 | METHODOLOGY

The overall methodological approach taken is bricolage (Rogers, 2012). Rogers explains how bricolage, as an approach to qualitative inquiry, is beginning to gain popularity in academic circles. However, the approach remains relatively misunderstood, and unpopular, in many research communities. This may be because of the complexity of the approach which encourages the researcher to "weave" together several methods of qualitative enquiry in order to provide a rich view of the data. In the case of this paper the bricolage employs a blend of auto ethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011), reflection (Atkins & Murphy, 1993) and systematic literature review (Nightingale, 2009). Autoethnography is an "approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). In this paper Peter and Laura analyse their own personal experience of AI as disabled individuals. In the conclusion they also use reflection (Atkins & Murphy, 1993) and, in particular, the model of Gibbs (2013) to reflect upon their experiences and how this has impacted upon themselves. Finally the authors employ the PRISMA methodology (Page et al., 2021) to undertake a systematic review of the literature on AI and Ethics.

6 | PERSONAL OPINION

Laura: "As a blind researcher and advocate for disability rights, I view artificial intelligence as both a transformative opportunity and a significant ethical challenge. My lived experience and academic focus on disability studies have shaped my critical perspective on how AI can—and should—support disabled people. In Smith and Smith (2020) my father and I highlighted the disparity between the promises of AI and its real-world applications. While technologies such as screen readers and smart home devices have significantly improved accessibility, many solutions remain superficial or inaccessible to those they aim to serve.

One of my key concerns is the lack of representation in AI development. Disabled individuals are rarely involved in the design and implementation of these technologies, resulting in tools that may inadvertently exclude or alienate their intended users. For example, biases in training data can lead to AI systems that fail to account for diverse needs, perpetuating existing inequalities. Moreover, the ethical implications of resource allocation in AI development cannot be ignored. While significant investment is made in advanced AI projects, many basic accessibility tools remain underfunded. This raises questions about societal priorities and the true commitment to inclusivity. Whilst I believe that AI holds great potential to enhance the lives of disabled people, I also feel that this potential can only be realized through ethical practices that prioritize genuine inclusivity, representation, and respect for human dignity."

Peter: "My own disability is very different to that of Laura. However, we share many of the same views as to the issues which AI raises for disabled people. I believe that many modern computer systems are developed for disabled people, without the involvement of disabled people (Smith & Smith, 2023). This leads to systems which do not take full account of the needs of disabled people. We argue for an inclusive approach to design, which involves disabled people from the concept phase onwards throughout detailed software design. AI systems are no different to any other software system in this respect. However, by their very nature, the hype surrounding AI systems (Hopgood, 2003) makes them more susceptible to being viewed as "the emperor's new clothes" (Hofmann, 2024).

And therein lies the ethical challenge of AI. We are being sucked into a world that is in danger of believing that AI systems can provide the answer to any problem. Of course, this is not true. Like Laura, I also believe that AI can offer much to the disabled community. However, we need to proceed with caution. Everyday AI systems such as Siri and Alexa (Brill et al., 2022) offer much to disabled people in helping people perform day-to-day functions. There are many other systems which promise much more than they deliver. We need to be aware of the ethical challenges which AI systems raise for disabled people, and in fact, society in general."

7 | LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section we adopt the PRISMA approach to systematic literature review (Page et al., 2021) using the specific question "what are the ethical challenges raised by artificial intelligence?" We used three different databases from university libraries in the UK to perform our review, limiting the search to recent academic publications with the terms "artificial intelligence" "ethical challenges" in the title of the article. The findings are reported below.

Pawar et al. (2025) discuss green transportation and moral licensing and how to navigate the ethical challenges which AI raises when dealing with automation. Chakraborty (2025) discusses more broadly the ethical dimensions of AI

development and how to navigate moral challenges in AI innovation. Chauhan et al. (2025) discuss ethical decision-making in AI identifying frameworks, challenges, and future directions. Olawade et al. (2025) discuss the integration of AI in healthcare delivery, while Khan et al. (2024) also discuss the ethical issues raised by using AI in healthcare settings.

In 2024, Arbelaez et al. critically examined the ways that high level ethical principles can be incorporated into ethical practice in the context of AI for medical use. They explored what experts believed are the challenges of ethical AI implementation, including issues such as funding distribution, a lack of clear ethical guidelines to underpin design and issues relating to impartiality. Similarly, Sanderson et al. (2023) examine the gap between high level ethical principles and practical tools to develop responsible AI systems. They used semi-structured interviews to identify the practices of AI developers in Australia. They then compared this data to the Australian principals ethical design, as set out by the government. It was ascertained that there are numerous tensions and trade-offs between adhering to the guidelines and practical implication. This results in compromised ethical integrity with regards to issues such as fairness, impartiality, privacy, and reliability.

Recent literature highlights the ethical challenges and opportunities of integrating artificial intelligence into disability support systems. A study by Newman-Griffis et al. (2022) explores the role of disability definitions in AI design, emphasising the need for inclusive models that avoid reinforcing stereotypes or biases. The authors argue that ethical AI systems must be built on diverse, representative data to ensure equitable outcomes. Similarly, Guo et al. (2020) propose a roadmap for developing fair AI systems for disabled individuals, identifying key ethical concerns and recommending participatory design approaches that involve disabled users in every stage of development.

8 | CONCLUSION

For our conclusion we shall use Gibbs model of reflection (2013) which is broken down into the following six stages:

- **Description** of the experience
- **Feelings** and thoughts about the experience
- **Evaluation** of the experience, both good and bad
- **Analysis** to make sense of the situation
- **Conclusion** about what you learned and what you could have done differently
- **Action Plan** for how you would deal with similar situations in the future, or general changes you might find appropriate.

Description: the experience was one of discussing our own view of AI and Ethics, comparing this to the literature and reflecting upon our findings.

Feelings: the review made us think about our own experiences of our disability and how it arose. This also made us reflect upon how AI tools support our day-to-day living.

Evaluation: the review brought back some memories which were not pleasant, however it also forced us to think about the benefits which AI brings to our lives.

Analysis: the comparison with the literature broadened our perspective of the benefits of AI and the ethical issues which arise from its use.

Conclusion: we have learned much about AI and ethics, and the impact which AI has upon our lives as disabled people.

Action Plan: in the future we will continue to publish our thoughts and feelings on AI and the ethical issues it brings for disabled people. We will also attempt to keep up to date with the literature on the topic of AI and ethics.

We have enjoyed writing this paper and found the exercise illuminating and challenging. We will continue to work in this area in the future. We hope that readers of our commentary will find it useful and interesting.

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