

**Social assistive robotics: An ethical approach through the concept of freedom**

As a technoscientific activity developing tools for specific fields of professional human activity, social robotics is a principal actor in the practical and conceptual (re)configuration of our life. It modifies the margins of human action in an unprecedented way, by allowing us to “outsource” part of our agency to robots in human practices of a relational kind, such as care. Robots’ capacity to interact with humans “interpersonally” places social robotics –especially social assistive robotics (SAR)– as a promising technological contribution to European institutional care practices, mainly regarding healthcare. The corresponding ongoing ethical reflection is predominantly led from an individual-centered perspective, which focuses on the implications that robots may have for the well-being of humans with whom they interact. Much limited to the sphere of human-robot interaction (dyadically comprehended), this ethical approach comes along with less attention to social robotics’ implications from both the perspective of the specific (care) practice in which AI systems are introduced and the sociopolitical perspective of justice. This tendency overlooks the constitutive interrelation between individual Well-being, Care and Justice as main spheres of human activity with ethical import regarding SAR. To contribute to overcoming this deficit, I suggest delving into the meaning of certain core ethical concepts that enable a transversal gaze to SAR implications at the *micro*, *meso* and *macro* level of human life, but which are narrowly understood in the current landscape of ethical debate. In this regard, I unfold the philosophical concept of freedom and some related notions such as autonomy, and I ethically (re)examine social assistive robotics in the light of these. By bringing to the fore the political-structural dimension of human-technology relations, this analysis accounts for a richer normative-oriented reflection on social robotics for the design of the Techno-Anthropocene.

**Keywords: ethics, freedom, social assistive robotics**

**Júlia Pareto Boada**

Institut de Robòtica i Informàtica Industrial,  
Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) -  
Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC)  
Facultat de Filosofia, Universitat de Barcelona (UB)