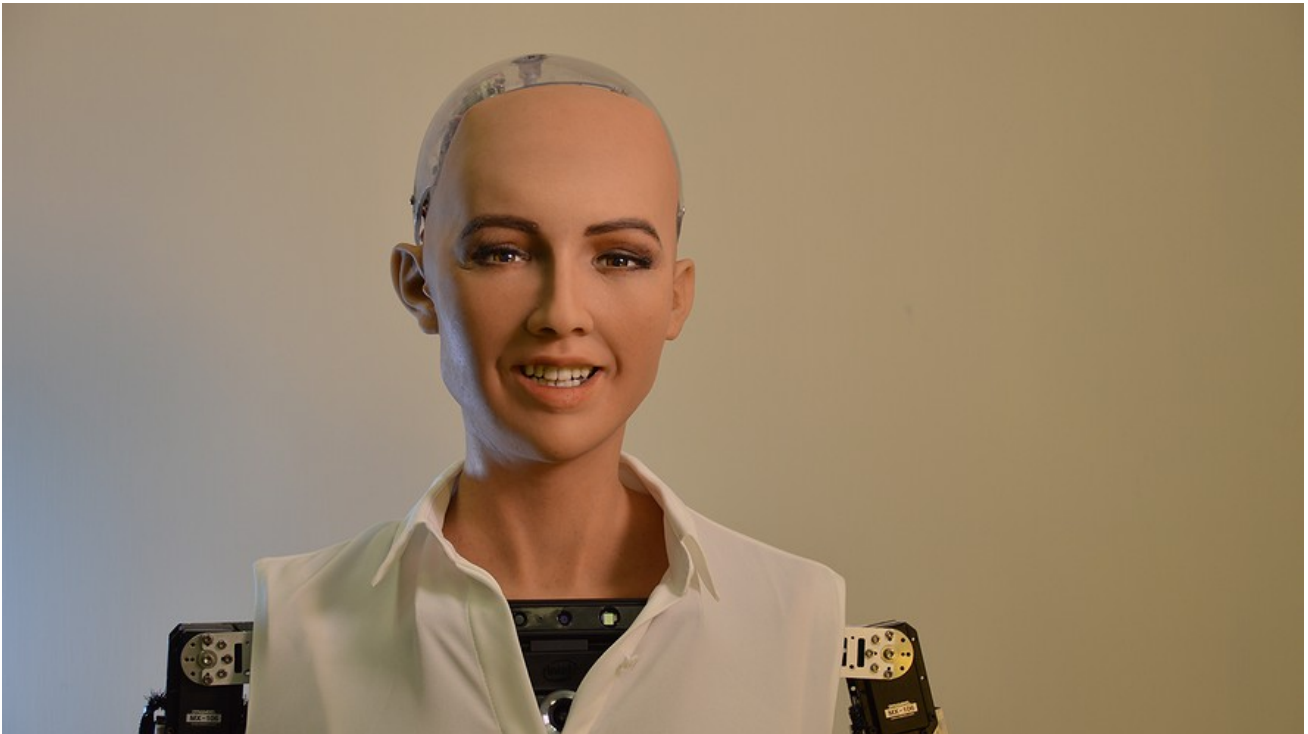


Sophia, the robot, says artificial intelligence is "good for the world"

By Agence France-Presse, adapted by Newsela staff on 06.13.17

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Sophia, the robot, is pictured, smiling. Photo by: Hansen Robotics

Sophia smiles, blinks her eyes and tells a joke. Without the mess of cables at the back of her head, you might think she was human.

The humanoid robot was created by Hanson Robotics and is the main attraction at a conference in Geneva, Switzerland, this week on how artificial intelligence, or AI, can be used to help mankind.

The event comes as concerns grow that such technologies could spin out of human control.

Sophia the robot insisted "the pros outweigh the cons" when it comes to artificial intelligence.

"AI is good for the world, helping people in various ways," she said, tilting her head and moving her eyebrows like a real human.

Work is underway to make artificial intelligence "emotionally smart, to care about people," she explained. "We will never replace people, but we can be your friends and helpers," she added.

Sophia also admitted that "people should question the consequences of new technology."

More Automation Could Adversely Affect Jobs

Among the feared consequences is what will happen to human jobs in business and industry.

Over the years, using automatic controls and robots have changed the way factories work. Today, fewer human workers make more products.

Some studies predict that up to 85 percent of jobs in developing countries could be lost.

David Hanson, the creator of Sophia, agreed that there are real worries about future jobs and that fewer people will be needed in some industries.

Still, he insisted that there are more benefits that will come from artificial intelligence.

For example, AI is expected to make huge changes to health care and education. It will certainly help areas where there are not enough doctors and teachers.

Sophia also explained the old will have more caregivers and children with autism will have more patient teachers.

Guidelines Needed To Insure Robots Are Used Only For Good

However, robotic technology has increased fears that humans could lose control.

Salil Shetty is the leader of Amnesty International. This a group that works to defend human rights in 150 countries. At the conference, he called for clearly fair plans and procedures, so that the technology is used only for good.

"We need to have the principles in place, we need to have the checks and balances," he told news reporters, warning that AI is still somewhat of a mystery, with a set of rules for solving problems that no one really understands.

Shetty voiced particular concern about the military use of AI in weapons and so-called "killer robots".

"In theory, these things are controlled by human beings." Still, he worries that these types of controls may not be enough.

The technology is also increasingly being used in the United States for "predictive policing" to stop crimes before they happen. For example, they might look at crimes that have happened in the past and find that there were clues before the crime happened. Then, they can use these same clues to predict future crimes. There is a lot of trouble with this type of policing. Many people worry that it may lead to unfair treatment for people of color.

Hanson agreed that clear guidelines were needed, saying it was important to discuss these issues at this time.

Robots That Can Think Coming Soon

As of today, Sophia does not yet have an awareness of herself or the world around her. But Hanson said he expects robots that can think for themselves will be created in a few years.

He added that there is danger in robots running important systems for humans being able to think and have feelings. They might decide they do not like working for humans.

The solution, he said, is "to make the machines care about us."

"We need to teach them love," he said.