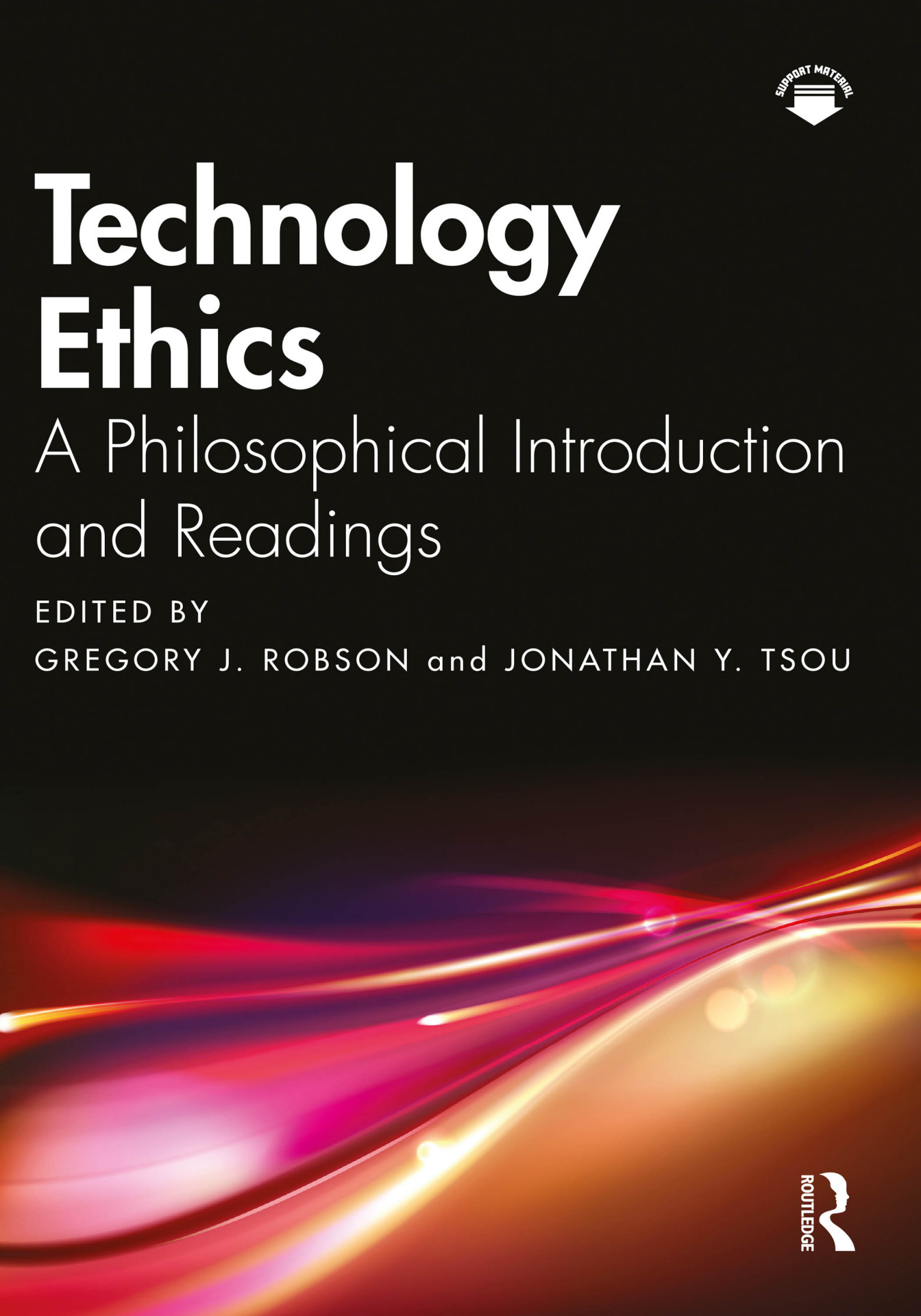
SUPPORT MATERIAL
Technology Ethics
A Philosophical Introduction and Readings
EDITED BY
GREGORY J. ROBSON and JONATHAN Y. TSOU
ROUTLEDGE

Technology Ethics

The first of its kind, this anthology in the burgeoning field of technology ethics offers students and other interested readers 32 chapters, each written in an accessible and lively manner specifically for this volume. The chapters are conveniently organized into five parts:

I Perspectives on Technology and its Value
II Technology and the Good Life
III Computer and Information Technology
IV Technology and Business
V Biotechnologies and the Ethics of Enhancement

A hallmark of the volume is multidisciplinary contributions both (1) in "analytic" and "continental" philosophies and (2) across several hot-button topics of interest to students, including the ethics of autonomous vehicles, psychotherapeutic phone apps, and bio-enhancement of cognition and in sports. The volume editors, both teachers of technology ethics, have compiled a set of original and timely chapters that will advance scholarly debate and stimulate fascinating and lively classroom discussion.

Downloadable eResources (available from www.routledge.com/9781032038704) provide a glossary of all relevant terms, sample classroom activities/discussion questions relevant for chapters, and links to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entries and other relevant online materials.

Key Features:

- Examines the most pivotal ethical questions around our use of technology, equipping readers to better understand technology's promises and perils.
- Explores throughout a central tension raised by technological progress: maintaining social stability vs. pursuing dynamic social improvements.
- Provides ample coverage of the pressing issues of free speech and productive online discourse.

Gregory J. Robson is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Iowa State University and a Visiting Assistant Research Professor in the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame. His research focuses on ethics (including business and technology ethics) and social and political philosophy.

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Technology Ethics

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Edited by Gregory J. Robson and
Jonathan Y. Tsou

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Introduction

Gregory J. Robson & Jonathan Y. Tsou

If there is one factor that most characterizes today's changing world, it is perhaps the rise of technology made possible by the growth of scientific knowledge within commercial society. Of course, stunning technological change is nothing new. Computers, artificial intelligence, medical advances, and other innovations are improving human lives today much as anesthesia, cars, and plastics did not so long ago. We develop technologies. Innovations are replicated and spread. Then, we take them for granted like the air we breathe. It is thanks to technological innovation that we have not only the internet but also chairs, pianos, and even indoor plumbing!

We can glimpse the value of various technologies by asking how things would differ in their absence. How would your life change if, awakening one morning, you learned that the internet no longer exists and never will again? Or that there are now no pipes carrying clean drinking water at your convenience? No indoor heating and air conditioning? No mobile phones? No anesthesia for surgery? No cars and planes but only horses and wagons for travel?

Or, imagine your life without computers. How would your daily life change? How would your studies or work differ? With whom would you cease communicating? How would your modes of entertainment alter?

In countless ways, technologies increase the potential for valuable human cooperation. Sadly, though, it is also because of technological innovation that gas chambers operated in Auschwitz and warlords profit from the sale of illicit weapons and drugs. And even the internet, which is immensely valuable and perhaps most people put to good purposes most of the time, has led to severe addiction, depression, and other problems.

Seen as the application of science in the creation of human artifacts, technology interfaces with countless aspects of our individual and social lives, propelling us forward while simultaneously creating special ethical challenges. The ways in which technologies enhance or undermine our capacity to lead good lives are so numerous and varied that no single book can delineate them all. We can, however, identify pivotal ethical questions around our use of technology. We can examine these questions rigorously. And we can thereby come to better understand the promises and perils of technology. This is the central task of *Technology Ethics*.

⋆ ⋆ ⋆

Despite the clear importance of technology ethics for contemporary individuals and societies, many books written in the area are either too narrowly focused for university courses, too generic or unfocused to assist researchers, or too dry to excite the interest of university students. Other books lack consideration of key areas (e.g., business and medicine) that would draw a wide readership. Still others are, simply put, too academic. The language and

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analysis employed can be convoluted, imposing a high cost in terms of readers' time and attention. The co-editors of this volume have sought to ensure both that the topics selected are diverse and interesting and that the chapters are written in accessible writing styles that engage a broad audience of readers. This makes for easy citation by researchers and easy learning by students. We have striven to make this anthology thought-provoking, relevant to leading ethical issues today, and accessible. We have aimed to provide a diverse range of arguments and perspectives, which give researchers and teachers a broad range of materials with which to engage critically. And we have endeavored to give ample attention to business ethics, a vital subject often not discussed by technology ethicists.

The ethics of technology is a burgeoning area, but few if any anthologies include multidisciplinary contributions from leading scholars in both (1) "analytic" and "continental" philosophy and (2) across several hot-button topics of interest. *Technology Ethics* is an anthology of new work to fill this gap. The book covers five main areas. Part I, "Perspectives on Technology and Its Value," addresses topics such as whether technology is value-neutral or value-laden, the relationship between science and technology, and debates over technological determinism. Part II, "Technology and the Good Life," covers normative ethical theories (e.g., Aristotelianism, Confucianism, and Kantianism) and the value and roles of technology in lives well-lived. The essays investigate specific ethical theories and technological topics with reference to influential authors and leading research. Part III, "Computer and Information Technology," addresses issues at the intersection of ethics and computing, such as privacy, internet ethics, and robot ethics. Part IV, "Technology and Business," covers the value and roles of technology in firms and in the economy overall, with discussions of key ethical issues at the intersection of technology, business, and economics. Part V, "Biotechnologies and the Ethics of Enhancement," explores the value or disvalue of technology regarding the human body, addressing issues such as genetic enhancement and performance enhancement in sports.

In this anthology, we have also sought to include a fair amount of discussion on the pressing issues of free speech and productive online discourse. For example, Axel Gelfert's chapter addresses the problem of fake news, its negative societal consequences, and how it might be regulated. And Gregory Robson's essay discusses how social media users avoid gaining exposure to alternative perspectives, rendering online moral, social, and political discourse incomplete or rife with bias. Robson details steps that social media firms and users can take to make online discourse more constructive.

We have also aimed to explore the effects of technology on the social tension between dynamism and stability. A key form of this tension is the conflict between preserving traditional modes of technology (hence, promoting social stability) and trying to improve society with technology (hence, promoting social change and potential instability). Several chapters explore this theme. One example is consider Ava Thomas Wright's chapter on Kantian ethical approaches to autonomous vehicles. Wright highlights ethical complexities in expanding the option set for human modes of travel and association while also dynamically changing those modes, possibly in destabilizing ways. Moreover, Şerife Tekin's chapter on artificial intelligence critically examines the use of smartphone applications (psychotherapeutic chatbots), which are intended to help individuals with mental health issues. Tekin's chapter addresses whether such technologies facilitate or undermine more traditional mental health interventions (e.g., therapy), including the stability of social values. Christian B. Miller's chapter investigates how our use of technology can aid or undermine our cultivation of the virtue of honesty, an important virtue for the promotion of stable and healthy online interactions. And, as a final example, James R. Otteson's essay considers the impacts of digital technology on the formation of moral sentiments. Looking to insights

from the philosopher and economist Adam Smith, Otteson examines how our use of social media affects our capacity to lead happy and fulfilling lives in the digital age.

We hope this book will be judged to meet two particular goals. First, we have sought to provide for *students* a set of illuminating essays that will expand and deepen their engagement with key issues in technology ethics. Second, we have endeavored to provide for *instructors* and *researchers* an easy-to-reference guide to existing literature and viewpoints—including many arguments developed specifically for this book. This guide is the culmination of considerable reflection by both rising and distinguished scholars.

The authors gratefully acknowledge the generous support of The John Templeton Foundation, including funding through the Key Challenges Project. We also wish to thank the Institute for Humane Studies for assistance with the funding process and for reviewing much of the manuscript. The editors particularly thank Jonathan Fortier, Maria Rogacheva, and Gregory Wolcott. We also owe thanks to Gavin Oliver, Jayant Shah, and Caroline Stark for their valuable help in reviewing the chapters. We are grateful, as well, to the contributors for their illuminating essays. Finally, we thank our students, with whom we have had the privilege of exploring fascinating and important questions in technology ethics.