

Chapter 11

Work 4.0: The Future of Ethics in Professions in Portugal

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the concerns of the largest companies operating in the Portuguese market regarding technological developments and artificial intelligence in the context of replacing human work with machines. More specifically, this study targets the reference to these concerns in these companies' codes of ethics and/or codes of conduct. The codes of ethics of 20 large companies operating in Portugal were thus analysed and classified according to their turnover, adopting an analytical method based on three dimensions identified as relevant for the respective evaluation: social responsibility, technological innovation, and commitments to employees. The conclusions from this study are that the companies analysed do not show in their codes of ethics any concern in mentioning the safeguarding of jobs if these are ever to be replaced by machines.

INTRODUCTION

“It was in this year (1943) that the wages of the average American peaked. Measured in 2013 dollars, an average worker, that is, from a universe of non-supervisory production workers in the private sector that represents well over half of the American labor force, earned about \$767 per week in 1973. The following year, average real wages experienced a precipitous drop from which they would never fully recover. Four decades later, a similar worker earns just \$64, a drop of nearly 13 percent” (Ford, 2015).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7452-2.ch011

Work 4.0

This is the starting point for a work that intends to be a comparative analysis of a set of codes of ethics/conduct of the main companies operating in the Portuguese market, in order to understand if they present references as to how companies view the replacement of human work by robotic machines.

The first paragraph of the introduction, an example from the USA, is a reflection of a paradigm shift that took place in the mid-1970s and started to have more repercussions in the 1980s, with companies launching a race to acquire machines that aided in-line production in their plants, as was the case, for example, in the automotive industry.

Only later do most companies become aware of the need to comply with a set of norms that, by societal pressure or legislative imposition, becomes essential for their social recognition in the territory where they operate. It is somewhat in this context that Codes of Ethics emerge structured according to specific rules. These Codes not only reveal a set of concerns regarding their employees but also seek to demonstrate how they, managers, suppliers, and partners who collaborate with the organization, should relate to each other.

At the end of the paper, we will present the conclusions we consider relevant to the study carried out.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is important, and as a starting point, to present some definitions and discussions on the topic under study, incorporating the opinions/approaches of several authors, through the literature review. We begin, then, by presenting some concepts of Ethics.

The term Ethics derives from the Greek *ethos* (character, a person's way of being). One of the most important works on this subject is "Ethics demonstrated in the manner of geometers", published in 1677, and written by the Dutch philosopher of Portuguese origin, Baruch Spinoza. Another important work is "Nicomachean Ethics" by the Greek philosopher Aristotle.

For Valls (2014) "ethics is one of those things that everyone knows what it is, but it is not easy to explain when someone asks." "Ethics is the normative science of human behaviors, it is like a set of norms, which human beings must follow in order to be respected in society" (Ourives 2006, *apud* Edmundo 2007).

For Reale, 1999, cited by Cosenza & Chamovitz, 2007 ethics "is the normative science of human behavior". In Weber's perspective, the ethical dimension related to intimate beliefs is of little use and, in certain cases, even harmful to decision making. For him, "[...] all activity oriented according to Ethics can be subordinated to two entirely different and irreducibly opposed maxims. It can be oriented according to the Ethics of responsibility or the Ethics of conviction. This does not mean that the Ethics of conviction is equivalent to the absence of responsibility, and the Ethics of responsibility to the absence of conviction. It is not that, of course. Nevertheless, there is a profound opposition between the attitude of one who conforms to the maxims of the Ethics of conviction - we would say, in religious language - The Christian does his duty and, as for the results of the action, trusts in God - and the attitude of one who is guided by the Ethics of responsibility, which says: "We must answer for the foreseeable consequences of our actions" (Weber, 2002).

We can conclude that Ethics is a set of moral values and principles that regulate human conduct in society. Ethics allows for balance and good social functioning, so that no one is harmed. In this sense, ethics is related to the feeling of social justice. Therefore, to be ethical is to always seek the good, to fight vices and weaknesses, to cultivate virtues, to protect and preserve life and nature. But what if we want to

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