

AD ETHICS

A MORALITY FOR ROBOTS

The famous science fiction writer Isaac Asimov (I, Robot (N.Y.:Doubleday, 1950) formulated his Three Laws of Robotics: (1) A robot may not injure a human being or through inaction allow a human being to come to harm; (2) A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law; (3) A robot must protect its own existence, as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.

These commandments are the rules by which slaves have always supposed to have abided--except that they substitute "human being" for "slave owner" and are thus far more universal.

What is interesting about the Three Laws is that they encapsulate the whole raison d'être of robotics, which is to build and manage high-powered tools in the service of man, not in replacement of it. 98