Bedtime Stories, Ancient Machines, and the Responsibility We Carry Into the Age of Physical AI
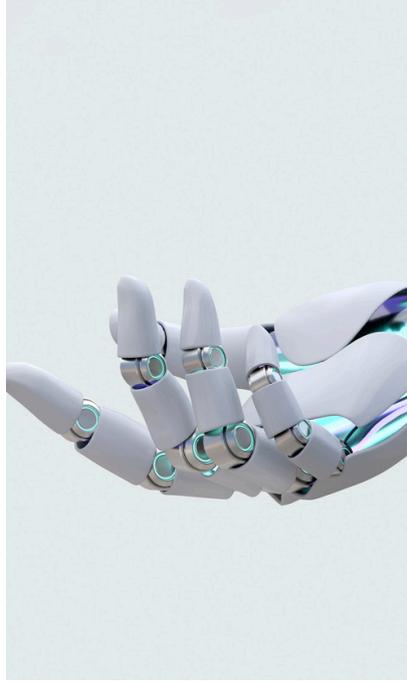
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Tonight was my turn to read with my son before bed.

My husband and I rotate reading nights so each of our kids gets dedicated one-on-one time. Out of every book on the shelf, my son chose one on robotics.

Not a fantasy book.
Not a picture book.
A robotics book.

As we started reading *Wonders of Learning: Discover Robotics*, I had one of those quiet moments where you pause and think: this feels intentional. I'm currently finalizing Session 2 of EverBot's AI+Robotics Club, which focuses on robotics and what we call physical AI, the point where intelligence moves off a screen and into the real world.

One of the first questions I plan to ask students in that session is deceptively simple:

"What do you think of when you hear the word 'robotics'?"

Reading with my son reminded me how deep that question really goes.

Long before computers, code, or electricity, humans were already imagining machines that could act on their own. Over 2,000 years ago, engineers in ancient Greece and Egypt built **automata**—self-moving mechanisms powered by water, steam, weights, and clever design. These weren't robots in the modern sense, but the idea was already there: **machines that could operate without constant human input.**

What's also interesting is that the word **robot** itself doesn't come from ancient history at all. It entered our vocabulary in the 20th century through science fiction and storytelling. Earlier thinkers spoke instead of things being automatic or autonomous: self-acting, self-governing.

Storytelling shaped how we imagine robots long before we could build them.

That brings me to something we don't talk about enough anymore: Isaac Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics.

Introduced in science fiction, these laws were never meant to be technical instructions. They were ethical thought experiments designed to force humans to ask hard questions before creating intelligent machines:

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 by human beings unless those orders 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 Law.

What makes these laws powerful isn't their simplicity, it's their implication.

Once intelligence and autonomy are introduced, responsibility does not belong to the machine.

It belongs to the humans who design, deploy, and govern it.

Today, those questions feel more urgent than ever. We're no longer talking only about robots that move. We're talking about systems that perceive, decide, learn, and act in real environments. Physical AI, whether it's a robotic arm, a delivery robot, a medical device, or something entirely new raises the stakes.

Around the world, we already see physical AI being tested in high-impact environments, including military training exercises. That reality can be unsettling, and it's often where dystopian narratives take over. But fear thrives in gaps of understanding.

Education closes those gaps.

What struck me most as we read was realizing that the book we were holding was published in 2020. At that time, most people had never interacted with a large language model. Today, everyday people: parents, students, teachers are actively using AI, experimenting with it, and learning from it.

This is one of the rare moments in technological history where adoption didn't start exclusively with governments or the military. It started with the public.

That matters.

As we move into 2026, AI models will continue to improve. Competition will increase. Systems will become faster, more capable, and more integrated into daily life. But just as important is how we talk about these technologies especially with the next generation.

Physical AI doesn't have to look human.
It doesn't have to resemble science fiction villains.
It doesn't exist to replace people.

It exists because humans have always built tools to extend what we can do.

We only made it four pages into that book, and already the conversation felt bigger than bedtime. That's exactly the kind of curiosity we aim to spark through EverBot; bridging history, ethics, and hands-on learning so kids (and adults) understand not just what technology is, but what responsibility comes with it.

Sometimes the universe really does place the right book in your hands at the right moment.

We don't need more fear around AI and robotics. We need more understanding, better questions, and thoughtful education.

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