The Future of Humanities

Is the Society of Cohabitation with Robots Possible?

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1. Needs for the Information Ethics of the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century

- Since ancient times, the question “What are the humanities?” has long been one of our eternal major problems.
- Recent great developments of computer technology, bio-engineering, robotics, etc. have caused quite new problems.
- These problems are hard to be solved without interdisciplinary academic collaborations.
2. Some problems related to WWW

- Although World Wide Web with its search engine is wonderful technological achievement, could we totally believe in it?
- A spread of demagogic and irresponsible discourses through the net
- Frequent copy right infringements, etc.
3. Mechanization of Human Thinking

- There are no logical consistencies among the enormous amount of knowledge propositions.
- Searching consists of pure mechanical and automatic processes. (e.g. Listing priority by the past frequency of references to the pages)
- In time, artificial Intelligence may not only assist but also replace human thinking.
- What is the essential difference between humans and robots/computers?
4. Need for the Dialogue between the East and the West

- Human thinking process is based on physical activities, and human body is far from electrical equipment.
- Risk: Dissolution of the concept of humankind itself
- There are no universal answers!
- Differences in the Eastern and Western way of thinking of what humanities are
5. Entertainment Robot


- The Author: a French researcher in the field of artificial intelligence and children’s language acquisition, has been engaged in the development of entertainment robots in the Sony laboratory in Paris.
7. Three axes for Robots

1. **Utility**: industrial robots in unmanned factory
2. **Intelligence**: artificial intelligence robots to explore human mind
3. **Affection**: entertainment robots to please human beings and stimulate their passion (AIBO etc.)
8. What does an Entertainment (Humanoid) Robot means?

- Western People: Fascinating but embarrassing *Weird Monster*, suggesting Dr. Frankenstein
- Japanese People: Pure scientific dream, wonderful technological achievement, recalling *Astro Boy*, who is children’s friend and human’s ally
- Entertainment robots would not have been born other than in Japan.
9. The Japanese Spirit & Western Learning

- In 19th Century: How to cope with the heterogeneous (Western) culture?
- Japanese attitude toward Western Technology: *Don’t merge but tame it!*
- Make good use of Western technology, while keeping one’s own spirit unchanged.
- Preserve some *distance* from technology. This *distance* makes easier for Japanese to accept entertainment robots.
10. What is the Essence of Japanese Spirit?

- Animistic World View: Everything was born spontaneously, and has its own spirit. (Not created by God.)
- The *artifact* is not opposed to *nature*. There is no sharp line between the two.
- Artifacts can be used to inquire into and even improve natural beauty.
11. An Episode of Tea Ceremony: Rikyu and Oribe

- At tea-ceremonies, the roji (small garden outside of a tea-ceremony house) must be kept clean.
- When to sweep up the roji?
- Rikyu: Sweep it up at the previous night, to achieve unintentional harmony through wind-blown fallen leaves.
- Oribe: After sweeping up the roji, lay deliberately some pine needles by hand, to achieve perfect natural beauty.
12. Sen no Rikyu (1522-1591)
13. Furuta Oribe (1544-1615) & Oribe-ware
14. Relation vs Order

- Japan: Desire for Relation
  A human being is an element of the fabric of nature, like a bird or a stone. Artifacts are also integrated into the fabric on an equal footing.

- The West: Desire for Hierarchical Order
  A human being holds a special position in the Hierarchical Order of existence. In it, artifacts are positioned below animals.
15. The Answer to “Why only in Japan?”

- Japanese people think more of relating things than of ordering them.
- The Japanese spirit is never threatened by robots as far as the spirit successfully adapts itself to technology.
- The production of a robot is included in the aesthetic pursuit of beauty that is peculiar to Japanese spirit.
16. Some Comments on Kaplan’s Conclusion

- Kaplan owes most of his argument to that of Augustin Berque.
- The East is not uniform. A humanoid robot is expected to be accepted in China and Korea, but not in nations with Islamic tradition like Indonesia.
- But it is suggestive of not only robots but also of future human beings.
17. Characteristics of Japanese Information Society

- Interested more in detailed technical improvements and refinements than in the philosophical meaning of their product in society
- Unfamiliar with the World Order (Hierarchy of existence)
- Vague borderlines between objects in general
18. Problems of Modern Japan

- Traditional indifference to the world order does not necessarily offer a safeguard against a cyborg and/or mechanization of human thinking.
- If everything has its own spirit and the same value, why are we not allowed to reconstruct our bodies and thoughts as freely as we like by using information technology?
- *The Japanese spirit and Western learning is no longer sufficient.*
19. Real autonomous robot?

- The *autonomous* robot AIBO does not sell well. Is it autonomous in true sense?
- A usual *autonomous* robot is a simple *learning machine* which changes its action in response to outer stimuli in such a way as to increase some calculated value.
- Without deep inquiry into biological autonomy, a care robot could never be appreciated by old people.
20. Autonomy

- The concept of *autonomy* must be investigated in more detail, to avoid machine reductionism.
- The Japanese concept of an autonomous subject differs greatly from that in Western countries.
- The Western argument on *human free will* is hardly found in Japan (cf. E. Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*).
21. Harmony rather than Autonomy

- In a Japanese community, harmonious cooperation with others is respected, and autonomy is easy to be ignored. People must *behave just like others*!
- An ordinary life of the average Japanese is mostly carried out with clock-like mechanical rhythm. He/She looks like a mechanical person.
- This attitude can be dangerous in a highly developed information society dependent on WWW.
The autopoesis theory insists that autonomy is the essence of living things.

A sharp line between living and non-living things can be found. Robots are *not autonomous* in a true sense.

A new approach to the human freedom is necessary in the field of Information ethics. (Fundamental Informatics)
23. Conclusion

- Robots can never have true human mind, but human beings can gradually lose their free will and make themselves closer to robots.
- Consideration on robots is expected to bring about fruitful discussions on the future of humanities.
References


