

A Heart of the Robot

Since I read Karel Čapek's play *RUR Robots*—written in 1920, I have been thinking of the confusing relationship between literature and technology. The robots—where the scientific designation comes from—rebelled when they started having feelings. At this mysterious and ambiguous point, they were able to imagine and dream of their freedom—in a world free from humans.

As such, the robots could not have revolted unless they experienced feelings that later led them to the imagination of their free world and creative thinking and planning—to run away from the factory wherein their parts were created to serve human beings—and to attain freedom.

The play brought the idea of freedom and the imagination of it—as a natural instinct and hope—to my attention for the first time. The desire for freedom began from the moment the robotic beings felt what seemed to look like "pulses" in the same place where a human's heart lies. Imagination is undoubtedly the essential pillar upon which human creativity is based. So, can technology feel? When we use the word "feel" in this context, we truly mean it: we do not mean, "anticipate" or "analyze" data, as is the case in smart devices here and there. So can these robots have feelings and emotions strong enough to enable them to imagine?

Many questions may be proposed when discussing the possibility upon which the answers would be based. For example, Jaguar, the large car manufacturing company, tested a moral question regarding the safety of bystanders when developing a series of its cars that will be fully based on the AI technology. It is similar to a question one might ask oneself, or even offer to others: should I save myself or make the choice of protecting others? What if the driver of this smart car was about to collide with something (the owner's pet, for example)? In normal cases, the human driver will instinctively choose to divert from the road to protect both himself and the other creature. In doing so, he would also try to control the car to prevent a collision. But the case may be different with the smart Jaguar that puts the owner's life at the top of its priorities, which means it won't have the barrier of morality that humans have.

So, colliding with the living object, a man's beloved pet, would mean the car would protect the owner's life, and it would do so without hesitation. Meaning, it would neither feel uncertain nor imagine the emotional consequences while making that decision. On the other hand, a human driver would imagine the dog's suffering, agony, and the departure of its soul from the body—a case that, despite being expected by the machine, would not be understood by it; machines do not understand how imagination works—that it takes place in abstract field parallel to reality, and that it can anticipate.

Emotion employed with feeling: that is what generates imagination and is the basis of creativity. With the passage of time, AI machines will be able to accumulate and store knowledge in a manner that will make it possible for them to anticipate consequences and to make decisions quickly. As mentioned earlier, this accumulated knowledge is about to reach perfection, and may become error-free.

However, accuracy-based perfection cannot produce feelings nor the imagination it could generate with a wide range of possibilities and complexities such as fragility, anger, or weaknesses that humans feel. It goes without saying that creativity is part of this process; so, will Čapek's prophecy turn into reality one day, especially after the invention of robots? Could we create smart and sensitive beings that, like humans,

could imagine and foster creativity? We who own human creativity and live imagination might leave this question unanswered, if with concern, to see how time will handle it, for an electronic creature able to master this has not been created yet.

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