

# Humanoid robots as “The Cultural Other”: are we able to love our creations?

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**Abstract** Robot enthusiasts envision robots will become a “race unto themselves” as they cohabit with the humankind one day. Profound questions arise surrounding one of the major areas of research in the contemporary world—that concerning artificial intelligence. Fascination and anxiety that androids impose upon us hinges on how we come to conceive of the “Cultural Other.” Applying the notion of the “other” in multicultural research process, we will explore how the “Other” has been used to illustrate values and theories about robots, as a mirror for the self. In this paper, we focus on the social, cultural, and religious implications of humans’ attitudes toward relationships between humans with robots. Six major views on humanoid robots are proposed: (1) robots as the “Frightening Other,” (2) robots as the “Subhuman Other,” (3) robots as the “Human Substitute,” (4) robots as the “Sentient Other,” (5) robots as the “Divine Other,” and (6) robots as the “Co-evolutionary Path to Immortality.” The likely and preferable scenario is the last one, which is compatible with an optimistic posthuman world in our evolutionary future. We imagine whether humans will meet the challenge of loving all living and non-living beings (including mechanical entities) might be the key to the co-evolution of both species and the ultimate happiness.

**Keywords** Humanoid robots · Cultural “Other” · Robots as the “Frightening Other” · Robots as the “Subhuman Other” · Robots as the “Human Substitute” · Robots as the “Sentient Other” · Robots as the “Divine Other” · Robots as the “Co-evolutionary Path to Immortality”

## 1 Introduction

Theirs was a culture that worshipped God through respect for both man and Nature, and indeed all animals and animated things, as creations of God that were equal to each other (p. viii).

(From *Around the hearth: Khasi legends*. By Non-gkynrih, K. S., 2007)

It is either aliens or robots, which will get us!  
(American expression)

According to Moravec (2000), pioneer in mobile robot researcher, our robot creations are evolving similar to how life on Earth evolved, only at warp speed. By his calculations, by mid-century, no human task, physical or intellectual, will be beyond the scope of robots. We are not only interacting with machines more often, but the machines are becoming smarter, more mobile, and more capable. Humanoid robots, meaning robots that take on human-like forms, behaviors, or other characteristics, have progressed from a science fiction obsession to an increasingly mature anthropomorphic technological reality (Kim et al. 2009). For most humans, the idea of working closely with robots seems unrealistic, but in reality, we will be working with and becoming more dependent on robots in the near future. Kurzweil (2000) also predicts the emergence of interactive “agents” with human personality qualities by around 2019.

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