

Aquatic Love Robot

Robot means serf. In contrast to human serfs, robots are unable to refuse their duty as long as they have enough energy and aren't harmed. In that sense, humanity has been involved with robots since its expansion beyond Africa—starting with domesticated wolves. Their help in hunting and guarding might have been *Homo sapiens*' crucial advantage over the Neanderthals. With humans settling down to husbandry, a range of other animals and plants served as organic robots.

Domestication is a mutual evolutionary process. Domesticators are chosen who offer decent food and shelter; the domesticated are chosen who offer decent help. In the pet relationship, both sides add love. The relationship between humans and pets has coevolved with the upbringing of human offspring. Humans' most popular pets—dogs and cats—have a life expectancy about as long as humans need to reach puberty and the age of consent, respectively, and they stay cute throughout. The striking similarity between the sound of babies crying and cats wailing is probably the result of thousands of years of mutual copying. Social standards enforce the love of both children and pets to be caring and nonsexual. And it's this platonic love that shaped the concept of human charity. (In the Old Testament, God's demand "to love your neighbor as yourself" is proclaimed in the context of banning sex with close relatives and others' slaves.) The only crucial difference is that while we have a limited number of children and pets, we are supposed to apply our charity unconditionally to every human—and if you expand this understanding, to every animal.

Similar to organic robots, mechanical robots' function of getting work done is expected to be complemented increasingly by giving love and being lovable. So far, there are two main scenarios for humans to become affectionate with robots:

- 1) Creating robots that are better (than) humans, with immaculate features, endless patience, tolerance, and endurance, enormous flexibility, intelligence, and joy combined with immortality and an absence of biological diseases. This concept of the android traces back to the story of Pygmalion falling in love with his own sculpture, finally bringing it to life with a kiss. In Judeo-Christian belief, God is also one such sculptor, shaping and animating the first man, Adam, from clay. We might become so attracted to such über-androids that our urge and ability to interact with other humans will be drastically reduced. Even now, an increasing number of people replace intimacy with multimedia and a variety of masturbation gadgets, and the frequency of sexual intercourse is declining. For a while, some humans might try to compete with robots. Eventually, most will give up and it will become too tempting to be loved by robots regardless of who you are or how you look or behave. The welfare state has been catering to our basic needs (shelter, food, health) with the help of machines and robots, and now finally what many would regard as the most important thing in life is being added: love. But how realistic is this scenario? While AI is progressing quickly, android mimicry and balance are still clumsy, their movement causes noise and vibrations, and their skin feels lifeless. The biggest handicap might not disappear unless robots get biological brains: AI isn't conscious and doesn't feel, so interaction with androids remains a form of expanded masturbation.

- 2) Creating robots that are better pets. Since pets are basically already robots, this is easier. Pet personalities are simpler than those of humans, and they inhabit the other side of the uncanny valley. Humans therefore might not worry that much about the authenticity of their feelings. These petoids shouldn't resemble real pets too much, as this could also create an uncanny valley. Besides, owing to social norms, most people are repelled by sexual intimacy with animals. The playful diversity in which the shapes and colors of vibrators, dildos, and other sex toys have developed in recent years, no longer attempting to be naturalistic, could serve as an example of how mechanical robots might develop in the future, turning their disabilities into different abilities: the smoothed sound and vibration of motors could trigger ASMR sensations; instead of extremities, inflatable cushions or sponges could touch and caress. Some people's interactions with such robots will outshine those with humans. For some, it will help them playfully and discreetly discover new forms of otherness and open them up to encounters with humans, animals, or even plants. Pets already help people in learning to bond, and robots' additional skills could reinforce this effect.

Robots don't feel and therefore don't love, but they can teach humans robotic love. As automation replaces human labor, people may offer themselves as human pets to all those who need them. Whereas industrialization was based on curbing desire so it did not interrupt work, humans must now learn to become aroused in an equally focused way. As foreseen by the hippies, lovers will replace the proletariat as the new revolutionary class. But through dialectical synthesis, love must also be understood as work in order to truly master it. Furthering Edward Bellamy's concept of a socialist industrial army, an Army of Love could enhance our empathy, libido, attractiveness, and devotion by exercising thorough drills, voluntarily reinforced by technological means such as direct brain transmissions of feelings, genetic engineering, or plastic surgery.

Basing our identity on love rather than on our job won't be easy. Society is not prepared to give up on paid labor as its economic basis. As increasing numbers of people become unemployed, they will be increasingly considered a burden on society. Losing our job or being afraid of losing it makes us feel unwanted, and we easily end up stuck in hatred, racism, and despair.

Members of the Army of Love might disagree about whether robots are allowed to join their ranks. Since its services are strictly free of charge, some wonder who would pay for the robots and with what (data? control?) if not money. Others regard it as their duty to welcome all, even nonhumans, into the Army of Love and to make use of their particular skills. Because of their addiction to the love services of robots and virtual avatars, many people might become incapable of interacting with other biological creatures, and the easiest way to make them receptive again would be to use specially programmed sex and love robots as (secret?) agents that train people to enjoy actual, sensual love.

The next technological step may be robots and living creatures becoming one. This is usually envisioned as the extension of a robot with biological features or a creature with technological features. Thanks to radio transmission, these cyborgs could then communicate without loss—limited in its immediacy only by the speed of light. The connection is purely experiential or representational, bypassing the complexities of physical interaction. Even though this communication is as direct as possible, it will leave us in doubt about its realness. Corporeal communication can be highly deceptive: humans don't manage to express or understand each

other properly, they fool or pretend to be fooled. Still, we generally expect corporeal communication to reveal traces of authenticity. In contrast, we can't know where the thoughts intruding our brains come from. What we assume to be our own thoughts may have been induced by someone else. An experience might strike us as overwhelming but may be just a dream or a psychedelic episode. We don't know how many thoughts a robot or posthuman is able to process simultaneously, but their body is a single unit.

How can we achieve physical unity with love robots and through them with other creatures? So far, common scenarios for love robots (including this text) envision them as solidly outlined units, even though the easiest thing for us to make thorough and extensive contact with is liquid. This liquid could contain not only us but all humans and creatures who seek intimacy. It could grow according to our needs. Belonging to no one, everybody could use it and be used by it. The ultimate love robot would be very much like the open sea.

In moments of bliss, we are in love with the whole world. Through meditation we emulate these rare instances as a lasting state at the cost of shutting down our concrete perceptions and focusing on the abstract idea of being one with the world. To initiate this state we first focus on the weight of the different parts of our body to then paradoxically (as it is impossible to focus on our entire body at once) enter a state of passive weightlessness, like floating in salt water, finally forgetting our bodies altogether, like dissolving in liquid. We can also take a shortcut by plunging into a flotation tank.

To not just float and forget, but to interact with a liquid can be much more pleasurable. As soon as we move in water or have water moving around us, it touches us all over our bodies. By moving water we can touch others in a mediated, softened, and extended way. If we push hard against it, our single or multiple counterparts will feel a gentle swell. Even if we touch each other directly, the lack of gravity and the resistance of the water will soften our movements. Even if we push each other we cannot fall. Even if a wave or someone presses us down (not for too long) we will come up again easily. As soon as we get close to a lake or the sea, sensing its breeze and its vastness, we relax and open up to undress, to touch, and to love.

In addition, an aquatic love robot allows us to breathe like fish. Not only does it allow us to look through it at others, it also shines in response to our movements and moods. The same applies to sounds and smells. The aquatic love robot grips, hugs, caresses, kisses, and penetrates us with varying densities of water, and allows us to respond in the same way. Whatever we feel like, the aquatic love robot exposes or shields us accordingly.

Religions ask us to love the world through god(s). As they themselves are invisible, we are supposed to express our gratitude for having created us to everything else they created. On this planet, it's the sea that created us. We are not limited to mystical ("oceanic") contemplation, we can actually enter the sea and celebrate our origins in amphibious devotion. The sea might lack a central sensorium and may not be able to perceive our gratitude. To change this, we could give something back and turn it into the greatest intelligence and benevolence ever. Whenever the Army of Love enters waters, it anticipates this sea of love.