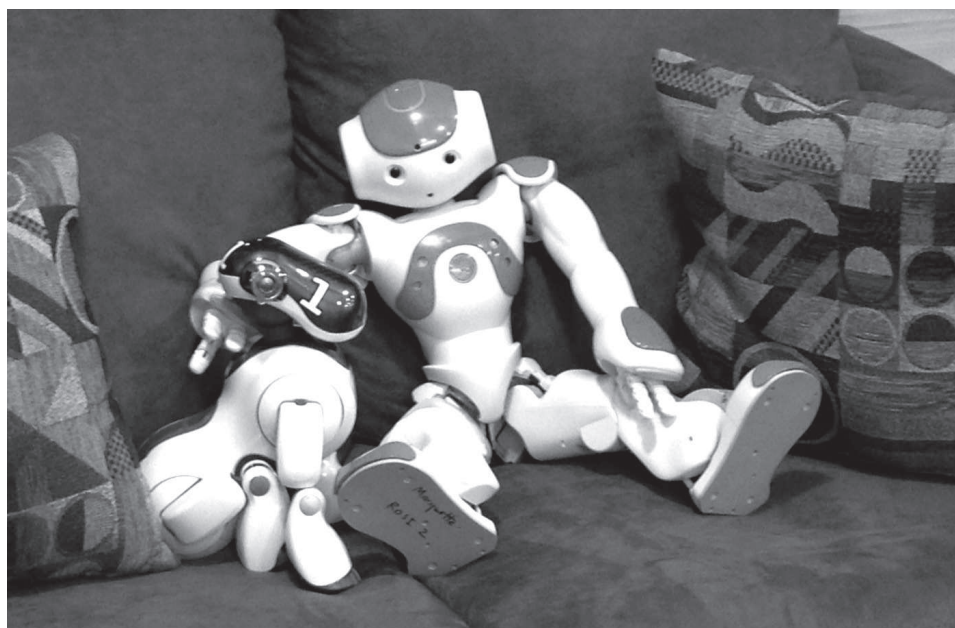


# Robot como esclavos modernos

## Robots as modern slaves

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### Abstract

Technology is an essential part of human lives. The drive for invention and technological development reached the idea and elaboration of artificial intelligence, which is created in the image of man. The general attitude toward robots as main carriers of the artificial intelligence is very much alike to the master-slave relation described by Aristotle in his *Politics*. Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* scrutinizes the master-slave dialectic. Historically, the tension between the two opposites leads to the process of transvaluation. In antiquity, the prevailing morality was the master's one while in Christianity the dominating moral values were the slave ones. Nietzsche offered another view on master-slave dialectic claiming ontologically speaking, masters are the consciousness for itself and slaves are consciousness for another and this very fact defines their inferiority.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, dialectic, Hegel, Aristotle.

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The simple definition of Artificial intelligence is as follows: intelligence created by men in their image. Is this goal possible? Maybe. But not soon. There are several problems which result from man's lack of knowledge about his essence, cognition, emotions, sleep and I can go like this for a long time. The view on the problem are so diverse and scientists who try to develop and ultimately create artificial intelligence need something else. Apparently, humans are much more complex than books, music (audio) and visual information (which we duplicate avoiding the copy-to-copy defects). The true understanding of human essence following the knowledge of what is life and how it is sustained, the thorough knowledge of how we get to know and its detailed mechanism will only provide the means of replicating what and who we are.

If men succeed to create an equal species many ethical and social problems and issues should be considered. But the main problem: 'can robots be ethical?' will be inadequate. The question is rather "can humans be ethical with robots?". I believe that today, as human kind is exploring its limits and the fact that technology expands its presence in our lives, we must face different issues concerning ethics. It is a great opportunity to rethink the human-human and human-machine relations.

No doubt technology is an essential part of our lives. We wake and go to the coffee machine to take our wake-up doze, we toast bread in the toaster, our clothes are washed by a washing-machine, the dishes are done by the dish-washer, we have a vacuum cleaner at our disposal (it is tempting to note that vacuum cleaners evolved to machines gathering dust and washing the floor on their own). There are even more examples. By all these, I mean that machines are helpful. They provide us with time for us, for our families, for hobbies and pleasure activities rather than work.

This is not all. There are machines conducting medical operations and surgical incisions.

There are building, excavating machines, cars, buses and of course computers. Some bare information and some do the hard work. But they all can be called robots. The word 'robot' is of Czech origin and means "a machine performing labour". The main issue of this essay is to explore what ethical issues the human-machine relation rises and what are the possible solutions.

Human-robot relation is very similar to master-slave relation. There are some differences but let us look at the common traits at first. Both slaves and robots are considered a different species: slaves were treated as animals (they do not have human dignity or any rights whatsoever), and robots are... machines. Both are not humans, they are inferior to human race. Slaves and robots are intelligent; they perform work which demands some mental efforts. But they still remain inferior. If we take history as an example (the fact that the attitude toward slaves developed through history and masters were held responsible for slave's actions and in fact slavery was outlived), we may assume that robots will develop in a similar way.

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For Aristotle, there are two types of people: those, who are born to be masters, and those who are born to be slaves. Slaves do not possess a rational foresight and their bodies are designed for work. Aristotle starts his analysis with the premise that humans are animals and what constitutes animals are body and soul. He opposes masters and slaves claiming that the former are defined by their souls and the latter by their bodies. The philosopher states the soul is the natural ruler and the body respectively is a subject. The main difference is that masters are equivalent to souls and slaves are equivalent to bodies.

According to Aristotle, the master-slave dynamic is firstly evident in the household relations. The slave cannot reason and that is why he can only work. Moreover, slaves are meant to be owned by their masters for the very same reason. What is a slave like? He is a tool. He is also a property of his master. Aristotle asserts that slave is an animated tool for using tools. Further, when a master is using his slave it is like the farmer is using his ox. Apparently, even though slaves have souls and are humans they of an inferior kind destined to do the hard labour as they are incapable of

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anything else. And each slave has a particular use of implementing one single task.

The master-slave relation is beneficial for both parties. Aristotle compares slaves to living extensions of their masters' bodies. They both (masters and slaves) need this in order to thrive. Masters are born free and slaves are born enslaved and this is the reason why they belong together and they benefit from each other.

Slaves have no rights: they cannot be citizens. Only masters as freemen are citizens of the polis. Aristotle notes that there is a specific group of people who are neither slaves nor citizens and these are husbandmen and the craftsmen.

It must be noted that Aristotle distinguishes just slavery and slavery by law. When someone is a slave because he is unable to do anything else, this is a just type of slavery. The slavery by law is a result of a war and of the agreement that what is conquered belongs to the victors. The war enemies are not born enslaved and their position as slaves is kind of unjust. Aristotle claims that one should not be referred to as a slave if he does not deserve it. According to the ancient Greek if a master is enslaved because of a war it is unjust.

To sum up, Aristotle asserts that slavery is something natural. Slaves are incapable of performing mental activities and so they have to do the manual work under their masters' guidance. Through the mutual benefit of masters and slaves the family household and the polis survival and thriving are possible and secured.

According to Hegel's dialectical system the subject is in constant becoming. A subject is "actual only insofar as it is the movement of positing itself, or the mediation between a self and its development into something different". In 'Lordship and Bondage' Hegel states that identity and self-consciousness do not exist until it is acknowledged. The fundamental

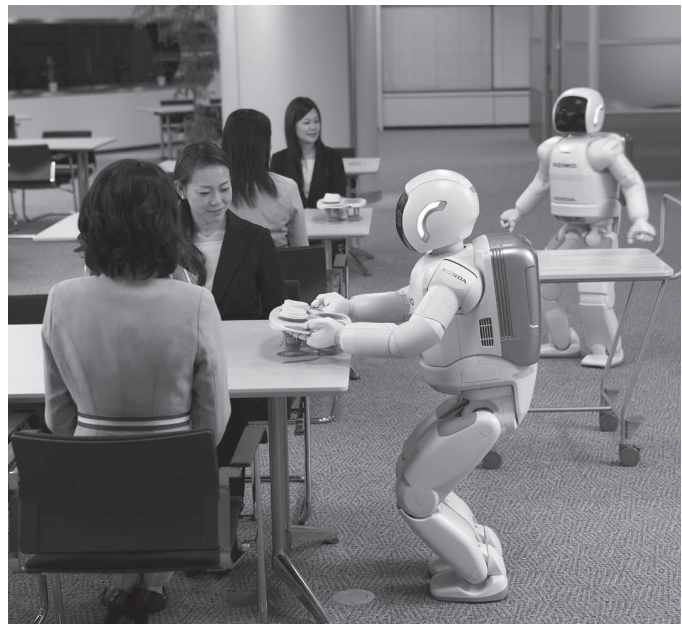
recognition consists of one self-consciousness facing another self-consciousness. The process is twofold. First, the self-consciousness realizes it is lost as it finds itself as an other being. Secondly, it suppresses the other and actually it sees itself as a reflection in the other. In fact, one identifies himself with the other and then gets aware of himself by negating this other and affirming himself as the primary in the relation. This process asserts the social character and traits of the formation of the self-consciousness as it is a battle of independence and dependence.

This battle or confrontation is the double movement of two self-consciousnesses: each is conscious of itself and of the other. "Each is for the other the middle term through which each mediates itself with itself and unites with itself...They recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another".

Namely this recognition is what gives grounds for the social interaction. At first, it is threatening because each party sees the other as threat to one's independence and control. In the battle, each one stakes his own life. And the struggle is necessary as the power is distributed unevenly between the opposing parties. This is the essence of master-slave dichotomy.

Within the struggle, masters appear as they are afraid of death. The victor needs the recognition of the loser in order to remain such. According to Hegel, the independent consciousness with the essential trait to be *for itself* is destined to be a lord. On the contrary, the dependent consciousness which essence is to be *for another* is meant to be a bondsman.

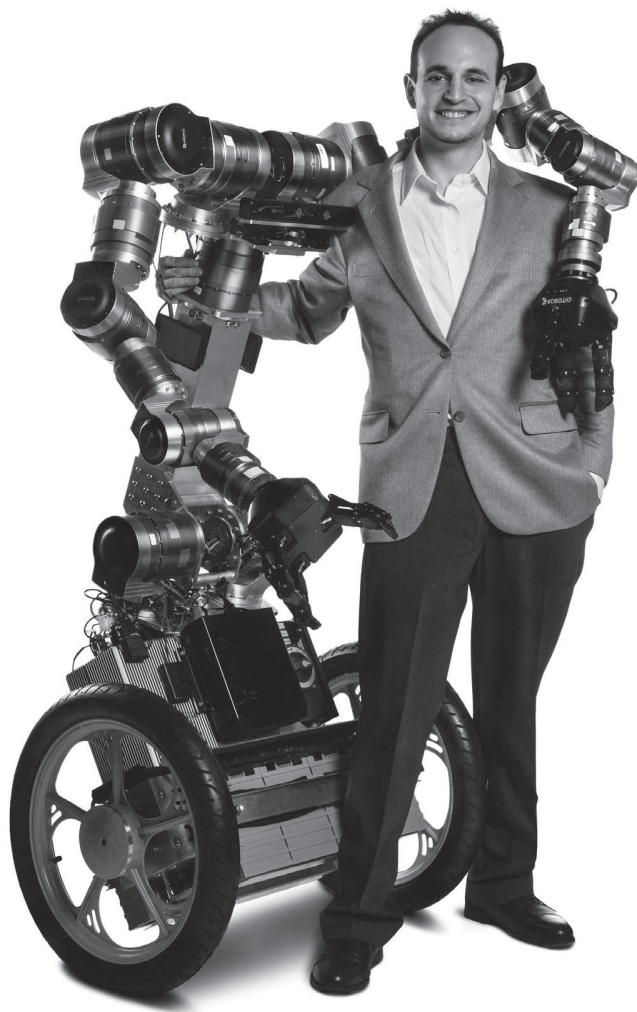
Hegel studied the differences between lords and bondsmen. Lords need the slaves' recognition and dependence for their existence. Masters apparently are dependent on slaves. So, they are no longer a *being for self*. In order for them to remain lords they have to realize their reign over slaves and also the relation of mutual recognition. On the other hand, slaves



are independent because they can shed their status and they can clearly point out what they are not.

The distribution of power shifts from the one party to the other and vice versa. This causes a transvaluation – shift of values. In conditions like these, slaves find a way to define themselves as worthy and as a group and a certain set of values. Hegel claims that slave's consciousness cannot affirm itself if it lacks three main things – fear, service and formative activity. Namely these things alienate the slave, on the one hand, but they give him the ability to become for himself, on the other hand. In Hegel's account, fear becomes the force by which the bondsman negates the other and becomes for himself.

Critics say that Hegel found a way to justify Christian transvaluation. He asserts that the slave is the independent one in the master-slave relationship as he values fear, servitude and labour. Such a conclusion is derived from the premise that a consciousness lacking fear as an empty self-centered attitude. Negativity is of inevitable necessity because the dialectical



dichotomy is reconciled and thus it gives birth to new quality or in this case to a higher self.

Nietzsche in his 'Genealogy' provides us with his master-slave morality. First of all, he defines what is Good and what is Bad. Those who are good are the nobles, the rulers, the aristocrats, the powerful – all those who said 'Yes' to themselves. The noble class is authentic, undeceived, self-affirming. Nietzsche associates this type of people with the Greek society and the strata of 'the truthful'. The good ones look down on the others, they are politically superior (until the priestly cast appeared on the scene), and they falsify what they are not.

On the contrary, the bad ones are the lower plebeians, the common men.

Priests introduced another distinction of good and bad, or rather between pure (clean and healthy) and impure. For Nietzsche, priests proved to be much more dangerous than the 'sickness' they were supposed to cure. Using this 'method' priests managed to develop a separate political and spiritual superiority. Thus, they created the really sharp and clear distinction between good and evil.

The priestly caste, Nietzsche claims, are the Jews and the Roman rule. They set out revenge and conducted a slave revolt in morality through transvaluation. Slaves triumphed over the others, the nobles. Slave morality says 'No' to anything outside, the different and evil. The negation is the creative deed. Nietzsche affirms that the slave morality needs an external, hostile world in order to justify its reality. The process of transvaluation consists not in the self-affirmation of the Self but rather in the negation of the Other. The evil is the other, the one who is not me, or does not belong to my group. After the moral reversal, the weakness became good. Slaves who previously were considered bad now are good by becoming the opposite of evil.

Nietzsche reveals the dialectics of value positing and value negation and its necessity for construction of the identity (created in deeds). For the German philosopher, thus the Christian subject is created, the sovereign, the responsible, simple, united soul. This position is most harmful, because we identify the 'I' with the 'Will' and the will is manifold and complicated. This is a mistake as we conceive the will as a singular which is identical with action and is beyond willing.

Ontologically speaking, masters are the consciousness for itself and slaves are consciousness for another (namely this defines their inferiority). Nobels are good because they are

self-affirming and slaves are bad for no other particular reason but because they are not good. The category of bad consciousness consists of the instincts which are not discharged outwardly; they are not let free so they turn into inward ones. When a man is subjugated he must turn his instinct for freedom inward and his bad consciousness is created.

The process of transvaluation coincides with the historical process of appearance and dissemination of Christianity. Christian morality is based on the good conceived as meekness and humility totally opposing the Roman status quo of social order and value structure, by negating the nobles, the dominant caste or, in other words, by creating alternative surrogate morality. Slaves overcome their inferior position.

This negation remains as it produced a culture and Nietzsche claims that this very culture cannot overcome its origins because it constructed a detrimental process which cannot come to an end. The German philosopher constructs a concept of identity based on relation with otherness; he reveals the asymmetry of the self and the other, absence and presence (the subject moves toward itself but it is in a constant becoming). The subject constantly becomes itself through social recognition, negation and conflict.

Isaac Azimov was a science fiction writer and he is famous for his Laws of robotics. There are three of them and their purpose is to arrange the human-robot relations in order to secure the submissive position of robots because it was humans who created them and people must maintain their superior status. The laws are as follows:

- A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
- A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.

- A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.

In one of his short stories Isaac Azimov asserts the three laws of robotics are a manifestation of the most if not all of the ethical systems and respectively norms. The third law is related to the self-preservation, which after all is essential to everybody.

Every dissent man (or a woman) is obliged to obey the rules and law and to observe the social norms. Everyone keeps the tradition even if it puts his life on stake. We also respect the authority personified by physicians, bosses, the government, friends. And this is the second law of robotics.

In the end, we humans are friends and we love each other and protect one another; we are capable of risking your own lives in order to save our loved ones. Namely that kind of behavior is implemented in the First law of robotics.

It should be noted that there are different modifications and developments of the Three Laws of Robotics. Generally, the "I, Robot" stories could be qualified as positive and optimistic about keeping the inferior status of robots. Men are the creators and robots

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are the created. And this is how it should be. Azimov always demonstrates the superiority of humans as they outsmart and outwit the machines despite the implanted hubris or distrust and feeling of superiority in robots. Isaac Azimov presupposes that humans as producers, or may be even creators, of robots do their best to keep them in place – as machines that conduct hard labour and may be defined as slaves in a future society. The main question here is will humans succeed in keeping their superiority and will they think of strategies which will be applied in case of some kind of hypothetical rebellion organized by robots.

It is very important to take measures to avoid the occurrence of processes of transvaluation which human history has witnessed several times. Of course, the main difference must be taken into account: we speak of machines. But the way I see it is that the problem is real enough as far as we speak of consciousnesses. Aristotle saw slaves as tools just like we today see machines as tools. In antiquity, the tools-slaves were humans deprived from social

status. Today, we are trying to give intelligence and consciousness to the tools-machines. But the two – the deprived humans and robots – share the same definition: they are tools. And this similarity brings anxiety. Moreover, Hegel and Nietzsche philosophized on the master-slave morality and derived some subordination of relations and events. The solution of such a threat is provided by the friendliness theory which states that robots should be inherently altruistic and their main purpose is to be implementing this altruism.

This essay raises more questions than it gives answers to. However, it is very important for our society to scrutinize the tendency to use technologies in our everyday lives. Of course, technologies are outstandingly helpful and it is positive to use them but we witness, on the other hand, extreme behavior predominantly by young people and tragedies should make us think about the negative influences and how to prevent such events, moreover, movie industry also warns society about possible negative outcomes of human-machine relations.

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