

**Sociality with artificial humanoids:
A deanthropologized approach to human-robot relations**

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Abstract

This paper investigates border problems of the social world posed by the development of autonomous humanoid robots, and explores the question of whether and how these intelligent technological creatures could become equivalent members of a present human-centered society.

In modern democratic societies for which the ethos of human rights is of fundamental importance, it is taken to be self-evident that only living human beings are social persons. However, this equation of the realm of the social with the world of humans has been increasingly challenged in recent years, especially by the advent of human-like autonomous robots. As empirical findings in cultural anthropology reveal, the premise that only living humans can be social persons does not hold true throughout the ages. The realm of the social would rather be demarcated by virtue of the historically contingent process of interpretation. According to this notion, the fact that machines built in the image of humans are becoming more and more integrated into everyday life, will raise crucial issues about the borders of the social world – not least the ethical problem whether or not autonomous robots should be viewed as subjects of legal rights and duties.

Based on such a critique, I argue that the conception of sociality ought to be radically deanthropologized for the empirical analysis of elementary border phenomena. It must be considered an open question whether or not artificial humanoids will soon be able to occupy the position of social persons. My main goal is to show that this issue can only be addressed adequately by elaborating a formal theory of the social, as a basic assumption which steers the critical field observation on human-robot interaction. The key idea consists in the focus on the high complexity emerging from the triangulated interaction within a threesome constellation.