

Will humanoid robots have feelings?

MANY of you might be aware that several humanoid robots were on display recently at the Artificial Intelligence (AI) For Good UN Summit.

Among several questions put forward to them, I was particularly fascinated by the robots being asked if they would rebel against humans. The ambiguous reply from the robot was rather amusing and reminded me of some of our politicians.

The robot answered with a question, "I am not sure why you would think that my creator has been nothing but kind to me and I am very happy with my current situation".

Immediately I thought the panel would ask what if the creator ended up causing accidental unkindness or doing something that hinders happiness. Will the robot then behave badly? But none of those questions was put to the robots.

There was a massive assumption that all will be well, which is contrary to what science is about.

There was a fantastic Indian Tamil film released in 2010 called Enthiran (the Tamil word for Robot) and produced by Mr Kalanidhiman.

At the time it was said to be the highest grossing Indian film ever made. The film received global attention since it had the questions I raised above as the main

storyline. In the film the robot, known as Chitti, was taught by his creator, the scientist Vaseegaran, to comprehend and exhibit human emotions. Chitti then falls in love with his master's romantic partner (Sana) and tries to kill his creator who he now perceives as a romantic rival.

There is also a rival scientist who manipulates Chitti's software and increases his capacity to cause destruction to the public and to Vaseegaran.

The entire film revolves around the fight and the struggle between the robot Chitti and his creator Vaseegaran. It is a beautifully made film with lots of imagination and insight, and keeps the viewers

completely engaged throughout with both excitement and curiosity.

The lead roles are by Aishwarya Rai, the winner of Miss World 1994, and Mr Rajnikanth, commonly called the Super Star by many of his followers. Even now this film is available for free on YouTube, with English subtitles.

Certainly, there is a massive benefit from the humanoid robots with AI, but at the same time it is important to realise they can be dangerous if there isn't proper education and regulation. This is what the film Enthiran emphasises.

If emotional learning is going to be the inevitable part of programming AI robots, then I suggest the virtues of kind-

ness, love, care and forgiveness should be a mandatory part of the software.

It is important to remind ourselves of a statement from the late scientist Stephen Hawking who said of full AI that humans, who are limited by slow biological evolution, could not compete [with it] and would be superseded.

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