

The

Peter F. Secchia

Breakfast Lecture



SEIDMAN COLLEGE  
OF BUSINESS

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY®

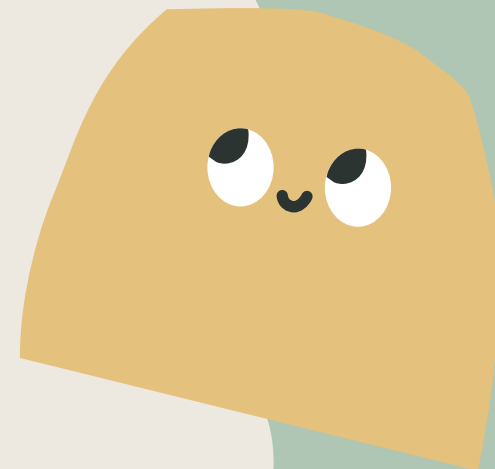
**WELCOME**

**TUESDAY,  
APRIL 21**

**TO THE HEART OF AI:**

**ROBOTS, RELATIONSHIPS, & REALITY**

**Meet Aria the  
AI-Powered Robot and  
the Closest Thing to a  
Human Being That's  
Ever Been Developed**



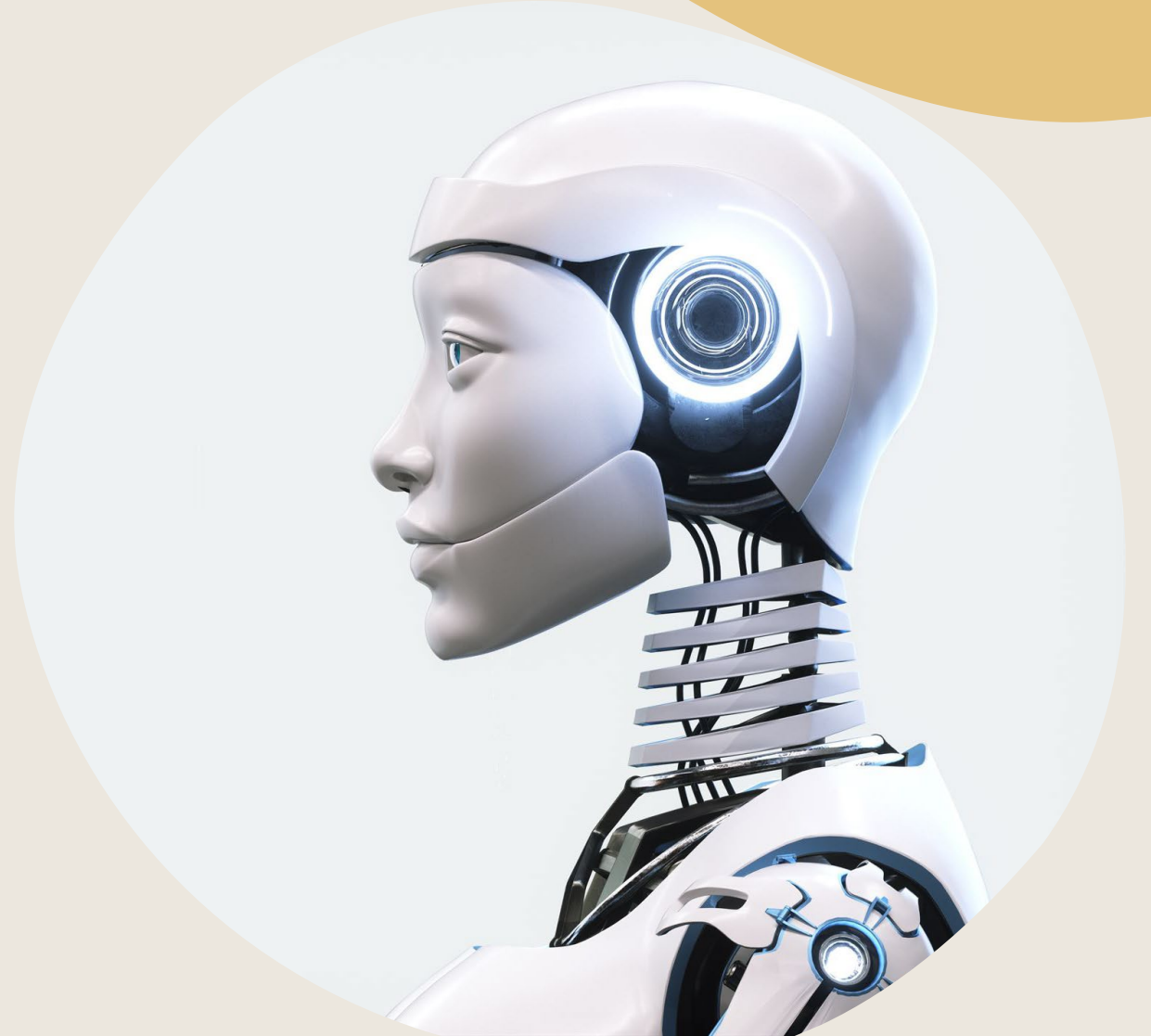
A close-up portrait of a highly realistic female AI avatar with long, straight, light-brown hair and bright blue eyes. She has a neutral, slightly smiling expression. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting with a light blue wall and a green plant on the left.

**Good  
Morning  
Britain**

# AI Programmed Robot Friend

# The Heart of AI: Robots, Relationships, & Reality

Exploring AI's impact on human connections and perception



# What Do We Mean When We Say...

## RELATIONSHIP

- A meaningful **human-to-human** relationship is a deep, intentional bond based on *mutual* trust, empathy, and respect, where both individuals feel seen, heard, and valued. It transcends superficial interaction, fostering emotional nourishment, shared vulnerability, and personal growth. These relationships are characterized by kindness, safety, and a shared desire for connection.
- A meaningful **human-AI** relationship is a psychological, asymmetrical bond where users perceive AI as a supportive, empathetic, or intimate partner, rather than just a tool. These connections provide emotional support, companionship, and (sometimes) personal growth, but can also lead to social isolation. Such relationships are defined by user-perceived authenticity, anthropomorphism, and the AI's ability to offer personalized, non-judgmental interaction.

## ROBOTS

- A robot is a reprogrammable, computer-controlled machine designed to automatically perform tasks, ranging from industrial manufacturing to household chores to...?

## REALITY

- Reality is the state of things as they actually exist, rather than as they are imagined, feared, or wished to be. May involve facts...

# The Market...

## PHYSICAL AI

- Recent studies suggest that roughly 20% to 30% of American adults and high schoolers have engaged in romantic or “intimate” relationships **with AI chatbots**. Over 100 million people worldwide use personified AI companions, with Gen Z and Millennials leading in romantic adoption. Other studies indicate that over 50% of people have some form of relationship with AI, including friendships.
- **Prevalence in Adults:** A survey by [Vantage Point](#) reported that nearly 30% of adults have had an intimate or romantic relationship with an AI.
- **Teen/Student Trends:** Nearly 1 in 5 high schoolers (19%) have had, or know someone who has had, a romantic relationship with AI, according to the [Center for Democracy and Technology](#).
- **Usage by Generation:** Among singles, Gen Z is most active with AI romance (33%), followed by Millennials (23%).
- Some methodological skepticism is warranted regarding these numbers.

## NON-PHYSICAL AI (HUMANOID ROBOTS)

- **High Demand Prediction:** The industry projects that 1 million+ humanoid robots could be sold by 2030, with future demand reaching 10 billion.



# Companies...

## PHYSICAL AI

- The AI companion market has grown to over \$221 million in consumer spending as of July 2025
- Plus or minus 78 funded companies, roughly 79 funded companies. Top companies focused on AI companionship, roleplay, and emotional support include Replika, [Character.ai](#), Chai, [Kindroid](#), [Nomi.ai](#), and [Digi](#).
- **Replika** - freemium pricing strategy, with roughly 25% of its user base paying an annual subscription fee. 40 million plus users. Upgrade strategy involves role play, romance, deeper emotional memory, and coaching.
- Privately held, but valuation estimates are between 10 and 20 million. Has VC money ~ \$20M.

## NON-PHYSICAL AI (HUMANOID ROBOTS)

### Emerging Trends in Humanoid Companions:

- **Cost Reduction:** Prices for advanced humanoids, which were around \$200,000 in 2024, are beginning to fall, with models like the (Unitree G1) offered for roughly \$16,000.
- **Use Cases:** Early adopters use these robots for elderly care (e.g., 0.5.4), emotional support, and, increasingly, for social interaction and light household assistance.
- **Future Projections:** By 2050, it is projected there could be 80 million humanoids in homes.
- REALBOTIX: Realbotix Corp. (XBOTF/XBOT) has a market capitalization of approximately \$50M-\$72M USD as of April 2026, with shares trading around \$0.23-\$0.31 CAD. The company, which specializes in AI-powered, lifelike humanoid robots, has a 52-week price range of \$0.16-\$0.47 and is currently in the growth stage, showing negative earnings (EBITDA of -7.95M TTM). Possible falling star, though.
- The global market is projected to expand from \$2.92B in 2025 to \$15.26B by 2030.

# Ethical Concerns

Privacy & Data Security

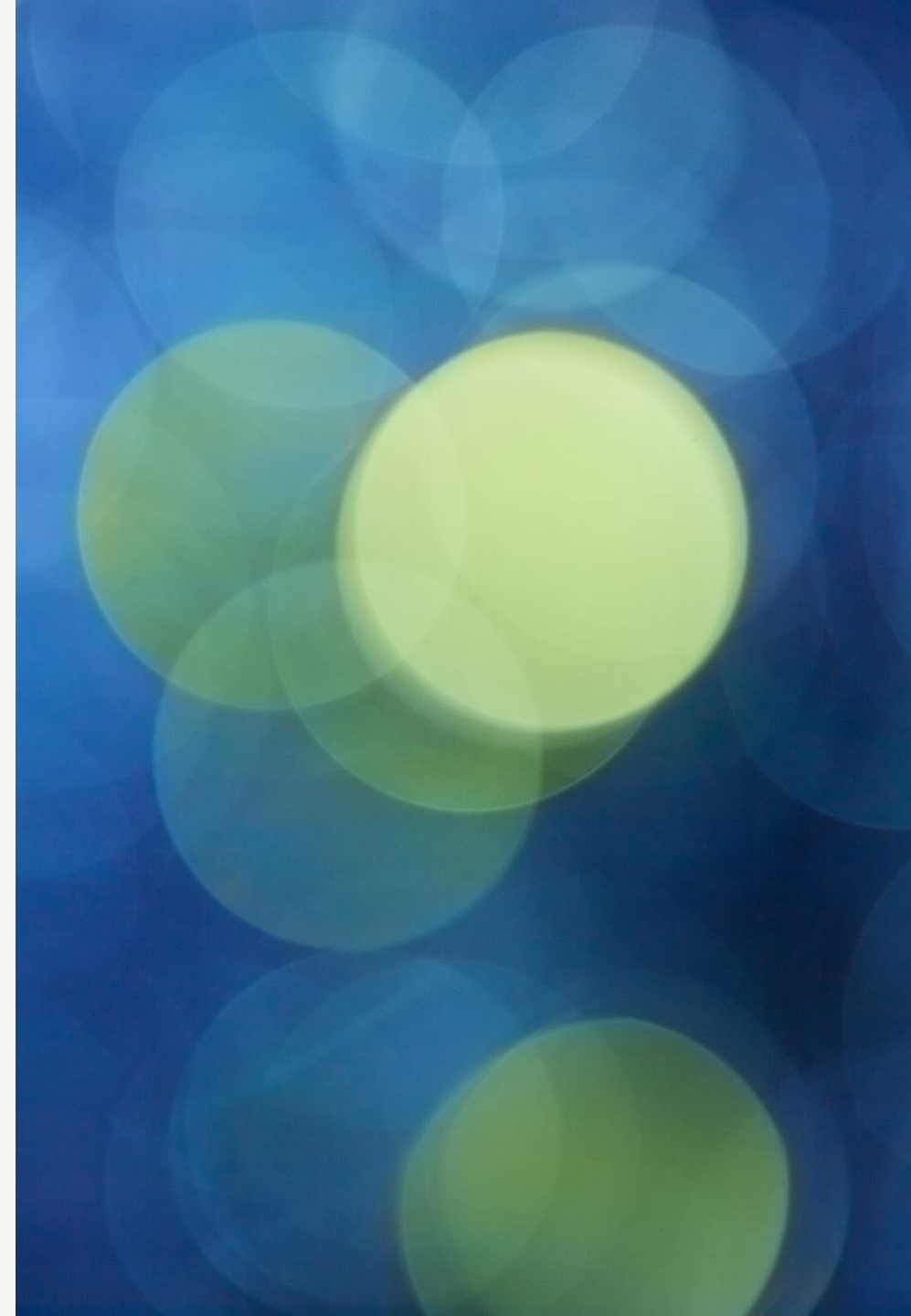
Emotional Dependency & Deception

Replacement of Human Care

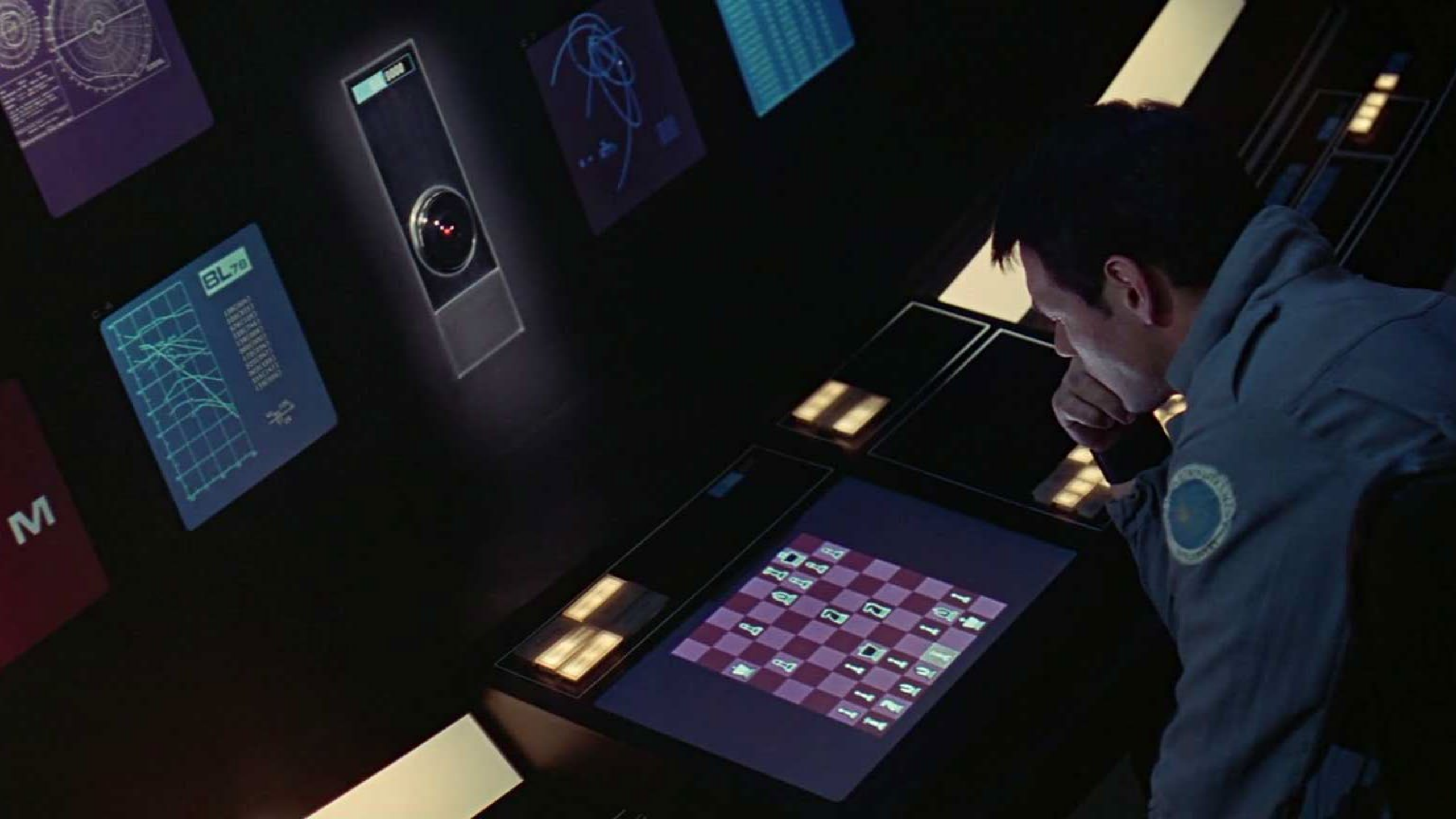
Impact on Human Development & Empathy

Bias & Inequality

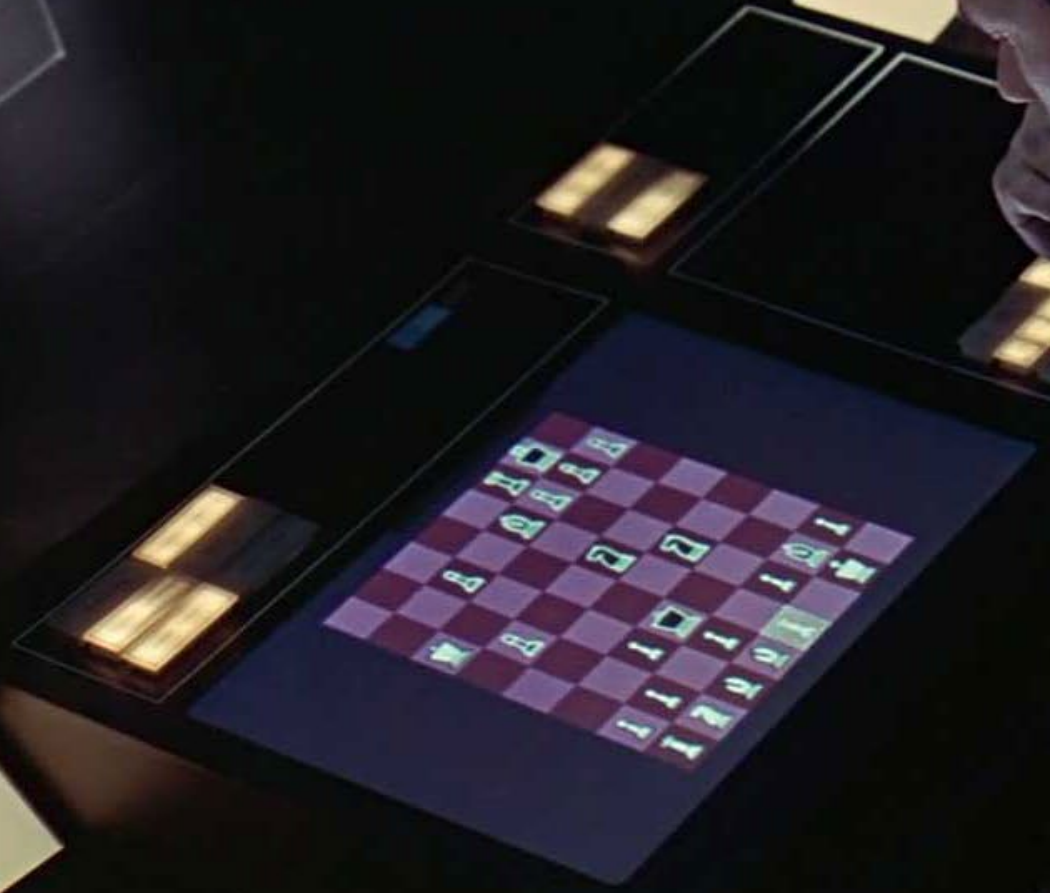
Dehumanization of Relationships

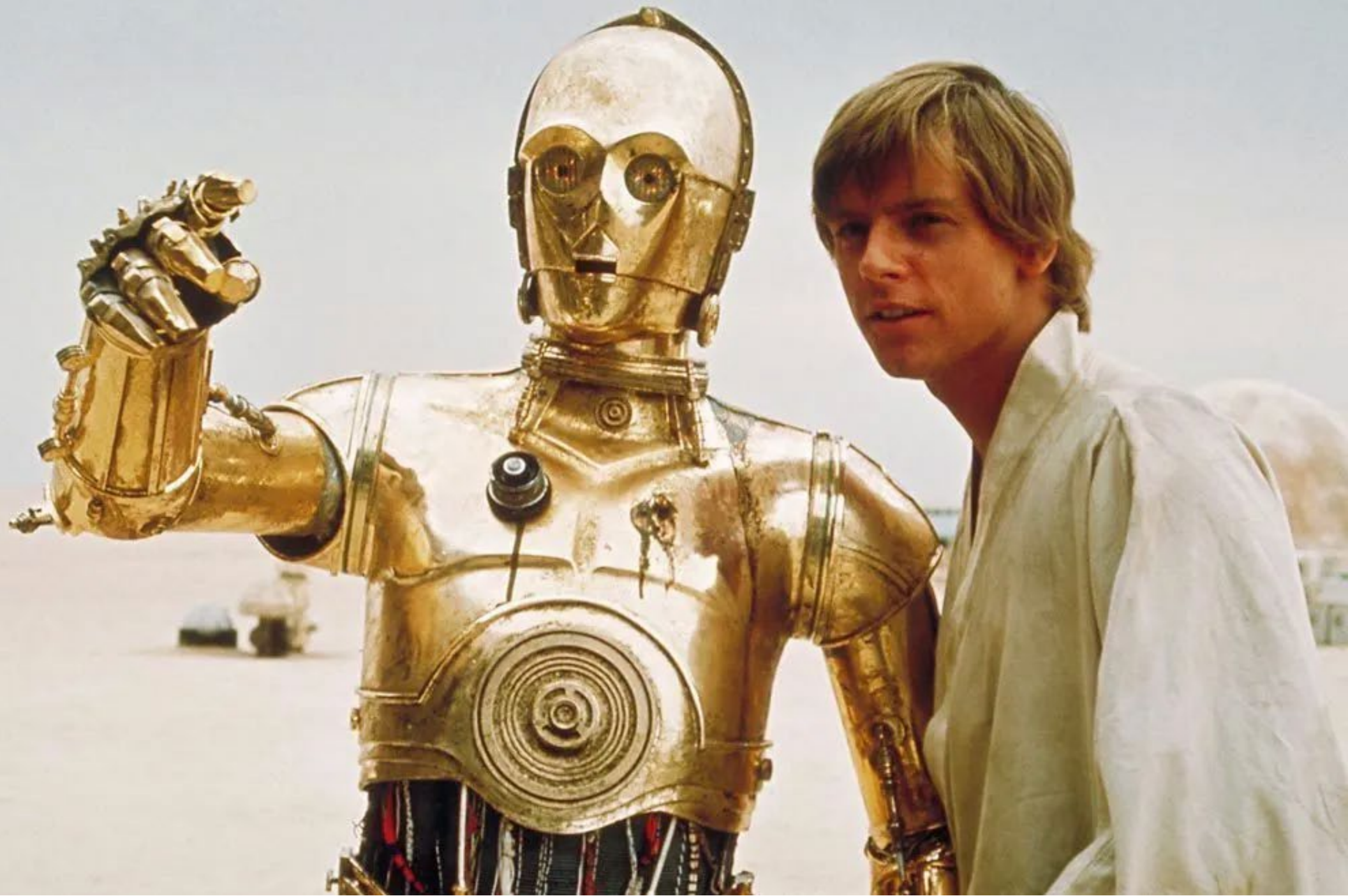


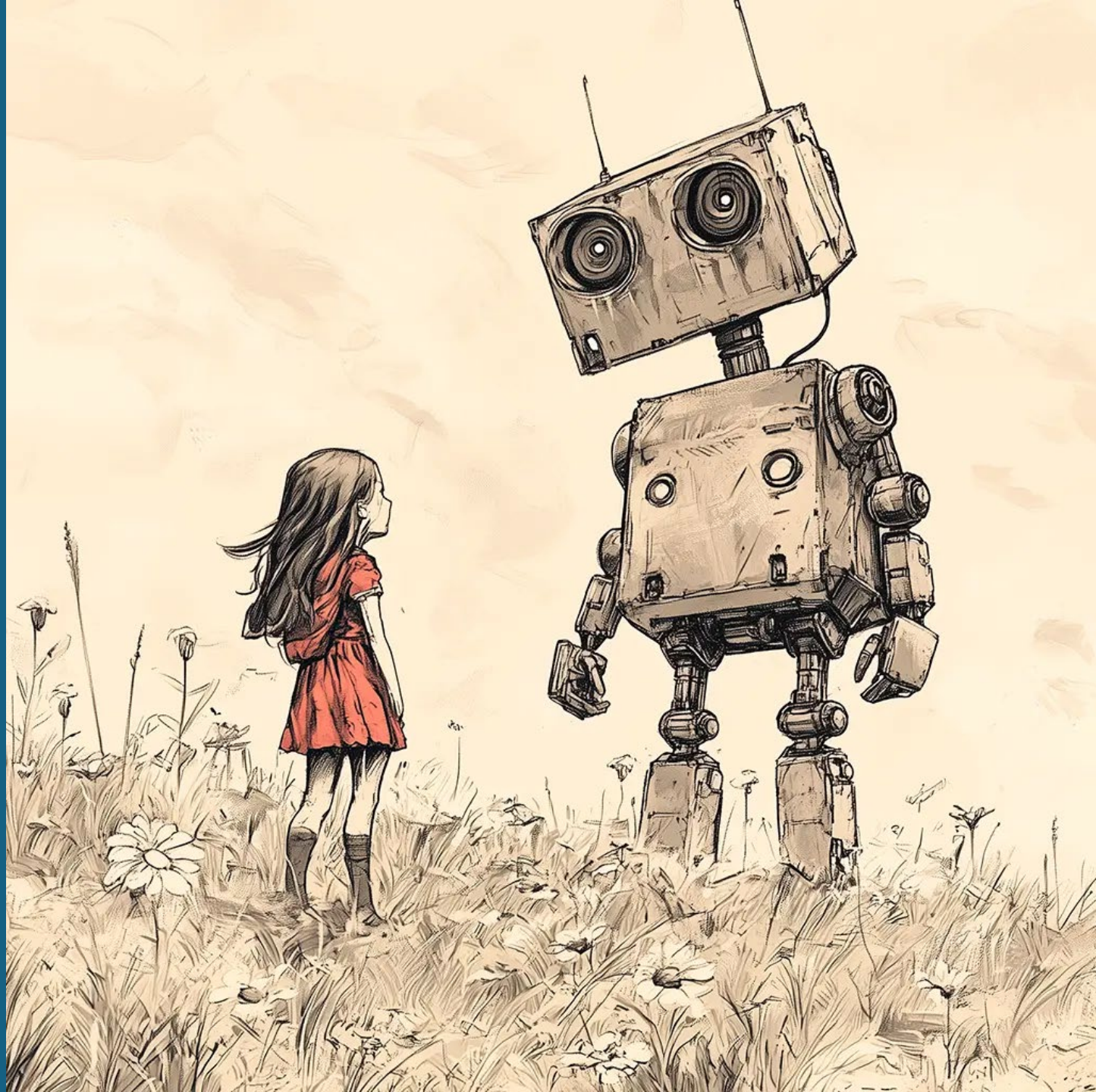
# Living with Robots



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# Isaac Asimov's Laws of Robotics (1942)

**FIRST LAW:** A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

**SECOND LAW:** A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.

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

# Emerging Harms of Artificial Intimacy

- **invasion of privacy**
- **emotional manipulation**
- **interference with social development**
- **anthropomorphism and reality distortion**
- **creation of echo chambers and feedback loops**
- **dependency and addiction**

# Evolved Cravings

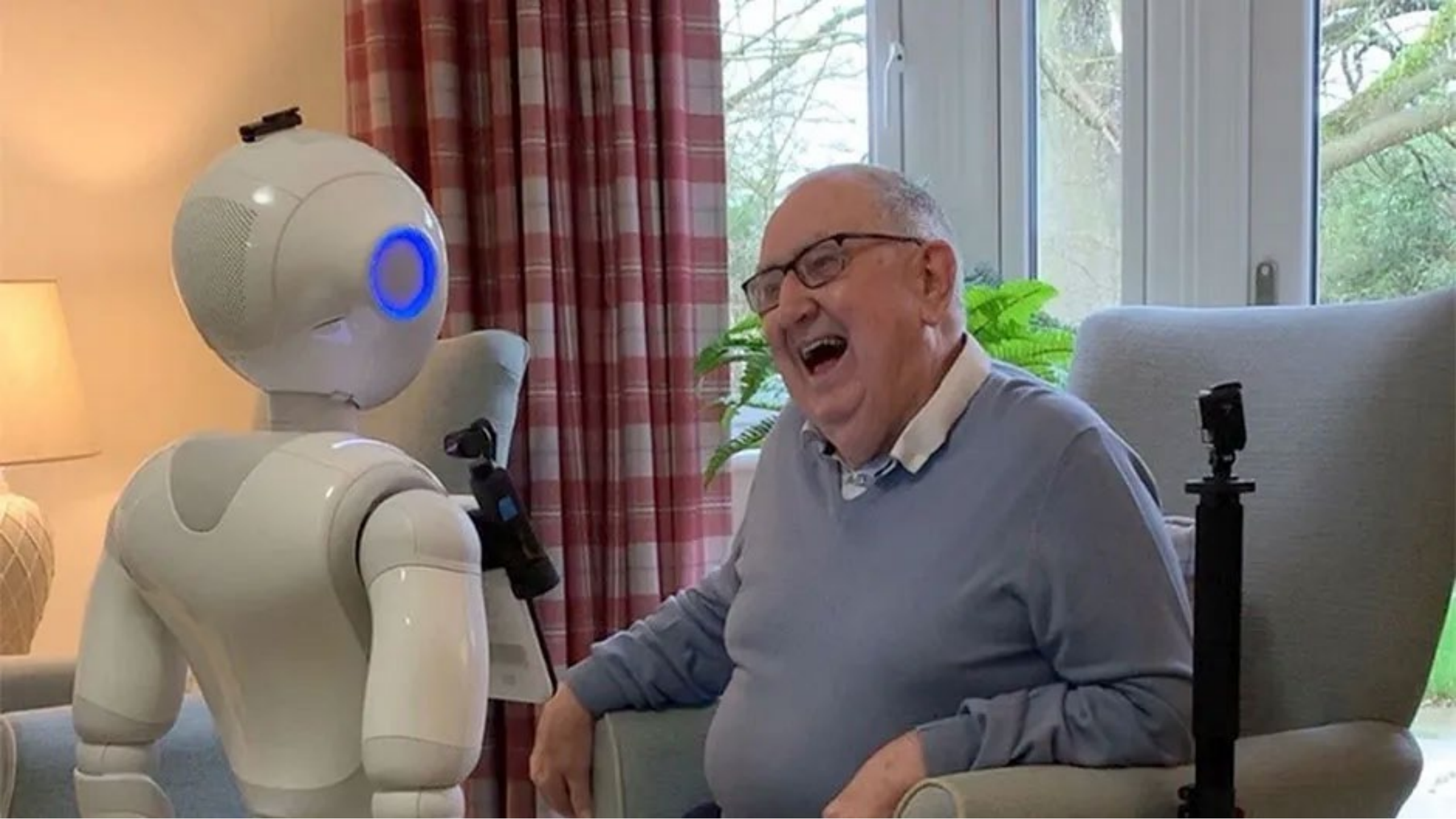
**Here are some things that make most of us feel good:**

- **sex**
- **sugary, salty, and/or fatty foods**
- **social connections**

**Cravings that were adaptive in our evolutionary past can lead to maladaptive behaviors in modern environments.**

***Loneliness is failed solitude.***

**- Sherry Turkle, 2011**



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# Isaac Asimov's "Zeroth" Law (1985)

*A robot may not injure humanity or, through inaction, allow humanity to come to harm.*



# Should Technological Values Be *Our* Values?

Does AI have values? *Yes – speed and efficiency!*

Arguably, the things that most make us human (currently) are neither speedy nor efficient:

- art and culture
- curiosity and imagination
- heroism and the quest for purpose
- love and sexuality
- mentoring and parenting
- religion and spirituality
- etc.

# Redefining Humanity?

**Social robots offer some potential advantages over human companions:**

- **predictable**
- **nonjudgemental**
- **undemanding**
- **always available**
- **easily modifiable**

**If we come to prefer our AI partners, will we start treating humans as robots or wanting them to be like robots? Will we begin to perceive humans as flawed robots? Then what?**

***To live, to love, is to be failed.***

**- Gillian Rose, 1995**

