

FROM SPEAKING STATUES TO FAMILY PETS – ROBOTIC INTEGRATION IN OUR LIVES

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We all know what is a robot.

But what do we know about their history? Just as science has a protoscience that arose millennia ago, so robots have their ancient prototypes. They are called “automatons”.

Robots are mostly powered by electricity and are always electric. While variety of sources are suitable for an automaton, which can also be either mechanical or electrical in nature. (1)

We can say, that mechanical figures capable of performing certain actions, repeating the movements of creatures or objects from everyday life, are called automatons. Some sources say, that they can rightfully be considered the first robots in history (2)

It's believed that those “ancient prototypes” were found in Greece. For example, an Archytas' “Pigeon”. There was also created the first alarm clock. (3)

According to French Egyptologist Gaston Maspero (1846–1916) (4), the Egyptians had “speaking statues”. They were made of painted or gilded wood with jointed limbs and voices operated by temple priests. From them you could had an answer for your question. There was another well-known statue in the temple of Amun in Thebes. There is a belief that it used to raise its arm and select the next pharaoh from among male members of the royal family.

In 3rd century BC Lie Zi described in his book a singing and dancing robot that performed for King Mu of Zhou.

The 15th century was marked by the creation of the first humanoid robot –

knight - by Leonardo Da Vinci. (5)

If generalize, we can see that during its existence, the creation of the automaton was motivated by some rituals, practical benefit or simply for fun.

The 17th century in a history of automation is remembered for Japanese Karakuri puppets, built for entertainment. (6)

And then comes 18th century with Canard Digérateur, or Digesting Duck (7) Even though, this “bird” was pretty popular at that time.

So now, having formed a minimal impression of its predecessors, we can say a few words about how the robot itself was formed, and about the presentation we are used to.

The earliest robot was created by George Devol back in 1950s. He invented and patented a reprogrammable manipulator called "Unimate," from "Universal Automation."

The Unimation company was formed. It began to produce and market the robots. And now Engleberger is known in the industry as "the Father of Robotics." (8)

As many popular things, robots started to be shown in media too. Mostly either as hope or the embodiment of human fears.

Since 1900s robots were used to represent our uncertainty about our place in this world. That's where the fear of being displaced by machine (or even becoming one) began.

And that's why it appears as a common theme in popular culture, giving rise to some of the first robot characters.

In the 1950s and 60s, the world was recovering from war. Robots began to embody people's optimism for the future.

Toy robots provided the classic image of a robot in popular culture. (9)

Mostly in media life with robots is rarely a positive experience. A common plot is humanity's attempt to destroy the robots that are trying to replace humans (10)

But at the same time, the present is somewhat different from the movie prophecies. People mostly get attached to their robots, as, for example, has shown ‘Robots in the Wild: Understanding Long-term Use’.

Where it was noted that the owners of Rumba vacuum cleaners often gave them names, rearranged the plan of the apartment to make it easier for the work to move. The participants perceived them as part of the family, talked to them and humanized them. Teresa Flanagan, lead author of the study published in *Developmental Psychology*, says they chose Roomba because of the way it moves autonomously.

“But the Roomba can’t speak or doesn’t look like a human. So those are some things that might make us think that it doesn’t have as many mental or feeling or moral capacities.”

One 10-year-old said it wasn’t okay to yell at it because, “*the microphone sensors might break if you yell too loudly*”. Another 10-year-old said it wasn’t okay because “*the robot will actually feel really sad.*” (11)

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