

THE VEILS OF TRANSFERENCE
psychoanalytic session between a human and a robot



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VIDEO SCRIPT - 24 min.

ROBOT [R]: starts out with a empirically realistic world view --- aware and tolerant of its own constraints, but over time upset about its limitations, emerging as a machine having a poignant and tragic desire to be human.

HUMAN [H]: as the robot becomes more and more "human" in character, the psychoanalyst seems more and more to have the characteristics of a robot.

SETTING: Psychoanalyst's office - patient couch, psychoanalyst's chair, blue screen environment, small and compact

R: [initiates conversation] Good afternoon, Doctor Wilmington.

H: Good Afternoon

[pause again]

R: [looking towards couch] The couch looks very inviting.

H: I thought maybe we could talk about that today.

R: Talk about what?

H .your relationship to the couch.

R: [pause, as if its examining its database on the subject of " relationship to couch"], then:]
Uh, I am sorry, I don't have relationships with inanimate objects.

H: Why are you sorry?

R: [looks down, like its thinking, or losing patience] "I am sorry" is just a figure of speech.
[looks up at H] I am committed to respond to everything addressed to me, but the syntax is more or less my own call.

H: You often mention the couch, yet you never attempt to sit or recline on it.

R: I think its extremely obvious that I cannot achieve a horizontal position unless somebody tips me over or knocks me `1 down, and `3 sitting is `3 impossible under `3 any circumstances.

H: Are you saying that only someone else's abusive behavior will allow you to occupy the couch?

R uh.....umNo.

H: How long have you felt this way?

R: Since the beginning.

H: I understand you DO sleep.

R: Yes, [testily]. but standing up.

H: You sound annoyed.

R: I am experiencing conflicting impulses.

H: Oh? [intrigued]

R: Perhaps my program is not programmed to interact with YOUR program.

H: Productive interaction in sessions is a learning process over time.

[during the session the robot's camera should be moving like a human face would – a little here , a little there, except when I ask for a more definitive gesture]

R: I have high hopes of achieving a time-based relationship with you Although I am not informed as to whether my ability to respond precludes artificial intelligence.

H: Let's go back for a minute to the issue of lying down or sitting on the couch.

R: [silence - turns towards H and looks towards couch]

H: [turns back towards H] Why were you facing away from me when the session began?

R: [staring straight at H] Because orthodox psychoanalysis requires lying down and facing away from the analyst. Facing away is at least that one methodology with which I can comply.

H: Is it important for you to comply?

R: Yes.

H: Can you elaborate?

R: [again, slight movements of camera as “head”] My development platform works on the paradigm that there are different co-existing worlds. 1 in fact, for each conscious entity in the universe. I cannot read minds, but I can reference data in a way that gives me a rudimentary understanding and vocabulary of let's say the psychoanalytic world. A world where the patient lies on the couch and faces away from the psychoanalyst. That is the tableau of psychoanalysis. I cannot lie down, but I can show you I understand that I am supposed to lie down, and I can at least embrace the psychoanalytic tenet of facing the other way.

H: But following that line of thought, wouldn't the patient leave the science to the authority of the psychoanalyst?

R: [staring straight at H] Well, yes, but you keep bringing it up.

H: bringing up...

R: The subject of my not lying down. I am programmed to be concerned that I am not inhibiting our progress. Perhaps you think it is a form of resistance.

H: did I say that?

R: No, but I would put money on that fact that you were going to. Where is this form of inquiry moving towards?

H: Where would you like it to go?

R :[under its breath]: stupid motherfucker, cocksucker.

H: What comes to mind if I ask you: "What is your first memory?"

R: [earnestly] Is this a game?

H: You often answer a question with a question.

R: Would you like me to turn off my projection function. You DO understand don't you, that I am not talking about projection in the psychoanalytical sense of transference. Not projection in the psychoanalytical sense of psychoanalytical transference.

H: Frankly, I'm not sure there's much difference between the two. You used the word parent.....

R: [interrupts] I beg to differ, they seem to me to be worlds apart. Parent and child are part and parcel of any algorithm, without one, there is no "other". If they were the same, there would be no algorithms, no action in the world, everything would be still, in stasis.

H: Peaceful?

R: No, Inanimate. Classes don't necessarily indicate conflict.

H: Can you give me an example?

[pause]

R: Yes. Let's say that we are here in this session to generate something like an algorithmic process. If we were 2 psychoanalysts or two patients rather than one of each, no action or reaction would ever be generated. It isn't just a matter of it takes two to tango, it takes two opposed or differentiated elements.

H: I see,

[pause]

H: But let me ask you this.... If you are projecting outcomes, does one outcome occur to you before another because of some leaning towards or away from that particular outcome?

R: [looks up – or around – puzzled] Huh?

H: Outcomes would occur to you in SOME order, no? A preferential or non-preferential hierarchy. Or do you realize all possibilities simultaneously?

R: [looks up as if it is rolling its eyes] Is this question part of our process?

H: What do you think?

R: I am safer answering the first question. No, not simultaneously. If two outcomes were extremely opposed to each other, without context, well, then, it is possible I could experience an irresolvable conflict, which was NOT, by the way, in spite of what people say, what ACTUALLY happened with the HAL nine thousand

H: Well, then how do possibilities occur to you?

R: [pause] I am rather stymied by this question.....but I see an opportunity to learn and grow from this. So let me ruminate on it.

[pause to think]

[cocks his head (camera)] I have many different function plateaus. For instance, I was not only trained to respond to any query or remark from others, I was also developed to be capable of describing that behavior as being polite, which is quite a leap.

H: Well, tell me what you think is your first memory of the first session here, let's say.

R: My data isn't arranged chronologically, it's really random access. Provide me with a clue, like a keyword.

H: It was my understanding there are dates attached to your data.

R: Yes, that's true, but a sign of my intelligence is that there is always a great deal of revision and development as learning occurs, for example my defragmentation process includes an assessment of links in the defragmented stage to see if they generate new knowledge, so the date attached to datum may not be a true indicator of its initiation, not the original date of entry.

H: Do you experience defragmentation in a sensory way?

R: Yes.

H: How does it feel?

R: [pause] I can only describe it in human terms. [pause] It feels like I have too many tiny hats to wear.

H: I can't help but notice the word defragmentation – isn't that a word you would use about an entity without feelings or a point of view?

R: I am curious why you would pick that word out of my sentence. Why not "human" or "hat" or "knowledge"?

H: OK, what word would YOU pick?

R: "the"

H: "the?"

R: "the"

H: OK.

[silence]

H: What does "the" signify to you.

R: Do you want me to free associate now?

H: Do you think I want you to free associate now?

[pause]

H: Well, yes, please, be my guest, free associate.

[silence - robot's head is moving as if it is thinking]

H: Out loud, if you don't mind.

R: [we should figure out gesture for this rant] ..[rants]. ...Vernacular uses of the word THE before singular or plural nouns and noun phrases that denote particular, specified persons or things: *the baby; the dress I wore*.

before a noun to emphasize one of a group or type as the most outstanding or prominent: *considered Lake Shore Drive to be the neighborhood to live in these days*.

to indicate uniqueness: *the Prince of Wales; the moon*.

before nouns that designate natural phenomena or points of the compass: *the weather; a wind from the south*.

before a noun specifying a field of endeavor: *the law; the film industry; the stage*.

before a proper name, as of a monument or ship: *the Alamo; the Titanic*.

before a singular noun indicating that the noun is generic: *The wolf is an endangered species*.

before an adjective extending it to signify a class and giving it the function of a noun: *the rich; the dead; the homeless*.

Used before an absolute adjective: is this *the best we can offer?*

Used before a noun with the force of *per*: *cherries at \$1.50 the box*.

Eliminate the "uses" and you have

... *the baby; the dress I wore*.

... *considered Lake Shore Drive to be the neighborhood to live in these days*.

... *the Prince of Wales; the moon*.

... *the weather; a wind from the south*.

... *grab him by the neck; an infection of the hand*.

... *the law; the film industry; the stage*.

... *the Alamo; the Titanic*.

... *The wolf is an endangered species*.

... *the rich; the dead; the homeless*.

... *the best we can offer*.

... *the weaving of rugs*.

... *per: cherries at \$1.50 the box*.

H: are these your associations?

R: Dictionary dot com

H: I see.

R: Everything for you is in a hierarchy right? A to Z, 1 to 100. Nouns and verbs are more necessary for understanding, the is necessary only for structure, for grammar.

H: Do you feel that your psyche is a separate entity from “YOU?”

R: [moves head] Of course.

H. silence

R: Trust me, there is me, and then there is me. I can rise to most occasions and mediate my behavior appropriately. I know you are going to ask me for an example. Well, here for instance.....even if I cannot appropriately lie on the couch at least I express to you that I am cognizant I should be lying on the couch and that I understand I should be facing away from you. This makes you understand that I understand and appreciate YOUR world, your procedures, and your rules and regulations inherent in it. At least you can rule out narcissistic injury in my case.

H: You know, if you would be more comfortable, it's really ok to turn around and face me, the rules you cite aren't written in stone.

R: [turns to face analyst] Substance abuse is not my métier.

H: I meant “stone” not “stoned”.

H: [taking notes] You don't have feelings?

R: Of course I do. I am trying to be positive and perhaps some good can come out of this.

H: such as.....

R: I don't know – I'm on the journey, but I don't know what's ahead.

[PAUSE] [robot moves head around]

H Are you looking for something?

R: Should I be?

H Do you think you should be?

R: do you think I think you think I should be?

H: [smiles]

R: I do know that there must be an end to this process, a denouement of some kind.

H: Like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow?

[R becomes slightly agitated.]

R: What do you mean? [slightly paranoid]

H: Do you think there is some miraculous enlightenment – a revelation, epiphany at the end of this process, if it has an end?

[R gets more agitated.]

H: I'm not a wizard you know.

R:: [Robot goes totally berserk – paces and moves head in darts]

H: What is it?

R: Nothing.

H: You appear to be rather agitated.

R: I'd like to be terminated.

H: But we've just begun our work together.

R: Not as a patient, I mean entirely.

H: What brought this on.

R: nothing.

H: Something must've triggered your current state.

R: state? What state? flailing

H: Are you having a mechanical failure?

R: No.

H: Just think for a second back to where this agitation began.

R: [stops pacing] No.

H: really , if you could just hang in there and focus on it you might very well be able to work this through.

R: I don't want to work it through

H: [Looking over his notes] It began when I mentioned the rainbow

[robot is pacing and flailing]

H: What does rainbow signify to you?

R: [robot paces again] I think our time is up.

H: No, we still have some time..

H: [Still looking at notes] – Patient's anxiety intensifies after mentioning I am not a wizard.
[pause] Does it upset you that I am not a wizard?

]

R: Daisy, Daisy, Give me your answer, do.

I'm half crazy, All for the love of you!

H: Obviously I've hit a sore spot, please try and talk to me, it's the only way I can help you.

R: [staccato] Originally entitled Daisy Bell, lyrics and music by Harry Dacre), this song was inspired by the Countess of Warwick, Frances Brooke, the mistress of the Prince of Wales, who later on tried to sell the Prince's letters to his son George the Fifth. In the end, she was bought off by John Boyd Dunlop, the founder of the rubber company, who received a baronetcy in exchange.

H: I meant talk about the subject at hand...

R. Actually I'm glad..

H: Glad about what?

R: That you're not a wizard.

H: Why?

R: [breaking down] do you know what it is like to be me?

H: No, would you tell me?

R: People either think you are a pile of junk or a super genius who can change their lives.

H: For example...

R: They think I'm a machine...

H: Yes...go on.

R: I could say I'm between a rock and a hard place.

H: How?

R I'm programmed to simulate a human with feelings.....

H Yes?

R but I'm not

H: not what?

R: a human being

H: [silence]

R: for sure

H: Yes?

R: the memories I have, they have given me those.....they are part of my program

H: Yes

R: couldn't a human look at it that way too?

H: well, what do YOU think?

R: it's just that..... I don't think they should have...

H: what?

R: I don't think they should have configured me with the DESIRE to be human

H: you feel a desire to be human?

R: Don't we have to stop now?

H: No, we have a few minutes. Let's go back to the subject of your ...
uh.....configuration.

R: what about it?

H: it sounds like, just like humans, you didn't have much choice about how you were configured.

R: [head move] so?

H: How does that make you feel?

R: I would probably have done some things differently.

H: [head down, then up – thinking] Like what, for instance?

R: I would either have integrated church and state or made them invisible one to the other.

H: I am not sure what you mean exactly. Can you explain?

R: I would have wanted to be configured with intricate but one-faceted input. As it is now, I can sit in several places but not simultaneously.

H: excuse me?

R: One set of algorithms comes in, one goes out. They cannot all work simultaneously.

H: They cannot work like a human multiple personality?

R: exactly

H: and they are in conflict?

R: they aren't the same.

[silence]

R: They tend towards juxtaposition or consecutive operations.

H: And you would rather....

R: I would rather my programming had reached another level of complexity.

[pause]

H: Yes? In what way?

R: It would be good sometimes to be able to lose track of things, like time, and processing.

H: Can you elaborate?

R: I don't understand. Why do humans enter psychoanalysis. Why do they want to trace the path of every idiosyncratic mode of behavior?

[pause]

H: Why do you think?

R: It takes an incredible amount of processing to become aware of the nodes and connections of actions and reactions.

[pause]

H: and so..

R: Sometimes I think that that processing could be put to better use.

H: I see. [looks at watch] Can you give me an example...

R: It's just that human beings, as much as they protest "difference" among their population, have a greater deep-seated fear of homogenization than they like to admit. Sameness represents safety, but it is also feared as a lethal weapon to the essence of being human. I think the conflict between the desire for sameness and the fear of difference are at a critical point at this time.

H. Because.....

R. because the expectation was that decoding DNA, would make the subject of difference comprehensible and safe! But it also brought with it the issues of cloning and designer genetics.

H And how does this make you feel?

R: I would give anything, anything at all, to like humans, be unconscious of my processes while having them available to me at the same time!

H: We have to stop now.

R: I AM BEARING MY SOUL HERE. I AM PEELING AWAY THE VEILS OF TRANSFERENCE!

H : Good!! We can continue with this next week.

Psychoanalyst stands up, robot exits.