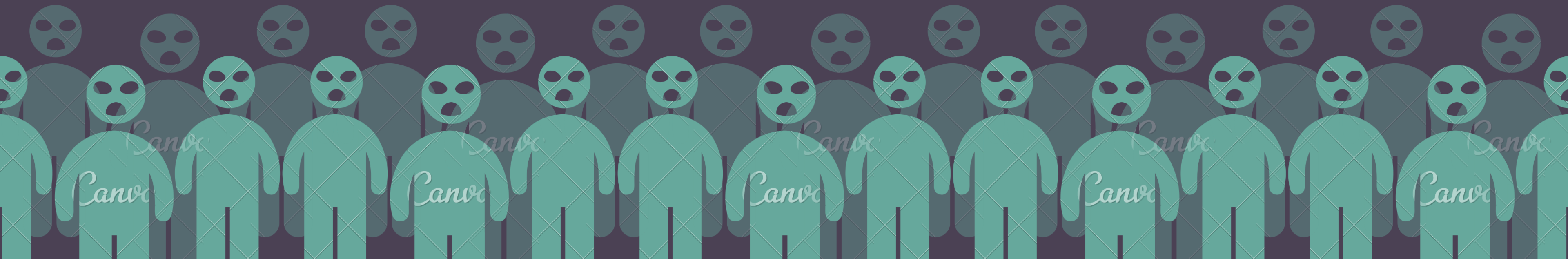


Karel Capek

R.U.R

Rossum's Universal Robots




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KAREL CAPEK



Karel Čapek, (born Jan. 9, 1890, died Dec. 25, 1938, Prague, Czech.), Czech novelist, short-story writer, playwright, and essayist.

He studied philosophy in Prague, Berlin, and Paris and in 1917 settled in Prague as a writer and journalist.

Almost all Čapek's literary works are inquiries into philosophical ideas.

The problem of identity and the mystery of people's underlying motivations are the theme of Čapek's most mature work.

Čapek's comic fantasy *Ze života hmyzu* (with Josef, 1921; *The Insect Play*) satirizes human greed, complacency, and selfishness, emphasizing the relativity of human values and the need to come to terms with life.

HUMANE AND ARTIFICIAL

The dichotomy between humane and artificial

Human tendency to fall as a victim to the ambition

An embodiment of persistent workings of natural laws

The idea of personal hubris

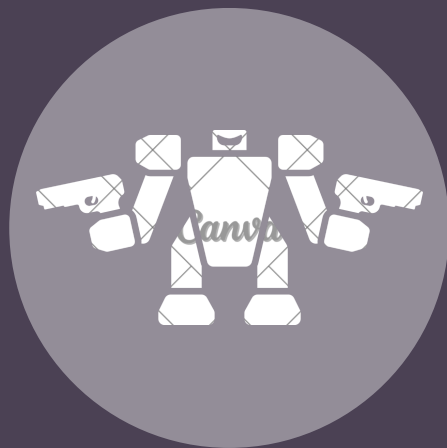
Human ability and desire to create things in order to transcend the laws of nature

Can artificial beings experience life in the similar way to humans?

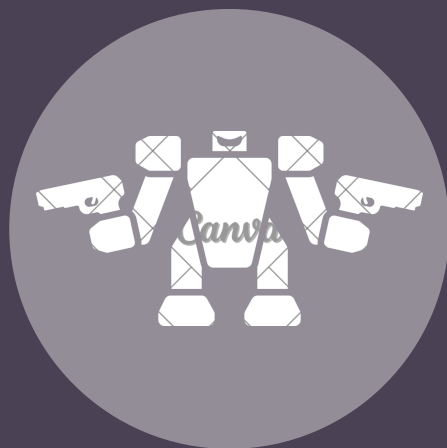
Playing God

The concept of love

R.U.R



R.U.R., drama in three acts by Karel Čapek, published in 1920 and performed in 1921. This cautionary play, for which Čapek invented the word robot (derived from the Czech word for forced labour), involves a scientist named Rossum who discovers the secret of creating humanlike machines.



“R.U.R.,” which gave birth to the robot, was a critique of the ways technology can dehumanize people. Its Slavic linguistic root, “rab,” means “slave.” The original word for robots more accurately defines androids, then, in that they were neither metallic nor mechanical.

SKEPTICISM TOWARDS THE UTOPIAN NOTION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

“The product of the human brain has escaped the control of human hands,”

“This is the comedy of science.”

As robots increase in capability, vitality, and self-awareness, humans become more like their machines – humans and robots, in Čapek’s critique, are essentially one and the same.

Such a contest implicitly critiques the efficiency movement that emerged just before World War I, which ignored many essential human traits.



THE ORIGIN OF ONE OF THE CHARACTERS

The old inventor, Mr. Rossum (whose name translated into English signifies “Mr. Intellectual” or “Mr. Brain”), is a typical representative of the scientific materialism of the last [nineteenth] century. His desire to create an artificial man – in the chemical and biological, not mechanical sense – is inspired by a foolish and obstinate wish to prove God to be unnecessary and absurd. Young Rossum is the modern scientist, untroubled by metaphysical ideas; scientific experiment is to him the road to industrial production. He is not concerned to prove, but to manufacture.



GOING BACK TO THE PAST:

SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN

- Slaves vs destroyers of their creators;
- Western characterizations of robots;
- The duality: successful creation vs the embodiment of personal hubris
- The role of religion and how the desire to 'play the god' puts one at the destruction.

SYMPATHETIC HELENA VS REBELLIOUS RADIUS

Helena: Poor Radius. ... Couldn't you control yourself? Now they'll send you to the stamping mill. Won't you speak? Why did it happen to you? You see, Radius, you are better than the rest. Dr. Gall took such trouble to make you different. Won't you speak?

Radius: Send me to the stamping mill.

Helena: I am sorry they are going to kill you. Why weren't you more careful?

Radius: I won't work for you. Put me into the stamping mill.

Helena: Why do you hate us?

Radius: You are not like the Robots. You are not as skillful as the Robots. The Robots can do everything. You only give orders. You talk more than is necessary.

Helena: That's foolish Radius. Tell me, has any one upset you? I should so much like you to understand me.

Radius: You do nothing but talk.

SYMPATHETIC HELENA VS REBELLIOUS RADIUS

Helena: Dr. Gall gave you a larger brain than the rest, larger than ours, the largest in the world. You are not like the other Robots, Radius. You understand me perfectly.

Radius: I don't want any master. I know everything for myself.

Helena: That's why I had you put into the library, so that you could read everything, understand everything, and then – Oh, Radius, I wanted to show the whole world that the Robots were our equals. That's what I wanted of you.

Radius: I don't want any master. I want to be master over others.

Helena's compassion saves Radius from the stamping mill, and he later leads the robot revolution that displaces the humans from power. Čapek is none too subtle in portraying the triumph of artificial humans over their creators:

Radius: The power of man has fallen. By gaining possession of the factory we have become masters of everything. The period of mankind has passed away. A new world has arisen. ... Mankind is no more. Mankind gave us too little life. We wanted more life.

THE END

In the end we have these two transformed robots whom Alquist symbolically calls Adam and Eve. You feel that although the other robots will die out, man in the form of these two transformed robots will survive. Everything is wiped out except man himself, and man must begin all over again as he did from the Garden' of Eden. And yet you do not feel an overwhelming sorrow at the loss of all the knowledge or so called progress in the world. Man is left, and that is all that matters.

Progress then in its sense is of no use unless man can grow with it in his outlook and interpretation of life.

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