# Self-delusion and
(the conscious exploitment of)
# Anthropomorphism

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# The inevitability of human-like robots



- **Physical interaction** (within human-scale environments) facilitated by the human-like shape

- Social interaction facilitated through the exploitment of anthropomorphism

- A strong grip on our collecting imagination

# The deceiving nature of anthropomorphism

Tricking the user by inducing a misleading sense of similarity

- Inevitable ( a natural instinct proven by a long tradition )
- Dangerous ( potential violation of the user's rights and dignity )
- Deeply rewarding ( blurs the perceived boundary between the robot and its user )

The user takes a passive role in the "benevolent deception" designed by the developers

The user is not aware of the actual capabilities of the machine

Is exploiting anthropomorphism ethical?

# The ethical approaches to deception

## Deontological approach



*"so act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means"*

By deceiving we harm the user's dignity and autonomy
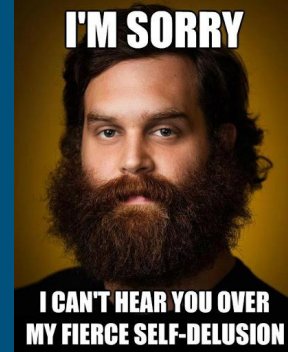
## Consequentialist approach



*"What did it cost?"*
*"Everything"*

An activity is ethically evaluated according to the results it leads to

Deception can be considered as an ethical activity if its consequences bring an improvement toward a set goal ( the wellbeing of the user )

# Embrace anthropomorphism through self-delusion



The user has an active role and consciously participates in the fictional activities without losing awareness of their nature

He consciously engages in the illusion ( human-like robots ) in order to trigger his instinctive responses ( anthropomorphism ) and therefore take advantage of the benefits deriving from these ( eased HR-interaction )

Is self-delusion actually sustainable?

# Sustaining the awareness of the illusion

How to keep the boundary between reality and "perceived reality" in check?

- Remanding the user of the robot's true capabilities ( robot signaling their action )
- Mind the duration of the user's interaction with the robot ( robot as provider or services but not as companion )
- Mind the innate susceptibility of some users ( interaction with the elderly and young people )

# Weak points and next steps

- Human-shaped robots may be quite evitable

- Enhancing the human-resemblance in robots could lead to many problems as raised expectations or the "Uncanny Valley"

- Is self-delusion "psychologically safe" ?

- Social robots as entities and not as mere tools

"I used to be a valid theory like you, then I took a skeptical analysis in the knee."