Love or Self-deception—— Discussion on the Justification of the Existence of Robot Pets

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Abstract：**Robot pet is a kind of social robot with the appearance and behavior of pet or companion animal, which will bring people joy, but it will also cause people to deceive themselves. For Kantian and virtue ethics, the self-deception caused by robot pets is immoral, but from the utilitarian point of view, the existence of robot pets is justified. Although robot pets are not exactly the same as real pets, they can make people feel no longer lonely, and make people feel loved and teach people to trust and love.**
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I. INTRODUCTION

As a substitute for real pets, robot pets have gradually entered people's daily lives. For those who are worried about the death of pets, robot pets can always accompany people and improve people's physical condition and mental state because they do not have the evanescence of life. However, the legitimacy of the existence of robot pets has also aroused widespread discussion. The first thing that people will have a tendency to deceive themselves in the process of contact with robot pets. The work to be done in this paper is to discuss whether the existence of robot pets is justified by analyzing the advantages and disadvantages that robot pets bring to people. Finally, this paper looks at this problem from the utilitarian perspective, and the existence of robot pets is justified.

II. ROBOT PETS AND HUMANS

There has been a close relationship between pets and human beings for a long time, and pets have become an indispensable part of people's daily life. Pets are usually accompanied by old people and children. Old people and children also have special feelings for pets. Old people regard pets as their own children, while children regard pets as their playmates. Pets have companionship and can provide "contact comfort" for people. In the increasingly close interaction between pets and people, people are attached to each other. If people only regard pets as animals, people will not pour their love into them. Therefore, instead of treating pets as simple animals, it is better to treat pets as people's families. Although people can feel the companionship of family members from their pets, most pets can't stay with people as long as real family members because their life span is not as long as that of human beings.

It is hard for their owners to accept the death of their pets. People who love pets will be at a loss when they lose what they love, and they will be unable to get rid of their feelings of missing pets. It is precisely because of this that robot pets have gradually entered people's field of vision and tried to accompany their owners as real pets. Robot pet is a social robot with the appearance and behavior of a pet or companion animal. [1] As one kind of social robots, robot pets have the same main function as pets in the real world, that is, to accompany their owners and bring them joy. At present, many robot pets have been accompanied by human beings as pets, including robot seal Paro, robot dog AIBO, robot cat NeCoRo and robot dinosaur Pleo.[2] In China, CyberDog, a bionic quadruped robot developed by Xiaomi Company, has also become the pet of a few people.

With the advancement of technology, robot pets have achieved some functions of living pets, such as Paro being able to respond to owners shouting their names, AIBO being able to express emotions through its own tail and body movements, NeCoRo being able to make different expressions, such as blinking and other actions, CyberDog being able to perform back flip like a real dog, and so on. Although robot pets are not yet able to have more complex actions and behaviors like living pets, in the near future, with the advancement of technology, it is undeniable that robot pet behavior and thinking methods are becoming closer to real living pets. Many researchers are further studying robotic pets, such as Danijar Hafner and researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, who successfully trained robotic dogs to pick up balls and move them from one tray to another. [3] In addition to being able to complete some of the actions of real-life pets, robot pets also have advantages that real-life pets cannot compare to. For example, robot dogs can provide people with the same mental health benefits as real dogs, while avoiding problems such as being bitten or having to take the dog out for a walk. [4] Meanwhile, Hannah L. Bradwell et al. believe that using companion robots such as robot pets can reduce depression, loneliness, and anxiety in elderly people.[5] The interaction between elderly people with dementia and robot pets can improve emotions and alleviate anxiety, enhance communication and social interaction, establish partner connections, and improve overall well-being. From this, it can be seen that the attraction of robot pets to humans is not only that they look like pets, but also that they have the same value to people as pets. This value is not only reflected in the physiological level, but also in the spiritual level, such as improving emotions and relieving anxiety.

III. PEOPLE'S WORRY ABOUT ROBOT PETS: OWNERS WILL APPEAR SELF-DECEPTION

As mentioned earlier, robot pets, as companions and "loved ones," can bring happiness and comfort to people. However, for other people, robot pets can't bring people true feelings like real living pets. Robot pets can make people self-deception. Robert Sparrow believes that although machine pets bring many obvious benefits, people will mistake them for real animals. If people want to gain great benefits, they must

deceive themselves, and they will not be able to accurately understand the world. [6]

People's self-deception appears under the condition of attachment to robot pets. When people interact with robot pets, they will feel attached. Researchers have found that human beings naturally attribute agents to machines-and then to qualities such as "intention" and "care". Research shows that if a person is asked to perform a parenting task for her robot, she will be more attached to it. [7] As time goes by, with the maturity of robot technology and the improvement of ability, children may have a deeper attachment to robot dogs, and the difference between their reactions to live dogs and robot dogs may narrow. [8] If people have no attachment to robot pets, then people must have no love for robot pets, so there is no need to deceive themselves.

Indeed, as Robert Sparrow said, for example, in the process of interaction with robot pets, the elderly will have self-deception, that is, they know that robot pets are not living pets, but they should also regard robot pets as real active pets and pay their own love to them. The concerns of Robert Sparrow are not unreasonable. Accurately understanding the world is one of the important purposes of human self existence, and the emergence of robot pets may conflict with this purpose. For Kantians, self-deception caused by robot pets must be immoral, because self-deception will destroy people's ability to make free and rational choices, and deception will damage their dignity. Similarly, looking at self-deception from the perspective of virtue ethics, the self-deception caused by robot pets is also immoral, because self-deception will turn people into dishonest people, and honesty as a personal virtue is inevitably indispensable. But is Robert Sparrow's concern that robot pets will make people self-deception the reason why robot pets should not exist? Robert Sparrow's concern is of practical significance, but what this article wants to argue is that, for people, sometimes self-deception is more acceptable than sadness. From the perspective of utilitarianism, robot pets bring more happiness to people than pain, which is one of the main reasons for the legitimacy of robot pets.

IV. ROBOT PETS BRING MORE JOY THAN PAIN TO PEOPLE

In the face of the problem that robot pets can cause people to cheat themselves, we need not only to analyze from Kantism and virtue ethics, but also to use other ethical principles, such as utilitarianism, because the results of utilitarianism analysis of deception, especially the self-deception mentioned in this article, may be different from Kantism and virtue ethics.

Although both Kantians and virtue ethics believe that deception is immoral, for utilitarianism, deception is moral in some cases. If the utilitarianism believe that deception is immoral, because such deception will bring about evil consequences, if deception brings about good consequences, especially when the good consequences are greater than the evil consequences, then such deception is moral. In the following, we will analyze whether it is moral for robot pets to cause people to cheat self-deception according to this idea.

As Robert Sparrow believed, people will self-deception in the process of contact with robot pets, and self-deception can be seen as the evil consequences of robot pets. So, what are the good consequences that robot pets bring to people? Simon Coghlan and others believe that if robot pets are designed to faithfully replicate the key features of animals, they may bring

some similar benefits to humans, such as improving cardiovascular health and mood. But in addition to these considerations, more and more empirical studies show that robot pets may have beneficial effects comparable to companion animals. In other words, robot pets can bring beneficial effects similar to real pets to people [9], including, 1. A sense of responsibility. Keeping robot pets is also an effective way for people to demonstrate and increase their sense of responsibility; 2. Time management, keeping robot pets requires personal spare time, which can increase people's ability to manage their own time; 3. The way to raise a robot pet can also make people understand that any life has needs, and these needs should be taken care of; 4. Emotional maintenance: robot pets establish beautiful and intimate connections with their owners, which can bring happiness to people; 5. Improving health, robot pets also require people to play with them, which will increase people's physical activity and reduce stress; 6. Free from fear, robot pets are different from regular pets. Robot pets do not make their loved ones sad due to death.

From the above, it can be seen that according to the utilitarian view, robot pets are necessary to accompany people. Because according to the utilitarian viewpoint and calculation method, the benefits of robot pets far outweigh the disadvantages (self-deception). Therefore, for utilitarians, robot pets are worthy of people's energy and close contact.

Some people may argue that we can't treat robot pets as real pets, because robot pets are just a machine, not a living life. It would be absurd if we put our feelings into machines. In other words, the promise of this robot pet is that it will be your partner and you will establish a relationship with it. There seems to be a correlation. There is no reciprocity This is a pile of bits and bytes. [10] Although it is doubtful that people have the same feelings for things as they do for humans, studies have shown that people's feelings for robot pets tend to be consistent with people's feelings for pets. According to the research results of Pirita Ihamäki and Katriina Heljakka, the elderly people are full of enthusiasm for Golden Pup (a robot pet). They actively interact with the robot dog, even play with it (make physical contact and talk with it), and personify Golden Pup as if it were a real pet. Not only for robot pets, but also with the popularity of social robots, people have feelings with human beings, such as attachment. We should not forget that although robot pet is a kind of machine, it is also artificial intelligence. For example, the behavior of robot dog may be controlled by simple algorithms, but its behavior can still be considered intentional or intelligent. [11]

Therefore, the main point of this paper is that although robot pets may bring people a tendency of self-deception, compared with other benefits brought by robot pets, according to the utilitarian point of view, robot pets are good and worthy of people's love.

CONCLUSION

With the development of the times, the range of pets has become wider and wider, and it is no longer limited to cats and dogs. The appearance of virtual pets, electronic pets, especially robot pets makes people feel the same fun as keeping real pets. However, unfortunately, compared with human life, the life span of pets is much shorter than that of humans. Take the most common cats and dogs as an example, their life span will not exceed 20 years at the longest. Then, for the owners who

have raised their lives, these pets are no longer just animals, but an indispensable part of the family, especially when they die, people will fall into a sad, sad and even depressed situation. The appearance of robot pets can change the above situation. Although robot pets are not 100% the same as real pets, they can make people no longer feel lonely, make people feel loved and teach people to trust and love. Although Mark Coeckelbergh, a professor of technology and social responsibility at De Montfort University in the United Kingdom, thinks that kicking robots is not immoral in itself [12], it does not mean that we can commit immoral acts against robot pets. On the contrary, if we want to establish intimate and inseparable ties with robot pets, we need to love and respect them like other pets.

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