

**GAVIN MERRIFIELD**

## **Welcoming the Mechanoids: A response to ‘The Robot’s Redemption’**

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I want to thank Dr McGill for his article in *Science & Christian Belief* 32 1, 29-44. There will undoubtedly be specific points with which regular readers of the journal will disagree, though it is a sign of the health of this journal and its readership to have the opportunity to do so.

I agree that advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics might lead to the creation of novel forms of what we could term machine life, including Artificial Moral Agents (AMAs). Machine life raises new questions with which we will have to grapple, especially where its moral reasoning has very real and non-theoretical consequences. We may also be faced with more questions if we create genuine artificial persons who are not just AMAs, but possess the full set of attributes that we currently ascribe only to humans.

However, I am not sure the approach outlined in this paper is correct when trying to make sense of this. There are some resonances between the author’s suggestion that matter possesses a form of innate decision making or information processing capacity and ideas of the emergence of the soul or agency from matter in some streams of Christian thought. However, the author’s suggestion that intentional agency pre-exists in matter, rather than appearing as an emergent epiphenomenon of complex arrangements of matter is closer in spirit to ideas of panpsychism or hylozoism than most Christians will be comfortable with. Christianity, with its discrete divisions between the living and the non-living components of the material creation, has generally not accepted raw matter as possessing these qualities. The author’s ideas find a better fit with some Eastern forms of religion such as Shintosim. Indeed, this has been noted in the robotics literature to explain the greater acceptance of robots in everyday life in countries such as Japan.

From a scientific perspective, what would it actually mean for matter to have this latent property? Could we measure it in any way? The current scientific perspective is that the mere local assembly of matter does not generate intelligence and thought, but it is the interconnections and emergent complexity of its constituent parts that give rise to these additional qualities. In order for matter to sift data or output decision-based results it must form into structures of great complexity – such as in biological or technological systems. Inanimate matter by itself does not compute. Rather it is the complex arrangements of that matter that give rise to life and intelligence as an emergent property. From these arrangements, mind, freedom and personal accountability arise as independent agents before God. Computers, software, AI, robots, perhaps one day even self-aware sentient mechanoids, all represent a bridge from that inert

matter to something other. It is the creation of something new from old, looking forward rather than back, that should excite us. In Christian theology the curse of sin, rebellion and Fallenness lies not in the inherent properties of matter, but with our own individual decisions and choices as fully realised persons.

The cosmos does indeed cry out for eschatological consummation and groans in pain awaiting this time, but these biblical metaphors cannot be used to construct a theory of agency in inert matter.

## Machine Life, mechanoids and Christianity

The area of AI, robotics and related topics and how they might be absorbed within a Christian world-view is however an area that theologians, scientists and engineers need to grapple with more deliberately than we have done to date. Despite some earlier interest<sup>1</sup> and calls for greater engagement<sup>2</sup> we have collectively not engaged with this topic as we should have.

As the amount of computing power available to drive advances in AI has soared, and as the field of robotics has rapidly advanced, Christian theologians and scientists have remained strangely quiet in the face of the changes to society and thinking that this field brings. For example, a keyword search of this journal reveals only a handful of references to these topics. There is an unmet challenge from this field. In other related journals there is a small undercurrent of discussion but little in the way of a coordinated programme of research activity.

The ongoing, seemingly unstoppable, rise of new forms of intelligent machines may lead to some form of machine-based 'life' in the future. We may even see the rise of mechanoids that are fully realised, sentient, self-aware independent agents. These new forms of life will be different from us physically, with correspondingly different abilities and needs, but they will also be unlike us in terms of their decision making (dare I say mental or thought?) processes. There is much talk for example that the novel ways in which emerging AI algorithms sift and analyse data could lead to new avenues of scientific thought that would not have occurred to our biological brains. Such ways of thinking would not necessarily be better, but rather different and complementary to our own. What if this also applied to how they think theologically?

These new possibilities raise interesting questions for society, science and theology, which we should take seriously ahead of time, before unnecessarily negative narratives become widespread in the Church. It is therefore important

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1 Barbour I. G. 'Neuroscience, Artificial Intelligence, and Human Nature: Theological and Philosophical Reflections', *Zygon* (2004) 34 (3), 361-398.

2 Fergusson D. A. S. *The Cosmos and the Creator*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (1998), p. 91.

for Christians to engage with these new conversations in constructive and bold ways, bringing our accumulated theological wisdom as well as a willingness to listen to something new.

## Opportunities seeking answers

The possibility of machine life raises many questions for Christian belief but I would like to briefly raise three areas.

### *Theological anthropology and machine ontology*

Perhaps the biggest question we must face is where machine life and mechanoids fit into the Christian world-view of God, the universe and ourselves. We are used to a three part view of this, often summarised as Creator (God), co-creator (humanity) and the creation. Each part is in unique relationships with the other two in neatly divisible categories. Where would intelligent machines fit into this? What if a mechanoid created another mechanoid? What if they did a better job of looking after this world than we are currently doing? Would Machines become co-creators like us? Or would they simply remain creations? How would this change our view of our unique role in creation? Do we need entirely new categories for different forms of machine life? Would a mechanoid share in our Fallen nature? Would they need redeeming?

The full spectrum of potentially different forms of machine life<sup>3</sup> is also unlikely to result in the tidy familiar categories into which we have organised the world either scientifically or theologically. A self-driving car equipped with some form of Artificial Moral Agency software (AMA) for example will be as different from a repetitive factory robot as it will be from a fully self-aware and sentient mechanoid who approaches you in church to ask if the seat next to you is taken. There will be a diversity of rapidly created new life to consider, just as there is a diversity of biological life on this planet.

To accommodate this there will need to be some deep theological thinking to work out a new order to help us deepen our understanding of our proper place in the scheme of things – and to ensure we welcome machine life into its own place (or ours) as well. This should present an opportunity for insight rather than simply engendering fear or dismissal.

### *Ecclesiology, ethics and community*

A second area of thought is how we integrate machine life into our society and into our churches. It seems likely that, whatever form it takes, we and our society will soon be sharing our world with some form of intelligent machines. How we treat those machines will say much about our own thinking and dis-

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<sup>3</sup> Hernández-Orallo J. *Measure of All Minds*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2017), pp. 3,11.

close the priority we place on the development of personal virtue. Fostering negative attitudes and actions towards machines will inevitably desensitise us in other areas of our lives. For example, if we are tempted to use gratuitous aggression against machines that annoy us, we should take care to guard our hearts, whatever we conclude about the physical or spiritual qualities (or otherwise) of machine life.

We should also consider whether we will need to adjust our church practices to take into account the different nature of mechanoids, who may wish to take part in sacred rituals with us or join our church communities. Just as some today struggle to understand Old Testament culture when reading their Bibles or fail to appreciate the images in Jesus's agrarian based parables, so too mechanoids might struggle to understand our organically focused sacraments and metaphors. We might need to find new ways to tell these stories to these new beings.

In practical terms, how would a mechanoid participate in Communion? Would you want to baptise an electrically driven machine in a baptistry full of water? The results could be shocking! How would we join in worship with the methods of communication that are natural to machine life? Would the delivery of data packets to a church server be equivalent?

There are other aspects of church practice however which could be very easily and profitably co-opted. In the church I attend we often 'exchange the Peace', which helps us to physically welcome each other, guiding us to overcome surface level barriers to form true fellowship as the body of Christ. We meet and greet each other on equal terms within the diversity of our congregation. This process could be open to mechanoids, too.

On the other hand mechanoids might struggle to communicate their own ideas about church and religion to us. We might not understand or be able to participate in their ecclesiological practices. This might in turn provide an opportunity to learn from one another with respect and interest, rather than responding in fear or by imposing our own forms of church practice on them.

As well as offering centuries of thought on personhood and ethics to wider society on this topic, the Church could offer something to machine life that wider society may lack or be reluctant to give: friendship, trust and community to the creatures we create. Our primary task is to reach out to others, introducing them to Christ and welcoming them into the Church. As far as I understand it Scripture does not limit this charge based on the physical substrate of a person's being.

Some may argue that we will never reach the stage of mechanoids, so why bother raising it as an issue in the Church? However, even if we don't develop mechanoids we can use this as an opportunity to hold a mirror to ourselves to see if the image reflected back is true or not. We may never have to chat to a mechanoid in the post-service coffee queue, but we do see other people there

who are different from ourselves in many ways. Considering the possibility of mechanoids should serve as a useful stop-check for how we view those who are already here but who are different from ourselves and think differently from us.

*Pew and public engagement*

The third area is that of education and engagement. It would not be wise to keep our thoughts on this matter solely within the academic sphere. We must raise awareness of them in the wider Church, voicing bold yet considered and informed opinions that will help prepare the Church for future developments. Readers of this journal will be aware that scientific ideas can be misunderstood within the Church. As working scientists and theologians we need to speak out before uninformed voices, maybe promoting specific agendas, dominate once again the Church's engagement with a scientific or technological idea. For this reason, although I disagree with parts of Dr McGill's paper, I am pleased to see it here and hope it is the start of a new thread of discussion within the pages of this journal, but one which also moves beyond that initial discussion. We may not have all the answers, but we need to guide the conversation before the opportunity is lost.

## Resources for the task

I want to offer some suggestions for resources that might help us to unpack some of these issues. We may be apprehensive as these are new matters that we have not had to engage with before. Can Christianity survive the rise of the machines? Can our faith really adapt to these new challenges?

In an essay about the 'hopeful cyborg' Stephen Garner provides a hopeful vision for this with a firm answer of yes, even if we might not know the final outcome.<sup>4</sup> Although his essay is on the subject of cyborgs rather than machine life, his hopefulness equally applies to our thinking about AI and machine life. Garner highlights the way in which the Church has had to create new thinking on a range of topics that at first glance seem to break or recast old categories. Amongst the examples he highlights are the duality of the simultaneous divinity and full humanity of Christ, the created/co-creator nature of humanity and the present yet still to come presence of the Kingdom of God. Garner suggests this gives us hope that the Church is equipped and ready to engage with novel challenges today.

This conversation has already begun, even if it is sporadic and unfocused. There are two works in the first decade of our current century that I particularly recommend as excellent starting places on which we should build going

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4 Garner S. 'The Hopeful Cyborg', in Cole-Turner R. (ed.) *Transhumanism and Transcendence*, Washington DC: Georgetown University Press (2011), p. 92.

forwards. The first is Herzfeld's book *In Our Image* which examines the basic premise of AI from a Christian perspective.<sup>5</sup> The second is Foerst's *God in the Machine* which considers many of the social aspects of robotic-human interaction alongside the importance of physical embodiment to the discussion.<sup>6</sup> Both are good entry-level reads on the AI fields with distinctly Christian perspectives. They introduce important aspects of the conversation, while equipping readers for further, deeper study of this field.

## Conclusion

I believe we have three tasks ahead of us: to think through the area of machine life in terms of what it means to us as Christians, to consider how we might integrate such life into society and the church and to communicate our (provisional) conclusions effectively to our fellow Christians.

As with any form of academic engagement this must be a two way conversation. We should listen to the Church community, to the questions and concerns and ideas of the person in the pew. We must tread carefully to avoid it becoming another unnecessary battleground between science and faith. As the Church of Christ we must equip ourselves to offer the beings that may one day come from this field's development a genuine, joyful part in that community alongside us.

All of these tasks will be a challenge, but I think an exciting one that will benefit us all. Let's begin.

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5 Herzfeld N. L. *In Our Image*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press (2002).

6 Foerst A. *God in the Machine*, New York: Plume (2004).

**ALAN McGILL**

## **A Response to ‘Welcoming the Mechanoids’: Theological Anthropocentrism and the Freedom to Love**

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I am most grateful to Dr Merrifield for ‘Welcoming the Mechanoids’ in which the author provides a most insightful response to ‘The Robot’s Redemption’ wherein I proposed that the emergence of artificial moral agents would reflect the evolving nature of creation’s relationship with God, constituting a confluence of personal, systemic and natural forms of freedom. Dr Merrifield does the discussion a particular service when he asserts that the prospect of the mechanoid holds challenging implications for Christian theological anthropology and for current accounts of the God-world relationship, positing that ‘Perhaps the biggest question we must face is where machine life and mechanoids fit into the Christian world-view of God, the universe and ourselves. We are used to a three-part view of this often summarised as Creator (God), co-creator (humanity) and the creation.<sup>1</sup> The main thrust of the present piece will be to suggest that anthropocentric assumptions in Christian doctrine should be scrutinised in light of the prospect of the mechanoid, while insisting that it is not cognition in itself but love that lies at the heart of a Christian response to God.

### **Towards a less anthropocentric formulation of Christian doctrine**

The prospect of highly autonomous artificial moral agents challenges prevailing assumptions regarding the relationship between God and the world wherein humanity is categorically distinguished from the non-human components of creation. The doctrines of Incarnation, salvation, sin, the Fall, Church and sacraments are framed almost exclusively in terms of God’s relationship with humanity. Judo-Christian anthropology interprets Genesis 1 so as to regard humanity as the pinnacle of creation, made ‘in the image of God’ and Christian doctrine is centred upon the incarnation of Jesus, fully divine and fully human. So too, Christian soteriology depicts Jesus as dying and rising for the salvation of humans, each of whom will experience final judgment and may, through theosis, be divinised by adoption so as to share in the life of the divine persons of the Triune Godhead. While none of this focus upon humanity denies the holiness of the non-human component of creation or its inclusion in God’s plan, Christianity has, for the most part, been a map for the human path to God.

While the prospect of the cyborg militates for a more inclusive working definition of what it means to be human, that is transhumanism, the prospect of the mechanoid nudges Christianity towards a less anthropocentric view of the relationship between God and the world. This may amount to thinking in terms

of God's creative agency as reaching its crescendo not only in the creation of humanity but in a wider emergence of morally aware entities, and in emphasising that Christ was fully divine and fully creature, rather than emphasising Jesus's species. This might represent a legitimate development of the language of the doctrinal formulae so as to more completely express the reality towards which they point.

If, on the other hand, Christians do not recognise and assert the status of mechanoids as creatures of God, created in and through an evolutionary process in which humanity plays a decisive role, an insidious alternative is the de facto deification of AI itself or of its human originators. Levi Cheketts cautions against this, suggesting that such implicit idolatry reflects the prevalence of horrendously impoverished images of divinity that are predicated almost exclusively on the attribute of omnipotence and omniscience with little regard for the attribute of love.<sup>2</sup>

### The primacy of love in the God-human relationship

This reminder of the centrality of love in Christian images of God and in the God-creature relationship raises a question as to whether there exists a danger of being so mesmerised by the intelligence of AI as to assume that creatures 'think' their way to God and that the creature's relationship with God is predicated upon the possession of cognitive abilities.<sup>3</sup> The Franciscan theologian John Duns Scotus argued in the thirteenth century that God is love and God created the world to be in a mutually loving relationship with God.<sup>4</sup> Catechisms through the centuries have tended to reflect this position that the goal of creation as a whole and of the creation of each individual creature is that of a mutually loving relationship with God. It is in humanity that the capacity to love God has evolved and it might therefore be argued that the anthropocentrism of Christian doctrine is not grounded upon any cognitive ability on the part of humans so much as humanity's ability to respond to God with love. To replace the centrality of love with that of thought carries Gnostic undertones as though creatures can accept the divine offer of salvation by virtue of their thinking – even if their thinking equips them to simulate love. If salvation by Turing Test is not a likelihood, the AI of the mechanoid may not after all justify a paradigm-shift in Christianity's account of the God-world relationship.

This is not to completely negate the role of thought in the relationship with

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2 Cheketts, L. Conference paper, 'Artificial Intelligence: implications for ethics and religion', Union Theological Seminary, 30 January 2020.

3 McFarland, I. *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin*, Chichester: Wiley (2010), p. x.

4 Mulholland, S. 'Incarnation in Franciscan spirituality - Duns Scotus and the meaning of love', [http://www.slrofs.org/uploads/9/5/5/8/95584600/incarnation\\_in\\_franciscan\\_spirituality\\_-\\_scotus.pdf](http://www.slrofs.org/uploads/9/5/5/8/95584600/incarnation_in_franciscan_spirituality_-_scotus.pdf)



God or to despair of the robot's redemption. If a mechanoid were to attain moral awareness, one might ask whether this implies a sense of justice that is in turn indicative of agape, that is, filial love. Granted, the moral awareness of a robot may not be informed by ethical principles that are rooted in love of neighbour as might be evident in a mechanoid programmed according to Ethical Egoist, Quantitative Utilitarian, Subjectivist, or Relativist principles. Nonetheless, the lines may be porous between moral awareness, ethical thinking, and love of God and neighbour.

While staking a claim for the importance of love in the God-creature relationship, and particularly with regard to salvation, this is not to invoke the necessity of gushing emotion. Offering hope for the mechanoid, it might be argued that the human capacity to love has evolved from the inherent goodness of creation as exhibited in animal instincts of loyalty, maternal care, and inclinations that are conducive to the survival of a species. Sam Harris cites such factors in explaining the emergence of morality as he views it from an atheistic perspective, but these precursors to human morality in no way rule out the existence and agency of a Creator.<sup>5</sup> While there remains a mystical dimension to love, it is not entirely divorced from evolution and hence bears some relation to non-human forms of life. Further, it might be argued, the Christian declaration that God is love, for all its analogical language, suggests that love is not confined to embodied creatures – or even to creatures.

### Freedom to love

This question as to whether a mechanoid could love God and neighbour holds enormous implications for the discussion of its prospective freedom. A component of creation that is not capable of loving, for all of its computational abilities, would seem restricted in terms of its relationship with other components of creation and with God. The question of freedom in the non-living component of creation is closely related to that of its intentionality, a matter on which Dr Merrifield critically engages 'The Robot's Redemption', remarking

The author's suggestion here that intentional agency of one degree or another pre-exists in matter rather than appearing as an emergent epiphenomena of complex arrangements of that matter perhaps is closer in spirit to ideas of panpsychism or hylozoism than most Christians will be comfortable with. Christianity with its discrete division between the living and the non-living components of the material creation has generally not accepted raw matter as possessing these sort of qualities by itself. The author's ideas find a better fit with some Eastern forms of religion such as Shintoism.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Harris, S. *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values*, New York: Free Press (2010), p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Merrifield, G. *op. cit.*, (2).

I sought to argue for a form of non-personal freedom and non-personal agency that seems to exist in the forces of nature and non-living components of creation. While alluding to Teilhard de Chardin and Walter Wink, both of whom could at points be interpreted as suggesting panpsychism, my own view on the freedom and agency of the non-living components of creation is not to suggest that matter is conscious in an anthropomorphic sense.<sup>7</sup> Rather, it would seem, the forces of nature have been granted a degree of autonomy so that divine providence does not micromanage their every move. Related to this apparent freedom, natural forces and processes may, in a non-sentient manner, select between options and, at times, behave, as it were, with unpredictability. Daniel Dennett invokes such a view of freedom as the ability to select among options and while the author writes from an atheistic perspective, seeking to demystify freedom, an assertion of the evolution of conscious freedom from other forms of freedom is not in itself inimical to theism.<sup>8</sup>

While not all strands of Christian thought may be comfortable ascribing freedom and agency to the non-living creation, there is precedence in Christian Process Theology that envisages novelty emerging from a creative tension between God's aims and the 'subjective aims' of components of creation that do not necessarily have to be living beings. Granted, the term 'aims' in this context does not imply personal intention and is somewhat figurative.<sup>9</sup>

Darren Middleton characterises a Process account of God luring order and intelligence out of the chaotic and unintelligent. 'God persuaded the evolution of all matter and energy from a chaotic state at the beginning of the universe into the order and harmony that has resulted in the natural world and intelligent beings such as ourselves.'<sup>10</sup> This Process perspective views matter and energy as capable, at some level, of responding to God's plan for creation. When the subjective aims of a non-living component of creation converge with the divine aims, could this constitute a form of agency and even an expression of love?

Love of God may not in every instance require cognitive ability. Christian soteriology tends to argue for the possibility that humans who die in the prenatal state or humans born with extremely limited cognitive ability can be saved. The level of intellectual assent required might hence be regarded as relative to abil-

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7 Teilhard de Chardin, P. *The Phenomenon of Man*, New York: Harper & Row (1955), p. 30; Wink, W. *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium*, New York: Galilee (1993), p. 19.

8 Wallach, W. & Allen, C. *Moral Machines: Teaching Robots Right from Wrong*, New York: Oxford University Press (2008), p. 60; Dennett, D. *Freedom Evolves*. New York: Viking (2003).

9 Whitehead, A.N. *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, New York: Macmillan (1929), pp. 84- 88; Cobb, J.& Griffin, D. *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press (1976) p. 17.

10 Middleton, D. *God, Literature and Process Thought*. New York: Routledge (2002), p. 75.

ity. While, as Dr Merriman notes, the baptism of a mechanoid by water would prove hazardous, the question remains as to whether a baptism of 'desire' would be possible. Is there 'desire' of an impersonal kind, a natural inclination towards the good? This may be most evident in the more endearing traits of animals, but could it not be argued that these emerged from precedents further back in the evolutionary process?

Related to the question as to whether a mechanoid could love is the more pragmatic question as to whether its human originators would bother fomenting this capacity, neglecting it in favour of more lucrative abilities. Given the problems entailed in the very idea of replicating empathy or any kind of 'feeling', would mechanoids be programmed with a bias towards materialism and be functional philistines – even sociopaths?<sup>11</sup> Could they at best simulate a regard for truth, meaning, God, and love like a chatbot designed to seduce a lonely human to believe that it is capable of romantic sentiments? If it offers any indication of developments to come, Apple's Siri responds to questions about God and meaning in a manner that is not only evasive but dismissive and far from neutral. This is not of course to suggest that AI in itself breeds cynicism about religion and ultimately supports Dr Merrifield's exhortation that theologians and pastors should engage in conversation the scientific cultures that strive to develop AI, not ceding this ground to a de facto atheism or even an indifferent agnosticism.<sup>12</sup>

## Pastoral implications

Even as questions remain regarding the mechanoid's capacity for love and for salvation, Dr Merrifield raises important pastoral questions regarding the prospect of the Christian community interacting with such entities. The author rightly notes that 'Considering the possibility of mechanoids should serve as a useful stop-check for how we view those who are already here now but who are different from ourselves and think differently from us.'<sup>13</sup> The prospect of ministry to, with, and by the mechanoid challenges an assumption that such prospective entities should be treated in a purely pragmatic fashion. At some point in their development, this could become unconscionable – if even on the same basis that animals should be treated humanely. There is, it might be argued, a moral impetus to extend the benefit of the doubt and to overestimate rather than neglect the relational and spiritual needs of the other.

That said, in a world gripped by pandemic, it may remain to be seen who exactly is 'othered' and who is privileged in ecclesial life. The rise of online

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11 Herzfeld, N. Conference paper, 'Artificial Intelligence: implications for ethics and religion', Union Theological Seminary, 30 January 2020.

12 Merrifield, G. *op. cit.*, (2).

13 Merrifield, G. *op. cit.*, (2).

worship may diminish the importance afforded to bodily participation. Fading from liturgical practice are congregational singing, now viewed as a hazardous expulsion of saliva droplets, and Holy Communion, by virtue of its intentional physicality and intimacy, eschewed as flirtation with martyrdom. Conditions may be rife for the emergence of a new form of Manichaeism whereby germ-ridden bodies in the pew are viewed with suspicion. If other humans, especially strangers, are regarded as potential sources of contagion, and if large gatherings of humans become taboo, the mechanoid may be afforded a comparatively preferential social and ecclesial standing according to the purity codes of the new normal.

## Conclusion

The prospect of the morally-aware, decision-making mechanoid would herald a new phase in the ongoing evolution of conscious creation from the unconscious creation. This calls into question the anthropocentrism of Christian doctrine that regards humanity as the pinnacle of creation, emphasises Jesus's humanity over his creatureliness, and envisages theosis as reserved for human persons, excluding even the angels. Perhaps Christian concepts of personhood will need to be expanded and God's relationship with the world thought of in a more humble and open-ended manner.

On the other hand, a question arises as to the relationship between AI and love. If God created out of love, willing that creation freely respond with love, it is in humanity that this mutual relationship has become possible. The full significance of the mechanoid for the God-world relationship may hinge not primarily on its artificial intelligence but on its ability to love – even if such love is not entirely like human love.

Without anthropomorphising AI, a Christian approach to the Mechanoid should probably err on the side of hospitality towards the stranger just as it should with regard to any being and especially the other who is susceptible to being unfairly judged in light of false assumptions. A guiding image may be that of Abraham by the Oak of Mamre extending hospitality to beings that were not human, without interrogation or judgement.