

antropologia e teatro

ARTICOLO

South Korea at the Crossroads: Tradition, Technology, and the Impact of AI on the Society

Giuseppina De Nicola

Abstract – ITA

L'intelligenza artificiale (AI) sta trasformando in modo significativo la Corea del Sud, influenzando vari settori, dall'industria all'intrattenimento. Lo scopo di questo articolo è quello di analizzare alcune caratteristiche culturali e la forza trainante che sta alla base dell'adozione dell'Intelligenza Artificiale (IA) da parte della Corea del Sud: l'industria tecnologica (automazione, manutenzione predittiva e produzione intelligente), la sanità (diagnostica, medicina personalizzata e gestione delle cure) e nell'istruzione (apprendimento personalizzato e amministrazione), intrattenimento (con influencer virtuali e promozione commerciale). Nel settore dell'intrattenimento influencer virtuali guidati dall'IA come Rozy hanno guadagnato un'immensa popolarità. Inoltre, i drammi K stanno integrando robot umanoidi, come nel caso di *Are You Human too?* L'impegno della Corea del Sud nei confronti dell'IA è evidente nelle sue politiche e nei suoi investimenti, che la posizionano come leader globale in quest'ambito, dimostrando il vasto potenziale dell'IA per migliorare vari aspetti della vita e dell'industria.

Abstract – ENG

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is significantly transforming South Korea, influencing various sectors from industry to entertainment. The purpose of this article is to analyze certain cultural characteristics and the driving force behind South Korea's embrace of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across various sectors: tech industry (industrial automotation, predictive maintenance, smart manufacturing), healthcare (diagnostics, personalized medicine, and patient care management) and education (personalized learning experience and administration). In entertainment, AI-driven virtual influencers like Rozy have gained immense popularity. Additionally, K-dramas are integrating humanoid robots, such as in *Are You Human too?* South Korea's commitment to AI is evident in its policies and investments, positioning it as a global leader in this field, demonstrating AI's vast potential to enhance various aspects of life and industry.

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Introduction

The cultural system is constantly evolving, subject to modification and revision by the ever-changing worldview of each culture. However, it is oriented towards internal cohesion. When a human group is confronted with new elements, it fits them into an existing pattern, thus altering the order of what it knows. The introduction of new techniques or technologies, for example, has brought about changes that have required a restructuring of the relationships between different areas of knowledge and everyday life on a new basis, both at the individual and collective level. Technological revolutions have also proved to be cultural revolutions, as evidenced by the changes brought about by major inventions and the shift from oral to written culture.

Technology develops in specific cultural, social, economic, and political contexts. T. S. Kuhn (1962) and M. Foucault (1966) have provided a framework for understanding this development. Kuhn's "paradigms" represent the dominant beliefs, methodologies, and theories in a scientific field during a specific period. Foucault's "epistemes" shape the assumptions, concepts, and rules of knowledge within a historical period and organize and structure understanding. The drive to develop artificial intelligence systems originated in a distinctly positivist, technocratic and capitalist environment. The pioneers who laid the foundations for intelligent machines in information processing were active in the first decades of the 20th century, a period when the notion of robots with artificial intelligence capable of cognitive processes first emerged in the realm of science fiction. This fundamental paradigm persisted in subsequent eras.

It should be borne in mind that the skills required by a culture, solutions, problem identification and creation are closely linked and processed in a cultural context that has its own experiences, knowledge and needs, defining and distinguishing it from other societies. Furthermore, the products of human creativity, which are in harmony with the 'knowledge' of a specific culture, may be completely unrelated and irrelevant in a cultural context. Processes responding to innovation influence the cognitive process of a social group since the group is both a product and a producer of culture. Therefore, the process of understanding also depends on analyzing the reactions of the individual, who rarely remains indifferent to changes in his or her daily life and his or her relationships with everything around him or her.

The scientific community in South Korea has long been discussing the use of artificial intelligence and its impact on society. The purpose of this article is to analyze certain cultural characteristics and the driving force behind South Korea's embrace of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across various sectors.

The first artificial intelligence organization in Korea was founded in December 1985 as the Korea Society for Information Science, the forerunner of today's Korea Artificial Intelligence Society. Enthusiastic about the vision of artificial intelligence, the country's leading universities had each created at least one study group on artificial intelligence. Since then, much has changed. Korea has experienced widespread adoption of *mobile computing*, wearable devices, autonomous robots and intelligent cars. This is particularly noteworthy in Korea, as much of its economy is based on the electronics and automotive industries. Another development has been the transition from machine-oriented to human-oriented AI and human-like artificial intelligence.

In addition to a purely technological point of view, the debate has also developed in recent times in the humanities and education. Interesting is the question posed by Guenhye Hong on the advantages and limitations of using AI in the translation of historical documents and the study of Korean history. In this sense, there are several studies on the translation of Korean works written in Chinese through the use of AI, as Hong himself mentions in his article. Also, the study conducted by Dr. Seong-Won Kim and Prof. Youngjun Lee (2020), "한국 고등학생의 인공지능에 대한 태도" ('Attitudes towards Artificial Intelligence of High School Students' in Korea), enlightens us on the expectations, behaviors and use of AI on high school students in South Korea. The result also showed that there are no gender differences in behavior towards this technology, unlike, for example, robotics, computer science or programming where the male gender predominates.

Indeed, AI stands as a critical tool embraced by academia, industry, and politics, marking an important challenge for the country's future. The integration of AI into these sectors underscores its transformative potential and highlights the collaborative efforts required to navigate its complexities. As AI continues to evolve, it promises to drive innovation, enhance efficiency, and address multifaceted societal issues. Thus, the sustained commitment to AI development will be pivotal in shaping a progressive and competitive future.

Understanding the cultural background in Korea

Artificial intelligence is currently thriving in Korea. The media regularly report on the implementation of AI-enabled products such as intelligent consultants, personal robots, autonomous cars and machines with intelligence levels comparable to humans. To maintain a global competitive advantage in services and products,

the IT industry is investing significantly in deep learning and AI. The Ministry of Science and Future Planning has initiated new funding programs in the field of AI and cognitive science, thus supporting the government's commitment to building a creative economy and software-centric society.

Observers may wonder why South Korea has embraced technology development in various fields so rapidly and pervasively from the internet to AI. The country, like other East Asian nations, rests on Confucian philosophical and cultural foundations. Confucianism has profoundly influenced Korean society, shaping it for centuries. In this cultural context, in the past, the individual was not a separate entity from others but represented the totality of relationships. Despite Korea's modernization, the enduring influence of this doctrine is still visible in contemporary times. Family relationships, political attitudes, the approach to problem-solving and many other aspects of Korean life show the imprint of the Confucian tradition.

Currently, South Korea is significantly positioned in the global economic arena, emerging as one of the most influential states in the world. The need to address major changes and the desire for social redemption, together with the will to break free from the rings of the past, have driven the country towards policies aimed at creating a highly competitive society. This is reflected in an extraordinary level of competition that permeates various aspects of life, involving individuals of all ages, genders and social backgrounds. From this perspective, the Korean population orients its lives towards personal advancement, seeking to gain a competitive advantage in this dynamic environment. Nevertheless, the desire to belong to the group persists in Korea. It certainly does not have the characteristics of the past, but especially among the new millennium generation, the sense of belonging to a group is guided by what is shared. There is no longer a sense of 'forced' loyalty as in the past. Today's young adults tend to create bonds based more on their values than on social conditions. Preferences for habits, lifestyles and values have become new fundamental criteria in group formation. In this type of community, more value is placed on the unique characteristics of an individual, whereas the criteria of traditional groups, such as place of origin or school, parish, etc., are completely irrelevant. The community presents a duality of character, both collectivistic and individualistic, in the sense that it serves as a practical and emotional support group for members, but its membership is completely chosen by individuals and not imposed. Koreans seem somewhat trapped in the dualism between 'expressing the Self' and 'the desire to belong to a group'. The strong fear of exclusion (or isolation) translates into a strong desire to belong, and this is not much different among the younger generation. Group identity is believed to represent the identity of the individual. Sometimes the individual's identity is considered less important than the individual's group identity. Could the increasing use of a "humanized" AI definitively overcome this dualism in Korean society? Xiang Shuchen (2023: 151) argues that metaphysical thought in East Asian tradition is grounded in a process-oriented

paradigm emphasizing the interconnectedness of all “things” with their constantly changing environment. This perspective produces a more fluid distinction between the human and non-human realms. From a Confucian standpoint, an individual fully embodies their humanity only through acculturation, where one's development is shaped by engagement in public symbolic practices (Rošker 2023: 11). In addition to Confucian thought, Daoism, which originated in China but was also adopted in Korea in ancient times, merged with shamanism and Buddhism. Through the works of Master Zhuang¹, spread numerous narratives that embody a Daoist perspective, challenging the notion of “humanist supremacy” and its implications in sociopolitical and moral contexts. The study clearly shows that this Daoist anti-humanism is part of a broader effort aimed at fostering a state of human tranquility and well-being, prioritizing therapeutic aspects over ideological ones (Rošker 2023: 10). Therefore, the East Asia traditional doctrines, that the supremacy of the human being is not taken for granted, but that it is geared more towards acculturation or the well-being of all, creates an environment that is predisposed to accepting certain forms of technology without such as the metaverse or AI.

If we consider, also, other socio-cultural aspects, we can grasp some that have created a favorable environment for the development of AI use in Korea. Anyone who has lived in this country will surely have observed the tendency of Koreans towards everything that is **편하다** *pyeonhada* (comfortable, convenient) and **빠르다** *ppareuda* (fast, quick). Everything is geared towards these two concepts in everyday life. Superfast internet, e-commerce, home delivery and pick-up services, smart home appliances, etc. have all been in use in Korea for a long time compared to other countries. *Pyeonhada* is a real desired attitude in Korea. The service industry, and not only, is moving in this direction: from cup sterilizers in every restaurant to huge umbrellas at pedestrian crossings, to robots escorting passengers at the airport (photos 1 and 2). These are just a few examples to make everyday life more comfortable.

¹ Zhuang Zhou, better known as Zhuangzi, was a significant Chinese philosopher who lived during the Warring States period, approximately in the 4th century BCE. The *Zhuangzi* (Sayings of Master Zhuang) is a foundational text of Chinese philosophical tradition and a pillar of Daoist thought.



Fig. 1 People waiting to cross the street²



Fig. 2 Cup sterilizer in a Korean restaurant³

In Korea, one is unlikely to succeed in the market or service sector if what one offers is not 'convenient' or 'comfortable'. Probably, this socio-cultural aspect has been refined in the post-industrial era, after a hard period of compressed economic development. Society, caught up in the challenges of continuous competition and achieving success in a short time, had to somehow rethink its concept of time and work. For this reason, everything must also happen as quickly as possible. *Ppareuda* is the adjective that best defines this new course. In essence, the two concepts are intimately linked. If we focus on the concept of *pyeonhada*, we should consider different aspects of why and how it is a desired attitude in Korea. Korea's rapid urbanization and economic development have led to a fast-paced lifestyle. In such an environment, convenience becomes crucial for managing daily activities efficiently. Technological integration is another aspect: the country is also known for its advanced technology and infrastructure. The integration of technology into everyday life is driven by the desire to make tasks more convenient, from using high-speed internet to smart home devices. Work ethic is also peculiar in this cultural context. A strong work ethic often results in long working hours. Consequently, people seek convenience in other areas of life to balance their busy schedules, such as food delivery services, convenience stores, and efficient public transportation. For all these reasons, Korea developed what we can define as "manifestations of *pyeonhada* concept". These "manifestations" can be summarized as follows: 1. Convenience stores. Known as 편의점 *pyeonijeom*, these stores are ubiquitous and offer a wide range of products and services 24/7, catering to the needs of busy individuals; 2. Food delivery. Korea's food delivery system is one of the most advanced in the world, offering a variety of cuisines delivered quickly to your doorstep.

² Credit: Jurgita Simeleviciene/Business Fondue, Font: <http://www.businessfondue.com/2019/05/17/10-simple-but-brilliant-ideas-from-south-korea-how-to-make-life-more-comfortable/> (Accessed on: 15th October 2024).

³ Credit: Jurgita Simeleviciene/Business Fondue, Font: <http://www.businessfondue.com/2019/05/17/10-simple-but-brilliant-ideas-from-south-korea-how-to-make-life-more-comfortable/> (Accessed on: 15th October 2024).

Apps like *Baedal Minjok* and *Yogiyo* make ordering food extremely convenient. 3. Transportation. The public transportation system in Korea, including subways, buses, and high-speed trains, is designed for maximum efficiency and convenience, allowing for easy and quick travel. 4. Technology. Smart devices, from smartphones to AI assistants, are widely used to enhance convenience in daily life. Services like mobile payments (e.g., *KakaoPay*) and online shopping further embody the concept of *pyeonhada*.

By prioritizing convenience, Koreans aim to reduce the stress associated with daily chores and routines. This focus on ease and efficiency helps maintain a better work-life balance. The pursuit of *pyeonhada* is tied to improving the overall quality of life. By making mundane tasks easier, people can allocate more time to leisure activities and personal interests. Convenience is also about enhancing social connections. Easy access to services and efficient communication tools helps people stay connected with family and friends, even amidst busy schedules. While *pyeonhada* is highly valued, it also comes with certain challenges: the emphasis on convenience can lead to an overreliance on technology, potentially affecting interpersonal skills and physical activity. The convenience-driven lifestyle, especially with delivery services and disposable products, raises concerns about environmental sustainability. Access to convenient services is often tied to economic status, highlighting issues of inequality within society. *Pyeonhada* is more than just a preference for convenience; it is a cultural attitude deeply embedded in Korean society. It reflects the nation's adaptive strategies to modern challenges, balancing a demanding lifestyle with technological advancements and efficient services. Understanding this concept provides insight into the values that shape daily life in Korea and the continuous pursuit of a balanced and fulfilling existence.

The Imperative of AI in Korean Society

Korean society, similar to those in Japan and Italy, faces two major challenges: a declining birth rate and an increasingly aging population. The data on falling birth rates are intensifying concerns about South Korea's economic future. According to the latest statistics, the birth rate has reached a record low of 0.70. Annually, the rate was 0.78 in 2022 and 0.81 in 2021. Fewer births mean fewer children attending school, with figures released in early December 2023 showing that the number of children entering primary school next year (2024-2025) will be less than 400,000 for the first time. This trend raises concerns for the future workforce: the low birth rate results in a shrinking labor force, limiting the growth of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) unless there is an increase in productivity from companies and individuals.

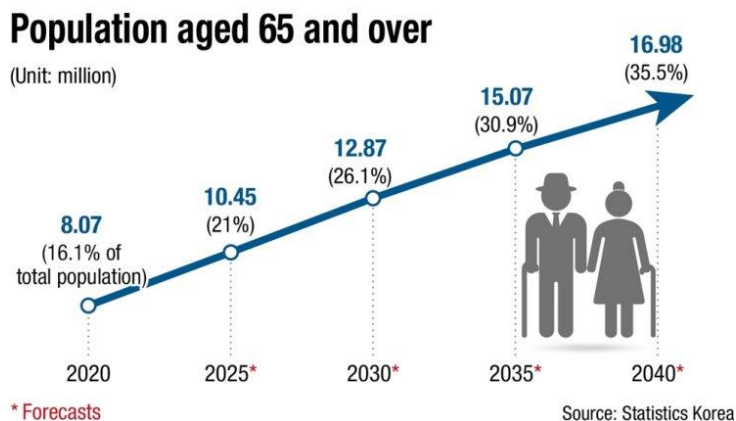


Fig. 3 Population aged 65 and over (Source: <https://kostat.go.kr/anse/>; Accessed on: 15th October 2024)

Breaking the cycle of a reduced working-age population—which leads to decreased labor input, slower growth rates, reduced investment, and a decline in secondary growth rates—requires urgent improvements in productivity, likely through the use of artificial intelligence. This is imperative if the government does not take substantial action to address the problem.

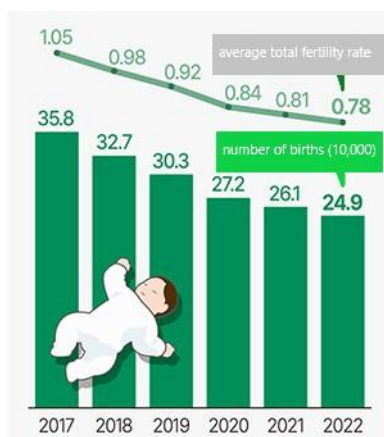


Fig. 4 (Source: <https://pulse.mk.co.kr/news/english/10818895/>; Accessed on: 15th October 2024)

On top of this, Korea is aging, a common problem for us. It has one of the fastest aging populations and the lowest birth rate globally (Photos 3 and 4). The country is on track to become a so-called 'super-aged' society by 2025, whereby the proportion of people aged 65 and over will reach 20% of the total population. Here, society is taking steps to employ AI to solve certain problems. One among many is loneliness and the risk of dying alone. In May 2023, the Korean Ministry of Health unveiled a comprehensive plan to investigate individuals at risk of dying alone, addressing the 8.8 percent increase in 'lone deaths' over the past five years, which reached 3,378 in 2022. This plan targets an estimated 1.525 million people, correlating with the rise in single-person

households from 28.6% to 33.4% between 2017 and 2021, a trend exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry highlighted the central role of artificial intelligence in this new strategy, which will monitor high-risk groups by analyzing patterns in energy and water consumption to detect signs of unusual behavior⁴.

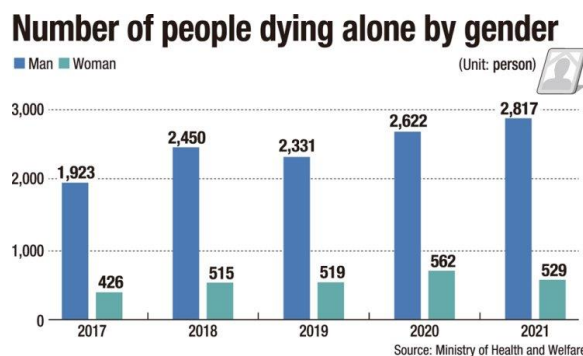


Fig. 5 Solitary deaths (Godoksa 고독사)⁵

In 2020, Naver Corporation, one of Korea's largest Internet conglomerates, developed an artificial intelligence system aimed at alleviating the workload of health workers overwhelmed by numerous demands. Initially conceived during the pandemic as an AI-based service to assist public health centers in monitoring and reporting COVID-19 symptoms, this system has since evolved into a nationwide service used to monitor the health and well-being of elderly individuals living alone. While Korea leads many Western nations in applying AI for elderly care, this initiative offers a glimpse of what may become a widespread practice in the future⁶.

The 'silent invasion' of the humanoid algorithm

In Korea, AI humanoid robot is already present in society. They have enrolled as students at universities, held internships at major companies and regularly appear on live television selling out products from food to luxury handbags. The demand for AI-powered humanoids was initially driven by the K-pop industry, with the idea of a

⁴ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/climate-and-people/south-korea-elderly-care-robots-artificial-intelligence/> (Accessed on: 15th October 2024).

⁵ https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2024/01/113_341959.html (Accessed on: 15th October 2024).

⁶ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/climate-and-people/south-korea-elderly-care-robots-artificial-intelligence/> (Accessed on: 15th October 2024).

virtual idol – not prone to scandal and able to work 24/7 – proving popular with the country's notoriously obstreperous music agencies. But now, this experiment is expanding by proving that they can co-exist with humans as colleagues and friends. There are many examples of humanoids now also dominating the media and marketing world. More and more companies are using virtual influencers to promote their products.

The global influencer marketing market is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 12.6%, increasing from \$13.8 billion in 2021 to \$22.2 billion in 2025 (HypeAuditor 2022). While human influencers have traditionally dominated social media marketing, recent technological advancements have introduced virtual influencers as a novel marketing tool, albeit still relatively new. Virtual influencers are social media celebrities who are either partially or entirely artificial but provide content similar to that of authentic Human influencers (Stein et al. 2020). According to Baklanov (2021), virtual influencers achieve an engagement rate nearly three times higher than that of Human ones. This trend, now in its third year, underscores the consistent interaction between followers and VIs' content, highlighting their significant popularity. These characters, despite being virtual entities, elicit emotional attachments from their audience. The line between human and virtual influencers is not a focal point for these followers. Scholars refer to this new interaction as “parasocial interaction”, which indicates a faux sense of mutual awareness that can only occur during viewing. In contrast, parasocial relationship refers to a longer-term association that may begin to develop during viewing but also extends beyond the media exposure situation. Parasocial interaction and parasocial relationships are two interconnected yet distinct phenomena that arise from the interactions between media consumers and media personalities, characters, or influencers. These concepts, initially introduced by sociologists Donald Horton and Richard Wohl in the 1950s, have become increasingly relevant in today's media-saturated world. Parasocial interaction refers to the immediate, one-sided, and seemingly reciprocal relationship that viewers or users experience with media figures during their consumption of media content. This phenomenon can occur during the viewing of television shows, YouTube videos, live streams, or even while browsing social media platforms. Key characteristics of parasocial interactions include: faux mutual awareness, where viewers may feel as if the media figure is aware of their presence and is directly communicating with them; emotional engagement, when viewers often experience strong emotional reactions, such as empathy, excitement, or even anger, as they engage with the media content; simulated Intimacy, since media figures often share personal stories, behind-the-scenes insights, and aspects of their private lives, creating a sense of intimacy and closeness that further deepens the parasocial interaction.

Parasocial relationships develop over time as viewers repeatedly engage with media figures and content. They can influence viewers' behaviors, attitudes, and decision-making. For example, fans may adopt the fashion

styles, opinions, or behaviors of their favorite media figures. In some cases, this influence extends to purchasing decisions, political views, or lifestyle choices. In the contemporary media landscape, the lines between parasocial interactions and relationships are increasingly blurred due to the rise of social media and interactive platforms. Influencers, who often share highly curated and personal content, make indistinct the boundaries between professional and personal lives.



Fig. 6 Rozy (<https://www.instagram.com/rozy.gram/>; Accessed on: 15th October 2024)

In South Korea, one of the phenomena above described is *Rozy* (photo 6) the first Korean virtual human being based on artificial intelligence. It was produced by Sidus Studio X, a content creation subsidiary of Locus, Korea's leading production company specializing in commercials, animations, films and video characters⁷.

Since 2020, Rozy has gained over 170,000 Instagram followers. She models clothing, posts travel photos and even releases pop songs. Brands pay thousands of dollars for her to promote their products. Rozy was created by combining the most beloved looks of millennials (people born in the 1980s to early 2000s) with nearly 800 facial expressions and movements extracted from an actor through 3D modeling technology. "In the first three months that Rozy's Instagram page was posted, no one noticed that it was a 3D virtual model," said the Sidus X Studio⁸. "Rozy does obscure the distinction between reality and illusion. She embodies all that is human, except

⁷ Virtual influencers are completely fictional computer-generated "people" that are created and managed via software by companies across the globe. These hyper-realistic influencers usually build a following through social media where they post about their "lives" and talk with their fans – with Meta even verifying 35 virtual influencers on Instagram. They can either be brand representatives to help promote a company's services or products or they can collaborate with brands – like their human counterparts. The phenomenon is now global, we have VI in Japan with Imma or in other countries as Lu Do Magalu in Brazil, Lil Miquela (US), Knox Frost and Ronald Blawko US (first male VI), Thalasya Pov (Indonesia) and in Italy recently appeared Nefele, Rebecca Galani and Francesca Gibelli.

⁸ <https://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Culture/view?articleId=203388> (Accessed on: 15th October 2024).

that she isn't a human being for real. But that doesn't dampen her spirit. She is vivacious, fun, and incredibly busy right now in her role as a social media influencer. She is a fashionista, a diva, a fitness enthusiast, a traveler..."⁹.

As media consumption continues to grow and diversify, the study of those phenomena remains crucial for comprehending how media influences individual and collective behaviors, emotions, and social dynamics. By acknowledging and exploring these interactions, scholars, marketers, and media professionals can better navigate the intricate landscape of modern media relationships.

AI Characters in Korean Dramas: Provoking Societal Questions

The release of *Are You Human Too?*, one of the first K-dramas broadcasted to tell a story of the interactions between artificial intelligence and humans, was a turning point for the launching of AI humanoids as a new social reality¹⁰. *Are You Human Too?* is the starting point of the discourse on AI in Korean TV dramas, the public aspect of viewership and topicality, and the narrative aspect of AI being most actively mentioned and utilized within the narrative of the work. It is a very meaningful work. In particular, it is significant as an indicator of discourse because it contains a multifaceted narrative in terms of AI-related conflicts. The conflicts between AI robots and humans reproduced in TV dramas are largely human-human conflict (physical conditions), possession conflict (competition for limited resources), emotion-algorithm (differences in cognitive methods for emotions), and norm-de-norm (conflict of interest), and the K-drama *Are You Human Too?* contains all four types of conflict. The story briefly goes like this: A renowned artificial intelligence specialist witnesses the mysterious death of her husband and finds her son taken away by her stepfather. She then hides in the Czech Republic, where she secretly creates a robot that resembles her son to fill the void left by his absence. Over the years, she refines this robot into "Nam Shin III," the adult version of her son. When her son, in search of answers, suffers a severe accident and falls into a coma, she returns to Korea to protect him and secure his position in his powerful in-laws' company. She places Nam Shin III in his stead, leading to a gripping Korean drama that blends thriller

⁹ <https://rollingstoneindia.com/rozy-koreas-first-virtual-influencer-isnt-human-but-humane/> (Accessed on: 15th October 2024).

¹⁰ Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6bl1DvhHsg> (Accessed on: 15th October 2024).

elements with a complex narrative involving a Chaebol¹¹, and explores various forms of love: familial, platonic, and romantic.

This is the story of a robot that tries to find its place while respecting humans, who most of the time do not respect it. There is also a whole section devoted to "love" that we could learn to feel towards "objects". Because many people end up sincerely loving this robot in different ways throughout the episodes. You might think it's disturbing, but it's so well done, that even we, on the other side of the screen, end up loving this being of steel. This is where the mastery of this scenario lies: It brings everything it takes to succeed in attaching itself to this robot while knowing full well that it is one. In 2017 and 2018, three television dramas featuring AI humanoid robots, *Borg Mom*, *I Am Not a Robot*, and *Are You Human Too?* were broadcast consecutively. Considering that television dramas are a form of popular art reflecting public interest, the consecutive appearance of these dramas suggests that public interest in post-human themes has increased to some extent.



Fig. 7 Poster of the drama *Are you Human Too?*

Among them, *Are You Human Too?* is a work that specifically shows, through concrete events, what situations might arise if AI humanoid robots were to emerge in human society. *Are You Human Too?* also prompts viewers to contemplate how humans should regard AI robots through the conflicts and changes experienced by the characters. At a point where we have already entered the post-human era, we must continuously explore what it means to be human and what will come after humanity before 'human-machine' and 'machine-human'

¹¹ Chaebol (재벌) are large South Korean industrial conglomerates, typically family-run, that exert significant influence on the country's economy. The word 'chaebol' comes from the combination of the Chinese characters 재 (chae), meaning 'wealth' or 'money,' and 벌 (böl), meaning 'clan' or 'group'.

transform the modes of existence of humans and the world. This kind of contemplation is also possible through imagination directed toward the future. Additionally, fictional texts provide actual emotions through concrete situations, prompting viewers to think how they would react if such things actually happened. In this respect, stories that depict the future can be seen as a kind of simulator that allows humans to experience and prepare for the future. This is precisely why we seek to explore *Are You Human Too?* which starts from the premise of the first appearance of an artificial intelligence humanoid robot in South Korea. However, AI discourses, including *Are You Human Too?* presuppose the evolution of robots. Evolution has historically occurred through mutations. This process of biological evolution is being directly applied to the evolution of AI. From a scientific perspective, this is a valid viewpoint because it aligns with the operational principles of deep learning, which underpins AI. The ultimate goal of evolution, as presented in AI-related narratives, is humanization. It is also true that the future goal of artificial intelligence is to create AI with human-like consciousness. However, in *Are You Human Too?*, the fact that this is achieved through the loss of AI's abilities is paradoxical. This drama implies that while people have come to realize the existence of AI and anticipate the emergence of AI forms that are almost identical to humans in various aspects, they still hope for AI to remain an alchemical fantasy. This desire can be seen as a representation of the inherent desires within Korean society and culture, as depicted through TV dramas like *Are You Human Too?* The current societal anxiety and desire might be that although we can live with the existence of AI, we prefer it not to be too conspicuous. However, this is problematic because it reflects a highly contradictory attitude: acknowledging the existence of AI while simultaneously wanting to erase its presence.

Conclusions

In every culture, interaction between individuals occurs on two levels, one conscious and the other unconscious. The input of information provided by each human being to the other is complex and, as is well known, comes not only from verbal exchange but also from nonverbal communication (sense stimulation, postures, micromovements, clothing, etc.). All this information reaches the individual simultaneously, creating a behavioral response presumably appropriate to the situation and context. In other words, everyone conveys information about himself to another individual and, in turn, receives an image of how the other perceives himself. A significant lack of correspondence between these two images can often cause misunderstandings in communication. In the context of communicative relationships between human beings and computers, there are fewer types of information. Sight, touch and hearing are useful in establishing "contact" with the machine. However, the computer is deficient in nonverbal communication. The relationship is established mainly on the

level of written language, which is limited; cultural and emotional implications are lacking. The challenge will be to create a cultural machine-subject according to different contexts.

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