We are at the beginning of an artificial intelligence revolution that has the potential to shift our perspectives on several fronts, including on the moral worth of artificially intelligent objects. Such shifts might be especially poignant when considering research aiming to create AI systems empathetic to human needs for, among other contexts, application in healthcare. This comic uses the ancient Japanese folklore of Tsukumogami, tools that have acquired souls, to invite readers to meditate on their relationship between the inanimate object and the animate subject.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

FIXING THIS STUPID OLD STOVE

YOU SHOULD BE NICER

TO THE STOVE? WHY?

BECAUSE OF THE TSUKUMOGAMI

TSUKU WHAT?

TSUKUMOGAMI. I JUST LEARNED ABOUT THEM. IN JAPANESE MYTHS, SOME OLD TOOLS CAN GET A SOUL AND BASICALLY BECOME ALIVE. PEOPLE TAKE IT SERIOUSLY, EVEN NOW. LIKE, THIS ROBOT DOCTOR GUY FROM JAPAN SAID THAT HE DOESN’T SEE A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HUMANS AND METAL STUFF, SINCE BOTH CAN HAVE SOULS.*

*MINORU ASADA. "ROBOT THAT CAN FEEL PAIN INVENTED BY SCIENTISTS" THE TELEGRAPH (FEB 2020)
But if you are mean or abuse the Tsukumogami, they go from playing harmless pranks to being really dangerous. So you should be a good person and be nice to the stove.

HA HA HA HA HA

You really think that our stupid old stove has a soul? C'mon, treating a stove poorly doesn't make me a bad guy.
Besides, we own this stove. It's ours. So, I can treat it however I like.
A stove is different than a dog. A dog has a brain and feelings. A stove? It doesn't have nerves or a brain. It's a piece of metal with some wires, it doesn't have any intelligence. So there's nothing wrong with me giving it a good whack.
MEANWHILE...
COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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