

# Hand Waving

Nobody asked but ...

When I was an academic, there was a common complaint among colleagues about hand waving. It was a metaphoric way of referring to sleight of hand, or smoke and mirrors. If the distractions were vigorous enough, then the eye of an otherwise thoughtful observer could be drawn away from a lack of substance.

Magicians are famous for keeping their hands in constant motion in order to keep the audience from isolating what the prestidigitator's hands are really doing. In the academic world, the metaphor is used to call out an investigator who may be glossing over a dearth of concrete data, or who may be overselling his argument when the argument is undersold by visible cases.

My field is computer science, the home of the *uncanny valley*. There is much hand waving devoted to the navigation of the uncanny valley. There are far too many dabblers in robotics and virtual reality who want artificial general intelligence (AGI) to be a thing. As a matter of confirmation bias, they want AGI to be true — they are doing wishful thinking about it.

What if the 7 decades that have passed since Alan Turing devised the Turing Test were not indicative of something — there hasn't been a single, documented case of an AI machine having passed the test? Why did a driverless car kill a pedestrian recently? Why haven't there been any truly believable robotic, sexual surrogates?

In *Ex Machina*, the robotics movie starring Alicia Vikander, why does Nathan do so much hand waving when it comes to how Ava went from clever programming to independent AGI?

— Kilgore Forelle