

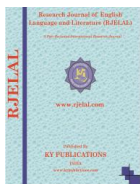


THE ELEMENTS OF REALITY IN PHILIP K. DICK'S "DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?" DEFINING HUMANITY

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Abstract

Technological development was the mainstream in the late 20th century. However, this development had influenced the writers of that period especially the Sci-fi ones. Dick in his novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Was thinking of what will happen in the future especially with this fast technological development? Moreover, he shed the light of the relationship between humans and androids, and what makes them different from each other. This paper aims to analyze the work of Philip K. Dick's "*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*" according to what elements can tell the differences between humans and androids.

Keywords: Human being, Empathy Box, Technological development, Concept of Reality, Androids

Introduction:

"*Do androids dream of electric sheep?*" is a novel that deals with miserable society after World War III. This war caused the death of a lot of people, and the extinction of the animals which made people concerned for the remaining animals so they start to make electrical animals to compensate the loss of the real ones. However, there is a presence of radioactive dust that may impact the health of the remaining people, whoever is exposed to that radioactive dust would be called a chicken head. The novel deals with the clash between humans and robots who were so intelligent and powerful that they killed their master and ran away to earth and the struggle of defining what is real and unreal.

Dick's novel analyses a lot of theories but since it is in the late 20th century, many critics review it through postmodernist theory. In the middle of 1980s there was an academic turn towards postmodernism as a replay of modernism and also it may be considered as a replay of the Marxism

theory. While Marxism focused on people collectively, postmodernism focused more on the individual concerned of the person's gender, strain and sexual orientation that mainly appears in Dick's novel (Wright)

Darko Suvin in one hand through his article "On the Poetics of Science Fiction Genre," states that the science fiction can be defined as "the literature of cognitive estrangement" (Suvin, 372). He adds the best thing for the science fiction rules which is "the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition" (375). Suvin also says that the cognitive methodology of science fiction is a critical and sarcastic one. On the other hand Carl H. Freedman illustrate that SF of all types are most powerful to historical specificity "For the SF world is not only different in time or place from our own but also whose chief interest is precisely the difference that such difference makes, and, in addition, one whose difference is nonetheless contained within a cognitive continuum with the actual". (Freedman,187). Moreover, Dick's work is more

similar to this and it nearly connected with the theory of postmodernism.

In "The Postmodernist Fiction", Brian McHale defines the major differences between the modern fiction and the postmodern as "movement from an epistemological dominant to an ontological one" (McHale, 9-10). The main difference between the epistemological and ontological is that the former deals with a fine stable world with the questioning of the human role, while the latter deals with the denial of such things.

Dick shows the fact that "The ontology of the human and the ontology of the world mutually construct each other. When one is fake, the other is contaminated by fakery as well; when one is authentic, the authenticity of the other is, if not guaranteed, at least held out as a strong possibility" (Hayles, 423). Maybe it is because Dick's focusing on authenticity makes Damien Broderick states that "following Fredric Jameson and Brian McHale, Dick is the inevitable exemplar of postmodern ontological fiction" (Philip K. Dick and Transrealism10).

The Elements of Reality in Philip K. Dick's "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" Defining Humanity.

Empathy and Voight-Kampff

Many critics such as Dr. Gerald R. Lucas states that in his technological courses that "*Do androids dream of electric sheep?*" is a novel that shows the contrast between the human and robot. However, this novel makes us wonder "what is human?" and "what is a robot?". In the novel, we can't differentiate between the human and the androids in the shape of the body, but the thing that they lack is empathy. They don't love anything but themselves. The only thing that can tell is a device called "*Voight-Kampff*". This device tests their reaction towards scenarios that instigate their emotions and reactions but they lack this as well. They are unable to show empathy.

The word "*Empathy*" is the main feature of the human moral, its origins come from the German term "Einfühlung", which was invented in the late 19th century by the German aesthician Theodor Lipps and translated by psychologist Edward

Titchener in 1909 (Keen209; Misselhorn 106). In the present time the word "*Empathy*" gained interest in almost all field such as "psychology, medicine, neuroscience, and psychoanalysis" (Hollan,385), *Empathy* also gained the interest in the field of robotics as researchers want to know if robots are able to show empathy and if they have morality as well.

The regular definition of the word "*Empathy*" is "the ability to 'put oneself into another's shoes'" (Misselhorn, 105). The ability of the person to put himself in the same situation of the other, it means to let himself feel the experience of emotions according to the same process that the other go through. Misselhorn defines these processes as: "knowing what a person is feeling, feeling what another person is feeling, and responding compassionately to another person's distress" (105).

According to the novel and the mind of characters inside the novel that the inability of androids to feel empathy is what makes them not humans although they are the same with the human physically and mentally. In other words, the novel states that "*Empathy*" is one of the main element of what makes us human. That's what makes robots dangerous because they lack empathy so they have the ability to kill without in consideration with anything else. The androids in Dick's novel known by the ability to keep themselves away from others because they try to protect themselves from what they call bounty hunters, that shows the basic emotion such as fear, so they express some emotion but their inability to feel empathy is ambiguous. According to Deckard, the androids' ability to develop empathy actually does "biologically exist, potentially" (Dick,37).

The lack of empathy in the robots is used against them by the device. This device is disc contains lens which is put in the face and measures the pupil expansion, the series of questions are asked to the android which mostly involves the animal in it, which measure the empathy and according to that it will decide whether they are either human or robot. It is important to take in consideration that how one reacts to the questions; as the android, Rachael Rosen responds to Deckard

while he was doing the test on her: "And of course, my verbal responses won't count. It's solely the eye-muscle and capillary reaction that you'll use as indices" (Dick,38). That may make the test more trustee because even if robots have the ability to show some emotion but they lack it, they cannot perform those emotions and reactions like a human.

Mood Organ

The other element that Dick uses in the novel is what is called "Mood Organ", at the beginning of the novel where Deckard and his wife Iran argues about. They can set their mood according to that device by pressing numbers so Deckard uses it every morning to have a joyful mood. Deckard asks his wife to do the same but she denies saying that emotions should be earned. When she told him that she will set her mood to six-hour of depression he asks her why one's want to do that she tells him it is healthy to feel the emotion that suits the place that they are in.

Mood organ though Dick mentions it in the beginning, he doesn't mention it again in the novel and it is something that we can't consider as something real, it raises a lot of questions leaving us with no answer.

Mercerism as Religion

Dick shows "Mercerism" as something spoof in different ways. It is something just like a system to show the reality in the technological world. Moreover, Mercersim is used in the novel as the only thing that brings relief to people. However, Mercerism makes us wonder about what is real and what is not as well, Mercer's reality is different from the character's and it's only the "Empathy box" that connects them together. In addition, it shows us the need of the characters to something that keeps their life stable, it provides them a reality no matter whether this reality is authentic or fabricated.

Dick uses this idea of creating the empathy box and religion which allows all the humans to participate in the experience of empathy and the way of making that empathy box something to distinguish humans from the android. However, this thing is fully dependent on technology, which is artificial as well. Thus, the question "who is the

creator" becomes doubtful when the human being depends on religion to know about their own creation (Lee,16). Dick classify this question in his essay, "The Android and the Human," when he states "Reality, to me, is not something that you perceive, but something you make" ("Android and Human" 205). Thus reality is texture as well as God who should be there to meet the need of the people. Dick outline man's artistic capability to compose God as proof of his declaration, "Man is the reality God created out of dust; God is the reality man creates continually out of his own passions, his own determination" ("Android and Human" 205). This supports the readers to examine what is the purpose behind creating such thing like Mercerism and what is the reason and in what this could help the characters.

Mercerism makes an existential identity about the character that gives meaning to their lives and creates a world which enables them to share joy and pain. However, for John Isidore, this is very important because it makes him "to escape the drab emotions of his solitary living" and "rejoice in human company" (Kucukalic 82). John Isidoer experiences with Mercerism working as how others feel the world the way it is within the mind of Wilbur Mercer. This experience has no logical layout, but Deckard meeting with Mercer allows him to search about what is the meaning behind it. In one of Deckard meeting with Mercer reveals him that "there is no salvation" and that "Mercer is not an all-knowing God" (Dick,141). In order to reduce the doubt thinking of the reality of androids, humans, animals, and Mercerism. Deckard accepts things as true as the person perceiving them. He states that "Mercer isn't a fake. Unless reality is a fake," (Dick, 186). To confirm that if a human being can take reality as he understands it, then he is capable of accepting Mercer as a God because he too is artificially structured. (Beitzel).

Dick's novel gives us a futuristic world which is terrible, yet rational referring to where the modern world may arrive in the future. This world which was under Mercerism led by Wilbur Mercer is the product of the physical environment in the novel and brings the current implementation of today's religion. The novel shows the human ability to set up

both reality and religion, in order to maintain their lives.

Androids

In order to make people live on Mars, they were provided by androids which are artificially intelligent. According to the theory "hyper-reality" of the theorist Baudrillard, the need for robots and electrical animals is not a real need and it just hyperreal one (Shabanirad, 238). This new version of robots which is humanoid ones are so intelligent that one can't differentiate them from the real human, they exceed humans in strength and wit. They rebel against their master and kill them running back to earth. Robots are mimicry of the real human, but they are unreal and lack what is called empathy or the love for their partners, men, and animals.

At the beginning of the novel the reader can differentiate between human and robots, but as the reader goes on reading the novel further, they would be having no idea how to tell who is human and who is a robot and would keep on struggling between what is real and what is not. In a review on "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" The writer describes the robots as "biologically human" (Gwaltney, 95). They have brains that work just like human minds do, if not better. "The androids are clearly human, but are they persons?" (Gwaltney,95). This makes it more confusing what is real human and what is a fake one because there is no rigid distinction that can split human from robots.

Some androids don't even know that they are manufactured, they think themselves as humans. Rachel Rosen, for example, wasn't aware of her reality. She thinks that she is a human, she knows her true identity when she had the test of the Voigt-Kampff by Deckard. The only way that the bounty hunter knows that his target is really androids is by this test, and the result of the test will tell him whether this is android or not. "Rick faces the same problem of identification before he retires an android," he must first administer the Voigt-Kampff, or as Gwaltney would put it, "a clumsy test of questionable validity" (Gwaltney, 94). When Deckard went to Rosen corporation, he makes a test on Rachel "The Nexus 6," he says, "I'm seeing one for the first time. And they damn near did it; they came

awfully damn close to undermining the Voigt-Kampff scale," (Dick,48). Deckard confesses that he hardly finds out Rachel as an android. The only other process to detect a human from Android is a bone core test called "Bonelli Reflex-Arc". Jill Galvan, a reviewer, does not think that it's just empathy that differentiates Android from a human. Galvan says, "if on one hand androids reveal their ability to feel compassion, the reader begins to surmise, on the other hand, that what passes for empathy among humans derives far more from a cultural construction than from any other categorical essence" (Galvan,3). Galvan wants to tell that the distinction between the two cannot be settled by the empathy test because of its various versions. Dick put those two test to make the reader wonder that even if what sounds real and what makes us differentiate the real from the unreal is not true, confirming that the difference between the two almost doesn't exist.

Another character that makes us wonder about the differences between human and androids is "Phil Resch", he is a passionless person and has the ability to kill coldly without any regret. He tells Deckard to do the test on him stating that "If I'm an android you'll tell me right? Because I really want to know. I have to know" (Dick,139). This shows how the characters are unable to know the reality about themselves, and this drives us to tell that only the test is able to tell what is real and what is unreal because there is no rigid evidence about everything.

Differences Between Humans and Androids

Androids are robots designed to mimic a human being. They look exactly like humans, which makes it impossible for people to differentiate between them, as what Dick shows in his novel. The word android and robot start to spread widely in the late 20th century. However, it comes from a Czech word, Robot, which means a worker or laborer. Hockstein illustrates that "Karl Capek intended for his 1921 play, Rossum's Universal Robots (RUR), to protest the rapid growth of modern technology and thus he described the evolution of the robots with increasing capabilities and the eventual revolt of these robots against their human counterparts" (Hockstein, 2007).

The androids in the novel are less strong than the human, they want to be like humans by imitating them and living among them (Galvan, 418). One certain factor about androids is that they don't grow old the way the humans do and they are made by humans and are programmed the way the inventor wants. "Rachel: We're not born, we don't grow up; instead of dying from illness or old age we wear out like ants." (Dick, 152).

Androids do not live as much as the humans do because of their cells according to the conversation that Rachel and Deckard had. She told him that she is a type of android that could just live for four years (Dick,170). Although androids do not live long like a human they do have memories but those memories about their children are not real. It is put inside by the programmer who invented them. There are more intelligent androids coming under the name of Nexus 6 brain unit, in spite of being highly intellectual they cannot understand Mercerism that the humans believe in.

In the novel, the empathy is the line that tells the differences between the humans and the androids. However, this changes as the event of the novel move on. In chapter eleven and twelve, Deckard meets another bounty hunter Phil Resch. He shares, to some extent, the same personality with Deckard. However, Deckard realizes his behavior and says, "You don't kill the way I do; you don't try to/ I know what it is. You like to kill. All you need is a pretext"(Dick,109). Deckard thinks himself an android because of his ability to kill with cold blood so he may lack empathy so that would make him android as well. Moreover, Resch says that he has a pet squirrel, "I feed it and change its papers-you know, clean up its cage"(Dick,102). Phil claims that he is not an android because androids don't care for animals. They only look after themselves.

For today's androids, we still can tell the differences between human and androids. There is a lot to do with technology in order to invent androids that look exactly like a human and can experience emotions and empathy. As what Dick shows in his novel the empathy was the main part to tell the difference. However, Dick still is the one who makes

us think about the possibility of this development to happen in near future.

Conclusion

What is the truth, what is real and what is fake, all of them are terms that cannot be defined by someone or it is different from one to another. Dick's novel consists some elements that the reader may consider it as real but at the end turns to be unreal. Androids, animals, Mercerism, and the mood organ all those elements turn at the end to be not real. Dick's main element in defining human throughout the novel was "Empathy". However, Empathy was the main thing that makes us believe what is human but that doesn't continue to the end when Deckard starts to have hard times to tell whether Rachel is an android or not.

Philip K. Dick invents the idea of creating a human-like android, that is so much similar to the human being that we can't tell the difference. Moreover, That makes us wonder what is to be human and what will happen if there will be such thing in future. This novel opens a discussion of what is to be real human or can we expect such thing especially in our modern society for now or even for the future.

Human is limitless, no doubt, and we still don't know who made humans. One thing is for sure, a creation cannot create something similar to it. Only a creator can.

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