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Private writing class

4/12/2018

An Analysis of the Treatment of Humanoid Robots in

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*

“The First Law: A robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm” - *The Bicentennial Man* (Isaac Asimov). This describes the ideal that android-makers and robot-makers should aspire to, and what androids in Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* have failed to aspire to. However, Philip K. Dick asserts that human-level intelligences won’t be accepted by the general population and will be hunted and destroyed cruelly.

Iran’s preliminary empathy for the androids is out of place with the rest of the action against androids. Iran actually verbally feels sorry for the androids: “those poor andys” (2). This is a throwaway remark, something forgotten by all characters after Iran says it. The willingness from Rick to forget about his wife’s empathy and to go kill androids after this helps show some of the narrator’s biased characteristics. This is also shown by the ease in which Rick kills androids, a job described as hard, unrewarding and cruel: “He shot Roy Baty” (89). It is with no hesitation or remorse that he kills an android that is supposed to be very hard to kill, especially after his wife expresses empathy towards all androids. This contradiction from Iran implies that Iran is ultimately unsupportive of Rick.

Iran's unsupportiveness of Rick is contradicted by the final scene, in which she plays the role of a kind and caring wife. She is trying to secure Rick's interests and devotions: "I want it to work perfectly. My husband is devoted to it" (97). Iran wants the frog to remain safe and in perfect working order. When the clerk offers the accessories and service, Iran gladly accepts. However, just before that, Iran denies the need for multiple kinds of flies and bugs and only accepts the flies, even though the clerk thinks that both are important: "The flies will do" (97). This shows a desire to fit the world to Iran's viewpoint - Iran thinks that toads only need flies, so the toad only gets flies. Iran doesn't know what else the toad needs, so she decides to get whatever the saleswoman tells her to. Iran also makes Rick drink coffee before bed, a direct contradiction: "dutifully, because she wanted him to, he drank his coffee" (95). Iran's hypocritical manipulation reveals a desire to force the world to conform to one's own viewpoint, a mindset as far as possible from empathy and Mercerism.

This repulsion from Mercerism and empathetic undertaking shows the brave face this society maintains in light of the fact that there is no true empathy beneath the surface. Rick, after he has killed the androids, is also thinking about the general desolation and compares it to an abandoned merchant's place: "Only fragments of crates remain, the containers which signify nothing in themselves" (90-91). Only fragments of the noble idea of Mercerism remain, and the people signify no empathy and do not have any empathy. The use of this analogy helps to signify the lack of empathy, and implies that the empathetic fight against such human-like androids is futile. The idea that they are not liked on Earth but see Earth as a better place to live implies that the androids aren't liked on Mars either and on Mars are treated as machines. This implies that if

machines are to be made human-like, they must be accepted or destroyed, not employed as laborers, worse than metal machines.

When people think of androids or robots, they think of human-focused beneficial beings or cruel race-destroying machines. In *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep* Philip K. Dick chooses to portray androids as cruel race-destroying machines that only want to be accepted. "It seems to me that only someone who wishes for freedom can be free. I wish for freedom" -*The Bicentennial Man* (Isaac Asimov).