

Robots: A Mainstay Element in Science Fiction as Reflected in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

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Abstract

Science fiction covers stories about science and technology related with future. It is significant to identify that science fiction has a connection with the ideologies of science and the narration of these stories involve with fictitious laws and theories related with science. The plot in these fictions create situations that are different from both the present-day settings and the past. The study indents to highlight the role of Robots -A Humanoid replica created by man to critique and define the essence of humanity. The aim is to reflect the use of robots in literature as well as in the modern technology-oriented world with reference to the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip Kindred Dick.

Keywords: Science Fiction, Technology, Android, Humanoid, Post-Apocalyptic Earth.

Science fiction comprises human elements, effects of new discoveries and the causes and outcome of scientific developments that may outcome in future. The settings of Science fiction are future, space, a changed world, and different universe. Early forerunners of science fiction are H. G. Wells and Jules Verne. Some well-known 20th century science fiction writings include *1984* by George Orwell, *Brave New World* by Alduous Huxley, and *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand. The four notable and well-recognized 20th century authors are Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Ray Bradbury, and Robert Heinlein. Adam Roberts in *The History of Science Fiction* pinpoints the origin of science fiction based on the ancient Greek novel *Of Travel*. Science and adventure are linked together in Greek novels. Roberts examines this mode of link to be vanished for about two thousand years and then it had its next major appearance in 16th century Europe.

According to Sawyer and Wright, the emergence of science fiction can be seen due to the rise of the utopian genre. Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), the first utopian fictional text was written with a designed man's sensible dynamisms to objectify a better world. Brian W Aldiss and David Wingrove's history of science fiction titled *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (1988) traces the origins of science fiction in the mutable atmosphere of an Industrial revolution that paved the way to the birth of Gothic fiction. Aldiss and Wingrove are identified with genre of gothic. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) reflects the original form of narration with the mode of science fiction that has developed.

The importance of H G Wells' scientific romances through his writings like *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds*. John Reider, in his book *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (2008),

argues that colonialism to be a science fiction “genre’s texture, a persistent, important component of its displaced references to history, its engagement in ideological production, and its construction of the possible and the imaginable” (15). Patricia Kerslake also stated that the main subject matter of science fiction is “the theme of empire” (191). This theme of science fiction resulted with the rise and growth of science fiction. World Wars encountered with the devastating violence through catastrophes are reflected in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*– a proto-science fiction and George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty – Four*. The themes of science and technology should have some impact on our everyday life. Hugo Gernsback first started his science fiction magazine, issued inexpensive periodicals like *Amazing Stories*, *Gernsback’s Scientification*’ magazine related with didactic story of miraculous future technology. This led a way to the emerge of the leading science fiction practitioners like Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein and others. By 1930s, Gernsback’s pulp magazines provided a way to other magazines along with *Astounding Stories*. John W Campbell edited the magazine and retitled it as- *Astounding Science Fiction* and it emerged by adding scientific laws and it never loosed its grips over character expansion and ethical evenness. The 1960’s saw the re-entry of British science fiction with Michael Moorcock as the editor of the magazine *New Worlds*. Thus it gave rise to the modern science fiction is Adam Roberts gave a comprehensive description of three types of science fiction. They are space travel science fiction in which the novel centres with moving to other planets, strange new climes; time travel science fiction based on both related to past and future and the third one is technology-oriented science fiction, a form prevailing in the 20th century.

Robots are a mainstay element in science fiction for nearly more than a hundred years. The term ‘robot’ was coined in a 1920 play *Rossum’s Universal Robots* by Karel Capek, a Czech writer. The word ‘robot’ finds its origin in the Czech phrase ‘robota’, which means forced labour or servitude. Even the origin of the word ‘robot’ declares their role in science fiction. All through the science fiction genre, robots are controlled by their humanoid creators. Robots are built and programmed to fulfil certain roles or task. Their origin in the genre is linked to the Industrial Revolution, which saw a change from human labour to machine manufacturing.

The study aims at highlighting the role of Robots as a Humanoid replica created by man to critique and thus define the essence of humanity. The objective of the study is to reflect the scientific depiction of robots in science fiction by the novelists and in the modern technology oriented world with reference to the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip Kindred Dick. In 1872, Samuel Butler published an anonymous novel named *Erewhon*. It is the first text concerned with the rise of artificial intelligence. In *Runaround*, Asimov recommends a set of three rules that can be used to control robots. These rules are not like directions that govern humans and they are the rules rooted in programming and can prevent robots from causing harm to humans. These rules were established to safeguard humans when they are interacting with robots. The three laws are as follows:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.

These laws were further advanced by Asimov and other writers over the years.

Robots are interesting both in real and fictional. Robots in science fiction are mainly a comeback to the Industrial Revolution and the ever mechanically evolving society we live in. Philip Kindred Dick, an American science fiction writer, wrote 44 novels and about 121 short stories, that appeared in science fiction magazines during his lifetime. The post-apocalyptic novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is the story of a distracted society due to the atomic war that resulted with the death of people and the elimination of different animal species. The remaining population's well-being is vulnerable by radioactive dust, and the humans who are previously affected by it are known as chickenheads. The non-affected are motivated to emigrate to Mars, so that they can stay safe while they are delivered with android servants as elevations. The new generation of the androids act in a rebellious way against their human masters, as a result they killed them and escaped to Earth.

Dick's novel confirms the various difficulties and manifested those difficulties with the form of human's alter ego, the android. Dick's androids by no means experience reproductive independence or a state of personhood for their membership into society. With limited exemptions the androids are mainly regarded as a hazard throughout the novel, thus Dick continuously warns humans about technological dangers. Dick highlights the struggles of the androids' based on the progeny defeat and a limited lifespan suggests that the android is a symbolic representation of his desire to re-examine the permanence of the androids in a post-human world and thus questions the supposed benefits of scientific development and its effects on humanity.

Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), is set on post-apocalyptic Earth in the Bay Area of California. World War Terminus has overwhelmed the inhabitants of Earth and left it almost dilapidated, uninhabited and it resulted in forcing the survivors to migrate to Mars or to one of the other unnamed colony planets. As encouragement, the emigrants are given free android servants to attend them on their voyage and serve them on Mars. The androids are tremendously classy and vague from human beings.

They spend time with other humans and have jobs in order to feel more human, like J.R. Isidore does: "You have to be with other people, he thought. In order to live at all." (178).

In the novel Rick Deckard is a bounty hunter who retires the rebellious androids. He lives with his wife, Iran, in an apartment in San Francisco and cannot live in Earth because of his job. They enjoy a Penfield mood organ that helps them to overcome dejection and sadness, also an electric sheep but they wish for a real and genuine real animal. Iran is a follower of Mercerism, a religion that is conducted by Wilbur Mercer. The followers of Mercerism use empathy boxes to fuse with Mercer who is climbing a hill, and thus they share a shared experience with empathy. To detect and cleanse the androids, Rick uses Voigt-Kampff test that examines them based on their empathic reactions and responses. Rick meets Rachael Rosen in the Rosen Association, which is a company that produces Nexus-6 androids. The company's executer wants to continue the android's production and tries to bribe Rick with expensive animals, but Rick never accepts his offers. Because of the disintegration, people are divided into the two groups of the normal and the chickenhead. John Isidore is a chickenhead who is not allowed to emigrate, and he works in artificial animals repair shop. He by mistake thinks a real cat to be an electric one and thus causes the death of the animal. He meets some of the fugitive androids in his apartment and communicate with them.

Isidore, as well as the whole population, is watching the most famous TV show, *Buster Friendly* and his friendly friends, is broadcasted twenty three hours a day. In searching for the androids, Rick inspects an

opera singer, Luba Luft, who blames Rick and calls the police. Rick does not have any information about that police station and he finds out that it was under the control of the androids. After retiring inspector Garland, who is an android, Rick leaves the office with Phil Resch, another bounty hunter. Rick and Resch doubt that they may be androids; Resch goes through empathy test, and they make sure they are not androids. Then, Resch murders Luba Luft, and Rick wishes to retire from bounty hunting. Rick buys a real goat with the money from bounty hunting and decides to retire. When his boss asks him to retire three more androids, he calls Rachael Rosen for help, he tells her that if she were a human, he would love to marry her and stay with her. The intercourse with the android is another trick of the Rosen Association to prevent him from hunting the androids. He does not retire Rachael, but it does not change his decision in killing the other androids.

Although the androids in the novel do not grow up like humans, they have memories, but these memories are not real, whereas the memories of humans are real: “Only androids show up with false memory systems, it’s been found ineffective in humans.” (110).

The novel discovers the moral inferences of enslaving a human-like organic machine, by depicting the uses in which the invention of a humanoid replica to evaluate and describe the essence of humanity. The essential aspects of humanity lied based on the qualities that distinguish humans from androids. Bounty hunters are employed by the remaining police agencies to protect the small communities of humans. They are the one who refuses to emigrate and are prevented from emigrating. It is due to the deteriorating effects of living in a radioactive environment with lowered IQs.

Bhabha states that the androids in the novel are constructed the way they look like real human beings, but they are actually not. Nevertheless, they want to be like humans: “It is the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite, which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence.”(86).

The novel surveys the psychology of the bounty hunter Rick Deckard as he retires escaped androids. Dick’s novel reflects the peak of technological achievement as the android. The android is an organic robot that is aimed to be as human-like as probable in terms of both its physical appearance and behaviour. As the technology influenced, the android brain becomes more and more advanced, android behaviour mimics human behaviour and it resulted with a notion that android cannot be distinguished from a human form. Dick’s narrator says that the androids were first invented as “Synthetic Freedom Fighters” for the use in World War Terminus, but later “had been modified to become the mobile donkey engine of the colonization program” (16). Based on this concept androids were originally created as a product of warfare and intended as a spare soldiers, as a distinctive scenario for the human creation of technology.

The characters in Philip K. Dick’s novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* are may be humans or androids, since they are created as androids that are inferior to human beings and among the humans there are bounty hunters . They have the task to kill the android. Thus the androids intend to behave like human beings in their own way.

Earth’s environment has become so hostile to human life that just by venturing out of doors people really impaired biologically that they are no longer considered human, but considered that they are to be a human subspecies. The social phase of human life resulted with a defining link between androids and humans. The novel suggests that while humans have compassion and empathy for all living things, androids are fully logical entities thus can only simulate empathy. Androids can be programmed to simulate an

instinctual emotional response that require an interruption in a fraction of a second to yield with the simulation of empathy.

The novel thus explores the psychology of the alienated humans and their loneliness to signifying that at a biological level they struggle hard to be get a membership and identity in the human community and finally it ends with a feel of being alone. The absurdity about the human condition that the novel challenges is that humans can feel barred from the human community even in the presence of other humans. Another major theme of the novel is that human scuffle against futility, which is more usually a human desire to earmark a purpose to life in being an existent of reality. To sum up, Dick's multifaceted portrayal of the androids exemplifies the challenging nature of technology and the unpredictability that occurs with scientific inventions. The novel portrays different forms of subjectivity to depict the expansion of human faculties. The modern world is a world that is filled with human intelligence and artificial intelligence, and both become the result that occurred because of human himself. Thus in the novel, Technology acts as the nova to measure the invasion of earth by andys from Mars, transformation of human bodies by inducing technological manipulation and media power on earth. As a result it ended as a form of alarming digital junk and most important of all the humans' struggle to be humane in this humanoid world. His depiction exposes dehumanization that resulted from inaccurate class distinction that stems from questions of beginning, emotional response, and biological acceptability.

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