



Blekinge Institute of Technology
School of Planning and Media Design
Department of Culture and Communication

What Distinguishes Humans from Artificial Beings in Science Fiction World

Di Wu

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Supervisor:
Maria Engberg

“An android, he said, ‘doesn’t care what happens to another android. That’s one of the indications we look for.’ ‘Then,’ Miss Luba said, ‘you must be an android’” (Dick 86). This quote from the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* by Philip K. Dick indicates the main boundary between humans and androids. Humans believe that artificial beings are emotionless and do not have the capacity of feeling empathy. However, the truth turns out to be that androids can have emotions and be able to empathize and that the reverse is sometimes true for humans.

Although contemporary A.I technology is far from creating a robot that can generate self-consciousness, in various sci-fi stories, highly intelligent robots that can generate their own emotions have already been created and are depicted as involved in human life in many respects. Taking Philip K. Dick’s novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) and Steven Spielberg’s film *Artificial Intelligence* (2001) as my primary sources, I explore how advanced robotic technologies affect human society and my particular concern is investigating the boundaries between actual humans and artificial beings.

In the film *A.I.*, the protagonist David is an eight-year-old intelligent humanoid robot who is the first robot boy that is programmed with the human feeling of love. Throughout the film, David projects a lot of outer signs of love to his foster mother, Monica. Moreover, after he is abandoned by Monica, he desperately wants to become a real boy in order to get his mother’s love back and then take him home. During his journey of finding blue fairy, he witnesses the callousness of humans and feels alienated from human society because of the different social categorizations. Likewise, in the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, androids belong to the lowest class in society and

do not have human rights. They are massively produced to be laborers, serving humans. The Voigt-Kampff test is the main approach to distinguish human from androids. It measures subjects' abilities of evoking emotional responses, primarily towards animals and if the subjects fail to show their empathetic feelings or their responses are comparably slower than humans', they are deemed as androids. Humans in the novel show indifferent attitudes toward others. One of the characters, Iran, Rick Deckard's wife, is a perfect example of someone who is willing to be alienated from society and enjoying immersing herself in artificial moods, such as deep depression.

In both of the works, post-humanism seems to undermine the dominant status of humanism in the light of the fast development of robotic and cybernetic technologies. The transformation process from human to post-human can be seen within the experiment of creating robots and technology-mediated body. Cyborgs are defined as the central embodiment of post-human. As N. Katherine Hayles points out:

Fourth, and most important, by these and other means, the post-human view configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. In the post-human, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals. (3)

On the one hand, humans benefit a lot from the advanced technologies. For instance, doctors can apply the most advanced technology to bring a comatose human boy back to life. Martin, one of the characters in *A.I.* is an example of how humans can articulate with technological devices. When he is brought from hospital, he is already become a cyborg

who is unable to breathe without mechanical aid. On the other hand, the proliferated robotic technologies will blur the boundaries between humans and robots to a large extent. As massive highly intelligent humanoid robots are produced and then get involve in human life, the original social orders will be disturbed or destroyed and ultimately results in sever social problems, such as dehumanization and alienation.

The primary task of my thesis is to explore the interrelationship between social categorization, empathy, alienation and dehumanization in the context of a technologically mediated post-human society. First, I will illustrate how humans are experiencing dehumanization along with analyzing main characters ad certain events in my primary sci-fi sources. “People experience interaction as dehumanizing when other people’s behavior undermines their basic elements of personhood, such as identity and status. These experiences have cognitive and emotional consequences” (Bastian and Haslam1).

Secondly, by comparing actual humans and artificial beings as counter-parts, I will discuss the boundaries between them in relation to social categorization together with the ability of being empathetic. Humans in *Do Androids* and *A.I* experience dehumanization and then choose to be alienated from society, while robots and androids are striving for gaining humanity.

Thirdly, I aim to investigate the determinants that contribute to forming dehumanization in post-human society. I will argue that the rigid social hierarchies set the foundation for dehumanization. However, it is under the premise that large quantities of robots are produced and take over the labor market. In this regard, the original lowest class/working class is replaced by robots. The contacts between human and society

become fewer, and as time goes by, they will first lose the enthusiasm to work then to life. Enjoy living in their worlds and then finally lose the capacity of being empathetic. Empathy is a very important characteristic of human beings and it is also a central concern of this essay. Psychology Professor Frans de Waal defines empathy that “Empathy: The capacity to a) be affected by and share the emotional state of another, b) assess the reasons for the other’s state, and c) identify with the other, adopting his or her perspective” (FAQ). The lack of empathy is the main determinants that results in dehumanization of humans. De Waal continues explaining the significance to a human of feeling empathy:

Empathy is first of all a bodily and emotional connection. If this core is lacking, you can try to imagine another’s situation as much as you want, you would lack investment in it. You might take the other’s perspective, but we wouldn’t call it empathy if you stay emotionally aloof (FAQ).

One of the central themes in both *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* and *Artificial Intelligence*, is that of dehumanization. As Psychology Professor Nick Haslam (2006) propose that there are two main forms of dehumanization, one is called animalistic dehumanization which involves viewing others as animal-like creatures, denying their unique human attributes (human uniqueness) such as higher cognition, moral sensibility, refinement and rationality, while the other one has been referred as mechanistic dehumanization. It occurs when we have a mechanized view of others by denying their human natures (e.g., emotionality, interpersonal warmth and cognitive openness) treating them like objects or automata (257).

In these two stories, robots are represented as the counter-parts of actual humans. The main boundaries between artificially created beings and actual humans lie in having the ability of being empathetic or not. In both of sources, the notion of highly intelligent humanoid robots is well known to humans. They are produced only to be laborers and servants and defined as the lowest class in society without basic human rights. No matter how realistic their appearances are and how smart they are, robots are still categorized into a subhuman group that should not be able to compete with humans since artificial intelligence will always fall short of human intelligence. This kind of deep-rooted self-confidence originates from the perception that human race hold natural superiority all over other species in the world. Therefore, robots as non-humans are perceived as cold, rigid, irrational and amoral. They are viewed as nothing but programmable machines and their lack of fundamental human characteristics would never make them truly humans. Nevertheless, as I will show, through a number of scenes depicted in *A.I* and *Do Androids*, robots actually behave in much more humane ways. On the contrary, as the robots' creators, humans' dehumanizing behavior let them become the same creatures as they normally view robots as being are. In a word, the characteristics that define a human being, such as humanity, are not traits that only exist in actual humans and it can be both gained and lost.

I will start by analyzing the main characters and events in *A.I* to illustrate how actual humans are experiencing dehumanization and how artificial beings are gaining more humanity in a post-human society. The story is set in the 22nd century, when the earth has undergone severe global warming, the ice caps have melted due to the massive greenhouse gases. Many cities along with coastlines were drowned, and the climate

became unpredictable. Large quantity of people died of starvation, resulting in a dramatic decline of human population. Under these circumstances, robots are massively produced, serving humans in various aspects in daily life. Their high efficiency and accuracy at work enable them to become the ideal substitutions for laborers. In this regard, robots are playing a crucial role in maintaining a country's economy. However, even if robots have already become an indispensable part in human life, they are still categorized into the lowest class in society because they do not possess human qualities and therefore do not deserve moral consideration. In the film, once robots are abandoned due to some partial damages they will be hunted and then destroyed by cruel melting or burning. The relationship between humans and robots is highly strained. As Michelle Maiese summarizes:

Protracted conflict strains relationships and makes it difficult for parties to recognize that they are part of a shared human community. Such conditions often lead to feelings of intense hatred and alienation among conflicting parties. The more severe the conflict, the more the psychological distance between groups will widen. Eventually, this can result in moral exclusion. Those excluded are typically viewed as inferior, evil, or criminal (n.p).

Humans' strong animus against robots can be seen in several humans' ruthless treatments towards robots, and the most ironic thing is that humans have not realized their behavior is much more like robots, being apathetic.

At the beginning of the film, a moral question is raised in a robot conference, "If a robot could genuinely love a person. What responsibility does that person hold toward

that mecha in return?” Dr. Hobby does not answer it directly, “Did not God create Adam to love him?” David, the main character, is the first robot boy who has the most realistic appearance and is programmed with the ability to love. He is adopted by a couple, Monica and Henry, whose own son Martin is in a deep coma and placed in a suspended animation to wait for a cure for his disease. Initially, Monica cannot accept a robot boy as a substitution for Martin and she is frightened of David’s behavior. In an important scene, Monica, Henry and David are having dinner together. David, intently observing what Henry and Monica are doing and he mimics their actions and then he abruptly laughing out loudly which frightens his adopted parents. After Henry and Monica realize why David is laughing, they relaxed and start to laugh along with David tentatively. But the audience can see that David’s facial expressions look exaggerated, especially his mouth makes him look like he were screaming instead, underscoring an unnatural look. All of sudden, David stops laughing just as quickly as he started and his parents feel very awkward. Finally, the scene ends up in uneasy silence.



Fig1. David is laughing at the dinner together with Monica and Henry

Throughout this event, we find distinctions between the portrayal of the humans and artificial beings. David’s feelings toward his adopted family are portrayed as mimicked, not genuine, as they are generated by programs. However, we cannot conclude that David

will never be able to generate genuine feelings in what follows. Because David is a newly created intelligent robot, he is curious about everything around him just like an infant. Thus his inappropriate behavior is understandable. Moreover, his advanced chip allows him to learn and adapt to behave more like an actual human. It can be seen in several scenes that David is different from ordinary robots because he is able to generate his own emotions and thoughts. He wants to get involved into human life thus he mimics Henry and Monica's actions of eating.

Monica perhaps is the most compassionate person in the film. She treats David as a real boy and loves him as her own child. After the event that David is persuaded by Martin to cut her hair in the middle of the night, she is frightened but she chooses to believe David will never hurt her on purpose. "It's normal for little boys to feel jealous and competitive. Martin's only been home a month and. It's normal for brothers to challenge each other. He...He was playing a game, he made a mistake, and he's practically human." says Monica. On the contrary, Henry is very angry and upset about David, he thinks that if David is able to love, it is reasonable for him also to hate. He cannot take his family at risk and it is the first time he has the idea that returning David back to manufacturer where he will be destroyed. In this regard, both Monica and Henry admit that David has human characteristics and to some extent Martin also admits that when he treats David as a competitor.

At first, Martin view robots as toys or servants, like any other human kids do. The first conversation between Martin and David shows the boundary between humans and artificial beings. "So, I guess now you are the new Super-Toy. Oh, can you do 'power' stuff, like, walk on the ceiling or the walls? Anti-gravity? Like, float, or fly?", "Can

you?”, “No, because I am real.” However, after he provokes David to eat food which results in David’s breakdown, he finds out that his mother cares a lot about David and loves him as another son. Martin becomes jealous and is worried that he will have to share Monica’s motherly affection with David. Thus he comes up with the malicious idea that persuading David to cut Monica’s hair in the middle of the night. His aim is to persuade his parents to consider David as a wicked child. This is the first example of how Martin is dehumanized, “Dehumanization is the psychological process of demonizing the enemy, making them seem less than human and hence not worthy of humane treatment” (Maiese n.p). At Martin’s birthday party, a friend of him pokes David with a knife in order to test whether David has DAS (damage avoid system) or not, none of the children stops this, just watching him and waiting for David’s reaction. Then, when David clings to Martin and moving to the edge of swimming pool, Martin becomes panicked and calls for help. Still, none of the children help Martin out until Henry and other adults jump into water to save Martin. David is down at the bottom of the pool, ignored by humans as a discarded object. The audiences can empathize with the children that they are just overwhelmed by David’s reaction and therefore do not try to separate Martin from David before they fall into pool. However, for the adults, is it so difficult to pull out David together with Martin? Are they not concerned about David’s feelings? When people encounter this kind of situation, even Monica will neglect the existence of David, saving Martin is the most important thing. No one understands or cares about David’s anxiety and fears in this event. The capacity of being empathetic is a very essential to human kind. If they fail to recognize or share feelings which are being experienced by another

sentient being, they will normally be viewed as lacking of empathy which also a determinant that contributes to dehumanization.



Fig.2 A friend of Martin pokes David at the pool party

Another event regarding dehumanization of humans appears in the second segment of film: the “Anti-Mecha Flesh Fair” shows how obsolete robots are destroyed cruelly in front of cheering crowds. “Any old iron? Any old iron? Any old iron? Expel your mecha. Purge yourselves of artificiality!” says Lord Johman-Johnson who captures obsolete robots and hosts the show. Why would humans show such hatred towards robots? After all, robots help humans a lot in daily life and do not show any threat to human society. The answer is stated by the emcee:

We are alive, and this is a celebration of life! And this is commitment to a truly human future! See here: a bitty box, a tinker toy, a living doll.

Course we all know why they made them, to seize your hearts, to replace your children! This is the latest iteration to the series of insults to human dignity.

In their eyes, robots are inferior and evil, the emergence of intelligent machines is undermining human superiority. “So, when the opportunities avail themselves, they pick away at us, cutting away our numbers so they can maintain numerical superiority!” one

of the broken robots says grumpily. Humans' irrational fear or anxiety of advanced technology is the embodiment of technophobia. Unlike Monica and Henry who are well-educated, wealthy and enjoy the benefits that technology brings to their life, the crowd in the show is the lower class in society which can be told from their manner of speech and behavior as well as their dress. As a matter of fact, their social status is close to robots. Although robots do no harm to human kind right now, whereas they are still afraid that robots would exceed human intelligence and become superior to humans, as Georges argues, "what really bothers people about A.I is how the development of intelligent machines will change the way we view ourselves" (136-137). Thus, their biggest wish is to exterminate all the robots to preserve humans' superiority, witnessing the destruction of robot is the most exciting entertainment in life. To a large extent, the human behavior portray in this event is very similar to genocide, massively burning or cutting robots alive. As Nick Hamls points out:

Dehumanization is frequently examined in connection with genocidal conflicts. A primary focus is the ways in which Jews in the Holocaust, Bosnians in the Balkan wars, and Tutsis in Rwanda were dehumanized both during the violence by its perpetrators and beforehand through ideologies that likened the victims to vermin. Similar animal metaphors are common in images of immigrants, who are seen as polluting threats to the social order (253).

Most of the obsolete robots before destroying can still work, as one robot begs before being cut, "I still work, don't I? I can still work in the dark, but my lamp is broken." Of

course, no one cares about a junky robot's last words. If robots can no longer work perfectly, they are worthless.



Fig. 3 The cheering crowd in Flesh Fair

However, audiences in the event only show their strong disgust and contempt towards robots. To humans, they still have interpersonal warmth which is one of characteristic of human nature. There are two examples of how humans show their compassion to the same kind. The first one is that when the staff of “Flesh Fair” is searching for the obsolete robots, the emcee of the show, Lord Johnson-Johnson says “You are certain he is not a man? I would not want a repeat of the Trenton incident.” It indicates that they only demolish artificial beings. The previous experience of mistakenly killed an actual human is a tragedy. The other one is that when David is hung on an execution shelf in the middle of ground in Flesh Air before he will be destroyed in front of audiences, he keeps pleading for live and thanks to his realistic appearance, audiences believe that he is a real boy and condemn emcee's inhuman behavior of burning a child. “Mecha don't plead for their lives! Who is that? He looks like a boy!” one female audience asks loudly, “Built like a boy to disarm us! See how they try to imitate our emotions, now! Whatever performance this sim puts on, remember we are only

demolishing artificiality!” the emcee continues convincing audiences, “He's just a boy, Johnson, you are a monster!” the crowd shouts. From the dialogues between audiences and emcee, we shall see the audiences still retain certain humanity.

After David escapes from “Flesh Fair” during the chaos, he continues his journey of finding blue fairy together with another two robots, Gigolo Joe (a male robot lover) and Teddy (a robot toy). He firmly believes that blue fairy can make him become a real boy and then Monica will take him home, loving him as her own child again. However, his robot companion Joe does not think the same way. As a rational adult robot lover, Joe perfectly understands the reality of humans’ world and the distinctions between humans and robots. He tries to persuade David not to go to Manhattan to chase down his childish dream of becoming a real human. He knows it is impossible for a robot to become a human, neither physically nor mentally.

Joe: Wait! What if the blue fairy isn't real at all, David? What if she's magic? The supernatural is the hidden web that unites the universe. Only organ believe what cannot be seen or measured. It is that oddness that separates our species. Or what if the Blue Fairy is an electronic parasite that has arisen to hold the minds of artificial intelligence? They hate us, you know? The humans, they'll stop at nothing.

These words are cruel to an eight-year-old robot boy. However, Joe is telling the truth, he just wants David to face the reality that humans hold implacable hatred toward robots and therefore they will never allow a robot become the same beings as they are. The boundaries between humans and robots will never disappear. Even the blue fairy can work as a bait that leading robots to death rather than giving them rebirths. In this scene,

audiences can imagine how David will be indignant and broken-hearted. Nevertheless, David persists in believing that Monica never hates him, he still keeps his fantasy of becoming a real boy, viewing blue fairy as a sainted figure in his heart. He refutes Joe angrily as follows:

David: My Mommy doesn't hate me! Because I'm special, and unique!
Because there has never been anyone like me before! Ever! Mommy loves Martin because he is real and when I am real, Mommy's going to read to me, and tuck me in my bed...and tell me every day a hundred times that she loves me!

Joe: She loves what you do for her, as my customers love what it is I do for them. But she does not love you David, she cannot love you. You are neither flesh, nor blood. And you are alone now only because they tired of you, or replaced you with a younger model, or were displeased with something you said, or broke.

In this dialogue, Joe indicates the brutality and selfishness of humans by exemplifying the reasons which result in David's current situation, being abandoned by his foster mother. He also points out that, as a matter of fact, Monica does not love David himself but loves David as a substitute of her comatose son, living together with David can make up her loss of not having Martin around. He continues to illustrate why the relationship between humans and robots are so strained, "They made us too smart, too quick, and too many. We are suffering for the mistakes they made because when the end comes, all that will be left is us. That is why they hate us, and that is why you must stay here, with me." Humans are reluctant or reject to admit the fact that robots are already superior to humans

in terms of being more intelligent, accurate and efficient. Joe foresees something terrible would happen if David insists on going to the end of the world, Manhattan, where a number of robots went and then never returned. Joe tries to convince David not to chase down his unpractical dream which can make him a next victim to the cruel human world.

However, David will not believe these words until he finally meets Dr. Hobby, the head of Cybertronics. He walks into the building of Cybertronics with full of hope and then walks out that building with full of desperation. What Dr. Hobby tells him totally break his fantasy, he sadly realizes that he is not unique because hundreds of robots will be produced as his replicas. He is just the first kind of ultra-realistic robot boy not the only one. Throughout their conversation, Dr. Hobby talks to David affectionately and gently, caressing his hair, just like an ordinary father does. However, his words make David and audiences feel like drinking icy water in winter.

Hobby: Until you were born, robots didn't dream, robots didn't desire, unless we told them what to want. David! Do you have any idea what a success story you've become? You found a fairy tale and inspired by love, fueled by desire, you set out on a journey to make her real and, most remarkable of all, no one taught you how. The Blue Fairy is part of the great human flaw to wish for things that don't exist, or to the greatest single human gift, the ability to chase down our dreams. And that is something no machine has ever done until you.

Dr. Hobby keeps illustrating the outstanding traits of David, telling him how successful he is. He clearly points out that no robots can be self-motivated or chase down what they are dreaming of until he was created. His high-minded talk gives him an idealized image

of an affectionate father. However, in his eye, David is only a substitute of his dead son, a robot, a machine. When audiences see the photographs on Hobby's desk, we realize that David is designed as a precise duplicate of his son. His love toward David is portrayed as appreciating a perfect piece of art or a successful product he created rather than a genuine fatherly affection. At the end of this conversation, Hobby is immersed in his delightful mood and fails to empathize with David's hopelessness and deep confusion. He even mentions that David's actual parents are the manufacturers who work in Cybertronics. In a way, Hobby never views David as a human.

David: My brain is falling out.

Hobby: Would you like to come meet your real mothers and fathers?

The team is anxious to talk to you.

Throughout the film, David is portrayed as a tragic figure. He is first betrayed by his "brother" Martin and then mistrusted by his "father" Henry. Finally he is abandoned by his beloved "mother" Monica. Even after he waits and suffers for two thousand years, he can only spend a day alone with the cloned copy of Monica rather than the original one. In several scenes, audiences can find that when David confronts with dangers or something he is afraid of, he always stretches out his hand to Joe, and Joe holds back his hand immediately. It indicates that Joe can feel David's fears and he displays empathy towards David. Outside the building of Cybertronics, Joe originally plans to run away by flying submersible vehicle, however, when he witnesses David jumping into the sea from the edge of the building, he empathizes with David's hopelessness and thus he chooses to rescue David. From previous examples, we know how rational Joe is, he may know the consequences of not taking the chance to escape, he still chooses to save David. "I am. I

was.” It is the last words of Joe before he is hauled by police to execute a murder which he does not commit. To me, this is the most tear-jerking scene in the film.



Fig 4. Mechas are saying goodbye to David

It reminds me of another science fiction movie, *The Terminator 2: Judgment Day* which is directed by James Cameron (1991). There is one famous line that says by the terminator (stars by Arnold Schwarzenegger), “I know now why you cry. But it is something I can never do.” Although robots are preprogrammed as a machine, no one can conclude that they are not able to feel empathy.

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, the relationships between humans and artificial beings are much more complicated and depressing than in *A.I.* There are three distinct social categorizations in the novel: humans, specials and androids. Due to extreme radioactive fallout after a worldwide Nuclear War, a number of humans’ genes have damaged and their intelligences deteriorated into subhuman level. They are viewed as “specials” by normal humans and are rejected by society. Because of their “special” status, they are not allowed to leave earth to avoid further radiation. Both specials and androids are categorized into subhuman groups. As Kevin R. McNamara argues, “Racism indeed defines social hierarchies in both *Androids* and *Blade Runner*, two stories that

centrally concern the relation between biology and rights. ...The dehumanizing power of racism was in fact a key factor in the novel's genesis" (432).

Those normal humans that represented in the novel are the dominant groups, such as Deckard, Iran and Phil, who are more like insensitive programmable machines other than human beings. They generate their emotions or empathetic feelings only through empathy box or a device called Penfield Mood Organ, which transmits certain mood models from device to their bodies by dialing numbers. Empathy box is a device which links simultaneous users to merge their consciousness/feelings together with Wilbur Mercer, a messianic figure of Mercerism (the main religion on Earth), to share his suffering of endlessly climbing a mountain and to feel his pain of having stones continuously thrown at him. By using empathy box and Penfield Mood Organ, humans put themselves down to the same level as they normally perceive androids as being are. The Voigt-Kampff test is the main approach to distinguish human from androids. It measures subjects' capabilities of evoking emotional responses, primarily towards animals. If the suspects fail to show their empathetic feelings or their responses are comparably slower than humans', they are deemed to be androids. For humans, owning an animal is very important, no matter it is artificial or genuine. On the one hand, taking care of an animal is the most straightforward way to show that the owner is not an android since only humans can display compassion towards animals. On the other hand, the extreme radioactive fallout not only damages humans' genes, but also endangers real animals. Thus, owning a real animal is the symbol of wealth and higher social status. That is why at the beginning of the novel, Deckard is longing for buying a genuine goat.

In the novel, humans show extreme indifferent attitude towards others. One of the protagonists, Deckard, a bounty hunter, feels very alienated from his spouse Iran, who enjoys immersing herself in various artificial moods, such as deep depression or long deserved peace. Her attention is never directly to Deckard as she indulges in her own world, which consists of the empathy box, Penfield Mood Organ and her genuine or electric pets. Iran is the example for Duclos's discussion of dehumanization, "The inhuman in this context is the human pushed to extremes, and, since the human is the alienation of the living by culture, the inhuman is thus the extreme of alienation" (34). As I discuss earlier about the two forms of dehumanization, Iran can be categorized into mechanistic dehumanization group since she lacks the core human characteristics that involve emotional responsiveness, interpersonal warmth and cognitive openness. She is inert, cold and passive. Iran's compassion for Wilbur Mercer and the artificial animals represent that she is still empathetic, preserving humanity to some extent. But when she witnesses an android killing a genuine goat that Deckard just bought, she does nothing but watch. We can be reminded of the scene in *A.I* with the human children watching Martin drown in a pool without helping him. In this regard, we cannot say Iran's previous compassion towards toad is genuine. After that android leaving her apartment, she sits in front of Penfield Mood Organ, thinking whether she should emphasize or not. She comes up with the idea of calling a mood of "the desire to watch TV, no matter what's on."

As a bounty hunter, Deckard's task is to retire (i.e. kill) fugitive androids (andys) that escaped to Earth from Mars because they cannot bear the psychological isolation and endless slavery. In his mind, androids are considered as enemies to human society. Even if they have not presented any direct threats to society yet, while the public still view

them as a potential hazard since they are afraid that androids would exceed human race in the future and become a new kind of rival to human race. This kind of fear is similar to what A.I portrays. Looking at the short dialogue between Luba Luft (a well-known android opera singer) and Deckard below, the audiences shall see how humans and androids view each other as emotionless, rigid and callous.

“An android,” he said, “doesn’t care what happens to another android.

That’s one of the indications we look for.”

“Then,” Miss Luba said, “You must be an android.”

That stopped him, he stared at her.

“Because,” she continued, “Your job is to kill them, isn't it? You're what they call—” She tried to remember. “A bounty hunter,” Rick said. “But

I'm not an android.” (86-87)

However, Deckard becomes deeply confused about his beliefs regarding humanity, morality and empathy when he gets know about Luba Luft and then witnesses her death. He talks to another bounty hunter Phil Resch, “I’m getting out of this business”, “I’ve had enough. She was a wonderful singer. The planet could have used her. This is insane” (117). Nevertheless, after he ponders a lot the distinctions between authentic living humans and humanoid constructs, he realizes that it is an extremely wrong idea to display empathy towards an android because if he begins to generate feelings to what he is going to kill, how can he justify his job to others. He cannot even convince himself. Furthermore, according to Deckard’s belief, human feelings should generate from empathy box or Penfield Mood Organ only, not spontaneously arise from deep heart. Thus, it is odd to feel empathy without any devices, especially towards androids. For

Deckard, the notion that androids are not able to feel empathy is deeply-rooted in his mind, “Empathy, evidently, existed only within the human community” (27). Androids are just like stones. Would anyone feel empathy toward a stone or to other insentient objects? The answer is no. Thus, moral considerations do not require when killing androids as a bounty hunter. Finally, Deckard convinces himself to continue his job.

To a large extent, it is true that androids are not empathetic, it can be seen from the scene that one of the “Nexus-6 Series” android Pris Stratton tortures a spider by chopping its leg one by one while delightfully listening Buster Friendly’s revelation that Mercerism is a huge hoax. Empathy to them is nothing but a ridiculous capacity that distinguishes androids from so-called humans. However, they are definitely emotional. Taking Rachael Rosen and the opera singer Miss Luba Luft as examples, I argue that androids care about their android companions, just like humans care about their artificial or genuine pets and human friends. Rachel kills Deckard’s genuine goat that he loves a lot as revenge for her companions who she cares about. From the scene that Deckard lets Luft have Voigt-Kampff test, we can easily see that androids are emotional than humans, albeit upset.

“Was the movie made in the Philippines?” “Why?”

“Because,” Luba Luft said, “they used to eat boiled dog stuffed with rice in the Philippines. I remember reading that.”

“But your response,” he said. “I want your social, emotional, moral reaction.”

“To the movie?” She pondered. “I’d turn it off and watch Buster Friendly.”

“Why would you turn it off?”

“Well,” she said hotly, “who the hell wants to watch an old movie set in the Philippines? What ever happened in the Philippines except the Bataan Death March, and would you want to watch that?” She glared at him indignantly. (88-89)

Feeling emotions is the foundation of being empathetic. The humans portrayed in the novel are emotionless, cold and callous. That is why they lack of empathy. Through Dick’s description of Luba Luft’s manner of speaking, such as “hotly” “indignantly” readers can imagine the situation when Luft is responding to Deckard’s question. Luba Luft is full of emotions when she talks to other people, whereas Deckard is depicted as mechanical and rigid, much more like an android. Being emotional means, of course, to express one’s own feeling, it does not require other people to feel the same way or even understands the reason that person behaves that way. Being empathetic is an interpersonal relationship, as international psychic advisor Anthon St Maarten concludes:

Empathy, on the other hand, is our ability to grasp the feelings of another person on a much deeper level, as well as the ability to convey this understanding to that person, which shows that you really do comprehend how they feel. Empathy is therefore the ability to ‘place yourself in another person’s shoes’ and the knack to truly understand where they are coming from; to see things from their perspective and relate to how it is making them feel (n.p.)

Contrary to those “normal humans” and androids who fail to be empathetic, John R. Isidore, one of the “speicals”, is the only human who displays genuine empathy and interpersonal warmth toward others. He lives alone in a giant and entirely empty building

with little outside contacts expects empathy box due to his special status. During the daily life, his only entertainment is to watch television. If he turns off the TV set, what he is going to confront is endless silence.

Silence. It flashed from the woodwork and the walls; it smote him with an awful, total power, as if generated by a vast mill. It rose up from the floor, up out of the tattered gray wall-to-wall carpeting. ...It managed in fact to emerge from every object within his range of vision, as if it—the silence—meant to supplant all things tangible. Hence it assailed not only his ears but his eyes; as he stood by the inert TV set he experienced the silence as visible and, in its own way, alive. Alive! ...The silence of the world could not rein back its greed. (18).

This quote depicts how J. R. Isidore is suffering from an extreme lonely and alienated life. Unlike Iran who is willing to be alienated from society, Isidore is abjectly isolated by society. He has no friends, being discriminated by normal humans. Theoretically, Isidore is the person who would experience dehumanization. “The inhuman in this context is the human pushed to extremes, and, since the human is the alienation of the living by culture, the inhuman is thus the extreme of alienation” (Duclos 34). Ironically, he is most humane character in the novel. It makes no difference to him of befriending androids or humans. He protects his android friends from being retired by bounty hunters. His behavior represents the innate altruism of human nature.

Throughout *A.I* and *Do Androids*, the humans are portrayed as experiencing dehumanization on a deep level, lack of empathy. On the contrary, androids and robots are represented as the counter-parts of humans, acting much more like actual humans in

many respects. The relationship between these two parties is extremely strained due to different social hierarchies and categorizations. The evident distinction (social categorizations) between dominant groups (humans) and subordinate groups (artificial beings) sets the foundation of dehumanization. The other essential determinant that contributes to forming dehumanization is lack of empathy. In *A.I.*, people in different social categorizations show different attitudes towards robots, as I discussed earlier, people who have lower social status show their hatred attitudes towards artificiality because they do not have the correct cognition of advanced technology, they are afraid that robots will exceed human intelligence and take over them in the near future. On the other hand, their deeply rooted perception that human race is superior to any other creatures gives them a good reason to vanish robots. Thus they enjoy watching all the robots being destroyed by various ruthless ways. However, fortunately, they still reserve some humanity by displaying empathy towards the same human kind. The robots in the story are depicted as vulnerable group and the victims to human kind, although humans treated them cruelly, they still keeping their dignity and beliefs, not to act like dehumanized humans. In this regard, robots are more worthy of the title of “human beings”.

Unlike *A.I.*, none of the humans portrayed in *Do Androids* except J.R Isidore who is categorized by society into “specials” or “chickenhead” shows genuine empathy and compassion towards others, no matter humans or androids. The bounty hunter Phil Resch is the most emotionless and callous character in the novel who views all other people or androids as objects or automata. He is experiencing mechanistic dehumanization by denying other’s human natures (e.g., emotionality, interpersonal warmth and cognitive

openness) (Halsam 257). Compared to Phil, Deckard still retains some humanity. In the plot, it is revealed that he develops feelings towards an android opera singer and he is emotionally involved with another android Rachel Rosen. However, he still kills all the androids at the end of the day.

The biggest difference between *A.I* and *Do Androids* is that characters in the film are much more innocent and empathetic than the characters depicted in the novel. In *Do Androids*, androids are not that vulnerable as robots in *A.I*. They know how to protect themselves from bounty hunters. In some certain cases, they even kill hunters in order to get away. In the novel, there are no distinct rules that define humanity and inhumanity as black and white, such as androids are definite victims to bounty hunters. However, they are also guilty when killing or torturing genuine animals. To sum up, the core characteristics (e.g. rationality, emotionality and cognitive openness) that define a human can be presented not only in humans but also in androids. These traits can both be gained and lost.

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