

Book Review : “Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?”

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Dick, P. K. (1968). **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?**. New York: Doubleday & Company.

“Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?” is a science fiction book by Philip K. Dick. This book was published in 1968. The story takes place in a dystopian future that is the wasteland of Earth. It is about a bounty hunter named Rick Deckard who has to “retire” six Nexus-6 type androids. The storyline follows Rick Deckard’s quest to realize what the meaning of “human” is.

This story starts off with Rick Deckard getting a call from his office that another bounty hunter named Dave Holden was injured by an android that calls itself Pokolov. Deckard was then given the task to “retire” six Nexus-6 type androids which are extremely human-like. He receives Holden’s list and starts his mission. First, he visits the Rosen Association which is the company responsible for manufacturing the Nexus-6 androids to learn more about his targets. He runs a test on a woman named Rachel Rosen, and the test reveals that she is an android. However, Rosen’s uncle objects and captures him. After being captured, he was set free as long as he does not harm Rachel. One by one, he retires each android. The first one is Pokolov which is the one that injured Holden. Pokolov managed to disguise as a detective in order to get close to Deckard and kill him before it gets killed. Deckard somehow manages to kill Pokolov. The next android is a woman named Luba Luft who disguise as an Opera singer. Deckard’s mission fails because Luft decides to call the police. However, the police agency she called was an agency that Deckard has never heard about. After arriving at the agency, he is interrogated by Garland who turns out to be an android. However, another bounty hunter named Phil Resch retires him instead. Resch and Deckard cooperate to retire Luft. Toward the end of the story, Deckard learns that the three remaining androids are currently residing at a house that belongs to a man named John Isidore. Finally, Deckard invades Isidore’s apartment and kills the remaining androids.

Rick Deckard is the protagonist of the story. Deckard’s evolution is clearly noticeable throughout the story. Initially, he is a bounty hunter because he does not care for things that he believes have no empathy such as electrical beings. This can be proved by his hatred of his electric sheep. During the whole story, Deckard tries to buy an organic animal to replace his electric one. However, his wife, Iran Deckard, has empathy toward non-organic beings because of the clause, “those poor Andys.” Toward the end of the story, Deckard learns that some humans have little empathy, and some androids might have empathy which makes him feel differently about his new electric toad.

Rachel Rosen is an android that was initially believed to be void of empathy, but that changed toward the end of the story. Rosen is sent to stop Deckard from retiring the androids which means that she must feel empathetic towards other androids. Another reason that proves that Rosen has empathy is the fact that she kills Deckard's sheep. We can assume that she killed the sheep because Deckard loves the sheep more than he loves her which means that she can feel jealousy.

On the other hand, Phil Resch was mistaken for an android when Deckard first met him. Resch retires Luft and felt no remorse or regret doing it. Deckard later noticed that Resch is a bounty hunter because he enjoys killing. Because of this Deckard believes that he is an android because of his void empathy. After the test was performed on Resch, Deckard learned that Resch is not an android which contradicts to the initial fact that humans can feel empathetic which cannot be felt by androids.

The author's purpose in writing the story is to identify the meaning of being human. In the book, Dick created a new religion called Mercerism which is about a man walking up a mountain towards his death. The followers of this religion are supposed to fuse with Mercer to feel what he feels in order to feel empathy. This was the way that people identify as being human. However, this religion was proven wrong by an android named Buster Friendly by showing that Mercer is actually an old actor, and the mountain is just a part of a movie set in Hollywood. Conversely, Deckard realized that the ways of Mercerism are real because he fused with Mercer in reality and was able to feel more empathy towards electronic beings. We disagree with this idea of humanity because some humans are truly heartless such as Phil Resch. A real world example would be Adolf Hitler. He enjoyed torturing and killing people without feeling remorse. At the end of the book, the author showed that some humans are void of empathy and some androids, such as Rachel Rosen, can develop empathy. As we mentioned earlier, the definition of human towards the end of the book contradicts with the initial part of the book which makes the definition of human clouded. We believe that the author purposely left the meaning of humanity unclear to let the readers infer for themselves what it means to be a human.

Overall, we think that the plot builds up many different ideas, but gradually switches to contradict the ideas to let the readers infer for themselves. This book tends to be an argumentative text that tries to explain the meaning of being human. But the meaning goes to the other side and gives reasons why the initial thought of empathy does not have to be true. The author tries to support both sides as much as possible, leaving the reader to truly decide what a human is. We believe that this book should be reread several times for the readers to fully grasp the concept of empathy and decide if we can distinguish humans by empathy. It is ironic how humans are very curious and tend to try to learn about their surroundings, but forget to learn about themselves. Observing from the current time, computational capabilities increase every year. Many people fear that computers will "take us over." If we do not prevent this from happening, mankind will be destroyed. In the meantime, the meaning of 'human' will be left behind. Although this book, based on the publication year, is old, its value does not seem to fade. In conclusion, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* can help readers reconsider a number of issues embedded in both the characters and situations in the book. At least, it suggests the idea of identifying ourselves to reach a point of what we are and what will *really* benefit us in the future.