

Can Bionic Dream of an Electronic Sheep? The Study of Man-machine Community in China

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Abstract

Philip Dick (1928-1982) was one of the most important American science fiction writers in the 20th century. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Is one of his most important novels. The novel tells the story of the hero Rick in a day to kill several bionic man experienced countless changes, from the beginning of the cold blood exclusive to gradually develop feelings for the robot, admit the story of electronic life. Based on the community theory of Hillis Miller and Luc Nancy, this paper explores the problems of man-machine empathy absence, man-machine symbiosis and harmonious man-machine community in the novel. In the face of an upcoming era of artificial intelligence, this paper puts forward the thinking of how human and machine coexist, and provides the possibility answer for building a harmonious man-machine community. Through the thorough study of the novel, this paper points out that in a space where man and machine coexist, man and machine should not be between master and servant; instead, they are the constitution of each other. Human beings should try to break through the boundary between self and others and look forward to a pluralistic and open community.

Keywords

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep; Philip Dick; Community.

1. Introduce

Philip Dick (1928-1982) was one of the most important American science fiction writers in the 20th century. He used the shell of science fiction to explore the problems of human existence. It is these explorations that make his works unique forward-looking and universal. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Is one of his most important novels. The novel tells the story of the hero Rick in a day to kill several bionic man experienced countless changes, from the beginning of the cold blood exclusive to gradually develop feelings for the robot, admit the story of electronic life. The works of Philip Dick have been extensively studied at home and abroad to provide a reference for the study of this paper.

Although many researchers have discussed the relationship between man and machine from the perspectives of technical rationality, identity and ethics, and post-human context, no one has discussed the man-machine community in this novel, which is a highly anticipated topic in recent years. Therefore, this paper intends to guide the community theory. Based on the community theory of Hillis Miller and Luc Nancy, this paper explores the absence of man-machine empathy, man-machine symbiosis and harmonious man-machine community in the novel. The rejection of robots is the dismantling of the original organic community in the novel, and the possibility of this new model under the immune mechanism. In the face of an upcoming era of artificial intelligence, this paper puts forward the thinking of how human and machine coexist, and provides the possibility answer for building a harmonious man-machine community.

2. Useless Community: The Absence of Man-machine Empathy

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? The human acceptance of robots seems to be equal and democratic. Once robots try to get rid of their servants, they become weak prey for humans. No matter how hard they try to imitate human behavior, these human people are treated as others. Miller believed that there is the possibility of mutual understanding and integration between the subject and the other. Therefore, the coexistence of man and robot is not based on an exclusive or convergent community, but to maintain the particularity and seek harmony in the diversity. This human-machine community is likely to be realized through the process of immune mechanism.

The protagonist Rick Deckard's thought flow goes through four stages from the denial of the electronic life to an attempt to accept the electronic life, which is also the process of mining the dominant ideology of the judiciary that hired him. As Miller points out, "we have to share our existence with others... we are both singular and plural" (Miller, 21,2011). The protagonist Rick Deckard's thought flow goes through four stages from the denial of the electronic life to an attempt to accept the electronic life, which is also the process of Dick digging into the dominant ideology of the judiciary that hired him. As Miller points out, "we have to share our existence with others... we are both singular and plural" (Miller, 21,2011). Readers are unaware of Rick's appearance until the end of the novel and, in Isidore's view, "a mediocre person, is not impressive. Round face, hairless, smooth features; like bureaucracy. Organized, but informal. Not a demigod in the figure" (Dick, 173). After completing the task of killing the robot, Rick is summoned to the desert of northern California and then experiences a rocky climb. When the police master operator saw his face, she said that Rick looked like Mercer. Rick replied, "I am Wilbur Mercer; I am forever with him. And I can't let it go. I'm just sitting here waiting to melt down" (Dick, 185).

In the first stage, Rick believes that killing robots is not equal to murdering humans because they are tireless machines. Therefore, when he hears at the beginning of the novel from his wife that he was "a murderer hired by the police," his irritability rises, "I've never killed anyone in my life" (Dick, 1). In Rick's previous cognitive system, he saw robots as a cold-blooded killer, which made his job more acceptable. So, in killing the robot, Rick didn't break Mercer's rules of life: you should just kill the killer. For Rick, "a runaway human robot, killed its owner, its intelligence more than many humans, it does not care about animals, it has no ability for another form of life success feel the joy of empathy, and no ability to feel sad for their failure -- for him, this is the epitome of" killer "" (Dick, 25).

Rick adheres to the principle that empathy is the absolute difference between humans and robots, which not only separates people from machines, but also helps to isolate the human community. If only humans have the capacity for empathy, then their only emotionally beneficial, reciprocal relationship occurs with each other. The robot of a robot expels it from any community, even its own kind. "One robot doesn't care about what happens to another robot" (Dick, 101), Rick said. It seems that robots lack the ability to care about their peers as they care for humans. However, in the process of arresting Ruba Left, Rick discovers that she is able to capture the emotions behind the painting, which is the first level of empathy -- understanding and feeling human emotions. He buys Ruba a copy of Monk's "Adolescence" to satisfy her last wish. After Ruba is killed by another hunter, Rick burns the photo to ashes. Rick's emotional behavior moves Ruba, so she praises humanity and expresses gratitude to him, the second level of empathy-emotional feedback. This is Rick's first empathy for robots, breaking his stereotype that robots have no empathy, realizing that not all robots are cold-blooded killers, and not all humans understand emotions.

Rick moves into the second stage after seeing Ruba being killed by Resh. He became guilty about his status as a bounty hunter and wanted to quit the job. Rick prefers to accept Ruba as an

emotional robot than a cold human. Rick found that Nexus-6 seems to have sex differences in personality. Most male Nexus-6 robots, such as Roy Betty, are cunning and cruel, while some female robots are relatively emotional. He realized he cannot develop empathy with these male robots.

Having sex with Rachel moves Rick into the third phase of cognition, as he begins to emphasize a specific robot or, more accurately, a female robot. Rachel does everything she can to stop Rick from killing her companions, even through sexual relationships. "The body, as the subject of perception and communication, is most obvious in sex... She chose not persuasion, but the closest physical contact, a real and concrete relationship with others" (Miao, 106). Rick confirms his love for Rachel and compares her to a woman who has four years of life. "If you're not a robot... if I could legally marry you, I would... physically." "You are not made up of transistor circuits like fake animals; you are an organic entity" (Dick, 155). Rachel's lure doesn't work, and Rick kills the last three robots, soon haunted by the guilt and moral emptiness of the killing, which takes him to Stage 4.

In the final stage, Rick becomes unusually open to the cognitive limits of life, perhaps because of some kind of self-redemption, or because he realizes that the forms of life are constantly changing. Rick spontaneously merges with Mercer on the mountain and believes that he is Mercer himself. He finds a rare toad in the stone and believes it is real and natural. (Toad is the representative animal of Mercer in the novel). He believes that the toad is a real animal, but when he is told it is not, he thinks the mechanical animal is somehow a real life, only a matter of degree.

Through Rick's work with robots has more or less changed, but in essence he is still self-enclosed. Rick becomes unusually open to the final cognitive limits of life, but still retires from all the robots on his killing list. Thus, the reasons for his open presence are complex. In the end of emotion, human beings tried to expel the bionic man. At the same time, the bionic man imitated the empathy ability of human beings, indicating that the traditional organic community to attempt to integrate heterogeneity will fail.

3. Immunization: Human-machine Symbiosis

According to Miller's theory of community, the human communities of different cultures, including animals, are the result of the construction, and the unity of this construct can always be destroyed. In each community, there are "immunity" and "autoimmunity". The immunome is protective, while the autobody is destructive. This destruction is a form of self-sacrifice to preserve the purity, security, and "holiness" of the community.

Secondly, influenced by the human population autoimmunity and immune mechanisms, the human-machine community is also affected. Under the logic of autoimmunity, killing every robot is destroying the precious human property. At the same time, while hunting robots, humans also hurt themselves. In the human-machine community of Mars colony and earth society, although human and robot are variants of each other, they do not have the same position in their subjectivity in filling the "gap" of the community. Only the family community of Isidore has temporarily found a democratic model beyond isolation and prejudice under the immunization mechanism, which shows that the immunization logic of accepting negation can be used to build a man-machine community. Therefore, man and robot should not be a fighting relationship. Only by getting rid of this power logic can the two sides move towards equality.

The novel doesn't spend much time describing as humans and robots live together on Mars. When the robots reappear on stage, they have gone from loyal servants advertised by the government to cold-blooded killers who flee to Earth after harming human masters. This leaves plenty of imagination. Rick, the main character, speculated that these robots yearn for something better. "Can robots dream?... Obviously, that's why they occasionally kill their

employer and flee here " (Dick, 145). The new Nexus-6 robot is gradually becoming self-conscious and emotional, and is unwilling to be a human servant. As Miller analyzed, "we know that every individual, both now and in the past, is not a whole, but a community of many belligerent forces, each fighting for domination" (258,2011). Thus, some self-aware robots escape to the ideal home -- Earth, which is heard from their human owners. For example, Roy Bty used the pharmacist on Mars to identify himself as a manual worker or field worker; Luba Left disguised as a musician on Earth, singing Don Giovanni and Le Nozze, rather than toiling on the barren land of Mars, which Rick saw as "a fundamentally uninhabitable colonial world" (Dick, 145), even if he had not been there.

The robot imitation community lives temporarily by its close simulation. It is on a smaller scale, consisting of robots fleeing back to Earth, hidden in human society. They mimic the human patterns of life, and the community is destroyed by a threat to humanity. Robots form a imitation community against the human autoimmunity community, but their goal is not to stop the human system. The fake police station on Pmon Street is an example. When Luft realizes that Rick is hunting, she calls one of her robot companions posing Officer Clams to arrest Rick. Although this is a collective of robots that imitate humans in a closed system, for their own interests, they do not directly slander Rick as a robot, but rather bring themselves into the police station in a false way.

An example in this plot independent of autoimmune logic is the relationship of Robot Inspector Garland to two human hunters. Robots will never be able to get themselves to commit real acts of violence against their human suspect Rick, and even hire human hunters like Phil Resch to ensure their authenticity. The purpose of this imitation community is not to invade the humans on Earth, but to protect the robots on the planet themselves. Driven by Phil Resch's doubts, Garland had to undergo a bone marrow test to confirm his "human" identity because he had long used the pretext of "lowering departmental morale" (Dick, 95). As soon as Resch went upstairs to get the test equipment, Garland took out a laser tube and pointed to Rick. He did not immediately shoot Rick off, because he knew that even if he did, another hunter, Rech, would still reveal his false identity. At the end of the plot, the robot Garland is shot by Resch the moment he walks into the office. As Miller highlights, immunity and autoimmunity in any group operate mechanically, spontaneously, inevitably, intentionally or unintentionally, rather than the result of choices made by group members or groups collectively. Each community strives to maintain its purity, security and "sacrosanct" from being polluted by aliens.

Immunization is entering the community and becoming part of the community. The community itself needs immunity and immune mechanisms to keep the community safe. If a community is to survive, it must assimilate its rest. Receiving negation (immunity) is the only way out of negativity (14). Compared with the ordinary human community, in this human-machine community, the immune mechanism is more complex. One of the most prominent points is the contradiction between humans and robots. In the community, by accepting others rather than rejecting others, the immune mechanism of the community can be stimulated, so that the community can get rid of the negative forms. This kind of acceptance of others is very enlightening to dealing with human-machine contradictions. Especially with the development of artificial intelligence, more and more machines are entering people's lives, and the health problem of man-machine community needs to be solved urgently. In short, this temporary community shows that Isidore is natural and without any bias against the robot. They formed a utopian community against a group of humans with their own immune systems but ended in the robots being killed. As Hayes points out, "Eating the predator is not the final solution, because the only way to achieve this illusory end is to bring the predator 'into the body', thus symbolically and literally becoming the predator itself" (Hayles, 186). That is, the two sides should not be a struggling relationship. Only by getting rid of this power logic can both sides move towards equality.

4. A Harmonious Man-machine Community

What the entire human culture does ideologically is to sacrifice robots. Rick did this with his own hands. He is unable to return to the human world in the unpleasant experience of killing the robots. Instead, he abandoned the silence outside the city, and he found something in space similar to Mercer, instead of throwing the results at the reader, where he could feel physical and mental pain without adjustment, "no one here records his or anyone's fall... dead stones, dust-eroded weeds, dryness and death, no perception or memory about him, or themselves" (Dick, 183).

On the one hand, man is extremely lonely; on the other hand, he is extremely close to another person. Rick was struck by a stone after skipping the traces of "human" culture. "The first knowledge of absolute isolation and pain runs through him in its undisguised actual form" (Dick, 183), and this isolation is an important part of his own subjectivity after death, because he is able to feel and endure pain "alone." Rick is not alone; however, he has merged with Mercer. Readers have several possibilities to understand the plot -- Rick may have paranoia or begin to hallucinate; he becomes a robot, or a cross-subject experience beyond language. Rick is willing to accept his posthumous status, and is willing to be a member of the human-machine coexistence community, because he begins to sympathize with the robot. He strives to liberate from human-centered humanity and merge with the uncognitive Mercer. For the toad that Rick eventually finds in the desert, Layla Kukukalick defines it as "the apparent involvement of the divinity in the novel", "through the presence of live animals, Dickard's pain and suffering stops. "His renewed faith in life" (Dick, 70); although Helus represents Rick's self-manipulation, "this sign is an illusion; the miracle is false" (Hayles, 187). So, the toad may be either a miracle or just a fake. Facing the animal, Rick asked himself, "Did Mercer arrange it? But I was Mercer, and I found the toad. Because I saw it through Mercer's eyes" (Dick, 184). At this contradictory moment, Rick realizes that he is half himself and half someone else. He was satisfied that Toad "did not know its existence" (Hayles, 184). Vent explains that Rick and Toad are "going beyond reason, beyond reason, beyond reciprocity. Species existence is a social existence, which is a direct connection" (Vint, 124). Rick regards himself as an innocent boy, eager to share the "miracle of the day" (Dick, 184). Thus, the toad somehow represents his entire transformation. This co-occurrence was renamed by Nancy as "with", which is an ontological state of the community. Nancy as the existence of the community and the traditional agreement community she called it "contact" or "infectious" "a contact, a trembling of the spread of the edge, a make we become partners of passion, or a become partners of passion, common passion" (Nancy, 61). Contact with the community, or infection, is a state of not working, a natural state. This community is not based on a human-only community, it depends on empathy, which can be established, where everyone exposes their limitations, limitations, and even death. This is not a closed community, but an exposed community.

Dick's *Can a Bionic Man Dream of an Electronic Sheep?* suggests a possible shift from an integrated community, where the other is excluded to a community with it, where humans, despite their constructed identities, open their selves, and expose their limitations. The man-machine community is based on the "if / what" logic.

The robots in the novel can master human thinking and empathy through technology and social experience, indicating that human beings are a cultural construction rather than an absolute essence. How to define the boundary between artificial intelligence and humans' beings depends on human choice. In addition, with the emergence of Metheticism, it is also proved that the human spiritual needs cannot be satisfied only from the scientific empirical and technological rationality. Therefore, when human beings are willing to give up the self-restricted by the traditional human boundaries, that is, integrated into a human-machine community, human beings will be in the best state.

5. Conclusion

Human-machine relationship is one of the most concerned issues in the rapidly developing modern society. This paper takes man-machine community as the theme, which has important enlightenment significance for modern people facing the coming era of artificial intelligence. The fate of AI in the literature is often filled with frustration and misfortune. However, Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* provides the imagination of a human-machine community, where accepting each other will help in the long-term survival of humans and other living and artificial life forms, sharing the planet with them. In general, the purpose of this paper is not only the academic value of innovation, but also the practical significance of attracting people's attention and reflection on the future of science, that is, to get rid of the shackles of anthropocentrism and explore an open community in which man and machine may coexist harmoniously. This open and novel way of thinking is also a profound reflection with the advent of the post-human era.

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