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Asimov's Robots and the Human Condition

Introduction

Stories about persecution, prejudice, and bigotry are nothing new, nor were they new during the time when the anthology collection *I, Robot* (1950) by Isaac Asimov was released. Tales about robots were also not a new phenomenon, but the difference between Asimov's work and those that preceded him, were his sympathetic views towards robots (Asimov, *The Caves of Steel*). Asimov wanted to "[...] write a story in which a robot would be portrayed lovingly" (Asimov, *The Caves of Steel* ix), and from there he created the story "Robbie" (1940), which has since become the first chapter of *I, Robot*. Throughout the stories in the anthology, the conflicts are not due to a robot's malicious actions or retaliation, but due to human error that either caused a conflict within the robot's directives, or by design flaws. This deviation from expectation allowed Asimov to explore then-unexplored avenues of possibilities, one of them being the unfair persecution and prejudice towards robots. As critic Donald Palumbo notes in one of his papers on Asimov's literary works, Asimov was a humanist who "[...] perceived the issue of prejudice with unusual objectivity in his personal and public life; he saw it as a broad and pervasive phenomenon, as a constant of the human condition, and consistently incorporated this large view into his fiction" (Palumbo, *Asimov's Crusade Against Bigotry: The Persistence of Prejudice as a Fractal Motif in the Robot/Empire/Foundation Metaseries*. 45). The robots of Asimov's fiction were not creatures destined to become monsters, but instead beings with set laws and regulations that were under the thumb of their masters. Their unjust treatment, therefore, would be even further highlighted as cruel, as the robots themselves had done nothing wrong but exist. If they were treated as badly as they were, what does that say about human beings? Asimov had observed that "[...] prejudice was universal and all groups who were not dominant...were potential

victims” (Palumbo, Asimov’s *Crusade Against Bigotry: The Persistence of Prejudice as a Fractal Motif in the Robot/Empire/Foundation Metaseries*. 46), which informs that the prejudice inferred from his work can be seen as a consequence of robots being a non-dominant group, always at the mercy of their humans.

The idea that the robots of Asimov’s world are creatures treated unjustly merely for the fact that they are non-dominant, is a fascinating one. Fiction lends itself to being able to explore ways in which potential scenarios may occur, and in Asimov’s *I, Robot*, it showcases the ways in which humans can thrive with robots, if they are treated fairly. As Asimov himself acknowledged within one of the stories of the anthology, *“All normal life, Peter, consciously or otherwise, resents domination. If the domination is by an inferior, or by a supposed inferior, the resentment grows stronger. Physically, and, to an extent, mentally, a robot – any robot – is superior to a human being. What makes him slavish, then? Only the First Law!”* (Asimov, *I, Robot* 144-145). Therefore, I will argue within this thesis that Asimov’s *I, Robot* is a collection of stories that tell the tale of human-robot interactions, where those that view robots as more than just tools to be used and discarded, are those that truly prosper.

A Robot’s Function

In the “Introduction” to *The Caves of Steel* (2021), Asimov tells of how the field of robotic fiction was one laced with distrust and disdain for these mechanical creations, where he explains, *“[...] it became very common, in the 1920s and 1930s, to picture robots as dangerous devices that invariably destroyed their creators”* (Asimov, *The Caves of Steel* viii). He likened the view of robots to the view of *Frankenstein*, where *“the creation of another kind of artificial human being also ended in disaster”* (Asimov, *The Caves of Steel* viii). This implication of *robots as the new Frankenstein’s Monster* was something that was prevalent in the fiction of the time, and as critic Gorman Beauchamp points out, *“[t]he fear of the machine that seems to have increased proportionally to man’s increasing reliance on it [...] finds its perfect expression in the symbol of the robot: a fear that Isaac Asimov called the ‘Frankenstein Complex’”* (Beauchamp 84). The fear of something *taking over* and the fear of *destruction* was an ever-lingering presence over this genre of fiction, something that Asimov and other authors began to chafe against; to them, this dismal view of future knowledge and progress was one of folly born by fear of progression (Asimov, *The Caves of Steel*). This idea

of exploring robots in a positive light, therefore, can be viewed within the texts of the anthology of *I, Robot*, where most of its stories tackle the idea that most of the robots' malfunctions and conflicts do not stem from a wilful act of malevolence, but from the faults of their human creators. The primary example of this exists within the concept of "the Three Laws of Robotics", where every robot within Asimov's stories is meant to be programmed with these Laws fully intact. These Laws are the basis of most of the stories' conflict, where the issue at hand will stem from one of the three Laws either being too weak or too strong, overriding another and causing mayhem for their creators. This, Asimov intended to be the "safeguards" of his robots, so that none of his robots "[would] turn stupidly on his creator for no purpose" (Beauchamp 85). None of his robots would turn to another Frankenstein's monster, not without purposeful human malevolence where the intention *was* to create a monster. The Laws and the "*rational lines [of logic]*" (Beauchamp 85) would be what ruled his creations, not the fear of progress.

These "rational lines" are the ways in which the Three Laws were constructed into each robot, where their one common denominator – and what made them robots – were their "positronic brains"; a type of central processing unit (CPU) that is what makes the robots function, what gives them "thought" and "consciousness" (Asimov, *I, Robot*). These brains were essential to the existence of the robots within *I, Robot*, and were the core for which the Three Laws resided in. These Laws were first introduced in the anthology in the story "Runaround", where the two main characters of the story – Gregory Powell and Mike Donovan – talk about the laws among themselves:

"Now, look, let's start with the three fundamental Rules of Robotics – the three rules that are built most deeply into a robot's positronic brain. In the darkness, his gloved fingers ticked off each point.

'We have: One, a robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.' [...]

'Two,' continued Powell, 'a robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.' [...]

*'And three, a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.' (Asimov, *I, Robot* 44-45)*

These Laws are the basis for every robot, and their existence is entirely ruled by them. It is impossible for a robot to deviate from these rules, and most of the issues that arise within the stories of the anthology are caused by one or two of the Laws causing conflicting priorities.

As pointed out by critic Donald Palumbo, “[the robot stories are] investigation[s] of the Three Laws, and particularly of their unanticipated interactions, presented as a mystery that is successfully solved by the personnel of U.S. Robots & Mechanical Men” (Palumbo, Alex Proyas's "I, Robot": Much More Faithful to Asimov Than You Think 62). The Laws are therefore not only the basis of the existence of the robots, but also used as a major plot device within many of the stories within the *I, Robot* anthology collection.

One of these stories where the Three Laws cause unanticipated interactions, is the aforementioned story “Runaround” (Asimov, *I, Robot* 30-55), where the Laws are first introduced. In this chapter, two humans and a robot are sent to a previously derelict mining facility on Mercury, a planet still very much inhospitable to humans. Gregory Powell and Mike Donovan are tasked with getting the facility up and running once more, and with them is the robot SPD – Speedy – to assist them with any task that the humans themselves are unable to do. When such a situation does arise, Speedy is sent to fetch a resource vital for the continued survival of Powell and Donovan. When Speedy does not return as expected, the two humans must put themselves in harm’s way to try to resolve the issue. As they realise that Speedy’s rogue behaviour stems from two conflicting Laws, they must find a way to free the robot from his confusion to save them all. With the Second and Third Law being the cause of the issue, Powell realises that he must strengthen the First Law, which means he must put himself in danger. Whilst the act may be one of frustration and desperation, Powell’s trust of Speedy is one of the earliest showcases of the sympathy that humans have for their robots, especially when said robot is having issues outside of their control. “‘Drag [Speedy] over,’ ordered Powell [to Donovan]. ‘It was his fault.’ He held out a hand and gripped Speedy’s metal paw. ‘It’s O.K. Speedy’” (Asimov, *I, Robot* 55). To Powell, the issue was never a fault of Speedy’s, but a fault of theirs; they did not consider the consequences of their orders, putting not only themselves in danger, but Speedy as well.

Prejudice and Lack of Agency

“‘Holy smokes, boss, what are you doing here? And what am I doing—I’m so confused—’” (Asimov, *I, Robot* 54). This quote occurs the moment after Speedy manages to break free from his conflicting directives and comes back to his senses, showcasing Speedy’s own lack of knowledge of the problems that had occurred. To him, the conflicting Laws had become as

if he lost complete control, and therefore could not pull himself out on his own. Speedy had no agency in whether he could choose to obey one Law or the other, forcing him to be at the whim of his human masters. As the critic Hawk Chang points out, “[w]ords such as ‘obey’, ‘order’, and ‘protect’ are indicative of a human-dominated mind-set that humans give orders and robots follow and provide protection” (Chang 104), robots are meant to be subservient to humans, and nothing more. The robots of Asimov’s world are not of equal standing to that of humans, where some humans within the narrative of a couple of them being actively hostile towards their machine counterparts.

This hostility and prejudice towards robots can be seen quite clearly within the first chapter of the anthology, “Robbie”. The titular character of Robbie is a nursemaid to a young girl, Gloria, who both have grown incredibly attached to the other. However, Gloria’s mother – Grace Weston – is rather uncomfortable with having the robot in their house and convinces her husband – George Weston – to get rid of Robbie. In Robbie’s absence, Gloria becomes increasingly sad and lonely as the robot was her best and closest friend. Grace’s attempt to soothe her daughter by getting a dog fails in cheering Gloria up, and it is only the prospect to the technological heaven that is New York City that begins to lift the young girl’s spirit. However, despite her parents’ belief, Gloria’s joy comes from the prospect of hunting down Robbie, as there are robots within the city, and to her young mind they must know where her friend is. During her search for her nursemaid, Gloria finds herself nearly killed by a vehicle in an assembly plant, saved only by the quick reflexes of the very robot she was looking for. It was only Robbie’s knowledge and love for the young girl that saved her, for none of the humans nor other robots noticed her fast enough. “*Robbie’s chrome-steel arms (capable of bending a bar of steel two inches in diameter into a pretzel) wound about the little girl gently and lovingly, and his eyes glowed a deep, deep red*” (Asimov, I, Robot 27-28).

With Robbie, the conflict of the narrative comes in the form of Grace and her disdain for the robot, “‘[...] Robbie was only a machine, just a nasty old machine. He wasn’t alive at all” (Asimov, I, Robot 14). To Grace, Robbie is nothing more than a toy her daughter is obsessed with, something that must be removed for the betterment of their family. Yet, even as her daughter grows increasingly upset, she does not relent nor accept that her daughter was indeed attached to Robbie. As critic Chang puts it, “[for Grace], robots are not to be trusted,

because unlike human beings who can reason with meanings and emotions, Robbie is nothing but a machine” (Chang 104). This leads into the hostility and prejudice that the characters and environment of “Robbie” embody, where New York have passed an ordinance “[to keep] all robots off the streets between sunset and sunrise” (Asimov, *I, Robot* 11). This ordinance, alongside the undertones of hostility coming from the society within the narrative, signify a greater fear within the society of Asimov’s anthology, where “Robbie” is only the beginning to the growing unrest with robots. As both critic Chang and Palumbo notes, the prejudice of robots become something of a reoccurring topic within the anthology series, whether it be as obvious as with “Robbie”, or more subtle as with “Runaround” (Chang) (Palumbo, *Asimov’s Crusade Against Bigotry: The Persistence of Prejudice as a Fractal Motif in the Robot/Empire/Foundation Metaserries.*). To the humans within the narratives of the anthology series, robots are only meant to be subservient, and should not become anything else; they were created to be slaves, and they must remain so. For anything else would mean not only the lack of needed labour for the employers, but the acknowledgement that robots are as sentient and sapient as humans.

Whilst Asimov did not wish to make a direct comparison towards a single minority group to his robots, he has acknowledged that “*prejudice was universal and all groups who were not dominant...were potential victims*” (Palumbo, *Asimov’s Crusade Against Bigotry: The Persistence of Prejudice as a Fractal Motif in the Robot/Empire/Foundation Metaserries.* 46) and the theme of unfair persecution and harm can be seen throughout the *I, Robot* anthology, as well as the rest of the *Robots* series. Within the anthology, the form that prejudice takes is one of either quiet disdain or a view of something as a lesser being, to that of actively wanting to sabotage a robot, as seen within the stories “Evidence” and “the Evitable Conflict”, where humans become borderline cruel to robots. As Palumbo reiterates, the portrayal that Asimov has towards his robots echo very similar to the ways in which known minority groups have been treated in the past (Palumbo, *Asimov’s Crusade Against Bigotry: The Persistence of Prejudice as a Fractal Motif in the Robot/Empire/Foundation Metaserries.* 47). This can be seen in the ways in which human characters within the stories contained within the collection describe their robot companies; often with the term “boy”, something that has historically been used in derogatory ways towards African American men (Palumbo, Alex Proyas's "I, Robot": Much More Faithful to Asimov Than You Think 66). The robots, therefore, are perhaps not a direct metaphor to any specific minority group, but instead

embody a combination of several to create a believable and organic form of prejudice that robots within such a society would experience. The robots are not seen as alive, but rather beings that can be ordered around and told what to do, no matter their own opinions on the matter. As seen with Robbie, the robot would be much happier around the little girl that is his charge, than in a factory building other robots. Yet, it is not by his will that he is allowed to remain with Gloria in the end, but the human parents that decide to not separate them once again. Agency was never afforded to Robbie, despite him being the only one who cared enough to pay attention to the young girl, and cherish his moments with her and mourn his time away, “[t]he robot left with a disconsolate step and Gloria choked back a sob” (Asimov, I, Robot 7).

Societal Persecution

When it comes to robots such as Speedy and Robbie, they are some of the more sympathetic robots within the anthology collection, where what happens to them are outside of their control. They are merely items to be used or discarded, as seen with how Grace views Robbie as nothing more than a “pet robot” and can easily be replaced by another pet (Chang). The motif of robots being seen as nothing more than tools is used throughout the anthology collection, where such beliefs can lead to further conflict if acted upon. This can be seen more clearly within the narrative of “Evidence”, where the antagonist of the story wishes to “expose” a rising politician and prosecutor as a robot. Both Francis Quinn and Stephen Byerley are campaigning for the position as the Mayor, but Quinn does not wish to play fair. In an attempt to stifle his competition, Quinn approaches U.S. Robotics (USR) to investigate whether or not Byerley is a robot or not. As the story progresses, increasingly invasive and hostile actions are taken against Byerley to “expose” him, all arranged by Quinn and his supporters. The rumours are laid to rest, however, when Byerley hits another man during a public speech, effectively “proving” that he is indeed not a robot, as it would go against the First Law to harm a human being. In the end, Byerley wins the election despite all the harassment he endured and becomes “*a very good Mayor*” (Asimov, I, Robot 238). However, as the reader discovers at the very end of the chapter, the “unfounded” rumours were, in fact, correct: Byerley was a robot. The issue for Byerley was never that the rumour was true or not, but that the fact it was raised and used to invade his privacy *was*. As Byerley states, “*As a citizen of adult responsibility [...] I have certain rights under the Regional Articles. Searching me would come under the heading of violating my Right of Privacy*” (Asimov, I,

Robot 228). The investigation on whether Byerley was a robot or not was politically motivated, which therefore caused an incentive for Byerley to not only stand his ground on his existence as a human being, but also implies that the accusation was only made *because* of the politics involved. There had been no such accusations before Byerley ran for the office of Mayor, even when he had been in public office as a prosecutor beforehand. The usage of this accusation, therefore, can be viewed as an active attempt to use prejudice against a group of individuals to shame and invalidate an opponent, not so dissimilar to prejudice and bigotry experienced in the world (Palumbo, Asimov's Crusade Against Bigotry: The Persistence of Prejudice as a Fractal Motif in the Robot/Empire/Foundation Metaseries.).

The motif of prejudice against robots, therefore, has not only significance to the plot of some of the stories within the anthology collection, but are also ingrained into the very fabric of the world that Asimov weaves. As critic Palumbo notes, “[p]rejudice or bigotry is the most persistent motif in all of Asimov's [Science-Fiction]” (Palumbo, Alex Proyas's "I, Robot": Much More Faithful to Asimov Than You Think 66), where he remarks this motif has a more prominent appearance in “Evidence” and “Robbie”. This is further remarked upon in the anthology itself, where Dr Susan Calvin – who was a close friend of Byerley – remarks that the reporter interviewing her “[...] share[s] a prejudice against robots which is quite unreasoning” (Asimov, I, Robot 238). This statement is significant not only that it exists within the text itself, but due to *who* it is that states it; Dr Calvin herself. The anthology is framed around this one interview, where every story is one that Dr Calvin recounts the events of, which is then followed by her own commentary of the events. Whilst she does not have a presence in all the stories, one stands out with a more prominent significance: “Robbie”. This is where we are introduced to her character outside of the setting of the interview and get a glance at the woman she becomes. Dr. Calvin appears during one of Gloria's adventures in search of Robbie, where she encounters the “Talking Robot”. This scene not only further establishes Gloria's view of robots as people, as seen with her first interaction with the robot and her opinion that “[...] that a robot that actually talked was worth a great deal of politeness” (Asimov, I, Robot 20), but also in the fact that Dr Calvin is a witness to this. The implication of the scene, and of how Dr Calvin “began rapidly writing” and how her research paper for a Physics class was finished during the events that transpired (Asimov, I, Robot 20-21), can be inferred that what inspired her to become a robophysicologist was Gloria. Specifically, the way in which Gloria viewed robots as something *more* than tools and items,

but as people worthy of respect and treated as such. This, therefore, makes Dr Calvin's comment about prejudice hit all that more effectively, as she has been one of the few characters that have repeatedly shown up in the anthology as well as the framing of the stories. Dr Calvin has been there since the beginning, and she has seen what human prejudice has led to. It is not a question of if it is happening to her, but instead something that she has lived and breathed. As stated by Palumbo in his paper, "[Asimov] employs the dynamics of bigotry in the service of telling a story – and to make statements about prejudice, 'the cruelty of man to man'" (Palumbo, Asimov's Crusade Against Bigotry: The Persistence of Prejudice as a Fractal Motif in the Robot/Empire/Foundation Metaseries. 47). The issue of prejudice, therefore, as experienced by Robbie, Speedy, and Byerley, are a consequence of man's tendency towards cruelty, and their disdain to anything that might undermine them. Asimov's anthology collection, therefore, "alerts us to a typical robot-phobia prevalent in human society, and the consequences" (Chang 106), where the reader is questioned with their beliefs about a robot's place within society, and if this fear of them is truly rational.

A Robot's Love

"'Robbie!' Her shriek pierced the air, and one of the robots about the table faltered and dropped the tool he was holding. Gloria went almost mad with joy. Squeezing through the railing before either parent could stop her, she dropped lightly to the floor a few feet below and ran toward her Robbie, arms waving and hair flying.

And the three horrified adults, as they stood frozen in their tracks, saw what the excited little girl did not see, - a huge, lumbering tractor bearing blindly down upon its appointed track.

It took split-seconds for Weston to come to his senses, and those split-seconds meant everything, for Gloria could not be overtaken. Although Weston vaulted the railing in a wild attempt, it was obviously hopeless. Mr. Struthers signalled wildly to the overseers to stop the tractor, but the overseers were only human and it took time to act.

It was only Robbie that acted immediately and with precision.

[...]

Gloria regained her breath, submitted to a series of passionate hug on the part of both her parents and turned eagerly toward Robbie. As far as she was concerned, nothing had happened except that she had found her friend.

[...]

Gloria had a grip about the robot's neck that would have asphyxiated any creature but one of metal, and was prattling nonsense in half-hysterical frenzy. Robbie's chrome-steel arms (capable of bending a bar of steel two inches in diameter into a pretzel) wound about the little girl gently and lovingly, and his eyes glowed a deep, deep red." (Asimov, I, Robot 26-29)

In this passage, Gloria is finally successful in finding her closest friend, and her own joy sets her life in danger. The adults in the situation have already, by this point, lost interest in paying a close attention to Gloria and where she wanders – having already proven once she will sneak off if she so desires – and therefore are unable to stop the young girl before it is too late. None of the humans – or the robots within the assembly plant – are able to react to Gloria's action, with the exception of Robbie. He not only heard her shout, but he reacted in a rather human way; by dropping his tool as if *he* was the one surprised into shock at seeing his former charge. This human description of his actions and hearing Gloria, as well as with the way Asimov describes Robbie and the way he “lovingly” held onto Gloria, is a rather pointed rebuttal against Grace's earlier claims that Robbie was “just a machine”, and not “alive”. Robbie has consistently throughout the story been described with a form of anthropomorphism that imply a degree of humanity. During the beginning of the story, Robbie showcases his ability to hold opinions, and that he himself can not only choose things for himself – “*Robbie waited until she had caught her breath and then pulled gently at a lock of hair. / 'You want something?' [...] / Robbie nodded rapidly*” (Asimov, I, Robot 5) – but that he has preferences as well, where his favourite story is *Cinderella*. Through Robbie's interactions with Gloria, Asimov showcases that the adults in the story are not only wrong about Robbie, but that any attempt to dissuade Gloria's perception of Robbie only further harms her. After all, she would not have been in this situation had it not been for her parents removing Robbie from the household.

Another important thing to take away from this passage, is the way that Asimov uses language to create contrasts and comparisons. In the first paragraph, the humans are not paying close attention to their daughter and are too late to react when Gloria decides to jump off the platform. It is only Robbie, by contrast, who is quick to pay attention to his former charge and therefore able to react to her impending death. None of the humans within the plant are fast enough to have any hope to save her, and here Asimov points out that, as they *were* only human, they would never be able to react in time. Their longwinded attempts at

trying to save Gloria fail, where Robbie's quick reaction and robotic precision enables him with the ability to save her. However, the passage that sticks out the most to the contrast within the text, is the way Robbie's hug is explained. Here, Asimov notes that Robbie could easily crush Gloria by one wrong move, yet those strong and unyielding arms are gentle and loving as they hold onto the little girl. Robbie has the potential to be dangerous and lethal, yet he is one of the gentlest characters within the story. This paragraph echoes the overall theme of Robbie as something *more* than what people first assume; he may be a robot, but he is a *kind* robot who loves Gloria and cherishes her above anything else. It is this contrast of Robbie's exterior against his interior thoughts that highlight the complexity of robots, and of how the view of *robots are simple and replaceable* is flawed.

Whilst an argument can be made that Robbie's act of saving Gloria was one spurred on by the Three Laws, the actions after the event imply otherwise. Robbie's tender hug of Gloria is not described as if he is merely indulging her, or is ruled by programming, but of that of a character that was *frightened* and is *grateful* that the person he cares so much for is safe. Throughout the story, Asimov pointedly reiterates his anthropomorphism by giving Robbie human traits, such as him being "hurt" by unjust accusations, being stubborn and petty, and able of having a favourite activity. Through Asimov's description of Robbie's actions, as well as his descriptions of the robot's emotional state, paints an image of Robbie as *more* than just a machine. When this is combined with Gloria's explicit belief that Robbie is *alive* and a person, the reader is incentivised to agree with the young girl. After all, something that isn't alive wouldn't have a favourite story, or pout when treated unfairly after a game. It is the prejudice of the adults in the story that make them unable to see Robbie as anything more than a metal machine. This is seen in explicit detail in the beginning of the story, where Grace demands Gloria sends Robbie away so the humans can eat dinner in peace. Gloria had promised to tell the tale of Cinderella to Robbie, and dinner interrupts that. In an attempt to appease her mother, Gloria tells her mother Robbie will be silent and sit in a corner so she can continue the tale, in which Robbie answers with a nod as he was "appealed to" such a solution. When Grace rejects this solution, Robbie leaves the room with a "disconsolate step", showcasing his ability to be sad and distraught (Asimov, I, Robot 7). Grace's low opinion of robots has made her unable to see anything more than metal in Robbie, and she will dismiss the robot and her daughter's feelings as she regards them as foolish and unfounded. It is after this scene that Grace truly begins to advocate for the removal of

Robbie, signifying that she truly does not see anything alive within the robot nanny. Yet, it is the fact that Robbie cares about Gloria that saves her daughter's life, and it is only after this event that Grace will allow Robbie to stay with them. It is only after Grace nearly lost her daughter that she concedes that Robbie may be important to Gloria and should therefore remain with them "until he rusts" (Asimov, *I, Robot* 28). For, as seen right after Gloria is saved by Robbie, it is not her parents that she latches onto, but her robot nanny. Gloria has chosen who she cares the most for, and so, Grace must decide whether to keep her daughter's love, or to give into prejudice. As Gloria and Robbie chose each other, Grace chose to keep Robbie so she may keep her daughter.

Conclusion

When it comes to the stories within *I, Robot*, the presence of prejudice is a prominent motif. The robots within these stories end up in conflicts with their human counterparts, often due to an error or unjust judgement on the part of the human. This is seen in stories like "Runaround", "Robbie", and "Evidence", where the conflict of the narrative stem from the action of a human that a robot must contend with. Speedy is stuck in a loop due to the thoughtlessness of his human companion, Gloria is almost killed due to her mother's disdain for Robbie, and Byerley is accused of being a robot as an attempt to smear his political campaign. Yet, in contrast to the events that cause the conflict, it is those that treat the robots with kindness and understanding that thrive within the narrative. Powell's desire to understand what went wrong with Speedy is what leads to discovering the problem – and subsequently – and the solution, Gloria's love for Robbie is what ultimately saves her, and Dr Calvin's kindness towards Byerley leads to her having gained a life-long friend. It is through their success and happiness that I would argue that ultimately, it is their sympathy and understanding of robots that brought them there, not their lack of it. In the case of Robbie, all he ever wanted was to be with his young charge, where they could play games together and tell stories. It is the attempt to pull them away that puts Gloria in danger; it is the prejudice of Grace that could have ended in tragedy. The mistrust that man has towards machine is one of folly, where it only leads to stagnation in progress. This, therefore, is why I would argue that the interpretation of prejudice as a dynamic within Asimov's world is one of importance, as it highlights the way in which prejudice can be prevalent in society, and how it can shape the way in which one acts. The stories within the anthology collection, I would argue, has significance to this day as thought-provoking material that can make its readers question the

dynamics of the society one lives in, and of how to recognize it happening. Fiction is an avenue for exploring ideas and topics that one cannot manage in the real world, and it can therefore present questions to events and a future not yet experienced. Asimov has, I would argue, presented the idea that prejudice towards a non-dominant group is one based off irrational fear and stupidity. The only thing that I would contend to fear, therefore, are humans themselves, and our tendency towards cruelty to anything different. After all, if robots were created by the hands of humans, would they not be an extension of us? Would their actions not be a reflection of our own actions? Therefore, it would reason to be the wisest decision to not only show our robots kindness, but to treat them as we should ideally treat each other, so we all may prosper.

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