i, Robot

Human Nature

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**What does it mean**

**to be human?**

(1950)

Human Nature in i, Robot

Cameron J. Burgess

 In the novel *i, Robot* by Isaac Asimov, the author shows his views on human nature through humans, and even particular robots. From the short stories Isaac Asimov told, Gloria and her family, Donovan and Powell, and some of the robots in the novel had shown the most aspects of human nature.

 The first short story told featured a girl named Gloria, her parents and a robot named Robbie. Gloria’s mother didn’t want her daughter to have a robot, because she was afraid of what she didn’t know, and she wanted to be like her neighbors who didn’t have robots and were also nervous about theirs. Gloria’s father always acted to please others, first to Gloria when he tried to keep Robbie, then to his wife to get rid of him. He later felt guilty for returning him and tricked his wife into getting him back. Fear of the unknown, the need to please others, and guilt are human nature.

 Donovan and Powell were introduced in the second couple of stories. Powell showed distrust and fear toward the non-functioning robots the pair came across. It is in the nature of humans to fear and distrust potentially dangerous things. Both Donovan and Powell were willing to risk their lives multiple times, such as when Speedy was the “robot equivalent of drunkenness” (Asimov 57). Lastly, Donovan and Powell didn’t have to force Cutie to believe in space and Earth. He was doing what he was supposed to do and he wasn’t harming anyone with his beliefs. I think Isaac Asimov was trying to show that it doesn’t matter if other people have different religions or beliefs as you as long as they don’t harm anyone.

 Finally, robots like Robbie, Speedy, and Cutie also represented certain aspects of the way humans act and react. Robbie signified how young children act. He was happy to play and didn’t have a care in the world. Even Robbie’s body language was one of a young child, like when he “nodded his head vigorously until the metal of his neck hummed” (Asimov 4) when he was offered a story. Speedy represents what humans do when presented with an ultimatum, or order that conflicts with another. Just as Speedy ran around the pool of selenium, humans usually don’t do either thing and end up getting nothing finished. One of the most humanized robots is Cutie. Cutie’s refusal to believe what Donovan and Powell said about Earth and space represents religion, and how it can start wars. The nature of humans can be dangerous like Cutie, but it can also be like Robbie’s.

 In conclusion, the human nature that was portrayed in this novel mostly showed people trying to keep themselves and others alive. I noticed a reoccurring theme of fear of the unknown, shown by Gloria’s mother and Donovan and Powell. It was interesting how Asimov humanized the robots by giving them human nature; this made them more dangerous, yet more human. The way they robots are portrayed makes the reader ask; Are humans dangerous because of our nature?