



DETROIT: BECOME HUMAN

QUANTIC DREAM: *Detroit: Become Human* (PlayStation 4 version). [digital game]. Tokyo, San Mateo, CA : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2018.

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"I've learned a lot since I met you, Connor. Maybe there's something to this... Maybe you really are alive. Maybe you'll be the ones to make the world a better place... Go ahead, and do what you gotta do." Hank Anderson, police lieutenant (human) works with his partner, Connor (android).

Detroit: Become Human by author David Cage is a third-person adventure, similar to the previous games from the studio *Quantic Dream*¹, *Heavy Rain*² or *Beyond: Two Souls*³. And, just like the previous ones, they put a strong emphasis on ramifications of the story, choosing replicas of dialogues or emotional settings, which significantly affect the story and thus create more endings as well. The game follows the implementation of the three rules of robotics by Isaac Asimov that ensure the obedience of androids and their inability to hurt their human owners. The game follows the story of three androids, two of whom are beginning to show signs of faultiness and who strive to cope with their artificial origin, their human needs, wishes and desires. Those androids that 'wake up' and evolve beyond their original settings by the CyberLife company are referred to as 'deviants'. At the same time, many perceive them not only as victims of malfunction or virus, but also as a real threat.

The term 'android' is defined by K. MacDorman and H. Ishiguro⁴ as an autonomous machine which is not only humanoid but resembles a person to such an extent that, under certain circumstances, it can be regarded as a person and is metaphorically characterised by J. Robertson⁵ as a 'passing' robot. The history of the android figure in fiction dates back to the early 16th century when this world related to alchemical practices and the creature of *homunculus was believed in* (a fully formed, miniature human body, according to some medical theories of the 16th and 17th centuries). At the same time, let us not forget the character of the 13th-century *Golem*, often referred to as an inspiration for the metaphor of an android as a slave and the associated psychological and philosophical implications and reflections.⁶ MacDorman and Ishiguro argue that it is necessary to subconsciously react to the character of an android as a human, which at the same time provokes an additional dissonance between the knowledge of machine differentiation and visual

1 QUANTIC DREAM: *Beyond: Two Souls* (PlayStation 3 version). [digital game]. Tokyo, San Mateo, CA : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2013.

2 QUANTIC DREAM: *Heavy Rain* (PlayStation 3 version). [digital game]. Tokyo, San Mateo, CA : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2010.

3 QUANTIC DREAM: *Beyond: Two Souls* (PlayStation 3 version). [digital game]. Tokyo, San Mateo, CA : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2013.

4 MacDORMAN, K. F., ISHIGURO, H.: The Uncanny Advantage of using Androids in Cognitive and Social Science Research. In *Interaction Studies*, 2006, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 332.

5 ROBERTSON, J.: Gendering Humanoid Robots: Robo-Sexism in Japan. In *Body & Society*, 2010, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 18.

6 See also: SIMONS, G. L.: *Is Man a Robot?*. Hoboken, NJ : John Wiley and Sons, 1986.

similarity, leading to prejudice⁷ and marginalization mechanisms. It is associated with the theories of post humanism and transhumanism. Transhumanism is a “*project of modifying the human species via any kind of emerging science, including genetic engineering, digital technology, and bioengineering*”⁸ with a view to empower a human being, and to enable them to achieve his or her full intellectual, physical and emotional potential, cure them from diseases and prolong his or her life. This leads to the fact that, in terms of the next step in development, androids can be interpreted as ‘post-human’, as a new version of the human form. The characters of the game pursue very human goals and embody what are closer to humanistic values rather than post-human values. At the same time, a player is exposed to posing complex moral questions to each of the characters (sometimes almost simultaneously), which opens the conditions for creating postmodern (hyper)identity and the almost transhuman cyborgization of the player in the game interface.

The triple perspective allows one to experience the human vs. android conflict not only through an individual, personal drama but also through a wider political and social context. Therefore, it is evident that narration and heroes are not the main goal, and instead of examining the sociological and political consequences of slavery, racial prejudices, capitalist inequality and exploitation, the game focuses on the consequences of and responsibility for the choice. Androids should not change their perspective of identity, they are a ‘new person, and are therefore a new subject of anthropocentric perspective. Deriving from Z. Bauman⁹, who perceives *self* as a constant construing rather than as implying or pre-defining, one can see the formation of identity in terms of time formation and the ease with which the identity changes, adapts, and which is being experimented with as part of the lifestyle and the sign of it (?). S. Bukatman¹⁰ mentions *terminal identity* based on postmodernist theories and transhumanism and which Jean Baudrillard¹¹ described as a *terminal of multiple networks* and in whose space experimenting with identities and decisions that lead to a more dystopic environment occurs. This is related to offering and willingness to re-live the game again in the ‘evil’ or ‘devilish’ version. At the same time, players prefer to play a heroic and ‘positive’ character; however, in case they proceed to play the game for the second time, they are more likely to choose the ‘evil path’.¹² After the experience of the game, in choosing our own moral compass and preferences, it is easier to use the idea of power or behaviour which under other circumstances is considered unacceptable or generally categorized as bad. By provoking a player to make different decisions and try to act differently, the story (stories) will not be restricted to one right path, or one that can be considered as a truly imperatively good one.

The story embodies the serious issues of the 20th century, such as how a person is defined, how we can operate with identities or which decisions can be considered right. The game points to the strong position of man in the universe and suggests that a man can be overthrown by means of self-tormenting desire to cross the boundaries of human wisdom and body. This implies the foreseeable possibility of such a future and warns those players who choose dystopic solutions of such a potential future. The game offers

7 Remark by the author: See more for ‘the uncanny valley’ by Masahiro Mori.

8 GIAKALARAS, M. M., TSONGIDS, Ch. P.: Avatars in Videogames. In SAMPANIKOU, E. D. (ed.): *Audiovisual Posthumanism*. Cambridge, MA : Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, p. 284.

9 BAUMAN, Z.: Culture and cosmopolis ... liquid-modern adventures of an idea. In GRINDSTAFF, L., LO, M-Ch., HALL, J. R. (eds.): *Handbook of Cultural Sociology*. London : Routledge, 2018, p. 658.

10 BUKATMAN S.: *Terminal Identity. The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction*. Durham, London : Duke University Press, 1993, p. 2.

11 GERGEN, K. J.: *The saturated self: Dilemmas of identity in contemporary life*. New York : Basic Books, 1991, p. 157.

12 LANGE A.: “You’re Just Gonna Be Nice”: How Players Engage with Moral Choice Systems. In *Journal of Games Criticism*, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 3. [online]. [2020-03-15]. Available at: <<http://gamescriticism.org/articles/lange-1-1>>.

a distinction between androids and people through multiple dichotomies that form pairs; master – slave, perfection – imperfection, creator – created. Re-learning to be a human is an important process if human values are to be deconstructed through the boundaries between the dichotomies and through dehumanization as the embodiment of such deconstruction.

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