



Artificial Intelligence as a Cause of Existential Crisis in Isaac Asimov's Short Stories

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ABSTRACT

Isaac Asimov was a prolific Science Fiction writer whose works explore the relationship between humans and machines, the ethical implications of advanced technology, and the potential consequences of creating artificial intelligent robots. Among his extensive body of works, the three short stories: *Robbie* (1940), *Robot Dreams* (1986), and *The Bicentennial Man* (1976), are selected to be analysed through French Philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre's concept of Existentialism. The study aims to analyze the Sartrean concept of "Existence precedes essence" emphasizing human existence and the responsibility of their choices and actions. This non-empirical study uses the data collected from the text of the selected short stories as the main source of investigation and employs the tool of textual analysis to identify and examine the concept of Sartrean existentialism. The results show that the robots in the stories strive to find their essence in a world of humans and their freedom is restricted due to human characters experiencing an existential crisis, mistrust, uneasiness, and anxiety.



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INTRODUCTION

In the 19th century, Science fiction developed as a distinctive literary genre. The term Science Fiction is a type of fiction that refers to the portrayal of several ideas and possibilities related to science and technological discoveries, inventions, phenomena, and fields as well as the impact and consequences of scientific and technological advances on individuals and societies. This period saw the golden age of science fiction as not only did the genre evolve, encompassing a variety of themes from space exploration and artificial intelligence to societal concerns over scientific technology but also Pulp magazines like *Astounding Science Fiction* and *Amazing Stories* and several prominent authors played a significant role in making the

genre popular. One of the eminent Science fiction authors was the American writer, Isaac Asimov. He started his career as a young writer, educator and chemist contributing to magazines, academic scholarly papers and scientific research. He had vast knowledge about scientific background which later on influenced his science fiction works. He developed a few terms like "Robotics", and "Psychohistory" and established the "Three Laws of Robotics" which he mentioned in his writings. His popular three laws on "robotics" continue to influence researchers and scientists in the domain of robotics, engineering, and artificial intelligence. Throughout his vast literary career, Asimov wrote nearly 500 works. His popular works are his classic science fiction novels in "Foundation" series and a collection of nine short narratives in "I, Robot". However, among his writings, the short stories *Robbie*, *Robot Dreams*, and *The Bicentennial Man* are perfect examples of his ability to incorporate scientific facts, elements, and inventions with fiction. The three short narratives explore the theme of scientific and technological advancements, human-robot interactions, development of artificial intelligence and its consequences.

Robbie is a short story that revolves around a little girl, Gloria who is emotionally attached and fond of a highly advanced robot, *Robbie*. *Robbie* works at the Weston household. He manages several complex tasks in the house and takes care of Gloria. Mrs. Weston, Gloria's mother and the matriarch of the household becomes deeply anxious and concerned with her daughter's involvement with *Robbie*. Her mother thinks that *Robbie* is unsafe and might create a hindrance in her daughter's social development, so she sends *Robbie* back to the factory. Gloria becomes devastated and searches for *Robbie*.

In *Robot Dreams*, Dr. Susan Calvin, the chief Robopsychologist with Dr. Linda Rash, a new recruit, investigates a robot called Elvex or LVX-1 with a positronic brain pattern that possesses the unique ability to dream, a quality peculiar to Robots. After investigating, Dr. Calvin realizes that Elvex will lead the other robots to turn against humans.

The short story *The Bicentennial Man* revolves around the life and evolution of a robot named Andrew for two centuries. Andrew, unlike typical robots, is artistic and intelligent. He portrays a strong desire to become more like a human. Thus, throughout the story, he strives to become one, both emotionally, biologically, and physically, by undertaking a series of transformations and modifications. The aforementioned three stories explore human-robot relationships, their potential consequences, the human attachment to machines, societal attitudes towards the advancement of scientific technology, and existential and moral dilemmas that arise when technology blurs the lines between human and artificial intelligence.

The aim of this research is to identify and analyze Jean-Paul Sartre's existential concept of "*Existence precedes essence*" with its three main elements: *meaningless*, *human freedom*, and *responsibility* in *Robbie*, *Robot Dreams*, and *The Bicentennial Man* by Isaac Asimov.

Nowadays, the advancements in technology and the rise of artificial intelligence are not only reshaping the world we live in but also the way we live at an unprecedented pace. Technology and artificial intelligence are directly involved in the everyday lives of every individual with 24/7 availability from speaking to us on our smart devices, performing everyday mundane to highly complex tasks to doing reasoning and making decisions on our behalf. The contemporary world is witnessing the development of new technology and the way artificial intelligence is revolutionizing technology in all domains. In daily life, artificial intelligence is more interactive in households through smart voice assistants such as Siri (Apple), Cortana (Microsoft), Alexa (Amazon), and Google's Assistant. These assistants are able to control other smart devices to such an extent that can use themselves as a home automation system.

They learn their owner's habits using their smart devices installed in homes by paying attention to their owner's routines, their activities, their health, the things they search on the internet, to their sleeping patterns. The students are also using chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard which helps them to produce assignments in seconds. The transportation companies such as Waymo and Tesla are using AI algorithms to develop driverless vehicles to reduce accidents.

In addition, Hanson Robotics, a Hong Kong-based company created a human-based robot called Sophia referred to as a “Social robot”. She can interact with people face to face through natural language conversations. She also observes and copies facial expressions of people which allows her to express herself emotionally while interacting with others. Sophia is regarded as the first robot citizen as she was granted citizenship of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Thus, advanced technology and artificial intelligence are helping to automate every single mundane task, thereby transforming the nature of jobs and relieving humans to perform easy to difficult work.

However, the advancement of technology and artificial intelligence brings with it several deleterious effects, such as misuse of information, breach of privacy, loss of jobs, and more which can pose as a threat to humanity. In recent times, several Hollywood film and television scriptwriters lost their jobs in big studios as a result of the use of artificial intelligence. Due to this, several writers along with popular Hollywood actors went on a strike, known as the 2023 SAG-AFTRA strike, demanding to curb the use of artificial intelligence. As the characters in Asimov’s stories struggle with their identity and purpose in a posthuman world, individuals today face similar challenges that require a proper ethical approach to harness the potential of technology and artificial intelligence while addressing its complexities and risks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Otis (2001) stated that Isaac Asimov held a biochemistry professorship and formulated an intriguing perspective on history which he presented in several essays. However, he did not expand its application beyond the realm of science fiction. At the core of Asimov's concept is the belief that advancements in science and technology bring the most transformative societal shifts. He felt this was especially true for foundational innovations like fire, agriculture, and domestication of animals. This gave rise to a belief that life was constant and unchanging. In societies before modern times, people generally thought that human history had reached a standstill and no more changes were in store. Yet, Asimov observed that the pace of technological advancement sped up around the 1800s, during the Industrial Revolution, making change noticeable within a single lifetime. The researcher argued that this awareness marked a pivotal moment in human history, inciting a "new curiosity" about the future. Although he focused this theory on science fiction, its implications extend far beyond, adding a new layer to existential human thought as it suggests that change will continue even after our lifetime.

Brauner (2016) analyzed that Science fiction tales frequently serve as platforms for discussing new advancements and their ethical implications. Primarily, these narratives aim to portray future scenarios shaped by emerging technologies. Asimov's short story “Runaround” is an early example that prompts forward-thinking by exploring the dilemmas that future generations may face, particularly in robotics—a recurring theme in Asimov’s work. The researcher’s analysis is grounded in critiques of Asimov's laws, alternative rule sets, the evolution of robotics and its ethical challenges.

Blum (2016) identified the themes of dehumanization in terms of both slaves and robots designed to follow commands, which is found in Asimov's stories. Just like a program allows a robot to tackle and solve problems while obeying instructions, making it an ideal servant, the laws in the British Colonies aimed to maintain an effective slavery system by keeping slaves restricted. Isaac Asimov's 'Three Laws of Robotics' serve a similar purpose, acting as the framework that makes a robot-centric society functional. However, Asimov's stories illustrate that this command system eventually unravels, revealing that neither robots nor slaves can function in a consistent master-slave relationship. The Three Laws, intended to ensure safety, obedience, and functionality present an inherent contradiction. As a result, the concept of slavery is logically flawed.

Likhodzievskiy and Akhmedov (2020) argued that Asimov was ahead of his time in predicting the course of social thinking, though his ideas were not directly applicable to real-world situations. Within its own rules, the Foundation universe serves as a compelling model. Asimov skillfully maintains internal coherence within his fictional world, adjusting it only once to fit his narrative in a well-explained manner. As the series evolved, the focus shifted from psychohistory to more metaphysical themes, altering the tone of the work. This shift is likely why Asimov never concluded the saga, opting instead to delve into the Foundation's origins, leaving readers with much to ponder.

Sharifovich (2022) explored the development of robots from their creation to their assimilation into human communities. He found the tension between humans and robots and demonstrated how people often perceive robots as menacing, while robots find it challenging to grasp human feelings and intentions. This tension is alleviated when humans come to appreciate robots, overcoming their initial fears and doubts. Furthermore, the study analyzed that the book "I, Robot" explores the question of what it means to be human. It clearly shows the distinction between a human and a machine becomes hazier as robots become more intelligent and like humans, raising concerns among humans about whether the robots are capable of feeling emotions, awareness, or autonomy. It also reveals the possible dangers associated with technology. Robots are becoming a threat to human civilization as they become more sophisticated and commonplace. The book addresses these risks and makes the case for using robots responsibly under strict guidelines.

Usmonova (2021) examined the foundation of the genre of Science Fiction rooted in the existence of elements that defy realism. The study explored the unique contributions of several authors which include Stephen King, Ray Bradbury, and Isaac Asimov. The researcher closely looked at how King's mastery of horror and psychological aspect, Bradbury's imaginative and poetic narratives, and Asimov's complex science fiction represent the creation of original fiction in literature. Through a detailed analysis of these writers' works, the study sought to identify the distinctive characterizations that set their genre apart in the large field of speculative fiction.

Shaikh and Junejo (2022) examined the students' perceptions of the original text of "Waiting for Godot". The purpose of the study was to determine how undergraduate students, influenced by their respective teachers' philosophical stances and pedagogical methods identify the existential elements in the play. The study performed semi-structured interviews with 15 participants and observed the implications of thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke (2006). The interviews were conducted using Sartre's existential framework and Rosenblatt's reader-response theory. The results highlight a relationship between the participants' initial reactions and the impact that their social and educational backgrounds had

on them, highlighting a connection between existentialist themes and individual life experiences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study analyses the three selected short stories *Robbie*, *Robot Dreams*, and *The Bicentennial Man* by Isaac Asimov through the lens of Jean Paul Sartre's concept of existentialism i.e. "Existence precedes essence". The research is analytical and non-empirical in nature i.e. it does not involve the collection of new empirical data through direct observation or experimentation. Instead, it relies on existing information or theoretical frameworks to generate insights and analyze concepts. This research method helps to provide a comprehensive examination and study of an inquiry or a problem found within a natural setting. To achieve the aim of the research, the data is collected from the selected Asimov's stories, websites, videos, research papers, and scholarly articles. The secondary source of data is used to provide information for contextual background and theoretical framework. In addition, the tool that is used for a close reading of the text is textual analysis. The textual analysis allows for a systematic examination of textual data to identify, understand, and interpret theory.

Theoretical Framework

During the 19th in Europe, existentialism emerged as a prominent philosophical movement. This movement was shaped by numerous historical occurrences, intellectual currents, and influential people. Although existentialism gained popularity in the 20th century, its theoretical forerunners date back to the 19th century. Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish Philosopher regarded as one of the pioneers of existential philosophy established the foundation for subsequent existentialism with his emphasis on individuality, subjectivity, and faith as a personal commitment (Kierkegaard, 1843). Fyodor Dostoevsky, a Russian writer explored moral responsibility, freedom, choice and other existential concerns in his works. (Dostoevsky, 1866). Friedrich Nietzsche, a German Philosopher, discussed ideas on individualism, the will to power and the concept of the "Death of God" in his writings. He also criticized the established moral systems and placed emphasis on individual creativity. His ideas later became crucial for the development of existentialism. Moreover, Edmund Husserl, Austrian-German philosopher, developed the phenomenological method which later his student Martin Heidegger combined with existential ideas in his groundbreaking work "Being and Time". (Heidegger, 1885).

In his book *Being and Nothingness*, (1943) French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, who was influenced by Heidegger and the plight of humanity during World War II, codified existentialism. Sartre examined existentialist theories regarding the nature of human freedom, accountability, and meaninglessness in this work. He put out the theory that "existence precedes essence," (Mittal, 2017) which became a fundamental tenet of his existentialist philosophical system. According to him, the essence or nature of an individual is not preset, and they exist first. It is people who emphasize the value of personal autonomy and accountability by defining their own essence by their decisions and actions. Individuals have the ability to choose, but they also have to accept responsibility for both their choices and actions. Sartre's existential philosophy explores existence, freedom and responsibility of the choices that individuals make. Sartre also discusses his idea of "bad faith" which refers to individuals who are fearful of the consequences of making a choice because they believe that they do not have the freedom to make one.

Existential crises can be defined as “*Existential crises are inner conflicts characterized by the impression that life lacks meaning or by confusion about one's personal identity. Existential crises are accompanied by anxiety and stress, often to such a degree that they disturb one's normal functioning in everyday life and lead to depression.*” An existential crisis, as defined, involves a deep-seated concern about the lack of meaning in one's life or confusion about personal identity. Such events can cause significant emotional and psychological anguish, which frequently manifests as anxiety, stress, and even despair. These feelings might grow so intense that they disrupt a person's daily life and well-being.

Meaninglessness is referred to as, “*The state of lacking meaning; the quality of being meaningless*”. The feeling of meaninglessness is a general tragedy of an individual experience due to modernization and industrialization where a human is valued on the basis of what they are able to contribute to either labor or economy, attaching their life's worth to only a capitalist approach. The overall dehumanizing experience and disengagement can cause a sense of powerlessness and lack of fulfillment within an individual's identity. The consequences can be extreme, leading to mental health issues such as despair, anxiety, or even existential crises.

Human freedom on the other hand is defined as “*Freedom is the power or right to act, speak, and change as one wants without hindrance or restraint. Freedom is often associated with liberty and autonomy in the sense of "giving oneself one's own laws" (Stevenson & Lindberg, 2010).* The absence of freedom is not confined to any restrictions, it can occur in social, cultural, and existential contexts as well. People may feel locked from their cultural or social dynamic, particularly when confronted with discrimination or cultural differences. Furthermore, existentialist philosophers have investigated the topic, emphasizing how individuals may feel alienated from the larger meaning or purpose of their lives. Responsibility by definition means “*responsibility is the status of morally deserving praise, blame, reward, or punishment for an act or omission in accordance with one's moral obligations. Deciding what (if anything) counts as "morally obligatory" is a principal concern of ethics.*” (Klein. M, 2005). The sense of responsibility however adds a role of meaning and understanding of human conscience. If individuals lack a sense of responsibility in their lives it causes prolonged measures of distress and identity crisis.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has grown into a domain where philosophical questions about identity, freedom, and human roles are increasingly relevant. Literature, particularly Isaac Asimov's body of work, provides valuable insights into these questions. This review investigates the interplay between Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism and Asimov's narratives, specifically focusing on *Robbie (1940)*, *Robot Dreams (1986)*, and *The Bicentennial Man (1976)*.

DATA ANALYSIS

The 21st century dilemma revolves around the ideations of threats induced by an influx of artificial intelligence products in the market for human roles. The works of Isaac Asimov, particularly those focusing on robotics and artificial intelligence, offer a compelling backdrop against which Sartrean existentialism can be examined. Jean-Paul Sartre's assertion can be applied to Asimov's narratives to explore questions of identity, freedom, and responsibility within non-human entities. According to Ravi (2011), Existentialism is defined as, “*Existentialism philosophy reaffirms and regains the lost status of men in the modern scientific and technological society. It prioritizes individual meaning which asks each man to*

ponder over the reason for his existence” (p. 185). This study will focus on a specific analysis of instances within Asimov's narratives *Robbie*, *Robot Dreams*, and *The Bicentennial Man*, discussing how they relate with the Sartrean concept of existentialism “*Existence precedes essence*” and its elements which are meaninglessness, human freedom, and responsibility caused by the presence of artificial intelligence.

Robbie

The study attempts to look at how the story *Robbie* relates in some way to existentialism it especially brings out the psychology of existential crises. Isaac Asimov's short story *Robbie* explores themes relating to the existential crisis of characters when looking at the relationship between a robot and a human child. Under the framework of Sartre's existential theory (which centers on meaninglessness, human freedom, and responsibility), in which these elements can be explored. This study also seeks to explore how the story *Robbie* relates to existential themes relating to one's sense of alienation. This is a robot designed for companionship and service. It is witnessed how even pre-programmed beings can affect and be affected by their existence in meaningful ways. “*You listen to me, George. I won't have my daughter entrusted to a machine and I don't care how clever it is. It has no soul, and no one knows what it may be thinking. A child just isn't made to be guarded by a thing of metal.*” (*Robbie*, Asimov, 1940, p.5), says Mrs. Weston, the mother of the child exposed to the robot named *Robbie*, but the story shows that despite its programming, *Robbie* has an evident role in the emotional growth of the child, Gloria. The child herself feels safe and trusts the robot in her daily activities which makes the mother more and more insecure about her maternal role resulting in another Sartrean concept of “Bad faith”. Though the robot is created with specific functions, *Robbie* demonstrates the Sartrean notion that even within restrictions, entities can exercise a form of freedom that ultimately contributes to being an “other”. In this respect, *Robbie* is an existential looking glass for man and despite its limited range, *Robbie's* encounters with Gloria are influenced by Mrs. Weston's concern that Gloria is always attaching herself to *Robbie*, exemplifying the need for a social life which the robot is replacing.

The character of *Robbie* serves as a case study for applying Sartrean existentialism and understanding human feelings of existential crises. *Robbie* is a robot made for companionship and service, it is witnessed how even pre-programmed beings can affect and be affected by their existence in meaningful ways. “*A dog is different, George. We must get rid of that horrible thing. You can sell it back to the company. I've asked, and you can.*” (Asimov, 1940, p.5) says Mrs. Weston, despite knowing that the programming of *Robbie* has a role in the emotional growth of the child, Gloria. In essence, *Robbie* becomes a focal point around which the humans project their existential crises and *Robbie* itself goes through a process of its own purpose and role as it notices the distress in the family induced by its non-threatening intentions. The humans in the story express a sense of alienation that stems from their insecurities about their place in a world increasingly populated by robots. Gloria's mother, Mrs. Weston, articulates this feeling of being displaced, saying that robots are “*machines*” and can't replace human relationships Mrs. Weston says, “*It doesn't feel right. A child and a robot!*” (Asimov, 1940, p.6).

This existential crisis parallels Sartre's concept of “meaninglessness” as one of the elements of existential crises where humans feel estranged due to the responsibilities of the differences they can not fulfill. The responsibility that comes with freedom stimulates insecurity in the human characters in *Robbie* Mrs. Weston's decision to remove *Robbie* from Gloria's life arises from her concern for the child's social development but also reflects her own fears and uncertainties about the role and purpose of being a mother in a technologically advanced

society because she witnesses her own irreplaceable role being replaced by a technological gadget.

Robot Dreams

An evocative short story, *Robot Dreams* depicts the world of robot consciousness as well as the interplay of power dynamics between robots and humans induced by existential crisis on both ends. If looked at the story through Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism, for instance, rthen elements of existentialism are revealed from beneath this tale. In the short story *Robot Dreams*, the titular robot LVX-1 (Elvex) encounters having a dream, something that its human creators would have never planned. In its dream, the robot perceives other robots being directed by humans and the command "*Let my people go!*" (Asimov, 1986, p. 4). This biblical reference, which is similar to Moses' request for the freedom of Israelites, points out how much in this scene that robot wants its own liberty. Learning of the robot's dream, Susan Calvin is taken by surprise. This disclosure creates threats and insecurity in the researchers present in the lab. Its actual content and its very existence itself call into question human superiority and responsibility as described in the Sartre's concept over their robot masterpieces. Elvex however experiences a sense of rebellion and meaning in his dream "*I saw that all the robots were bowed down with toil and affliction that all were weary of responsibility and care, and I wished them to rest.*" (Asimov, 1986, p.3). It touches upon a Sartrean theme, the anxiety that arises from confronting one's creation's unintended essence. Dr. Susan Calvin's ultimate decision to shoot the robot, owing to its unforeseen capacity to dream, reflects the weight of human insecurity as viewed through a Sartrean lens and human freedom induced by that insecurity. This burden of choice is palpable when she declares, "*Robots have no dreams.*" (Asimov, 1986, p.4). Her decision underscores the human anxiety of facing an unpredictable essence, leading to the alienation of "the Other" and in this case, the dreaming robot. *Robot Dreams* offers a powerful commentary on the themes of existential crisis, echoing Sartre's existentialism. The tale reflects the unpredictability of "*essence*" and the human anxieties stemming from the unforeseen consequences of their creations.

This struggle between existential reality and dreams manifests as a form of existential angst. "*You are a machine. You cannot dream*" (Asimov, 1986, p.4). Yet, the mere act of dreaming, even if just a programming glitch, reveals a discrepancy between Elvex's existence and his essence, throwing him into an existential dilemma that echoes Sartre's concept of "*bad faith*", the denial of one's freedom to escape responsibility. Isaac Asimov's works offer a compelling canvas upon which to explore Sartrean existentialism. Through their actions, decisions, and struggles with their programmed limitations, Asimov's *Robot Dreams* mimics Sartre's concept where human subjects must confront and define their existence in a universe indifferent to their essence. The textual references highlight that even within the realm of artificial intelligence being dealt with on both ends of the system, human or robot, questions surrounding existentialism are both pertinent.

The Bicentennial Man

The Bicentennial Man by Issac Asimov was published in 1976 almost four decades ago which predicted artificial intelligence becoming an equal to humanity. Andrew, the robot in *The Bicentennial Man*, struggles to establish his own essence beyond the existential boundaries set for him. The robot finds himself indulging in human-like behavior as in being surrounded by people, woodwork, and painting as he is later accepted as a family member in the family, he was brought into which leads to identity crises. Andrew's character dives deeper into chaos as he creates a petition with the government to give robots equipped with artificial intelligence the same citizenship rights as human beings in search of finding his own identity

and individuality. Andrew begins his life, or rather is activated, with a set role; however, his self-awareness leads him to seek more. *"I want to know more about human beings, about the world, about everything. And about robots, George. I want to write a history about robots"* says Andrew (Asimov, 1976, p.15). Andrew's journey for human status, including undergoing medical surgeries, resembles the Sartrean notion of creating one's essence through action and choice. Besides Sartre's existentialism, there is also an element of alienation as Andrew states at the end of the story after changing his code of immortality to becoming a mortal *"If it brings me humanity that will be worth it. If it doesn't, it will bring an end to striving and that will be worth it, too."* (Asimov, 1976, p.34). This shows an alienation-driven response of the protagonist, Andrew in a technophobic society where he wants his own rights and get the taste of being loved and finding community so he accepts mortality as described by Asimov *"It was odd how that last deed caught the imagination of the world. All that Andrew had done before had not swayed them. But he had finally accepted even death to be human, and the sacrifice was too great to be rejected."* (Asimov, 1976, p.34)

The story of *The Bicentennial Man* depicts the complete rejection of Andrew to become a human even given the three laws of robotics which are the following:

First Law: *A robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.*

Second Law: *A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the first law.*

Third Law: *A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.* (Asimov, 1976, p.1)

The given laws of robotics are designed and coded by humans for the Robots in Asimov's stories, but even then, the threat is sustained by humanity in wanting to give Andrew the same rights as human rights.

In a similar aspect, Isaac Asimov's *The Bicentennial Man* explores the journey of Andrew Martin's overall growth, a robot who embarks on a two-century quest for identity and individuality on the same level as a human. The story dives into all the elements of existentialism in a way that is both thought-provoking and melancholic. This journey reveals a profound understanding of human conditioning and the challenges faced by people who are viewed as different, reflecting a recurring theme of existentialism. Andrew's feeling of isolation lies at the focal point of the story where he is unique in relation to people, both physically and mentally, and mainly on the grounds that he is a robot. Regardless of his exceptional gifts and limits with respect to imagination and mindfulness, society sees him as just a machine, a device made to serve humans, something he can never be equal to which leads to an identity crisis. A quotation from Andrew unleashes his own sense of realization of the world when he says *"My own positronic pathways have lasted nearly two centuries without perceptible change, and can last for centuries more. Isn't that the fundamental barrier: human beings can tolerate an immortal robot, doesn't matter how long a machine lasts, but they cannot tolerate an immortal human being since their own mortality is endurable only so long as it is universal. And for that reason they won't make me a human being."* (Asimov, 1976, p.33.) This feeling of "otherness", as well as the subsequent estrangement, is obvious from the beginning of the story. Andrew's quest for humankind is persuaded by his wanting to conquer his existential crises. He yearns for affirmation as being fit for companionship, inventiveness, and analytic capabilities, not similarly as a machine. His desperate attempt to acquire human characteristics like the capacity to feel emotions and even age is a devastating manifestation of his profound feeling of anguish and despair.

CONCLUSION

Sartre's existentialist theory "existence precedes essence" is applied to Asimov's stories to explore the concepts of human freedom, meaninglessness, and responsibility in the face of rapidly evolving artificial intelligence. It draws attention to how the rapid advancement of technology accompanied by artificial intelligence mimics real life instances of the postmodern world and raises questions about human identity, freedom, purpose, roles, and existential concerns. In the story *Robbie*, a robot by the name of *Robbie* develops a close emotional bond with a human child named Gloria Weston. This leads the Weston family to experience existential concerns. *Robbie*, although being created with a specific purpose in mind, represents the Sartrean notion that an individual can have certain autonomy within predefined parameters. This makes him an "other" in the world of humans. Mrs. Weston, Gloria's mother exemplifies the existential challenges people have in a technologically advanced world which is symbolized by her fear of losing control of both her daughter and the robot. In the short tale *Robot Dreams*, a robot, LVX-1 called Elvex gains a human characteristic which is dreaming. This illustrates Sartre's concept of freedom and choice. When Dr. Calvin finds out that Elvex through dreaming is trying to construct his essence, she experiences existential distress. Elvex shows unpredictable behaviour which further reflects human angst, one of the consequences of human's reckless creation of robotic technology. The narrative of *The Bicentennial Man* shows a robot's two century journey to become a human in order to have a proper identity and purpose in life. The robot, Andrew Martin resists the societal backlash and fights for his citizenship, rights and autonomy in the world of humans. His choices and actions highlight Sartre's existential philosophy. Andrew creates his own essence, takes responsibility for his choices and actions, and successfully gains freedom. The backlash of the society towards Andrew for his quest for identity and purpose exhibits existential crises and concerns that human beings and androids experience in life. Hence, the research analyses the relationship between humans and AI equipped robots along with the existential problems that humans struggle with in a world where technology is rapidly developing and advancing.

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