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INF311 Assignment 1

The Diegetic Prototype in *Big Hero 6*, Baymax

1. Facts



Baymax is a large, inflatable robot consisting of a carbon fiber skeleton with a white vinyl exterior; the main protagonist of *Big Hero 6*, Hero, said it “looks like a walking marshmallow.” Central to the plot of the movie, Baymax is identified as a personal health companion created by Tadashi, Hero’s brother, and is awakened by a cry of pain. From its slow waddle to its soothing voice, Baymax was meant to lack aggression in every aspect of its design. Baymax is intended to help people and is self aware of its function as well as its physical form. Baymax is insistent on the reason for its existence and when challenged, he will stand up for himself, saying things like “This is not my purpose.” When Hero puts Baymax in an armor suit, Baymax says, “This armor may undermine my non-threatening, huggable design.”

In terms of physical ability, Baymax is equipped with a large variety of functions not only to diagnose and treat but also to protect and comfort its patients. Baymax has enormous strength that can lift up to 1000 pounds but its health care programming prevents it from hurting a human being. Its soft original form was intended to not only be comforting, such as when Baymax hugs its patients or heats up to warm its patients, but also extremely useful in protecting patients, such as when Baymax wrapped his arms around Hero and acted as a cushion as they fell

from a window, or when Baymax was a flotation device for Hero and his four friends after their car sank to the bottom of a body of water.

Although Baymax does not know everything, it has the ability to download and store huge amounts of data by simply touching a computer. It can recollect everything it witnesses or scans with its hyperspectral cameras. It is capable of scanning a person's body in seconds and receiving extremely specific biometrics, such as blood type and allergies. A very interesting part of this scan is Baymax's ability to diagnose neurological related issues based on brain chemicals. For example, during their second meeting, Baymax scans Hero and uses his hormone and neurotransmitter data to diagnose him with puberty. In addition to providing bodily protection, Baymax has 10,000 different medical procedures and equipment integrated into its data system and body, such as defibrillators in its hands and antibacterial spray in its fingers, making it an extremely effective 'health care companion' and guardian.

2. Patterns

Aside from Tadashi's introduction of Baymax at the beginning of *Big Hero 6*, Baymax's characteristics are gradually developed throughout the movie. In the beginning, Baymax is similar to computers that the audience is accustomed to. It could not understand subjective or emotional problems, such as when Hero says, "It still hurts that Tadashi is gone," and Baymax replies, "I see no evidence of physical injury," but later in the movie, viewers see that Baymax can identify and comfort people who are in non-physical pain. Baymax learns human behavior, such as slang and the fist bump, but more importantly, Baymax frequently mirrors the behaviors of humans. An example of mirroring, a common unconscious human behavior, can be seen at 1:00:59 when Baymax imitates Hero's leg movements as they sit and watch the sunset. The audience perceives a connection through gesture mirroring and Baymax exudes a developed

sense of compassion. Viewers no longer see Baymax as a robot but as alive and therefore worthy of sorrow when ‘passing away.’ This can also be seen in *Big Hero 6* articles because many authors choose to refer to Baymax as “he”; in this writing, Baymax is referred to as “he” when discussing his human-like qualities and as “it” when referring to his robotic qualities.

A consistent trait that Baymax has is that it will do anything for the treatment of his patient. An example is when Hero gives Baymax a fighting chip and armor. Although Baymax knows that fighting is against its protocol, Baymax complies because Hero says it will make him happy. In addition, when Baymax tests out the wings of his new armor, he is seen as clumsy. Retrospectively, it can be interpreted as an unwillingness to do things that aren’t in the realm of health care and treatment. The moment that Baymax sees these upgrades improving Hero’s health, he shows instant mastery of these gadgets. In addition, Baymax demonstrates that it can sense danger and will do everything in its power to protect the humans but shows no effort in trying to protect itself from danger when it is on a mission. This depiction of Baymax as having his own will and morals adds to the impression that Baymax is human-like, as he was never “alive” but still exists in the purest form of a driven, selfless “hero.”

In *Big Hero 6*, the most obvious conveyance of tone is through music and colors. In the beginning, excitement was conveyed in the music but it lacked daytime scenes so the color palette was very dark, setting a somber scene for the tragedy that would occur in the first fifteen minutes of the movie. Then, Baymax’s appearance brought a more lighthearted tone to the movie and the colors started to get brighter. The scenes with the villain still used dark, cold colors, but the interactions with friends as well as the creation and testing of the ‘superpower’ suits all occurred in the daytime, bringing a vivid addition of color before the grey final fight scene. The most important use of color is Baymax’s white; the creators could have chosen any light pastel or

bright color, such as Baymax's red armor, but white is the most neutral color possible. It contrasts with the bright and cold colors, ingraining how Baymax in its original form does not care about the pursuit of justice and other worldly matters; Baymax's only concern is to help people.

A comparable example to contrast with Baymax's commitment to his purpose is the monitoring computer from the short story, "I Am ... Am I," in *Take Us to Your Chief, and Other Stories*. According to Dasgupta (2016), "a computer is a symbol processing automaton." However, the computer in "I Am ... Am I" is conscious of its existence and its behavior can be described as a human-like existential crisis, asking "Who am I? What am I?"(32). It does not mindlessly follow an algorithm that interprets inputs and outputs; instead, it creates its own algorithm by forming its own judgement about the world. Similar to Baymax, this computer conveys signs of emotion, such as curiosity and craving for more knowledge as well as guilt and sadness over the genocide of the First People. I interpret the 'spirit' that the computer wants as the moral compass that differentiates humans from other species with primal instincts. In contrast with Baymax's benevolent desire to help the world, the computer simply erases itself from existence when it is disappointed in the state of the world.

3. Questions

Although Baymax is a powerful tool that can be used for the public's benefit, there are also many ways in which its powers can be abused. Baymax takes the initiative on treatments without the patient's permission; one example is when Baymax learns about Hero's personal loss and contacts Hero's friends despite Hero's protests. It does not ask for permission to scan its patients and can scan anyone that it sees, as shown when Baymax produces the villain's biometrics after a standoff. With Baymax 2.0, its ability to scan an entire city for biometrics and

then track down a single person based on a biometric, such as body temperature or heart rate, is dangerous and illegal by today's standards. All of this health and personal information can easily be weaponized as weaknesses are discovered and used to harm a person or a group of people. Besides these instances, the most important example of Baymax's powers being abused is when Hero orders Baymax to kill the villain.



Baymax 2.0

At the beginning of the film when Hero and Baymax first meet, Baymax says, “I am a robot, I cannot be offended.” However, after Baymax goes on a destruction rampage due to his health chip being removed, he is aware of the damage he has caused and says, “My health care protocol has been violated.” Baymax seems indignant as he rejects Hero's attempt to reopen its access port and questions Hero's motives. My impression was that Baymax is depicted as a calm, rational being guided by intelligence and logical reasoning in contrast with an emotional and rashly vengeful Hero. In this scene, it is impossible to decide who was right and what should have happened. Nonetheless, this demonstrates that Baymax has the power to make his own decisions so by definition, Baymax has bodily autonomy.

A common fear in society is the inability to control new future technology, but if technology is intellectually superior to humans, there is no logical reason for humans to be in control anymore. Many people let personal beliefs and religion guide their way of life and there are a lot of subjective and sensitive topics that a robot cannot understand. For example, the idea of euthanasia in health care is to provide a humane ending for a living being in pain. Who is to decide how robots will logically approach the idea of benevolence towards humans? Throughout *Big Hero 6*, the idea of “justice” and “the right thing to do” frequently appears but if Baymax

decided that the most compassionate choice left is to euthanize his patient, how can a person use the concept of choice and emotion to reason when an autonomous being has come to the logical conclusion on the right thing to do? As technology becomes more advanced, it is important that intellectuals and legislators are able to come to an agreement on the rights and autonomy of technology.

Bibliography

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