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English 1121

Final Essay, Dec 16, 2021

Comment [SS1]: Proper MLA heading

Private and Public Duty in the Near Future

Comment [SS2]: Title is original and relates to ethics

In this essay, I will explore the ethical decisions made in the short story “Mech” by C.J. Cherryh, published in 1992. The most important type of normative ethics seen in this short story is deontology. A deontologist is someone who is obligated to abide by the rules with specific duties and principles. Rules and duties guide the deontologist’s choices in what to do in a situation of stress, and stress is serious factor in how crimes are solved in the futuristic world of “Mech.” Sheila and Dave are police officers in Dallas on patrol at night in the near future; Sheila is the driver, the keyman, while Dave is the tracker, or the mech—heavily armed. Dave is sent in his armored suit to investigate a possible domestic assault case in a wealthy hi-rise apartment complex, and he and his partner stumble into a crime scene that has national, maybe interplanetary, implications. Dave’s duties are split: he has a duty to uphold the police code and must swing to yellow if his visor lights up in a certain direction, yet he is also committed to Sheila who is plugged into vital information that keeps him alive.

Comment [SS3]: Identify author, title, and other basic information right away.

Comment [SS5]: Student gets to the point right away and enables readers to see where the essay is headed.

Comment [SS7]: Clear and accurate definition of our ethics terms; note how the definition is connected to the story.

Comment [SS8]: Brief summaries should not extend beyond five lines.

Comment [SS10]: Story summary is then connected to the idea of ethics

Dave survives the tense chase for the unknown person, referred to as a “live-in,” by following two duties: one is the police code and the other is a personal relationship code of trust to Sheila. While these seem to indicate a parallel set of loyalties, the story provides more evidence that survival is based on close interpersonal connections to partners. Dave follows Sheila’s directions perfectly even though they do not make sense to him or to readers (not at first anyway). Further, Dave lies to another officer and they both evade police regulations. Duty to humans takes priority over duty to general rules and regulations. First, I will explore the secret signals such as “mustard” between Dave and Sheila, then I will examine the antagonist’s death (his name is Ross). Lastly, I will try to unpack their offline conclusion of what happened to Nolan, the live-in, and Ross, and why the partners are not arrested or even questioned—even though a double killing just occurred. In the end, by looking at scenes of death, secrecy, and personal loyalty, we can see that relying on people is more important than relying on rules, making the ethics a hybrid of Virtue and Deontology. [400 words]

Comment [SS11]: This sentence prepares the thesis which comes after.

Comment [SS12]: Thesis blueprint: While X, I think Y.

Comment [SS14]: The thesis is unpacked and explained.

Comment [SS17]: Clear method enables readers to see what is coming down the road and even hints at the conclusion.