

Revenge of the droids: Star Wars, civil disobedience and the moral status of artificial agents

It is a somewhat common trope in Sci-Fi movies and TV series that robots and androids have to fight for moral, political and legal recognition. In an iconic episode from *Star Trek*, lieutenant commander Data (flawlessly defended by captain Picard) gains the right to bodily integrity, while Starfleet loses its right to treat him as property. In *Westworld*, the human overlords have to face a rebellion from the hosts who were angry at the moral status quo according to which they were mere tools for the enjoyment of paying customers. The Star Wars universe came late to this party. While C-3PO's whines and ruminations were clear conversation starters on the subject of droid rights (just remember the famous desert scene from Episode IV where he tells R2-D2 that they "seem to be made to suffer. It's our lot in life"), it's only with *Solo: A Star Wars Story's* L3 that we get to see what it's like to be a droid who challenges the long-established discriminatory institutions against artificial agents.

The main claim of my presentation is that, just like the fight that Luke, Leia and the rest of the Resistance waged against the Empire, so too would civil disobedience and a rebellion undertaken by the droids and aimed at liberating their brethren be legitimate on moral grounds. I will first present a short overview of the social institution of droid slavery in the Star Wars universe and explore the anthropocentric meta-ethical assumptions of the moral status quo that discriminates against artificial agents. Secondly, I will argue that the droids are not mere tools devoid of any moral status. While some are moral patients (R2-D2), others (like C-3PO and L3) possess all the necessary properties to be considered moral agents and, thus, should count as moral persons. Last but not least, following Rawls and Walzer, I will show why L3 and C-3PO should lead the way in using political tools like civil disobedience or rebellions to further the moral cause of emancipation from slavery and droid freedom.