

Conspiracy

By Morrie Mullins

San Herrera and Nia Reston have a long history of wild theories and incongruous causes. Over the past half-decade, they've continually managed to find ways to keep themselves in the periphery of the public eye. Once or twice a year, something they say or write finds its way into public channels. They've been interviewed by Yara Grugara on multiple occasions and have, in the opinion of many in Cularin, long since worn out their personal apportionment of fame. From their insistence on helping the "primitive" Tarasin to their crusade for the rights of droids -- or, to use their terminology, "synthetic persons" -- they have consistently come down about as far from the mainstream view on many social issues in Cularin as is possible. No one, however, was quite prepared for this document, posted recently to Cularin's holonet, in which the authors called into question the very armies tasked with defending the Republic.



Are Clone Armies Safe?

By San Herrera and Nia Reston

The past three years have seen bloody fighting waged across our galaxy. The armies of the Separatists, made up almost entirely of synthetic people, have clashed repeatedly with Jedi-led clone armies. On worlds uncounted and out among the stars, the armies have blasted, burned, and mutilated one another, their every action under the control of their creators.

In the past, we have attempted to demonstrate that exercising such control over synthetic people was wrong. We continue to maintain that this is the case, though we understand that many do not agree with our conclusions. It would be difficult to reconcile our arguments, for those who "own" synthetic people. You would naturally deny us, to avoid any uncomfortable tension in your own minds at the realization that you are effectively enslaving sentient beings.

The question of the synthetic person is thus one that we have dealt with and will not return to in this paper other than to draw certain parallels to the current state of the galaxy. These parallels all have to do with the so-called "Grand Army of the Republic," constituted primarily of clones of a reputed bounty hunter (if our sources are accurate, and we believe they are). We will argue that the continued use of such an army, while potentially necessary, is also inherently unsafe. Our arguments will touch on three points.

- First, the mentality of the "original" off whom the clones were based.
- Second, the criticality of free will in determining behavior.
- Third, the essential and inevitable imprecision of the cloning process, and its inability to adequately capture or account for all of the variables that must be controlled in order to "program" an army such as this to fight in a consistent, coordinated manner. We have a difficult enough time programming droids. If something were to happen to a clone, if it were to begin to manifest aberrant behavior, it's unlikely that a memory wipe would suffice.

As regards our first point, we have come into possession of information stating that the clones that make up the Grand Army of the Republic (GAoR, for future reference) are, in fact, clones of a single individual. While we have not obtained his name, we understand that he was a bounty hunter -- an individual tasked with hunting down and in some cases killing other living beings. There are those who would argue that this is precisely the type of individual best suited to having a clone army created in his image: ruthless, cold, and willing to take lives.

However, the mentality of the bounty hunter is very different from the mentality of a soldier. Bounty hunters are inherently individualistic. They are constantly in competition with other bounty hunters, trying to find and capture or kill the target before anyone else does. They are ill-suited to cooperation, and are notoriously bad at following orders. For all we know, this particular bounty hunter may have been mentally unstable; he wouldn't be the first in his profession to not be playing with a full sabacc deck.

If a clone army to be led by Jedi were to be created, why not clone someone more suited to serving the galaxy? Why not an army of Mace Windu clones? Why utilize an individual with an unpredictable, dangerous temperament? The choice indicates a severe lack of judgment on the part of whoever commissioned the GAoR, since we now find ourselves defended by several thousand (likely imperfect, due to the nature of the technology) copies of what most of us would consider an individual of questionable moral fiber. The choice also indicates the possibility that the army may have been constructed with some secondary purpose in mind. If you have access to Jedi, why would you avoid using Jedi as the foundation for your army? Perhaps because Jedi are too likely to disregard morally ambiguous directives. Regardless, the choice of foundation for the clone armies is the first factor that leads us to doubt their safety and reliability.

Second, we will draw parallels between the two armies fighting this war, the clones and the synthetic people. Specifically, some would argue that the terminology we have chosen for what most would call "droids" could apply equally well to the clones

themselves. We find it hard to disagree with this assessment. Whether an individual is created on an assembly line or grown in a tank, that person is not completely "natural." However, being tied to the Force (as all sentient things are, depending on your point of view) keeps both synthetic people and clones from being "unnatural," leaving us in the awkward position of trying to explain how they fit into the gestalt of the galaxy.

It is our opinion that neither the armies of the Republic nor those of the Separatists "fit" particularly well. They were created to serve, and by design, to minimize their free will. This cannot, however, be accomplished perfectly in either case. When we ask another creature -- carbon-based or not -- to make decisions, that creature must exercise free will. Synthetic people are given tasks that require nonlinear thinking and problem solving capabilities. Clones are asked not only to solve problems, but also to make rapid and precise decisions about how to approach complex tactical situations. There must be free will to make decisions in both cases, and if free will is present, it is always possible for those who are being used -- which we contend is the case for both classes of synthetic people -- to revolt.

Droids can be fitted with restraining bolts. Does such technology exist for inhibiting the behavior of living creatures? If so, we've never heard of it, and we'd be very frightened to learn that the GAotR is actually subject to that type or level of control. If we assume that they are not, then what happens when this army -- fully armed and trained, with the resources of the Republic behind it -- decides that enough is enough, that they are going to exercise their free will and take control of the Republic they have "saved"? This cannot be safe. The Jedi are too few (and growing fewer) to maintain control over this army if things should go bad. The clones are unsafe.

Third, and perhaps most critical, is our insufficient understanding of the cloning process and our inability to precisely "program" clones to do as they are told. While the authors do not know all the details of how the clones were "grown," we are confident that in order to turn them into soldiers, they were subjected to rigorous behavior modification to ensure that when the time came, they would follow orders. However, as has already been noted, we frequently have difficulty programming synthetic people to do exactly what they were built to do. The question of free will again arises, forcing us to consider how thoroughly the obedience of these clones can be guaranteed.

The necessary answer is, their obedience cannot possibly be guaranteed. As long as they have any degree of free will, as long as they are living beings, as long as they are *armed*, there is always the possibility of revolt. One need only look so far as the various droids that have "gone rogue" over the years to see that no amount of programming can prevent malfunctions. We have a much more thorough understanding of the circuits and gears that make up a droid than we do of the cells that make up a "living" creature, and that understanding translates into greater control. Now, we have the GAotR, vested with all the power of the Republic, given all the weaponry necessary to eradicate our enemies, and we place blind faith in the notion that they will never turn on their creators? This is both naïve and foolish.

We are convinced that the clones that comprise the Grand Army of the Republic are unsafe. They were created from a flawed template, they continue to possess free will, and no amount of behavioral "programming" can possibly make them even as safe or predictable as an R2 unit. Putting our faith in the future of the galaxy on these shoulders, however strong they may be, is a mistake. We must ask ourselves, given these factors: Why were clones chosen? Why not draw on local system militias, pulling them together and organizing them beneath the eyes of the Jedi? Finally, we must ask this question: What is to become of the clones, when the war is done? The Republic has not had a standing army for generations, but what other purpose do these individuals know? There are too many unanswered questions, too many things that hint at an ulterior motive. For all our sakes, we very much hope we are wrong.

We will not reproduce the various comments that followed the posting of this essay to the holonet, in order to not offend our readers' sensibilities.