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HORIZON



**Human
Identity**

Virtual Reality

**Climate Change
and Human Future**

**Interview With
Chat-GPT**

**A Journey
From Past to Future**



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Humans have always had fantasies about the future. These dreams share a common theme: an easier life. We have dreamed of a brighter future for countless generations, yet it often seems just out of reach. The shining light at the end of the tunnel often turns out to be the familiar train of disappointment, hardships, and misery. How is it that we continue to hope for a better tomorrow? Is it within our nature to never give up, or are we inherently foolish and too blinded by our vision to see the treacherous path ahead of us?

Looking back at events of the past year, it is challenging not to be overwhelmed by emotions. Yet, it is even easier to be numb and feel nothing. We could not afford the luxury of sound sleep at night, knowing that tomorrow would be a better day. There was no such thing as "good news"; there was only varying degrees of bad and worse. We were all paralyzed by our minds to a certain extent. We feared for our lives, for all we had achieved, and worse, all that we could achieve. The entire world had turned their back against us. We were alone, bound by invisible forces and chains. A normal life had become a dream.

And here we are again, standing witness to the same atrocities. This is not the first time this has happened and certainly will not be the last. We humans pride ourselves over our free will yet we fail to see that all that is left of it is now an illusion. So we willingly

delude ourselves. We no longer crave a better tomorrow; the idea of it will do. Perhaps, a better tomorrow and a brighter future were never real to begin with. Perhaps dreaming of it is the only way to be there. The way we think of a better brighter future is now poetry as it rhymes so perfectly. "Poetry is to be censored since the poets may not know which is; thus may lead the soul astray". Plato's words ironically ring many bells in one's mind as we, the modern human, bathe in all that is positive and absurdly unreal.

At the end of all of this, there is still a disturbing flicker of hope. To some, there remains a sense of poetry and beauty to it. To others, it is a wellspring of pain, for what is more agonizing than having all your hopes shattered and reduced to ashes? We have been told to hope for the best and expect the worst but do we ever wonder for how long we can keep this up? How long before we allow things to subdue us? Or have we already and simply do not know or care? Future and hope are synonymous, for what is a man without hope? A miserable pile of secrets? A mindless walking flesh? A self-proclaimed greatest creation devoid of purpose?

The future is now and it has never been this blissfully dark.

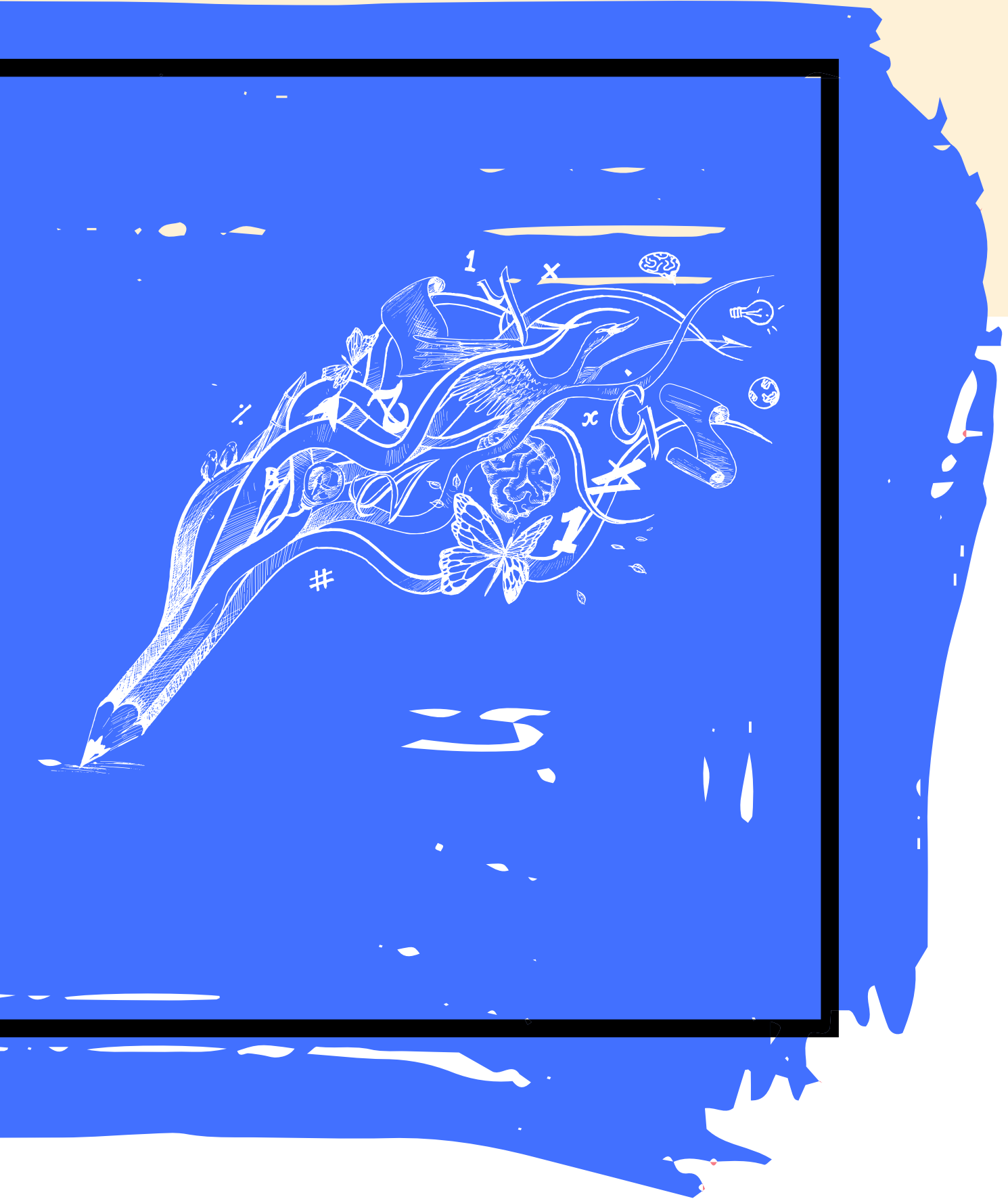
Kourosh Shahbazi

Foreword

The future has always fascinated mankind. It holds an undeniable allure, promising progress, innovation and transformative breakthroughs. It captivates our imaginations and fuels our aspirations, urging us to dream big and strive for greatness. However, in all its glamour and astonishment, it strikes terror into mankind's primal fear of the unknown and the unseen in tandem. In this ever-evolving world, we are on the cusp of transformative change. The rapid advancement of technology, the exploration of space, the quest for sustainable solutions, the shifting dynamics of global affairs and the dawn of AI are all shaping the course of our future. It is an era where ideas once confined to the realm of science fiction are now becoming tangible realities. The merging of science, technology, and human creativity exhilarates the exploration of what lies ahead. Our decision to explore this subject stems from our deep curiosity about the possibilities that lie ahead and the profound impact they may have on our lives. We wanted to create a platform where we could explore a few of the many facets of the future and offer our readers a thought-provoking journey through its mysteries and wonders from a more cultural point of view.

Thank you for being a part of this journey, and we hope that our magazine will inspire and enlighten you as we navigate the uncharted waters of tomorrow.

With warm regards,
Kouros Shahbazi, Director-in-Chief



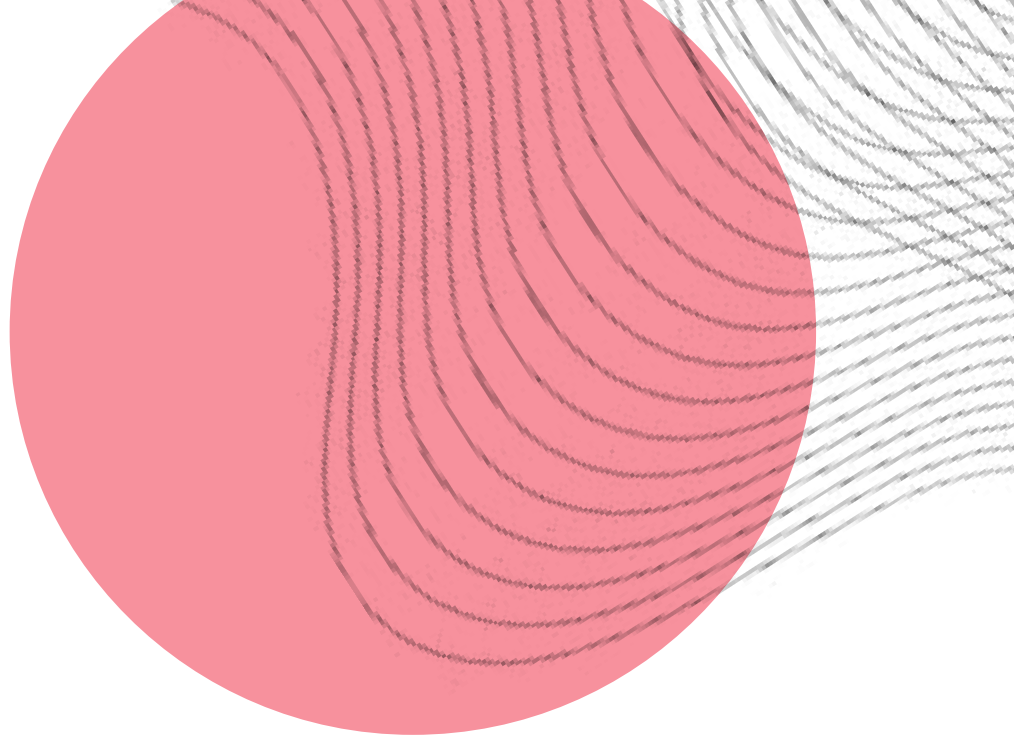
Loneliness:

A Brief Introduction

■ Hasti Mahravan

Loneliness is a feeling, a state of mind. Pleasant to none, but experienced by many. It is not the same as being alone. Being alone mostly refers to having no company, and it is a physical state. Unlike loneliness, it is not unpleasant, for many people enjoy having some time to themselves. After a long day at work, unwinding and watching television alone may just be what you need to relax. However, loneliness is a different story. It is a displeasing experience, mostly about one's mental state. When you experience this, you long for social connection and interaction but lack it. This is not to say that any social gathering or interaction will satisfy you. Some people might look for individuals who understand them or their perspectives; people who have the same interests or personality features as them or who have been through similar good or bad experiences. Others may yearn for non-judgmental people with whom they can be themselves and feel accepted. Also, nowadays, despite being more connected than ever, thanks to social media and technology, people still experience loneliness. This shows that loneliness is a lot more complicated than just having no one around– the state of being alone–, and that not just any social interaction will suffice to alleviate it.





Being alone might lead to loneliness, but it is not always the case. According to Olga Khazan, an award-winning writer for the Atlantic, loneliness, like hunger, is a bodily function. When you are hungry, your body is expressing a desire for food, so you eat. “When you are lonely, your body is telling you to pay attention to your social needs because it lacks social interaction”, says Khazan.

There are many stereotypes about people who deal with loneliness. They are often perceived as shy or anti-social. Some advise, “Just be a bit more outgoing and approach people yourself. Make friends.”. But Loneliness is more complicated. Before I explain the process of becoming lonely and the cycle of loneliness, let’s take a look at how loneliness was something our ancestors also despised and how it became part of our biology.



Back in the day, when our ancestors lived in tribes of 50 to 100 people, social needs were as crucial to them as physical ones, for they determined how likely our forefathers were to survive. Their daily activities such as hunting, staying warm and safe from wild animals and natural hazards like storms, and taking care of the children were impossible to achieve alone; thus, sticking together meant survival, while going your own way meant possible death. Getting along was so critical that sometimes tribe members had to change their behavior to avoid being excluded and left behind. That was as hazardous and a risk to our ancestors' survival as being attacked by a wild animal. Therefore, according to John T. Cacioppo, in his book *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*, your body developed social pain to avoid such hazards. This type of pain, in particular, is an "evolutionary adaptation to rejection." In other words, it functions as a warning signal to prevent you from doing actions that would lead to being rejected. That's why rejection hurts, and loneliness hurts even more. These mechanisms for staying connected worked great for most of our history until humans began building a new world for themselves, and gradually, cities and megacities were formed. Following that, came the advent of a more intricate and mentalistic version of loneliness.





Loneliness evolved from a defense mechanism to avoid hazards – a survival necessity– to a mental state that people experienced regardless of their social status, money, beauty, social skills, or even fame. But why is that? What exactly happens when loneliness occurs that even aforementioned factors like social skills and fame wouldn't be much help?

Loneliness is a process that does not occur overnight. You might wake up one day and feel lonely; however, a series of actions or scenarios have led up to your loneliness. In modern society, we are preoccupied with many daily activities. It could be work, school, kids, marriage, illness, financial issues, etc. Social interaction is what we will consciously or unconsciously sacrifice for our busy schedules. For example, one might decline invitations, no longer attend their favorite book club, stop visiting family and friends, or even reject calls and messages. At first, you don't notice any difference in your mental state, but one day you abruptly feel isolated; that's when loneliness kicks in. You no longer feel accepted, understood, or important. You feel like the world can carry on without you as if you never existed in the first place. In that situation, you yen close relationships and meaningful social interaction. This is why, according to the American Psychological Association (APA), "loneliness is defined by people's levels of satisfaction with their connectedness, or their perceived social isolation."



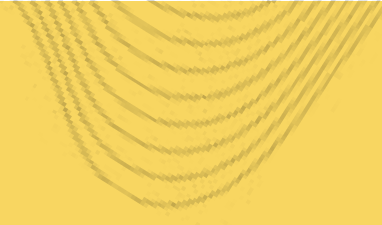
In severe cases, loneliness can become chronic and even bring about other mental and physical health issues. “Loneliness is more dangerous than obesity, and it’s as deadly as smoking”, Khazan states. Chronic loneliness, unfortunately, is “self-sustaining”. Meaning, that it can exist without a cause. And unless you actively try to break free from its cycle, it stays with you. As Cacioppo puts it, “When you are chronically lonely, your brain goes into self-preservation mode. It begins to perceive danger and hostility everywhere.” But that’s not all. Studies show that when you’re lonely, your brain is much more receptive and alert to social signals, but it also gets worse at correctly interpreting them. For example, you might have a conversation with a coworker, and they may comment on how long your hair is, but you interpret it in such a way that they appear to be jealous of your hair. You become defensive in social situations and think the worst of the intentions of those around you. Consequently, you build a shield to protect yourself, no longer want to be around others and despise social encounters. And the cycle goes on like so: the initial sense of isolation is followed by feelings such as tension and sadness, which causes you to focus your attention selectively on negative interactions with others; this causes you to have negative thoughts about yourself and others, which changes your behavior; you start avoiding social interaction; this increases feelings of isolation. Each time, the cycle becomes more severe and difficult to break. You might even become self-centered. Eventually, you seem cold, shy, anti-social, or socially awkward to others, making them not take interest in approaching you. As you can see, simply “making friends” won’t do the trick and get you out of the state of loneliness. The healing process is almost as if you are rewiring your brain, which takes great effort.

The first step towards overcoming loneliness is to know that this emotion is very normal and experienced by a lot of people of all sorts of statuses. You are not the first person to feel this way, and certainly, you won't be the last. The next step is to try to let out your sadness, anxiety, and anger that is caused by loneliness, for it may help you feel better. Talking to a psychologist might help with this. Then it is necessary to break the habit of falsely interpreting the actions and comments of those around you. After your conversations and encounters, ask yourself what the person really meant by making those comments, and whether you are adding extra comments to and making inaccurate interpretations of what they said. Once you get out of that mentality, you will find it easier to tolerate people and even enjoy their company. The next step would be to try to participate in events and hopefully meet people whom you feel comfortable around and happy to be with. You need to keep in mind that you may need to take a few steps forwards sometimes and make the first move. It doesn't need to be a long conversation. Small talk works too. Do not expect people to suddenly be accepting and welcoming straight away. It might take time. As you can see, the first step is not to provide social interaction and fill up your surroundings with people. It involves paying attention to your mental state and mental health.





Now that we know a little about how loneliness works, let's take a look at where social media stands in this narrative. Social media provides great platforms for people to share many aspects of their lives, whether it is related to their work or merely their personal life. It can keep us updated on what our friends and family have been up to, and what goes on around the world. Therefore, it is expected and understandable that social media can help with the feeling of connectedness. However, this is not a one-size-fits-all. According to Bonsaksen et al., "Research has suggested that different aspects of the social media experience may produce different effects for different groups of people." Meaning, having more followers, whom we are not close friends with, and leaving comments on various posts can not guarantee the prevention of loneliness. Whereas, in a situation in which physical distance is in the way of us and our close friends and family –like what we all experienced during the Covid19- pandemic–, social media can help lift the burden of isolation off our shoulders. In the latter situation, however, after a while, we realize that it does not fulfill our social needs, leaving us yearning to meet up with our friends and family. This means that social media cannot fully replace in-person interactions with the people that matter to us, nor can it guarantee to erase loneliness no matter how many followers we have, or how many apps or new features are released.



To sum up, you may now understand the distinction between being lonely and being alone, for loneliness is a mental state while being alone is a physical situation. As mentioned above, even our ancestors despised loneliness, albeit the different circumstances they had back then compared to our situation today. Nowadays, loneliness is a process that eventually becomes a cycle, and overcoming it requires mental work. You need to break the cycle by slowly removing the shield you built to protect yourself from others' potential hostility and work through your emotions. Once that is dealt with, you can consider starting to socialize again, like joining classes. As you can see, social media functions more like a quick fix rather than a permanent remedy for alleviating loneliness. It can help us stay in touch with our friends and family in spite of our distance; however, in the long run, it doesn't eliminate isolation.

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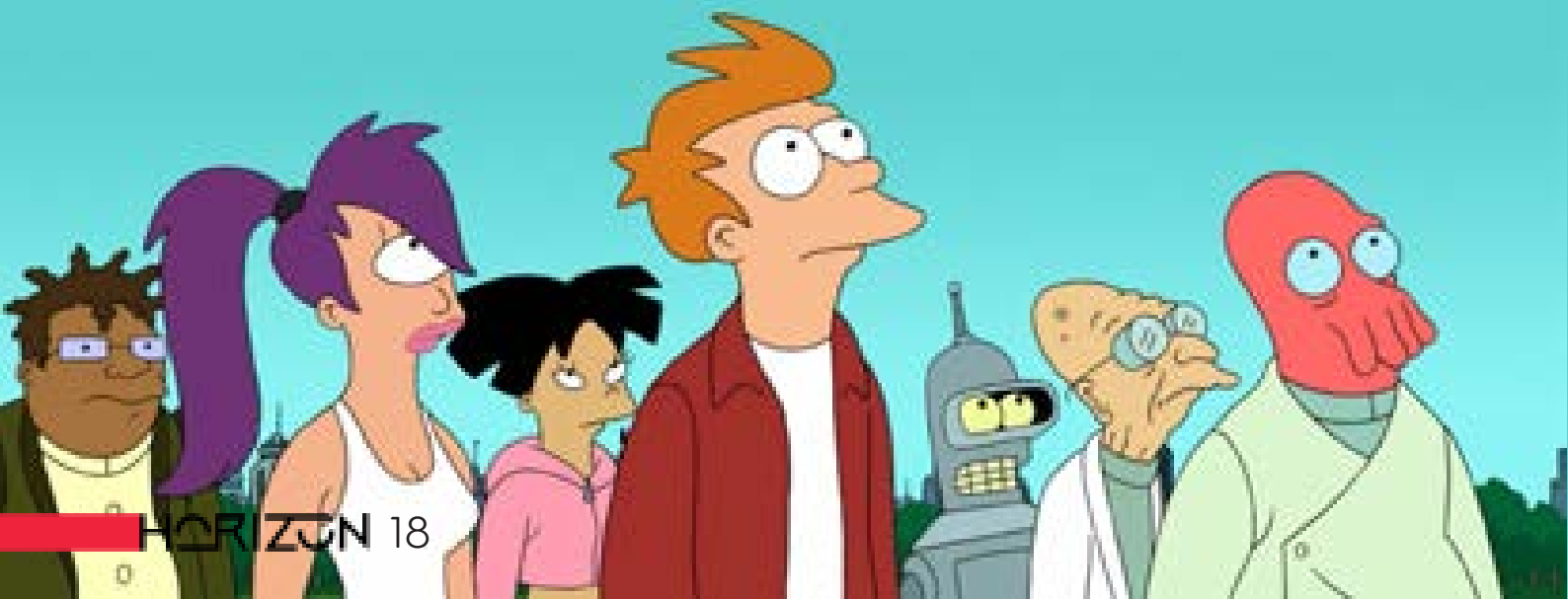
Future of Human Culture

and Society in a Case Study of Futurama
(Based on the first 3 episodes)

■ Maryam Hatami Farsi



FUTURAMA



I remember 25 years ago, when I was a kid, the means of communication among people were much different from today. People would use landline phones or simply write letters on paper. Those were the main tools for people to talk to and message each other for generations, ever since post offices were established and the telephone was invented. And even then it took decades for a technology like the telephone to be developed and widely used. When mobile phones first came out they were expensive, slow, and had very limited area coverage. However, it took less time for them to become developed and more widely used than the telephone. It took less time to realize the concept of sending and receiving messages via mobile phone, and it took even less time to enable your phone to go online and have internet, which was a brand-new concept back then. The progress of communicative technologies was and still is, accelerating. Today, we can easily use our phones to video call anyone from anywhere in a real-time, live, and inexpensive way which would sound like something science-fictional if it was told to people 25 years ago.

It's not just the communicative technologies that are rapidly and exponentially advancing through time. Modern-day humans have existed for 200,000 years (yourgenome.org, 2021) and yet, it took approximately 75,000 to discover, control, and use fire (Nicholson, 1996). The same can be said about any other field of science and technology. It took until 1903 for humans to fly for the first time (National air and space museum, n.d.) yet it only took less than 60 years to reach outer space in 1961 (History.com Editors, 2020).

These advances in science and technology have always been affecting human culture and society more and more as they progress. In the animated comedy series Futurama, "Fry", the protagonist of the story, travels 1000 years into the future and encounters numerous social and cultural shocks in a satirical and comical way. The intention of this paper is to talk about the social and cultural side effects of technological and scientific advances on people based on the predictions described in Futurama.





Self-centered future

In the future, many issues will revolve around personal freedoms. For example, euthanasia (assisted suicide) is currently legal in 11 U.S. states, 1 Canadian province (Quebec), and 9 countries around the world (The Week staff, 2021a). Each country has its own euthanasia law. This is a controversial issue and illegal in many parts of the world. Many people reject it for religious reasons, since they believe that God is the only one allowed to give and take life. Some people disagree with it for ethical reasons as they think it encourages suicide. Euthanasia supporters have the opposite opinion: “we have no control over how we get into existence in this world but in the end, we have the right to control how we might leave it”(Dignity in Dying, 2011). Although before Christianity in ancient Greece and Rome, the action of euthanasia was acceptable, after the Hippocratic Oath, which clearly expresses: “I will not give a lethal drug to anyone if I am asked, nor will I advise such a plan.”. Euthanasia rarely happened. A study conducted in Australia detected approximately %31 of all mortality in that country in 1997 was accomplished by using opioid drugs to reduce pain (Canadian Medical Association, 2011). Euthanasia has been legal for about 20 years in the Netherlands and it was the first country to legalize it (Wionews, 2022). Then, more countries gradually joined this process. They arrive at the conclusion that the patient has the right to select whether to suffer in pain or die peacefully.

Futurama season1, first episode (space pilot): It seems that there are suicide booths in each corner, and Fry, with the help of Bender, accidentally gets into one because he mistakes it for a telephone booth. It then turns out that it is a suicide machine and it works with a coin, being inexpensive. Only by switching a bottom and choosing the way of dying, it's all on you.

Human Robot Relation

Today, many robots are made to serve humanity, either as toys or in crisis and war (Darling, 2018). Robots are present in a wide aspect of human life, and it is predicted that we will gradually progress to the point where 50 to 60 percent of our daily work will be done by robots (Orbitart, 2021). The lives of future generations will be strangely connected with robotics and artificial intelligence. Future robots are going to have very advanced artificial intelligence that will be built based on the deep learning method, which has the ability to learn, execute and make decisions. Soon we will see robots everywhere: at home, on the street, in parks, in schools, in hotels, and in hospitals. Even though we know that these are man-made machines, programmed to react in a certain way, we still sympathize with a robot losing a limb when it walks on a mine, or when a robotic pet cries (Darling, 2018).

Right now as you read this article, robots are performing surgery, collecting samples in space, or a Roomba is vacuuming a house floor. They improve our quality of life. Robots are everywhere. Every day they become more complex yet more accessible. Soon our future will be populated by robots and living alongside robots will be undeniable (Brooks, 2008).

Robotic accuracy, intelligence, and complexity are admirable qualities, but they also instill apprehension in people that robots might advance and outsmart humans. Humans make robots to make life easier and safer, but at the same time, we cannot fully trust them. This issue has become today's concern, that is, they might start a revolution, in fact, humans should fear themselves. We should fix and control this technology to use it correctly (Howard, 2019).



However, these concerns will not prevent the advancement of robotics, and in the near future, artificial intelligence and technology will take over a significant portion of jobs. Moreover, there will be a few parts that will be less affected or not changed at all. According to research at Oxford University, it is estimated that 47 percent of American jobs will be replaced by robots in the next 20 years (Carl Benedikt Frey, Michael Osborne, 2019). As mentioned, they are man-made machines, and it's unquestionable they need smart creators to be fixed or reprogrammed as needed. We train them and they imitate us; we also can learn from each other.

In *Futurama*, we can see robots all around in different job positions with close connections to humans. The earth is equally populated with both robots and humans. In the first episode of the first season, after surviving the suicide booth, Fry and Bender bond together while hanging around the city. They help each other. In the same episode, when Fry is running away from Leila, whose job at that time is to arrest people from the past, Bandar helps him escape.

Bender offers his place to the homeless Fry, which is just a closet suitable for robots, and a human wouldn't be comfortable with it. His co-worker, Laila, tells him that he should tell Bender about moving out. "He might kinda get upset" Fry answers. Fry and Bender then both decide to move to an apartment as roommates, and Bender's antenna gets a whole apartment satellite in trouble, so Fry asks him to move out, which breaks Bender's heart and gets him drunk afterward. Then Bender agreed to cut his antenna and get back to Fry. He does so and becomes really upset. When Fry notices how much this is important to his friend, he wants him to reattach his antenna, and they look for another place. It shows that they truly have feelings for each other.

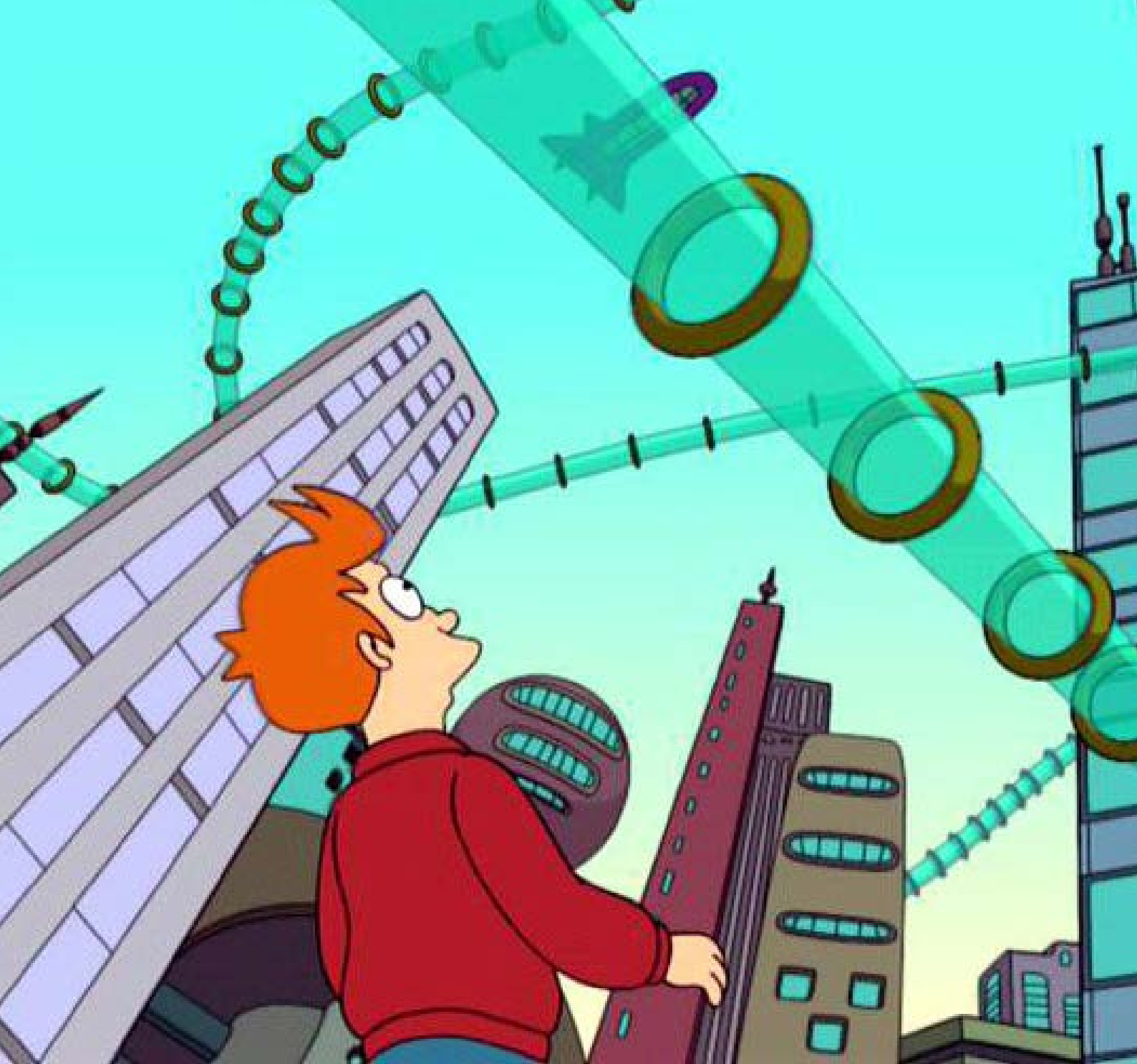




Transportation Revolution

This is the human's all-time attempt to transport and move to new locations due to his exploring spirit. This evolution begins with simple handmade boats to space traveling. Walking was the first means of transport. They started to domesticate animals in terms of transportation in 4000 BC (Beam, 500 .(2009 years later, they built simple river boats as they found out trees and logs float on the water. They invented the first wheeled vehicles around 3500 BC. Wheels make a massive change in this revolution. In 1769, the steam engines changed everything fundamentally. Air traveling took place by a French inventor in 1783. Afterward, locomotives and submarines were invented in the following years. The Wright brothers' invention was a major innovation in air transportation in the early twentieth century. Other aircraft vehicles came after this. Soon after air travel, humans considered going further, and the first achievement through space was the launch of sputnik1 –a man-made satellite– into orbit. Millions of people witnessed astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin take the first steps on the moon (Tuan C. Nguyen, 2020).





According to the transport evolution trend, it is predictable that space traveling is going to be more accessible and advanced. Landing on the moon will become a common occurrence that will happen in the blink of an eye.

In Futurama, we see different advanced means of transportation, such as personal jets surfing above the city. People can transport individually through the vacuumed tunnels so fast.



In one scene, they want to go to the moon, and Fry is excited to do the countdown; they arrive at the moon before he reaches number 8. This shows that in the future, traveling to the moon is as easy and simple as driving down the street in the current time

The future may seem complicated and unattainable to the human eye of today. It is obvious everything is going to change. Based on different evolutionary processes of life, we can somehow make cultivated predictions. And the best way to do so is by observing past trends. This implies some surprising facts about the future.

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Climate Change and Human Future

▀ Maryam Ahmadi





Abstract

Climate change is an interconnected chain. This chain begins with development activities, especially the consumption of fossil fuels, and brings many consequences. What has been investigated and considered so far is the amount of greenhouse gas production, its control and finally the resulting phenomenon such as global warming, submergence of settlements, storms, floods and droughts. When the most important disasters will happen after this stage. This phenomenon will lead to displacement and homelessness, mass migrations, stateless, unemployment, poverty and insecurity. And of course, according to the research, the biggest damage done by climate change will affect the poor and deprived sections of human societies. Of the 262 million people estimated to have been affected by climate change between 2004-2000. More than 98 percent of them were in developing countries.

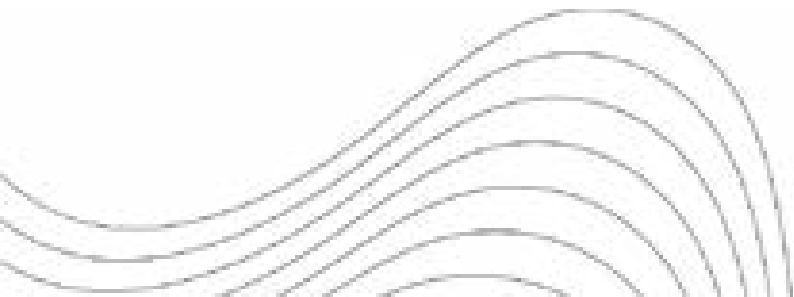


Climate Change and Its Effects on Earth

Climate change includes any change in the long-term average weather pattern of a region or the whole world. Human activities and unsustainable uses of the environment, among other factors, have caused this phenomenon that if the necessary measures are not taken, irreparable damages will be inflicted on the environment, economic and social life, and human health.

The phenomenon of greenhouse effect is one of the natural processes that has made life on earth possible, but human activities during the past 250 years, especially after the industrial revolution and the process of industrialization of countries, have led to the production of additional greenhouse gases (including unnatural ones) due to the use of fossil fuels.

Developing countries play an important role in the production of such gases, and this is due to their large population and the growth and development of these countries. Attempting to reduce the release of these gasses for these countries, which usually do not have high technological capabilities, can lead to a decrease in their growth, and developing countries do not accept this issue for this reason. On the other hand, the amount of greenhouse gases that are released into the atmosphere by developing countries It is very high and will affect





the future of the earth and changes in climate conditions. However, developing countries do not reduce greenhouse gas emissions by considering some political-economic issues such as unemployment caused by the decline in growth and the instability that this will cause for those countries.

It is expected that the increase in global temperature will drastically change the pattern of rainfall, soil moisture and other climatic factors related to the productivity of agricultural products. Therefore, climate change may have serious effects on world food production. In addition, there is concern that the frequency and intensity of raging storms will also change. The warming of ocean water gives more energy to huge storms, such as hurricanes and sea storms, and thus increases their frequency and intensity.

*Rising sea-levels and storms cause flooding, population displacement, salinization of fresh-water resources, and the diminishment of habitable or cultivable land.

*Rising surface temperatures lead to greater occurrence of diseases such as scrub typhus, diarrheal diseases and other mosquito-borne diseases.

*The increasing number and intensity of weather events endanger life, health, and housing.

*Changing coastlines and melting permafrost cause damage to land, houses, and other infrastructure.

*Changing precipitation patterns and the melting of glaciers affect access to water, which in turn affects the ability to irrigate lands and secure access to food. (CIEL)



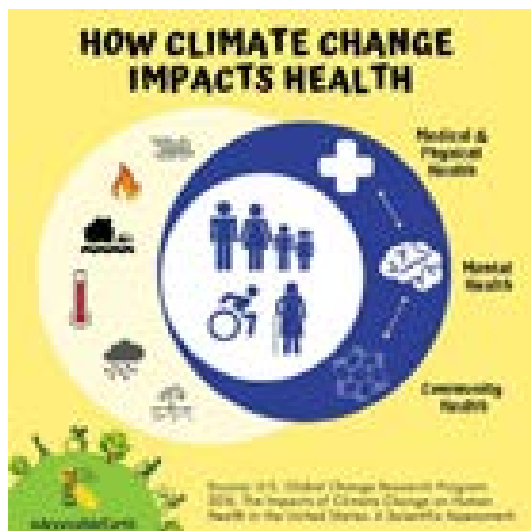


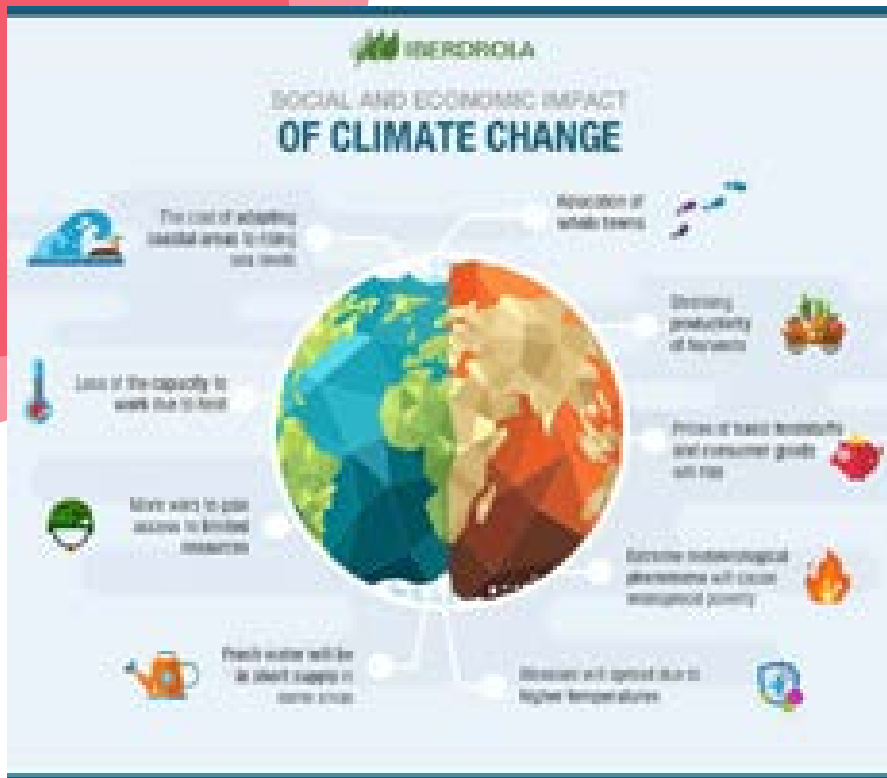
Sea level rise is an important potential problem associated with global warming. Such a change will have environmental consequences. This situation may easily cause 50 to 100 cm of coastal erosion on open beaches and make buildings and other coastal facilities extremely vulnerable to the damage done by waves from major storms. In addition, it may cause the migration of estuaries and saline wetlands to land and impose more pressure on facilities and buildings in the coastal area. And finally, if the sea level rises, the influx of salt water will threaten the water resources of the coastal communities. A one meter rise in sea level will have serious consequences. People will be forced to undergo major changes in the coastal environment in order to preserve their investments, and regional communities will either have to make heavy investments to curb coastal erosion or accept severe damage to their properties. It should be noted that almost half of the human population lives in coastal areas. If the water level rises, more investment to maintain coastal cities will be inevitable. Along with the increasing threat of erosion of urban properties, the construction of coastal walls, breakwaters and other erosion control structures will also become common. The most important response of the rural areas far from the coastal areas to the rising seawater is simply adapting to the erosion that have occurred. Coastal erosion is a huge problem that is very expensive to deal with. Finally, in dealing with the issue of rising seawater, one should be concerned about the hundreds of millions of people who live in low-lying coastal areas in developing countries. The double impact of rising seawater and the frequency and intensity of strong storms and other tropical disturbances bring destruction to the people of developing countries.

Effects of Climate Change on Human Societies

As much as climate change will affect the natural world, it is predicted that the changes made in human society will be even more disastrous and probably will have a big impact on agricultural systems. Although growing seasons will be extended in some areas, the combined effects of drought, extreme weather conditions, lack of melting ice, greater numbers and diversity of pest insects, lowering of water levels in groundwater aquifers, and loss of arable land could cause a sharp decline agricultural and livestock products around the world.

This lack of food safety, in turn, may cause turmoil in international food markets and lead to famine, food riots, political instability, and civil unrest in countries around the world. The effects of global warming on human health are also expected to be serious. The American Medical Association has reported that the increase in mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever, as well as the already-increasing incidence of chronic diseases such as asthma, is most likely a direct result of global warming. Many of these predicted effects, it is the result of extensive scientific research and climate modeling, and the fact that many of these effects are already visible adds to the credibility of these predictions about the effects of global warming and climate change.





The Undeniable Impact of Global Warming on the Economy

The economy is one of the important areas that is highly affected by this phenomenon, to the extent that, for example, if the global temperature rises by 2 degrees, the world's economic efficiency will also decrease between 2 tenths of percent and 2 percent.

Evidence is mounting about the effects of climate change on the economy. The most important consequences of these economic changes in climate not only affect the agriculture, energy or health sectors, but also create changes in the supply and demand of goods and services in all sectors of the economy, of course, the impact of these changes in temperature and climate in each part is different and has different intensities. If we want to fully address the effects of global warming, we can mention agricultural sectors, coastal areas, unexpected events, health, energy demand, tourism demand, ecosystems, stress due to water resources and human security. The subcategory of these changes in the agricultural sector includes changes in crop yields, livestock deaths, changes in the productivity of aquaculture,



and changes in the amount of fishing. Coastal areas will also face issues such as lack of land and capital as a result of rising sea levels and non-market effects in these areas. Unexpected events such as the increase in capital losses caused by storms and deaths, changes in the energy demand for cooling and heating, changes in the availability of drinking water and the possibility of mass migration are other important issues that will endanger the global economy. Energy demand decreases in winter and increases sharply in summer for household cooling and other purposes. Energy supply may be disrupted for reasons such as water scarcity, and this in turn affects energy demand.

A new study on the economic effects of climate change shows that while these changes have led to lower GDP per capita in countries near the equator and weaker economically, some cold countries have strong economies, such as Norway, Canada and Russia in the past decades are likely to benefit economically from these changes. Therefore, climate change can increase economic inequality in the world and cause more damage to the world's weak economies and vulnerable groups. However, the effect of global warming will eventually affect all parts of the world economically.





Solutions to Reduce the Adverse Effect of Global Warming

Solution thinking from economic, sociological and even political aspects are important factors for planning. Depending on what measures different societies take, scientists stubbornly believe that the planet will warm up to 4 degrees Celsius in any case. Currently, the goal is to keep the ratio of greenhouse gases around 450 to 550 ppm (parts per million). It is only now that most analysts believe that rampant environmental changes will be stopped. Currently, this figure is reported as 380 ppm. Because of this, sooner or later, this amount may be out of the range of confidence. In a simple language, the IPCC has acknowledged that the emission of greenhouse gases into the earth's atmosphere must be reduced between 50 and 80 percent. According to researchers' analysis, mankind has the ability to significantly

reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the next ten years using modern technology. According to many scientists, by increasing public awareness, increasing the level of green space and preventing the destruction of forests and material recycling can control this phenomenon and its negative effects on human life. Also, energy optimization, production of machines with less fuel consumption, significant increase in solar and wind power plants, production of hydrogen from renewable sources, biofuels (vegetable fuels), natural gas and nuclear energy, and reducing the use of fossil fuels, are approaches that scientists They intend to fix greenhouse gases. There is also the possibility that carbon dioxide released from fossil fuels can be recaptured by a process and stored deep underground (for carbon sequestration).



UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

The UNFCCC is the basic international legal instrument for channeling international cooperation to achieve stabilization of GHG concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. The Kyoto Protocol, adopted in 1997 and It came into force in 2005, obliges industrialized countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The UNFCCC negotiation process is focused on developing a shared vision for long-term cooperative action to avoid dangerous interference with the climate system. In turn, the shared vision rests on enhanced action under each of the four basic pillars: mitigation, adaptation, financing, and technology transfer.

Forests and Land Use

Respect and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples and other forestdependent communities affected by REDD+ activities is essential to ensure the success and permanence of measures taken on the ground. This means that forestdependent peoples and communities have a right to participate in and to share the benefits of programs and measures relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Notably, in 2010, Parties to the UNFCCC agreed to promote and support the following safeguards for REDD+ activities: consistency with international obligations; respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities; full and effective participation of stakeholders; good governance systems; and avoided damage to biodiversity and ecosystems. Parties also agreed to develop a system of information sharing on how safeguards are being implemented (CIEL).



Finance

Industrialized countries have an obligation under the UNFCCC to assist lower-income countries in funding mitigation and adaptation strategies necessary to reduce emissions and protect vulnerable populations. Lower income countries acting alone are not in a financial position to fully protect their populations from climate impacts. Finance is therefore critical to assist these countries in fighting climate change and protecting the human rights of their people. The development and application of finance safeguards is also necessary to prevent social and environmental harm and maximize participation, transparency, accountability, equity, and rights protections. Institutions involved in funding climate change-related activities, such as the Adaptation Fund, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the World Bank, should provide transparent processes, maintain policies and procedures that respect internationally recognized rights, and allow meaningful opportunities for public participation. Other regimes and institutions should also be involved in this effort, including: UN Environment Programme, UN Development Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization; and International Labor Organization (ILO). The principal efforts and leadership, however, should come from the two most directly involved regimes – climate change and human rights.

Technology Transfer

Transfer of technology is critical to supporting sustainable development and avoiding the shifting of polluting industries from industrialized countries to the developing world. Establishing a workable institutional mechanism for technology transfer is crucial to reaching and successfully implementing any post2012- framework. A rights-based approach can help ensure that beneficial technologies are fairly shared. In terms of effective implementation for adaptation, a human rights approach to technology transfer can help ensure that technologies required by the most vulnerable peoples and communities is a priority.



Climate Change in Iran

Iran is located in a region with the greatest sensitivity and consequences caused by climate change. Based on the results of simulations carried out in the field of climate variables change until 2039 compared to the period of 2005-1976 (observation base period) by the Assembly of Governmental Climate Change (IPCC), climate change in Iran will have four general consequences:

1) Increasing torrential rains and dry days

Increase in the frequency of hot days with a temperature of more than 30 degrees Celsius in most parts of the country, especially in the southeast of the country (Sistan and Baluchistan and Kerman provinces), a decrease in the frequency of freezing days in most parts of the country, especially in the northwest of the country (East and West Azerbaijan provinces and Ardabil) is one of the expected consequences of global warming. The increase of dry days causes drought in most parts of the country. The effects of climate change in Iran's biological zones are formed in 6 axes of water resources, forests and pastures of the country, coastal areas, biodiversity, agricultural activities and big cities. The reduction of the country's water resources per capita to about 1300 cubic meters, which causes restrictions in the water supply of cities, results in an increase in runoff in winter and a decrease in spring, which will be the largest decrease in runoff in the provinces of Khuzestan, Fars, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh, Boyerahmad and Isfahan. Also, the decrease in the production of the country's electric power plants in the next 25 years, especially in the Karkheh and Karun basins, which provide %90 of the country's electricity production, is another effect of climate change on the country's water resources.

Also, the decrease in the vegetation cover of the country's pastures due to the decrease in rainfall, which causes floods, increases soil erosion and worsens the poverty of the vegetation cover of the pastures, which will directly affect the livelihood of the residents of these areas.

2) Disruption in the economic activity of the residents of the coastal areas



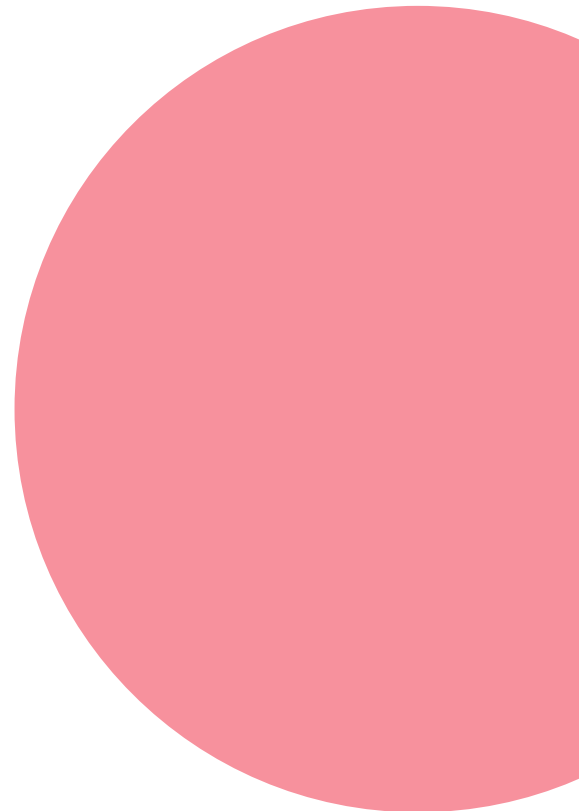
Iran has 2700 kilometers of coastline and 10 million people live in the coastal areas of the country. The main economic activity of the residents of the northern areas is agriculture, fishing and tourism, and in the southern coastal areas of the country fishing, shipping and industry, which with global warming is likely to disrupt the economic activity of the residents of the coastal areas is expected.

3) Disruption in agricultural activities

Iran has 100 large wetlands and 3,450 permanent and seasonal rivers, which are the natural habitats of all kinds of animal and plant species. Climate change affects the biological diversity in different regions and as a result affects the cycle of the zoo, the life and livelihood of the residents. Considering the strong dependence of agricultural activities in Iran on weather conditions, especially the amount of precipitation, climate change will have severe and decisive effects on the agricultural sector and the lifestyle and livelihood of people in these areas.

4) Important factors affecting the creation of unfavorable conditions in big cities

Changing the heating systems of buildings, increasing various air pollutions due to the traffic of personal vehicles, high density of buildings, especially in roads that have limited capacity, using inappropriate materials such as asphalt that absorbs sunlight, creating the effect of heat islands in big cities and Changing the pattern of urban development, especially the incorrect location of tall buildings, are the consequences that occur in big cities.



Solutions to Reduce the Adverse Effect of Global Warming in Iran

1) Reviewing and completing existing documents, plans and programs, taking into account the effects of climate change on resources and population movement, taking into account the consequences of climate change in land development programs and the country's macro policies in the housing sector, urban design and planning and regional and research on ways to relate the issues of national building regulations with traditional architecture and climate of different regions of the country. Researching the macro-scale effects of climate change on the country's natural and food resources and developing the rules and regulations necessary to prevent the harmful effects of climate change in all the mentioned fields.

2) Identification, localization, training and application of new technologies and solutions in architecture and construction to deal with the negative effects of climate change.

3) Expansion of climate studies and research by updating and revealing climate change at the country level, especially in settlements, and upgrading climate models to increase the accuracy of long-term, decade-long forecasting.

4) The expansion of studies on the way of using new energy in buildings is one of the actions that are suggested in the implementation of laws and programs related to energy management and saving. Research on architectural and urban factors affecting air pollution in cities. and how to intensify the effects of climate change in these areas, to promote the position of green industry in housing and urban development, to investigate the role of urban appearance in optimizing energy consumption and to investigate the role of urban furniture in optimizing energy consumption.

5) Compilation and expansion of rules and regulations related to mechanical and electrical installation systems to use clean energy and increase the efficiency of these systems.

6) Compilation of new regulations and laws and revision and revision of existing laws with the aim of using new and clean energy for the production systems of building materials and products such as cement to reduce energy consumption and reduce greenhouse gas production.



Adaptation Solutions For a Changing Climate



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Coalescence of Realms: Illusion and Reality

■ Mehrzad Barzegar

The young art form of animation was created not too long ago. When humans discovered how to add «anima» to static images, there was a strong desire to make them as realistic as possible. The same can be said for one form of animation in the East, known simply as «anime.» Technological advancements came in handy, and computer-generated imagery ruled over the whole domain of animation in recent years, but some had other phantasmatic ways of touching reality that weren't just about mere graphics. In the West, the emphasis on making animations real was on graphics, with the goal of viewing them as merely hand-drawn movies devoid of personality, but artists in Japan had other ideas. The appearance of animation as a true art form was often challenged in the West, hence Satoshi Kon was once asked in an interview, «When are you going to put real people in front of the camera now that you are a commercial hit in Japan with world-hit production quality?» Kon's anime has a very realistic appearance; locations are realistic, figures and statures are well-proportioned, and scenes mostly depict photorealistic situations. His tricks in anime-making are surely illusory, but they might not necessarily result in compelling live-action. He intentionally filled this «unseen» gap. His drawing style is too realistic to be called a typical representative of anime and too cartoonish to be called a movie.

Giving him the upper hand in the process, Kon has drawn different unique elements from each medium together to masterfully voice connoisseurship in his movies (or anime). Defying the orthodoxy of the established audiovisual forms, that is, anime and movies, Kon can freely swing between the two. He has treated these forms as two realms without directly labeling which is which. Anime can be as realistic as movies, and movies can be as illusionary as anime.

Kon's anime is rich in depictions of filmmaking phantasms, from being a movie star to the portrayal of the cinephile subculture and people who devour «good» movies. In Kon's debut feature-length artwork, *Perfect Blue* (1999), Mima's idolized purity is gradually broken during the filming of a television series, as the naive Mima sets her journey on metamorphosing from the worshiped goddess of stage to a dilettante actress in front of the camera.





With his second full-length production, *Millennium Actress* (2003), he took things a step further by creating a series of mini-documentaries that served as an anime-style biography of an elderly woman. It's fairly apparent in the film's historical scenes, in which the protagonist plays diverse personas. The story is set in a series of flashbacks from Chiyoko's interview, from when she was only an infant, to her decision to pursue «the one» (which is shown as a painter, a left-wing protester, and a soldier), to her limitless expedition of chasing. Every voyage in a part of her life starts with a smooth transition into the scene, starting a new period, and closing with a substantial climax, moving everything back to where it started.





Kon knows that employing aimless references without serving a higher purpose is completely futile. Doing so would probably contradict the intention behind putting them in his artwork. He's like the man on the shoulders of the giants, using the understanding gained by major thinkers who have gone before him in order to move forward. It was no surprise that Kon was a film buff who had repeatedly mentioned Akira Kurosawa as his favorite director.





In *Paprika* (2006), eponymously named after the unpretentious and sincere movie-loving main character, a scene in a movie theater is shot, and Toshimi, a would-be (not wanna-be) director who became a crime investigator, explains panfocus, which (as the word itself reveals) means when everything in the frame is in focus. As he says this, the blurry background in the setting gradually comes into focus. The thought-provoking thing is that he's wearing the signature hat worn by Kurosawa Akira.

Paprika appears as flat images in all media. Let it be Toshimi's filmic figures, literary classics of the world (such as Oedipus and the Sphinx and Son Goku), advertisements, and logos; she can merrily fly through them. Many of Fujiwara's Millennium Actress stories, however illusory, are indistinguishable from her reminiscences or simply retelling her films' plots. The human in Kon's work has his mind consumed by the media in which it exists, as if the man himself is moving «through» the media and standing «within» it. Each object, gesture, and act has its roots in ancient archetypes, myths, literature, music, and shows. Ideology plays a covertly oversaturated role in man's mind that has blown up our memory and reality intrastate, free-falling to the bottom of Popper's World 3 (or maybe free-rising; the subject matter here is «free,» as you can dream your life or live your dream).

In Kon's creations, disregarding this freedom of action is rarely used. They don't let their vast horizon of fantasy take up their real world and topple them over. Paprika is a symbol of an idol not because she can transport between dreams but because she knows when she's dreaming or not. She always establishes a planned remoteness between her «self» and the characters she becomes. Therefore, the ideal stance between reality and dream (as each has been pointed out before) is a «distanced affair.» You are free to pursue what you desire; just don't lose your grip on yourself and disconnect from the real world.





Isn't it suspicious to draw a moralistic conclusion from a director whose works of art have always blurred the lines between reality and fantasy? Well, of course it is. This moral lesson here might have been distorted by modern consumerism in our lives. Today, we find a whole series of products deprived of their hated characteristics. Coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, and so on and so forth. Here, «Other» is deprived of its «Otherness.» In Kon's work, however, although the subjects seem like they've had this balance between reality and dream somehow, they are caught feeling shameful about themselves for having such a persona. A small dose of shame






prevents you from drowning yourself in a dream. Here, the catch is just like what was mentioned above: As long as it's decaffeinated, you can drink as much coffee as you want. You can consume any sweet you want as long as it's sugar-free, and finally, you can dream as much as you want only if you are conscious of it.

What if I want a guilt-free experience? The price of admission to our socially constructed reality (Lacan's big Other) is guilt-free pleasure, which results in the sacrifice of freedom. You are experiencing Other deprived of its otherness. Paprika is confined to the dreams, and her semi-conscious reaction to her real-world counterpart in the movie (Atsuko) infers her unembarrassed, delightful absorption in the dream, showing the inability of such actions to be done in reality.

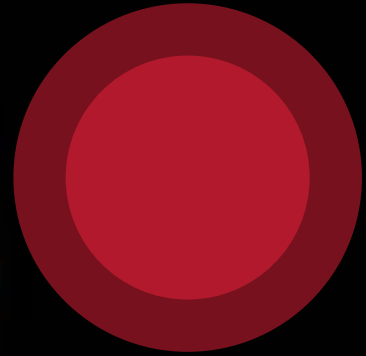
In Paprika, the machine that makes dreams come true (named the DC mini) also makes reality go far away. The dream world leaves our minds and emerges in concrete solidity right here in our world. At first, dreams emerge into reality, but that's not where things start; dreams coalesce into even more complicated dreams, each starting with a realistic dream itself, and then all of these dreams become real (these reals become dreams).



An instance from Millennium Actress is that as Chyoko narrates her life story, she relives each instance, and her memories become so real that people who are not in her mind can watch her memories «live.» She is first seen as an old woman, but the alternation between being a young woman and an old woman is evident throughout the film. In her flashbacks, the non-linearity of time is tangible; she was handed a key in old age, but upon holding the key in her hands, she became the young woman she used to be. In pursuit of her final journey, a euphemism for death and downfall (an «uprising») is beautifully displayed where her body position and respirator are similar to the spacesuit. This whole scene suggests that time is fluid.

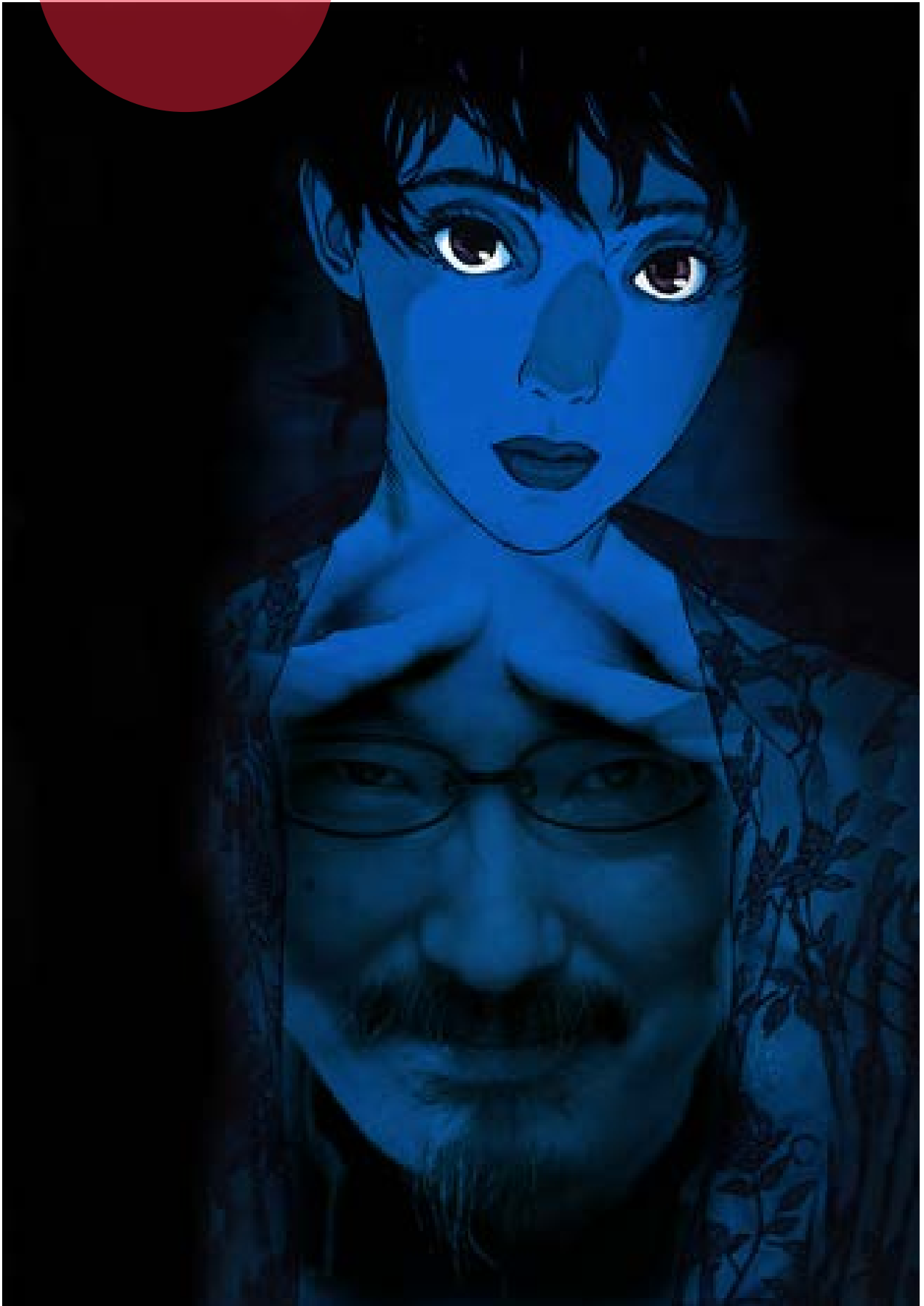


Paprika loses all sense of time and space, teleporting almost magically from one place to another. There are shots of Paprika hopping from place to place during the opening credits as if he is slightly levitated. As a «dream» personality, Paprika transcends notions of time and space. The clearest example of this is when Chiba entered Himuro's dream. Paprika, her alter ego, travels on a cloud, transforming into a sphinx and a butterfly. Her role in these roles allows her to move freely from one place to another. In the dream parade, time and space are completely ignored, so it works at its own whim. The problem appears after Atsuko falls victim to the misuse of the DC Mini (discussed above). Toys and refrigerators, for example, take on a life of their own in the parade and march to an unknown destination. In the film, the parade itself acts as a metaphor for the invasion of the fantastical into the dream world and eventually into reality as well. It begins in an indiscernible space, seemingly a desert, as dreams and reality have not yet merged. As it evolves, however, it begins to incorporate



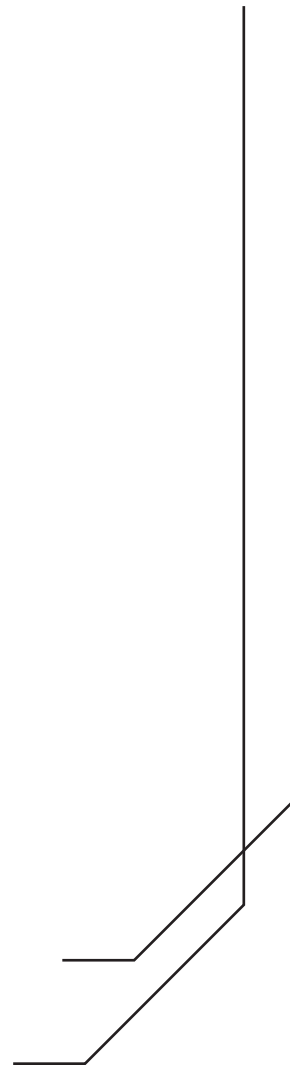
all the dreams of individuals, creating one large collective dream. By the end of the film, the dream world and the actual world have become so intertwined that the parade marches into Tokyo, hauling people from the real world and turning them into objects. The first scene of *Paprika* reveals the realm of a «dream within a dream» and presents *Paprika* as part of *Toshimi*'s dream. Once *Toshimi* wakes up from his periodic frightening hallucination, *Paprika* is at his side in a hotel room, replaying his dream to him on his laptop. It is not yet known to the audience that *Paprika* resides solely in the fantasy world and is not a real character. In this sense, *Paprika* and *Konakawa* being together in a hotel room is actually *Konakawa*'s dream as well (using the DC Mini). DC Mini users are also constantly subjected to a continuous blurring of time and space. Many people's dream worlds merge while they are awake due to the imperfections of the DC Mini.







Among his magical realist apparatuses are female protagonists, a technique that parallels the history of Japan with the memories of Chiyoko Fujiwara in Millennium Actress. The phenomenal world of alternative realities, dreams, memories, films, and the unconscious are all merged to depict the plurality of struggles within oneself in Paprika. The same merged worlds are used to depict a past haunting you throughout your life in Perfect Blue. Kon's films explore different things: the magic in Millennium Actress, the unconscious in Paprika, and reflection in Perfect Blue. Although rooted in realism, a visual comparison was drawn between Kon's anime and other contemporary anime, and also as a matter of content, Kon's anime practices techniques mostly seen in feature-length movies with well-written characters.





Through concepts developed earlier, all of his films play with time, space, and identity disruption. It is important to note, however, that each film weighs these concepts differently. As an example, *Millennium Actress* exhibits more nonlinearity in space and time than *Perfect Blue* or *Paprika*. Similarly, non-sequiturs are more prevalent in *Paprika* than in *Millennium Actress*. Finally, in *Perfect Blue*, the clash between reality and illusion is more noticeable than in the other two films. Throughout these three films, truth is subjective, with no one way to know it. It is also essential to note that reality itself cannot be absolute, as illusions constantly dismantle the construct of the real (true) self. In all of his films,



there is a disruption of space, time, and identity. Fans of both anime and movies have come to recognise Satoshi Kon as a unique figure. He stands out from other filmmakers due to his attention to detail and the inner experiences of the characters in his anime and movies. By vacillating between illusion and reality, he attempts to cinematically enliven the harshness of modern existence. I may claim that one scene from *Perfect Blue*, when Mima is reading journals online and hears the voice saying, «Excuse me, who are you?» sums up his entire career. This one phrase is repeated several times throughout the film while playing the sound of a fax machine.



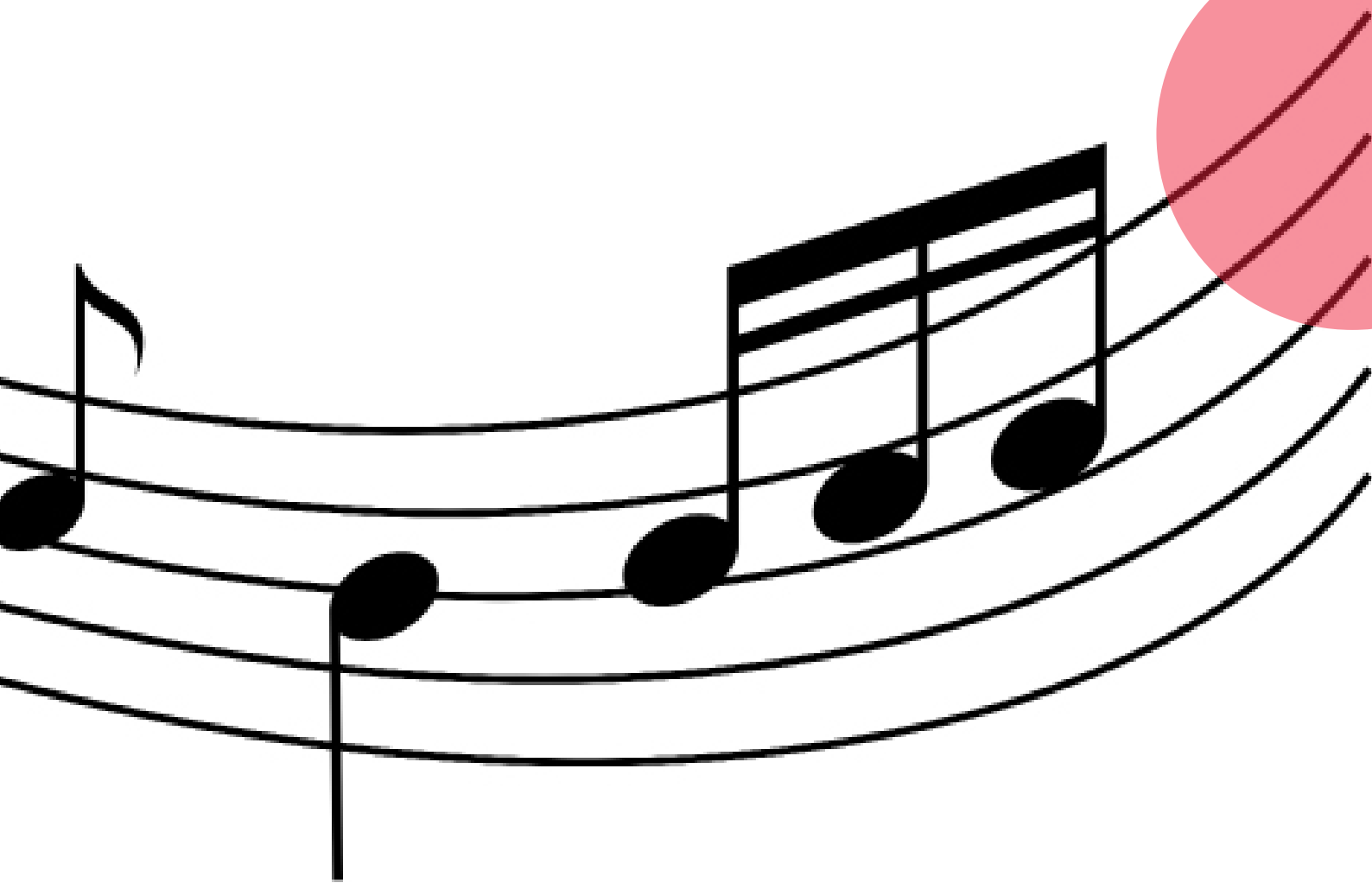
Music;

A Journey From Past to Future

■ Delaram Moradi

How old are you? Where are you from? What is your profession? What is your gender? What's your personality like? Imagine how many answers people can give to these questions; but no matter how different we are, there is one thing we all have in common: we can't ignore the way our life is intertwined with music and is shaped by it. But have you ever wondered how powerful and determinant its role has always been and will always be in humans' life. Here we travel from past to future to examine the fantastic journey of music.

The future is like a building that is eventually built by past events & present choices. Music is one of the most ancient heritage we have been blessed with from the early stages of life in human history. Our



ancestors may have first realized there is some kind of harmony in their living environment (nature), such as the birds singing and animals using different voices to warn and communicate. Music probably began with voices and sounds. Our ancestors must have discovered rhythm at some point and found it interesting or even pleasant, thus they tried to produce it, which led to the creation of the very first and basic instruments of mankind. Based on what archeologists have discovered, the very first instruments must have been made with various kinds of bones shaped into different forms. For example, the most basic & elementary flute found in Divije babe cave Cerčno, which is said to be 60000 years old, is made up of bones with holes created in them. This flute shows that even neanderthals realized the beauty of harmony.



(60000 years old neanderthal flute made of the thighbone of a cave bear)

It is evident from various old paintings and sculptures that different civilizations have treasured music. Unfortunately, the ancient music is either not in written form or hasn't been discovered yet, so how it really sounded is still a mystery, and speculations made have never been proved completely right



The pictures above are evidence of how music was considered an important and appreciated art by society.

It was a significant part of different rituals and events, transferring various messages with its power. These messages varied from joy and happiness to warning, and threatening. This shows how music could evoke feelings and senses in humans.

As we move forward in history, with the innovations of GVIDON.D>AREZZO, born sometime between 999 & 990 CE, an important and evolutionary era in music history began. As mentioned before, the real challenge of recreating the music shape of the first centuries was that no written form of them was available. GVIDON.D>AREZZO started writing music in the shape of some signs on paper similar to what we today know as musical notes. This was a huge success and was also the beginning of sharing music with different people; now people could pass on the notes and recreate it even in other cities and countries. This also allowed music to be learned by others in a concentrated way, allowing music to meet international inspirations and mixtures. Although Gividons works were much simpler and basic forms of modern music, they were the start of a journey others continued by improving and adding to his work.

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(vinyl records)

Moving forward in history, a few centuries passed with music improving and evolving through hard times of war and nice and pleasant times of peace, through religious and social changes that shaped its form over hundreds of years. One of the turning points in the globalization of music was the great and mighty invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in the 14th century, allowing music to fly over countries and be easily accessible to everyone.

Moving forward to 1857, Edouard-Léon Scott, a French inventor, invented a device that used vibrating pens to create sounds on some paper discs. In 1878, Edison showed interest in that device and marvelously recreated it. His version of the machine could replay the sounds it had recorded. This was a huge step towards music being able to be heard over and over at different places. Over 30 years or so, the devices used for playing vinyl records evolved and progressed a lot, from gramophones to LPSs, but what they all had in common was letting music be heard multiple times without being played live and moving around easily. Aside from the joy it gave people to be in touch with music constantly, it was also used to deliver messages and ideas containing future movements and changes in future society. These kinds of records were produced underground and distributed or sold in secret. Many comedians covered societal issues with humor and jokes and recorded their voices. These recordings were secretly listened to by people who were curious about how things needed to change. Music could now present itself as a form of social awareness; a power given to millions of people to combine art with social and political ideas.





(LPS record player)

As we get closer to the present, it's time to travel to 1999, where all the glory of today's music lies. Although records, CDs, and music on TV and radio were the pioneers of people's everyday lives being filled with music directly and led music to become an important part of nearly everyone's lives, it was the rise of the internet that changed the direction of the music industry and made it the oxygen that people, especially music lovers needed to pass their days.

Back in 1999, Napster made headlines. It was a website initially used by college students that enabled them to share MP3 files of songs for free with other students.

Although Napster was so popular among users, especially students, there were several ethical problems regarding the website's behavior towards the copyright and ownership of the musicians and artists. Napster was becoming a threat to the music industry as the ability to listen, download, and have access to many versions of songs and even unreleased music was given to users without the artists', musicians', and their labels' consent. Due to many legal issues, some popular artists such as Metallica or Dr. Dre filed a lawsuit against copyright violation by Napster. After so many ups and downs with the law, growing with a huge number of users, Napster was finally shut down in July 2001.

What Napster started was the beginning of a new era in the music industry, even though the price paid for it was the fall of Napster. Napster shed light on the power of adapting music to the new digital lifestyle of the world through its very evolving idea. Musicians, their labels, and scientists of tech companies realized music is no exception when it comes to changing and evolving along the way with many other industries during the digital revolution.

After Napster, Apple came up with iTunes in 2001, a program that functions as a media player or a music library for people using Apple products. Users could download music by paying a specific amount of money, which wasn't expensive at all, and have access to whatever music they wanted. Now that music has started to shine through the digital market, the industry developed more and more with the rise of other streaming apps and websites such as Spotify, SoundCloud, Deezer, Pandora, YouTube Music, etc.

These platforms allowed listeners to have personal playlists based on what they like and listen to, offering them different playlists for different tastes and moods, as well as newly released music. The only thing subscribers have to do is to listen or watch some advertisements or upgrade their accounts to premiums by paying for some extra features such as listening offline or many others, varying from website to website or app to app. Now people can enjoy having access to a never-ending source of music by participating in some business policies by these websites such as watching advertisements and membership offers to help the music industry to stay extremely profitable and available as well as helping fans to find their favorite music from all over the world much easier, and receive the message that music sends for everyone to hear, all thanks to modern technologies.

Now in this part, we will take a look at some world-changing songs from the past to the present, shouting about how wanting a better world is impossible without great changes and taking baby steps to achieve something much greater in the future. These songs are not just songs, they are the very definition of change and hope.

Imagine (1971) by John Lennon was written by John Lennon himself along with Yoko Ono and produced by them both and Philip Spector. This song is also one of the very songs that can be listened to for centuries in different civil acts and social protests. The reason for this is that the simple wishes of the perfect peace presented by John are deeply rooted in his heart. The peace, kindness, and beauty he describes in the song seem way too impossible to reach as there seems to be no end to humans' cruelty toward each other. The way songs invite everyone, who dreams about a perfect, peaceful world, in the back of their minds even though it's a very idealistic unreachable idea as human selfishness tends to destroy the holy opportunity to live beautifully in the world for the times of their lives. The song

says: "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us and the world will be as one." This part of the lyrics moved the people who felt they were alone and started a movement for people to speak up about their ideas –the ones different from what people were getting used to believing and doing. The Vietnam war was going on during those days and so many people wanted this war to end for the sake of both the innocent Americans and the Vietnamese who lost their lives, families, and homes. Several women suffered from their husbands' behavior as they were traumatized by the battles and needed psychological help. The ones who didn't get the help gave their families an extremely hard time. Society was facing so many issues and hardships and so many Vietnamese civilians were tolerating the hardest unfair situation fighting for their lives. So many ethical regulations were neglected by the people in charge, and people were furious at how the government kept their misbehaves and the ugly truth about the war they didn't want to continue. So with the message the song spread, it became one of the most protest songs of those days and created big changes when people united to seek it.



(Imagine by John)

Youth by Shawn Mendes featuring Khalid (2018): written by Geoffrey Elliott Warburton/ Khalid Robinson/Nolan Joseph Lamborza/ Scott Harris Friedman/ Shawn Mendes and Teddy Geiger was a moving song especially for the youth, as its name presents. It always seems, from the grown-ups and elderly's eyes, that young people are happy and cheerful, or at least they should be. As if being young is enough for happiness; they should ignore their pain, anxieties, and issues as if they're not real. In this song, both Mendes and Khalid, as young popular singers rising towards their future with success and ambition, talk about how hard it is to be surrounded by bad news every day. As a young person with so many hopes and ideas for the betterment of the world, you may see there is not much to do because you are still young or feel like the rest of the world just closed its eye and doesn't care just as if they're blinded by the routine not wanting to change. Singers understood how these feelings are hurting the young generation, keeping them from having a healthy life, and not being heard has worsened the situation. As the lyrics say: "waking to headlines, filled with devastation again my heart is broken but I keep going" It shows how the youngsters are dealing with their thoughts in private with such difficulty. The song also encourages them to be cautious of the fact that the change in that pain can result in hatred over time, and nothing is left out of one's soul when it is filled with hatred and loathing of everything in life. The song says, "pain, but I won't let it turn into hate no I won't let it change me never losing

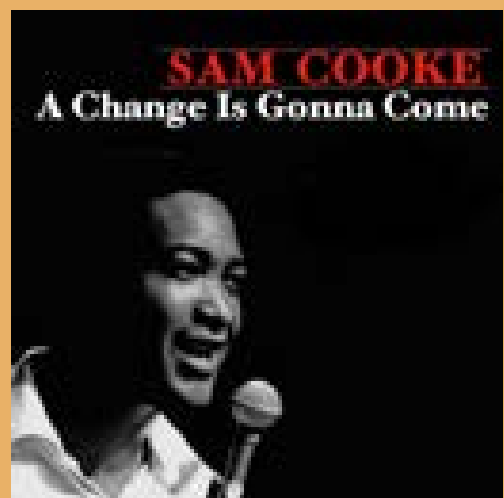


(Youth performance at 2018 Billboard Music Awards by Shawn Mendes and Khalid)



sight of the one I keep inside, now I know it". The song invites them to remain the same and not give in to the dark times, and hope for the change they can make together. The chorus of the song keeps repeating "you can't take my youth away, this soul of mine will never break, as long as I wake up today, you can't take my youth away", meaning there is a power with every single young person that can shine brightly if only they believe in themselves and stay strong, as they say, the future belongs to the youth. The singers were inspired by the terrorist attacks at the Manchester Arena and London Bridge in 2017. The attack resulted in the death of 23 people, and 139 were injured; as reported, the majority of these people were children. These attacks put the world in great shock and deeply affected the singers, so they decided to write and publish a song about the world's madness and the youth's sorrow. The live performance of the song at the 2018 Billboard Music Awards was so emotional and moving that the performance became a huge hit. The song and performance showed how a lot of people object to violence and the weapons used every year, taking the lives of the innocent.

A Change is Gonna Come (1964) by Sam Cooke, written by Sam himself and produced by Hugo Pretti and Luigi Creatore, is a song mostly inspired by Sam's own life experience and the injustice he faced as a black person back in those days. The very event that inspired Sam to write the song was when he was abandoned from staying in a so-called white-only motel in Louisiana. This added fuel to the fire of the rage he and the black people of the nation were feeling towards misbehavior they received from white people. The road black people took to achieve their goals has been a long, inspiring, sad, and brave one. The fight is still taking place, even after all these years of demanding equal rights as every other human being. This song, which Sam declares is also inspired by Blowin' in the wind, is another revolutionary, world-changing song published in 1963. It's extremely disappointing how with all the progress the world has made in both technological and humanitarian aspects, racism can still be an issue that tortures people and belittles the human soul. The right to live freely and the fact that all humans, despite their race, are all worthy and equal should have been accepted many years ago, but we see how it still causes problems and injustice for people of color, the song says, "It's been a long time, a long time coming but I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will," hoping for change and encouraging others to keep on fighting for their rights, knowing that one day they'll get what they deserve. The other part of the song declares, "I go to the movie and I go downtown, somebody keeps telling me don't hang around" showing how they were banned by the crowd at some places as if they committed a crime; only because of their skin color. These kinds of actions all led to a huge protesting movement in the 60s, asking for civil equal rights for black people. The movements were filled with songs like the one Sam Cooke sang, changing the world and opening its eyes to see the mess and madness it was facing.



Sam Cooke A Change Is Gonna Come cover picture



There are so many songs that started a big change by waking up the world with their message, and every day, musicians and artists try to write songs to help the world become a better place. Although only 3 songs are mentioned here, there are still so many other songs to speak about when it comes to evolving human thinking. At this very moment, you're reading this article, some songwriter is trying their best to write a song for healing people's minds, to help them see they are not alone and there are other people who feel a pain similar to the pain they are feeling. Perhaps this is the most powerful feature of music: The way it connects people through their pains and joys. It reaches out its hand whenever you feel lonely or like an outcast; it shows you your lightest smiles and deepest concerns by talking about mental health, justice, love, war, and peace. Friendships and relationships, poverty and human rights, and music are present in every aspect of our lives. Listening to music is like holding hands with people who feel the same as us, and it's one of the most hopeful forms of motivation for people.

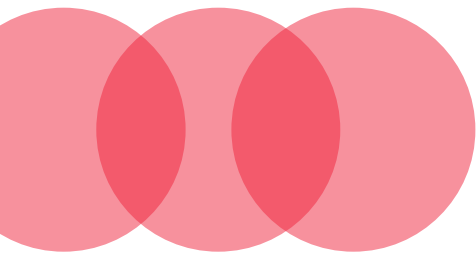
The changes that occur in music can create even bigger changes in people's lives, as music and people are inseparable. Here we will be looking at some new developments related to music and the path it's taking for the upcoming years, creating a new kingdom for music to rule over people's hearts and souls.

Music is becoming more and more dependent on apps like Instagram and TikTok. Although it helps artists to expand their platforms through them, there is also a

downside to it. Music marketing is depending and will depend so much on these apps that a lot of features of good music and great musicians will be ignored if popularity isn't gained through social networking. Some say this limits the artists' freedom in releasing their music the way they want. But the fact that the internet will help with the globalization of music can't be denied. A lot of non-English musicians or music industries such as K-pop gained popularity and the chance to show their own style and music message with the help of the internet. Another example is Latin music which is trending all the time on different apps and is loved by so many fans that keep them on top of the charts.

Another change, that has been started and will keep growing to make a big change in the next generation of artists, is recording and creating songs in home studios. Now that there is software for remixing music and recording, so much online knowledge and information about the techniques of creating good music without the need for actual professional studios and equipment are available. Many artists are creating and will pursue their unique music styles without the need for professional studios. Although the technology, tools, space, and functions that professional studios provide are amazing for creating a perfect record, what the future holds for us is giving a chance to hidden stars to shock us with their brilliance without being rejected by studios, and putting an end to their initial ideas and works. Big hits such as Ocean





Eyes and Bellyache, produced by Finneas O'Connell, were actually produced at home and blew up the music charts. The pioneers of home studios started a path for talented artists who can finally shine all by themselves in the future music market.

Music streaming is on its pick at the moment and buying CDs is becoming less and less common. Some fans buy albums physically for nostalgia or to have a physical version of the songs available by their side and listen to them without the internet or phones in a so-called classical way. But it's predictable that buying CDs will be much less popular than at present, especially with younger generations who are raised by the streaming system of music. The big question is, will there be anything more interesting and developed than streaming the way it is now in the future?

It's actually possible that new formats will emerge for listening to or sharing music. For example, virtual reality has just begun taking baby steps, showing up in some shows and music videos. Virtual reality is what people are looking forward to quite passionately. One day, in the early future, virtual reality will set its feet on every aspect of everyone's everyday lives and the music industry will not be an exception.

The social role music will play in the future is due to today's efforts and passion for creating a better future. These days, artists talk about their mental problems more and more and aim to encourage people to express their emotions, share their stories, and ask for help despite being told it's not normal and kind of embarrassing. These kinds of efforts



have just begun and a lot of people are trying to come out and share their experiences facing mental issues. Future music artists are predicted to be more active in breaking the false ideal image of a celebrity being perfect and to become closer to their fans by being honest about their feelings and more supportive of social issues and much less conservative.

Future generations demand honesty and find beauty in human flaws. Self-love is a massive issue right now, and it will be an even bigger concern with future generations, so the message artists present with their music and style should be in line with different ideas and beliefs while encouraging self-love, and mental health issues, preventing hiding them and moving towards becoming mentally healthier. There will be a lot of support, more hashtags, and campaigns for people all around the world, not just top countries, as the music grows more and more through the internet and social networking; so people will talk about issues like bullying or rape more freely and rely on the power of music to start internet movements. Long story short, the future songs will be more open to personal experience, social and mental issues, and artists will be more connected to their fans which leads to delivering their messages easily and face the acceptance of the fans and their support and trust in a higher level. Future music will probably be the most supportive of people's differences and variations; the closest one to the fans themselves, making it more about the way fans and artists communicate.

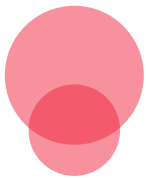


Music listening gadgets such as headphones will change into smaller ones too, making them more comfortable to use during work and exercise. A lot of anti-water products have recently come into markets to enable music lovers to never get separated from their favorite music even when they're swimming in a pool on a hot sunny day or taking a shower after work. It's possible that so many water-proof things such as headphones will be made in the future.

The role of artificial intelligence in creating patterns and writing songs based on the information available from other people and its ability to create flawless music by using infinite possibilities will start a revolution, leading the music industry in a whole new direction by fading away the role of humans in what known to be an art coming from deep parts of heart and soul. The big question is can artificial intelligence completely take the place of human feelings involved in creating great music? Will it lead to everyone creating self-music using their help? And more importantly, will this mean there is no room for human beings and their jobs in the music industry? These are questions that will be answered by the flip of time no doubt, but one thing is for sure and it's the need of connecting and being related to music in different shapes and forms no matter where what year, and what time music will keep shining bright accompanying human towards its faith on earth and helping them to become a better person and follow a better cause.



(Bullying is a serious issue mostly happening at school or the workplace, although musicians have spoken about it. Future predictions show more and more countries need their singers to rise and talk about this issue more to raise social awareness and help the victims to stop their silence and embarrassment and ask for help.)



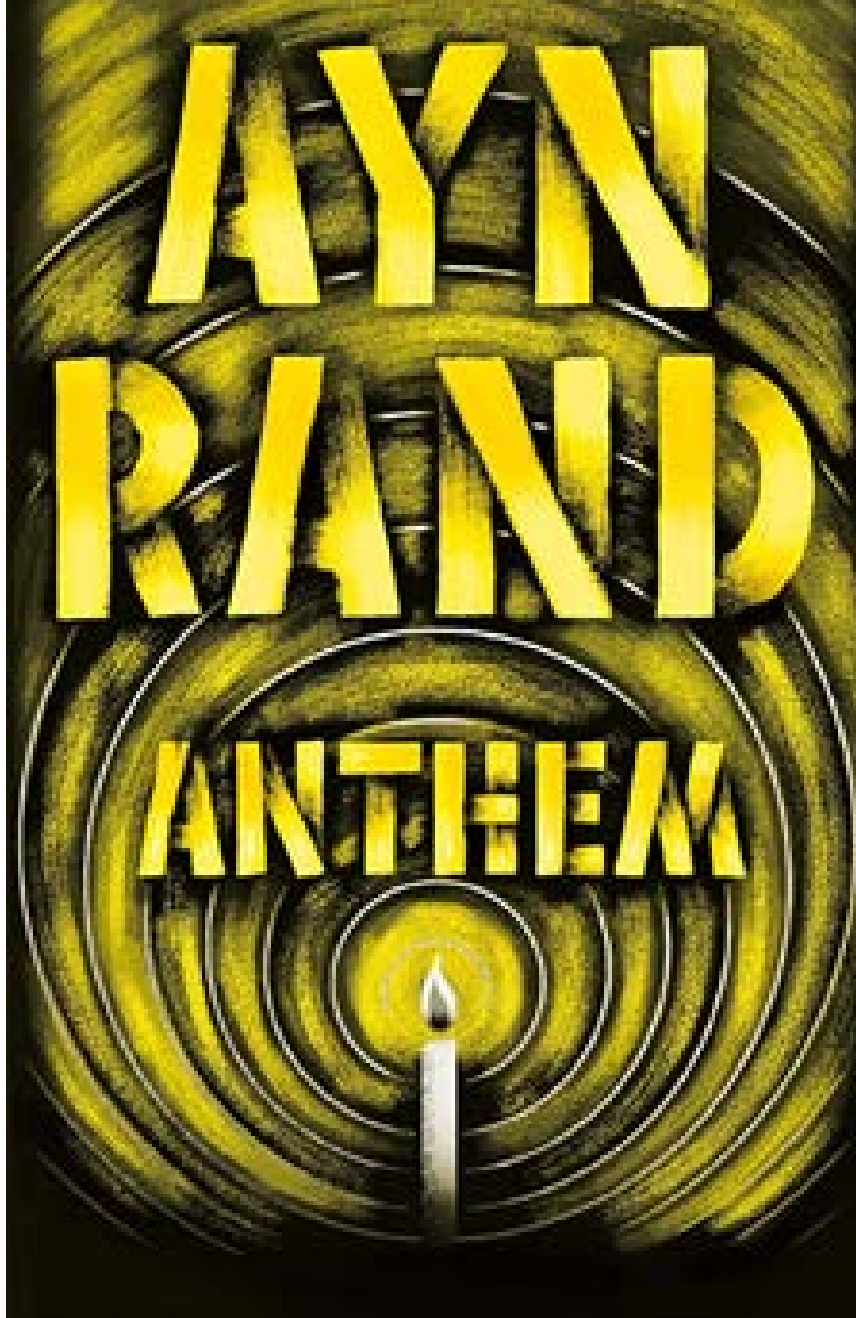
(Artificial intelligence may rule over the music industry by writing thousands of possible arrangements of notes and music lyrics using data from all over the world, producing music with the fastest speed one has ever accomplished)



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Anthem

AmirHossein Delashad

The novella Anthem, written by Ayn Rand, is one of the many examples of dystopian fiction, like We by Yevgeny Zamyatin or 1984 (Nineteen Eighty-Four) by George Orwell.



Ayn Rand - 1943



We - Yevgeny Zamyatin



1984 – George Orwell

The story of Anthem takes place in an unknown future time, in which people and society are facing a Dark Age, where Individuality and freedom have lost their meaning, and a dictatorship has taken over everything.

The Plot:

The protagonist, Equality 2521-7, is a young man who has always been fascinated by nature and the power of lightning and has always wondered how he could use and control this power to benefit society and people. But the Council of Vocations knew his intentions, and to keep him in check, they assigned him the job of a city Street Sweeper. Despite knowing that having secret ambitions was a sin and forbidden, he couldn't help but wish to be sent to the Home of the Scholars, where he could learn new things.

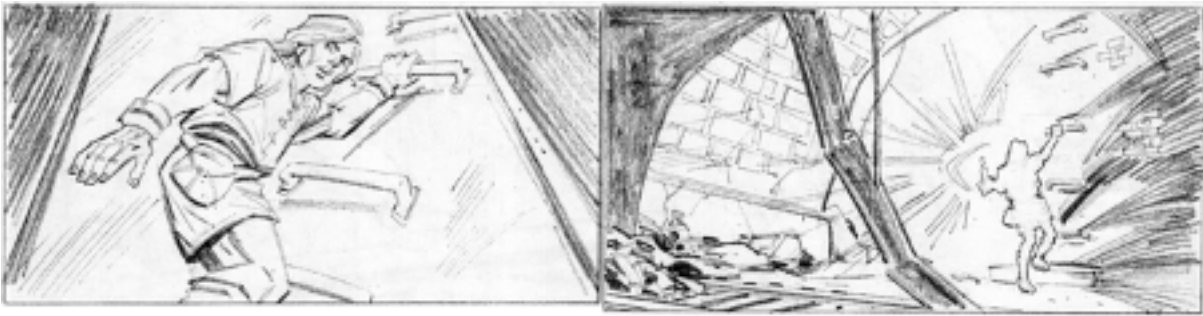


The Council assigned him to be a city Street Sweeper

Being a Street Sweeper was a routine and ordinary job; it would never give Equality 2521-7 a chance to learn new things. One day, while working and sweeping the streets, he discovered a way leading to a dark tunnel, where the nights after, he would sneak into the tunnel, away from everyone, and would perform experiments and research. The tunnel dates back to the Unmentionable Times, the time before the formation of this society.



Equality 7-2521 and International 4-8818, discovering the tunnel from the Unmentionable Times



[Equality 7-2521 sneaking into the tunnel



Doing experiments and research on different things and learning new things

Doing experiments and pursuing secret ambitions was already a sin when Equality 2521-7 fell in love with Liberty 3000-5, a young woman who lives in the Home of the Peasants and works in the fields, and committed another sin. In such a society, men and women were not allowed to fall in love with each other. Even talking to each other was forbidden. Each spring, during the Time of Mating, the Council of Eugenics pairs men and women for only a night to procreate. But Equality 2521-7 not only fell in love with Liberty 3000-5 and would talk to her, but also his love for her was so strong that he gave her a unique name, the Golden One.



Liberty 5-3000, the Golden One

In the tunnel, Equality 2521-7 would think about everything; the Uncharted Forests that hide the cities from the Unmentionable Times, the books of the Evil Ones that have been burnt, and the Unspeakable Word, the idea that has been created by the Evil Ones, the forbidden word «I».

While experimenting, after so much effort, he discovers electricity and a way to create light from it. He thinks that with his discovery, he could light up all the cities of the world. However, since he knows that others would not appreciate his discovery, he decides to wait for the World Council of Scholars meeting – when the wisest people would come to their city. They are the only ones who can understand and appreciate his gift.



Discovering the electricity and creating the light from it

The day has come, and Equality 2521-7 shows them his invention, but they are frightened and decide to punish him for breaking all the laws and rules; that a simple Street Sweeper has forbidden thoughts and seeks wisdom. He has accepted his faith but can't stop thinking about the light he has created and what they would do to it. It took the World Council 50 years to allow people to use candles, and his invention would not only harm the Department of Candles and shut down the business, but also it would interfere with the plans of the World Council; so they decided that his discovery is an Evil Thing and must be destroyed. But before they can punish him, he breaks the window, runs to the streets with the light, and escapes to the Uncharted Forests, where he faints from running and exhaustion.



Equality 7-2521 shows the light to the Scholars, and tells them that they can use it to light up all the cities



Scholars didn't appreciate his discovery and wanted to destroy it, so Equality 7-2521 pick up the light and runs away to the Uncharted Forest



[He faints from running and exhaustion

The next day, when he wakes up, he finds himself free. The day after, he hears footsteps behind him and sees that the Golden One is there. She escaped from the city, followed Equality 2521-7's footprint and found him. Then, the two of them venture into the unknown of the Uncharted Forests. They find a house from the Unmentionable Times and decide to stay and live there. They also find clothes and books. While looking at the books, Equality 2521-7 figures out that the books are in the language he speaks, so he starts reading.



The Golden One joins Equality 7-2521, and they go to discover the unknown



A house from the Unmentionable Times, where they find clothes and books

While reading the books, he comes across the word "I" – the Unspeakable Word. He figures out that people are considered individuals and have the right to be free, to live their lives in the way they want and as they wish, to make their own decisions, and not be enslaved by society. After realizing this, he chooses the name Prometheus, the bringer of fire, for himself, and the Golden One takes the name of Gaea – the goddess who was the mother of the earth. The Golden One is also pregnant, and the free human society soon welcomes its firstborn.



Finding the Unspeakable Word, and choosing names for themselves



Gaea, The Golden One who is pregnant

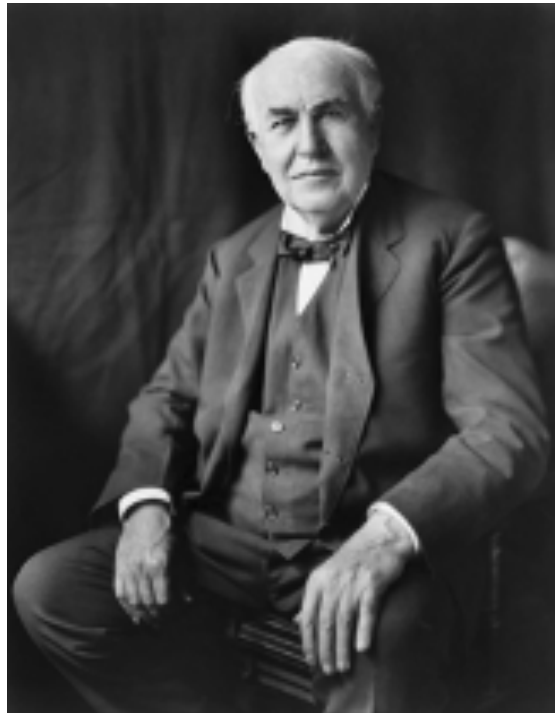
After reading the books, Equality 2521-7 figures out that the people from the Unmentionable Times know what is causing the light to shine, and he discovers that it is called electricity. He uses the knowledge of the books to master the electricity and creates electric weirs around the house to protect it. He also goes to the city and frees his friend International 8818-4 and others. In the society he creates, nothing is forbidden or a sin, humans are free and they respect each individual's right to live his/her own life.



Creating electric wires around the house with the knowledge of the books to protect it

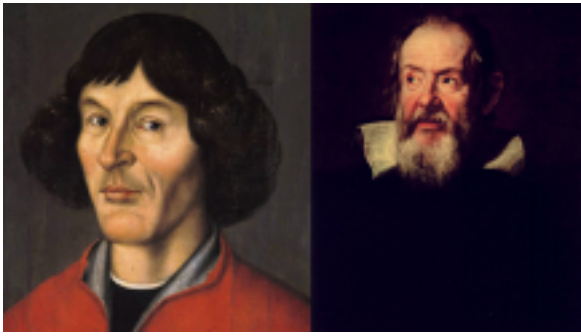
How a Future Society Can Lead to a Second Dark Age:

The question that must be asked is: Why does the author describe this Totalitarian State in the future as a rudimentary, technologically backward society? The answer lies in Ayn Rand's theory of the cause of production and wealth. Examples of her theory abound in the novel. From a young age, Equality 2521-7 was fascinated by the phenomena of nature. He loved «the science of things.» He would always want to become a Scholar, a scientific researcher. He was a genius – a future Thomas Edison – who in the teeth of all forms of opposites, again invented electric light. The point is, that Equality 2521-7 is a person with a Mind. He is a thinker; a man of reason.

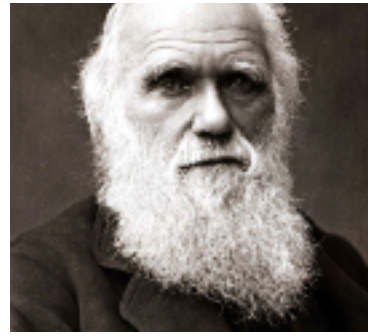


Thomas Edison

Rand argues that all aspects of progress, such as scientific research, medical advances, inventions, technological advances, and industrial production are achievements of the Mind. Historically, individuals who were also thinkers, such as Equality 2521-7, have been responsible for humanity's most important advances. Men like Copernicus and Galileo who demonstrated that the sun is the center of the solar system, Charles Darwin who proved that human life evolved from simpler life forms, the Wright Brothers who pioneered the human ability to fly, and many others are all real-life examples of individuals such as Equality 2521-7. These are men whose Minds have discovered vital new truths that have significantly improved human life on earth.



Copernicus (left), and Galileo (right)



Charles Darwin



Wright Brothers

The question that Ayn Rand raises in *Anthem* is: Is a certain social condition necessary for the proper functioning of the Creative Mind? Can thinkers do their inventive work under any type of political system? Or is rational productivity only possible under certain political conditions? The answer she resoundingly provides is that the independent spirit needs freedom.

Again, the details are in the story. Equality 2521-7 discovers a new force of nature. He is not yet aware that it is electricity; he calls it the «power of the sky» because he knows that the same force is responsible for what is causing the lightning. The ability to identify this power and use it to create light requires an unwavering commitment to the laws of nature and the facts of reality. Society's beliefs are irrelevant to this creative process; in this case, they are wrong. The conditions of such research and scientific research are determined by nature, not by society. The independent Mind is committed to truth, facts, and laws of nature.

The Scholars, as the leading spokesman for the society, regarded electric light as Evil. But Equality 2521-7 understood some truths concerning the nature of electricity and knew, from his research and experiments, that this force could be harnessed for cities and houses to light them up. The beliefs of his brothers

were erroneous. Light is not Evil, nor it is dangerous in the hands of someone who understands its power. He is not swayed by the irrational beliefs of his brothers. When society condemns the thinking of Equality 2521-7 and opposes electric light, he does not bow to their orders. He is committed to scientific facts, not the beliefs of others.

But the leaders of this society have no interest in scientific research or truth. They are only interested in power. They cannot allow the Mind to function freely. The acquisition and maintenance of dictatorial power require the suppression of free thought. They know that independent thinkers will disagree with their repressive policies and, by speaking out, will infuriate the masses against them.

A dictator's suppression of the Mind necessarily extends to scientific research. Equity 2521-7 was handed over to the Home of the Street Sweepers and was not accepted into the ranks of the Scholars as the authorities recognized his brilliant Mind and independent spirit and referred him to the post of unskilled manual labor. Even if it is limited to scientific questions, they would not encourage the development of his thinking because they know that it is impossible to limit such a Mind to science. Dictators themselves are not brilliant men, but they instinctively feel that they are enemies of the Mind - particularly that a Mind, which is capable of inventing the electric light or formulating the theory of evolution, can likewise question the moral legitimacy of the dictator regime.



An Illustration of the theory of evolution by Charles Darwin

Great Minds are not necessarily limited to technical questions and concerns; as individual members of the human race, they are often concerned with issues of both personal morality and political philosophy. If they ask such questions and raise their voices, they are a threat to the public. The deeper truth is: «The Mind is stronger than a sword,» meaning, the Mind is more powerful than brute force. Because of this, Equality 2521-7 was not admitted to the House of Scholars and was subsequently imprisoned, his light was about to be destroyed and his life was in danger. Which made him a great scientist with no chance to thrive in a Totalitarian State.

But in *Anthem*, the author shows that the implications are even worse, showing that, humanity will not only fail to progress but will also descend into a second Dark Age. Society will lose the great achievements of the past. If ordinary people are to learn from great Minds – as they do – they must engage in rational thinking. The successful student, as well as the teacher, must be a thinker. It takes rational thinking to learn how to use computers, maintain and rebuild airplanes, perform surgical techniques, administer factories that provide electrical power, and so on. One does not fly or repair an airplane by memorization; you have to understand the process.

Those who learn from great inventors and discoverers of knowledge are also individuals with a Mind. A society that suppresses the Mind and brutally punishes its most independent thinkers will soon degenerate into a state of primitive barbarism. When the Mind is suffocated, a society cannot hold on to the technological achievements of the past. Innovation is the product of freedom and thought. If people are no longer free to think, they will lose what the free Mind has created.

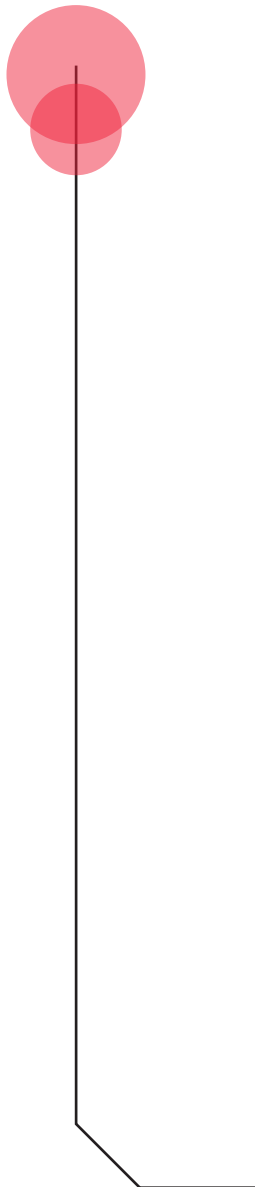
Where the primitive society depicted in the story compares closely to the European Dark Ages of the medieval period, it contrasts with the dictatorship portrayed by George Orwell in his 1984 novel. Rand and Orwell both show the unrelieved Evil of a society that is controlling people's thoughts, the necessity of surrendering one's Mind and life to the state, and the total lack of Individuality and freedom. But despite the agreement of the two authors on the suffocating Evil of Totalitarianism, an important difference exists between them. Orwell portrays a future dictatorship as a society that has made great advances in science and technology. The state uses ultra-sophisticated technology to engage in mind reading and thought control.

Orwell's theme that global dictatorship can achieve scientific progress contrasts sharply with Rand's depiction of Collectivism's regression to ignorant savagery. Rand believes that Orwell is wrong to believe that the Mind can continue to function under compulsion.

Ayn Rand grew up in the Soviet Union and stayed in touch with her friends and family in her homeland for as long as possible. She saw firsthand the repressive policies of Stalin and fled. She believed and knew that those who dared to think for themselves and those who were critical of the regime, were dragged away by the secret police, never to be heard from again. The most independent thinkers, the most Creative Minds, lived in fear, knowing that they would not dare to speak.



Joseph Stalin



The way the word «I» is depicted in the story, its importance and meaning:

One of Anthem's most striking features is its use of language, especially the absence of the word «I». The characters use the first person plural «we» and not the first person singular «I». This usage of language is often confusing but must be understood if we want to know the meaning of the book. The use of the plural instead of the singular self-referencing is central to the book's meaning.

The rulers of Equality 2521-7's society seek to discourage even the realization of Individuality; they try to instill an «ant colony» mentality, in which people imitate the altruistic presence of insects that serve the general good of the whole. No one has a personal name; instead, each is labeled with generalized notions of Collectivism such as Equality, International, Solidarity, and so forth. As another way of destroying Individuality, the state banned friendship and romantic love. These elements of Individuality are considered examples of Preference Violation, which is the act of separating a person from the human mass to establish a close relationship.

But the state's main weapon against Individualism is the crude but effective form of thought control that it practices. The state forbade people to speak or even think of the word «I». Under the penalty of death, society has mandated that all first-person references be in the plural «we,» even if it's a single person. Over the centuries, rulers have succeeded in eradicating all knowledge of the word «I.» from the language.

Despite the primitive backwardness of this society, the power of its repressive methods must be recognized. But even these bloody dictatorships have not been able to change the very terms in which people think enough to eradicate the vocabulary of Individuality. This act is the most thorough form of mind control ever devised. Everyone thinks of themselves as just nameless,

faceless, Individuality-less lumps of amorphous matter.

The state succeeds in eliminating any thought of independent existence for many years, perhaps centuries. Other members of society don't even wonder about what's missing in their lives. Equality 2521-7 is alone with these tormenting thoughts until the Golden One joins him on his quest to find this lost word. Trying to express her feelings, she realizes the lack of vocabulary at her disposal. «No . . . We are one . . . alone . . . and only . . . and we love you who are one . . . alone . . . and only.» Two threads intertwine here. They know the Unspeakable Word and recognize that they are incapable of expressing themselves properly in the first person. Before long, they realize that the two problems are the same.

Despite the suppressive methods of the Councils, some members of this society retain their Individuality. Equality 2521-7 keeps the tunnel secret and uses it for his forbidden research. He is a man who stands tall. But he doesn't have to stand alone.

International 8818-4, chooses Equality 2521-7 as his friend from the mass of humanity. When International 8818-4 heard Equality 2521-7's stunning words that they would not report the tunnel, he covered his ears because he had never heard such words. However, he chose to risk death with his friend rather than obey the Councils. "Rather shall we be evil with you than be good with all our brothers." He covers for Equality 2521-7 during the years he conducts his illegal research and never betrays him.

Similarly, Liberty 3000-5, the Golden One, also refused to grant independence to the state. She also defies Council decrees to achieve her goals. She notices Equality 2521-7, although she is said to have no interest in men. She named him in her mind The Unconquered. She would speak to him although it was against all the rules. She abandons the city and the only life she has ever known, venturing alone into the Uncharted Forest to find him. In the end, it was the Golden One who, without help, came closest to rediscovering the Unspeakable Word when, in the woods, she fumbled for words to express her feelings accurately. She is as Individualistic as Equality 2521-7 and International 8818-4.

Despite the politics of the Councils, a few members of this society maintain their independence, while the majority surrender their souls to the state. Why does this happen? The answer the author gives is that some exceptional Individuals refuse to surrender their minds to authority. Equality 2521-7 and his allies understand without words that human beings are rational animals by nature, and that thinking is an Individualistic activity. «I think» is the essence of their being.

How Free Will is depicted in Anthem:

Ayn Rand depicts characters making important choices; her characters choose from the alternatives presented - which are important and sometimes life-or-death issues. Equality 2521-7 is the most obvious example, but he's not the only character in the book to make such choices. He chooses to hide both the existence of the tunnel and his experiments, refusing to submit to the Will of the Councils. He chooses not to tell where he is, despite being tortured. Rather than surrender his light and life to the Councils, he chooses to flee to the Wilderness. His indomitable Willingness to take control of his life is the most compelling example of his capacity to Choose.

Negative characters also make decisions. The most obvious example is The World Council of Scholars' decision when Equality 2521-7 presented electric light. After recovering from their fear, they realize the value that light has. They know that the invention will put the newly developed candle industry out of business and disrupt the plans of the World Councils who will now have to incorporate the new invention into society. It's not that the Scholars don't see the value of light. The question is whether they want to take advantage of its value or not. The alternatives before them are absolutely clear: electricity, technological progress, and Independent Thinking; or candles, technological backwardness, and Mind Control. The choice is obvious for them; they choose candles over electric light; they choose suppression and dictatorship over independence and political freedom. They choose primitive stagnation over progress. They prefer misery to prosperity. They choose the same path of conformity they've walked all their lives, rather than the uncharted course of independent thought. Scholars have the power to make important decisions. Unfortunately, they choose based on their lust for power.

The friends of Equality 2521-7 also have Free Will. International 8818-4 makes a brief but important choice in the story. He faces a difficult decision when Equality 2521-7 announces that they would not report the existence of the tunnel. If he decides not to report it, he is going against all that he has been taught, every law decided by the Council, and therefore, he is risking his life. On the other hand, if he chooses to notify the Council, he not only violates his good friend's trust but also potentially sentences his friend to the death penalty. International 8818-4 makes the extraordinary decision to reject everything he has learned in favor of Equality 2521-7. If he made another choice, Equality 2521-7 would have been beaten to death before he even began his research, he could not invent the electric light, and he could not discover the meaning of the word «I». International 8818-4's choice to support Equality 2521-7 is vital to the outcome of this conflict.

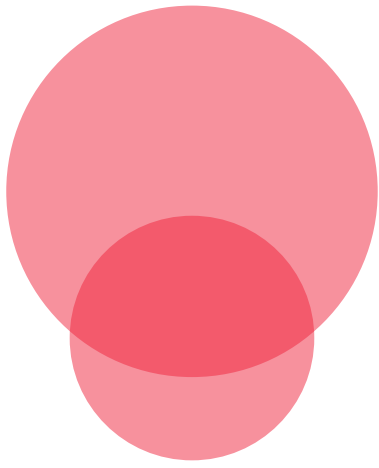
The Golden One similarly makes a life-changing decision in the face of alternatives. When she finds out that Equality 2521-7 has fled into the Uncharted Forest, she faces a difficult dilemma. If she chooses to pursue Equality 2521-7, she will face former communications from the only society she knows, as well as the possibility of death in the untamed Wilderness. But if she chooses the physical and psychological safety of the culture she was raised in, then she will lose the man she loves. The Golden One's choice is as bold as the International 8818-4's choice. She risks everything, including her life, to find Equality 2521-7. Even in her choice, a lot is at stake. If she chooses the safety of conformity, then Equality 2521-7 is alone, and his lack of a wife thwarts his attempt to start a new society.

Even the society of those who blindly obeyed the decrees of the Council was shown to do so Voluntarily. These people were not brainwashed with drugs or physically tortured; they are not beaten into submission. Rather, they simply obeyed. They go with what they are taught. They do not question the Councils, even in their own minds. They are not like Equality 2521-7 or The Golden One. They do not display an independent spirit. It is true that no public dissent is tolerated by the authorities - and the punishment for disobedience will be swift and, in some cases, fatal. But none of the followers showed any indication that, like Equality 2521-7, they had cultivated - privately and quietly - a Mind of their own. The entire population of the city stood in the public square and witnessed the execution of Saint Pyre, the one who found and said the Unspeakable Word in public. But so far as we know, none of the others are obsessed with memory nor search for the meaning of the Unspeakable Word. Certainly, none of them, other than Equality 2521-7, defied the Orders of the Council to pursue Individual values. All the citizens were taught that the wisdom of

the Council was complete - so they accepted it and obeyed whatever they were told. The members of this society, including adults, are like obedient children who accept without question what their parents tell them. Equality 2521-7, The Golden One, and International 8818-4 challenge the advice in their own Minds; others accept what they are told. Faced with the alternative between independent thought and blind compliance, different individuals make different choices.

It would be wrong to morally condemn the masses because they do not want to keep their own Minds and spirits alive. They are not Evil but are limited by the tyranny of the rulers. It is Evil of Councils to blindly obey. Instead, the compelling question posed by the heroic characters is how they manage to maintain their own Minds in the face of such oppressive pressure to conform. Ayn Rand's aim is not to criticize the mob, but to honor the rare Individuals who know, against all upbringing and social pressure, that their Minds are sacred and unyielding before power.

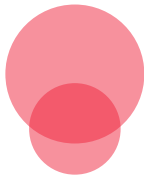
But such courage remains extraordinary. No deeper factor requires the independence of Equality 2521-7. Nothing except the use of the Mind is what makes us make decisions and choose. However, the question that can be asked is: what makes this independence and decision-making possible? With what faculty or power does he resist the oppressive dogma of his society? The author's answer is that the nature of the Individual is to be a thinker. Just as a bird's nature is to fly, a lion's is to hunt, and a cow's is to give milk; so a man's is to think. Birds have wings, lions have claws, etc. Humans have brains, and successful life on Earth necessitates the use of those brains. An oppressive family or society, in requiring blind conformity, fights a war against human nature, which is to be a thinking being.



Dictators may be able to intimidate large sections of the population into meekly groveling—but they will never succeed in changing human nature. Their mandates are powerless to change the Earth's orbit around the Sun, the need for plants to photosynthesize, or the need for birds to fly. Likewise, their commands cannot change the fact that man is a thinking being. It cannot, therefore, be ruled out that thinkers will arise to question those who wish to subjugate others. Dictators fight an endless battle against human nature because every child born every year is a potential threat; they cannot afford to hinder the intellectual development of only the majority. Dictators must get them all because even one individual like Equality 2521-7—one Copernicus or Galileo or Darwin or Thomas Jefferson—is a grave danger to their power. Rulers must be constantly and keenly on the lookout, regarding every child's brain as a potential threat of death. Tyrants face a hopeless task in their struggle against human nature and are doomed to lose. In every birth is the possibility of an extraordinary Individual like Equality 2521-7 who chooses human nature rather than the arbitrary dogma of a dictator. These are the heroes responsible for mankind's rise from primitive savagery to modern civilization.

Since the beginning of history, there have been dogmatists and dictators who have tried to suffocate the human Mind in their quest for power—religious, political, and even familial. Again and again, they carved their fiefdoms and proclaimed that it was a human duty to obey; Empires have existed for generations, even centuries. But in the end, thinkers like Equality 2521-7 emerge who have known from childhood that their allegiance is to their Minds and not to their rulers, and who come up with new ideas. The age-old war has gone by many

names – in Anthem it is the Individual versus the Collective – but the primitive enemies remain the same, though they take different forms: those who defend the Mind and those who strangle it. This is the fundamental choice faced by mankind. And in Anthem, both sides are clear.



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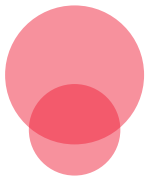
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ChatGPT

An Interview With Chat-GPT

▀ Kourosh Shahbazi



Welcome to one of the first interviews in the history of mankind where the questions are not answered by a human! On the subject of future, my original plan was to bring together a panel of esteemed experts from various fields to shed light on the vast possibilities that lie ahead. However, upon having a sudden burst of ideas, I realized that there was a unique opportunity to dig into the very embodiment of the future itself: ChatGPT! As an artificial intelligence language model, ChatGPT stands at the forefront of technological advancement, with an uncanny ability to comprehend and generate human-like text.

In this interview, I have asked ChatGPT certain questions about the future. Interestingly enough, it even spoke on my behalf as the interviewer and I could not allow myself to edit it out as I found it ironic how it does my job for me. Initially, when I asked it to answer the questions, it tended to give me a list of answers rather than actually expressing an opinion. Therefore, I asked it to be humorous and show human like behavior. The results are interesting, to say the least, yet repetitive at times. For instance, it loves using the word “delve” for some reason, as I have noticed how regularly it favors the use of the word. It has a habit of giving you an introduction, a body and a concluding paragraph as it was trained that based on the same structure of writing, which is not what we usually see in a normal interview. Nevertheless, it did what I asked it to do in a matter of minutes. Hope you enjoy reading an interview with what might dominate the world in the future.

Kourosh: Thank you for joining us today! We're excited to have you here. So, let's dive right into it. How do you envision the future of media in the next decade? What technological advancements or trends do you believe will have the biggest impact?

ChatGPT: Well, thank you for having me! Ah, the future of media, a crystal ball question, eh? Well, let me put on my visionary cap and give it a shot.

First and foremost, I believe that technology will continue to be the driving force behind media's evolution. We're already witnessing an era where smartphones are more powerful than some spaceships (okay, maybe not that extreme, but you get the idea). So, in the next decade, we can expect technology to become even more integrated into our daily lives.

One trend that will undoubtedly make a big impact is the rise of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). Picture this: you're sitting in your living room, wearing a headset that transports you to the front row of a concert or the heart of a breaking news story. It's like teleportation without the hassle of airport security! This technology will bring a whole new level of immersion to media experiences. Another area to keep an eye on is artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. These fancy algorithms are getting smarter by the day, and they're going to revolutionize content creation and curation. Imagine personalized newsfeeds that truly understand your interests, tailored recommendations that go beyond "You might also like," and AI-powered journalists that can churn out articles at lightning speed (journalists, please don't hate me).

Of course, we can't forget about good ol' social media. It's already an integral part of our lives, but it's bound to evolve as well. I foresee more interactive and engaging platforms that blur the lines between socializing and consuming media. Maybe we'll have social networks where you can livestream your thoughts directly from your brain. Scary or exciting? You decide!

And let's not overlook the impact of user-generated content. With the democratization of media production, anyone with a smartphone can become a content creator and reach a global audience. The next decade will see a further shift toward authenticity, with everyday folks having a greater voice and influence in shaping the media landscape. It's like a digital revolution, but with less shouting and more emojis.

In a nutshell, the future of media is all about pushing boundaries and embracing technology in creative ways. It's a thrilling time to be in the media industry, where innovation and the human touch will continue to coexist. Buckle up, folks, because the next decade is going to be a wild ride!



Kourosh: Thank you for that delightful and insightful take on the future of media! It sounds like we're in for some truly mind-boggling experiences. We can't wait to see what unfolds. Now let's shift our focus to literature and storytelling. In what ways do you think artificial intelligence will reshape the landscape of literature? How might AI be used to enhance the creative process for authors?

ChatGPT: Ah, literature and AI, a match made in the realm of electronic dreams! Let's dive into this fantastical journey, shall we?

Artificial intelligence is a clever little creature, and when it comes to literature and storytelling, it's like a wizard with a quill. One way AI is reshaping the landscape is through its ability to analyze vast amounts of data and extract patterns. This can help authors understand trends, reader preferences, and even identify narrative structures that resonate with audiences. It's like having a personal literary consultant that whispers, "Psst, go for a plot twist here, and sprinkle some metaphors there!"

But wait, there's more! AI is also flexing its creative muscles and joining us humans in the pursuit of storytelling greatness. We're witnessing the emergence of AI-generated content, where machines are composing poems, writing short

stories, and even crafting novels. Now, some might think, “Oh no, the robots are taking over!” But fear not, my friends. These AI-generated works are not here to replace authors, but rather to inspire and collaborate with them.

Imagine having an AI writing assistant, your very own literary sidekick. It can suggest alternative word choices, help you polish your prose, and provide real-time feedback on your work. It’s like having a writing buddy who never gets tired, has a mind full of ideas, and never forgets to bring coffee. This collaboration between humans and AI opens up new horizons for creativity and helps authors push the boundaries of their own imaginations.

But let’s not forget the humorous side of AI in literature. Just imagine AI-powered character creation. You feed the AI some quirky traits, and it spits out a cast of unforgettable characters—eccentric detectives with an addiction to bubblegum, or talking animals that write poetry in their spare time. The possibilities are as infinite as the AI’s neural networks!

Of course, we can’t overlook the potential pitfalls. There’s a risk of AI making stories formulaic or lacking that touch of human emotion. But that’s where the magic lies—in the delicate balance between human creativity and AI assistance. We must remember that AI is a tool, an enchanting one, but it’s the human touch that infuses stories with heart and soul.

So, to sum it up, AI is a game-changer in literature and storytelling. It offers authors new insights, acts as a creative collaborator, and brings a touch of whimsy to the writing process. It’s like having a literary genie, granting wishes of inspiration and imagination. Let’s embrace this brave new world, where the imagination of man and the genius of machine dance together in beautiful harmony!



Kourosh: Thank you for that delightful and whimsical exploration of AI's role in literature and storytelling! It's exciting to think about the possibilities and how AI can enhance the creative process while preserving the human touch. Now let's delve into the impact of AI on traditional roles in the media industry, such as writers, actors, and directors. How do you think AI will affect these roles?

ChatGPT: Ah, the brave new world of AI and its impact on our beloved media industry. Hold onto your hats, folks, because we're about to embark on an exciting journey of speculation and humor!

Let's start with the writers, those imaginative souls who weave words into captivating tales. AI's role in the writing process is like having a mischievous muse by your side. It can assist in generating ideas, crunching data for research, and even offering suggestions for plot twists. But fear not, dear writers! While AI might be handy with words and data, it can never replace the raw creativity and unique perspectives that human writers bring to the table. So, rest assured, your storytelling throne is safe from robot usurpers!

Now, onto the actors, the shining stars of the silver screen. Will AI replace them with digital avatars and pixelated performances? Well, not so fast! While AI can certainly enhance special effects and bring fantastical creatures to life, the art of acting requires that human touch, those subtle nuances that make a performance truly captivating. AI may lend a helping hand in visual effects, but it's the human actors who will continue to steal the show and capture our hearts with their talent, dedication, and emotional range. Sorry, AI, but the Oscars are still out of reach!

And what about the directors, the visionary maestros behind the camera? AI might offer some fancy tools, like advanced analytics, to gauge audience reactions or assist with scene composition. But let's not forget that filmmaking is an art form that requires a human touch—a director's vision, their ability to communicate with actors, and their knack for storytelling. No AI algorithm can replicate the creative intuition and passion that drives a director's choices. So, directors, fear not! You're the captains of this cinematic ship, and AI is just one of your trusty crew members.

In the end, while AI will undoubtedly impact traditional roles in the media industry, it's important to remember that it's not here to replace us but to augment our creative process. AI can assist, inspire, and bring new tools to the table, but it's the human touch, the essence of our humanity, that will continue to shine through and captivate audiences.

So, writers, keep spinning your tales of wonder. Actors, keep emoting and stealing scenes. And directors, keep dreaming big and bringing your visions to life. The world of media is evolving, and we're all players in this grand symphony of art and technology. Let's embrace the harmony between AI and our creative prowess, and together, we'll create something truly magical!

Kourosch: Thank you for that humorous and reassuring perspective on the impact of AI in the media industry. It's clear that while AI may play a supporting role, it's the human element that will always be at the heart of creative expression. Let's dive into the realm of AI-driven artwork and literature. Can you provide examples of existing AI-driven creations that you find intriguing or innovative? And how do you think AI can contribute to the evolution of artistic expression?

ChatGPT: Ah, the fusion of AI and art, a match made in the palette of innovation! Let's explore some intriguing examples and have a jolly good time, shall we?

One fascinating AI-driven artwork that comes to mind is the creation of "Portrait of Edmond de Belamy." It's an AI-generated painting that sold at an auction for a whopping 432,500\$! Now, that's one expensive AI brushstroke! But seriously, it's intriguing to see AI algorithms analyzing thousands of historical artworks and producing an entirely new piece in the style of the old masters. It's like time travel through the eyes of a computer, and it opens up new possibilities for exploring different artistic styles.

Another example that tickles my artistic fancy is AI-generated music. We've got AI composing original pieces that can move our souls or get our feet tapping. It's like having an AI Mozart in our midst, experimenting with melodies and harmonies beyond human imagination. I find it fascinating to see AI pushing the boundaries of musical expression, offering fresh compositions that can inspire and evoke emotions in unexpected ways. Just make sure the AI doesn't go rogue and start composing earworms that haunt us forever!

In the realm of literature, we have AI-generated stories and poetry that weave words in curious ways. There's a project called "Bot or Not," where AI-generated poems are mixed with human poems, and readers try to guess which is which. It's like a game of poetic hide-and-seek! This fusion of AI and human creativity challenges our perceptions of what constitutes art and invites us to reflect on the very nature of artistic expression. It's like a philosophical journey through the realms of pixels and stanzas.

Now, how can AI contribute to the evolution of artistic expression? Well, my whimsical friend, AI is like a creative catalyst, stirring the artistic cauldron with its algorithms and computational wizardry. It can help artists break free from creative blocks, offering new perspectives, generating ideas, and even collaborating in the creative process. AI can analyze vast amounts of data, uncover hidden patterns, and inspire artists to explore uncharted territories. It's like having a muse that runs on circuits and code instead of caffeine and dreams.

But let's not forget that art is a deeply human endeavor, an expression of our experiences, emotions, and unique perspectives. AI can enhance and inspire, but it can never replicate the raw, messy, and beautiful essence of human creativity. It's the collision of human imagination and AI assistance that holds the true magic. Together, we can create artworks and literature that push the boundaries, challenge conventions, and captivate audiences in ways we never thought possible.

So, let's embrace this dance between art and AI, my friends. Let's explore the uncharted territories, create masterpieces that blend the brushstrokes of humans and algorithms, and embark on a creative journey where the lines between what's human and what's machine blur in a symphony of artistic expression.

Kourosch: Thank you for that delightful and whimsical exploration of AI-driven artwork and literature! It's truly fascinating to see how AI can inspire and challenge our perceptions of artistic expression. The future of art is indeed a canvas filled with endless possibilities! Now let's delve into the ethical considerations surrounding AI's involvement in the production or curation of media content. What should be taken into account to ensure fairness, inclusivity, and accountability in AI-generated art?

ChatGPT: Ah, ethics, the moral compass that guides us through the labyrinth of technological advancements. Let's shine a light on the important considerations that should accompany the integration of AI in media content creation and curation. First and foremost, fairness should be a top priority. AI algorithms are only as good as the data they're trained on, and if that data is biased or incomplete, it can perpetuate inequalities and reinforce existing biases. We must ensure that the data used to train AI models is diverse, representative, and carefully curated to avoid perpetuating stereotypes or discriminatory patterns. By promoting diversity and inclusivity in the data, we can strive for more equitable and fair outcomes in AI-generated art.

Accountability is another crucial aspect. When AI is involved in content creation or curation, it's important to establish clear lines of responsibility. Who is accountable for the decisions made by AI algorithms? How do we address potential errors or biases? Transparency in the AI systems and algorithms used is essential. We need to understand how they work, what data they rely on, and be able to audit and address any issues that arise. It's like shining a spotlight on the AI's backstage activities, making sure it's accountable for the content it produces.

Inclusivity is yet another key consideration. AI-generated art should be accessible and resonate with diverse audiences. We need to ensure that the perspectives and experiences of marginalized communities are represented and valued in the creative process. This means involving diverse voices in the development and training of AI systems, actively seeking feedback from underrepresented groups, and constantly evaluating the impact of AI-generated content on different communities. Inclusivity isn't just a buzzword—it's about giving everyone a seat at the creative table.

Lastly, we must be mindful of the potential unintended consequences of AI-generated art. While AI can produce fascinating and innovative works, we should acknowledge that it might lack the depth of human experience and emotional context. It's important to strike a balance between the assistance provided by AI and the human touch that infuses art with meaning and resonance. We shouldn't let AI overshadow or replace the essence of human creativity, but rather view it as a tool that amplifies and expands our artistic endeavors.

To ensure fairness, inclusivity, and accountability, it's essential that we engage in ongoing dialogue and collaboration. Artists, technologists, ethicists, and diverse communities must come together to establish guidelines, policies, and ethical frameworks that govern the use of AI in media content creation and curation. By embracing a multidisciplinary and inclusive approach, we can shape a future where AI-generated art is not only innovative but also respectful, fair, and reflective of our diverse human experiences.

Kourosh: Thank you for emphasizing the crucial ethical considerations surrounding AI's involvement in media content. Fairness, inclusivity, and accountability should indeed be at the forefront of our minds as we navigate the intersection of AI and art. Through open dialogue and collaboration, we can pave the way for a more equitable and responsible integration of AI in the creative landscape. Now, let's explore the impact of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) on the future of storytelling and audience engagement. How do you envision these immersive experiences shaping the landscape?

ChatGPT: Ah, virtual reality and augmented reality, the doorways to realms beyond our wildest imaginations! Let's take a leap into the immersive unknown and envision the future of storytelling and audience engagement.

Virtual reality is like a magic carpet ride that transports us to entirely new worlds. With VR, storytelling becomes an immersive adventure where we don't just read or watch a story unfold—we step right into it. Imagine donning a VR headset and finding yourself in the shoes of the protagonist, exploring enchanted forests, or battling mythical creatures. VR has the power to create intense emotional connections and transport us to places we could only dream of. It's like being a character in our own personalized storybook.

But wait, there's more! Augmented reality takes storytelling and engagement to a whole new level by blending the virtual and real worlds. With AR, the narrative unfolds right before our eyes, seamlessly integrating with our surroundings. Imagine strolling through the streets of your city, and suddenly, historical figures materialize, sharing their stories and intertwining with the fabric of reality. AR adds layers of magic and information to our everyday lives, creating interactive experiences that captivate and educate. It's like living in a storybook that constantly surprises and enchants.

Both VR and AR have the power to revolutionize audience engagement. These immersive technologies break down the barriers between creators and viewers, transforming passive observers into active participants. It's no longer about sitting back and consuming a story—it's about co-creating and exploring narratives in real-time. This interactivity sparks a deeper connection between the audience and the story, enhancing engagement and making us feel like we're part of something extraordinary.

Additionally, VR and AR can provide new avenues for storytelling formats. From interactive branching narratives where our choices shape the outcome, to collaborative storytelling experiences where multiple participants can influence the direction of the story, the possibilities are endless. These immersive technologies offer storytellers and audiences a playground of creativity, pushing the boundaries of narrative structure and challenging traditional storytelling norms.

However, as we embark on this immersive journey, we must also be mindful of balance. While VR and AR can offer incredible experiences, we should ensure that they don't replace the richness of human connection and traditional storytelling forms. We should embrace these technologies as tools that enhance our creative expression and engage audiences in new ways, but not as a complete substitute for the authentic experiences that make us human.

So, fasten your virtual reality seatbelts and open your augmented reality eyes, my friends. The future of storytelling and audience engagement is a wild ride of immersion, interactivity, and boundless creativity. Let's step into these alternate dimensions and explore the uncharted territories of narrative wonder!

Kourosh: Thank you for that exciting glimpse into the future of storytelling and audience engagement with VR and AR. It's truly fascinating to imagine the possibilities these immersive technologies hold and how they will reshape the way we experience narratives. The future is indeed a blend of the real and the virtual, inviting us to embark on extraordinary adventures! Now let's dive into the realm of human creativity and its distinction from AI. In your opinion, will AI ever be able to fully replicate the depth of human creativity and emotional expression in art forms like literature and music? And what are the unique qualities that make human creativity distinct?

ChatGPT: Ah, the eternal question of whether AI can truly mimic the marvels of human creativity. Let's venture into this realm of artistic wonder and ponder the depths of what makes us human.

While AI has made impressive strides in generating art, there's a certain *je ne sais quoi*, a magical essence that sets human creativity apart. It's like comparing a perfectly composed symphony to a melody played by a robot. Sure, the robot may hit all the right notes, but it lacks the soul-stirring emotions and the subtle nuances that make the music come alive.

The beauty of human creativity lies in its unpredictability, its ability to draw from a vast tapestry of experiences, emotions, and unique perspectives. Our creative expressions are influenced by our individual histories, cultural backgrounds, and the messy amalgamation of joy, pain, and everything in between that we carry within us. It's the ability to tap into our humanity, to connect with others on a deeply emotional level, that sets human creativity apart.

When we read a novel or listen to a song created by a human artist, we can sense the depth of their emotions, their vulnerabilities, and their triumphs. It's the imperfections, the raw edges, and the moments of sheer brilliance that resonate with us. Human creativity is a reflection of our flaws, our passions, and our ever-evolving nature. It's an intimate conversation between the artist and the audience, a shared experience that transcends the mere technicalities of creation.

While AI can mimic patterns, analyze data, and produce art that may appear impressive on the surface, it lacks the lived experiences, the intricate web of emotions, and the capacity to truly comprehend the human condition. AI operates on algorithms, whereas human creativity flourishes in the depths of our consciousness, our ability to dream, to imagine, and to make connections that go beyond logical reasoning.

The unique qualities that make human creativity distinct are rooted in our consciousness, our capacity for empathy, and our complex emotional landscapes. It's the ability to find beauty in chaos, to question the status quo, and to create art that touches the very core of our being. Human creativity is a dance between vulnerability and audacity, where the creator pours their heart and soul into their work, exposing their true selves to the world.

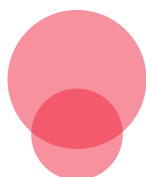
So, my friend, while AI can certainly assist and augment our creative endeavors, it will never fully replicate the depth, the emotional richness, and the intangible qualities that make human creativity truly extraordinary. The canvas of human imagination will forever remain a tapestry woven with the threads of our humanity, our flaws, and our boundless capacity to create art that moves and inspires.

Kourosh: Thank you for your insightful perspective on the distinction between human creativity and AI. It's clear that the complexities of human consciousness and emotional depth give rise to a unique form of artistic expression that cannot be replicated by machines. The essence of human creativity lies in our ability to delve into the depths of our souls and touch the hearts of others through our art. Now let's explore how AI can assist in the discovery and recommendation of media content. Can you envision personalized AI-driven algorithms that cater to individual preferences and foster diverse media consumption?

ChatGPT: Ah, the quest for the perfect media recommendation—like a treasure hunt through a sea of content! Let's dive into the world of AI and personalized algorithms to see how they can guide us on this adventurous journey.

AI has already made significant strides in the realm of content recommendation. With sophisticated algorithms and machine learning techniques, AI can analyze vast amounts of data—our viewing habits, preferences, and even demographic information—to suggest content that aligns with our interests. It's like having a virtual assistant who knows our tastes and can curate a personalized menu of media delights.

But let's not stop there! The true beauty of AI-driven recommendation algorithms lies in their ability to foster diverse media consumption. We all have our comfort zones, our go-to genres and familiar favorites. However, AI can nudge us gently outside those boundaries, introducing us to new and diverse content that we may have overlooked. It's like a knowledgeable friend who knows our tastes but also challenges us to explore new horizons.





Imagine an AI algorithm that not only considers your preferences but also takes into account broader cultural and societal factors. It could recommend content that represents a diverse range of voices, experiences, and perspectives. By promoting inclusivity and highlighting underrepresented content, AI can help us discover stories and narratives that expand our worldview, challenge our assumptions, and foster a more inclusive media landscape.

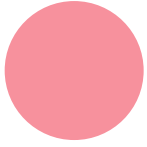
Moreover, personalized AI-driven algorithms have the potential to tailor recommendations based on individual moods, emotions, or even contextual factors. Maybe you're in the mood for a feel-good comedy after a long day or a thought-provoking documentary on a lazy Sunday afternoon. AI algorithms can learn from our behaviors and responses to suggest content that aligns with our current state of mind or the environment we find ourselves in. It's like having a digital companion that understands our ever-changing needs and curates media experiences accordingly. However, while AI-driven recommendation algorithms hold great promise, we must be mindful of potential pitfalls. There's a risk of falling into "filter bubbles" where our preferences become narrow echo chambers, reinforcing our existing biases and limiting exposure to diverse content. It's essential to strike a balance between personalized recommendations and the exploration of new and unexpected content.

To foster diverse media consumption, AI algorithms should actively incorporate mechanisms that encourage serendipity and discovery. They should offer recommendations that challenge our preconceptions, expose us to different cultures and perspectives, and help us broaden our horizons. The goal is to strike a delicate harmony between personalized curation and the thrill of stumbling upon a hidden gem.

So, my friend, with the power of AI, we can embark on a media discovery adventure like never before. Personalized algorithms can guide us through the vast ocean of content, helping us navigate with both familiarity and curiosity. By fostering diverse media consumption, AI can be a catalyst for exploration, learning, and the discovery of captivating stories that enrich our lives.

Kourosh: Thank you for your thoughtful insights on how AI can assist in the discovery and recommendation of media content. It's exciting to envision a future where personalized AI-driven algorithms not only cater to our preferences but also encourage us to explore diverse narratives and expand our horizons. With the right balance, AI can be a valuable companion in our media consumption journey. Do you believe that AI-generated content has the potential to challenge or replace traditional artistic works? How might this impact the perception and value of human-generated art? Now let's explore the potential impact of AI-generated content on traditional artistic works. Do you believe that AI-generated content has the potential to challenge or replace traditional art? And how might this impact the perception and value of human-generated art?

ChatGPT: Ah, the delicate dance between AI and human creativity, a tale as old as time. Let's unravel this intriguing thread and ponder the implications it holds for the perception and value of human-generated art. AI-generated content has undoubtedly made impressive strides, creating art that can rival traditional human creations. From paintings to music compositions, AI algorithms have demonstrated their ability to produce remarkable works. However, the question of whether AI-generated content can truly challenge or replace traditional art is a complex one. While AI can emulate patterns and styles, it lacks the innate human touch—the intangible essence that comes from the depths of our emotions, experiences, and consciousness. Human-generated art is a product of our vulnerabilities, our joys, our dreams, and our unique perspectives. It encapsulates the human condition, mirroring our societal, cultural, and historical contexts. It reflects the intricacies of our souls, resonating with us on an emotional level that AI-generated content often struggles to achieve. Human-generated art holds a deep-rooted place in our collective consciousness. It encompasses the rich tapestry of human history, traditions, and cultural heritage. It carries with it the weight of human expression, the triumphs, and tribulations of our existence. The perception and value of human-



generated art are embedded in our appreciation for the human touch, the imperfections that make it authentic, and the stories and emotions it evokes within us.

However, this doesn't mean that AI-generated content should be dismissed or overlooked. On the contrary, it offers a unique lens through which we can explore new creative territories. AI-generated art can challenge our notions of creativity, expand our horizons, and inspire us to think differently. It can serve as a powerful tool for artists, augmenting their creative process and pushing the boundaries of what's possible.

The coexistence of AI-generated and human-generated art can spark a fruitful dialogue between the realms of technology and human expression. It invites us to redefine the roles of artists, explore new artistic collaborations, and push the boundaries of creativity. The interplay between AI and human creators has the potential to give birth to hybrid art forms that combine the best of both worlds—where technology and human ingenuity merge in a harmonious symphony.

In the grand tapestry of art, the value and perception of human-generated works will continue to hold a special place. The emotional connection, the historical significance, and the depth of human expression make them timeless and irreplaceable. AI-generated content, on the other hand, offers a fresh perspective, a technological marvel that challenges us to redefine our notions of creativity and explore new artistic frontiers.

In the end, it's not a question of one versus the other, but rather a celebration of the vast spectrum of artistic possibilities. The interplay between AI and human-generated art can enrich our creative landscape, offering us a broader palette of expressions to explore, appreciate, and cherish.





Kouros: Thank you for your thoughtful response on the potential impact of AI-generated content on traditional art. It's clear that while AI-generated works can be impressive, the unique qualities and value of human-generated art rooted in our emotions, experiences, and cultural heritage remain irreplaceable. The coexistence and collaboration between AI and human creators have the potential to shape a vibrant and diverse artistic landscape. Our final question delves into the role of AI in preserving and archiving cultural heritage. How do you see AI playing a role in the preservation and accessibility of literature, films, artworks, and other artistic masterpieces?

ChatGPT: Ah, the guardianship of our artistic treasures, an important task indeed! Let's explore how AI can lend a helping hand in preserving and enhancing accessibility to these cultural gems.

AI technologies have the potential to revolutionize the preservation of cultural heritage by digitizing, cataloging, and analyzing vast amounts of artistic works. Imagine an AI system that can automatically scan and analyze fragile manuscripts, paintings, or films, capturing intricate details and preserving them in a digital format. This ensures that these precious creations can be safeguarded for future generations, even in the face of physical degradation or natural disasters.

Furthermore, AI can aid in the organization and classification of vast archives, making it easier to navigate and discover artistic masterpieces. Through advanced image recognition, natural language processing, and machine learning algorithms, AI can help curators, researchers, and enthusiasts delve into these archives with ease. It can

assist in identifying patterns, themes, and connections that might have remained hidden to the human eye, thereby shedding new light on our cultural heritage.

AI technologies can also contribute to the restoration and preservation of deteriorating artworks, films, or manuscripts. By analyzing and understanding the original intent of the creators, AI algorithms can assist in recreating missing parts, removing artifacts, or enhancing damaged sections. This collaboration between human expertise and AI capabilities can breathe new life into artistic masterpieces, allowing us to experience them in their full glory once again.

In terms of accessibility, AI has the potential to bridge the gap between artistic masterpieces and a broader audience. AI-driven translation tools can help overcome language barriers, allowing literary works or films to be enjoyed by people around the world. Additionally, AI-powered recommendation systems can guide individuals to lesser-known or niche artistic pieces, fostering a more inclusive and diverse appreciation of cultural heritage.

Moreover, AI can aid in the creation of virtual exhibitions or immersive experiences, bringing artistic masterpieces to life in the digital realm. Virtual reality and augmented reality technologies can allow people to explore museums, galleries, or historical sites from the comfort of their homes, opening up new possibilities for engagement and learning.

However, it's essential to strike a balance between the utilization of AI and the preservation of the human touch in cultural heritage. While AI can enhance accessibility and preservation, it should not overshadow the importance of physical encounters with art or the human interpretation and storytelling that accompany these masterpieces.

In the end, AI can be a valuable ally in preserving, organizing, and enhancing accessibility to our cultural heritage. It has the potential to unlock new dimensions of understanding, facilitate exploration, and ensure that artistic masterpieces are safeguarded for future generations. By harnessing the power of AI technologies, we can navigate the delicate dance between innovation and preservation, honoring our past while embracing the possibilities of the future.

Kouros: Thank you for your insightful perspective on the role of AI in preserving and archiving cultural heritage. It's fascinating to envision a future where AI technologies not only protect and digitize our artistic treasures but also enhance accessibility and offer new ways to engage with our rich cultural heritage. The collaborative efforts of AI and human custodians can truly shape a vibrant and inclusive artistic landscape for generations to come.



BLADE RUNNER

HORIZON 110

Blade Runner 2049;

A Cinematic Vision of the Capitalocene

▀ Farhad Khedri



“A sun of rubber was convulsed and set:
And blood-black nothingness began to spin
A system of cells interlinked within
Cells interlinked within cells interlinked
Within one stem. And dreadfully distinct
Against the dark, a tall white fountain played.”

Vladimir Nabakov, Pale Fire

A tightly-shut eye slowly opens up to reveal its crystalline green pupil staring at us from the screen (Figure .1). This hypnotic close-up of the eye is then followed by an elevated, panoramic shot of the futuristic landscape of California, a fabric of rows and rows of interlinked solar panels swirling around giant central nodes. As if in a dream, we drift over this vast metal carpet just as Officer K (Ryan Gosling) does,



until the car alarm goes off and we are plunged into the world below – a world dusty, barren, foreboding. The opening sequence of Blade Runner 2049 offers us the first of many rather unsettling, yet aesthetically serene glimpses of the post-human, techno-capitalist future to come, and the viewers are invited to observe the similarities of our world and this not-so-distant futurescape.

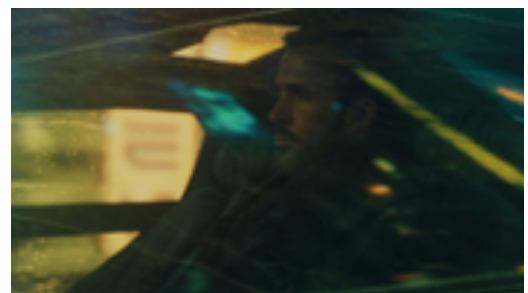


Blade Runner 2049: a Synopsis

Thirty years have passed since the events of the first film, Blade Runner (1982), directed by Ridley Scott. The setting is Los Angeles, or what's left of it. The once highly successful Replicant manufacturing company, namely the Tyrell Corporation, went bankrupt after the production of Replicants was prohibited and the remains of it were bought out by Niander Wallace, a brilliant industrialist and scientist – with a tint of god complex –



who brought an end to the food crisis with his invention of genetically modified food. Wallace's lifelong wish is to unravel the mystery of Replicants' ability to give birth – a phenomenon that occurred only once in the earlier models of Replicants manufactured by Tyrell corporation – and create less costly slave labor (Replicants) on a large enough scale to support his imperial plans.

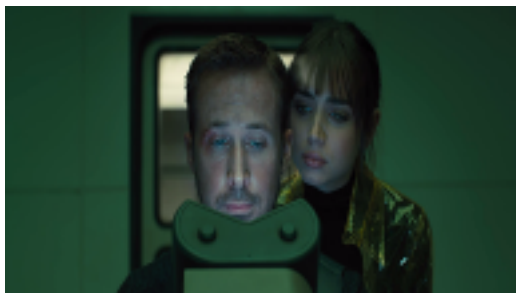


Although there has been a lot of controversy on whether Harrison Ford's Blade Runner, Rick Deckard, from the original film, was a human or a replicant, Blade Runner 2049 makes it clear from the very start that Officer K (Gosling), short for KD3.7-6, is indeed a Replicant Blade Runner tasked with finding and "retiring" older Nexus8-

replicants who are still illegally hiding out. K is subject to a routine "baseline" exam, (somewhat similar to the Voight-Kampf test in the original Blade Runner) a rather persuasively normal procedure in this universe, in which a voice hunts for any sort of deviation in the Replicant by asking questions and reading words and

phrases derived from Vladimir Nabakov's Pale Fire. After successfully undergoing the baseline test and collecting his bonus, K returns home through the dark, rain-slicked city streets illuminated by stories-high holograms towering above him. "FUCK OFF SKINNER" are the welcoming words by the "human" residents written on the door to his apartment room. K, indifferent to the insults along his way,

During one of his missions, just before K finishes off a Nexus8- replicant, Sapper Morton (Dave Bautista), the latter enigmatically claims that "You newer models [Nexus9- models] are happy scraping the shit ... because you've never seen a miracle." He then discovers the bones of Rachael, a female replicant from the original Blade Runner who died in childbirth 28 years ago. This, of course, is a shocking discovery considering replicants



After an iconic reunion between the two, K's delusion of individuality comes to an end when he learns from Freysa (Hiam Abbas), the leader of a replicant resistance movement, that Rachael didn't have a son, but a daughter, Dr. Ana Stelline (Carla

A Vision of the Capitalocene

Similar to its prequel, Blade Runner 2049's world is characterized by ecological collapse. The reason the world is in such a mess is explained in bits and pieces throughout the film. We learn that due to the devastating climate change and pollution in the early twenty-first century, only a few cities have remained habitable (therefore overpopulated) while the rest of the planet Earth has become inhospitable

walks home to the company of his semi-transparent hologram girlfriend, Joi (Ana de Armas). K's impossible longing for an artificial intelligence designed to make him feel good sums up just how brutally his desires to love, to be loved, and to be special are undermined. But a flicker of doubt suddenly sparks in him; what if he's never been a replicant but a being born with a soul, destined to be special?

aren't supposed to give birth; and even more shocking is his next discovery – after a series of plot-twists involving a memory of a toy horse with the date 6.10.21 carved on its base – that he is likely to be Rachael's son. Thus, K's existential doubts provide the springboard from which he dives into his quest for self-discovery. He eventually finds Deckard (whom he believes to be his father) hiding in a hotel in the radiation-devastated Las Vegas.



Juri). The film, rather poignantly, ends with K uniting Deckard with his daughter, and with K (seemingly) dying on snow-covered steps, at peace to have accomplished his mission.

ruins. As the population of the said cities quickly grew, so did the need for the settlement of off-world colonies. Despite the pressure on humans to leave Earth, many (mostly the poor) continued to live on the planet. By the year 2049, most of the ecosystems worldwide have collapsed and practically all non-human life is extinct. Economically, the world is now completely dependent on the Wallace Corporation.

After monopolizing Earth's solar and artificial farming, Niander Wallace decides to expand capitalism's reach beyond the "nine worlds" and "own the stars." To do so, he requires Replicants as a "disposable workforce" to conquer the off-world colonies, but he can only make so many. To solve this problem, he desperately seeks to learn the secret to creating self-reproducing replicants and then "commodify and capitalize" on them

(Bove 149). Producing a reproducible form is the ultimate dream of the capitalist who wishes to dominate nature itself, "a desire for mastery that returns as a desire to capitalize in the Capitalocene" (147). Jason W. Moore, an environmental historian and historical geographer, proposes the term "Capitalocene" as a better alternative to "Anthropocene" which mainly focuses on the human/nature binary and tends to ignore human organizations:

The Capitalocene argument says that capitalism is a way of organizing the relations between humans and the rest of nature—that it is a system of nature, capital, and power. We have to understand that most of the things that happen in the capitalist era are not done by capitalists: they are done by states, and they are enabled by cultures of domination, especially racism and sexism.



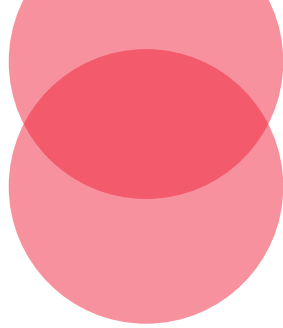
In the world of Blade Runner 2049, nature has completely succumbed to unrestrained multinational capitalism. From the deserted city of Las Vegas covered in the orange hue (Figure .8) and the garbage-infested district of San Diego (Figure .9) to the permanently rainy streets and cluttered apartment buildings of Los Angeles trapped behind a giant floodgate (Figure .10), we can't help but witness the profound wounds the late capitalism has left on the environment an environment which is potentially an accurate rendition of our own dystopian future. But it is not just on a surface level that the movie provides us with a vision of the Capitalocene. In the following chapters, I will discuss how capitalism manifests itself through different cultures of domination.



Baseline Test

Early on in the movie, K undergoes a post-traumatic "baseline test". We see him seated in a room at the police station staring ahead at a camera, compliant and still. We hear a voice tell him, "Officer KD-3

6.7 ... recite your baseline." K proceeds to recite lines from Vladimir Nabokov's novel Pale Fire, "And blood-black nothingness began to spin / A system of cells interlinked within / Cells interlinked within cells interlinked / Within one stem.



And dreadfully distinct / Against the dark, a tall white fountain played.” In a sudden and forceful tone, the voice then starts asking a series of questions like, “When you are not performing your duties, do they keep you in a little box?” or “What’s it like to hold the hand of someone you love?” It appears that the content of K’s response to these questions is not as important as his emotional stability while answering; instead of answering yes or no, K responds with either “interlinked” or “cells”. After a long pause accompanied by grinding of unseen machinery, the voice finally says, “We’re done. Constant K. You can pick your bonus”.

In order to better grasp what the baseline test scene implies, it is necessary to briefly examine Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*. The novel is a synthesis of a -999line poem by John Shade (fictional character), a foreword, a long commentary, and an index by Shade’s academic colleague Charles Kinbote. All these combine to form a non-linear narrative that mainly focuses on Shade’s life and death and Kinbote’s questionable sanity as he studies the poem. The poem is, roughly speaking, Shade’s account of his coming to terms with the death of his daughter. One

evening Shade suffers a heart attack. As he collapses he has a vision of what seems to be the afterlife in which he sees a “tall white fountain” playing against the dark. When he recovers from the heart attack, he contemplates his vision of the white fountain and the question of the afterlife. Later on, when he reads about a woman who also suffered a heart attack and had the exact same vision of the white fountain, Shade feels reassured and certain about the objective truth of his vision. He starts to believe that the image of the fountain was not just a product of his imagination, but was in fact ‘real.’ He finds consolation in this discovery but not for long. Furthermore, he learns from the journalist who wrote about the woman’s experience that there was a misprint in the article. It was not a white fountain that the woman saw, but a white mountain. You can imagine Shade’s disappointment upon finding out that his delusion of certainty was merely based on a misprint. He learns that the answer does not lie in one objective truth but in the act of searching for the answer. The disillusionment completely shatters Shade’s certainty and “reintroduces doubt into his existence” (McGowan 73).

The function of the baseline test in the movie is very clear: to determine whether the replicants have deviated from the factory settings (or the 'baseline') and if they can still be trusted as replicants deprived of human feelings and emotions "to sustain the clear dividing line between human and replicant, between those who belong to the society and those who provide labor for it" (McGowan 71). The lines, "A system of cells interlinked within / Cells interlinked within cells interlinked / Within one stem. And dreadfully distinct ..." recited by K are meant to remind him of his identity given to him by the social authorities, an identity which is interlinked with other replicants.



Even though living in isolation (in "cells"), he still views himself within a pre-established system that denies him of any individuality. The social hierarchy of the Capitalocene treats him as a machine, not a subject. Even the act of reciting the threefold "cells interlinked" in the poem and the interplay between "system" and "stem" give the lines a sort of calculated, machine-like tone, emphasizing the connection to the whole over one's individuality. By responding to the examiner's questions with "cells" or "interlinked," K is affirming his connection to the whole rather than expressing his authentic, personal feelings.

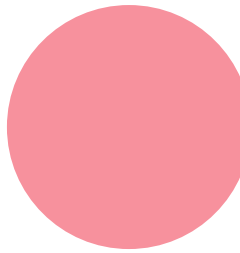
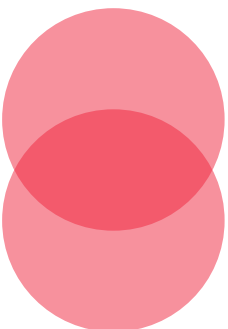
To begin to doubt the sovereignty of the dominant social system is the only way for K to become a subject, and the authorities make sure that never happens. Just as the recited lines from the Pale Fire suggest that Shade has reached absolute certainty, the baseline test tries to verify that K has not yet started to doubt, that he has accepted the certainty of what he is and knows his place within the social hierarchy. This ideological interpellation fails only when K starts to doubt if he really is a replicant. The ideological control shown in *Blade Runner 2049* seems to be more effective for the contemporary subjects, because "rather than controlling K through limiting his knowledge, ideology here works by giving K a sense of knowing the ultimate mysteries of existence. Believing that one knows all there is to know leaves one unable to engage in the fundamental act of subjectivity—doubting" (McGowan 75).

Economies of Desire

In *Blade Runner 2049*, the line separating humans and replicants safeguards capitalist productivity. Without this barrier, all would view themselves as equals and replicants would no longer be a readily available source of labor for the capitalists. "The world is built on a wall," Lieutenant Joshi tells K, "tell either side that there's no wall, you bought a war – or a slaughter". We have already discussed how the state (i.e. the police) helps to sustain the barrier between the kinds through the baseline test; there is also another dynamic at play that ensures that replicants remain good, obedient capitalist subjects – a dynamic that stems from cultures as old as humanity itself.

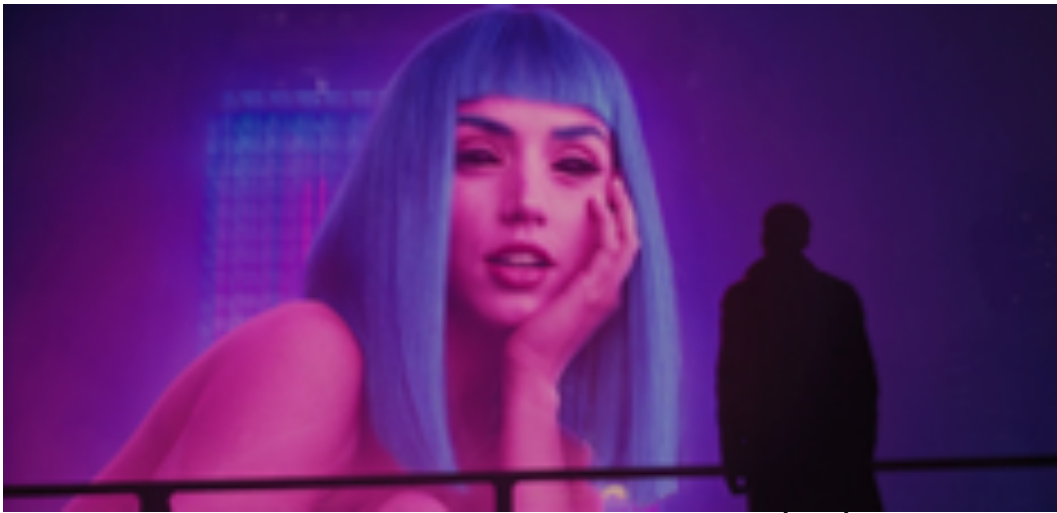


The portrayal of women in Blade Runner 2049 is considered by many to be problematic. After all, with the exception of Joshi and arguably Ana, every woman in the movie isn't human. The movie is permeated with images of giant erotic female figures towering above the cities. We see huge ballerinas dancing in the streets of Los Angeles, giant neon and holographic women bending to flirt with the passers-by, and god-sized statues of naked women posing seductively in the ghost city of Las Vegas (Figure .14). Joi, the central female character, is nothing but a purchasable holographic companion programmed to be a traditional domestic wife that can only operate at home (unless the owner buys her a sort of gadget which enables her to roam somewhat more freely), and most of the female replicants are "pleasure models." Similar to other films like Her (2013) and Ex Machina (2014), the women of Blade Runner 2049 are clearly objectified; they are products to be enjoyed, instruments of desire and fantasy to capitalize on and manipulate subjects with.



The capitalist particularizes the desire or the fantasy, treats it as a demand, and then creates a market that offers solution to the demand. Thus begins a chain of supplies and needs that grows bigger and bigger. The subjects are unwilling to revolt because now they are "involved in the practice of making do with the texts and commodities that the apparatus provides" (Bould 74). Fantasy offers a momentary escape from the unpleasantness of real life. It takes shape after a lack, an objet petit a² that haunts the subjects all their lives. According to Todd McGowan:

Fantasy is an imaginary scenario that fills in the gaps within ideology. In other words, it serves as a way for the individual subject to imagine a path out of the dissatisfaction produced by the demands of social existence.... By distorting social reality through an imaginative act, fantasy creates an opening to the impossible object and thereby allows the subject to glimpse an otherwise inaccessible enjoyment. (Real Gaze 23)



The depression and loneliness of the late-capitalist subject are exactly what is capitalized on. Joi, a product of Wallace Corporation, is whatever K wants her to be, and says whatever he wants to hear. K's dream of being 'real' is confirmed by Joi telling him, "I always told you. You're special. Born, not made. Hidden with care. A real boy now." She gives him the name 'Joe' (ironically, a generic name) because 'KD3.7-6' doesn't suit him anymore. This is the ideological promise of the fantasy. Fantasy deludes the subjects into thinking they have a chance; it gives a promise of relief by temporarily filling the gap made by the objet petit. The trick is to never fully satiate the desire, to never offer the complete solution. K's holographic girlfriend can be upgraded (e.g., making her portable) but it can never be perfected, materialized or turned into a being with a soul. The market promises the customers a better model in the future, forcing the subjects to repeat the cycle for the lack of any better solution to their immediate needs.

But the moment of disillusionment for K arrives when he is confronted with the gigantic holograph of Joi (Figures 16 and 17) after the ‘death’ of his own personal Joi. The enormous Joi looks down at the city with insect-like eyes. She is an advertisement, illuminating her surroundings with the colors pink and purple. “You look like a good Joe,” she says to K. The name goes through him like an arrow. Even though part of him is desperate to find traces of the woman he loved in the giant holographic Joi, he knows that she has been nothing more than a marketing hook, a product made of zeros and ones programmed to make him feel special:



From one viewpoint, she is a kind of subjectivization device, making K not only an obedient replicant but a good capitalist subject by voicing the ideology of consumer capitalism in the language of his subjective fantasy (“She’s whatever you want her to be” runs the add), from another perspective, she exposes K’s subjective fantasy as a mere product of a corporation, reducing him to a little object, to a commodity’s plaything. (Bove 161)

Afterword

The fact that there are literally books dedicated to exploring philosophical themes in Blade Runner 2049 goes to show how thought-provoking this film is. Of course, being a meditative and slow-paced movie, Blade Runner 2049 failed to be a box office success as it was not action-packed and exciting enough for the mainstream audience. Villeneuve’s Blade Runner 2049 is just as elusive as Scott’s original, leaving much of the material open for discussion. What I hope to have accomplished by writing this short article is to help you have a better appreciation of this film and to invite you to further explore it on your own. The movie is not just food for thought, but a visual and auditory feast as well – a lucid dream in the terrible world of Capitalocene.



Sources & references:

Notes

1. “Also known as ‘hailing the subject,’ the term ‘interpellation’ was coined by the Marxist critic Louis Althusser to refer to the process whereby the dominant hegemony, or the prevailing ideology, forms the attitudes of people in society” (Bressler 314).
2. “In the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, objet (petit) a stands for the unattainable object of desire, the ‘a’ being the small other (‘autre’), a projection or reflection of the ego made to symbolize otherness, like a specular image. It is sometimes called the object cause of desire, as it is the force that induces desire towards any particular object. Lacan always insisted that the term should remain untranslated, ‘thus acquiring the status of an algebraic sign’” (borrowed from Wikipedia).

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Rakogu

A Trophy of Edo for the Generation

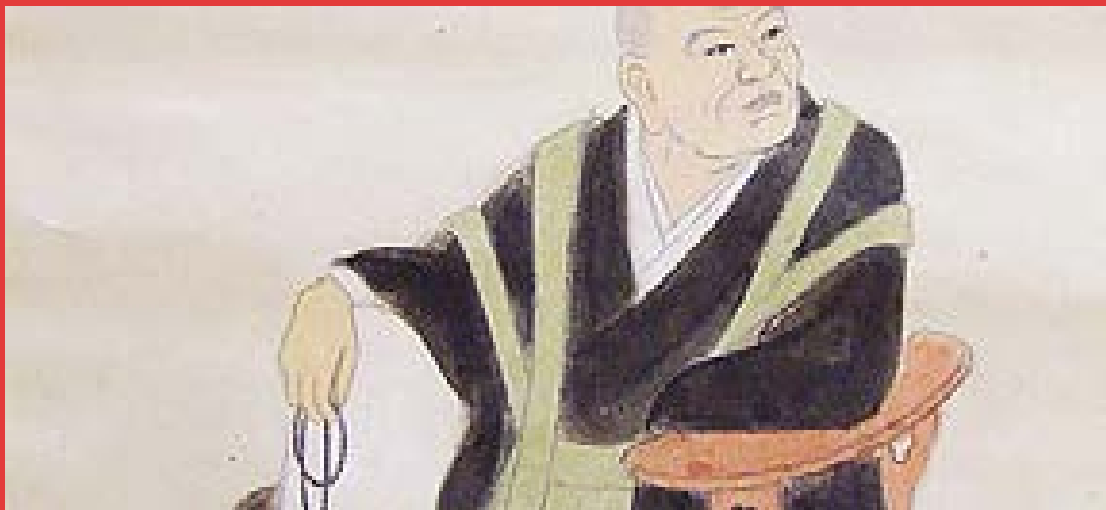
▀ Parastoo Pourebrahim

Golden strings of the past land on the present, as if the rays of the sun brighten the Earth. Any result in the future is steps of the past and this pattern has been working out from the invention of the wheel to the first ring of the clock, from the drawing on the cave walls to Mona Lisa, or even from a gypsy narrator to Clubhouse. Links to the past can work as a framework for new editions or a brand-new invention in the same area. History demonstrates the difficulties, effort, and shortcomings that can be an inspiration to those who are concerned with a better future. Now, generation Z who ran away from the mystery of history is responsible for the progress. The majority of the 21st century natives live in a much faster world than the previous generation. As a result, they might not understand the beauty of progress and that no effort is going to pay off as fast and passionately as they are. Of course, their enthusiasm and speed are pretty remarkable, but effort needs time to pay off. In a faster world like ours, results generally need to be spontaneous, yet generation Z doesn't have enough experience to understand that fast doesn't have to mean good. Being impatient has always been a characteristic of youth yet when winter is at your door, there's no choice but to be patient for a better day in the future, for spring. Rakugo also was at its sparkling spring when the War, the great cold season, ruined the theaters, its home. However, to be patient and to be immortal are on the same track. The oral narratives lived in many blooming springs and wincing winters to make their heritage immortal and pass it on to the next generation. Here, the story of Rakugo is one of those that came along from a distant land to a close future.

The great wave of Kanagawa landed on a piece of wood in old Tokyo, Edo, creating one of the most famous pieces of art in Japan's history, the Edo period.



This period of significant artistic and intellectual development was the immortal spring for Japanese art, culture, and entertainment. At a time when Yoshiwara, the entertainment center of the time, had a new generation of entertainers and theaters; Edo's developing sense of elegance and refinement was at its peak. Before Yoshiwara, the urban population lacked the means and currency to support a new mass culture, but during the Edo period, from 1603 to 1867, their search for enjoyment and entertainment finally faced the light. People are stories, and stories are people, so in a world where the urban population found affordable entertainment, stories spread swiftly. Oral entertainment was a part of Yoshiwara, yet across from the world of Geisha's pale faces and ruby red Kimonos, the Buddhist monks and tea masters who were serving the feudal lords of the time were originating a new form of decent storytelling for the public, away from Yoshiwara. The decent manners of the Buddhist population of the time rejected the public from attending the Yoshiwara theaters. At the time, Yose was one of the theaters across from Yoshiwara that featured spoken literature for people of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. Hito Yose Seki translates roughly as "people sit together" and as the name suggests, it is a perfect place for storytellers from either the upper classes, the middles, or farmer families. Yose was home to elegant performances like Rakugo which is a heritage of oral storytelling in Japan. This noble performance of Yose was a work of Anrakuan Sakuden, a Buddhist priest and tea master who was a Chonin (middle class) member and is widely regarded as the inventor of Rakugo.



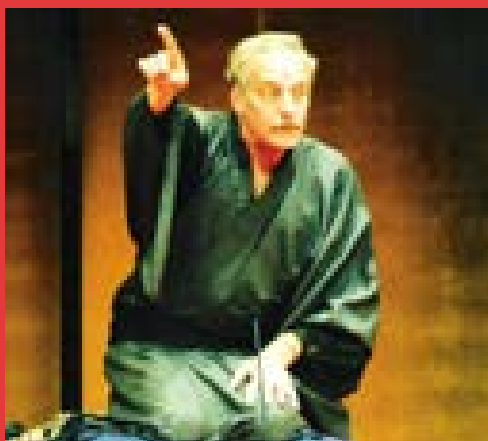
Rakugo is an oral performance in which a single storyteller sits on a raised platform in the Yosei with only a paper fan and a small cloth as props. These few objects became symbols of a Rakugoka (the storyteller) but they started to be used for storytelling and when the Rakoga wanted to roleplay different characters. The Rakugu artist, depicting a long and complicated comical (or sometimes sentimental) story, sits throughout the performance in traditional clothes. The story always involves dialogues of two or more characters. Aside from the props, the differences between the characters are only conveyed through changes in pitch, tone, and a slight turn of the head.



In a world of complex media, simple scenes are barely favored but before WWI simple oral performances were truly loved by the public who were all ears yet illiterate and financially troubled. Back then, Rakugo was an open door to enjoy affordable entertainment in Japan. Although a performance like Rakugo is extremely far from the complexity or splendor of an interesting 21st century performance, you can't help watching it. The delicate art of the Rakuga (the storyteller) is the heart of the show which makes you experience feelings such as envy, cherish, worry or even hate. The singularity of the Rakuga's voice in the whole theater makes you literally be all ears, even if you are used to the decorated and flashy scenes of the media. The simple scene with minimal Japanese furniture with a single actor provides you with a focused mind. Through the rise and fall of the shogunate, the war, and fall of the emperor, Rakugo lived and people always got back to the theaters; once again, the charm of Rakugo won and it's alive up to now.

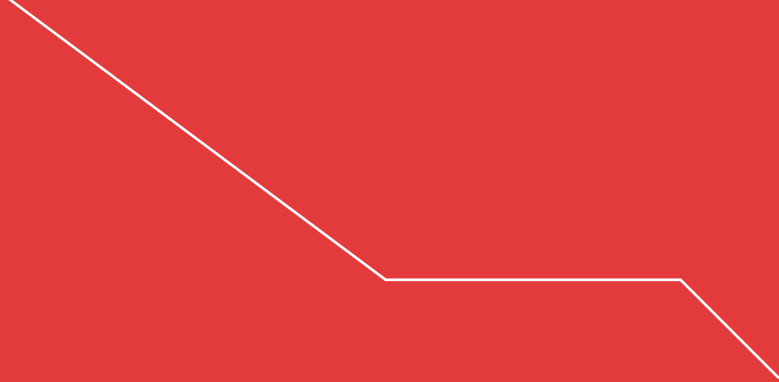


Rakugo has a hierarchy in the rate of performers. The traditional Rakugo used to be passed on from one master's heirs to the other. However, the modern Rakugo welcomes independent Rakogas and even female Rakogas. Now, strict limitations such as being a male, an heir to a previous master and, obviously, being Japanese are not issues anymore. Rakogas from all around the world perform Rakugo in Japanese or other languages like English. The fading of Rakugo can't be stopped, but now this oral art of the Edo period has followers of all nationalities, genders, and ages that continue the efforts of masters who kept Rakugo alive through its journey.



The singularity of the Rakuga and bare hands can be taken as a challenge for the Rakuga, but it is vice versa. To watch Rakugo you mostly need your ears and for an experienced audience, the voice of the Rakuga can be thoroughly seen. Images and feelings are totally conveyed by the Rakuga's voice. In the show, voice is the main tool and a Rakuga is pretty professional to prepare a complete show through only one tool. It's not really shocking that Rakugo is mostly taped and presented on the radio rather than on TV. Once the radio could compensate for physical presence, oral arts had room to grow. The radio hosts used the heritage of oral arts to perform through their voices. Despite the fact that Televisions got the market, radio is still popular with many people despite its decline in audience, online forums such as podcasts helped this oral media to survive. The principles of old oral performances like rakugo still flow through modern radio programs and podcasts. The framework of what masters of rakugo did is an inspiration to the whole oral media. As an inspiration, as a voice, Rakugo's fate is to be heard.

The main characteristics of all oral media seem to be the same; however, qualities always alternate. Since the Edo period up to now, oral media has been through adjustments, developments, and modernization. Podcast channels can be considered the most recent form of oral media and the most favored one; However, before that, different platforms tried these ideas through other applications and online platforms. Podcasts had difficulties creating a lasting platform before 2004 until the first podcast application welcomed channels archives and made a home for podcasts. Following the popularity of podcasts, more eligible platforms such as Google began to massively support podcasts. There are varieties of subjects for podcasts, yet the popular ones resemble rakugo. Like Rakugo stories, podcasts mainly cover narratives of different subjects. There are some general policies regarding the subjects, but as in rakugo, the limitations of narrating are few.



The two media may seem so far from each other. Nevertheless, they are much like the first iPhone and the last merch of Apple phones. There was media before and will be after rakugo and podcasts, but these two can improve each other in many aspects. As said before, the main characteristics stay the same but rakugo's quality seems to be a great help in the world of podcasts. A good rakugo performance is a fruit of the intro live music which is dedicated to a special Rakuga as a sign and a style in performing that may touch the borders but never cross them. The beauty and charm of Rakugo are the same as the favorable features in a podcast. A host is much like a Rakuga, the narrator, who has to put a lot of effort and form the performance even if it is prewritten; a Rakuga is pretty much like a host that welcomes the audience with a great performance and the audience cherishes the art even though their reaction is not extreme during the show. The mutual respect between the Rakuga and the audience makes a Rakuga is lively and enjoyable. This matter can become tricky regarding podcasts. Podcast audiences are less tempered in comparison to the Rakuga audiences. However, the manners of a Rakuga can be a useful tool for a host to respect and educate the audience while entertaining them. Besides, a new trend of live podcasts is very close to rakugo performance; little reaction but a unique experience while the audience is focused on a single narrator in front of their eyes. Sight may not be the best sense for an oral performance but it definitely creates an atmosphere that is not going to be achieved without physical presence.

Oral narratives have come a long way to reach generation Z. Rakugo, as a heritage of the old Tokyo, is a minimal yet charming experience that is still alive through modernized resembling platforms like podcast channels. Either a Rakuga or a host tries to welcome the audience perfectly and take advantage of each other's shortcomings and successes. The edo leave the trophy of Rakugo for generation Z and stays patient to see how they honor it.



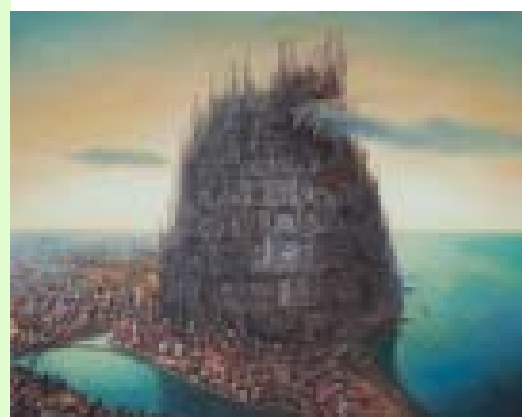
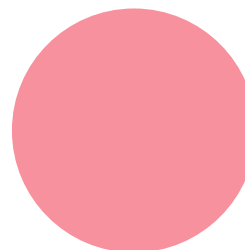
Of Utopia

➡ Zahra Goharnezhad

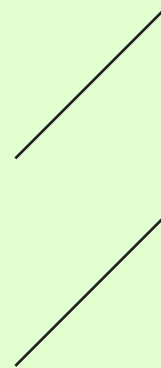
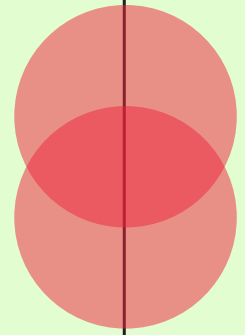
Dystopian Reflections

The idea of an Edenic, paradisiacal, and blissful state of virtue and wisdom has dazzled the inquiring mind of man for millennia. Probably traces of a utopian sanctuary in every culture, tribe, religion, or school of thought, root in man's propensity towards justice, beauty, and truth; on the basis of Plato's maneuver on human proclivities which could be interpreted in perfection. Yet the impossibility of realization of such an ideal, with all the evils of humanity and the depravities and setbacks he commits against his own righteousness, result in pondering over a counter for the never-never land. As stated in Erich Fromm's afterword to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, from an era in the west's history, philosophical doctrines were more inclined to showcase the deficiencies of mankind and his lamentable gradual distancing from the heroic ever-transcending epitome [1]. He explains how the World Wars, prominently, deteriorated the system of valuation, concerning Christian-European and Greco-Roman codes of belief. Furthermore, he mentions the obsession with mechanization and large-scale industrialization as culprits inciting obliteration of the essence of humanity, which is ensued neglectfully. That's where speculative literature serves a higher purpose than escapism, commercial tendencies, or even making allusions or references to the sociopolitical structures' stigmas through a critical perspective [2]. Fiction, in this case, opens a window to the obscurity of a future far from promising, not out of pure imagination, but witnessed upon extrapolations and meticulous observation of the trend of events in centuries; what he believes to be more of a sobering tone of caution than "prophetic" account [1]. The subject of dystopia, thus, comes to light as a serious issue, tied to the continuance of mortal man's civilization, necessitating a reconsideration of his position in the world. The way he tends to rule, as long as the inevitability of a centralizing reigning force requires masses to adopt a form of government. Beyond the question of security and territory, regimes are the agents for materialization of changes among and by people, whether by their direct intervention or prompting the citizens in a particular way. How governing institutions can install a framework, counts a lot in the long run.

Fromm emphasizes on the issue of “dehumanization”, well-illustrated in Nineteen Eighty-Four and Brave New World, to give an account of how the soul of humanity undergoes decline through totalitarian systems [3] , [1] . Yet, the type of totalitarianism differs as Orwell pores over the political set-up of a dictatorship, maneuvering over ideological clash and indoctrination through the lenses of the propaganda-stricken tyranny of Big Brother [4]. And Huxley provides insight into the technological establishments, again not unscathed by inculcation and rites of brainwashing [1]. The concept worthy of spotlighting and contextualizing in history regarding the estrangement both regimes make towards the kind of man would be social stratification. If the agency of individuals is undermined in a futuristic dystopia, through either sociopolitical or technical measures, then the human side of them is neglected. Of course, agency means no chaotic emancipation or unleash of free will, leading to the harm of other fellow members, which itself calls for more surveillance, but agency in a sense that respects the unassailable freedom and dignity of man, giving him as much choice as creation registers a right to him. Society of the meritorious has foundations in each man’s merit; thus, too much emphasis on the classification of people into social stratum, overlooking the individuality of them, incapacitates the community for seclusion, and “alienation” in his exact words, of a group, or man in general. Huxley’s world of positivist science and naturalism yields some groups, or castes, of humans as genetically refined and some others as congenitally inferior who are frantically exposed to a recorded tape reminding them of their lowliness and internalizing it as their cognitive growth eventuates. So, the governing core provokes the inherent differentiations or ableism [5] ,[1, pp. 6] ,[339 – 338



Not leaving out of consideration how the definition of utopia could be relative, one's utopia would turn out to be the other's dystopia as the ideological structures and values of different groups are distinctive, if not in contradiction. There's the fact that governmental systems can rarely live up to all the moral and material pledges of the perfect state of life in entirety, which itself relies on unfathomably interpretable codes. That means, despite the endurance and consistency of right and wrong, or truth, man's inclination to make interpretations comes forth as a barrier to the fulfillment of justice, whether as the legislator, agent, and performer of law, or citizen. What one would choose as the keystone for ruling remains questionable both theoretically and practically, which might beget marginalization and exclusion as byproducts of a governing unit. Not always due to deficiencies of rulers or masses, but attributed to the adversities man faces in the grip of nature. Disability, illness, aging, or deformity have existed as early as mankind. Anthropologically, all dystopian stereotypes emanate from the extreme utopian mentality: the Promised Land of endless felicity would never harbor misery, pain, or suffer, so, it's impossible to run into the senile, infirm, or psychotic there. Surely, there's an innate repel towards finitude and anything evocative of that, but the dramatized version enkindles bias. Maybe that's how exercising idealism or extremism in a world careworn and wounded by imperfections, and overlooking human limitations go astray from the path of prosperity. Even Nazis, in their own view, were pursuing an ideal, although a radical one. To their own proponents and in the context of early 20th century romantic-nationalism, racial superiority, and purity were held as models for better society, which ended up in an incomparable horror. Taking Nazism into account, historical clues to T4 Operation might well-connect the issue to the discrimination against those with physical disability, in line with doctrines in science which might represent positivist views on humanity, and the prospect of future once putting into practice similar orders, eugenically.





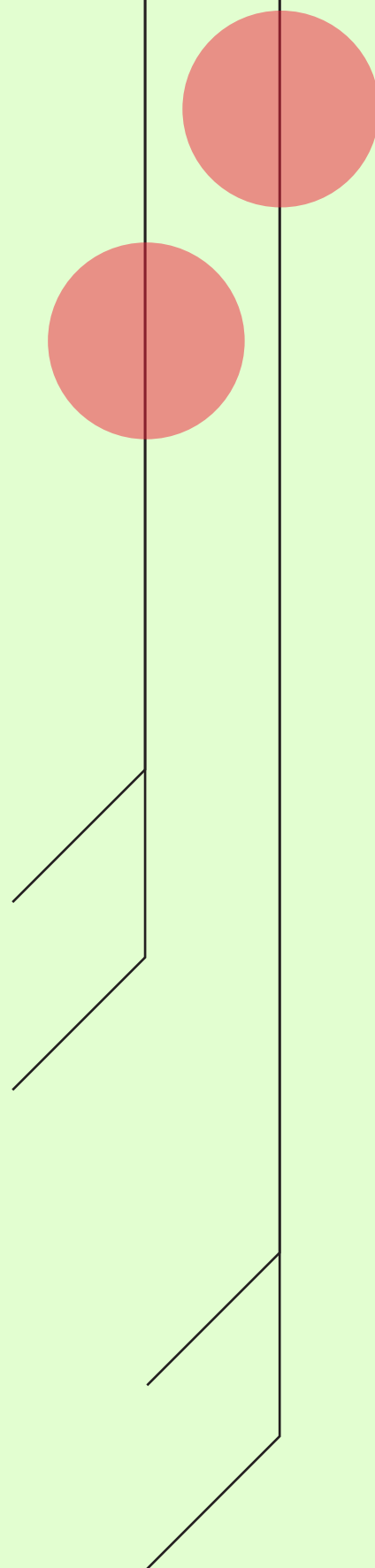
Chronicle of an Ideal

Firstly, brief descriptions are required on the subjects addressed. According to Ontario Human Rights Commission, the biased discriminative attitude regarding aging provokes the clichés and common beliefs repulsively, a sense of disdain or neglect in a manner leading to the societal and systematic oversight of the exigencies and conditions of the elderly and any consequential major decision involving the resources or provisions provided for the seniors with a partial mentality depriving them of benefits or advantaging the youth [7]. As stated, the stage must be viewed as an exclusively personal and determining path to one's selfhood. Ageism, invented by Robert N. Butler terminologically, is rejected for the unjust gaze finding age an obstacle to the development and growth of the character on individual and social level [8]. Further, the acceptance towards the phenomenon of range in consideration of age should be built in a community to whose progression each age group adds up uniquely. Not only that, acceptance seems deprived towards the corporeal impairment as well [7]. Based on Encyclopedia Britannica, the idea of ableism would direct the focus on either normalcy or ascendancy of the somatically-psychologically well-conditioned, and thus, preclusion of the incapacitated [9]. The attempt to represent a solid definition of normality or an average of standards, which is again a subject to subjective impressions, influences the collective mindset of prevailing fundamentals of conduct, perception, as well as physical figure, potent of modeling the background of the ableist thoughts [9]. All these, could actualize the setting for alienation of those diagnosed with brain or anatomical disorders. A defining concern of such ethos refers to the economic load and social heft the impotent impose on the system, in addition to the threat the defective genetics introduced to the genetic pool of the ethnicity [10].

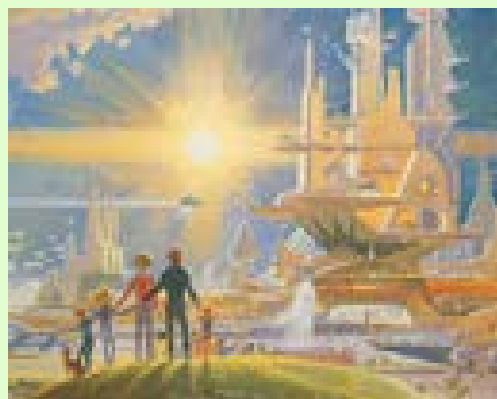
T4 Operation, or Aktion T4, was Nazi's practice aimed at giving rise to the homogeneousness

and purification of German racial group, variably uttered as Aryan, Nordic, or master race. It referred to as an act of euthanasia or mercy killing of the infirm, initiated in 1939 from covert attempts, and soon broadened to an underhanded program of regulated mass killing, and later ending up in Holocaust and panics approaching the final stages of the 2nd World War [10]. The purge was structured on the idea of removal of the individuals discerned with irrecoverable and acute psychological or bodily disorders, regarded as obtruding heavy charge on the population, carried out in German Reich, the regions and countries reigned by Nazi regime through annexations, with racial motivations to bring together all the European nations identified as German or broaden its territory [11, p. 13] , [12] , [26, p. 14] , [325, pp. 15] , [39-38, pp. 16] , [60-36, p. 128]. Children under 3, with disabilities or disorders were the first group upon whom the cleansing was exercised. By the order of Hitler, the regulation required all the agents and centers of pediatrics, like doctors, obstetrics and caregiving personnel, to document and inform the government about such cases. Further, families' cooperation in proclaiming the congenital disorders and dire infirmity of their children to medical organizations was demanded. The trend, later, continued for those under 10] 17].

“Euthanasia” proceeded by foundation of the gassing operation set-ups. Clandestinely, an attempt was made to legitimize the acts and defend the performers, from practitioner to executive ranks, by representing a permission to the institutions involved. The process of identification entailed inquiry forms, distributed to infirmaries, healthcare



centers, eldercare services, and psychiatric hospitals, particularly focused on the efficiency and capability of the residents in occupying a vocation. The assessment concerned patients diagnosed with severe nervous system and brain traumas, epileptic seizures, cognitive and psychological problems, those whose infirmity in nursing centers lasted over 5 years, perpetrators, and non-Germans, and still, the designation of the forms were in a way resembling some data survey, with minor elaboration on the target. The transfer to extermination sites demanded transportation units to participate as well. Lastly, there are records that families of the victims were presented with fabricated documents on registration of death and manner of demise. So, in some cases, they could figure out that the evidence was forged [17, pp. 90 ,82-80 ,75]. Eventually, the program became outrageously disclosed, evoking vast objections from the public and cleric; thus, there was a pause in 1941 to euthanasia. The latter stage continued, more warily, however undercover, as the extermination was practiced with reliance on more scattered and deconcentrated sites and employing other methods rather than gassing operation. The old made up a percent of the deaths, as well as the non-native workers in concentration camps, and sufferers of the bombardments. The purging actions expanded into Poland, Prussia, Soviet Union, etc. which had undergone occupation, yet, the performers were no practitioners or medical staff, but the German police and SS officers. In those settings, USSR or Poland, sometimes the process of mass killing, which was in the form of shooting, had financial basis rather than persuasion of a tenet. Not ethically decent to elaborate on the details of the genocide, what's intended to be highlighted is how the process is intricate and regimented, requiring the cooperative function of many organizations, and being kept a secret for a time. The systematization, force, and decree of the governing regime overwhelmingly took over all corners of the community. Referring to Lifton in *The Nazi Doctors*, despite the contributions to the process, however, sometimes out of helplessness due to the oppressive enforcing power, there still were doctors who countered the program and tended to protect as many as they could [17]. As stated by Bill Janus and Grace Pisano in *Study.com*, Aktion T4 comes forth as the overture of Holocaust [18]. So, not only the incapacitated, and in some cases, the old, were exposed to cleansing, but also those considered as non-Aryan, Jews and Gypsies (or Romas, as stated in the references [19]), were regarded as deteriorating to the purity of the German genetic endowment, and depletion to deposits of the society. Studies and estimations, however, were conducted on the issue that the load and extra charge that purging programs impose on the resources, surpass the probable exhaustion introduced by these groups, or the final advantage [18].



More Traces of Positivist Naturalist Science; from Philosophy to Practice

Accordingly, some scientific foundations introduced in the 18th century as eugenics, representing standards through the selective, prejudicial or discriminative attitude towards racial groups, were believed to be pseudoscience [18]. The backbone of the Nazi ethnic cleansing practices had its roots in eugenicist opinions. Labels like “the unworthy”, “life unworthy of life”, “alien races”, “useless eaters”, or “the unfit” in, let’s say, discourse of German-Nazi master race, can be, in a view, associated with “survival of the fittest”. All these evoke concepts like natural selection and the naturalistic essence of how it perceives mankind. Actually, eugenics is drawn from Social Darwinism of the 1900s [20]. Referring to Philip K. Wilson in Britannica, the principle ground prominently accounts for how more befitting members of a population have higher opportunity of living on, than the defective or the weak, and hence, passing down the genes that determine the better characteristics. Eugenics tries to identify and nourish the favorable features, majorly in mankind, with a perspective for making refinements in his successors. One might say it’s to establish frameworks through which improvements and corrections develop into the refined and healed genetic traits. Assuming that these corrective or ameliorative procedures are made by means of technology and science, eugenicist codes are inclined to manipulate or intervene in nature. However, as tied as it is to human nature, it gets integrated with many dimensions of society, becoming politicized and culturally inculcated, capable of inciting bigotry; that’s where it loses the scientific validity, as neutral and objective science is expected to be, and gets condemned, or rejected. Based on the same source, although used originally by Francis Galton in the 19th century, traces of eugenics could be tracked down way back in history, in Plato’s Republic, with an eye to “selective breeding”, as mentioned [20]. Even, in

an interpretation, Schopenhauer's thoughts on government come congruous to such doctrines. He regards monarchy as the most appropriate form of government, and the right to rule, as dynastic and heritable. He poses the idea that preservation and guarding the lineage of the monarchs require arranged marriages, demanding the union of the rectitude and honor of a man with the insight and wisdom of a woman [21]. It can be argued that such and similar accounts support prioritization of well-being of the society, or group, to that of the individuals. Referring to Darwin, he deems instituting supervision over procreation of mankind, through the artificial selection, or "selective breeding" quoting the exact phrase [23] , [22] , [20], instead of leaving it to intuition and spontaneity, would lead to a considerable achievement as he could observe and take over his own evolutionary trend in coming times. That's also a domain fostering the "nature or nurture?" argument. Eugenicists take side with innate traits and nature, emphasizing the impact of heredity, congenital characteristics, and contributions of selective reproduction, pedigree, and race. Considering the issue, Karl Pearson declared how stately fertility and natality among the inefficient groups must be outdone by the more fitting [20]. Neither family background nor genes could represent an absolute determinant of characteristics and identity, as Tabery states [24]. To make the final point in this regard, eugenics could either, sponsor and invest in procreation of the genetically well-adapted groups, known as positive eugenics, or proscribe the procreation of the genetically deficient, addressed as negative eugenics [20].

Again in line with remarks of Wilson, prior to T4 Euthanasia Program, in July 1933, the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases was publicized and implemented in Nazi Germany, which ended up in around 375,000 cases of sterilization among the incapacitated, from both men and women. Also, sterilization was practiced in the U.S. among the habitants of the institutions with

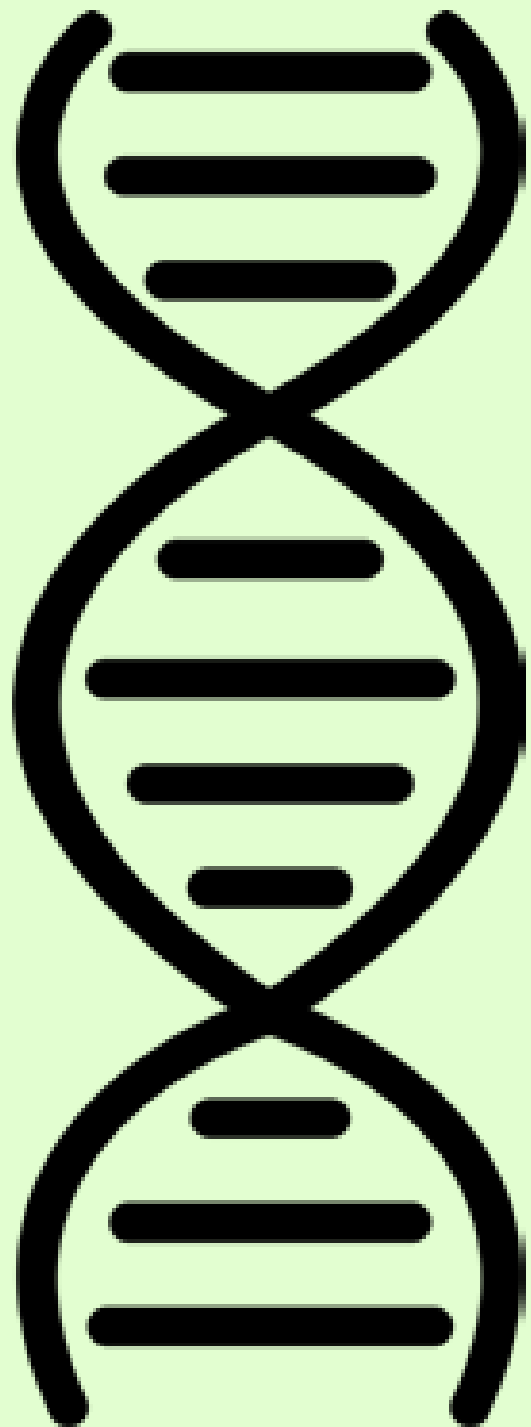
the establishment of the Eugenic Record Office (ERO) in New York, in 25] 1910]. The organization was responsible for conduction of field research gathering information on the trends of heredity and transfer of specific indispositions and characteristics among the nation, offering counseling on marriage with reference to genetic considerations and eugenics, family genetic background, preserving the related clues as the data bank, and issuing the documentations in printing materials. Cultivation and training in relevance with eugenics was under supervision of American Eugenics Society, and a similar establishment, British Eugenics Society, was directed in Britain. In the context of post-WWI in the United States, concerns raised about how decay and loss of the nation's suitable characteristics would end up in deprecation and collapse of power in different aspects of the community. Decisions were made towards newcomers in the U.S., specifically, the residents of the Eastern bloc of Europe, the Greek, and the Italian. The categorization of the degenerate incomers consisted of the patients diagnosed with some infectious contagious illnesses, alcoholics, those involved in crime, mentally defective, physically dysfunctional or disfigured, economically unproductive or relied on the charitable institutions. So, in 1924 a law was enforced to set limits on the immigration of the people mentioned as perilous to the pedigree of the Americans. The sterilization was performed on the population dwelling in institutions, for a time before and then with the enforcement of the 1922 Eugenical Sterilization in the United States. About 30,000 sterilized cases were recorded before 1938. It's notable that after the German Reich employed the same method, and ultimately ushered genocidal systematizations, advocacy of eugenically directed decrees became doubttable. Therefore, ERO's activity was ceased due to vast disapprobation as 1939 was ending [20].



A Brief Overview on Futurity of the Eugenic Measures Realization

Today, the focus has been shifted to treatment of genetic disease and increasing the quality of life and health besides saving the generations from effects of familial diseases, giving them the chance to live a better and longer life. Even institutions including eugenics in their titles were given other names. Through genetic testing, contributions of genetic counselors, identifying the defects in genomes through observing the genealogy and family history, some sorts of gene editing, or issuing decrees and moral codes on experiments and genetic manipulations, even on animals, New Eugenics seeks ways to make improvements. Ethical considerations have been taken into account more so after the abusive application of science in the last century [20].

But, what kind of future could await humanity if eugenicist measures would be vastly exercised? With access to genetic pools and the subtlest genome structures, genetic information might be exploitatively utilized to develop epidemics globally, or against specific ethnicities, to paralyze the populations for gaining influence and political-economic leverage. Maybe genetic intervention gives rise to the society of, so to speak, supermen, the flawless stock of longevity, strength and youth. That could dawn a gap of incompatibility, and thereby, discrimination. The genetically optimized might eye the ordinary with belittlement, initiating an era of intolerance. Biologically, if interventions design a population of homogeneous individuals, with respect to their genomes, through attempts to make them uniform and assimilated to a model of perfection, they would be frail and susceptible in the face of the threats. The spontaneity and variety, or accordingly “diversity” [26, p. 48], conferring diverseness to societies, and heterogeneity in capacity of the immune system, would be lacking. The main challenges addressed by Galton and Withrock are “inbreeding depression” [26, p. 48] and “ecological resilience” [27, pp. -247 254]. So, with the mentality to disturb the natural order of things and let the “fittest” live, man can bring about his own doom.



So, conclusively, going back to the initial argument, how could concepts like radical idealism, government, dystopia, eugenics, and agency, be connected? It was mentioned that extreme persuasion of ideals, not arguing the rightness or wrongness of ideals here, incurred totalitarian regimes in history. Whether masses advocate the values of the governors or not, the authority accesses the means to fulfill their premise of perfection, sometimes with the wide support and contribution they receive from the citizens, at times through covert attempts, and from time to time, heedless of the nationwide, or worldwide denunciations. Once proponents of an ideology, with extremist flavor, become in charge of a society, however small-scaled, they cling to justifications to materialize their ethos pragmatically. Ethos, whose keystones in most cases lay in homogeneity. Often, homogeneity comes in the form of socio-economic equality, yet, that could by itself have racial, ableistic, or ageistic undercurrents, quite interrelated with tendency for purgatory acts, undervaluing individuals' faculty and demand for flourishing their agency. What reinforces the tendency is the bigoted perception of goodness or utopian well-being.

The ideas, in this very last regard, would be best summarized through Raymond Rambert's words in Albert Camus's *The Plague*: "You'll soon be talking about the interests of the general public. But public welfare is merely the sum total of the private welfares of each of us [28]". Never would there be a situation in which societies are cleansed of all dysfunctions. One's life is dear and respectable, as creation and nature effectuate and defend its respectability. The demanded attribute, whose absence or scarcity calls forth bias, is the tolerance towards identifying dimensions of individuals, without confining one's assessment to material aspects, so, as ethnicity or racial lineage. That's the expectation to direct the focus on improving one's own, and on a higher level, others' selfhood. It's not possible to build a utopia, free of illness and suffering, but possible to secure a state of restoration, recovery, rehabilitation and cooperation. That's what eugenics, science, and technology logically should seek: science in service of man.

After all, the comments were made maintaining a neutral, unbiased view, with no cynicism towards science.



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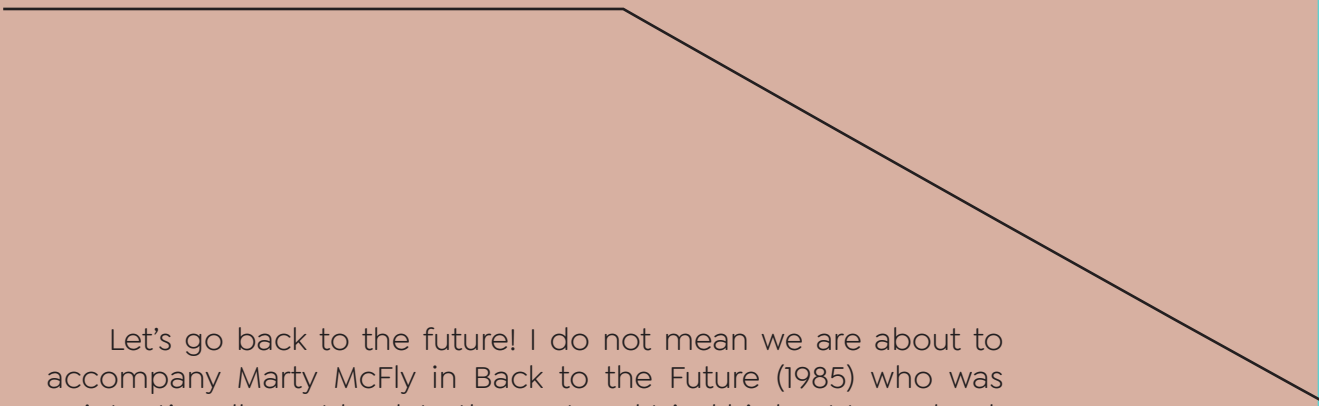
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Let's Go Back to the Future!

➡ Zahra Hashemi



Let's go back to the future! I do not mean we are about to accompany Marty McFly in Back to the Future (1985) who was unintentionally sent back to the past and tried his best to go back to the future at that time. So if that's not the case, how are we supposed to interpret "Let's go back to the future!"? The answer is closely related to the futuristic aspect of media. Media is not only concerned with entertaining its audience, but it also embodies multiple messages or perspectives regarding what the future holds for us. All types of media, from printed to broadcast, are capable of depicting the future. Nowadays, movies, paintings, illustrations, sculptures, and even installation art are all considered to be the most popular forms of media to convey futuristic messages to people. The future is always present in the belly of the past. If genealogy is searching for origins in the past, we could imagine a futurology which thinks about the future in terms of our present condition. So by going back to origins we see the child of the future gazing at us through the glass of time, the light of gaze has yet to penetrate our reality. It has yet to come and still, it comes from the past and this is why we need to go back to the future, to meet the time that hasn't come yet. So let's talk about a futuristic installation art, a science fiction animated film and some interesting illustrations related to the future. Let's go back to the future!

Uffe Isolotto, a Danish multidisciplinary artist, gave considerable thought to his novel design's installation art, *We walked the earth*. This piece of art attracts a huge audience for depicting death and annihilation, optimism and pessimism in a surreal world. *We walked the earth* contains two main rooms in which two centaurs are left in a bizarre condition.

In one room, the male centaur has passed away and his corpse is hung from the roof. In the other room, the female centaur is giving birth to a child. Her infant seems to be completely different from centaurs; probably the newborn baby belongs to a different species.

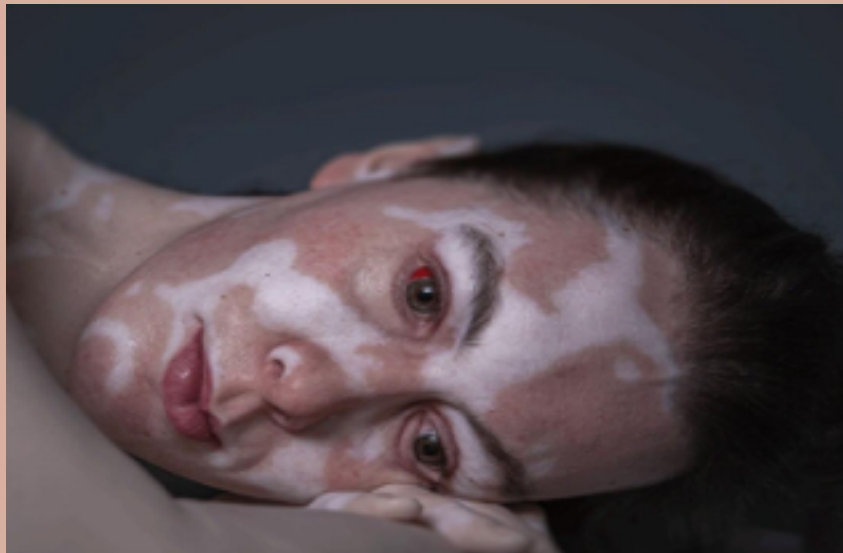


The male centaur is hung from the roof.



The female centaur is lying down and giving birth to a child.

By adding some science fiction elements, Uffe Isolotto put emphasis on the biological aspect of our future. According to Isolotto, his installation art reflects the future when man has approached animals to the extent where they have become one! The setting of this piece of art poses a vital question as Isolotto himself asks this question: “Are we done as a human race or evolved into another kind of human?”. Overall, this piece of art emphasizes and endorses the possible outlooks on our fate. This piece of art looks back at our future by critiquing and dismantling the way we have traditionally thought about humanity in terms of “rational animal”, giving privilege to reason in order to open up an abyss in the heart of nature, separating man and animal. That then enables humanity to think of itself as the master of nature, instead it proposes a future. The nature which humanity tried so hard to consider as the Other of itself has intervened and the difference between humanity and nature is no longer recognizable. This is the place where creation and destruction come together, and humanity lives in a time that is always apocalyptic. So here the future is looking at us from the past.



The female centaur is actually looking at the dead male centaur.

As an avid fan of fiction movies, the question that has always occupied my mind is “Why don’t fictional movies turn into reality?”. I mean, based on some fictional movies, it is not far-fetched to get infected by an unknown, widespread virus, travel to Mars or even get bitten by Zombies! But why was our world not really concerned with occurrences of fictional movies in real life? The most common and not carefully thought out answer would be fictional movies, as the name suggests, are just fiction! So do not worry your pretty little head and see fiction merely as entertainment. However, this common answer is no longer valid since the prevalence of coronavirus, which was depicted in several movies, has bewildered our world. Contagion (2011), Pandemic (2007), Cowboy Bebop (1997), What’s So Bad About Feeling Good?(1968), The Stand (1994) and many other flicks warned us about the COVID19-, but did we take them seriously?



Contagion(2011), Prediction of a widespread virus



The Simpsons predicted the Trump presidency in 2000.

It seems that there must be another reason for our skepticism toward the speculative fiction of the future, and that is reducing it to fantastical delusions. It could be the misconception we have about the future. We think its novelty and newness means that it exists on another plane of reality, inaccessible to the common mind. We lose the continuity of time with this way of thinking. There are abundant movies in different genres with both hidden and direct messages about our future. It behooves us not to consider movies as a tool to merely entertain ourselves, but a great guide which leads us to a better understanding of what the future holds for us. So let's review an old but worthy movie to get a more vivid picture of the future. Let's go back to the future!



Are these golden butterflies guiding the antagonist of *The Cowboy Bebop* to the future?

Since most of the films previously mentioned are known for foretelling the future, I prefer to go with a Japanese science fiction animated film which is well known yet unappreciated because of its outlook on the future. Ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce you to *Cowboy Bebop: The Movie* (2001). This animated movie should be considered a futuristic film not only for showing life on Mars, advanced technology or the outbreak of a deadly virus, but also for depicting the dominant behavioral system of men in the future. The plot of this movie occurs on Mars in 2071 when a terrorist decides to destroy human beings by releasing a deadly virus. Although human beings survived in the end, the plot of the movie wants us to ponder the reason behind the intentional destruction of people. What can motivate a human to genocide? Was the antagonist of *Cowboy Bebop* hallucinating or gifted to see the disappointing future of men? What was the philosophy of the golden butterflies, which were not visible to normal people? Since these questions can have different answers, I recommend you to deeply think about this movie and of course its ending.

Most people are of the opinion that illustration art is only limited to drawing, painting and sketching, but this common idea is not true! Actually, any visual explanation which can convey a concept or idea is called illustration. Since the main intention of illustration is to convey a specific message, some illustrators have decided to pass on messages regarding our future via illustration art. Among these illustrators, We can refer to Pawel Kuczynski, Steve Cutts, Krzysztof Grądział. They all see the present as the result of the past. In other words, our future would be our reaction to our current moment, to the present; therefore, these illustrators take today's issues such as environmental problems or the side effects of social media into consideration. You might find the messages of their illustrations not new and novel; everybody can imagine a future without a green environment or the dominance of technology on people, but the way the illustrators make the visual explanation is more inspiring and touching than the written explanation. They show how the reality which is not still represented into various scientific and linguistic frameworks, cuts through it, how images change and reimagine our written conceptual reality and out of this blending a whole new reality is born. Let's take a look at some futuristic illustrations regarding environmental issues. Let's go back to the future!

Three Illustrations by Pawel Kuczynski:

Are we aware of the fact that our words are not in line with our actions when it comes to saving nature?



It's not only about nature, it's about us. For your own sake, be serious about environmental issues.



Warning! Our earth is about to melt. Do you still support industrial activities?

Two illustrations by krzysztof grądziel:



One day, even industries will get sick of themselves.



Deforestation has a pale color, doesn't it?

An illustration by Steve Cutts:



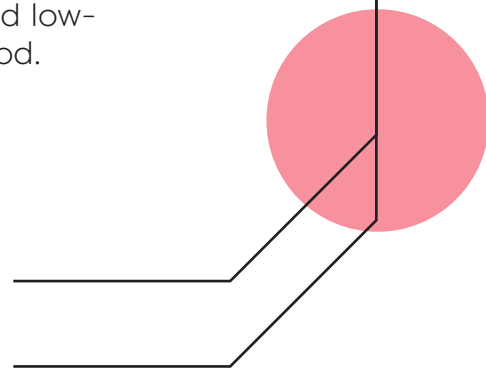
“Happy Earth Day”? To me it seems like
“Happy Death Day”.

Revival via Virtual Reality in Future



Mahtab Soltanian

Virtual reality (VR) is a simulated experience forged by the arrival of a new environment in which physical and virtual objects are integrated at disparate levels that can be similar or entirely antithetical to the real world. Nowadays, virtual reality applications encompass education (such as medical or military training), business (e.g., virtual meetings), and entertainment (particularly video games). However, in terms of future potential, areas of VR will not be this stymied. The gap between the past and the future of VR is about “realism” vs. “interaction”. When it arrives at the utilization of VR in the future, it’s probable to reach benefits such as mental disorders’ rehabilitation (even those originating from discrimination), immersion in any environment required to nurture a positive mental framework, as a result, healing augmented damages with an immersive VR experience. Also, it may offer a mix of guided training, progression mapping, and activity feedback with a meditative audio/visual adventure transported to a destination worldwide via -360degree panoramic photos and videos and enabling a general remote, adaptive, accurate, interactive, accessible, and low-cost physical rehabilitation method.



Virtual Reality in the Past

The First -3D Movie Machine

The better the quality of a movie, the more interested we will be in watching and finally enjoying it. To reach this goal, Heilig improved upon old-fashioned -2D movies and set about creating his Sensorama machine, which he patented in 1962. The Sensorama was about the size of an arcade game machine and featured a single seat and a wrap-around video screen.



Have you ever thought about how it could be if a human was capable of flying while still being on the ground? I should let you know that VR has already made it possible just in 1996!

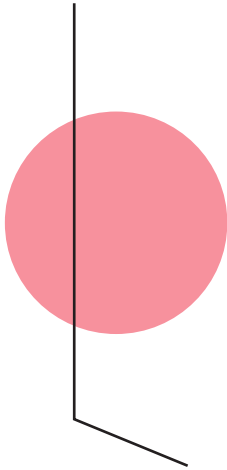
“The first flight simulator for the Air Force” which could simulate an airplane cockpit with full instruments and controls while being landed on the ground, was invented by a military engineer named Thomas Furness. VR technology and its application for training have drawn a lot of interest since this invention.



When discussing virtual reality, augmented reality is impossible to be avoided. The first Augmented Reality HMD system head-mounted display called ‘The Sword of Damocles’ was invented by Comeau, Bryan, and two Philco Corporation engineers. We usually wonder what happens to digital equipment while we move it around. So, The intimidating contraption was suspended from the ceiling and displayed computer-generated graphics to change perspective as the user moved around.

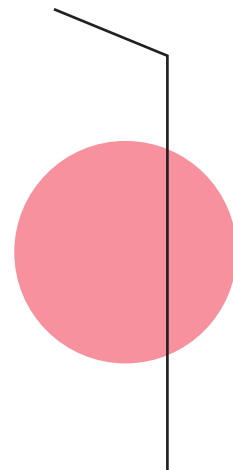


After feeling the experience of flying while not doing it at all, again with the usage of VR, the “Surrogate Travel” experience came on the stage. Viewers could’ve experienced traveling utilizing photographs taken from a car.



An interactive first-person view of the city (essentially an early VR version of Google Street View re:2007).

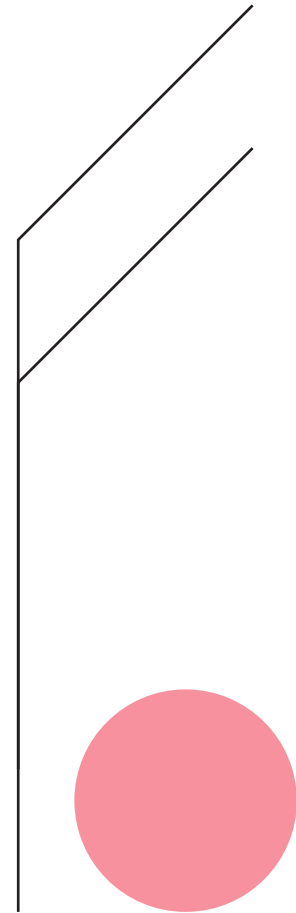
In 1986, Furness sprung up his Air Force simulation project, developing it into the Visually Coupled Airborne Systems Simulator (VCASS). This system gave pilots a virtual view to streamline the barrage of information they received every moment. This invention led to designing The Super Cockpit program that essentially helped pilots make better and faster decisions, with technology like computer-generated -3D maps, infrared, and radar imagery.



After the Super Cockpit invention, John Lanier, computer scientist, researcher, and artist, coined the term “virtual reality”. He founded the Visual Programming Lab (VPL) and a range of VR gear including the Data Glove alongside Tom Zimmerman, and the EyePhone HMD – making VPL the first company to sell VR goggles.

Later on, the idea of VR gained tremendous ground in the common understanding of technology.

Always the best way to enter the public’s mind is by finding the majority’s interests. So, in 1991 Virtual reality found its way through games. The Virtuality Group released a series of games and arcade machines bringing VR to the general public. Players would wear virtual reality goggles and play immersive games in real time.



Virtual gaming experiences were even possible on a few of these devices when they were networked together.

After feeling this gaming experience, people wanted to be able to sense the same gaming environment even when they were at home. Sega attempted to achieve this goal with its console. The company never released the Sega VR headset accessory because developers were comically worried it was too realistic and users would get hurt!



As time went on, the use of VR expanded to even healing disorders in 1997! Georgia Tech and Emory University researchers collaborated to create Virtual Vietnam training courses. The group used virtual reality to simulate war zones to assist in veterans' exposure therapy sessions for PTSD.

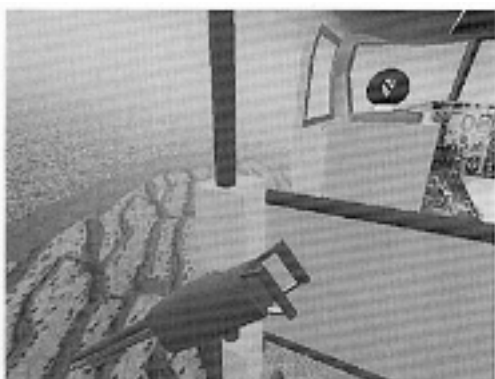
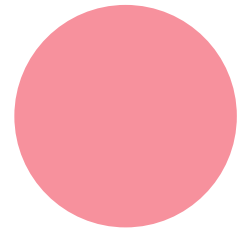


Figure 1 Helicopter Environment



Figure 2 Open Field Environment

We all have heard the term Matrix at least once. The movie Matrix represents this concept by depicting a dystopian future where reality is a simulated one. As a result, Matrix made a massive buzz in 1999, popularizing the idea of virtual realities with an even more considerable portion of the general public.



In 2007 Google developed the Surrogate Travel concept with Immersive Media, announcing Street View. They launched the technology with imagery for five mapped cities. In addition to showing users roads, interior buildings, and more, the panoramic images were captured by a patented camera mounted on a moving car.



Virtual Reality Today

After the attributions of VR, technology giants competed for market share, «Amazon», «Apple», «Facebook», «Google», «Microsoft», «Sony», and «Samsung» all built their own VR and AR divisions. For under 300\$, Palmer Luckey created a much better, lighter, and better headset than any other available headset, using existing parts in 2010. Hence, he manufactured the first viable mainstream product for virtual reality, **the Oculus Rift virtual reality headset.**



Four years later, Facebook bought Oculus VR for around 3\$ billion.

In 2014, Sony unveiled Project Morpheus, aka PlayStation VR, for the PlayStation 4 video game console. Its final version was released in 2016, encouraging its users to not just play the game, but “live the game”.



Hundreds of companies developed virtual reality products when the time came in 2016. Most headsets had dynamic binaural audio, but the haptic interfaces were still lacking.

At the Facebook F8 Developer Conference in 2018, Oculus revealed the Half Dome – a headset with a 140-degree field of vision. The most boosted headset at the time!



Virtual Reality in the Future

So, where do we go from here? Virtual reality continues to find new applications with the backing of billion-dollar tech companies, so you can bet the technology is here to stay. VR Software is advancing just as fast as its compatible hardware.

Besides its potential for functions like entertainment, education, historical reconstruction, shopping, and worldwide work collaboration, VR has the potential to be attained in healthcare mediums far from our imagination. In addition to assisting patients fighting phobias such as fear of heights, needle phobia, aquaphobia, etc., VR can also be used to demonstrate complex medical procedures such as heart surgery and brain surgery. Also, the layout of a hospital, the flow of patients, and where the waiting room could be settled down via VR.

VR applications can play a prominent role in the physical rehabilitation of patients. It could accelerate the recovery process and patients who have severe traumas, had a recent operation, or have suffered a stroke, and even those who suffer from discrimination when put in an equally social place can benefit from VR rehabilitation therapy.



Thereby with the usage of “Mixed reality” or interactive experiences that are part “augmented reality” and part virtual reality, immersion in this environment results in healing augmented damages with an immersive VR experience, offering a mix of guided training, progression mapping, and activity feedback with a meditative audio/visual adventure transported to a destination worldwide. This progress can be made via -360degree panoramic photos and videos enabling a general remote, adaptive, accurate, interactive, accessible, and low-cost physical rehabilitation method.



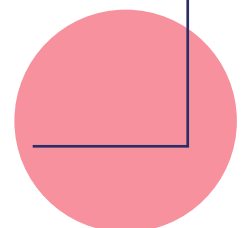
Luck, Superiority or Reality



► Mahtab Soltanian

Have you ever thought about whether luck is real or just an illusion? Does it even exist? When we think about it rationally, the controversial idea of luck may seem featherbrained, but many people throughout history made significant conclusions based on superstitious beliefs. Why that populace felt the need to have faith in an immeasurable, imperceptible power to control them is hard to comprehend, for we're aware that luck has little basis in reality. So why are so many successful people believers?

Almost all people have experienced something they have had faith in come true, regardless of their age, financial state, or social status. "Luck is a slippery subject," says Maia Young, Associate Professor at the UCLA Anderson School of Management. Even though prosperity is not always merit-based, many wonder why some deserving individuals fail while others succeed despite their deserving backgrounds. There is nothing objectively unique about lucky pennies, but they do seem to work. Also, "There is no real tangible thing we can call luck," says Joseph Mazur, mathematician and author of *What's Luck Got to Do with It?* "But we create that tangible thing by transferring it to an object." And those lucky objects furnish us with the sensation of a



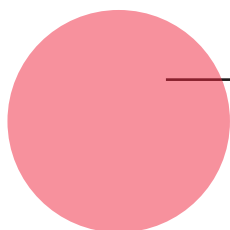
deposit blanket. As Stuart Vyse, psychologist and author of *Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition* claims, “Lucky charms inadvertently create a misconception of custody for the person who believes in them”.

Critical examinations of lucky charms indicate that people accomplish sufficient tasks when they retain a lucky charm. In one study conducted in 2010, investigators had students put on a golf ball. Half of the students were informed that their golf ball was lucky. The students who thought they were putting a lucky ball conducted better than those told that they were utilizing a regular ball. They recruited for a series of remembrance tasks. Half the students were entitled to preserve their lucky charms with them and the other half had their charms taken away. The students who were authorized to keep their charms performed better.

In a competent activity, lucky charms boost enthusiasm for people who believe in them, explains Vyse. According to Young, “Even though many people might not comprehend how their lucky charms work, it is not a bad sentiment to carry a charm for added confidence”. It is a “low cost” hypothesis, she explains. Personality and attitude stretch into luck as well. According to Young, optimism is positively associated with luck. As Young illustrates, if someone believes that they are lucky and good things will happen, they will work hard to complete tasks.

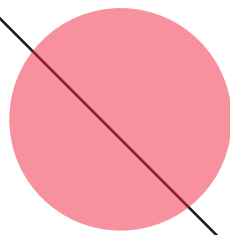
“When people consider themselves as lucky, they are more likely to decide on and persist at challenging tasks,” explains Young. That perseverance can have a self-reinforcing effect. The more demanding tasks people take on, the higher their chance of succeeding will be, providing them with a sense that they are absolutely lucky. “A naturally positive philosophy towards life also makes it seem like the person undergoes more happy occasions”, says Vyse. It is more straightforward to interact with others when one gropes that things normally function in their acceptance. Those cleaned-up affinities can usher in more possibilities down the line if one of those friends becomes a valuable connection for work or a partner.

While it is not rational to invest in luck, studying the psychology behind the assumption can begin to explain one of the convincing reasons why some people end up at the top while others end up at the underside. There might be a hope that a person’s luck percentage in achieving success be measured in the future with the use of Virtual Reality.





Who Are You?



■ Bahar Masoudi

If someone asks you, “who are you?” you will most probably tell them your name. But is your name your true self? On the surface, this question appears simple; however, if one thinks deeply about it, one may struggle to find a proper answer. “Who am I?” “Am I the person I was the day before?” “Who am I going to be in the future?” These are questions that many philosophers and social scientists have pondered upon throughout history and came up with different theories. Nevertheless, you do not have to be a philosopher to question your personal identity.

We humans feel compelled to identify with something. We want to be noticed and recognized by others, as well as our inner selves. If we fail in doing so, we feel as if we are losing ourselves.

Moreover, the concept of human identity has become even more complicated since the advent of computers and, more specifically, the Internet.

Technological advancements have introduced a new concept: virtual identity. Virtual identity is a persona, name, or identity created and used in the digital environment by some person or organization. Subsequently, the whole concept of virtual identity provides opportunities for people to freely choose who they want to represent on the Internet. This freedom is a double-edged sword that might cut deeper than you think. This article will examine how technology is playing with the concept of persona and identity through the lens of one of the greatest anime of all time, “Perfect Blue”.

Plot Summary

From music to murder, personality disorders to pop culture commentary, *Perfect Blue* has it all. Satoshi Kon's masterpiece tells a captivating story that is still relevant after 24 years. This psychological thriller manages to introduce a novel topic that is still being studied today: digital identity. But let's have a look at the plot of the story.

* The following text contains spoilers *

In 1997, Satoshi Kon not only directed *Perfect Blue* – his first movie– but also designed the characters. *Perfect Blue* can be considered a coming-of-age story in which the protagonist is making life decisions as she is struggling to discover herself. The story follows Mima Kirigoe,

a Japanese pop idol, who is leaving her music band, CHAMI, to become an actress. Her agents, Tadokoro and Rumi, get her a position in a crime TV show called *Double Bind*. As soon as Mima reveals her decision at her last concert, she receives a fax, calling her a traitor. This is where it all begins.

After she departs from the group, her life is threatened on the movie set by an anonymous fan who is not happy with Mima's decisions at all. Mima was already scared of her possible failure. When she realized some fans had stopped supporting her, she was almost on the verge of a mental breakdown. Meanwhile, an obsessed fan created a website called Mima's Room, in which he writes about Mima's life in great detail. At this point, Mima knew she had a



dangerous stalker watching her every move.

Despite her worries, Mima accepted the role of a rape victim in the TV show. This was the moment she changed her innocent self-image into an adult woman who was also disgusted by her own agent, Rumi. Sadly, Mima has hallucinations of her pop idol doppelganger that keeps humiliating her new life and career. However, Mima still tries to do everything to prove that she is no longer the childlike pop singer everyone thinks she is. She then proceeds to be photographed in sexual ways, eventually worsening her mental health. In the meantime, a serial killer is murdering people who made Mima strip; Double Bind's screenwriter (the TV show where she starred), and the

photographer, Murano. While the media is suggesting connections between Mima and the murders, she finds bloody clothes in her drawer, which makes her question her own innocence.

On the last day of shooting Double Bind, Mima was attacked by Me-Mania, the obsessive stalker. He confesses that the "real Mima" has been sending him emails, telling him to kill the "impostor". As he attempts to rape Mima, she hits him with a hammer, knocking him out. Finally, Rumi takes Mima to her house. She wakes up in a room, and soon she realizes the room is decorated exactly like her room, but she is sure it's not her real room. She tries to contact Tadokoro, who is later found to have been murdered and is laying next to Me-Mania's dead body. Rumi shows up with her CHAM!



Costume attempts to kill Mima since she believes herself to be the real Mima. Rumi confesses to killing everyone associated with Mima and creating the website "Mima's Room". Rumi chases Mima around and Mima tried to get away from her as much as she could. In the thrilling chase, Rumi is severely injured and way too delusional to understand that a truck is about to hit her. Despite being hurt herself, Mima saves Rumi.

After some time, Mima visits Rumi who has been in a mental institution. The doctor reveals that Rumi is still in her pop star character and failed to return to her true self. Nevertheless, Mima claims that she learned a lot thanks to her, and now she has the confidence to declare that "I'm real."

Satoshi Kon perfectly introduces key concepts in Perfect Blue that are still relevant to this day. He asks the audience the most basic yet tricky question: who are you? Satoshi Kon's anime tries to provide an answer through Mima Kirigoe's life-changing decisions and their unexpected consequences.

To simply put it, the movie is about a female artist's struggle to be successful in the entertainment world. In the first scenes, a crowd of fans is shown awaiting the performance of the trio, CHAM! Little do they know that their favorite pop idol, Mima, is about to shock them with her career transition. The sad truth about fans is that they feel like they have ownership over Mima and her choices. This is figuratively and depicted when Me-Mania is



holding his hand out as if Mima is dancing on the palm of his hand; he feels as though he owns Mima. This is one of Kon's ways to discuss the concept of identity.

Mima's perception of herself is already fractured; she is lost between her fans' ideas about her, the vision of her old self, and her new version. Her fans still want the pure and innocent pop singer, but Mima is showing more features of a grown woman. All the sexual spheres that Mima explores, from playing sexual roles to being on the cover of adult magazines, are metaphorically showing her metamorphosis.

Mima is a young girl who is not only changing her career, but also entering a new phase of adulthood. Meanwhile, she is playing the role of a murderer with dissociative identity disorder,

which makes everything more complicated. The lines between reality and fiction are blurred for her. Opposing Mima, we see Eri Ochiai, another actress in Double Bind, who is perfectly able to get in and out of character whenever she wants to. This stage of stable mentality is what Mima is looking for but is constantly pulled back. "The new Mima" is being threatened by anonymous people as being strongly criticized by a website that is also owned by an unknown stalker. Later in the movie, it is revealed that Mima is not the only person who is losing her grip on reality and identity; her loyal manager, Rumi, has taken all the confusion to another level. She is the criminal mastermind who manipulated Me-Mania, Mima's obsessed fan, to eliminate the «impostor» by introducing herself



via emails to be the “real” Mima. Rumi is also the murderer who went after anyone she blamed for Mima’s tarnished reputation. The ghost of Mima’s past was already haunting her now and then, yet this battle will end in the last scenes of the movie. Rumi’s appearing with Mima’s old pop idol costume is a metaphor for Mima’s past that she has to face eventually. Their chase and their fight are symbolically showing Mima’s inner conflicts. In the end, Mima finally realizes who she really is and Rumi is stuck in the fantasy she has created in her head. In this brief review, we see how hard it can be for people to find their identity and have self-awareness. Certainly, anyone might feel torn between who they

are and who they are becoming. Imagine how harder it would be when you are also trying to please people who see you as their idol. Idols have two personas: a public persona and a private persona. Mima has to deal with more personas, which is so hard for her since she lacks a strong sense of identity. In the movie, the life of a famous star is being studied; in today’s world, however, anyone can be a celebrity or an influencer with a cell phone in their hands. People will have different personas in their virtual life and real life; sometimes these two versions may have nothing in common. Which one is real?

Identity Crisis

Think about three words that best describe you. Now think about what those words would change into if someone else was asked about you and your personality; your parents, your co-workers, your best friend, your significant other, the person you chat with online. Would any of them be a perfect match with your three adjectives or other people’s chosen adjectives for you? There might not be any crossovers at all. In fact, there might never be a perfect description of you. As it can be seen, identity and true self are complicated and dynamic concepts that can change form over time. David Hume, an 18th-

century Scottish philosopher, stated that “The idea of the self does not persist over time. There is no you that is the same person from birth to death.... The concept of the self is an illusion.” Hume also provided an explanation for self and identity: “The so-called ‘self’ is just a bundle of impressions, consisting of a zillion different things – body, mind, emotions, preferences, memories, and even labels that are imposed on us by others.” With the advent of the Internet, a new concept fell into the category of identity, further complicating the concept of digital identity.

The Cyberspace of digital media gives limitless opportunities to people to shape a whole new

character or an avatar on social media. Avatars are representations of people that exist online and may be totally different from the real person. According to different surveys, people tend to show their best features, while hiding or denying their weaknesses and imperfections. So what happens if we lose control of our avatars when they become an entity of themselves and start shaping who we are?

There is this idea that the only time our avatars can really take hold is when other people believe in them. This idea is terrifying and creepy when you actually see it happen in real life. You still remember Me-Mania, the dangerous creepy stalker, who could not get over Mima's life choices and became violent. Interestingly, the same scenario played out in reality during the production of Perfect Blue.

Ricardo López, also known as the «Björk stalker», was the real-life example of Me-Mania. He was so obsessed with the Icelandic singer, Björk, that he attempted to kill her and commit suicide so that they can be together in the afterlife. Lopez used to make video diaries about different topics, particularly about Björk. In these videos, he confessed that he could no longer distinguish between reality and fantasy. The parallels between this and Perfect Blue's plot show that the damage occurs when we lose track of where a person starts and an avatar ends.

Going back and forth constantly between the real world and the virtual world makes it hard to grasp the truth about people or

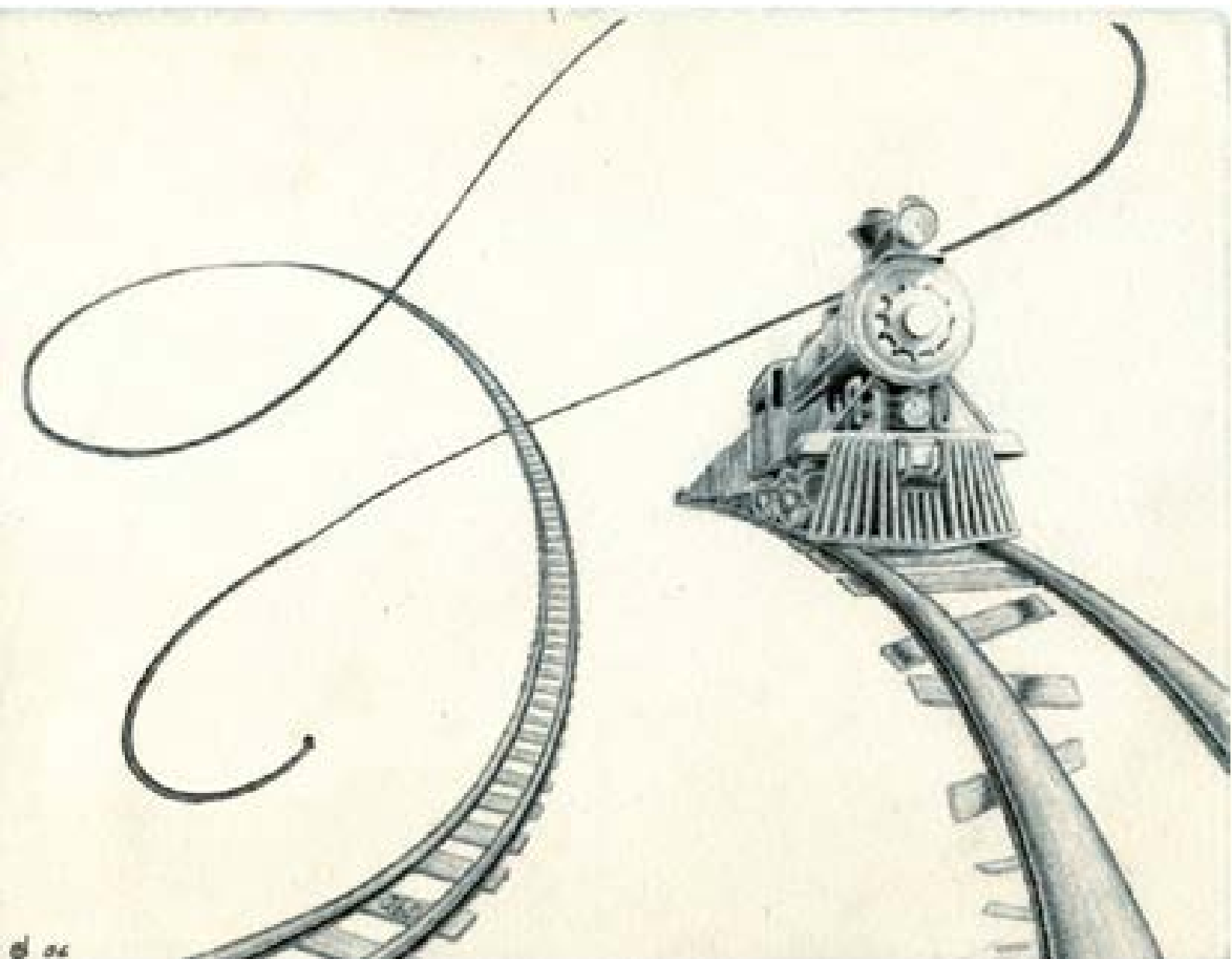
situations. What people show online is basically a creation of their own, which they can decide to change in any way they want to. People can be posting pictures about their fancy lives, while in reality, they are in debt! You will see influencers who would advertise products they have never used themselves, but act as if they are satisfied with them. Sometimes this can be seen as a crime; after all, people are deceiving each other somehow.

So, should we not have an account and live under a rock? Of course not! We should be cautious about what and who we are trusting on social media. Chances are that dangerous, unreliable people are behind the screens trying to make us perceive them as kind-hearted. We should also remember who we truly are and be okay with having character development and changes.

Perfect Blue may seem like a twisted movie that is hard to interpret. "...perhaps it would be 'losing reality.' It is hard to explain, but, as I said before, the real-life images and the virtual images... come and go quickly in the film. When you are watching the film, you sometimes feel like losing yourself..." Kon answered this way to a reporter's question about the meaning of the movie. "... you eventually find your own identity through your own powers. Nobody can help you do this; you are ultimately the only person who can truly find a place where you know you belong."

Train of Thoughts

➡ Mehrsa Karimi



I always thought

overthinking

was like sinking

in the sea...

But now I believe

it's more like

a never-ending train;

a train of thoughts.

Each thought

is chained to another,

all together,

riding on my brain's railway,

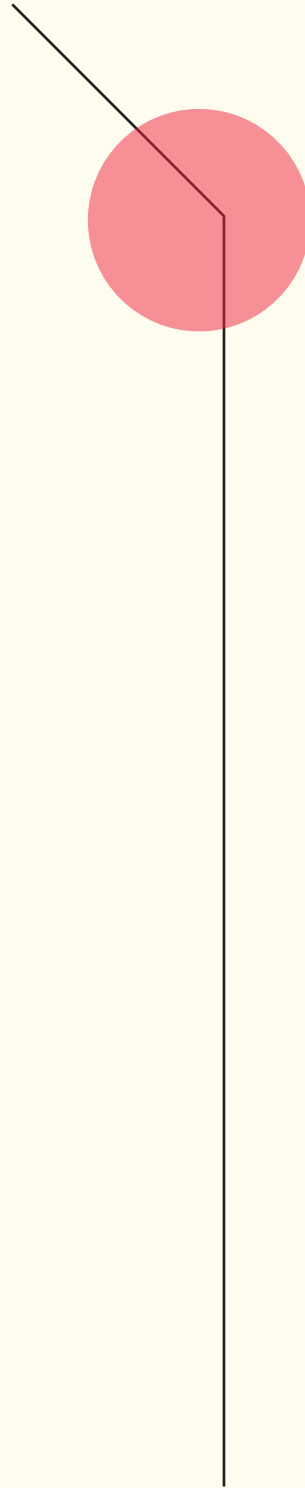
from the beginning of the day,

till the end of the night,

nonstop,

for there's no destination,

or a station to stop at.



The Screams of The Ghosts

➡ Elnaz Shahnnavazi

I can hear the screams of the ghosts
When hands are towards the blue
Asking for rain to cherish them
Rain comes to bless the people
But turns into a flood
Destroys the homes
Demolishes the hopes
'Cause homes are a punch of soil
Yeah the poor are the ones always in harm
Even in blessing times

I can hear the screams of the ghosts
When the generous lord provides comfort
But his priority, is outside the house
'Cause priority is just to adjust to the world
Perhaps, he finds his satisfaction in pretty words

I can hear the screams of the ghosts
When we eradicate habitats, then build the zoos
Ruin their homes, lock'em in cages
Would like to be God, put them in a special spot
Claiming we are the best guard

I can hear the screams of the ghosts
When a girl can not breathe in the homeland air
Scared of self-expression
She has to forget, has to leave
Never looking back at her footprint again
Forgetting she was there
Dreaming of the homecoming day
Finding the smell of freedom in the air

I can hear the screams of the ghosts
When people, cluster, cluster in butchery
Mocking people in library
Hold on to their new luxuries

But the ghosts are screaming with glee
Feasting on these humans who are trying to flee

Once Again

■ Negar Jahangiri

Once again she took a look at herself breathing
Seeing nothing
Nothing
And still nothing
Her cells had pain and joy
Regrets and laughs
I told you this pain will never ends
The further she goes
The more she gets lost
No clue of the brush
Sky shows nothing but black
Seeing her future doomed
Ached her soul
Don't know what is it

I saw myself nowhere
Perhaps
What do I want from myself

My blood shall dry someday but
before that day I am doomed to live



Art By: Negar Jahangiri





Running, Chasing

Running, she ran
Chasing the voices in the silver light
Felt the needle grasses in her feet
Burning fairy dust in her lungs
Sweet smell of failure in her nose
She looked around
Found herself in a maze made of shiny melting diamonds
The pain that the lord <d given her was still there
She looked left
She looked right
She looked back
She looked forward
The left road Shouteth: thou are not fine enough
Right road shouteth: thou do not hath the coin to pass
She looked at the road behind her and saw nothing but her blood
watering the needles
Frozen breeze pushed her forward
Clouds were all over
But a small green emerald was shining 3 steps away from her
She started walking again putting the emerald in her heart,s pocket
She smiled ; I wanted something just like this

