

# Brave new world and blade runner: concern for humanity and its relationship with ...

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Welcome to the second session of the "Reach to the Future" student conservation conference. The ethical issues reflected in this graphic are representations of humanity's interaction with nature in two futuristic literary creations; novel "Brave New World," by Aldous Huxley, 1932, and film "Bladerunner: The Director's Cut" directed by Ridley Scott and released in 1992, a decade after its original. It has been in my experience in my post-graduate study of ethics and nature in futuristic texts, that many composers expose technological advancement and economic pressure as origins of environmental degradation.

However, Huxley and Scott expand this concept, creating imaginary worlds where technology has also caused a loss of humanity and change in ethical standards. But are the concerns of these worlds purely imaginative? Or have Huxley and Scott simply analysed the advancement of technology and consumerism in their own contexts, in order to create a future world that is dehumanised and unnatural? Consider our context Year 12, and welcome to the future. By deliberately contrasting the setting of the 'conventional' world state, to the 'wild' Malpais, Huxley challenges the humanity's value in a genetically engineered world.

In Chapter One, we are oriented to the technologically 'perfect' world state of "Community. Identity. Stability (BNW, pg. 1) ," 632 A. F. Imagery like "Cold for all the summer beyond the panes (BNW, pg. 1)," helps to describe a world that is natural to its inhabitants, but ethically disfigured for readers. However when Bernard and Lenina enter the Malpais in Chapter Seven, we

adjust to a world that is similar to ours, yet is deemed " Queer (BNW, pg. 96)" by Lenina, a product of the genetically engineered World State.

A birds eye view, accompanied with sensory imagery of sound, " rhythm of ... heart, (BNW, Pg. 96)" and touch, " eagle flew ... blew chill on their faces, (BNW, Pg. 96)" produces the contrast that enables Huxley to express that science and stability occur at the expense of humanity. This concern was evoked by his father's work in science, and also the 1930's Victorian view that science was developing at the same rate as humanity, later encapsulated in Orwell's novel " 1984.

To illustrate the erroneous nature of the contextual view, Huxley presented ethics and a connection with nature in a human, but diseased land that has been marginalised due to global advancement. In our context, scientific advancement at the expense of humanity is questioned in creating 'designer babies' through IVF. Our ethics, and connection with natural practises are queried when numerous embryos are disposed of in the process of creating one 'perfect' human. It seems much too like the marginalisation of the Malpais and nature to create a 'perfect' society in the World State of BNW.

Similarly, a contrast of scenes is used in Bladerunner to illustrate Scott's concern that consumerism is a primary cause of inequality in humanity and nature. The atmospheric setting in the opening montage illustrates a pervading darkness, with fearful synthetic sounds and a high camera angle zooming down onto the streets of fiery urban decay titled " Hades, Los Angeles, 2019. " The bird's eye view, like in BNW presents a dystopic vision,

soon contrasted when Deckard visits Rachael at the Tyrell Corporation building. As Deckard's lift ascends, the camera scales the building from a slight angle of depression.

The rain and lack of natural light is replaced with a golden glow, and once inside, musical director Vangelis ensures a soundtrack shift to peaceful wind chimes which successfully juxtapose the tranquillity of the corporate elite to the dystopic array of the cityscape. Globalisation, a 1980's contextual fear is expressed through setting as the essence of the destruction of humanity and nature in BR. The 'little people' in Bladerunner, live with the pollution and unequal spread of resources that globalisation has caused.

Similar is our own context, as due to economic globalisation more than half of the female population in Latin America live below the poverty line<sup>1</sup>.

Advanced behavioural conditioning for economic capacity occurs in the World State of BNW, regardless of its effects on nature and humanity, which is another of Huxley's contextual concerns. After learning of 'hypnopaedia' and the 'neo-Pavlovian' conditioning of children to ensure an association of pain with nature, the structured juxtaposition of two conversations in Chapter Three further explains Huxley's concern.

In Chapter Three, the hypnopaedia of the conditioning centre " I do love flying... new clothes,(BNW, pg. 43)" is reiterated in Huxley's narration, " The voices were adapting ... future industrial supply (BNW, pg. 43). " This is further expressed in Mond's teachings in the garden as he states " under production... a crime against society. (BNW, pg. 46)" Through structure,

Huxley's concern that manufactured goods are deterring humanity's interaction with nature is unequivocal. Contextually, Huxley is criticizing the era of Fordism and the loss of values experienced in post WW1.

Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motors, initiated an era of mass production of goods in the 1920s, advancing society's consumerism. Ford and economists grasped the level of spiritual emptiness apparent after WW1 and suggested purchase as a method of relief. Huxley witnessed human behaviour change as the appreciation of nature was noted as disadvantageous for industry. Huxley's concern advanced to Scott's era as well as our own where globalisation and mass production are the basis of our economy.

Furthermore, our current level of technology allows many to live without human interaction, and much human behaviour involves expenditure, not the conservation of nature. Like structure in BNW, Symbolism works in Bladerunner in illustrating behavioural conditioning as detrimental to human behaviour, a concern that continued from Huxley's era to the 1980's. In the opening sequence, a long camera shot places our focus on a symbol of consumerism, epitomised by the 'geisha' Asian woman 'pill popping' on an animated billboard.

When considering BR's setting, the continual reappearance and placement of the billboard on a skyscraper, Scott typifies consumerism as holding precedence over nature and humanity in Los Angeles, 2019. This consumerism symbolises the rise of the Asian trans-national corporations of the 1980s which was feared as an economic form of communism. The world

was constantly reminded of the benefits of purchasing yet was rarely informed about the state of the environment which led to the considerable level of environmental degradation, including acid rain.

Today, most developed countries have signed treaties regarding the environment. For example, the 'UN Kyoto Protocol' urges all developed countries to reduce their Greenhouse Emissions by 5% every five years starting from the year 2008. However, the lack of ratification of this treaty, our material world, and the inescapable nature of advertising are still threats to our environment and also to the natural behaviour of human beings in the year 2004. Each character in BNW has a definite purpose in exploring Huxley's warning about humanity's detachment from the natural world.

However, Mustapha Mond further explores Huxley's notion by also articulating the loss of humanity's values in a scientifically advanced setting. Mond is the mouthpiece of the World State, devoid of human values and thus his expressive dialogue and mannerisms clinically justify a society where everything can be standardised, mass produced and therefore stabilised. In Chapter Three, Mond talks with the students about families and the plight that emotional freedom caused in times before 'Our Ford.

Mond devalues emotion as "reeking (BNW, pg. 35)," and describes natural reproduction, families and monogamy in language "so vivid... one boy... at the point of being sick. (BNW, pg 32)" Dismissive nonetheless, Mond is merely encapsulating the change in human behaviour that scientific advancement has caused, and therefore communicating Huxley's concern.

As Huxley toured Europe before completing BNW, Mond is modelled on post WW1 dictators such as Hitler and Mussolini.

His personality also portrays the loss of values and spiritual emptiness experienced by many people in post WW1. In BR, Deckard is devoid of human values like Mond but unlike 'John the Savage' from BNW, it is a replicant with no connection with nature, who exerts human values in Blade Runner. The rise of robotics in the 1980's influenced the character of Batty, and also Deckard. Batty exemplifies the 'human robot' that science dreamed of in the 1980's, whereas, Deckard symbolises the loss of humanity that ethicists feared because of robotics.

Roy Batty's "more human than human" genetic disposition allows him to exert intelligence, evident in his quotations of Blake "fiery the angels fell... their shoulders roared," and to exert physical duress, but only in the course of his four year life p. In the last scenes of the film, Batty's heightened self awareness and desire for emotion and life surpass his genetic limitations casting him as a Christ figure and also a fallen angel as he looks fruitlessly to his creator for a sense of meaning.

With his final words, "Memories... soft like tears in the rain," Roy is cast as a tragic hero, and allows Scott to illustrate that when there is no longer an environment to exploit, like in the world in LA, 2019, those who possess desirable qualities will be oppressed, this ultimately leaving the world more inhumane. In our context, the empathy we feel for Batty, questions our ethics, asking what makes us human. Huxley skilfully satirises the social

construct of the 1930's using 'Soma' to express his concern for the conditioning of humanity against nature.

The World State in London is a strangely benevolent dictatorship through Mond, where all aspects of an individual's life are determined and controlled by the state in the name of, " Community. Identity. Stability (BNW, pg. 1). " Another way to ensure stability is the encouraged use of the mind-numbing drug 'Soma'. In the Malpais, Chapter Nine, Lenina " embarked for lunar eternity(BNW, pg. 127) " on an eighteen hour soma holiday to escape the reality of nature and humanity. 'Soma' satirises the post WW1 regimes of Totalitarianism throughout Europe.

The doctrine of Totalitarianism denied people intellectual stimulation, freedom of thought and a relationship with nature. Huxley introduces 'Soma' to show a future world where the denial of a relationship with nature can be self induced. In BR's 1980's context, severe industrial pollution and urbanisation resulted in the detachment of people from nature In 2004, though Totalitarianism is a violation of basic human rights, many people choose to deny themselves' a qualitative relationship with nature by choosing to live in environmentally isolated, but grossly populated urban areas.

The use of contextual irony in Bladerunner is contrasting to the use of satire in BNW as Scott's irony questions the ethical behaviour of humanity regarding technology. In the 1980's, robotics and computers were the result of technological advance, and robots were promised to take the place of



humans in the workforce. In Bladerunner, Ridley Scott epitomises technology and humanity through the Nexus-6 Replicants, who are "more human than human" Human beings in Bladerunner live as second class citizens in desolate, socially inept conditions as we see J.

F Sebastian and Deckard both living in solitude. Humanity in 2019 has no sense of the value of interaction, and consequently Ridley Scott placed the capacity for these human qualities in the Replicants. Ironically though, when the Replicants begin to show human emotion and need, such as Batty's need to 'meet his maker,' they are 'retired' by the human, by ultimately inhuman character, Deckard. This irony illustrates Scott's concern for a scientifically advanced world, with a dismal appreciation of human qualities and value.

The same concern is expressed in the 1997 futuristic popular culture film, "Gattaca," where your personality is irrelevant as genetic composition guarantees you an occupation. Huxley and Scott have established quite a few concerns for our future. Strangely though, they have also warned about issues that are in need of conservation now. Again, close your eyes and imagine the natural world that you want in the future. Consider our context year 12, and help to create an ethically harmonious world for the future.