Problem Of Humanity In Blade Runner And The Kite Runner: Comparative Essay

Khaled Hosseini in The Kite Runner and Ridley Scott in Blade Runner explore the notion of what it means to be human through the juxtaposition of a reluctant, flawed protagonist and an antagonist. Both authors use characterisation and setting to portray their respective antagonists as both evil and in the case of Blade Runner, morally ambiguous. The Kite Runner follows the protagonist Amir in his quest for approval from those around him and the consequences of his shortcomings. Blade Runner that focuses on an alternate future where the protagonist, an old semi-retired replicant killer named Rick Deckard is brought back into the business but discovers there is more to replicants than originally thought.

Amir is the protagonist of The Kite Runner. Hosseini narrates the text through Amir, meaning his experience as a selfish child is told from his perspective, sometimes clouding the cruelness of his actions with empathy. Hosseini portrays the stem of Amir's psychological conflict from his inaction in the rape of Hassan that guides the text. Amir incites action by choosing to watch Assef rape Hassan instead of helping. Amir spends a good portion of the text with a sole purpose of trying to atone for these sins that plague his mind. Hosseini shows how misguided Amir was by his quest for approval that in his quest to prove himself to his father Baba he watches his friend get raped, then requests that Hassan and his father be replaced for his own selfish comfortability. This establishes the idea of an essentially flawed protagonist, similarly to Rick Deckard in Blade Runner who is the movie's protagonist. Deckard feels like a hero to the viewer but his job that he is insinuated to have had for most his life is to kill replicants, who the film then questions how human these replicants are. Deckard is reluctant in his 'killing' but still kills nonetheless. A fellow blade runner, Gaff, leaves a silver origami unicorn in Deckard's apartment leading the viewer to assume Gaff knows about Deckard's dreams, indicating the possibility that Deckard has false memories and is in fact a replicant.

Deckard is sitting by the piano with the photos, Scott insinuates that he might actually be pondering his own identity, wondering if he's a replicant too. Similarly, in The Kite Runner Hosseini presents Assef as the antagonist to Amir, the two of them have some key things in common. When Hosseini presents Assef's assault and rape of the child Hassan, Assef physically and violently asserts his feelings of superiority: racially, socially and religiously. This is the same way Amir feels only Assef is more explicit. This parallel is given credence when Assef tells Amir, 'We're the same, you and I...You nursed with [Hassan], but you're my twin.' They both dehumanised Hassan: Assef actually perpetrating the assault and Amir letting it happen without stopping it. This similarity that shows the likeness the two have with each other and questions who is really worse? adding to the notion of our flawed protagonist and what it means to human and morally good. This is central to the idea of what it means to be human, how human is Deckard really if he can even begin to question his validity as a human, be the thing he has hunted down his whole life. Scott poses the question, what's the difference, actually, between a replicant and a human? Memories? Identity? The capacity for empathy? Nonetheless, Deckard continues hunting and killing replicants. In both texts as the protagonist is having their final confrontation with the antagonist they are outmatched and actually lose the fight, in The Kite Runner it is when Assef is confronted over the safety of Sohrab in which the only thing that saves Amir is the innocent Sohrab having to launch a brass ball into Assef's eye.

Unlike The Kite Runner, in Blade Runner as the protagonist is bested, it is not a third party that saves Deckard's life but the antagonist himself. The different way in which the respective antagonists are used throughout the story and at the climax are specifically built to help each text portray the idea of what it means to be human in their respective ways. In The Kite Runner Assef is the antagonist of the text. Assef is less important to the message of the film as Amir's primary struggle is with himself and his decisions, however Assef as a character created by Hosseini epitomises the evil that surrounds Afghan society and the evil in Amir's past that holds him back in life. Throughout the text Assef terrorises other people using brass knuckles, the idolisation of Hitler, and the eventual rape of Hassan. Assef essentially acts as a way for Amir to prove himself so Hosseini can explore what it means to be human through Amir. In contrast to Hosseini, Scott's antagonist is central to establishing the idea of what it means to be human. In his final confrontation with Roy, Deckard finds himself outmatched. Fortunately, Roy has a change of heart from his earlier more violent tendencies 'I want more life, fucker'. Roy chooses to spare Deckard's life. The Voight-Kampff test produced by Scott acts as a way to tell the difference between humans and replicants based on their respective capacity for empathy, assuming that replicants don't have empathy but humans do - despite this the audience sees Roy empathise with Deckard, once again asking what's the difference?

In conclusion, both texts ultimately convey to the reader the notion of what it means to be human, and the moral dilemmas that surround the human experience, One must acknowledge the humanity of others to truly be human themselves.