Unforeseen Technology In Blade Runner And Frankenstein: What Technology Has In Store For Humanity

“it has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity”

· Albert Einstein

Science, so often do we depict it as a noble and righteous pursuit. In fact, we humans strongly worship the desire to exceed past the boundaries of the knowledge and possibilities that we possess. However, keeping in mind the fact that exceeding out limits can carry positive connotations can we humans be trusted with the responsibility of such immense power? Though having the profound knowledge alone cannot do much harm but instead its carry’s a potential far greater than anything else in the world. Having the potential to cause serious damage if applied recklessly through technology – There’s fine line between achieving technological breakthroughs and playing god.

Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein written in the early 19th century is a cautionary tale exploring the dark and destructive side of humanity. Created during the romantic era where we humans had greatly valued scientific and technological advancement. Similarly, Ridley Scott’s Bladerunner explores the effects of scientific and technological advancement through highlighting and showing the effects it has on our planet. The film personifies a physical representation of living hell by presenting an urban wasteland with a claustrophobic atmosphere.

The dark reality that lies ahead of us

Upon first watching the film Blade runner it may only appear as a simple warning of the development of artificial intelligence, as the story focuses on the replicants [robots which replicate every aspect of humans besides emotions] have been created to function as slave labour. However aside from the development of artificial intelligence there is a bigger issue at play here – one where the planet would become so toxic until humans won’t be able to live in those conditions.

“Humanity is acquiring all the right technology for all the wrong reasons”

· R. Buckminster Fuller

Ridley Scott utilizes the use of camera angles and special effects to highlight his perception of what the near future would look like, giving us warnings of the consequences, which lie ahead of us.

The opening scene into the world of Blade Runner shows an aerial approach of the city, where giant pillars of fire shooting giant smoke clouds with the city sprawling. Similarly, with the industrial revolution, the world of Blade Runner has a society where corporate greed and abuse runs rampant, infecting the society around them. The film shows a complete lack of nature of any kind. Any animals that are seen are quickly shown as mechanical beings such as Tyrell’s

owl or Zhora's snake. This carries the implication that all living animals are completely gone. Although there is no explanation as to why there are no animals, it can be brought to a conclusion that the environment they live in is uninhabitable due to environmental disasters caused by uncontrolled use of technology. When nature and natural environment recede, the consequences are dire and depressing.

Aside from the lack of nature there is also hints suggesting that the earth struggles to keep a living environment for humans as a few scenes show a giant blimp carrying a billboard encouraging humans to "emigrate now!", promising them with a better life.

Is this a warning of the harsh reality that we are headed towards?

The concealment of the outside world from humans, trapped inside a small cage of which the city of blade runner resembles – a world filled with darkness and where the only source of light comes from the brightness of street lights and giant video billboards on the sides of buildings. In the pursuit of achieving technological breakthroughs with little to no care our planet will be headed towards this horrific reality – a world driven into chaos by uncontrolled use of technology.

The recurrent motif of the dangers of technological advancement is embedded in every second shown within the film.

Unrestrained science

Mary Shelley uses Prometheus in Greek mythology as an intertextual reference to characterise Victor Frankenstein as the "modern Prometheus" – Prometheus defied the gods – stole fire from the gods and gave it to mankind. He was heavily punished with eternal agony for disrupting the natural order. Similarly, with Victor Frankenstein, he disrupts the natural order and tries to "Play God" by creating life through the use of uncontrolled science but is punished for his actions with eternal agony.

Throughout the novel the story focuses on Victor Frankenstein's – A scientist which defies nature by creating life within a lifeless being In his pursuit of further knowledge without regard of the consequences or risks involved, showing the dangers of uncontrolled science. Victor assembles and recreates an artificial man by using human remains gathered from a graveyard and successfully manages to infuse life within the creation through the use of his profound knowledge of science. However, the results of his creation are disastrous as the monster becomes enraged and destroys anything that resembles a human. Victor Frankenstein's decisions can be seen as a representation of humanity's arrogance and folly, as we may think that human power is limitless, the foolishness of our decisions can lead to great consequences of which we are not fully prepared for.

Is this a warning of the dangerous possibilities' humans will face for the pursuit of further knowledge?

By ignoring the risks and consequences our world could be headed towards a disastrous outcome due to our own ignorance. The question of whether humanity can be trusted with the

responsibilities of such scientific discoveries comes into play when disrupting the natural order or trying to recreate artificial beings – replicants and humans.

Scientific discovery is the beginning for technological innovation. By implicating such discoveries into our planet we take risks that we aren't prepared for. These discoveries must be heavily considered as they are being pursued. As shown in Mary Shelly's Frankenstein and Ridley Scott's Blade Runner the societal consequences were ignored and instead technology recklessly advanced in pursuit of further knowledge and discoveries. Furthermore, demonstrating the effects of unrestrained science and its disastrous results, portraying a message to us saying humans will and should be punished for the disruption of the natural order or trying to "play god".

Is it too late? Have we gone too far?

Despite over half a century separating both film and texts, both Mary Shelley and Ridley Scott find common ground in their ability to represent the future consequences of what unrestrained science and technology has on our planet.

Our world currently is not far off of what Mary Shelley and Ridley Scott have predicted and warned us about. As we have created technology such as Artificial Intelligence – intelligence demonstrated by machines to replicate the natural intelligence displayed by human kind. So far as to creating human-like AI's – AI's in the form of a human through the use of scientific knowledge and application through technology. We have created smart devices which can interact with humans similarly with Blade Runner's replicants, the creation of replicants is seen as unnatural technological growth. This brings us to the question of how much more time do we have before we are completely driven by technology and are we prepared to face the consequences which lie ahead of us?

References

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