

HBO's "Westworld" Creates Moral Divide Among Television Fans / Living Without Limits: Not Always The Best

Added by K.E. FISHER on May 22, 2018.

For their Journalism Final Exam students wrote two pieces, one objective and one commentary, related to the theme of "technology." K.E. FISHER tackled HBO's sci-fi series "Westworld."

HBO's "Westworld" Creates Moral Divide Among Television Fans

By K.E. FISHER

In October of 2016, HBO premiered the science-fiction thriller series "Westworld." The plotline focuses on the strange amusement park for which the show is named and the company working behind the scenes. The Delos company fills this park with its oddly-lifelike synthetic androids — or "Hosts" — that are free game for the guests to use however they desire.

Of course, this theme weaves several moral dilemmas into the folds of this show and leaves viewers with many questions: Is this technology within human capability? If so, how far are we from seeing it happen? To many, it may be unthinkable that humanity might create conscious beings and ignore the immorality of treating them so inhumanely. Others might view such possibilities as simple business advancements in action, and why should such economic opportunities be shoved away?

"It really questions what it means to be human," says Talawanda teacher and Westworld fan Kalinde Webb. "What is the definition of humanity? ["Westworld"] really points out that, in reality, we don't really know for sure."

A main hook of the park within the show is the large cost of visiting — the financial cost, not necessarily anything else — that restricts it to very wealthy people, making Delos quite a successful company when it comes to funding. Visitors to Westworld are shown remarking on how realistic the park is and what makes it so worth the money. So if consciousness is irrelevant when it comes to being human, such an economic profit could be beneficial in some people's eyes.

Living Without Limits: Not Always The Best

By K.E. FISHER

HBO's popular science-fiction thriller series "Westworld," currently on its second season, raises a very large question mark over where we draw the line between technology and humanity.

The show revolves around "Westworld," the screwed-up amusement park in which visitors can "live without limits." The park is inhabited by realistic android "Hosts," and the wealthy guests pay to visit, using the Hosts however they want — and if you haven't seen the show, it is indeed as disgusting as you're imagining. Of course, there are families and friends who have their perfectly innocent vacations and have no malicious intent at all, but if that was all the show focused on, there would be a severe lack of blood and nudity.

Behind the scenes of everything occurring in the park is the company Delos, which produces and programs the Hosts to move, speak, and behave a certain way, each within their own programmed "narratives." The Hosts relive each day over and over unless there's an interference from one of the guests. If they get murdered in whatever fashion, company workers revive them and send them back into the park, likely to get shot or stabbed again.

The unfortunate detail of all of this that I find most disturbing is the fact that the Hosts are unaware of the purpose they're serving and think they're simply living their lives normally — meaning they feel very real fear and pain when mistreated by guests. This is passed off by the company, of course, and they claim that "they don't feel anything unless we tell them to."

It's frightening to imagine that such technology could be at all available to us, within any span of time, and humanity and consciousness could become such an ignored subject. The suffering of any being, whether natural or synthetic, should be regarded as a relevant concern. What would be better than that, even? Leaving artificial intelligence to shows like "Westworld" instead of making them a reality.



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