

## CINEMATOGRAPHIC DYSTOPIAS ALARM SIGNALS IN THE GLOBALISATION ERA

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### Abstract

The present paper analyses the role of several cinematographic dystopias in shaping mentality in the globalisation process. Cinematography, an independent art form and also an industry, is a part of the globalisation process. Cinematographic works are accessible worldwide and reach peoples of all cultures and cultural level, raising awareness of several problems that affect the people on entire planet: scientific progress, love, political forms of government, pollution, virtual reality, mass-media ethics etc. The dystopias discussed in our study are successful cinematographic production, multi awarded and popular: "Branded", "Equilibrium", "The Island", "Aeon Flux", "Never let Me Go", "Cargo" and "The Matrix". We will argue that these productions help raising awareness to the issues named above and help mould people's emotional response to them.

**Keywords:** *cinematography, dystopia, possible future, ethics, responsibility, totalitarian regimes, manipulation.*

The study aims at describing a series of cinematographic dystopias from the last two decades. The time period we chose the dystopias from is that of popularization of new communication technologies that eased gaining access to the cinematographic works, including free access on the internet. We chose cinematographic dystopias because of the impact the cinematography has in our globalized era.

In order to argue this impact, we will embrace Dr. Nayef R.F. Al-Rodhan's perspective on globalization as the "process that encompasses the causes, course, and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities." (Al-Rodhan, 2006) Although the term is relatively recent (last century), globalisation is not: it is the result of integrations that have occurred globally throughout human history. As globalisation was embraced in the political and economical strategies, it became a controversial process,

depending on how its consequences were predicted to be: positive or negative.

Cinematography is a part of the globalisation process; it is "a tradable mass-entertainment, integrating the national entertainment markets into an international one." (Bakker, 2010) Moreover, the cinematography industry is one of the most popular and prolific industries, gathering spectacular incomes.

But cinematography is not only an industry. It is an independent art form. According to Berys Gaut, cinematography is an autonomous art form because it has its own specific medium – cinematic medium – that conditions "the artistic properties of cinematic works." (Gaut, 2010, p. 245) As art form, cinematography has a special relation with truth. Art is an appropriate manner of revealing those aspects of reality relevant to us, it is "conversational disclosure". Art is universal and timeless language: artists "create a community, and in principle, this truly universal community (oikumene) extends to the whole world." (Gadamer, 1986, p. 39) From Matthew Kieran's point of view, art delivers a modal truth; art gives us an imaginative knowledge of the possible world (Kieran, 2009). Arts' cognitive value is independent of its truth value defined as mere correspondence to the outside world. Art's fictional world, viewed as a possibility of our world, gives us a kind of practical knowledge. As the world of the art does not refer to a physical space of the world we live in, we could say that all art forms are utopias.

Etymologically, the Greek term means nowhere. (Online Etymology Dictionary) Utopia refers to a place with an imaginative existence, an ideal place that does not exist; utopia imagines a perfect society. Dystopia is the opposite of utopia (dis topos - "bad place") and depicts an

imperfect fictional society in which people suffer due to human misery, poverty, terror, corruption and oppression. Dystopian fiction became very popular after The First World War. Both utopia and dystopia offer society models with the purpose of improving the existing ones, and, from this view point, the two genres are very similar (Utopia and Dystopia Website).

We will discuss next some cinematographic dystopias that imagined society models that may threaten to shape the global society.

Also known as *The Mad Cow* and *Моква 2017, Branded* is a 2012 Russian and American science fiction film written and directed by Jamie Bradshaw and Aleksandr Dulerayn.

The action of the movie is set in a dystopian future, in which the brands, through mass-media, manipulated and shaped human body and behaviour. The main character is Misha Galkin (played by Ed Stoppard), a rising marketing guru, also involved in espionage by Bob, an American hired to spread Western brands and businesses in post-Communist Russia. Struck by lighting in childhood, Misha will be the only person left on the world with the ability to figure out the manipulation at the heart of the movie.

A marketing guru named Joseph Pascal meets the executives of fast food companies that register sale loss due to the public awareness of the negative impact of fast food products on health and appearance. The ideal of beauty involves attributes as slim, and this is one of the reasons people stopped consuming fast food products. Pascal tells the executives how to make fast food profitable again: they must change public perceptions of beauty and "make fat the new fabulous."

As part of the plan, Misha is hired to do marketing for a new reality TV show, "Extreme Cosmetics," that apparently promotes skinny silhouettes. In the show, an overweight girl undergoes extensive plastic surgery to become skinny and beautiful but she enters a premeditated coma instead as result - officially - of the surgery. The public is manipulated to turn against the show and the glorification of skinny bodytypes.

Misha, as the show's marketer, becomes the scapegoat and is arrested. Misha believes that the show and the coma was all orchestrated in order to split him up from Abby, Bob's niece, as her

uncle did not approve of the relationship. Misha realizes that "his marketing powers are a curse", he leaves Moscow and withdraws from modern society. There he performs a sacrifice as he is shown in a dream he must do and discovers he developed the ability to see strange creatures clenched to people and feeding from their consumer behaviour. These creatures are the embodiment of marketing brands.

When Misha returns with rich Abby and their sun to her apartment in Moscow, six years after leaving the city, he discovers that the "fat is fabulous" campaign has changed society, everyone is overweight (including his sun) and junk-food brands sell better than ever. Due to the grotesque visions of brand creatures, Misha is unable to adapt to the society. Because no one else shares his visions, Abby thinks he has grown mad and leaves him. Coming to the conclusion that he will never be able to persuade the other his visions are real, Misha develops a plan to fight back using their own methods.

Going back to his old company, he accepts a job to do marketing for Dim Song, a vegetarian Chinese restaurant chain that would have liked to expand on the Russian market, but with little chances of success, as Russia was monopolised by fast food brands. Misha's solution is to inoculate people with the idea that beef is bad for health, such as people were inoculated with the idea that slim is bad for health six years earlier. Using the public's fear of a mysterious ultra mediated virus similar to The Mad Cow disease, the burger sales drop precipitously and people turn to Chinese vegetarian products.

The process is viewed by Misha as follows: a dragon-like entity hatches from an egg on top of the Chinese building, fights and kills The Burger's corporate embodiment. Pascal, the marketing guru, is vaporized by a bolt of lightning (ironically, considering that because of the lightning Misha was able to see through the whole manipulation process) before sharing the plan to recover the fast-food industry.

Misha's plan is not to destroy only the embodiment of the fast-food brand, but all brands. Thus, he shares his fear-based strategy with all brand leaders in order to induce a brand war that would end with all brands being destroyed in the process of world-domination

fight. Public opinion turns against all brands and a mob of angry protesters attack Misha's building. Misha and Abby try to run for their lives, but Misha is hurt. It is only when the decision taken in Russia and the other nations of the world to ban all advertising is made public, that the mob stop their rampage.

Some time later, all advertising is banned, people are released from brand domination, Misha awakens in the hospital, together with the coma girl from "Extreme Cosmetics".

One philosophical stake of the movie is to imagine how far the extent of manipulation through mass-media could go. In the movie, the manipulation had extreme effects: it affected the very shape of the human body and the ideal of beauty. Beauty is a socially shaped concept, it depends on how man defines himself in society. It is also a socially imposed ideal that people try to reach. The concept of the beautiful in return has effects in the social sphere, because it shapes people's actions and moulds the way people shape society. The media are able to become a manipulative instrument without their will: the media were, in the movie, themselves manipulated. This phenomenon raises the ethical dilemma of manipulation in a scientism objectivity paradigm based exclusively on facts, banning all interpretation from the media coverage and denouncing such interpretations as unethical. This ethical dilemma is analyzed by several authors (Iggers, 1999) who also conclude that offering only the facts to the public and lacking an adequate interpretation may actually deprive society of the help it needs to understand the facts correctly and react to them in an appropriated manner. Manipulation may easily happen in such a media approach. The role of the media is not only to present the facts, but also to investigate social reality at a larger scale and offer an insight on the relevant social phenomena.

Another ethical stake of the movie is analyzing the role of advertising and the brand concept. At the origin, products were created for the noble purpose of satisfying certain needs of the public. But what happens when these needs go second and the needs of a brand to grow go first? This is a public relations ethical dilemma: the role of the P. R. is to correctly identify the needs of the public in order to satisfy them. It is the mission

of the P.R. specialist to bring harmony between all publics. In this movie not only do the companies put the public's needs second, they even create fake needs, in order to satisfy their own. It is an efficient marketing strategy that of identifying the needs of the public in order for the company (or organization) to create a way to satisfy these needs. It is the win-win situation: an organization's financial value may grow (and it is recommended to be so) proportionally to the social value it creates. But when the marketing strategy is that of creating a fake need in order to sell an existing product, the P.R. organization becomes a menace for society. When people forget to satisfy their true needs and begin satisfying the fake needs (the artificial) what do they become? They become less themselves and more "branded creatures". They live less and something else lives instead.

The next dystopia presented in the present paper is the American production *Equilibrium*, released in 2002, written and directed by Kurt Wimmer and starring Christian Bale. The movie envisages a totalitarian society set in the city-state of Libria pretending to be the best form of government possible. The Third World War took place and devastated the entire Earth. After the war a new ideology that explained human suffering (conflict and war) through emotion took place. Since this ideology was based on the premises that emotions are responsible for all wrongs, it concluded that the only way people could live in peace would be to suppress all emotions. Due to the fact that science progresses enough to invent a serum, called Prozum, able to inhibit all human emotions if taken regularly, a sense-less society is becomes possible. The obligation that all citizens take the serum became law and refusing Prozum became a crime. Moreover, all citizens must report those who do not obey by the law.

At the same time, all emotionally stimulating material, including the beauties of nature and all art form, had to be banned. As in any totalitarian society, the obedience of the ideology is imposed using the force of the army. In Libria, the Grammaton Clerics, trained in the martial art of gun kata, try to restrain the Resistance movement known as "The Underground". Thus, the Clerics raid the "Nether" region outside the city, where

they destroy all emotionally stimulating materials such as art, and execute their owner.

One scene is particularly symbolical: the tracking down and burning of Leonardo Da Vinci's Mona Lisa. The painting symbolizes the natural, the life-like and the normal. Through his artistic technique of the *claroscuro*, Leonardo aimed at rendering the most realistic traits. Mona Lisa represents the essence of what is human. Her smile and her look are evidence of quiet joy, grace and peace. Destroying the painting is the equivalent of destroying that which makes human be humans: the naturalness and the artlessness. The action of burning the painting is the action of refusing human nature and the attempt of creating a new one.

John Preston is a high ranking Grammaton Cleric and a fervent believer of the ideology. Father of two children, a boy and a girl, Preston is also the widower of a wife executed for "Sense Offense", as a result of a denouncement he himself made. Their marriage was not one based on love, because, together with the negative emotions such as hate, love disappeared, as well. In fact, love was thought to be one potential cause of passionate violence and all human relations were thought to be better functional based only on reason.

During a raid, Preston grows suspicious of his partner, Errol Partridge, after the latter takes a book of poems instead of incinerating them. After the "crime" is proved, Preston tracks Partridge down and executes him. Partridge's last words, that all the consequences of feeling are a cost he "would pay gladly", haunt Preston. After he accidentally breaks his daily vial of Prozium, Preston begins to experience emotions. Afterwards, he decides against taking the medicine. Preston is touched by the simple joy of a sunrise, for example, and he starts seeing reality completely differently than before.

Preston is partnered with career-conscious Brandt and they arrest Mary O'Brien, a member of The Resistance, for sense offense. Preston connects emotionally with Mary and becomes akin to her cause. He also experiences remorse for killing Partridge, especially after he finds out that Partridge and O'Brien were lovers. He eventually contacts The Resistance who plans to

disrupt Prozium production in order to awaken the citizen. At the same time, Preston receives warning of the suspicion of a traitor and he is ordered to destroy Resistance and all its members and he cannot stop O'Brien's execution. Preston found it difficult enough pretending emotionless in front of his suspicious partner and family as it was, but, after the execution, he experiences an emotional breakdown and is arrested by his partner. Preston manages to place the treason guilt on Brandt and hurries home to destroy the unused Prozium vials before the Clerics find them. It is with that occasion that he receives help from his son, Matthew, who had stopped taking the Prozium when his mother died, but had to pretend in front of his father to avoid denouncement.

Preston and the Resistance leader Jurgen plan to assassinate the supreme leader, The Father, by tricking the latter that Preston had the Resistance leadership arrested. When Preston is granted an exclusive audience with Father, he finds out that the original Father after his death and had been replaced by DuPont who does not take Prozium and enjoys life by living in pleasure and luxury. After eliminating DuPont, Preston and the other members of The Resistance destroy the propaganda communication control systems, the Prozium manufacturing and storage facilities and stop the execution of Jurgen. The Revolution had succeeded.

This dystopia brings to our attention a danger that has always menaced our human society: totalitarianism. History teaches us that in times of crises people would sacrifice all ideals for the promise of a better world. History also shows that these promises are never fulfilled and the totalitarian society, far from utopia, is in fact a dystopia. Totalitarian regimes have contradictory effects. There are very many arguments against totalitarian society. One of strongest is the loss of the free will. In the discussed dystopia, Prozium inhibited emotions and feelings, injecting an artificial behavior. Equilibrium is an invitation to meditate on what constitutes human nature. An artificial construction of man did not result in the creation of a superior breed, but in that of an abomination. Man without love or compassion is not a man at all. As for the society formed of such beings, it is not a better society,

far from it. Libria was nothing more than a jail. Paul Ricoeur, analyzing Saint Augustin (Ricoeur, 2004), remarked that the greatest of all evils is the evil that passes as good. Totalitarian societies would like to be described as utopias, but they are, each time, dystopias. In such societies, law is not legit.

*Equilibrium* is also an invitation to meditate on genuine relationships. Feelings include love. In all religions, love is the way to salvation. In everyday life, love is the ground stone for marriage and parenthood. As in many other dystopias (including the screening of George Orwell's 1984) totalitarian regimes distort these relations by introducing suspicion and fear between family members and friends. Without trust, no significant relation is possible, less alone forming family bonds. Due to Prozdium, Preston did not have the chance to form a genuine relation with his spouse and ended up betraying his wife in the name of a wrongful law. Nor could he be a true father to his children, to which he was more a law agent. In their turn, Preston's children had to pretend observing his behavior in order not to raise suspicions. In totalitarian societies privacy is not allowed, nor is intimacy with other people, as intimacy involves sharing something private. All affairs are exposed for the judge of the authority.

Our society is endlessly tormented by war, economical problems and religious crises. There is a great temptation to surrender to the empty promises of government regimes to solve all these problems and forgetting that the cost is selling one's soul.

*The Island*, a 2005 American dystopia is also an invitation to meditate on human nature. Pastiche of *Fahrenheit 451*, *THX 1138*, *Parts: The Clonus Horror*, and *Logan's Run*, starting Ewan McGregor and Scarlett Johansson, this dystopia imagines a 2019 apparently ideal island that protects its inhabitants from the outer deadly contaminated world. Living on this one island was the prize of the lucky lottery winner. The participants of the lottery were the members of an isolated community governed by a set of strict rules.

Lincoln Six Echo and Jordan Two Delta, two young people who seem to be in love with one another, live in that isolated compound. When

Lincoln begins having dreams that include memories that he knows are not from his own experiences. He soon discovers a live moth in a ventilation shaft and deduces that the outside world is not really contaminated. Following the moth, Lincoln uncovers the "lottery" as a disguise to remove inhabitants from the compound and, instead of offering them the privilege of being one of the craved island inhabitant, they were in fact used for organ harvesting, surrogate motherhood, and other purposes of the sponsors they were cloned to serve. Once Dr. Merrick finds out that Lincoln has discovered the truth, the latter is forced to escape together with the latest lottery winner, Jordan. After the escape, they find themselves in Arizona desert. There, Lincoln reveals to Jordan that all compound residents are clones ignorant of the real world. Their sponsors are desperate people facing hard situations. For example, some of them are in need of organ transplant in order to save their lives. In order to avoid death, they order a clone, "born" and bred in the compound, the only place they get to know and that they never leave. When it is time for them to serve the purpose for which they were created, they are promised transportation to an imaginary island, but they never get there. They live their lives ignorant of the real world, concealed from them with the help of holographic projectors. Both Lincoln and Jordan are being hunted down by Dr. Merrick who tells them that outside the compound their organs will fail, but they decide to track down their sponsors.

Jordan's sponsor is comatose model Sarah Jordan and Lincoln meets his sponsor in Los Angeles, a Tom Lincoln, whose memories he had gained. The sponsor agrees to help expose the truth about the organ harvesting, but secretly calls Merrick who backup. Lincoln tricks Laurent into killing Tom and assumes Tom's identity. Meanwhile, Merrick discovers the cause of Lincoln's behavior, a cloning defect, due to which decides to eliminate the four newest generations of clones. Posing as Tom, Lincoln returns to the compound and, with the help of Laurent, destroys the projector and frees the clones. The price he pays for his heroic acts is his own life. The ending scene of the film presents the clones seeing the outside world for the first time.

The movie presents the extent that science could go to in the absence of ethical barriers. In order to keep their lives, if science offered the chance, people could break all ethical rules. In the present dystopia, the excuse scientists used was that clones are not actually people, so putting them down was not murder. This argument is analogical with Ancient Greek belief that distinguished citizen from barbarians, specie thought to be different from man. This paradigm justified slavery both in the Ancient world and in the Modern Era. But it was just that: a justification. What makes someone a human being, a person? Is it one's soul? Would clones have a soul? These line of questioning could extend to other matters (could, for instance, artificial intelligence come to life?)

There are many definitions of a person, some of them offer "human" and "individual" as synonyms. It is also one of the three modes of being in the Trinitarian Godhead as understood by Christians (Merriam Webster Dictionary). The latter approach will reveal that the concept of the "person" implies a certain relationship with the others, a mode of being, and not necessarily an entity (substance). In Christian theology, the concept of The Holy Trinity (three hypostases in a single natured God) is based on the Latin concepts of "persona", "hypostasis" and the Greek "prosöpon" (Schönborn, 1994). The key of understanding The Trinity is grasping the love-based relationship between the Trinity's Holy Persons. The Person of Christ communes with The Person of The Father in a unity of will.

Thus, a person should be considered to be someone who acts in a loving manner (this explain the reluctance of naming people who hurt other people "persons"). The main features of a person should not be searched elsewhere. Maybe the real question we should ask is not whether clones are humans, but whether we are one?

Cloning is also at the heart of another cinematographic dystopia, *Aeon Flux*, also 2005 American production, an adaptation of the animated science fiction television series of the same name, starring Charlize Theron.

The action is set in the year 2415, in the state-city of Bregna. After a virus wiped out 99% of the Earth's population, in 2011, all survivals

gathered in Bregna, a state city ruled by a congress of scientists. Apparently, Bregna is an idyllic place, but periodically people are mysteriously disappearing. Charlize Theron plays *Æon Flux*, a member of the Monicans, a rebel organization, whose sister was mistaken for a Monican and killed. Sent to kill government's leader, Trevor Goodchild, *Æon Flux* develops an unexplained connection with Trevor. Investigating that connection, she finds out that she is his cloned wife.

Everyone in Bregna is actually a clone, grown from recycled DNA of the missing people. Recycling and cloning is apparently the only possible way to perpetuate the human species, since the antidote to the virus made humans infertile. Trevor was leading ongoing experiments in order to reverse the infertility. One of Trevor's experiments, Una, *Æon Flux*'s sister was successful. She became pregnant. This is why she was killed by Trevor's brother, Oren Goodchild, with the sole purpose of staying in power. He covered up the fact that, in time, nature itself has corrected the infertility problem and that some women are becoming naturally pregnant. Oren has killed them all. In her attempt to destroy the cloning facility, *Æon Flux* finds him out to be the one who ordered Katherine, Trevor's wife, DNA destroyed in order to prevent any influence she had on Trevor. When *Æon Flux*'s dirigible crashes into the city wall, breaking it down, it is revealed that the land surrounding the city is actually fertile. All problems were solved in time: infertility of man and land.

*Æon Flux* reminds us of Renaissance utopias debating the most suitable form of government. Scientists were thought to be a suitable option, since their knowledge level was superior to most people, but in order to be a political actor you must first have an ethical conduct and value the welfare of the citizen before one's own. True love is also a stake of this dystopia, since Katherine's love for Trevor went beyond the barriers of time and body and surfaced even in the enemy status the two were in. The movie also raises the question of nature's possibility of healing. Such does *Cargo*, a dystopia we will discuss shortly.

But first, we will note that, in 2010 another dystopia themes the cloning phenomena, the British production *Never Let Me Go*, starring

Kyra Knightly, based on Kazuo Ishiguro's 2005 novel of the same name. This cinematographic work presents a less thrilling story than the films described above. It is a love drama that accentuates the emotions of its characters. After a medical breakthrough in 1952, the human lifespan was extended beyond 100 years with the help of cloning. Mass production of clones begins to ensure that each person had the possibility of benefiting from harvesting the clone's organs, just like in *The Island*. The clones are allowed to live until the harvesting moment comes.

Kathy and Tommy, two young clones, fall in love, but Tommy falls into a manipulative relationship with Kathy's best friend, Ruth, who does not love him, but fears the loneliness of being excluded from her friend's lives, once they formed a couple. The three friends meet on a farm where they meet their kind. Ruth lives the farm in search of her "original", supposedly spotted by one of the other clones, but gets very disappointed because she realizes that clones are made from men with no accomplishments in life. Once rumors of the possibility of "deferral" - a temporary reprieve from organ donation for donors who are in love and can somehow prove it, and convinced that his feelings transpired in his art, Tommy remembers having his art works sent to an Gallery as a child for his soul to be looked into and believes he could prove his love for Kathy that way. However, he does not manage to find that gallery.

Once Tom becomes intimately involved with Ruth, as a result of her intrigues, Kathy decides to become a "carer" - a clone who is given a temporary reprieve from donation to do the job of caring for donors as they give up their organs. In the third and final act of the film, ten years later, Kathy is working as a carer. She has watched many clones gradually "complete" as their organs are harvested. Kathy has not seen Ruth or Tommy since the cottages. While working as a carrier, Kathy happens to meet Ruth and Tommy, both of them unwell due to the two donations they made. Ruth asks for their forgiveness for interfering between the two, because of the fear to be left alone and tries to gain redemption by offering them the address of the gallery owner, whom she thinks may grant deferrals to couples in love. Kathy and Tommy

finally begin a relationship, sharing a passionate kiss after a night of Kathy's reading to him, before getting into bed together. Tommy explains to Kathy that he has been creating art in the hope that it will convince Madame to give them a deferral. He and Kathy drive to visit Madame, but two teachers tell them that there have never been any such deferrals. The purpose of the Gallery was not to look into clone's souls, but to determine if they had souls at all. Hailsham had been, in fact, the last remaining place to consider the ethical implications of the donor program. In the end, Tommy is being anesthetized on the operating table for his last organ donation. He is saying goodbye to Kathy with a smile. The film ends with Kathy accepting her fate, concluding that her fate is any different from the people who will receive her organs; after all, "we all complete".

This dystopia focuses on Kathy's relation with Tom describing clone's feelings, hope and dreams. What impacts the audience of the movie is the calamity of this epic that manages to catch all significant details of its characters lives and emotions. Clones are described as persons with the ability to create art, to love, to fear, to repent and to hate. Meanwhile, human society is described as being unethical and cruel. The cruelty of clones knowing the truth may be found by the audience bigger than their manipulation in *The Island*, as clones are well aware of the fatality of their fate. Kate's conclusion that both clones and the originals are the same establishes that one's part is to complete something, underlining the depths of her love for Tommy, as well as the fact that we define each other by the role we play in other people's lives. If love completes one without taking anything away, on the contrary, by giving, society's behavior towards clones are only to take away what they need, no spiritual connection at all.

*Cargo*, a Swiss production written and directed by Arnold Bucher, Ivan Engler, takes us to year 2267 on Earth's orbit. Since Earth had become uninhabitable due to an ecological collapse, the remaining people live on overcrowded space stations in Earth's orbit, including Doctor Laura Portmann.

The young doctor's dream is rejoining her sister to the distant planet Rhea, a supposed

paradise. In order to pay for her trip there, she signs up for a job on the cargo ship *Kassandra*.

While crew members are cryo-sleeping, one of them must stay shifts to monitor the space ship. Toward the end of her shift, Portmann hears unusual noises from the cargo bay and awakens her colleagues. While they all search for signs of an intruder, Captain Lacroix falls to his death from the cargo containers under mysterious circumstances. Analyzing Lacroix's body, Portmann, find out he had seen container marked "BIOHAZARD", although the cargo should have consisted only of construction materials.

When Decker and Portmann investigate, they find a room filled with such tanks. They bring back one of them and find a comatose little girl inside, whose brain is perfoliated with artificial neural tissue, grown outside of the skull. Laura has never seen such a phenomenon before. While administering her with a medicine meant to deal with the artificial brain tissue, Portmann receives a reply to a message she had sent her sister in only 20 minutes time, instead of the several years it took for communication from Rhea to get there, and prisoner Decker, suspected for Lacroix's murder, reveals her that they were actually flying to Rhea. Decker was actually working undercover as an RBS agent. Afterwards, Portman finds on her a video message proving Earth was coming back to life. The head-terrorist was filmed talking about the cover up of the fact that Earth would be habitable again. The expensive flights to Rhea are the reason for the secrecy. Lindbergh restrains suspicious Portman and reveals to her that Rhea is a giant virtual reality simulation on a station in orbit around the actual, uninhabitable, planet. According to Lindbergh, this was all necessary to avoid a revolution. The first colonization mission on Rhea many years ago was a complete failure since Rhea was not habitable. The colonizing corporation started to build a giant simulator in Rhea's orbit: Station 42, where all those who travelled to Rhea are plugged into the simulator where they will share a virtual life. To avoid suspicion, the people inside the simulation can receive and send message from and to Earth. Keeping the secret about "Rhea" is crucial to maintain the peace back home in the extremely cramped spaces stations.

After escaping detention, Decker and Portman set out to rescue Portman's sister from the virtual reality simulation. While Vespucci and Prokoff try to enter the virtual paradise, an alternative they prefer to living on a cargo ship, Decker plans on leaving the ship at Station 42, hack into the simulation and send a message back to Planet Earth proving Rhea does not exist. The girl Portman found wakes up. After caring for her, Laura he sets out in space, experiences technical problems and is rescued by Decker. The two find Portman's sister's containment. Connecting to the virtual world her sister lived in, Laura finds she and her family is very happy and decides to leave without telling them that their world is a simulation. However, before she leaves, she sends out a broadcast revealing the truth about Rhea and the news that Earth is habitable again. Back in reality, Decker sacrifices his life for Portman. He gives her his fuel cell so she can get back to the cargo ship *Kassandra*. Back on board, Portmann is forced to eliminate Lindbergh in self defense. Afterwards, she returns to the young girl she had rescue.

The film ends with Portmann's broadcast from Rhea airing on news stations everywhere.

*Cargo* is an eco-message dystopia. Despite genuine efforts, an international environmental law respected all over the world still does not exist. Pollution is a reality and in this context ecological catastrophe is very possible. *Cargo* also imagines a large scale cover up of another colonization disaster due to financial interests. The ethical question is to what extent would companies go for money? In the depicted world, people were living in crowded places and, instead of restoring life to their planet, they aimed to getting to Rhea, a so called paradise. Some of them, knowing the truth, have chosen virtual reality over truth.

*Life as a dream* is an old artistic theme that other cinematographic dystopias also valorized. *The Matrix Trilogy*. Written and directed by Andy Wachowski, Lana Wachowski, *The Matrix* (1999) is starring Keanu Reeves. It depicts a dystopian future (year 2199) in which reality is actually a simulation called "the Matrix", created by artificial intelligence devices in order to subdue the human population and use the human body energy as a power source. The



virtual reality represents a world very similar to our own. Although the first attempt was to create a paradise, that was easily proven a mistake since man was unable to live in a perfect world, so a world filled with both good and wrong was created for them. Computer programmer "Neo" learns this truth and plays a vital part in a rebellion against the machines.

Thomas Anderson is a computer programmer living a double life as the hacker "Neo". His efforts to solve the cryptic references to "the Matrix" that appear on his computer lead him to meet Morpheus who offers him a red pill. After swallowing the pill, Neo abruptly awakens to real life, where his body was kept in a liquid-filled vessel, connected, along with billions of other people, to an elaborate electrical network. He is rescued by Morpheus and brought aboard a levitating ship, the Nebuchadnezzar. He is told that humans are fighting the intelligent machines created in the 21st century. After man polluted the sky in the attempt to prevent machines using solar power, their new power source became human bioelectricity. The "Matrix" is a simulation of the world as it was in 1999, where Neo has lived all his life. Morpheus is part of a group who dedicate themselves to "unplug" others from the Matrix and recruit them to their rebellion. Morpheus believes Neo is "the One", a man prophesied to end the war between humans and machines. Neo is trained in the art of hacking the Matrix and gains the ability to manipulate its physical laws. While Neo is injured in battle, Trinity tells Neo that the Oracle told her she would fall in love with the One. She kisses him, and he revives in the Matrix, where he displays the power to control the Matrix.

In 2012, the movie was added to the National Film Registry for preservation. There were two film sequels, both written and directed by the Wachowskis, *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions*.

The trilogy depicts the possibility that artificial intelligence may turn into a life form, inviting us to meditate on scientific progress. In the movie, man was denounced by machines to be a "virus" that consumed his host, Planet Earth. The analogy between human behavior and virus does not pretend to be a scientific truth, but a metaphor meant to raise awareness of the negative impact

man has on the other life forms. The message of this dystopia is that man must change his destructive behavior and become more aware of the results of his own actions.

These cinematographic dystopias have the role of imagining possible world with the purpose of growing awareness of the dangers our action may lead to in the future. In the past, literature was the main art for utopias to be created in. The main stake of past utopias was offering solutions for creating a better world: political system, education etc. In the present days, cinematography is a more accessible form of art. Global communication channels (including the free movie sites on internet) made it possible for cinematographic works to reach people all over the world, independently of their education or financial level.

The dystopias we presented, like the ones of The Renaissance do not address themselves to a single culture, but are meant to have a universal message. Also, the themes envisaged by the discussed dystopias are problems that already affect all cultures: love, financial interest, mass-media role, corporate ethics, scientific progress, pollution, cloning, artificial intelligence, political ideology, war, totalitarian regimes. Although there is much scientific literature discussing all the above, art is a more suitable form of impacting collective imaginary, by addressing man's emotional structure. Arguments against abuse based on religious or laic premises may be strong, but such kind of arguments may generate in endless discussion. As for the argumentative effect of an art work, it is greater, because addresses mainly our affectivity.

Thus, an argumentative discourse against on a certain type of political regimes, for instance totalitarian, could generate in ideological endless discussions and may be less effective than the depiction of the abuse and pain such regimes inflict. Ecologists may find less supporters to their cause by sharing the public information about the negative effect of pollution on our planet than simply showing them artistically the fearful future non-ecological practices will engender. And the list may go on. Moreover, art, unlike scientific work, afford to present realities without having to scientifically account for them. The aim of these dystopias is not to offer scientific

predictions, but to pull alarm signals in order for us to better understand ourselves and the world we live in and in order for us to become more responsible about the actions that will shape the world we live in.

In conclusion, the purpose of experiences these dystopias is not to gain scientific knowledge of our society's future, but to become more sensitive to the matters that may threaten that future.

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