

Neurotechnological visions: ethical reflections on the portrayal of transhumans and neurotechnologies in *Blade Runner* (1982)

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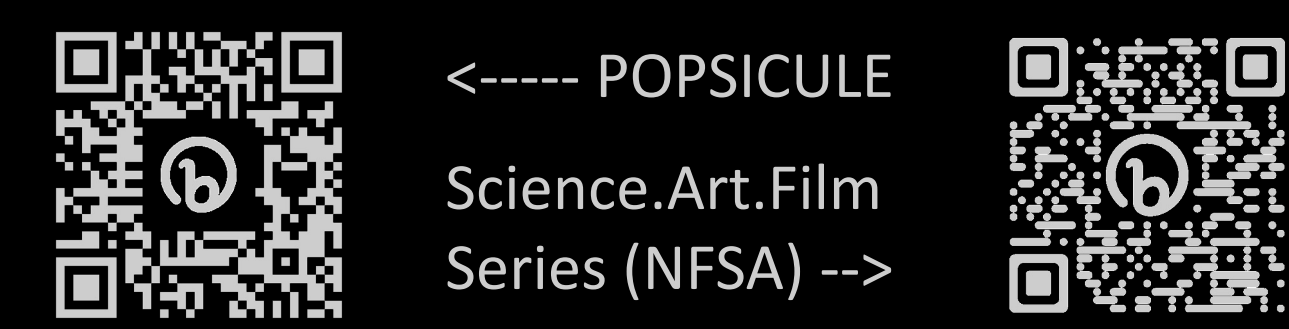
EXAMINING SCIENCE AND ETHICS THROUGH POPULAR CULTURE



- Pop culture is where our collective science understandings are created - where we reflect on our anxieties and fears, hopes, and desires around our techno-scientific present and future.
- From movies and TV shows to books, comics and beyond, pop culture has a profound impact on how we perceive, engage with, and even participate in scientific and technological exploration.
- Pop culture can also serve as medium for examining ethical issues in scientific research and technological innovation. For instance, the role of film in raising public and professional awareness on bioethical issues has been explored in several articles and edited collections.

HOW TO ORGANISE A LOCAL NEUROETHICS MOVIE NIGHT

Explored existing local initiatives, such as "Science. Art. Film." – a monthly film screening at the National Film and Sound Archive, with POPPICULE, CPAS & ANU Humanities Research Centre.



Contacted organiser of "Science.Art.Film" (Jürgens) and set a meeting with the INS Engagement and Outreach Committee. We then co-created a list of potential movies: bit.ly/43RbrQh



"Blade Runner" was collaboratively selected (taking into account length and cost). We then set a date & planned the event structure (Introduction → Screening → Panel Discussion [PD] → audience Q&A). Invited other panellists and reflected on PD themes.



Promoted the event through various channels (NFSA website & POPPICULE website). Explored other concurrent local events (National Science Week) that can help advertise the film night.



Experience from the organisation of the movie night was used to generate this poster. We also present the initial themes we have generated from our pre-movie discussions and our reflections after the movie night, including directions for future research.

Before and during the movie night

Technological assessment/quantification of human capacities
"The tortoise lays on its back, its belly baking in the hot sun, beating its legs trying to turn itself over. But it can't ... It's a test, designed to provoke an emotional response."



Moral status, and treatment of, replicants/augmented humans
"Replicants are like any other machine. They can be a benefit or a hazard. If it's a benefit, it's not my problem."



Centrality of memory, and its continuity, to personhood
"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe... Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion ... All those moments... will be lost in time, like tears in rain.."



After the movie night

- Responsible development of technologies that can assess human capacities
- Development of new technologies, such as genetic engineering and AI, that challenge what it means to be human
- Sliding scale of augmentation – according to method (from instruments to implants to genetic engineering) and purpose (treatment vs. enhancement)
- Social positioning and treatment of people with brain and mental health conditions and of those deemed not biologically normal (IVF babies)
- Implications of memory modification and cognitive replication to identity, personality, and selfhood

Directions for future research



- Comparison of technologies portrayed in the book and the two movies, and the way they reflect salient ethical issues at the time of production/publication
- The role of film in examining what it means to have bionics for enhancement
- Speculative ethics and its potential to detract from more pressing issues (discrimination of androids vs. discrimination of people with disabilities and mental challenges)
- Special issue on neuroethics and popular culture (potentially in *Neuroethics*). Interested? Kindly submit EOI on <https://forms.office.com/r/eGsCH73y7y>