
The Last of Humanity

To what extent does the extreme use of technology affect us as a society? In relation to the short story *The Pedestrian*, Ray Bradbury dives into a futuristic theme where technology has dominated the civilization and the dangers that follow. The story revolves around the main character, Leonard Mead, as a lonely man who lives by himself and an outcast to the society due to his contradictory lifestyle compared to the others. He does not own a television, which is expected of all members in this community as he prefers to take long walks through the streets. Leonard is known to be the only pedestrian in this society, during his usual evening stroll, a police car stopped and began interrogating him about his life and family. When his answers are regarded as unacceptable, the police car decided to hold Leonard captive and brought him to the psychiatric center due to his “regressive” tendency. This essay will investigate how Bradbury explores the focal theme of *The Pedestrian*, dangers of technology to society, through constructing a gloomy and lonely environment caused by the dehumanisation of society, where human traditions and perceptions are no longer coherent, as well as creating the main character, Leonard, as a symbol of the last remaining humanity.

The author constructs a gloomy and lonely environment to illustrate the dehumanisation of society due to excessive technology use. Bradbury often links the environment to a graveyard as well as the use of simile to compare houses to tombstones, “the tombs, ill-lit by television light, where the people sat like the dead”. This paints a portrait of a lifeless society where there is no interaction among human beings. In addition, Bradbury selects phrases which possess a negative connotation, “the street was silent, long and empty”, in which he incorporates with the use of repetition, “highways were like streams in dry season, stone and bed and moon radiance”, to emphasize the quiet surroundings and show that people are too busy watching televisions in their houses rather than socializing. These literary techniques aid the readers to visualize a particularly gloomy and isolated setting, which validates how technology advancement leads to the decline in interactions between human as everything is mechanised.

Moreover, Bradbury expresses his scepticism towards technology through creating an automated world where human habits and perception are considered strange and redundant. In this story, walking is viewed as abnormal and obsolete, although it is an activity performed by the vast majority of people at a daily basis for various purposes. Leonard Mead, being the only person who walks in this society, “had never met another person walking”, encountered a police car with a metallic voice. The car is robotic, which symbolizes that it does not possess conscience towards human mind and perception as it is programmed to follow orders. After asking a series of questions to Leonard, “I guess you’d call me a writer”, “No profession”, this dialog implies that the car does not recognize the purpose of walking or writer as a profession, because “magazines and books did not sell anymore”. The police car repeatedly utters walking as if it is not programmed in its system, therefore Leonard was captured and transported to the psychiatric centre as his action was considered a regressive tendency. This shows how the norm of a society who is overly dependent with technology may neglect popular past time activities, perceiving them as unnecessary and a threat to the community.

The lead character, Leonard, is created as a symbol of humanity as he is the only man left in this mechanised world. His personality is described as “the shadow of a hawk”, this suggests

that he is a free-spirited individual and like humanity, has the freedom of choices. Additionally, Leonard's house is illustrated as "brightly lit by electric lights with a yellow illumination", and "warm in cool darkness". This indicates his character and soul as being a bright and compassionate individual unlike the rest which are "dim-lit with flickering lights". In the resolution of the story, Leonard was locked in the back of the police's car, which contains bars similar to those in a prison. This signifies how technology will trap humankind from interacting with one another, provoking loneliness. When the police car drove away, this can be associated to the last remaining humanity gone forever in the future of an automated world. As technology is used more in everyday lives, humanity will be lost forever, just like Leonard Mead, who is captured and brought away for good.

Ultimately, this story reveals the true dangers of technology overuse to the society. By means of numerous literary techniques, including simile and repetition to create a gloomy effect in the setting of the story, Bradbury effectively applies symbolism in order to fabricate a deeper meaning to the story. One of the most significant message that can be derived from The Pedestrian, is how extremity of technology use give rise to the loss of humanity and the impacts that follow is permanent, hence we must moderate the use of technology before it consumes us as a society.

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