

Feasibility and Morality of Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy's *Westworld*

Westworld (2016-present) is an American science fiction Western television series created by Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy. The story takes place in Westworld, a fictional, technologically advanced Wild-West-themed amusement park populated by android "hosts". The park caters to high-paying "guests" who may indulge their wildest fantasies within the park without fear of retaliation from the hosts, who are prevented by their programming from harming humans. The first season of Westworld (*The Maze*, 2016) explores how an android can gain consciousness. The second season (*The Door*, 2018) delves into the repercussions of androids gaining consciousness. Like the first two seasons of the series, I have twofold aim for the paper. The first aim is to examine the feasibility of intelligent, conscious androids. The first aim is connected with two major debates in the field of philosophy of mind; debate about human consciousness and the debate of weak and strong artificial intelligence (Bostrom & Yudkowsky, 2014). There are various interesting thought experiments present in these debates. I would invoke some of the well-known thought experiments like philosophical zombies, Mary's room, Chinese room argument, and the imitation game to make sense of the philosophical perspective found in the series (Chalmers, 1996; Clark, 2010; Ludlow, Nagasawa & Stoljar, 2004; Searle, 1980; Turing, 2009). The second aim of the paper is to explore the moral issues attached to the world of conscious, intelligent androids. The possibility of creating thinking machines raises a host of ethical issues. These questions relate both to ensuring that such machines do not harm humans and other morally relevant beings and to the moral status of the machines themselves. In the paper, I am interested in explicating the relevant ethical issues pertaining to intelligent, conscious androids not only as showcased in the series but also as a reality in our near future. The ethical exposition will include challenges for the ensuing safety of humans, the question of ways to ensue moral

status to androids, the difference in the ethical assessment of humans and androids, and finally, consequences of creating androids more intelligent than humans.

References

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