

“Ghost in the shell” analysis

The film “Ghost in the shell” is an anime from 1995, which focuses on the theme of humanity and its underestimation of technology. It represents the possibility of computerized beings, such as cyborgs, gaining their own consciousness without the need of human assistance.

What instantly stood out in the movie for me was its approach to identity. Throughout the film, the viewer is introduced to the concept of anthropoid bodies being influenced by so-called “ghosts”. A ghost refers to the consciousness of each machine, therefore granting them a sense of uniqueness and separating them from the rest of similar creations. While the ghost relates to the cyborg’s sense of self, the “shell”, on the other hand, can be defined as its physical body. This pattern indicates that while cyborgs and humans don’t fit into the exact same categories, machines encapsulate key humanoid characteristics and imitate them.

What’s more, the film claims that identity isn’t defined mainly by one’s genetic code, but rather by the mind’s ability to store memories. This approach single handedly alienates cyborgs, since, while their brains do remain human, they have been irreversibly altered. The ghost’s perception of memories doesn’t entirely preserve the past. Cyborgs are reminded throughout the movie that no matter how innovative and technologically advanced they are, they’ll never get to form the same sense of self as their creators. On the other hand, due to the fact that memory shapes humans by taking an indelible toll on their emotional sphere, they’re seen as the weaker alternative. The line from the film: “you bleed red” suggests that human beings are both emotionally and physically weaker than cyborgs. This allows machines to gain superiority over humans by rigidly analyzing their weaknesses and rising above them.

Additionally, while biology isn't the primary indicator of identity, the fact that all cyborgs have the same features and look like copies of each other allows the viewer to determine that their sense of who they are is limited and doesn't expand beyond their model in the context of physical appearance. Since humans express their individuality through their bodies, the way they style their hair, clothing and accessories such as earrings or jewelry, our societal perception relies on these factors. While we have the possibility of customizing our looks, cyborgs are mass produced and designed in a way that doesn't allow them to veer away from the standards created by humans. This, amongst other major dividers, might be seen as a cause for distrust and conflict between cyborgs and the human race.

In conclusion, the film encompasses themes of identity, inequity and individualism. It shows us that while on the surface level, cyborgs are perceived as a flawless computerized version of a human, they lack key elements that humans possess and they cannot achieve their level of identity. In contrast, we could also argue that the human and cyborg mind, as well as physical body, follow the same path and are indistinguishable on the theoretical basis.

To summarize, the film essentially voices the message that identity isn't black and white; it shifts and turns according to millions of factors. Who we are as humans relates not only to our external features, but also to our upbringing, experiences and emotions, while machines focus more on the desire to become special amongst thousands of seemingly indistinguishable replicas, as well as gaining independence and, at times, superiority over the human race.