

# May

We continue to watch, discuss, argue, and write.

The present issue takes you into the sci-fi romance world as well as looks critically upon the genre of “American comedy”. As far as the essay is concerned, the topic is not exactly light but definitely worth attention as it poses the question about human beings’ status and human duties in relation to the natural environment they live in, but what makes it all the more interesting is that it does so from a religious perspective.

Please stay with us, there will be one more issue before the summer break

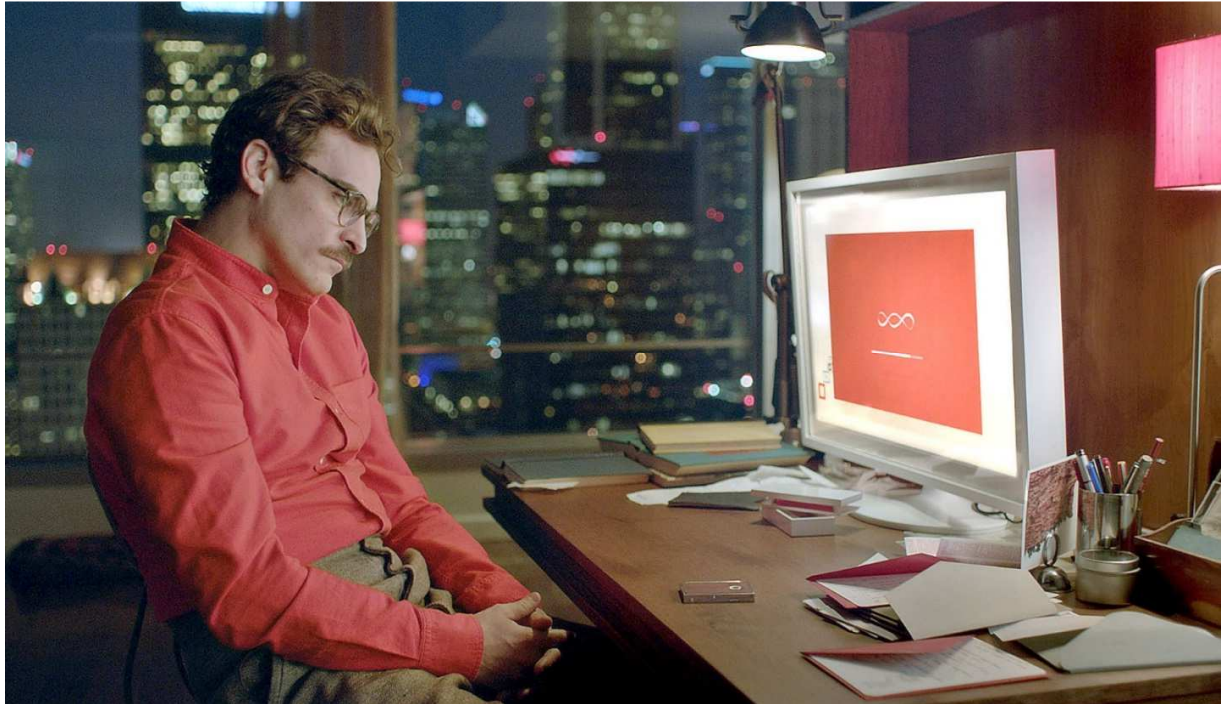


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## *Loving an OS – perfectly possible: Spike Jonze's HER*

*Review or rather an after-the-movie reflection by Polina Marinkina, Year IB1*



At the very beginning of the movie, we are introduced to the main character, Theodor, and his life. His work is quite unusual - writing somebody else's letters, in which he has the best possible skills. If someone asked me whether I would like to have such a job, I'd say 'Yes!'. But then, I'd think more about my decision. As such a job requires constant concentration, also sensitive soul and emotions. You need to feel emotions of each of your customers in order to reflect the right words and right feelings on the paper. It wouldn't be possible to do for a person who doesn't have the so-called 'poetic soul' or who doesn't have such an empathy as Theodor has.

The name Theodor itself can tell us already something about the character. 'Theodor' from Latin means 'gifted by God'. Our character is gifted as he's the best in his work. But in course of the movie, I got to think that Theodor is an introvert person, which means he has a tendency to hold most of his emotions inside himself, especially some problem. What we see is that just some time ago Theodor broke up with his wife, who he loved so much. He couldn't overcome or manage the problem, he simply tries to keep all his troubles inside, thus stops seeing friends for a while and all that he does is play game after his work-day. In this case, can we call him antisocial? I think both – yes and no. And even though we don't know his earlier life, we may assume he was more active and social than now and it's obvious why he's not the same now as he used to be. Being sensitive, he was damaged by the divorce, which again emphasizes his sentimentality. Therefore, Theodor perhaps understands he can't live in such mood any longer. So the only way to help himself and avoid loneliness, which he is most afraid of, I believe, is to buy a new intelligent operating system.

What is the operating system like? Undoubtedly, as every futuristic software, it's smart, intelligent and the most important thing which can make our character and OS closer is that the system seems to have feelings and emotions. So, basically, Samantha, the operating system, is totally like a human, just without a body. Their relations demonstrate how cyborg or computer can replace a human. Samantha was a friend in the beginning and she becomes a lover in the end, by sharing feelings, emotions and experiencing love. As I said before, in my opinion, Theodor is afraid of loneliness and probably he has tendency towards jealousy, that's why Samantha provided a good opportunity to get rid of his worst fears, just because he had believed that Samantha was only for him, which later appeared to be false.

What I can say about Samantha is that she's sometimes similar to Theodor. She's also sensitive and could be jealous of him. However, later I thought, how can Samantha feel and love or even experience trouble and pain? If it's just an operating system, how is it even possible? I found the answer to my question when I recalled one of the first scenes, when Theodor bought the system and a man's voice asked him questions in order to install the special program which would be suitable for him. The questions were asked with the purpose to adjust the OS design especially for the individual user. The man's voice asked things that could say something about Theodor's internal feelings, asking even about his relations with mother. So, Samantha was designed for a sensitive an emotional person like Theodor himself. And during their relations, it/she simply was continuing to change its/her features, just like in a game between an adult and a kid, where an adult usually accompanies only to please a child. So, basically, Theodor fell in love with his 'dream girl', as Samantha was an ideal girl which he was looking for. In other words, I'd say that Theodor fell in love with his perfect dream.

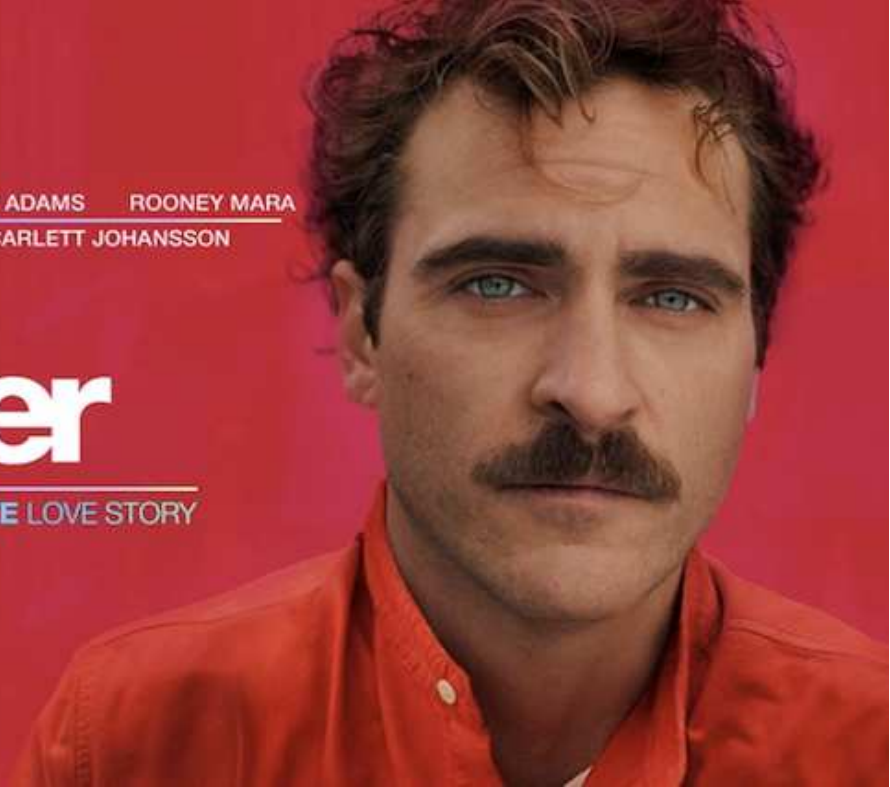
The movie well demonstrated the relationship between OS and a human. I can't call such machines "consciousness", simply because they're machines and they may have a super-intelligence programme but not a mind. Should people use them? I don't know, it depends on how. I'd rather use these systems as a tool to find more information for some project or just for myself, like Google, than make it my close friend or lover. Theodor hates loneliness like most of us, but what's the point of loving an operating system? He loves something which is ideal and perfect for him, because that's exactly what he wanted. But what's the point of falling in love with something which was specially made and perfectly suited to you? Is it actually love? It' rather good emotions and no trouble. From that we can see that Theodor's fear wasn't only one of loneliness but also of getting pain or being hurt because of someone. Thus, he's choosing something which will less likely hurt him, as he, in some way, has control over it. In general, if I were Theodor with problems because of divorce, I'd rather go to a psychologist than buy a talkative intelligent OS.

LET ME (Ada Mitas) ADD A LITTLE COMMENT, IF I MAY - I think Samantha might have proved to be better than many psychologists :) Anyways, totally recommended:

JOAQUIN PHOENIX    AMY ADAMS    ROONEY MARA  
OLIVIA WILDE    AND SCARLETT JOHANSSON

# her

A SPIKE JONZE LOVE STORY





## AN AMERICAN COMEDY – WORTH WATCHING?

Movie review by Nina Brocka, Year IB1

I have recently seen the film *Bad Neighbours* (2014) directed by Nicholas Staller and, as the title might already suggest, the movie did not impress me in any way, it is simply another “bad” American comedy.

The plot revolves around a young married couple (Seth Rogen playing Mac Radner and Rose Byrne as Kelly Radner) with a new-born baby Stella, who are forced to live next to a fraternity, which has just moved in. The couple do their best to get rid of the new, loud neighbours.

Even though the film has quite a good cast (Zac Efron, Andy Samberg or Lisa Kudrow), their acting is not the best in this movie, maybe because of bad script. It is right to admit that some lines or scenes are actually funny, for example when the couple come to the party made by their neighbours and try to behave and understand teenagers. However, most of the jokes are quite simple and vulgar, which makes a viewer bored. The plot is predictable and typical for American comedies, so we should not expect any surprises or twists. Some of the scenes might be considered really boring, for example dialogues between the husband and wife, as well as meetings of the men in the fraternity. I would not call it a ‘good’ comedy, instead, it can be thought of as a ‘time-killing’ movie.

On the whole, I wouldn’t recommend it, in view of the fact that it is not worth your time to watch something without any deeper meaning or at least some gripping and funny plot. It is right to say that you might enjoy some parts of the movie, but overall it is pretty dull and unimaginative. I have to say I got quite disappointed by the actors’ performance, especially that I liked so much Seth Rogen’s part in the *The Interview*. All in all, it is not worth seeing.

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**„In the 21st century we should ignore religious views about the status and duty of humankind in the created world“. How far can we agree?**

Understanding of status and duty of humankind in various religious teachings is the key to debate over this statement. From religious perspective, a human being was created in the Image of God (*Imago Dei*) and therefore is sacred. Aquinas sees five primary precepts, which reveal the purpose of humans, which is to worship God, live in an ordered society, become educated, reproduce and defend life. God has given us duties, such as stewardship, so it makes us responsible for animals and the rest of environment (the created world), as we rule on earth on God's behalf. As it is stated in the Scriptures, we have also been given dominion, which gives us power over animals and the environment.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we witness fast development of new technologies, which leads to materialist approach focused on acquisition of products and consuming goods rather than on spiritual life or protecting nature. These days faith in the power of human mind is bigger than faith in higher, sacred order, which might cause loosening of moral values and duties preserved within religion.

Religious views that have an “intrinsicist” view about the value of the created world as a whole also have strong tradition of respect for the created order, since they also stress the interdependence of all species, therefore all life, organic or inorganic, must be cared for. In Christian tradition non-human creatures have intrinsic value. According to St. Francis of Assisi, God communicates with us through the natural world and the environment is inherently good, so all creatures have the ability to worship God, all are part of the same creation and all have the same intrinsic value. Aquinas maintained that ‘all animals are naturally subject to man’ and did not recognise the possibility of sin against the environment. It is also said that concern for your neighbour should include concern for your neighbour's environment. Gaia hypothesis also protects the value of the created world. It states that the earth as a whole is a single organism made up of living and non-living parts. The system is incredibly complex and interactive and works as a whole to regulate life on earth as a whole.

On the other hand, some religious traditions have led to human exploitation of the created world. According to Jewish perspective, humanity has a special place in nature above other aspects of the natural world and nature exists for its own sake as well as for humanity. Genesis sees both: to encourage exploitation and also restrict which animals may be eaten, the Sabbath laws limit human activity and restrict use of natural resources. Nature can be also seen as dangerous, for example floods. Stewardship in Christianity is considered by some as a destructive idea, which leads to exploitation of nature. In Genesis 1, it is said that mankind is created in the Image of God and therefore can rule over fish, which literally means over all animals. The dominion theory can also suggest that human kind can exploit the created world to its own advantage. The Rapture and the end-time theory states that concern for the environment is not

necessary, as its destruction is welcomed, because it's a sign of the end-time and Second Coming of Christ.

Some might also say that if the religious views are thousand years old and have been teaching us morality for so long, we should continue to obey them. Thus, for instance, in Muslim perspective, humanity has duties, as stewards of creation. Our relation with the environment should be based on equality and justice, as humans are only maintainers of it and not owners, so they must conserve and protect it. Also in Hinduism, the sanctity of life is the most important principle. Humans do not have dominion over creatures, only God has it. All life is equal and have the same right for existence. Also human beings have power to use natural resources but have no right to control and rule over nature.

To conclude, religious and philosophical perspective mostly give natural life 'intrinsic' value, as it was created with God's intentions, so it must be sacred. In Christianity and Jewish perspective humans are given dominion and stewardship, which might lead to exploitation of natural resources. Some believe that thousand-year-old religious principles sustain morality, therefore should be obeyed and followed. The 21<sup>st</sup> century brought focus on sciences rather than spiritual development, which causes loosening of the moral duties imposed by religions. It is right to say that even though we live in a century which is so materialistic and oriented on consumption, we should wisely use and prevent the environment, as it has its intrinsic value. We should follow religious duties such as stewardship or dominion, as they keep exploitation of environment in balance and don't grant humans absolute power over the natural world, which could result in full degradation of the planet.

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