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Abstract

This is a review of the short film *Artificio Conceal* (2014), directed by Ayoub Qanir.

Author Notes

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In *Artificio Conceal*, Ayoub Qanir has created a dark masterpiece about a new and hidden threat to us as human beings. The hidden deception is that people called “tracers” are able to hack into our minds in much the same way that people now hack into our computers. The tracer steals our identity, replacing it with imagined experiences that create for us a new identity. Since we are given new identities, we will not even know that our minds have been hacked. We will go on living with our new identity, unable to access our previous identities. The trick of stealing our identity is hidden from us. Even worse, once our minds have been hacked, we take on characteristics of the tracer who stole our identity and we become tracers ourselves, thereby perpetuating the mind hacking/identity loss of others.

The movie is a bit of a science fiction/high technology film that includes the drama of tracers stealing from us our most important possession and as such it is a fun ride. But, there is much more to the movie. Underlying the drama and science fiction (hidden or concealed, if you will) are two quite different world views, world views that have been in competition throughout the ages. At the beginning of the film, a voice says: “Uncertainty is where God lives.” In this world view, human beings must live with uncertainty and have faith that all will be well in the end or that all is well even if there is an end. There is no certainty on this view, no way to know for sure all of the things we would like to know with certainty. Based upon this view, humanity must embrace subtle chaos in order for the species to survive.

The other world view is represented by Solaris, a clock that will bring synchronicity to the world, that will give the world order. Solaris promises us greater certainty and a deeper reality—greater order, more control. This view is an essentialist view, while the subtle chaos view is existential in nature. I am reminded here of the controversy between faith and reductionist science, or the battle between the angry atheists and religion, or the Grand

Inquisitor's description of what is good for 'man' versus free will, or even Plato's concern that the poets would distort our understanding of the world.

The underlying world views presented in *Artificio Conceal* are not simply "presented." The movie argues that certainty and meaning, logical truth and synchronicity are sought to "fill the void." The essentialist view hides from us the dark view that "nobody wins the war against death." But the passionate, even desperate, existential search for meaning turns out to be one way of denying the existence of death. The conclusion of the movie is that we must embrace subtle chaos to live well or to live honestly and that we must have faith that life is worth living even in the face of uncertainty and death.