**Ray Bradbury: Short Stories Summary and Analysis of "The Pedestrian"**

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**Summary**

"The Pedestrian" offers a glance into the future, where a man, [Leonard Mead](http://www.gradesaver.com/ray-bradbury-short-stories/study-guide/character-list#leonard-mead), goes for long walks every evening by himself. The year is 2053, and Mr. Mead is the only pedestrian near his home. He has never seen another person out walking during the many hours that he has strolled. He lives by himself - he has no wife, and so it is a tradition for him to walk every evening. It is never said explicitly in the story, but it can be understood that he is the only, or one of the only, walker in society.

On this particular evening, a police car stops him and orders him to put his hands up. He answers a series of questions about his life and family, and his answers are unsatisfactory to the police. This car is the only remaining police car in the area. After the election last year, the force was reduced from three cars to one because crime was ebbing and they were seen as unnecessary. When Mr. Mead answers the question of employment by saying he is a writer, the police interpret his answer as "unemployed." They order him to enter the car despite his protests, and as he approaches he realizes there is no driver at all - the car is automated.

Mr. Mead is filled with fear as he sits down in the cell-like backseat. The car informs him that he is being taken to a psychiatric center because of his regressive tendencies. His behavior is not acceptable in society - no one walks anymore and it is queer that he continues to do so as his primary hobby. En route, they pass his house, which is the only house that is lit up and inviting to the outside eye. Mr. Mead's behavior is completely atypical of the society in which he lives.

**Analysis**

Once again, Bradbury shows his skepticism of technology and "progress" in "The Pedestrian." In this story, a popular pastime is viewed as regressive, outdated, and abnormal. Mr. Mead's behavior is deemed threatening even though it is not hurting anyone - the powers in charge believe that his determination to walk every night could upset their social stability. He does not have a viewing screen in his house, which is expected of the members of this society. His behavior proposes an alternative activity that the government does not approve of, and this threatens their monopoly on control.

The act of ostracizing someone who is different than the rest of the group appears again, which is a common theme in Bradbury's stories. The police car, a representative of the powers in control, disapprove of his behavior, but the entire society disapproves as well. Ostracizing him is another form of censorship. His lit up house is symbolic of his difference from the rest of society. He is very easily identified as someone who is different.

The story calls into question the idea of progress for the sake of progress. An automated police car is programmed to stop Mr. Mead, even though he has not committed an offense. There is no room for human discretion and judgment in a world that is fully automated. Additionally, the viewing screen is considered a way to distract the public and keep them under the watchful eye of the government. A roaming public that is out walking is much harder to control than one that is stationed in front of its television set. Thus Bradbury's story raises the question of, "What does progress really mean? Is advancement, regardless of the consequences, a positive step in the right direction?"

Additionally, this story highlights the dangers and "slippery slope" of a government determining what is best for a group of people without their input. What exactly does "regressive tendencies" mean, and who has decided that walking means being regressive? Does our society resemble that of the pedestrian's, and if it does, is that a good or bad thing? Once again, Bradbury's stories prompt us to reflect on our surroundings and continue to be relevant despite a different temporal age.

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