PHI315 Lesson Plan. September 1. Philosophy and Sci-Fi Together.

Today I want to talk about the following things:

1. Modality in philosophical terms.
2. How philosophy is going to inform our approach to sci-fi.
3. How sci-fi we consume is going to inform our philosophy.
4. Thus, in toto, our interpretative methodology.
5. You paper.

So, to start with, modality. The term refers to the relationship between possibility and actuality. When we talk about what is possible, we do so at different levels. The levels are as follows:

1. Logical Possibility – this refers to what is possible in terms of what logically can unfold. For example, it is possible for an elephant to materialize in this room, for any of you to throw a fireball at me, and so on. However, it is logically impossible for you to think that some thing, such as A, is true and not true at the same time. Logical possibility is the broadest possibility.

2. Metaphysical Possibility – this refers to what is possible in terms of metaphysics, and it depends on the metaphysical framework you adopt. So, for example, it is possible that all of reality around you is actually made of thoughts. It is also possible that it is made of folding substance, and so on. Metaphysical possibility is circumscribed by logical possibility.

3. Physical Possibility – this refers to what is possible in terms of our best knowledge of physics. So, for example, it is possible in principle to attain fusion energy, it is possible to make AI. But, for example, it is impossible to travel faster than the speed of light, even though metaphysically this is possible, and it is certainly conceivable hence logically possible.

4. Technological Possibility – this refers to what is possible in terms of our best technology. For example, it technologically possible to get rid of world hunger, and to make primitive artificial organs and so on. Technological possibility is more narrow than physical possibility–there are physically possible projects that we presently lack technology for.

5. Intersubjective Possibility – this refers to what is possible given our present institutional arrangements, social conditions, politics, and so on. This level of possibility is circumscribed by technological possibility. For example, we have the technology to get rid of world hunger and homelessness, yet given the present social and political circumstances, we are unable to do so.

Philosophy is going to inform our approach to science fiction since we will be looking at science fiction as content. I have mentioned that philosophy draws from living life, including engaging in culture, of which science fiction is a mode. So, by approaching science fiction from the standpoint of philosophy, we will be looking at it as content for us to inhabit and then reflect upon. I want us to use science fiction as a means of expanding the possibilities.

Science fiction in turn will furnish content that goes beyond the established modalities that make up our world view. The very determination of science fiction is work that presents a world that differs from our own due to science and technology that is other than our own. The difference, crucially, is rarely due to the metaphysical possibility. Often, it has nothing to do with physical possibility either–usually, the laws of physics remain the same in the imagined world as they are in our own. The difference responsbile for the science fiction world being possible rather than actual usually comes down to a technological one, and since technological possibility is under physical possibility, it is entirely conceivable within our own world that the world presented in sci-fi is a world we could in principle inhabit–the fiction world could in principle be the real world, should some things change.

Thusly, science fiction is a means for us to expand the limit, the horizon, of what we think is possible. It is the kind of work that if we immerse ourselves into fully allows us to imagine what our real and actual world could be like. Philosophy is a tool for us to take that experience of having seen the world as it could be, and then reflect on it, such that we can live a better life.

A natural question, if you look at the schedule, is why am I lecturing on philosophy prior to us watching movies. This is because I want you to have some framework in mind, culturally speaking, as to what the current thought is on the matter. Then, once you engage in the content of sci-fi, you can reflect on the present thought, and see how it might be right, wrong, or different. The ultimate goal is for you to reflect on what you knew, what you saw as possible, and see how that can lead to a good life for yourself.

So, our methodology, which is without a name, is as follows. Philosophy prior to the engagement with the content provides a view as to what we presently think, what is known, what is thought to be possible. The science fiction, in turn, provides us with a view, with content, as to what is beyond the conceptualized possibility. Then, discussion rooted in philosophical reflection provides us an opportunity to expand the rational horizon presently conceived beyond itself, with the help of the imaginitive possibilities exhibited in the science fiction work we saw.

I will now talk about your paper. Here is the assignment spelled out:

> Paper I: The first paper is a kind of meta-paper where you explain the general approach of this class that you will learn in the first two weeks. This assignment will also fulfill the first core requirement. Essentially, you will analyze and explain to me the very unique approach we will take in this class toward mixing philosophy and science fiction. Science fiction will allow us to explore possibilities that may be hard to imagine given present conditions, and philosophy will allow us to analyze these possibilities in relation to our own life and world. (11% of your final grade, due end of the day on September 10).

This is the learning outcome it is to fulfill:

> Define and distinguish different approaches (historical, theoretical, and methodological issues) to "creativity" as appropriate to the dis-

ciplinary practices specific to the subject, medium, or approach that informs a particular course.

So, here is what I am looking for. I am looking for 5 pages. On page one, you should explain what I take philosophy to be, what the determination is. Compare and contrast it to philosophy understood as "thinking about thinking". Say how my approach is different from the other. On page two, I want you to explain what I take science fiction to be. Contrast it with what science ficiton is usually taken to be–just work about possible worlds. On page three and four, I want you to analyze 'creativity' in terms of thinking beyond modalities as they presently are with the help of science fiction and philosophical refleciton. In other words, I want you to explain our methodology combining philosophy and science fiction, in your own words, in relation to possibility and what we can imagine for ourselves and how that relates to the good life. Say how this is a creativity in a sense. Finally, on page five, I want you to reflect on all of this and share what you think of the approach. The pages are approximate. The paper can be 3 pages, as long as you accomplish all of the things I mentioned. The 5 page is just an orientation schema, think of them as sections. Also, feel free to use a chatbot to workout your ideas, just avoid copying and pasting from it, since that is low tier.