

Discussion Guide for Signals & Society Episode #2 (1/12/26)

“You Already Have a Reputation Score”
(based on the Black Mirror Episode, “Nosedive”)

link to video on YouTube <https://youtu.be/sv0601ldS0Y>



My “Signals and Society” series examines the interaction between technology and society as viewed through the lens of books, movies, and TV / streaming episodes. This episode recaps one of my favorite episodes of Black Mirror, “Nosedive”. In this episode, a woman’s pursuit of a higher “reputation score”, (which unlocks access to things like nicer apartments, express lanes, and more options when renting a car) backfires in a spectacular way. In the end, she ironically finds freedom in jail, after her phone is taken away from her.

Here are some questions to reflect on and/or discuss in a small group setting with friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc. Some of these are deep, philosophical questions that honest and intelligent people may disagree about. Most do not have a clear “right answer” because they are intended to encourage reflection and polite, civil debate.

Theme 1: Performance, Identity, and Emotional Masks

1. Why does Lacie practice her smile and laugh every morning, and what does that say about the incentives in her world?
2. What is the personal cost of constantly performing happiness for others?
3. How does wearing an emotional “mask” affect authenticity and mental health over time?

Theme 2: Incentives and Behavior Shaping

4. How does the rating system change *why* people are kind to one another?
5. Which behaviors are rewarded in Nosedive, and which are punished — regardless of intent?
6. How does the system discourage compassion for people who are grieving, sick, or inconvenient?

Theme 3: Bystanders, Compliance, and Moral Diffusion

7. At what moments do ordinary people participate in Lacie’s downfall without directly harming her themselves?
8. Why do people continue to down-rate Lacie even when she is clearly distressed?
9. How does the presence of a system or authority reduce individuals’ sense of moral responsibility?
10. In what ways does the system allow people to say, “I didn’t do this — the system did”?

Theme 4: Personal Reflection — “Not Me” Questions

11. Where in your own life do you modify your behavior, speech, or opinions to avoid social or professional penalties?
12. Have you ever withheld honesty, help, or kindness because it might hurt your reputation or standing?
13. If you lived in Nosedive’s world, which situations would most tempt you to comply rather than resist?

Theme 5: Authenticity vs. Advancement

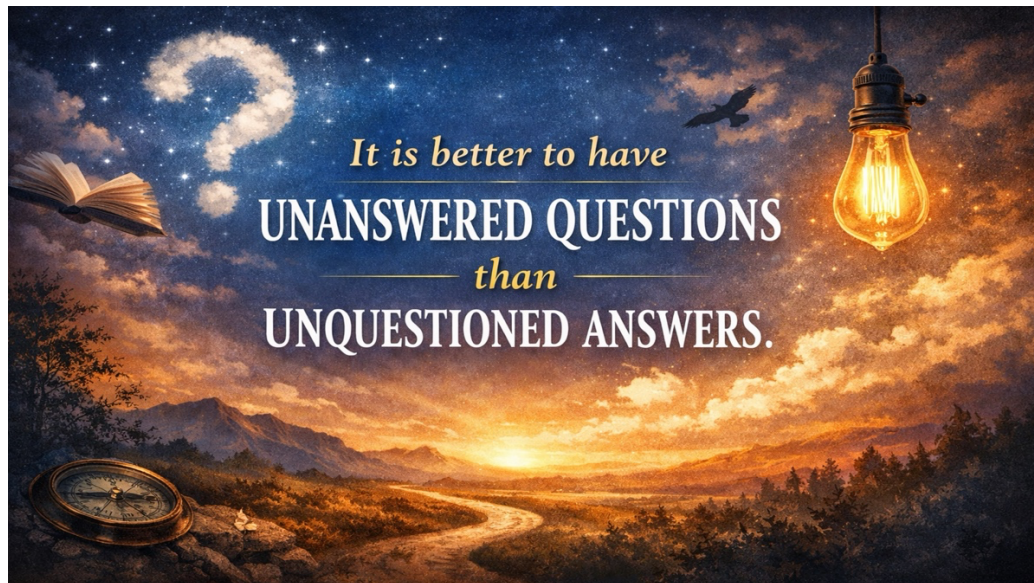
14. Why does Lacie’s brother accept a lower score, and what does he gain — and lose — by doing so?
15. What does Susan’s story reveal about how systems treat grief, illness, and human vulnerability?
16. Why does Susan appear more genuinely free with a low score than Lacie does with a higher one?

Theme 6: Technology, Surveillance, and Control

17. How does constant visibility change how people speak, act, and relate to one another?
18. Why are systems that claim to promote “trust” or “safety” so easily used to control behavior?

Theme 7: Freedom and Resistance

19. What changes for Lacie once her phone and contact lenses are taken away in jail?
20. Is it possible to design reputation or scoring systems that don’t corrupt human behavior — or is corruption inevitable?



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