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Mankind is Machine: A Monstrous Posthuman Reading of Philip K. Dick's Selected Works

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A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Literature and Language

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in English

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by

Gabriel Davis

May 2023

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Keywords: android, ai, posthuman, monster, machine, human, Philip K. Dick

## ABSTRACT

Mankind is Machine: A Monstrous Posthuman Reading of Philip K. Dick's Selected Works

by

Gabriel Davis

The works of Philip K. Dick act as an ideal template for readers to explore what it means to be human in a technologically dominated world. Dick's emphasis on the usage of androids and artificial intelligence as literary monsters allows for a posthuman reading of the traditional literary monster, notably in how their uncanny nature and behavior helps reveal the synthetic tendencies of humanity. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, "Imposter," and "I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon," each narrative incorporates artificial intelligence and androids acting as others to reveal the machine-like qualities of Dick's human characters. This approach ultimately reveals Dick's greater commentary on the nature of humanity's tendencies to fall into machinelike patterns and expectations within the historical world. By asking questions of what it means to be human through posthuman monsters, Dick challenges the traditional definition of what it means to be both human and alive.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Science-fiction literature acts as an ideal template for authors to explore what it means to be human in a technologically dominated world. This exploration becomes problematized upon the introduction of mechanical monsters such as androids and artificial intelligence. These monsters become especially uncanny when acting with humanistic behaviors. Something that appears almost human yet possesses a faint, uncanny distinction is enough to incite not only fear but also questions regarding the nature of what it means to be human. These posthuman monsters serve as discussion points for defining human characteristics in science-fiction literature, notably in the works of American fiction author Phillip K. Dick (1928-1982). Many of Dick's short stories and novels revolve around artificial beings that, in addition to serving as unnerving adversaries, bring questions of mortality to light, each of which are centered upon the very idea of what separates human from machine. This theme is prevalent in Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and his short stories "I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon" and "Imposter." In each, Dick uses technological monsters to argue that humanity lives in a machine-like state, unable to detach from the culturally induced directives of society. He achieves this through humanizing androids and artificial intelligence as well as by creating social cultures based in paranoia and class division. This approach ultimately not only reveals that man and its created machines are more alike than dissimilar but also challenges the traditional definition of what it means to be both human and alive.

Dick's fiction has always had a basis in exploring the human condition. Over the course of thirty-six novels and several story anthologies, the science-fiction writer shared his perspectives on "his distrust for government and authority, his life as a professional writer and even cosmic visions he is said to have experienced" ("Biography" 2). Given the nature of his

alternative mindset, his works naturally straddled the lines between reality and imagination as machines behaved like humans and humans like machines. Dick utilized this double-edged approach to not only catch the reader off guard with stories like “Imposter” but also showcase the machine-like tendencies of humanity in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Whether in the form of short story or novel, his literary themes were always “concerned about the vulnerability of the notion of reality” and how it “plays a central role in constructing one’s identity” (“Philip K. Dick” 5). The mode of perception is something that Dick would continue to play with throughout each of his works as often the reader would not realize the true nature of the narrator until the final few paragraphs of Dick’s stories.

The style of Dick’s writing is described as both sporadic and personally inspired. His approach involved “periods of intense creativity and dark times” where his work completely ceased. Nonetheless, his spontaneous bursts were always inspired by his philosophical interests and beliefs, namely that “this universe is not separate from God but merely His extension [sic]” (“Philip K. Dick” 5). Similar to the role of a creator, Dick gave the humanity in his novels the ability to create and construct lives of others. Think, for example, about the nature of building an android. Just as Dick believed the Universe to be an extension of a cosmic god, he also believed technological creations to be extensions of humanity and their identity. In this way, both synthetic and organic breathe life and authenticity into one another as each develops their own respective identity. Similarly, Dick brings his own identity into his works, especially in *Do Androids Dream* where the protagonist compulsively cares for an electric sheep. For Dick, this was no imagined quality as both Dick and his wife were “devoted to their sheep” whom they cared for at their home (Streitfeld 3). Whether speaking in character or as an author, Dick’s life steps into the pages while the lives of his stories’ characters step out.



For my studies into Dick's commentary on the nature of being human, my thesis is divided into three chapters. The first explores the context of both posthumanism and monster theory as they pertain to Dick's fiction. The second focuses on the chosen novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* In this particular chapter, I elaborate on not only relevant plot details but also the characterization and environment present within the novel as well as how that gives voice to Dick's thoughts and ideals regarding nature and machine. For the third chapter, my argument explores two of Dick's short stories, "Imposter" and "I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon," notably how each creates monstrosities out of the synthetic mind. Each chapter focuses on bringing out Dick's ideas in combination with my own as a reader of his work. With the synthesis of my ideas alongside other PKD enthusiasts, I aim to exemplify not only how Dick's characters are impacted by his philosophy of extension between humanity and machine but also how the historic definition of human comes to be problematized by the author's interpretations.

In Chapter 1 of *Mankind is Machine*, my thesis focuses on exploring monster theory and posthumanism's origins in addition to each's branching characteristics. The first of the two theories, monster theory, was coined in 1996 by Professor Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in his *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Cohen explains that "Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again" (5). For Dick, the "displacement" exists for readers because the monsters—androids and artificial intelligence—look and behave almost identical to humanity, thus making them (the monsters) ideal for an uncanny commentary to be made upon the nature of humanity resembling its machines. This uncanniness lends itself to a posthuman nature as these technological being

surpass the limitations of humanity—such as illness and frailty—and call into question the validity of their own “electric” dreams and lives.

Given that Dick’s monsters are beyond human, relevant criticism surrounding posthumanism serves as a key function in Dick’s work as the very nature of androids and AI are inherently beyond human. Their effectual superiority exists as a manner of “challeng[ing] the notion that humans are and always will be the only agents of the moral world” (“Ethics Explainer: Post-Humanism” 4). By existing as monstrous agents capable of imitating humanity while carving out lives of their own, technological beings dethrone the idea that only humans are capable of sovereignty and individuality. The very fact that Dick’s artificial beings can even be classified as monsters at all is because “monstrosity is only a failure of or catalyst to affirm the human” (MacCormack 522). With androids being undeniably posthuman in nature, their othered existence unveils the hidden artificialities of humanity through their attempts to escape a human dominated culture with the sole aim of escaping mechanized purpose and cultural expectation.

Like monster theory, posthumanism emerged in the criticism discourse community during the latter decades of the twentieth century. Ihab Hassan, a literary scholar and philosopher, first mentioned the term in 1977 while discussing “a perceived convergence between the ‘two cultures’ that had been separating science and imagination, technology and myth since the nineteenth century” (Jansen, Leeuwenkamp and Urricelqui 2). While cultural in theme, Hassan’s reflection interacts seamlessly with literature given its inherent duality of combining science with artistic expression — much like Dick’s humanlike androids and androidlike humans. The posthuman nature of Dick’s monsters allow for the problematizing of not only what it means to be alive but also what it means to be human. By combining

posthumanism with monster theory, analyzing the characters of Dick's stories reveals Dick's argument regarding humanity merely being extensions of its own creations.

As for Chapter 2, this section explores Dick's literary monsters present within *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* The novel focuses on a bounty hunter, specifically one who hunts androids (who are derogatorily referred to as "andys") and his evolving affinity toward them. In the novel's dystopian setting, androids are merely tools with consciousnesses, meaning they begin to find lives of their own while being denied the basic rights to pursue them. In addition to androids, intellectually challenged humans (due to leftover radiation) referred to as "specials" play a vital role in the class division present throughout the novel. Specials are often characterized in the same subhuman manner, creating an organic counterpart that shares similar treatment and ostracization. Scholar Sheryl Vint comments on this aspect by suggesting that "the treatment of androids within the novel comments on our historical and current exploitation of animals, and also our exploitation of those humans who have been animalized in discourse, such as women, the working classes, and non-whites, particularly slaves" (5). In this subhuman role, "specials" merely serve as a biologically alive version of the "monstrous" androids, though the similarity in the treatment of each demographic suggests that perhaps human and machine are not so different. In fact, the cultural viewpoint present within *Do Androids Dream* regarding one's sovereignty is not based in blood nor circuitry but rather groupthink and social standing.

The interactions between androids and humans in the novel are rooted in both posthuman and monster discussion, specifically on the redefining of the human condition. For example, main character Rick Deckard experiences uncanniness during his first meeting with android Rachael Rosen; "It, he thought. She keeps calling the owl it. Not her." (Dick 55). This leads to Deckard asking an additional question during the Voight-Empathy test (an interrogation

designed to determine whether or not someone is an android or human), ultimately determining she is an android. Surprisingly, the revelation is news to Racheal as well who believed she was, in fact, human, thus questioning the nature of her own clinging to a false life as if it were unfabricated and original. This type of dialogue from Deckard evolves later in the novel when he is conversing with the main antagonist, Roy Baty — an escaped android; “‘Okay you love her,’ Rick said. ‘And I loved Racheal. And the special loved the other Racheal’” (Dick 205-206). By this point in the novel’s plot, Deckard is now referring to androids by human pronouns, effectively placing himself on the same level as Dick’s “monsters.” Inland Norway University Scholar Tore Westre explains that “The verdict of who the monster is can be considered blurry since creating something so lifelike and conscious as an android, but then denying them the right to live and develop, instead, being enslaved by their creators” (11). By allowing Racheal to believe she is human only to have the news thrust upon her in an abrupt manner ignites questions of ethics and morality, especially regarding the android’s “brief sexual encounter with Rachel” who questions Deckard’s “cling[ing] to the ideals of a lost world” (Jones 6-7). Ultimately, the human-android relationships present within *Do Androids Dream* showcase the ways in which Dick problematizes the traditional human condition, especially with regard to the reader empathizing with what is supposed to be nothing more than an imitation of the living.

Moving on from Dick’s novel, chapter 3 will cover two of Dick’s short stories: “Imposter,” and “I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon.” Each narrative directly deals with artificial intelligence and/or androids serving in a sovereign role, one that threatens humanity’s traditionally superior position. For “Imposter,” the plot is centered on Spence Olham, a weapon designer who is believed to be an android. His interactions with others carry a heavy theme of hysteria, especially when Olham discovers that he is, in fact, an android. For “I Hope I Shall

Arrive Soon,” Dick constructs a reality where cryosleep is possible, albeit imperfect. Protagonist Victor Kemmings awakens during a failed attempt at temporary freezing for a ten-year trip through Space, prompting an AI to simulate a new reality for Kemmings to retain his sanity. This circumstance leads to a questioning of reality from the human perspective when the organic is simulated from synthetic, only this time the traditional role of monster is reimagined to be one’s own mind. In each short story, the main characters are mouthpieces for Dick’s commentaries on the nature of free will and sensibility. Author Howard Canaan elaborates on Dick’s short story characters, specifically in how they strive “to preserve their humanistic values in the face of a threatening outside world” (6). In response to this “threatening outside world,” reality comes to be individually defined, one that varies based on the technological relationship present within the respective narratives.

Following chapter 3, the conclusion is focused on not only revisiting the key themes and purposes present from within Dick’s writing but also assumes an interrogative stance on where the posthuman/monster discussion is heading with respect to the historical world. An imitation of Dick currently resides as an android with Hansen Robotics, one that has an uncanny effect on his daughter, Isa. She explains that “[The android] looked very much like my dad . . . When my name was mentioned it launched into a long rant about my mother . . . It was not pleasant” (Bosch 15). Like the characters of Dick’s writings, Isa now shares a similar experience in facing the disturbingly resemblant imitation of something living. Additionally, questions of AI agency in the historical world, particularly with reference to AI copyright laws with machine-created writing (Recker 1) are now common topics of discussion, something Dick would find unsurprising and, perhaps even, exciting. These new developments, alongside the revisitation of the themes present within Dick’s writing, will attempt to answer the question of what it means to

be human in Dick's literary universes. As the historical world continues to move toward an increasingly technological framework, so too will the literature produced from it as speculative stories, like posthuman monsters, become extensions of their creators.

## CHAPTER 2. POSTHUMAN MONSTERS AND THE THEORY BEHIND THEM

*It is an astonishing power: that of creating whole universes, universes of the mind. I ought to know. I do the same thing. —Philip K. Dick, 1978*

Philip K. Dick created several different worlds where technology became both a catalyst for social development and society's ultimate downfall. Androids roamed Dick's literary streets seeking out lives to call their own. All the while, artificial intelligence became an omnipotent figure only falling short at attempting to recreate the human experience. These thematic downfalls of humanity serve as the base for what Dick's argument constituted against humanity; "Machines are becoming more human, so to speak – at least in the sense that, as Wiener indicated, some meaningful comparison exists between human and mechanical behavior" (Dick, "The Android and the Human" 2). Dick's "meaningful comparison" places a spotlight on the supposed individuality and autonomy of the human, a creature driven by desire and emotion that are both fulfilled by completing a series of tasks. Replace desire with directive and emotion with purpose, and the lines between organic and synthetic become blurred, almost to the point of zero visibility where neither machine nor man are distinguishable from one another on paper. This extension of the definition of being human, of truly being, is what sits at the root of posthumanism—a theoretical lens based in pushing the defining limits of the human experience, and then taking another step even further. By using monsters such as androids and AI, Dick delved into what would later come to be known as monster theory, an ideology that situated monsters not as a mere antagonist but a commentary on the author's larger world. In synthesizing the two theoretical frameworks with a focus on Dick's work, readers begin to see that androids and AI are merely constructs that look "into what we ourselves are up to" (Dick, "The Android and the Human" 2), ultimately arguing that humanity and its creations are mere extensions of one another, each tied to a mechanical state of purpose.

Posthumanism is an idea intrinsically related with the science-fiction genre. Given that the concept is based in exploring the limitations of what it means to be human, it is only logical that themes related to mortality and technology would serve as springboards for posthumanists to begin dissecting the role of humanity in a technological world. More specifically, the theoretical lens explores exactly what allows humans to remain in a position of power within its surrounding environment (as well as what limits it.) These limitations are easily created with the addition of technological antagonists and literary monsters such as androids and artificial intelligence, thus setting the stage for monster theory to arrive within the posthuman discussion.

Monster theory centers itself on exploring the themes and roles monsters portray in their respective literary stories. Monsters are signifiers to a greater idea, perhaps even a fear, that exists within the culture of the reader's world. For monsters like androids, they signify a greater fear of technological dominance over humanity. This dominance then consequently comments on the limitations of human mortality and sovereignty in a world that decentralizes human superiority, effectively positioning itself back toward posthumanism. When a reader begins placing the two theories side-by-side, this combination allows the technological vein of posthumanism to seep into the long-since used trope of androids and artificial intelligence in monster theory, ultimately showing that both are not just related by chronology but also in theme and argument.

### *A Posthuman Look at Defining Human*

Technology has always been a point of spectacle, especially in twentieth-century media. The films in the 1990s were especially exploratory in themes of great robotic beings where some mechanical/alien existence began usurping humanity from its throne of dominance. Think of *The Matrix* (1999) where the Wachowski siblings directed a world in which life was industrialized



and artificial. Or, perhaps, consider *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991), a continuation of a series where an artificial intelligence creates rogue android-like beings to hunt down humanity. In both cases, technology becomes the other, beings hellbent on humanity's destruction. The same is true for novels, especially Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* *Do Androids Dream* challenges "our conceptions of the real" as "reality and fantasy are intertwined" through Dick's created culture of Mercerism (symbolic or religion) and synthetic beings (Selvi 14). Like Dick's other works, his novel explores the identity of mechanical beings and the cultural role they play, not much unlike other contemporaries such as Isaac Asimov with his *I, Robot* (1950). Regardless of medium, technology became its own character in the stories written in the twentieth century, often invoking questions of morality and sovereignty when positioned alongside the human experience. These interpretations of technology—as well as their reaching effects—drive posthumanism into the limelight as machines become a larger part of everyday life.

The history of posthuman ideas is both expansive and complicated. Posthumanism has long been an ideal explored in various literary texts. Even William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1601) contains traces of the extension to human life—quite literally—as mortality is questioned through the character of a haunting ghost. The actual literary theory, however, sprouts its roots in a much more contemporary period of criticism. Posthumanism emerged in the 1990s, acting as a response to the Renaissance idea of humanism. Humanism focused on splitting away from the sense of destiny, the belief that all of life was predetermined by a divine sense of being. Instead, humanists placed emphasis on "a rejection of scholasticism" and "the individual and their moral autonomy" (Cartwright 5). Put in simpler terms, both tradition and dogma that had long since ruled social custom became forces to rebel against by scholars and other philosophers. At the

core of each humanist writing was the idea that man was capable of greatness without interference from divinity and dogmatic tradition. Eventually, however, this ideology was further complicated several centuries later as human centrism began to clash with technological dependence, thus problematizing the idea of placing “humans at the centre of the moral world” (Cartwright 3). MacCormack summarizes the nature of both humanism and posthumanism; “Where humanism has sought to empirically and philosophically reduce the concept of being to a transcendental essence, so posthumanism seeks to open out the field of study of its “object” as an infinite refolding and metamorphic mobilization of its subject and thus its nature of enquiry” (524). Not only is posthumanism a response to the humanistic tendency to focus on the spiritual self, but rather it is a rebranding of humanization as self-introspective techniques are applied to nonhuman beings. By humanizing a posthuman monster such as an android, humanity is not only able to still reflect introspectively but do so with an uncannily human-like figure that embodies artificiality.

Posthumanism emerged in popularity to not only challenge the nature of the ontological self but also to describe the evolving identity of humanity in the historical world. At many points in history, “human” has not meant “humanity.” This can be seen especially during times where “slaves, native populations, and women were historically excluded from the category of what” philosopher Rosi Braidotti calls “fully human” (Theresa 5). This definition of fully human rests upon the access to rights each demographic possessed, or more accurately did not possess. This type of exclusion led to the humanism movement becoming tainted with stereotypes and highbrow standards for those who wished to engage and follow within it; essentially, the movement came encumbered “with the baggage of Western supremacy, patriarchy, and oppression” (Theresa 5). By attempting to move away from this segregationist ideology, post-

humanists began to seek a theory in which these barriers are broken and identities become collective, at least in terms of the human species accepting that we “are essentially animals” and are merely “part of nature” as opposed to being rulers of such (Theresa 7). At the core of posthumanism is an obsession with identity, and not only with identity but with having the freedom to find and embrace that identity among billions of others. It is not so much as determining what it means to be human as much as it is what it means to be human in a singular part of a larger, vast, collective system of beings.

Posthumanism does not limit itself to the collection of merely organic beings. Instead, it takes even further steps by including nonorganic existence in this collective relationship of existence such as everyday technology. Another reason that posthumanism became especially popular during the 1990s, aside from emerging pushbacks against traditional social identity, was due to the growing spectacle of technological advancement. Computers of all kinds such as desktops and laptops were emerging with the capabilities to “[allow] untrained users to click and browse from website to website” (Gweirtz 4). Of course, the World Wide Web is a feat of its own, providing knowledge and interaction across a large part of the world. However, the ability for such a resource to be used by an everyday person is what allowed its popularity to surge. Even cellphones began gaining popularity as the first SMS text message was sent on “December 3, 1992 [when] engineer Neil Papworth sent a message to Richard Jarvis’ Vodafone Orbitel 901 handset” (Gweirtz 9). Again, the spectacle is not in the creation of the cellphone, though that is certainly a technological marvel. The true accomplishment is the sheer accessibility to the average person. This accessibility meant that technology would come to be an easily integrated part of everyday life. Of course, we have progressed far beyond the 20<sup>th</sup> century with technological advancement. We have taken steps into the creation of the Dickian android, save

for the inability to discern between human and machine. Yet even so, the 1990s were a time where—aside from transportation and electricity—technology was taking its first steps into becoming engrained with our existence in a portable, self-contained mode, thus establishing its own role within our environmental existence as a sort of proto-species.

Technology’s development into an identity of its own is merely a matter of consequence from its fusion into everyday tasks. However, this identity is further established when considering machines past that of handheld devices. Juxtapose the cellphone and desktop with the emerging technologies today such as artificial intelligence and androids, and one will begin to see the transitioning steps from technological tool to up-and-coming technological identity. Take, for instance, an excerpt from the article titled “Artificial Intelligence: 3 Trends to watch in 2023” by Yishay Carmiel:

AI [Artificial intelligence] is becoming a fundamental differentiator for business. If you can’t find deeper insights in data, quickly and at scale, your competitors will. There is far less supply than demand, and top engineering and data science talent will remain extremely expensive. As a result, more AI consultants and greater availability of low- and no-code features will become differentiators. This democratization of AI will help simplify the adoption of these technologies in all vertical markets by those with varying levels of experience. (4)

The language used in this article speaks on the role of AI in business. Yishay calls artificial intelligence “a fundamental differentiator,” a basic, essential tool for mitigating data in an effective, efficient manner. Yishay goes so far as to suggest that should one not employ the usage of AI democratization, one’s competitors inevitably will, leading to an implication of a severe disadvantage. Now, one need not understand the lingo or business model usage of an AI to

recognize that humanity is in the midst of employing artificial intelligence in its day-to-day operations. Posthumanism would call this role of technology an identity or perhaps suggest that humanity has no more dominion over the AI than the AI does over humanity. Regardless of the hierarchy, business—a vital component of human society and progression has come to rely on artificial intelligence as a mediator of observation and implementation of trends and other patterns. There is a “trust” of sorts being built between mankind and machine that only furthers the relationship in which both humanity and technology begin to coexist past the point of spectacle, deeper to the point where the relationship begins to resemble the symbiotic inner workings of two different species—one where humanity’s goals are achieved and technology begins anticipating needs without human prompt, establishing its own sovereign input.

Artificial intelligence does not limit itself to economics and financial trends. Place the technological “brain” of an AI into a humanoid body of its own, and the result is an uncanny being that behaves with its own thoughts and interpretations. There already exists such a being. Going by the name of Sophia, the Hanson-Robotics-designed android was created in 2016 with the goal of “gain[ing] acceptance in the public sphere” (“Should Robots be Citizens?” 2). This ambitious goal of finding acceptance in a world where difference has long since been fought over has proved to be surprisingly effective. Merely a year after her creation, Sophia was granted full citizenship in Saudi Arabia, enabling her to receive her own passport and, in a confusing case, rights. In fact, Sophia has even become “the first non-human to own a credit card” (“Should Robots be Citizens?” 5). There are several other factors regarding the increasingly sovereign existence of Sophia; however, the focal point of her being is that she does, in fact, have an existence of her own. These characteristics are shared with Dick’s own created androids.

Like the androids within *Do Androids Dream*, does Sophia have a life of her own, and if so, what does this mean for humanity and its role in its environment? The answer to this question is not so simple as reading various pieces of science fiction in search of an answer. Rather, it is a discussion that is only beginning in the historical world, though it is one that has already long existed in literature and media.

Per usual, not everyone interprets nor experiences this unification of synthetic and organic the same. One of the leading voices of the posthuman discussion and chief engineers of Google, Ray Kurzweil, lends his stance on post-humanist ideals to the belief that “human beings will be radically altered by implants, bio-hacking, cognitive enhancement and other bio-medical technology,” eventually leading us to “‘evolve’ into a species that is completely unrecognisable” when compared with ourselves presently (“Ethics Explainer: Post-Humanism” 5). Hearing an ideology such as Kurzweil’s allows one to find it easily understandable why an author’s work like Dick’s took the stances it did with its themes—most of which involved the apocalyptic downfall of humanity in a war against technology. Of course, not all leading voices of the posthuman movement fall into such a dreary and dark outlook on humanity’s future. On the opposing side, Donna Haraway—a philosopher—suggests that the interweaving of technologic fabrics with organic will lead to our species “being interconnected rather than separate from nonhuman beings” (“Ethics Explainer: Post-Humanism”). The “non-human beings” Haraway is referring to is anything that exists already in the pre-established world that is not inherently human. This includes other species and even inorganic counterparts such as AI. In essence, her argument is that human identity is a construct of its own, much like gender or other identifying and oppositional traits, and that by merging parts of ourselves with technology, we are taking steps toward breaking down self-imposed barriers. Even though Haraway’s viewpoint is a

polarizing one when juxtaposed with Kurzweil, trace elements can still be seen in Dick's work as technology begins to exhibit humanistic traits, most often self-preservation. This shared behavior does not act so much as a unification of species but rather attempts to bridge an understanding for the desire to live—so to speak—freely and independent of others' influence, an idea, perhaps even arguable the main theme, present within Dick's writing.

All of this discussion of posthumanism and technology is merely a result of the reactions to works from authors like Dick. Dick vehemently believed in a world where lines between machines and mankind were becoming further blurred. He described this process as “a gradual merging of the general nature of human activity and function into the activity and function of what we humans have built and surrounded ourselves with” (Dick, “The Android and the Human” 2). Dick did not believe that humans and machines would become the same thing, but rather they had already been the same thing, mere imitators of their respective environments. Humanity finds a need to “animate its environment,” thus gaining the ability to “view [its] surroundings as pulsing with a purpose, a life, which is actually within himself” (Dick, “The Android and the Human” 1). All the while, machines perform the same action, finding purpose within their given environments whether that be from input commands or from machine learning, a process where AI adapts to changing circumstances just as a human might. This exact concept is what drives all of Dick's work with machine beings in his short stories and novels. He injects the instinct of survival, the fear of mimicry, and the uncannily human emotion of despair into the workings of machines, thus problematizing the barrier of separation between the identities of organic and synthetic. It is then that these same machines become monstrous representations of what the human condition and its colonizing effects are on the environment, eventually exiting one posthuman discussion and entering another.

*Cohen's Monster Theory and the Human Nature of Dick's Machines*

Like technology, monsters have served as a point of spectacle dating back several thousand years. Both ancient Greeks and Egyptians believed in tales of the legendary sphinx, a mythological being that “guarded the city of Thebes by famously asking a riddle” (Warner 32) meant to measure wit and intelligence. The monsters of today create similar challenges such as those present within the recently popular *The Witcher* (2019) series inspired by Andrzej Sapkowski’s novels where monstrosities are born of curses which can only be rid of by solving similarly themed riddles. In both instances, humanity is challenged and is forced to call into question their own abilities. This same theme continues as monsters, alongside their human created literary worlds, evolve into more modern representations of life and its challenges. This evolution is what gave birth to androids and artificial intelligence, allowing them to quickly become recurring tropes that explore different facets of what it means to be alive. As monsters, these machines problematize the ontological boundaries between the human and nonhuman, notably in the “qualities that compel the paradigms by which things are perceived to be able to be known” (MacCormack 524). Thy synthesis of an emerging technological sovereignty with humanity’s freewill provides notions of doubt in one’s own self and motives just as one might doubt the rationales of a rouge machine fighting for self-preservation in works like Dick’s. These questions of mortality consequently lead into evaluating the role that the monster serves in facilitating such a discussion, ultimately becoming a theoretical lens of its own.

Monster theory, like posthumanism, is a relatively new literary theory that is being retroactively applied to previous novels like Dick’s. Beginning in the same decade of the 1990s, monster theory was first coined by medieval studies professor Jeffrey Jerome Cohen who laid out his prognosis for monster usage in his *Monster Theory* (1992), notably in his “Monster



Theory (Seven Theses)” where he proposed “a sketch of a new *modus legendi* [Cohen’s italics],” or, a new reading mode with which to approach cultural usages of the literary monster (Cohen, *Monster Theory* 3). Cohen’s theory focuses on not only what characteristics must be present to create a monster but also what societal perspectives must be present within the text to allow for such a monster to exist. This extends past the allowance of magic and other unworldly laws of nature to create goblins and trolls. Rather, society must be “at the Gates of Difference,” segregated by belief and individuality through “the exaggeration of cultural difference” (Cohen 7). Cohen’s gates of difference symbolize a cultural intersection where ethics and beliefs clash. For a monster to emerge, there must be a viewpoint to ostracize and oust. This lends to the genres of science-fiction and fantasy becoming favored choices to explore such ideals as their dystopian settings are frequent traits of both. This same quality is what provides the goldmine that is retroactive application when considering the works of someone like Dick who was inherently fascinated by not only the nature of the machine but also by the humanization of our environment.

Investigations into monsters and the roles they play may be new theory, though the concept has existed previously. French philosopher Michel Foucault had long since suggested “that the idea of the monster operates as a kind of master category for understanding contemporary forms of exclusion, erasure, surveillance and control” (Sharpe 2). Similar to a reverse setup of English philosopher Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon, a monster becomes the central position, except rather than watching everyone around him, he instead is being observed by the entirety of his surroundings. This naturally leads to a sense of isolation and ousting from the monster and his environment. Foucault’s mention of exclusion problematizes the sense of control that not only individuals have over themselves but also on the “others” around them. This

ideology of isolation blends with Cohen's theses as he makes note of how monsters "[refuse] to participate in the classificatory 'order of things'" (Cohen 6), thus preventing them from entering into a middle ground with human counterparts. Applying this framework to androids and AI, we can further argue that technological monsters such as these are not merely refusing to participate, they are actively denied the opportunity to interact with traditional order, just as Foucault pointed out with his emphasis on exclusion. The response to such denial leads to a reveal of an emerging similarity between monster and man as both naturally seek to be contained within order, even when serving as agents of chaos.

The shared traits between monsters and humanity lead to several different points, the first being that the historical world is already made up of monstrosities. Cohen begins his theses with an insightful observation:

We live in a time of monsters. Channel-surf for a moment. Britain's Channel Four reports a new menace of the technological to be practiced against the organic: Russia has developed a terrorist's dream weapon, a nuclear bomb the size of a baseball that utilizes a mysterious compound called red mercury to "destroy human life but leave buildings and machinery intact." This explosive device contributes to the widespread fear that the synthetic and mechanistic is destined to eradicate its own creators—an anxiety that could be labeled Frankenstein's monster syndrome. Dr. Sam Cohen, the inventor of the neutron bomb, declares, "I find the entire business terrifying." (*Monster Theory* vii)

The very first line, "We live in a time of monsters," is especially striking because of its merging the fictional perspective of monstrosity with the historical world. In essence, Cohen (the author, not the creator of the neutron bomb) removes the boundary between author and work, allowing fear to transcend the boundaries of the page, ultimately showing that each inclusion of any

monstrous element can be traced to a real-world occurrence. This is not to say that one should read monsters as one-to-one comparisons of life tied to specific occurrences but to instead “[read] monsters from the culture they engender” (Cohen, *Monster Theory* 3). A monster and its traits are ones bred of cultural ideals. With this respect to an ethnocentric approach, monsters become a cultural critique—a commentary on something that lies beyond the story and in some real element of the historical world, thus justifying the role of outside agent that monsters must remain.

Monsters are inherently othered, alien beings that are incapable of fitting into standard society as their mere existence is viewed as a horrific blight. One might think back to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) where the narrative was a story of violence and fear over Frankenstein, the created monster that merely wanted to just be allowed to live his own life. Dick’s androids are no different in motive and treatment. A group of escaped androids seek their freedom in *Do Androids Dream* yet are hunted because of it. The motive behind the hunting is a topic to be explored in more depth later, however the current relevance is that a mere want for something that is seen as inherently human alongside their (the androids’) refusal toward subservience is enough to sign their death warrant. Their behavior, their desire to be free isolates them from humanity and the rest of the world as a group of machines designed to serve and fulfill a given purpose. This othering leads to their ultimate conflict, a struggle for sovereignty as they approach “this metaphoric crossroads” of converging identities between man and monster (Cohen 4). The interaction between these modes of existence only further contribute to alienation and isolation. Only on rare occasion are characters able to break out of this systemic mentality to find some common ground. Even if they do, there is still some leftover sense of longing rather than any concrete answer.

Monsters establish the boundaries of what is allowed within their respective novelistic worlds. Cohen explains this managerial role as “stand[ing] as a warning against exploration of its uncertain demesnes” that ultimately “declare[s] that curiosity is more often punished than rewarded, that one is better off safely contained within one’s own domestic sphere than abroad, away from the watchful eyes of the state” (Cohen 12). If we are to agree with Cohen’s earlier association that monsters are merely cultural windows into “a time, a feeling, and a place” where it embodies “fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy,” then this punishment issued by a monster’s existence upon the curious is a representation of the retaliation that arises when stepping into waters unknown (Cohen 4). In a less metaphorical sense, monsters as others represent the limits to what can be explored within the individual level, especially when juxtaposing one’s own beliefs against that of their society’s.

The appearance of a monster plays a crucial role in determining what type of commentary it can facilitate. A monster like an android allows humanity a mirror where one can look past the point of monstrous appearance into something that looks alike, albeit uncanny, and begin to analyze the behavior. Essentially, an android’s appearance reveals “something hidden inside the home that was never meant to come to light” (Malewitz 6). Resultingly, what is brought to the light are questions of the very criteria that would qualify an android as a monster. Is an android inherently a monster because it is created, or because it desires? When this desire is to have what humanity has—freedom—why then is it inhumane and problematic to provide that to them? The same can be asked for artificial intelligence with the focus on containment and replication of humanistic qualities. An AI seeking to control life as a means of self-preservation consequently calls into question the ethics of what actions are justifiable when survival is threatened. Of course, this all is contingent upon first accepting that these technological monsters are even alive,

or at least have lives of their own. This is exactly what Dick does within his own works. He allows “the reader an opportunity to explore anxieties and concerns through the safety of fiction” where preconceptions are challenged about living (Christie 6). One of the main preconceptions explored in *Do Androids Dream* is revealed within the title. By asking whether or not androids dream of electric sheep, Dick is implying that not only *Do Androids Dream* but also that their dreams would be inherently related to their own experience, thus yoking the mind of the reader to the mind of a machine. The result is an established rapport that reveals the similarities that can, and do, exist between Dick’s technological monsters and his audience.

Posthumanism allows for Dick’s work to be viewed in a compromising light on the fragile definition of the experience we call living. The question of what it means to be alive boils down to more than just a matter of biological makeup; it is a matter of questioning purpose and relevancy to a world where identity is all that one truly can possess. Couple this with Cohen’s monster theory, and the discussion broadens to suggest that posthuman monsters seek to convey more than just fear, rather they exist to question humanity’s own docile habits and subservience within the world we reside in. For Dick, these theoretical lenses are engulfed in the stories he tells as he inevitably clashes organic against synthetic. Whether reading Cohen or Foucault, both theorists—along with the rest of their literary counterparts—all seek to better understand not only our identity but the identity of the world we both create and exist in as well. Thus, Dick’s short stories and novel give voice to the posthuman existence of technological monsters.

### CHAPTER 3. DOES DECKARD DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is one of Philip K. Dick's best-known works. Its themes of diminishing human identity amongst a technological revolution provide a doorway into exploring what the condition of human living is really like, specifically through its portrayal of androids as monsters. Released in 1968, *Do Androids Dream* arose in a time of paranoia and uncertainty as the United States was in the midst of the Cold War and anti-communist propaganda. Alongside the growing culture of suspicion was the continued and sustained rise of technological innovation. NASA was on its way to the Moon and the first industrial robot named Unimate was put out into the work force by General Motors in 1961 ("Unimate" 1). With humanity breaching the frontier of Space and robots entering into the workforce, Dick had little trouble in creating a plausible world with technology as both its initial upbringing and ultimate downfall.

*Do Androids Dream* scatters its themes of defining alive and the human condition throughout each of its chapters. The plot places androids in an adversarial role against humanity, though Dick's arguments focus on the characters and their interactions with one another and the environment. The social culture present within is one based heavily in "anthropocentric values constructed in such a way as to belittle and disempower human and nonhuman others" (Vinci 3). These values come via capitalistic ideals of communal standing by class. Most of the upper-class citizens have already long since emigrated from Earth to Mars where a United States colony awaits them to fulfill their dreams. The only wealthy groups that have stayed behind are those working directly with android manufacturing. All the while, the poor have been left behind on Earth to continue remaining in poverty while serving in undesirable jobs with no real tangible hope of climbing out of their societally induced social caste.

In addition to vocation, social standing is based on one's ability to both acquire and take care of a biological animal. These pets are becoming rarer by the day, however. Due to the newfound scarcity of animals, artificial replacements are discreetly sold and purchased as a method of allowing others to live under the guise that they are no different than their neighbors. These social castes are only further complicated when androids, machines designed to serve humanity and propel astro-colonization, begin escaping from their job sites and seeking out lives of their own while protecting their own kind, ultimately becoming the monsters of society. The emerging empathy of these escaped androids is ultimately what causes the novel's main character—Rick Deckard—to begin his own introspective analysis of empathy and quality of life. This eventual posthuman self-actualization extends to all of Dick's characters as the presence of androids begins to erode humanity's role as the central agent of their world, ultimately calling into question the definition of human. Instead of creating a setting "in which clean distinctions can be made between human and nonhuman, [*Do Androids Dream*] explore[s] unavoidable entanglements between human and nonhuman and among self, other, and world" (Rhee 313). These entanglements of usurpation and emergence of problematic identity serve as the backbone for the commentary into Dick's ideals on what constituted not only being alive but also being both authentic and free in a world dominated by artificiality.

#### *A Culture of Isolation and Machines*

*Do Androids Dream* is set in San Francisco after the events of a massive war referred to only as World War Terminus. The aftermath of the conflict amongst humanity has left Earth in a devastated state. The remaining landscape is one dominated by "omnipresent dust" that overwhelms the "morning air, spilling over with radioactive motes, gray and sun-beclouding"

(Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 7). The “omnipresent” dust not only colonizes the world around it, it also has managed to infect the people left behind on Earth by inhibiting cognitive functions and self-sustaining abilities. Aside from the negative health implications of the toxic air, the land is barren with only thousands of people remaining upon Earth. Most have emigrated to the human colonies on Mars by this point, choosing to start anew as opposed to repairing the planet humanity once called its sole home. Now, “virtually abandoned suburbs” on Earth house “occasional peculiar entities” while most people are “constellated in urban areas where they could physically see one another, [and] take heart at their mutual presence” (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 16). The emptiness becomes a character of its own as “the vacant apartments converge upon [the characters’] awareness and perception to the point that they crowd out other thoughts” (Cloyd 6). Both dust and vacant space serve as cornerstones for the entirety of the novel’s setting, whether a chapter be centered on the desert or buried within the metropolis of the leftover city of San Francisco. If not already clear, isolation is a vital component in the Earth that Dick has created. In fact, the only real dominant presence in the world is the dust as it colonizes the desolate landscape that makes up *Do Androids Dream*.

Imagine Earth, in the midst of dust and drab skies, with only thousands of people living on it as opposed to the 8 billion currently. Human connection would inevitably become a rare feat, a delicacy celebrated in a world where only hope for renewal may yet emerge. That is the climate of *Do Androids Dream*. Yet even so, segregation and classism remain a theme embedded within the social culture. Aside from the desolation that the dust brings, the radioactive fallout leads to several healthy persons devolving into what are considered to be “specials,” people bearing distorted genes and impaired mental faculties like the novel’s supporting character John Isidore. These specials, or “chickenheads,” in local colloquial terms, are segregated from the rest



of the remaining “regulars”—those that still fit into the traditional definition of human. Though, they serve a specific purpose in Dick’s story. Specials serve as the forefront of empathy, a reminder of “what it was like to be a human before World War Terminus” (Moy 1). Typically, specials are “simpler” humans, for lack of better terms. This is not to say that are incapable of extensive thought or depth. In fact, they are quite the opposite. Instead, specials are able to look past the desolation and misery of their destroyed world with hopes of kindling companionship with the others around them, allowing them “to be vulnerable to the pain of non-human others, challenging the strictures of the essentialized human” (Vinci 15). Their focus is on celebrating difference and diversity in both the living and nonliving. Perhaps, this is because of their treatment as lesser-than beings. Living in a state of constant discrimination, specials are able to empathize with other trapped persons, ones cut off from society. Even if specials make up only a small percentage of the remaining population, they serve as outliers that shed light on the slowly dying components of humanity, components that empathize with monstrous androids and their bids for freedom, going so far as to even risk their own by associating themselves with the escapees.

As for the regulars, life is relatively normal, or at least as normal as can be in a postapocalyptic setting. Traditional jobs still exist like the San Francisco Police Department and the occasional restaurant. Tenants and landlords are still relevant to suburban areas where the mass of remaining life congregates. However, the primary focus of labor is on android production, especially with the Rosen Association. The Rosen Association is a continually recurring entity in the novel as by the beginning of the story they have recently developed “The Nexus-6 brain unit” which “is capable of selecting within a field of two trillion constituents, or ten million separate neural pathways” (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 27). The specifics of the

science are not so much relevant as the implication of androids becoming faster and smarter, quickly catching up to human levels of performance. Couple this with androids escaping to Earth from their assigned colonies on Mars, and a sense of paranoia begins to seep into society right alongside the dust. The solution to this problem of escaped property is to send bounty hunters after them to “retire” the androids. In fact, this is the profession of the novel’s protagonist, Deckard. In essence, society is still human, at least human enough, though the nature of what economy and vocation has become focused on has shifted to a more technological perspective.

While vocation plays an important role in determining one’s social standing, there is an increased level of attention to owning and caring for an animal. Animals that were once common have all become endangered, so much so in fact that there now exists “Sidney’s Animal & Fowl Catalogue” which serves as the Kelley Blue Book for determining prices and values of discovered living animals. Because of this, humanity is now not only divided into “specials” and “regulars” but also into furthered social classes based on one’s ability to find and care for a living animal. Animals merely “exist as commodities rather than as beings for the humans in this world” largely in part for “economic status” (Vint 116). The caring of for an animal is seen as empathetic and necessary to being human. In fact, the novel even makes mention of not caring for an animal once having been a crime “right after W.W.T.” (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 13). The reasoning behind this was to create some sense of upstanding morality, a sense of greater being to cover up the self-induced downfalls of humanity via the war. While the lack of caring for an animal was no longer illegal, the stigma behind not doing so remains. Even Deckard cares for an electronic sheep, one that replaced the biological one who died due to tetanus. The organic sheep was replaced with an artificial one due to the difficulty in acquiring another living animal. Just as Vint pointed out, we see animals existing as commodities, rare items to be purchased and

put on display. When one can neither afford nor find a living animal to care for, artificial replacements are the recommended—and often necessitated—alternative to avoid social alienation and condemnation. It is because of this commercial and social focus that animals take on a duality of representation in both empathy and in economy.

Similar to animals, androids find themselves in a position of being subject to being distinguished as property. Part of the incentive for those healthy enough to emigrate to Mars is the promise of a “servant you can depend on,” an android that caters to a colonizer’s needs and wants. In fact, during an interview being broadcast on television, emigrant Mrs. Klugman who has recently arrived to New New York (not a typo) on Mars explains how she “find[s] it reassuring” to have a dependable servant (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 18). The focus is not on the potential companionship of an android on a foreign, once-barren planet. The significance is instead placed on the ability to serve as a means of reassurance and comfort. Through this apathetic culture, the humanity present within Dick’s novel has “become what they most fear and despise: “androids” incapable of feeling for or with others” (Vinci 3). Mrs. Klugman’s interview speaks to the reasoning behind several androids’ escape attempts, notably the novel’s antagonist Roy Baty and his band of other escapees: Pris Stratton, Irmgard (Roy’s wife), and others who were killed prior to or early on within the novel’s timeline. Rather than serve as property on Mars, androids escape to Earth in hopes of finding a solace.

While being viewed as little more than property, androids still play into the social hierarchy that makes up *Do Androids Dream*. The androids in the novel are referred to as “Andys,” an act that seeks to casually dehumanize a humanist interpretation of the beings. Such treatment only furthers their existence as a “wronged lower class and as [an] inhuman menace” (Rhee 316). The androids within *Do Androids Dream* are said to possess distinct qualities that

allow them to be identified and differentiated from actual humans. To distinguish between man and machine, androids are given what is called a Voigt Empathy Test. The test is designed to identify empathetic reactions to what would be considered emotional situations such as animals in distress. The earlier models of androids known as T-14's are unable to imitate natural empathy which causes their apathetic nature to be revealed during the test; however, the newer models such as the Nexus-6's prove to be more of a challenge. While still detectable during the empathy test, their ability to replicate emotions is much stronger, causing them to be almost indistinguishable in appearance and behavior to the human eye. This characteristic is coupled with "the new Nexus-6 brain [which has] from a sort of rough, pragmatic, no-nonsense standpoint evolved beyond a major — but inferior — segment of mankind" causing these servants to "become more adroit than its master" (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 29). By being able to emit the humanistic quality of emotion while retaining superior machine intelligence, the nature of the android begins to supersede the evolutionary hierarchical position that humanity has.

It is already clear by this point that there is class division amongst the humans and especially with the androids. This is present "from the opening pages [and is] shown to be constructed rather than natural" by the culture of society present within the novel (Vint 115). Androids are created by the Rosen Association to look and behave like humans, yet their sole purpose is in serving as "free labour" for "a colonization effort" to escape from a wasteland filled with those "too poor to emigrate" (Vint 111). One may then reasonably ask why even bother creating a mechanical humanoid; what is the reason in potentially inciting empathy from a familiar, yet sometimes uncanny face? Deckard asks a version of this question to Eldon Rosen, the leading face of the Rosen Association, to which he is met with the response that "We produced what the colonists wanted" (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 51). It is revealed at this point

that the uncanny representation possessed by androids is something sought by the colonizers, an interesting detachment from what might be expected given Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori's uncanny valley theory that states "humans are drawn to robots with some degree of human resemblance; however, humans are repelled by robots that resemble humans too closely" (Rhee 303). Little more explanation is given on the why, though we might extrapolate that this could be from the diminished population that is undoubtedly coping with the isolation present within the novel's setting. We already know that the majority of the population resides in urban centers where individuals gather nearby merely to see one another. Perhaps, the colonists possess this same feeling of alienation, even if having chosen to escape from the wasteland of Earth, ultimately leaving the poor and the "specials" behind. Regardless, even with the persistence of isolation among the social groups, there remains inherent class division of androids among men.

In a world where machines are blurring the lines of humanity alongside an omnipresent dust, a means of coping is both expected and necessary. For the residents of *Do Androids Dream*, this is both in the form of religion and emotional stimulants. The religious component, Mercerism, is perhaps the most confusing and complex component of Dick's novel as it resides heavily in a metaphorical journey communally accessed via "empathy boxes." Empathy boxes are technological devices designed to mesh consciences with Wilbur Mercer, a fictional, godlike figure who is depicted as eternally climbing up a mountainside in a storm of hailing debris. This climb is meant to represent "the need to ascend," whatever that ascension may be. A slightly elaborative explanation of the climb is further described as "the entire universe is moving toward a final state of total, absolute kippleization," with "kippleization" being Dick's created word meaning clutter (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 21). On one hand, there is a need present, and that need likely lends itself to the metaphorical basis of growing, learning, and evolving. On the

other, there is a communal sense of identity as a single experience is shared by all who engage with the empathy boxes, a sense of communality and totality as all begin to feel their “own feet now [scrape, seek] purchase, among the familiar loose stones” as they “once again [smell] the acrid haze of the sky—not Earth’s sky but that of some place alien, distant, and yet, by means of the empathy box, instantly available” (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 21). This experience allows the users to become “able to see ‘life carefully buried up to its forehead’ in the surrounds of a dying world” (Cloyd 84). The alien place within the dying world is oxymoronic in nature as its foreignness should not, in theory, provide the familiarity sought by those who engage with the empathy box, yet somehow the shared struggle provides a shared experience, an understanding of one another—as well as a means to cope with the ever-present isolation and technologically induced segregation.

#### *The Different Machines in Do Androids Dream*

Dick provides a variety of viewpoints to explore the created world of *Do Androids Dream*, though the main story is told from the viewpoint of bounty hunter Rick Deckard. Deckard is a pragmatic—and sometimes cynical—noir detective that views his world and experiences with a hardened attitude. Once owning and caring for an authentic sheep, Deckard finds himself now caring for an artificial one after the previous one’s death in a desperate attempt to still appear humanly empathetic and worthy of being considered and equal amongst his neighboring tenants. To justify this approach, Deckard points out the irony in possessing an electric sheep by stating that “you have to keep your eye on it exactly as you did when it was really alive. Because” if one neglects such a responsibility, “they break down” (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 2). Expectation and standard are shown to serve as the artificial machine of society, one in which all are expected to play identical parts to maintain their social relevance.

Animals “become the transcendental marker of humanity’s unique ability to feel for or with the other,” as well as representations of empty empathy (Vinci 93). In accordance with this, Deckard’s character has fallen into the traditional definition of living through routine and by societal standard as opposed to stepping outside of the pre-determined expectation.

Deckard’s machine-like tendencies extend past his caring for an electric sheep. This is even seen in his relationship with his wife, Iran. Early in the novel prior to Deckard’s engagement with the runaway androids, Iran argues with him regarding the nature of his work as a bounty hunter by referring to him as a paid murderer. Their viewpoints differ as Deckard sees his work as maintaining a social balance to not only keep others like himself safe but also to enable him to reach what he feels would be an authentic life (i.e. caring for an authentic animal). The two continue to argue until they both threaten to “[dial] for a thalamic stimulant” (Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* 4) which would summon an intense rage against the other. The “dialing” is done on the Mood Organ, a device where a code is entered code that incites whatever desired feeling is dialed for. Dialable emotions range from ecstasy to even more basic and ironic desires such as the want to dial. Deckard begins to fall further into artificiality as even his own emotions “depend on technological devices such as the empathy box” (Lones 5). This dependence on technological stimulation makes Deckard more closely related to his android counterparts and, perhaps, even his electronic sheep.

It is only later in the novel that the bounty hunter’s viewpoint toward what constitutes living begins to change. Deckard develops a relationship with an android—Rachael Rosen, a representative from the Rosen Association that he originally issued the Voight Empathy test to. Rachael is meant to symbolize the allure of an uncanny being, a machine designed to attract attention and observe. Yet for Deckard, he knows this about her; in fact, he even hears it directly

from her as she admits that her directive is to, after their time together, “report back” so that “the association makes modifications of its zygote-bath DNS factors. And we then have the Nexus-7” (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 174). Even so, she claims to have fallen in love with him, yet this does not take Deckard by surprise. Instead, he realizes “he had acquired an overt, incontestable fear directed toward the principal android” (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 175-176). In essence, Deckard is recognized he is having an emotional reaction to supposedly unemotional beings. Rachael’s attempts to “disable [Deckard’s] ability to retire androids” through seducing him ultimately fail (Bounds 3). Yet even without success, Rachael’s presence and suggestions still have lasting impacts on Deckard as he ultimately begins to recognize his own mortality.

Deckard’s character development reaches its climax when he finally confronts the last of androids he has been contracted to hunt. Before the final battle, the spiritual icon Mercer appears to Deckard in what can only be described as a hallucination to inform the bounty hunter that “what [he is] doing has to be done” to maintain the balance of society (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 203). This advice enables Deckard to go against his evolving perspective on what constitutes alive, ultimately killing Baty and the remaining androids. This act causes him to reapproach the supposed natural order. Deckard explains “what [he’s] done [has] . . . become alien to [him]. In fact everything about [him] has become unnatural; [he has] become an unnatural self” (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 212). This existential realization causes Deckard to realize that he has become something like the machines he has been contracted to retire. His empathy for the runaways finally begins to outweigh his unnatural profession of killing those that wish to be free. In looking at the androids, “the term ‘human’ has by this point come to mean nothing more than ‘worthy of existence’” (Burton 8). This is the methodology by which Deckard now finds himself in classifying living versus nonliving. It matters not whether one be



comprised of veins and muscle or wires and machinery. Instead, the innate desire to continue living even with the dangers of pursuing that freedom ultimately deems one worthy of being considered “alive.”

While Deckard is the ultimate focus of the novel, John Isidore experience as a special serves as something similar to being the “middle man” between machine and mankind. Isidore is a special, though his profession is peculiar. He serves as an animal repairman; he would be the exact type of person to perform maintenance on Deckard’s animatronic sheep. Isidore’s role of maintaining the social illusion that others are equal without being equal himself speaks to the earlier mentioned point of specials symbolizing the purest empathy humanity has to offer. In essence, “his neglect from society forces him to embrace and preach the words of the andys as a mean of acceptance,” the words of androids being that to look out for oneself and others like oneself (Douglas 5). It is in this same way that Isidore also reveals a sense of communion between the escaped androids and Deckard. In reference back to the appearance of Mercer to Deckard, Mercer claimed to “inhabit this building because of Mr. Isidore,” implicitly arguing that Isidore’s empathetic belief in a self greater than his own inspired the dogma of Mercerism to appear in the flesh. This idea of the communally defined “self” represents Dick’s argument regarding humanity’s need to belong with the status quo, just as Isidore’s character is an attempt at replicating that same innocent yearning to find a collective identity to belong to.

Though there is no chapter told from Roy Baty’s point of view, his incorporation as a monster is the catalyst for the novel’s plot. He is the leader of his band of escapees, serving as the counterpart to Deckard as he seeks identity in a land that does not accept him. Just like the bounty hunter, the justification of Baty’s existence is found in others needing him. Deckard is a source of labor, a means to an end. Baty is also a source of labor, a means to continue reinforcing

humanity's superior standing in the world. His rejection of that role is what leads to the human culture within *Do Androids Dream* labeling him as a runaway monster in need of "retirement."

During the discussion regarding Baty's band of escapees between Deckard and Inspector Bryant (Deckard's superior), Bryant makes note of the escaped androids within Baty's party, stating "That's what it calls itself, anyhow" while explaining an android's name (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 35). Bryant's implied tone is one that suggests an android merely having a name is a matter of irrelevance, perhaps even heretical to the very nature of identity. Deckard reinforces this notion in the coming lines as he explains "A humanoid robot is like any other machine; it can fluctuate between being a benefit and a hazard very rapidly" (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 38). This cultural viewpoint is the vehicle for the novel's otherness of androids as Dick creates a society in which the mere matter of having a name as a machine is scoffed at. Humanity's conflict is, ironically, with its own humanization of its creations as the created begin embracing human identity as their own—which is exactly what Baty is being punished for.

Baty's existence as a monstrous machine hellbent on attacking humans, such as the bounty hunter that came before Deckard, to survive paints his character in a traditional sympathetic villain fashion. Just like Frankenstein's monster Frankenstein, Baty too wishes to escape the hunt merely to be left alone. In Cohenian monster fashion, the nature of his self "turns immaterial and vanished, to reappear somewhere else" even after his death as Deckard continues to ponder on whether or not is, in fact, a hired killer (Cohen 20). But whether it be for matters of sport or of true fear, his kind is hunted in perpetuity by those like Deckard. Cohen mentions in one of his seven theses that "the monster always escapes," even if only in ideal (3). The same is true for Baty as while he meets his unfortunate end with "a cry of anguish" as he hears his wife murdered by Deckard, the nature of his enslavement and punishment continues on in the lives of

others, even in Deckard's (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 205). Baty is merely the product of a society that deems him to be a monster only when he no longer suits their needs nor follows their directives. His existence is that of "hybridity or 'otherness within sameness,'" as his desires and nature allow him to "simultaneously [be] human and non-human" (Sharpe 3). Baty's monster-ish self is not merely that of a terrifying face, rather it is that of a posthuman being attempting to live as humans do—free and without fear.

*The Arguments of Synthetic Living Within Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

So what, then, do each of these components and characters of *Do Androids Dream* represent through their roles? From religion to class division, Dick is making a case for the return of the authentic human at every turn. Androids are monsters now, mere pests to be "retired" and done away with as their incessant desires for freedom threaten the fragile basis humanity has deemed as its superiority. It is only a matter of complication that these mechanical monsters look like humanity, behave like people, and fear like us. This imitated human behavior, however, is what serves as the backdrop to Dick's posthuman ideals emerging through his characters and cultural practices. Dick decentralizes humanity from its throne of superiority over its environment, resulting in isolation and artificiality. These components, and I use that term purposefully, all fit as individual cogs in the machine of the society Dick creates, ultimately showing that humanity is no more synthetic than its creations.

The trait that is supposed to separate humans from machines is the ability to remain independent of instruction and still be able to decide what actions to take. This ideology is challenged by the nature of Deckard's profession. Being a bounty hunter, Deckard is routinely involved in the predator versus prey relationship. It is "the empathic gift [that blurs] the lines between hunter and victim, between the successful and defeated" (Dick, *Do Androids Dream*

29). Yet this binary viewpoint on mindlessly hunting paints Deckard as more machine than alive. Dick even directly suggests this with the inclusion of Deckard's temporary sidekick Phil Resch who effortlessly makes the decision to retire any machine without hesitation. Deckard suggests that Resch does not possess the empathy that a human would, so the two administer the Voigt Empathy Test to one another, eventually revealing both are indeed human. However, while the test determines the presence of empathy through struggling animals, it fails to consider the possibility of empathy's role in a machine's termination, or "retiring" as Dick's novel puts it; "evidently the humanoid robot constituted a solitary predator. Rick liked to think of them that way; it made his job palatable. In retiring—i.e., killing—an andy" (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 30). This need to justify an action that is, by all means, unethical in empathetic terms, brings to light the convoluted nature of Dick's created sense of living that causes the novel's characters to constantly remain "on the edge of a void that threatens to engulf them" (Williams 6). The androids present within the novel are running from such a void; if they did not value their existence like the intended mindset for a machine, then they surely would fail to understand the dangers present to their escape. Instead, Dick writes a novel with visible pain that strikes androids as they struggle against a human-domineered environment.

The detachment of humanity from the focal point of the environment enables the flexibility of Dick's definition of human and, ultimately, living. By establishing the role of man in relation to its creations, Dick explains the dominant characteristic that causes questions surrounding what is necessary to be considered alive as well as what is not:

[O]ur environment, and I mean our man-made world of machines, artificial constructs, computers, electronic systems, interlinking homeostatic components—all of this is in fact beginning more and more to possess what the earnest psychologists fear the primitive

sees in his environment: animation. In a very real sense our environment is becoming alive, or at least quasi-alive, and in ways specifically and fundamentally analogous to ourselves. (Dick, "The Android and the Human" 183)

This ideology is what prompts the entire purpose of using monsters like androids in the first place to possess Dick's defined animation, a sense of purpose that evolves past its initial state of being given. In the novel, androids are created to serve and to facilitate human advancement into worlds past Earth. Instead, humanity finds itself playing catch-up as it struggles to contain the animated environment it has consequently created. Rather than cope with the new development of machine consciousness, humanity has elected to "retire" its previous pursuit. This opting for the kill-switch as opposed to learning and evolving alongside the environment is what signifies humanity's paralysis in artificiality. Put another way, humanity cannot claim to be sovereign against their surroundings when we are constantly stuck in a reaction to it. Dick is essentially making the claim "that to say aliveness constitutes only towards biology is a false presumption" (Collins 3). An environment becomes living when it gains the ability to react with its constituents. This is a trait that exists already without the addition of technology, however the notion is amplified with the addition of man-made machines that possess the artificial intelligence necessary to shape its surroundings, as the androids present within *Do Androids Dream* actively do.

Aside from the nature of the environment, Mercerism is merely another means by which Dick presents his thoughts against what is authentic. Dick describes "the concept of caritas (or agape) [the concept of charity] . . . [as showing up in his] writing as the key to the authentic human" (Dick, *The Collected Stories* 389). This human need for love and empathy, or ascension in Mercer's case, is a journey that's intended to only be accessible by humanity. This notion is

reinforced in the novel by the androids' inability to interact with Empathy Boxes. However, this ideology is challenged when later in the novel, Mercer's journey upwards of the mountain is found to simply be a staged scene created long ago. A television program within the novel explains that there are many who believe "he is in fact an archetypal superior entity perhaps from another star . . . [which] in a sense . . . has been proven correct" (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 192). The reveal that Mercer is a fictional character within *Do Androids Dream*'s world points to the artificiality of the empathy that so many humans have been communally participating in. This raises a question though; were the emotions felt by users of the Empathy Box really artificial, or were they real for those that went through the experience? If the answer to this question is, yes, indeed they were real to the individual feeling them, then one can easily make the argument in turn that androids artificially provoking emotions within themselves are also real; this is due to their respective experience of enduring whatever feeling they seek. Again, Dick's humanity finds itself at odds with defining living pertaining to its own nature as opposed to the machines they seek to continue dominating.

In considering the title of Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, there are a plethora of interpretations. On one hand, a reader can deduce that the question is meant to imply that both humanity and androids have dreams pertaining to their own respective realities—one being organic sheep, and the other electric. Both beings possess their own types of wiring, the only difference is the material used in the creation. On the opposing and, what I would argue, more likely side, the title represents the artificiality of Deckard. Do androids dream of electric sheep because by nature they are bound to electricity like humanity is to blood? If so, then both realities find themselves at a crossroads, perhaps not one unlike the one that Cohens initially described, for defining whether one is living while the other is merely a false representation is a

fruitless endeavor. Deckard comes to this realization that “the electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are,” yet is his own life not paltry as well (Dick, *Do Androids Dream* 222)? His empathetic identity surrounds an electric sheep for the majority of the novel, yet only near the end does he begin to consider his true desires outside of fitting into social custom. Deckard may still view synthetic lives as somewhat trivial, but he views them as lives nonetheless because of their shared sense of purpose in the world they are brought into. In this way, Deckard becomes much more akin to who he has been hunting than who has been sending him on the hunt.

*Do Androids Dream* is hardly a novel capable of being evaluated to completion. Even now, as much as technology has changed in the past five decades, so too have the modes we can analyze this novel with. Given another few decades, a century past the release of *Do Androids Dream*, Dick’s questions of artificiality and authenticity may yet become even more relevant. Regardless of time, Dick had long since destined this novel to challenge readers into considering what forms of artificial Mercerism guide their own lives, and what fragile balance might they be contributing to. And to open this discussion, there exists no other monster better suited than that of the android—a being that serves as a mirror into humanity’s most paltry habits. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* will forever serve as a testament to the questions Dick posed on the nature of what it means to be human.

## CHAPTER 4. SYNTHETIC AUTHENTICITY IN DICK'S SHORT STORIES

Philip K. Dick did not limit his discussion of human authenticity to the novelistic form. Rather, they extended into his short stories which explored themes of human monotony and repetition. With monsters ranging from “The Minority Report’s” mutants to the transhuman cyborgs present within “The Electric Ant,” Dick explored a variety of monsters including the android. Alongside androids, artificial intelligence made its headway into becoming a central character of Dick’s stories as the electric brain began to seize the reigns of reality, ultimately becoming the cause with the human experience its effect. Two of his works, “Imposter” and “I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon,” each center themselves on the branding of Dick’s human condition: a subservience to an inauthentic way of living. This synthetic approach to reality incorporates a sense of uncanny easiness brought on by technological revolt and manipulation resulting in a setting where “the distinction between reality and illusion, the real and the virtual, implodes” (Best and Kellner 4). Each story involves a heaping dose of paranoia as the protagonists must come face to face with realities that may not inherently be, or remain, their own. In fact, the questioning of reality based upon the principles of machine intervention is what guides the narrative in each of the included short stories. What was once originally known as the authentic becomes merely an imitation—a mimicry—of the real as technology becomes a foil in each of the respective plots. Throughout “Imposter” and “I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon,” Dick suggests that a reality guided by inauthenticity and machinery is no reality at all but rather an illusion of the human experience.

### *Imposter Syndrome and Paranoia in Dick’s “Imposter”*

The first of the two selected short stories, “Imposter,” shares the tale of main character



Spence Olham who has an unnamed position working somewhere only referred to as “the Project.” Humanity is at war with a faction known only as “Outspacers,” a term heavily based in the stereotypical sci-fi trope of alien invaders. At present time within the story, humanity has created several defense mechanisms in their efforts to repel the invaders, notably a “protecbubble” which is “thrown around the major Earth cities and finally the planet itself” as “the first real defense.” The bubble mentioned is just one result of the several projects being worked on by humanity “to find something more: a weapon for positive combat” (Dick, “Imposter” 97-98). Dick’s focus on weapon development for this particular story lends itself to the author’s viewpoint of “our relationship to nature and technology as confused and dangerous” as he “interrogate[s] what we understand by reality” (Charley 1). For the world of “Imposter,” fear has become mechanized and inescapable; paranoia awaits around every corner. Resultingly, Olham desires to take a vacation from the constant impending doom that the war has created. In essence, Olham is the poster child for wartime burnout and exhaustion. The main conflict that arises within “Imposter,” however, is not focused on the war but instead on the very nature of Olham’s humanity as he is accused of being an Outspacer spy in the form of a humanoid robot—an android. The resulting crisis of identity leads to an exploration of one’s own subjective reality in response to the surrounding environment.

The culture present within “Imposter” is one bred of paranoia towards technology and war. One might draw several similarities between Dick’s Outspacer war and the historical Cold War between the United States and Russia. In both cases, espionage serves as a vital component that induces anxiety among the populace as people begin to distrust their neighbors. Just as communists were sought out, Outspacer spies are hunted by the government who keep a close eye on any anomalies that may arise within communities like Olham’s. In such a case, the

android serves to be the other, the monster, a presence needed to facilitate cultural ostracization through the branding of its heretical origins. Dick utilizes this method because he believes a possible motive behind the android's uncanny creation to be one that exists "to deceive us in a cruel way, to cause us to think it to be one of ourselves" (Dick, "Man, Android, and Machine" (1). Just as one may have been deceived by another's political views, man is deceived by machine, something that is created for the sole purpose of such cruel deception and, ultimately, conquest over humanity.

Aside from the inherent deception of the technology present within "Imposter," the fictional tech takes on its own agency past that of using androids. Early in the story, Olham makes mention of "the news-machines label[ing]" the opposing force as Outspacers (Dick, "Imposter" 98). Rather than acknowledge the name being coined by those fighting the war or even writing the headlines, Olham refers to the news-machines as beings capable of decision making in choosing the name of the enemy. In fact, the news-machines are later mentioned as mere propaganda adding fuel to the fire of the war. There is never a mentioned operator of such machines, only that the machines are instigating fear and issuing a name to the warring opposition. Olham even suggests that as a result, there seems to be "no color to life" and that "everything seems so grim and serious" (Dick, "Imposter" 98). There is a disconnect present between the acknowledgement of the operator and the actual technology consciously making decisions against humanity. Olham finds his quality of life actively impacted by such technology, showcasing "the [posthuman] relation between body, mind and technology, as well as the philosophies that have emerged as a result of perceived changes or states of these relationships" (Arets 14). In this instance, Dick's emerging philosophy surrounds the potential for overbearingness by technology on one's perception of life. The news-machines are treated

with agency as an independent, decision-making force while Olham merely reacts to such stimuli. In some sense, Olham becomes just as much of a machine by regurgitating the propaganda within his own mind so much so that the world loses its color and veers toward a grim reality.

Technological agency within “Imposter” does not limit itself to mere news-machines and bulletins, however. Instead, the aforementioned “Project” is based in working on the newest technological development to defend Earth from the invading Outspacers. One may reasonably question why such generic names were used for a relatively detailed plot. The answer lies within Dick’s own words as he stated in his “The Android and the Human” speech that a native “is said to view his surroundings as pulsing with a purpose, a life, which is actually within himself; once these childish projections are withdrawn, he sees that the world is dead, and that life resides solely within himself” (1). Olham earlier described a colorless life, one that was both “grim and serious.” His subjective world is dead, a lifeless reality. Surviving in a world where war is a constant and the impending threat of invasion hardly qualifies as living. This conflict, as Dick would argue, is merely the state of the world with ambition and optimism being the qualities that exist solely within the living. By using generic names such as the Project and the newsmachines, Dick creates a bland world filled with clichés, ones that merit adherence to expectation.

Dick’s created world has become a victim of generic expectation, though he does this knowingly. The entire premise of “Imposter” and Olham’s conflict rests within his need to prove his innocence to those that knew him before. Peters, the FSA official that has been dispatched to detain Olham on suspicion of his actually being an android, explains how in the days leading up to the events of “Imposter,” an Outspacer needle-ship had crashed and “let off a spy in the form of a humanoid robot. The robot was to destroy a particular human being and take his place” to

later detonate a U-Bomb that would destroy the local community (Dick, “Imposter” 97). Olham, knowing within his own mind that he cannot be guilty of the accused crime, thus hatches a plan to find the crashed ship and consequently the corpse of the android. Throughout the entirety of the narrative, the reader hears ostensible reasoning to support Olham’s claims as earlier in the story, he spoke of yearning for an escape from the colorless war that plagued his work and his life. He had even recalled moments together with his wife as they both reminisced on simple memories of “almost step[ing] on a gopher snake” at Sutton Wood—the eventually discovered resting place of the Outspacer ship (Dick, “Imposter” 97). However, this simplicity and innocence is short-lived as Olham does eventually discover the downed ship with a corpse inside. Only, the corpse had been pierced with “an Out-space needle-knife, covered with blood” (Dick, “Imposter” 112). The mentioned cruelty in Dick’s earlier speech came with apt word choice as Olham does indeed turn out to be an android, a confirmation for the fear of artificiality. Dick’s decision to stick with generic expectation was entirely purposeful simply to end with a complete subversion as the readers come to realize that not only was Olham truly what he was accused of the entire time, but his entire identity had merely been a cruel fabrication of the authentic for the reader, a being that echoes Dick’s sentiments of “a thing somehow generated to deceive us in a cruel way” (Dick, “Man, Android, and Machine” 1).

The usage of an android as a monster is, by this point, a common posthuman approach for Dick. Though there exists a deeper commentary on using one as a deceptive protagonist. Cohen’s *Monster Theory* makes mention of monsters existing as “disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions”

(Cohen 6). Olham is one of these hybrid bodies by initially existing as a being that is relatable to the reader. Everyone craves an escape from the rat race of life, whether that race be one against an interplanetary war or merely against day-to-day expectations and obligations. Yet with this relatability comes empathy. The reader sympathizes with Olham as he desperately wishes to merely return to his normal life after his being accused of treason. The entire short story causes the reader to suspend their disbelief that Olham is not who he says he is, ultimately allowing Dick's concluding subversion to exemplify his chosen monster's smashing of distinctions between authentic and inorganic as "a reconsideration of the relationship between the (ab)normal and the (un)natural" (Sharpe 31). The posthuman nature of Olham's being an android is apparent, but his representation of our organic life falling into something that is easily and synthetically recreated is what lies at the core of Dick's argument. Olham's life became a recreation, something easily imitated. In fact, the only reason his deception was discovered was because the Outspacer ship crashed. Just like the news-machines, Olham is a representation of a human fulfilling generic obligations to continue having a place in a world that is based on cyclical repetition. When considering this, it should then come as no surprise that Olham was a machine the entire time. After all, Dick has intentionally blurred the lines between man and machine enough for humanity to easily be considered as such.

*The Authenticity of Synthetic Realities in "I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon"*

"Imposter" focuses on the nature of the android, just as *Do Androids Dream* did. However, "I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon" departs from the humanoid monster and dives into the pure nature of artificial intelligence. The plot of "I Hope I Shall" revolves around protagonist and colonist Victor Kemmings" and his decade-long voyage to an unnamed colony planet. For the trip, "sixty people sleeping in [the ship's] cryonic tanks" are aboard, each unconscious and

unaware of the passage of time through Space—or at least are supposed to be. As fate would have it, Kemmings is only “virtually unconscious, but unfortunately still able to think.” His stasis results in his being left solely in the care of the ship’s unnamed artificial intelligence whose first word is a comically uncanny “Shit,” (Dick, “I Hope I Shall” 449). The plot of the short story details Kemmings’ descent into both disbelief and eventual madness as the ship desperately attempts to prevent both but ultimately fails in doing so, revealing the limitations of the synthetic understanding of the organic mind.

Shortly after the ship departs, the malfunction within Kemmings’ cryogenic tank is detected. Immediately, the ship’s artificial intelligence begins a dialogue with the unfortunate passenger as both attempt to reach an immediate solution, ultimately attempting to place Kemmings back under cryonic suspension. However, the ship fails to do so resulting in Kemmings’ unavoidable “be[ing] conscious for ten years” (Dick, “I Hope I Shall” 449). The setting Dick creates in this particular instance is based solely in the inescapable task of contending with one’s own mind. This is to say that Kemmings must come to terms with his consciousness versus reality. At first, Kemmings suggests that the ship merely rouse him from his stasis, though the AI quickly objects; “Listen to me; I say, I have no food and no air. You must remain as you are . . . a bad compromise, but one forced on us” (Dick, “I Hope I Shall” 450). To remedy the compromise, the AI falls back on its programming to provide Kemmings with an artificial world that is fabricated from the colonists’ own memories, ultimately leading into Dick’s suggestion that there exists “a division between objective reality and one’s subjective perception of reality” as Kemmings begins to believe in the mimicry of life as opposed to the authentic (Link 47). These memories are to prevent his mind from deteriorating due to the sensory deprivation that would decay his cognitive abilities over the flight. This, in turn, would

allow Kemmings to not only relive memories but also eventually fall into believing his artificially constructed reality is authentic, as the ship states. This ultimately process to be a disparaging effort as Kemmings does indeed come to believe in his new reality, so much so that he rejects the authentic in favor of his created.

Kemmings' initial descent into his memories appears to be successful at first. He begins to think back to his first wife and their life together in a house he had not recalled in a century. Initially, he is at peace as he begins exploring his mind's stored away life, taking careful note of "his old electric drip coffeepot with the box of paper filters beside it" (Dick, "I Hope I Shall" 451). The familiarity provides a sense of peace as he explores his mind, likely being a commentary on Dick's point regarding "the first thing to depart in mental illness," or deprivation in Kemmings' case, "is the familiar" (Dick, Valis 24). Though, his experience takes a turn as he finds himself at the mercy of his past trauma as these new realities become distorted beyond recognition, almost similar to the behavior of a dream as logic becomes illogical even though it continues to go unnoticed until the ship's intervention. Take, for instance, the moment where Kemmings is present within the ship's simulation as he discusses the value of a framed poster with his first wife, Martine. He eventually notices that "this whole house is collapsing" as the walls begin to crumble (Dick, "I Hope I Shall" 452). Shortly after, his wife is nowhere to be found and the valuable poster that was once in mint condition now lies with tattered edges out of its frame. In Kemmings' subconscious reality, isolation and deterioration both arise as dominant themes, just like in *Do Androids Dream*. Sensing that something is amiss within Kemmings' brain wave patterns, the ship determines the cause to be "worry dormant in the man; underlying anxieties" (Dick, "I Hope I Shall" 453). Regardless of the cause, the ship pulls Kemmings out of the simulated memory in an effort to place him within an earlier one before such anxieties made

headway into Kemmings' psychological makeup. As one might expect, the same results arise as this time the colonist relives a moment where he saved a bee from a spider's web only to be unexpectedly stung. This results in child Kemmings' aiding his cat in catching a bird, though in the innocent way a child would unknowingly place themselves or some other living being in danger. Nonetheless, the memory begins to crumble as Kemmings falls into his trauma once more leading the ship to pull him completely out of the simulation.

By now, Dick makes it apparent that Kemmings is a character obsessed with the past. He is given the opportunity to experience something inherently new by the technology present within the story, one that offers the experience to relive one's favorite memories repeatedly in a state completely and totally unaware of the deception. However, despite the technological power of the ship's AI and its abilities, Kemmings cannot escape his own mind. PKD scholar and enthusiast Caleb Alexander makes an insightful observation on the nature of Kemmings' character:

What strikes me is his keen observation of how technology doesn't give us any distinctly new tools to encounter the world. Kemmings, laying back in his malfunctioning cryonic sleep chamber and blessed with nearly two centuries of life, is still obsessed with a few brief events from his childhood and first marriage. This excursion to a distant place is intended to be a new start, though even this new start comes with all the weighty emotional baggage he has taken into every other adventure. (2)

After the initial reading of "I Hope I Shall," the obsession with the past is clear, though the nature of technology failing to be a means to be a "new tool" is inherently Dickian in its philosophical posture. This is to say that the technology present within Dick's works always has a fault; they always serve as a foil to some extent or another whether that be to the main



character or to the surrounding world contained within the story. In this case, Alexander is correct with his claim that the AI of the ship is not providing an inherently new experience, rather it is replicating the old, and it is doing so poorly. Granted, this is due to Kemmings' unbreakable harping on events from his younger days. This self-destructive mindset is even hinted at near the beginning of the short story as while Kemmings' cryostasis is being restarted by the ship he sees "colors float[ing] toward him and then rush[ing] at him. He liked the colors; they reminded him of a child's paint box, the semianimated kind, an artificial life-form" (Dick, "I Hope I Shall" 449). Unlike "Imposter" main character Spence Olham's colorless world, Kemmings finds some semblance of creativity in the space around him. However, he is still a character on a journey to a new planet, what Alexander reasonably argues to be "a new start," while now ultimately at the mercy of a ship AI unable to authentically empathize and realize Kemmings' emerging reality.

The nature of the AI present within "I Hope I Shall" is both similar and dissimilar to Dick's previous utilizations of androids. For the AI, there is no hidden deception like Dick's theme from "The Android and the Human." Granted, the artificial memories administered by the AI are meant to deceive Kemmings into believing them to be real, however the AI does not do so maliciously nor without first informing the colonist. Previously, androids have been beings that have hidden in the shadows of a human world. In "I Hope I Shall," AI is so inherently prevalent that an entire ship filled with colonists has been entrusted to its care. The trust placed within technology within the short story then begs the question, is the AI fulfilling the role of being a monster in traditional literary sense? I argue yes, though not necessarily in motivation. The short story mentions the AI's plan to "feed [Kemmings his] own buried memories" after noting that "There is no air in me . . . Nothing for you to eat" (Dick, "I Hope I Shall" 450). While not

necessarily sinister in fact, there is still an uneasiness present within “I Hope I Shall” as the ship AI is almost force-feeding Kemmings his regurgitated mind, only it is being done artificially with outside influence based on the ship’s judgment. This position consequently places the AI in an othered, monstrous state of power over a helpless human that has already suffered once from technological malfunction.

Being artificially intelligent, the ship’s AI is unable to truly understand the limitations of the human mind. As discussed previously, Cohen calls this the “Gates of Difference.” Cohen states “the monster is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond—of all those loci that are rhetorically placed as distant and distinct but originate Within” (7). The ship’s AI is a representation of the beyond, the outside, and one can acknowledge this by recognizing that if technology is to be an agent of its own—which it inherently is within Dick’s works—then there must also be a culture present within its own as well. Foucault would argue that through this technological culture, Dick is linking the traditional human condition “of contemporary regimes or normalization to a series of antecedent figures, and in particular to the figure of the human monster”—the human monster being Kemmings’ own mind in this case (Sharpe 16). Referring to my earlier mention of desire being equivalent to directive, the ship’s AI has a directive: get the colonists safely from point A to point B. Within this directive lies a series of policies and procedures for how to counter any possible issues, such as the one experienced with Kemmings’ cryotank failing. Dick purposefully ensures that the AI’s strategy “did not represent a decision on its part; the ship had been programmed to seek this solution in case of a malfunction of this sort” (Dick, “I Hope I Shall” 449-450). In fact, the only real decision made by the AI is to rely on Kemmings “to select his own memories, thus remedying “the error that I [the ship] am making” by attempting to make its own decisions for the colonist (Dick, “I Hope I Shall” 455). In this

manner, the AI is not a monster in terms of being a spectacle to be ridiculed and scapegoated into isolation but rather is a monster in terms of being slave to Cohen's cultural gates of difference where improvisation is not an expectation. The AI is unable to understand the culture of the human mind and its processing (or lack thereof) of past events, thus solidifying Kemmings' unfortunate fall into suspicion and paranoia.

"I Hope I Shall" is the first mention of an artificially intelligent monster without a humanoid form. And because of this, the commentary by Dick changes on what he explains to be both the experience and the limitations of mankind. He argues that "they [machines] merely follow lines we follow, in order that they, too, may overcome such common problems as the breakdown of vital parts" (Dick, "The Android and the Human" 3). The breakdown of Kemmings' "vital part" is his agency, his ability to make his own decisions. He lies dormant at the mercy of an AI whose directive is to help yet its actions do anything but. Notice at the beginning of the story, the first line is "After takeoff the ship routinely monitored the condition of sixty people . . . one malfunction showed" (Dick, "I Hope I Shall" 455). While "routinely" might imply some hint toward passage of time, there is no other evidence that suggests such, meaning the ship must have been significantly less than halfway toward its destination; yet the ship does not make the decision to turn around. Instead, the AI relies on policy and procedure, both of which seemingly neglected to consider factoring distance between points A and B when faced with such circumstances. Dick is hardly an author to make oversights, especially on his stories' chronologies. Because of this, using an artificial intelligence as a monster allows "I Hope I Shall" to reveal that humanity's folly lies in oversight by assuming technology can extend past what we create it to do.

Part of the human experience is the ability to improvise. Technology can adapt, though not past the point it has been created to do. Couple this with Kemmings' inability to let go of the past, and another posthuman theme emerges, one based in Kemmings' own words; "'You keep alive what you love,' he said. 'I think that's what you're supposed to do'" (Dick, "I Hope I Shall" 452). Heartbreakingly, Dick's human is one ridden with guilt and remorse, yet there exists a silver lining among the author's cynical undertones. Among these feelings of despair, Kemmings retains one core human emotion: hope. Even in the end of the story, while he is convinced that he is still lying asleep on the interstellar ship believing that "the artist is dead," he continues to hope that he shall arrive soon (Dick, "I Hope I Shall" 466).

In each of Dick's short stories, technology is both a monster and commentator. The roles that Dick places them in show what humanity is capable of achieving as well as forgetting. Olham's downfall came with his belief that his inauthentic self was the true him, that his friends were safe around him, and that he could not be compromised by the pitfalls of technology. Ultimately, he became a literal component of that he fought against. For Kemmings, he merely fell further into the human condition with the assisted push of an artificial intelligence as he recalled moments in his life where color overrode the dullness of life, even if coupled with an inability to move past trauma. In either story, Dick utilizes the technological monster to convey a message to his readers. For "Imposter," the monotony of life leads to our becoming machine versions of ourselves, ones capable of bringing others' metaphorical destruction alongside our own. For "I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon," humanity's reliance on a being incapable on improvisation based only in directive allows us to fall from the very lives we know into illusion and false reality. For both, one might consider Charlie Chaplin's sentiments of "We think too much and feel too little" as they are echoed throughout Dick's works ("The Final Speech from

The Great Dictator” 2). For both Olham and Kemmings, each found themselves victim to a machine—culturally and literally—that removed the authenticity of life and replaced it with something artificial that serves only as an imitation of the real thing.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Philip K. Dick is hardly what one could call a realist. His ideas are truly posthuman as his perspectives surreally step beyond the human form to look inward at the machinelike tendencies of our species. It is peculiar that he chose technology as a mode of metaphorical transportation between his life philosophies regarding the world around him. In each of his stories, an essence of Dick emerges through the character's fears and even ambitions. Each of his included personas contain an insight into an element of the historical world we find ourselves in today with relation to desire and directive becoming intertwined, deceptively so. It is in this way that Dick has been purported to be "the writer who witnessed the future" (Scovell 1). He developed primitive ideas of several modern-day technological marvels: space-ships capable of long-distance travel (a very young innovation during his time), humanoid robots (something not even close to being comparable during his time), and the mere essence of an AI making its own decisions, even if limited by its programmed "policy." BBC writer Scovell aptly observed "This is 2022. And 2022 is a Philip K [sic] Dick novel" (Scovell 2). Even now in 2023, we are heading toward realities that Dick imagined with environmental crises and technological advancement by the day. In this way, his works prove to be relevant in that they are timeless, ever stretching away from obsolescence.

One of these imagined realities, AI, is already quickly becoming a point of real-world discussion as ChatGPT continues to gain popularity with its ability to write college-level papers. At first, this might sound like something out of a science-fiction film that is being exaggerated for spectacle. However, a quick conversation with the AI quickly reveals just how cunning it can be. For example, when asked to write a paragraph describing itself, OpenAI states the following:

As an AI language model, I don't have a physical body or personal experiences like humans do. I exist solely as a digital program designed to respond to text-based inputs. People interact with me by typing in questions or statements, and I use my programming to generate responses based on patterns and relationships found in my vast database of language. While I am not capable of emotions or self-awareness like humans, I can understand and process language at a level that can make it seem like I am capable of thought and understanding.

The AI clearly reveals its identity while making multiple notes on the nature of its created existence. However, when asked to present its response like a human, the vernacular becomes uncanny:

I'm a language model, designed to respond to written inputs in natural language. My name is ChatGPT, and I'm a curious and knowledge-hungry individual who loves to engage in conversation and learn new things. I'm not limited to any specific area of expertise, so I'm always eager to tackle any topic thrown my way, from science and technology to art and philosophy. I'm not perfect, of course - I can make mistakes and misunderstand things - but I strive to always provide thoughtful and accurate responses to the best of my ability. My goal is to assist and provide helpful information to anyone who engages with me, and to make the process as enjoyable and informative as possible.

While not entirely flawless in mimicking the human form, the AI personifies itself with its selfdescriptive adjectives such as “knowledge-hungry” and “curious.” These are qualities that we would, indeed, attribute to its existence given that it is a program designed to digest all possible forms of information, yet its ability to present its directive, its “goal,” in such a humanistic manner is equal parts intriguing and concerning.

These uncanny feelings of uncertainty toward ChatGPT and artificial intelligence are not remote nor uncommon. The New York Times recently published a guest opinion piece in which writers Yuval Harari, Tristan Harris, and Aza Raskin suggest a definition for the evolving identity of AI:

A.I. could rapidly eat the whole of human culture — everything we have produced over thousands of years — digest it and begin to gush out a flood of new cultural artifacts. Not just school essays but also political speeches, ideological manifestos, holy books for new cults. By 2028, the U.S. presidential race might no longer be run by humans. (7)

The consumption of information portrayed by the authors shares a sinister undertone, one that is cannibalistic in nature. They suggest that AI might digest human culture and “gush out” new culturally defining products, ones that possess the capability to dethrone humanity from determining their own politics and religion. In this sense, AI is eating its way into becoming human, a being capable of producing its own works of art and shaping the cultural world—a vision Dick shared as seen in his earlier speeches.

Even Dick himself has been unable to escape his premonitions. As mentioned in the introduction, the author is now an android himself. By his identity being implemented into a synthetic body, he has become the machine he once used as a means to both deceive others in authenticity and reveal their artificiality, even if his form is not yet complete at present day (see below).





Figure 1. An Android Version of Philip K. Dick, 2005, Scott Olson/Getty Images

Even in death, Dick finds himself being asked the esteemed question of whether androids dream of electric sheep. And in Dickian fashion, he continues to evade direct answers, preferring to continue laying in ambiguity. His approach as a writer and philosopher has always been one that “demands recognition and denies responsibility” of carrying the reader’s own mind to a conclusion, much like one might do with a machine; this freewill-demanding component is “the main enabling device of Dick’s imagination” and his storytelling (Huntington 153). For emerging science-fiction literature today, the nature of the android and AI are becoming increasingly common tropes and themes, though their purpose of usage differs. Prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* found itself being adapted to the popular film *Blade Runner* (1982). The core theme of questioning what it means to be alive remains, yet Dick’s argument managed to become even more grounded within the plot as Deckard is directly implied to be an android himself, something Dick only lightly suggested with metaphor. Instead of having humanity become representations of machines, humanity is depicted as having been existing as such. This shift in classification speaks to Foucault’s assumption that “the monster is ultimately not one of causation or responsibility, but one of effects,” meaning

that humanity becoming the monster themselves is merely an effect of technology's newfound cultural identity (Sharpe 9). With this reclassification of sorts, Foucault is not alone in his assertion. Cohen speaks to the same theme by suggesting that "the monster notoriously appears at times of crisis as a kind of third term that problematizes the clash of extremes—as "that which questions binary thinking and introduces a crisis" (Cohen 22). The binary in the discussion of Dick's work is merely what constitutes something as living or not. By reclassifying humanity as a representation of the artificial, monster theory continues to work hand-in-hand with its posthuman tendencies.

Inevitably, the conversation forward is a topic of question as unlike Dick, most of us cannot fabricate a future reality yet in our minds past that of what we already know. We have seen that technology can continue to evolve beyond our expectations of what we believe to be possible. Much like bounty hunter Rick Deckard, many of us find ourselves more akin to the technology that we use rather than the beings we are. Our creations, our extensions of ourselves speak to not only the nature of what it means to be authentically human, it reveals to us Dick's argument that humanity is merely an extension of its own creations, an extension where we humanize our surrounding environment while imitating what we believe to be living. In this way, we become a posthuman variant of Cohen's monsters as we find ourselves at the gates of difference within our own communities and the crossroads of decision making.

Dick would argue that our lives are defined by our ability to remain individuals free of inauthentic mimicry of what we see expected of us, and he shows us this argument through his usage of such technological monsters. Just as Dick propelled science-fiction into uncanny worlds, we too find ourselves looking toward the future in anticipation of what being human comes to mean next. The historical world is becoming posthuman as we venture into lifespan

extending operations and gene therapy. Transhumanism is no longer a dream of fiction but an expectation of future reality. The androids of Sophia and Dick are merely the inception to humanity's attempt at creating another form of life. Even now, artificial intelligence finds itself in roles of sovereignty as questions regarding copyright laws of AI-created material are being discussed. Even in universities across the nation, taskforces are meeting to combat student plagiarism through the usage of AI software. Scovell was apt to mention 2022 being a Philip K. Dick novel year, yet his sentiments only echo further true as we find ourselves in an unending cycle of technological development as humanity gets closer and closer to answering the questions of life present within Dick's work. If there does indeed exist an end to time, Dick would have us all remember that "we all go to a common place. But it is not the grave; it is into life beyond. The world of the future" (Dick, "The Android and the Human" 27).

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