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# “Real illusion”: The notions of “real” and “fake” in Philip K. Dick’s Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

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**“Real illusion” : The notions of “real”  
and “fake” in Philip K Dick’s *Do  
Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?***

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Mémoire de Master 2

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attestation sur l'honneur de non plagiat.....	6
Table of contents.....	7
Introduction.....	1
1 - <i>The Treachery of images</i> : “authenticity” and perspective.....	7
1.1 - Subjectivity in the face of bias.....	7
1.2 - The concept of “labels”.....	16
1.3 - Identity and reality in relation to appearances.....	28
1.4 - Authenticity in relation to attachment.....	39
2 - Evolution and stagnation: technology and an acute obsession with the past.....	46
2.1 - Individualism and empathy.....	46
2.2 - Pastoralism as goal.....	60
2.3 - The blending of technology and nature.....	73
Conclusion.....	82
Index.....	87
Works cited.....	88
Résumé - Abstract.....	92

## INTRODUCTION

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* written by Philip K. Dick and first published in 1968 can be placed in the social science fiction subgenre which aims at questioning the human condition and society; the novel is a speculative story taking place in a dystopian world where humanity is on the verge of disappearing and where nuclear warfare has made Earth and its inhabitants fragile. Bounty hunter Rick Deckard, hired by the police, is given the job to “retire” Nexus-6 androids who are supposed to be servants on space colonies but have recently escaped to Earth. Rick Deckard dreams of making enough money by “retiring” these androids to buy a live animal in order to replace his electric sheep.

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*'s but also Philip K. Dick's surge in popularity was largely due to the novel's 1982 adaptation *Blade Runner* directed by Ridley Scott and starring Harrison Ford which was praised for its effects and atmosphere but was panned by critics for its slow pace and mishandling of the story and themes when it first released. While it did not gain popularity when it first came out in theatres, it has since gained the status of cult classic with its subsequent versions and home video releases, largely contributing to the building of the cyberpunk aesthetic and inspiring works from all over the world. The movie's popularity eventually influenced the marketing of subsequent novel editions, the book bearing the subtitle '*Blade Runner*' in several of them.

A sequel to the original 1982 movie eventually came out in 2017, *Blade Runner 2049*. Directed by Denis Villeneuve, the movie has not only reaffirmed *Blade Runner*'s status as a cult classic, but also Philip K. Dick's bibliography as important works of social science-fiction that are still relevant to this day.

Philip K. Dick's social science-fiction novels have recurring themes of authoritarian police states in dystopian futures and the bending of reality; In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* The authoritarian police state is seen in Rick Deckard, who works for the police and is tasked with “retiring” androids while the difficult relationship with technology in this world provokes doubts about the nature of reality. Other works by Dick, such as *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*

[1974], *A Scanner Darkly* [1977] and *The Minority Report* [1956] for example, all take place in authoritarian police states taking on different forms.

All the aforementioned novels also question the fragility of one's reality. In *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*, the protagonist, Jason Taverner has his identity erased as he has no way of identification, he must struggle in a reality where he essentially does not exist; the narrative tackles a hypothetical American second Civil War.

*A Scanner Darkly* is perceived as a semi-biographical novel as it deals with the use of reality-altering drugs, Dick himself being addicted to various drugs in the seventies. The novel follows an undercover agent living in a household of drug-addicts. The novel was also made popular through its 2006 filmic adaptation of the same name directed by Richard Linklater.

*The Minority Report* heavily focuses on police and crimes as it tackles the concept of a "Precrime" police force capable of seeing crimes committed in the future and prevent them from happening by arresting people before they are able to act on it. A movie adaption of the same name released in 2002, directed by Steven Spielberg, also made the original novella more popular.

In addition to the social science-fiction aspect of the novel, Philip K. Dick also makes use of the "humanoid robot" as one of the main driving forces of the story to put humanity into perspective in an increasingly technology-dominated world. The depiction of androids in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* builds upon previous depictions of robots and androids in various science-fiction media.

The word "robot" itself was first introduced in a science-fiction play entitled *R.U.R* which stands for *Rossumovi Univerzální Roboti* (Rossum's Universal Robots) written by Karel Čapek and published in 1920. The story revolves around the making of organic robots engineered to do labour in the place of human beings and eventually ends in a robot revolution which ushers in the end of the human race. The play, like many social-science fiction works, deal with the master-slave relation that the human-robot relation entails. It illustrates the fear of slave uprising by the means of advanced artificial intelligence.

The word "robot" originates from the Czech word "robota" which means "serf work" and "corvée", indicating what the robots were made for originally: as servants for humans. The word "robot" itself shows that humans are giving machines menial work and the intelligence that might manifest in these robots

might lead to hate towards their creators. Isaac Asimov's "Three Laws of Robotics", first introduced in the short story *Runaround* [1942], also reinforce the idea of human beings as creators, superior to robots. In a nutshell, the laws state that a robot must protect humans at all costs and not harm them in any way; their existence is at the mercy of human beings. Both Asimov's laws and hierarchies putting them at the bottom exist out of fear towards robots who are made superior to humans in a number of ways, one of those advantages being the fact that they are tireless.

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* the fear of androids not only stems from an eventual uprising but also from an existential dread because of their proximity to human beings not only in appearance, but also in cognitive intelligence.. Humanity is afraid of losing their identity as human beings to androids and thus of losing a way to distinguish what is "real" from what is "fake".

Donna Haraway, in her feminist essay *A Cyborg Manifesto* [1985] first published in the *Socialist Review*, illustrates the cyborg as a being who blurs the line between animal and machine, a genderless entity who rejects identity, "roles". Contrary to the depiction of humanity in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Haraway embraces the concept of an android, a "cyborg" as beings capable of blurring the line of humanity's limits. The cyborg can go beyond society's polarized black and white views to take on a multiplicity of identities and adopt a more nuanced perspective: Haraway describes this as "polyvocality".

Embarrassed silence about race among white radical and socialist feminists was one major, devastating political consequence. History and polyvocality disappear into political taxonomies that try to establish genealogies. There was no structural room for race (or for much else) in theory claiming to reveal the construction of the category woman and social group women as a unified or totalizable whole. (Haraway, 159)

Through all the works mentioned above and as seen in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, robots can be used to amplify the commentary of social science-fiction novels by confronting humans with their own nature but also with otherness.

At the time of writing, major political events such as the Cold War (ca.1947-1991) and the Civil Rights movement from 1954 to 1968 were taking place which most likely inspired major elements in the novel.

The novel tackles two aspects of the Cold War: the fear of nuclear warfare and the space race which stemmed from the rivalry between the United States and

the Soviet Union. Rather than being a war taking place on battlefields, the Cold War instead took the form of fear-mongering campaigns to see which nation had the advantage in terms of technology by building rockets and missiles which also led to espionage.

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* materializes the fears of the Cold War in different forms, the planet being affected by the “dust” in the aftermath of World War Terminus, the need for humans to emigrate to space to escape Earth’s impending doom and the androids “invading” Earth’s space taking on the form of human beings.

Ronald Reagan’s “evil empire” speech about the Soviet Union from 1983, (which took place well after the novel’s release) depicting the United States as a force of “good” and “freedom” as opposed to the “evil”, “uniform” Soviet Union paints the latter as robots without feelings and individuality.

In the novel, Rick Deckard is supposed to be receiving help from the Soviet police but an android, Polokov, impersonates that policeman in order to kill Rick Deckard. Rick eventually mixes the name of the Soviet policeman with the android’s: “Kadalyi-Polokov” (Dick, 80) This interaction can be seen as a way to depict the fear of espionage of the U.S by the Soviet Union during the Cold War but also the dehumanization of the Soviet people.

While the dehumanization of members of society was directed abroad against the Soviets, it was also a local problem with the discrimination against African-American people within the United States.

The Civil Rights movement was led by the African-American people in an effort to stop this discrimination against them and to gain the same rights as the white population; discrimination against African-Americans were especially prominent in Southern states with its history of slavery.

Major events in the Civil Rights movement include the March on Washington that took place on August 28 1963 and culminated in Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, but also the “Bloody Sunday” on March 7 1965 which originally was a march in Alabama to protest the killing of a black civil rights activist by a white policeman and escalated to the beating of protesters due to Alabama’s then governor’s support of segregation.

The end of the Civil Rights movement is considered to be the signing of the Fair Housing Act on April 11 1968 looking at ending discrimination against African-American people looking for a home; the signing followed the

assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. which took place on the 4th of the same month.

Philip K. Dick was most likely inspired by the entire movement as well in the representation of the androids and “specials” as discriminated people. Again, the killing of androids by Rick can also be read as an analogy and social commentary on the events that led to “Bloody Sunday”.

Philip K. Dick’s novels can be read as responses to personal and societal issues of his time. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the reader also encounters environmental issues including the extinction of most animals due to the “dust” resulting from nuclear warfare; as mentioned above, the threat of a nuclear war would also mean rendering the planet uninhabitable. Additionally, there was a rise in the usage of auto-mobiles throughout the sixties which caused heavy air pollution in the US as evidenced by the “Clean Air Act” that was passed in 1963 as an effort to reduce the smog and air pollution.

While Philip K. Dick’s novels are mostly embedded in their era due to his being inspired by major events of his time, many of the societal issues he tackles are still relevant to this day and pushes the reader to think about them. The philosophical notions that Dick is fond of like reality, illusion and the human condition also make his bibliography timeless as these topics will most likely remain rooted in our society.

This dissertation itself will deal with these philosophical notions that are so prominent in Philip K. Dick’s science-fiction, the concepts of “real” and “fake” and examine how they are presented in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. Whether it be the duality that is nature versus technology or “reality” versus “illusion”, this dissertation will aim to look at the fragility of such demarcations within the novel’s diegesis.

The first part of this essay will use René Magritte’s painting, *The Treachery of Images* to examine the idea of “authenticity” in the novel and how it is closely linked to an individual’s perception as well as how their surroundings and how they are brought up inevitably shape that perception.

The second part will focus on the idea of evolving as a society and how perception and preconceived ideas of what “reality” is or should be ultimately lead to a stagnation in ways of thinking.





# 1 - *THE TREACHERY OF IMAGES:* “AUTHENTICITY” AND PERSPECTIVE.

## 1.1 - SUBJECTIVITY IN THE FACE OF BIAS.

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is a novel that can be read as a tale of oppositions, depicting different perspectives and realities. Though every character the reader encounters is deeply rooted in this society, it is the way they are affected by it that provides these different perspectives. Rick Deckard, for example, is a character that enforces the system’s ideals, a force that acts upon the others while androids and “specials” are characters who are being marginalised, acted upon.

Androids are of course the most obvious example of this confrontation with an opposing perception. The battle for ethics and the “correct” idea of life in a more general way are points that we will tackle in this dissertation. Androids however, are not the only devices used in the narrative to question ideas of “reality” and “illusion”.

“Reality” is made up of one’s point of view and is shaped by their subjectivity of what the world around them looks like: “Perception”. Perception is something that varies from one person to another; shaped by our education, background, social status, our past and ideas that were passed on to us. This point of view is what makes up our “reality” and once this view of the world is put into perspective, challenged by something or someone else, this very reality starts to fall apart; whether we choose to accept this new outlook on the world or not is what shapes “reality” to us. In other words, reality is unavoidably linked to perception.

*The Treachery of Images* [1929] is an oil on canvas painting from 1929 by Belgian painter René Magritte; the painting depicts a pipe with the caption “Ceci n’est pas une pipe”, translated literally as “This is Not a Pipe”. The main aim of the painting that has been pointed out is to challenge the observer on the perception of art and its idea. Torczyner quotes René Magritte talking about his painting and what it represents in his book *Magritte: Ideas and Images* [1979]:

The famous pipe. How people reproached me for it! And yet, could you stuff my pipe? No,

it's just a representation, is it not? So if I had written on my picture "This is a pipe", I'd have been lying! (Torczyner, 71.)

The painting is “just a representation”: in other words, the painting of the pipe is the projection of the painter’s perception of what a pipe is; it is in no way a “real” pipe.

We can apply *The Treachery of Images* to the novel in various ways. One of the most striking examples of this perception of reality can be seen in chapter 12. Chapter 12 takes place in an art gallery where Rick Deckard and his newly found “ally”, Phil Resch, are tracking down an android, Luba Luft, with the objective of “retiring” her.

In this chapter, art is used to mirror reality in a direct way. Both Resch and Luft engage with paintings by Edvard Munch. Edvard Munch’s works very often gravitate towards anxiety, something that we can associate with androids and their existence, their struggle to find an identity as they have to imitate humans in order to exist. In the book *Edvard Munch and the Physiology of Symbolism* [2002], the author, Shelley Wood Cordulack underlines different subject matters tackled by Edvard Munch in his paintings: “Munch dealt with specific feelings in his choice of subject matter, among them anxiety (fear), melancholy, jealousy, and love.” (Cordulack, 53)

Phil Resch himself compares his existential crisis of whether or not he is an android to the 1893 painting of *The Scream* by Edvard Munch, often associated with existential anxiety and the human condition. “The painting showed a hairless, oppressed creature [...] Twisted ripples of the creature’s torment, echoes of its cry, flooded out into the air surrounding it” (Dick, 113.) More than just a description of the painting, Resch gives his own interpretation of it, his perspective, to convince himself that he is not an android: “‘I think,’ Phil Resch said, ‘that this is how an andy must feel.’ [...] ‘I don’t feel like that, so maybe I’m not an--’” (Dick, 113)

In a similar way to Phil Resch, Luba Luft is found contemplating *Puberty* by Edvard Munch from 1895; the subject matter of this painting is often associated with fear and anxiety but also sexual awakening.

In the novel, androids are considered to be “fake humans”, copies of a genuine human being; Luft herself says, “I really don’t like androids. Ever since I got here from Mars my life has consisted of imitating the human...” (Dick, 116) The main difference between androids and human beings according to the characters is that they cannot feel empathy, which makes them inferior to the latter.

“Empathy, evidently, existed only within the human community...” (Dick, 26) In appearance, however, they are indistinguishable from human beings, making them a sort of reproduction, which is echoed in this chapter when Luba Luft asks Rick Deckard to buy her a reproduction of *Puberty*. “Buy me a reproduction of that picture I was looking at when you found me.” (Dick, 115) Luba Luft shows that she is aware of her value compared to a genuine human being but asks Rick to buy a reproduction to show that the “copies” still have value in their own way. We learn that the real painting is invaluable, “not for sale”; (Dick, 11) but also that the reproduction is marketable and cheap “Twenty-five dollars”. (Dick, 115) It is something that applies both to androids and electric animals; genuine beings are more valuable than their reproductions.

In the novel’s movie adaptation from 1982 directed by Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner*, what we call in the book “androids” or “andys” are referred to as “replicants”. The word “replicant” underlines the fact that androids are in fact replicas of human beings, copies if you will. Luba Luft refers to this concept of replicas, saying that androids are only “Imitating, as far as I’m concerned, a superior life form” (Dick, 116).

In some modern western cultures especially, copying others’ work is frowned upon and “originality” is sought after: the society of the novel bases itself on the belief that the “original” is necessarily better than every consequent “copy” that may come after it; “Regular” human beings are using this assumption as a way to justify their superiority over others.

The imitation of reality through art is a concept called “mimesis”: Plato believed that plays and poems, while being inspired greatly by reality, were not enough to convey the truth and knowledge, but was rather rhetoric to convey a message driven by “inspiration”. In *Ion*, Plato writes a dialogue between Socrates and Ion about whether Ion writes about the “truth” with knowledge or whether he was “inspired” to write it and embellishing the truth, which makes his art “false” and erroneous. Aristotle on the other hand, believed that art was a means to attain “perfection”: something that does not age and is timeless. It is an “imitation” of reality, but an imitation which exaggerates certain features of reality and is necessary to construct what is “art”, a topic that he tackles in his work, *Poetics* [335BC].

Impossibilities should be referred to poetic effect, or idealization of the truth, or opinion.

With regard to poetic effect, a plausible impossibility is preferable to what is implausible but possible. Again, it is impossible for people to be as Zeuxis painted them, but that is an idealization of the truth; one should surpass the model. (Aristotle, 31)

Furthermore, we can also see cases of anti-mimesis in the novel: a philosophical idea advanced by Oscar Wilde from his 1889's essay *The Decay of Lying*; it goes the opposite way of Aristotle's mimesis ("Art imitates life") and inverts it ("Life imitates Art"). A perception of reality is given through art and thus shapes an individual's original point of view.

All that I desire to point out is the general principle that Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life, and I feel sure that if you think seriously about it you will find that it is true. Life holds the mirror up to Art, and either reproduces some strange type imagined by painter or sculptor, or realizes in fact what has been dreamed in fiction. (Wilde, 11-12)

In the novel, we can see that reality can imitate art to a great extent indeed; it is depicted literally in chapter 12 as the scene of Luba's death is reminiscent of Munch's painting: "She began to scream; she lay crouched against the wall of the elevator, screaming. Like the picture, Rick thought to himself..." (Dick, 116.)

Wilde's philosophy opposes realism in art; he encourages embellishing facts rather than telling the whole truth: "The final revelation is that Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of Art." (Wilde, 18) Androids are abstract and elusive to human beings: they represent something beyond imagination and logic and yet appear real to the eyes of humans without them understanding what they are, which is the reason why their existence is questioned. "Do you think androids have souls?" (Dick, 117) This conflict between mimesis and anti-mimesis also mirrors the confusion of (self)-identity in both androids and human beings.

Androids like Pris use science fiction novels, surreal literature about space travel before space travel existed, as a means of temporary escape from this confusion in identity; this sequence underlines the importance of "fakeness", the imaginary in the building of one's identity. Androids like Pris are interested in this kind of fiction because of the anti-mimetic nature of their own existence in the sense that they are imitations of human beings.

'And Horst got me interested in pre-colonial fiction.'

‘You mean old books?’  
 ‘Stories written before space travel but about space travel.’  
 ‘How could there have been stories about space travel before--’  
 ‘The writers,’ Pris said, ‘made it up.’  
 ‘Based on what?’  
 ‘On imagination. A lot of times they turned out wrong.’ (Dick, 131)

This difference between androids and human beings when it comes to their perception of art and philosophy is not due to their nature, it is due to their overall experience of the world. One’s subjectivity is affected and shaped by how this world will choose to welcome them.

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* subjectivity and perspective play a central role in the story. Through John Isidore and the different androids, the reader is given a different perspective of the world that surrounds the characters in opposition to Rick Deckard’s. At the beginning of the novel, as John Isidore, who is a special, wanders about his flat and his building, we see how his surroundings and the media he is exposed to are influencing him on a fundamental level and how he reacts to them. his perspective of reality is shaped by these two elements.

Through the descriptions given by Rick and John Isidore, the environment the main characters live in, Earth, is depicted as an inferior place to live in because of the omnipresent pollution. In contrast, a “brighter” and more “pleasant” depiction of the colonies is given by the TV, which explains the characters wanting to move there to emphasize the contrast between these two worlds.

The TV set shouted, ‘--duplicates the halcyon days of the pre-Civil War Southern states! Either as body servants or tireless field hands, the custom-tailored humanoid robot – designed specifically for YOUR UNIQUE NEEDS, FOR YOU AND YOU ALONE.’ ( Dick, 14)

Space colonies are depicted here as “halcyon”, meaning an idyllic and peaceful place from the past. On the other end of the spectrum from space colonies, we find Earth; polluted and barely inhabitable. It is clearly stated that the space colonies are meant to reproduce the pre-Civil war southern states which strongly advocated slavery.

It is evident that the androids are seen as slaves, even though the word “slave” is not used by human beings in the novel, androids very much fit the roles of “body servants” and “field hands”. The adjectives “idyllic” as well as “halcyon”

are targeted to the android owners and not the androids, explaining why the androids fled the colonies in the first place, to flee a life of servitude and pain.

The novel is mostly seen through the eyes of Rick Deckard, a “regular” human being and bounty hunter who “retires” androids. He can be seen as an average man, an everyman figure in this universe: he is not an android nor a “chickenhead”, he is well integrated in his society. However, his line of work which requires him to eliminate “replicas” of humans who have their own agency lead him towards philosophical and existential questions; this questioning about his work eventually leads him to step out of his society’s perception of “normalcy”.

At the beginning of the novel, Rick’s perspective is noticeably biased against androids as one would expect for a bounty hunter. Since he is the protagonist, the reader is mostly exposed to his point of view. The problems and ethical questions that he encounters are also the ones that the readers will pose themselves. Nevertheless, the narrative paradoxically also encourages a disconnect from Rick, who is initially presented as the everyman figure in this society. The novel, through its depiction of its dystopian society’s accepted definition of “normalcy” as well as “right” and “wrong”, pushes the reader to challenge Rick’s actions and thought processes towards androids.

Rick’s perspective is supposed to be that of a “regular” human being within the world of the novel, a “norm”: wary or even violent towards rebellious androids and especially the Nexus-6 type since he is not familiar with them. His unfamiliarity with them in addition to his job as a bounty hunter increases the sense of othering and alienation, making them seem even more menacing to him:

‘The Nexus-6. He had now come up against it. Rachael, he realized; *she must be a Nexus-6*. I’m seeing one of them for the first time. And they damn near did it; they came awfully damn close to undermining the Voigt Kampff scale, the only method we have for detecting them.’ (Dick, 52)

Rick’s already negative perception of androids as well as the arrival of a new type of android increases that bias that he already had against them.

At the beginning of the novel, Rick’s point of view is challenged by his wife, Iran: “‘I’ve never killed a human being in my life.’ His irritability had risen, now; had become outright hostility. Iran said, ‘Just those poor andys.’” (Dick, 01)

This interaction between Rick and Iran not only gives Rick Deckard's perspective of androids as inhuman objects, but also that he does not consider himself as a "killer", he has been led into thinking that what he is doing is for the "greater good". The scene sets in motion the moral transformation of Rick and awareness of the existence of another way of thinking, the possibility of androids as living beings and consequently, whether or not and it is "right" to "retire" them.

A prime indication of Rick's perspective of androids is the constant use of "retire" as opposed to "kill" or "murder" throughout the novel. While "killing" and "murdering" is applied to living things and more specifically human beings, androids are associated with the term "retire", which suggests that they no longer have a purpose and are no longer needed. But "retire" is also used for human beings who stop working because of their age; it is usually a voluntary act. Yet androids are denied free will because someone else retires them, it is not a choice of their own. The fact that the euphemism "retire" is used instead of "kill" or "murder" suggest that the individuals who use that term are not willing to accept and assume the guilt of killing androids because the androids resemble human beings too much.

Androids are dissociated from basic human emotions and concepts like "empathy" and "life" to emphasize their fakeness; furthermore, the Voigt-Kampff test is used by the bounty hunters to "confirm" whether an individual is a human being or an android. The test is confirmed to not be 100% accurate and not suitable for the new Nexus-6 androids. "You realize – you ought to, anyhow – that this test isn't specific for the new brain units. No test is." (Dick, 30)

In addition to the Voigt-Kampff scale not being reliable enough, this is also the only test known by Rick and his superiors at the beginning of the story; their only scale to detect an android is not even calibrated for the Nexus-6 type. "If you can't pick out all the humanoid robots, then we have no reliable analytical tool..." (Dick, 33)

When he comes to know the existence of another test, the Boneli test, testing reflexes, (Androids have a slower nervous reaction than humans) Rick has trouble adapting to a new test and he also refuses to use it because he says he is not accustomed to it, even though it is described as "simpler" by Phil Resch. "'Ours is probably simpler,' Resch said. 'The reflex-arc response taking place in the upper ganglia of the spinal column requires several microseconds more in the humanoid



robot than in a human nervous system.” (Dick, 103)

The fact that Rick refuses to use another test and that he trusts a test that has not been proven accurate on Nexus 6 androids, shows that a big part of subjectivity comes into play when determining whether someone is an android or not. Rick trusts the accuracy of the test, despite the test being said to not be 100% accurate and that a human with mental conditions could be mistaken for an android:

‘The Leningrad psychiatrists,’ Bryant broke in brusquely, ‘think that a small class of human beings could not pass the Voigt-Kampff scale. If you tested them in line with police work you’d assess them as humanoid robots. You’d be wrong, but by then they’d be dead.’ (Dick, 32)

Rick, even though he knows full well that a human being could be mistaken for an android, chooses to trust the results of the test to go ahead with his job, as acknowledging that the test is erroneous would make his job too complicated and he would no longer have a purpose or a way to earn money. “[...] if one of the humans fails to pass it--’ ‘That can’t happen.’ Rick said.” (Dick, 32) Rick refuses to admit that the system he is a part of can be wrong as it would prevent him from doing his job and earning enough money to buy a live animal as he intended. Such admissions would also challenge his reality which he heavily shapes through his subjectivity. Bryant confirms that subjectivity is required to do their job as bounty hunters. “Now we’re forced, as we knew we would be, to determine it on our own.” (Dick, 33)

Rick’s entire job is based on his and his colleagues’ judgement following the application of the Voigt-Kampff test on the individuals on the list. Dave Holden himself may not be objective towards the androids and the people from his list, but neither Rick nor the reader can verify that fact: “Assuming Dave was right. Everything is based on that assumption, this entire list.” (Dick, 31)

As a bounty hunter whose job is to “retire” androids, Rick reconciles himself to the idea of “killing” them by thinking of them as killers and machines who do not even have any regard for their comrades, which would make their destruction morally “right”. Rick bends his reality to bypass the discomfort of killing them by justifying his deeds through Mercerism. “Rick liked to think of them that way; it made his job palatable. In retiring – i.e. killing – an andy he did not violate the rule of life laid down by Mercer. You shall kill only the killers...” (Dick, 27)

Through his relation with Phil Resch, Rick shows how convenient it is for a bounty hunter to bend their reality to think of people he hates as androids, so that he can kill them easily without feeling any remorse. “I hope to god you do test out as an android.’ ‘You really hate me,’ Phil Resch said, marveling. ‘All of a sudden; you didn’t hate me back on Mission Street. Not while I was saving your life.’” (Dick, 119)

Rick comforts himself that what he does is good, because he thinks himself as an average man who needs to attain a higher social status by buying a genuine animal; he refuses to accept an outside view of the world: it is an egotistical perception of his surroundings. As long as one finds a way to justify what they do in some way, it can be considered “genuine”; everything thought to be outside that viewpoint is “fake” and is rejected.

The exploitation of androids as servants or slaves indicates to the reader the existence of a hierarchy and where the androids are placed within it: at the very bottom. John Isidore, a “special”/ “chickenhead”/ “anthead”, a human that is not considered a human being, but is not an android either, can be found at the middle of this hierarchy. Unlike Rick Deckard, he cannot be considered the average man because of the marginalized status that he has been given.

John Isidore’s point of view provides us with the idea of a reject of society and someone who cannot aspire to higher social status; his job also does not require him to come into direct contact with androids as he works for an electric pet vet.

John Isidore is impacted by his classification and his status as a “chickenhead”. His introductory passage tells us that he has been isolated and that his only point of communication with the rest of the world outside of his job has been television, which constitutes his surroundings and his perspective: “... occasional peculiar entities remained in the virtually abandoned suburbs. John Isidore, being yammered at by the television set in his living room as he shaved in the bathroom, was one of these.” (Dick, 13) Unlike Rick who claims to hate androids, John Isidore does not have a strong opinion of them. “‘You’re androids,’ Isidore said. But he didn’t care, it made no difference to him. ‘I see why they want to kill you,’ he said. ‘Actually you’re not alive.’” (Dick, 114) John Isidore may not be a bounty hunter but, as seen in this very quote, the bias around androids is still very much present: he clearly states that they are not alive and sees “the point” of killing them. The alienation that comes from the prejudices associated with

androids are voiced by him with confidence because he believes his perspective to be the true one, as he has been instructed by the commercials he sees on TV. In this sense, he is still a part of human society.

## 1.2 - THE CONCEPT OF “LABELS”.

Isidore was not able to tell the difference between a human being and an android at first. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, labels are the cornerstone of society as they determine one’s fate; from social status, gender and religion. Association of a word to either living beings or objects is to determine a specific purpose in a society: names determine an identity, how one is seen by oneself and by others.

In the novel, however, “labels” are taken to the extreme and they give us an idea of how deeply they affect perspective and identity. Alienation is created through labels. As a first example of their toxic nature and their affect on the individuals, we may take the case of “androids”, a definition given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* being as follows: “(in science fiction) a robot with a human appearance.” (*OED*). The humans’ hate and discomfort towards androids can partially be explained by their appearance. They can be mistaken for humans, but their alleged lack of empathy differentiates them from the latter; androids take the form/ appearance of human beings while also being machines. This definition of androids as a robot taking on a human form can also explain their existential crisis: they are stuck in in a liminal state, between human being and machine. This liminality is echoed by the various names given to androids from the very beginning of the novel, namely “humanoid-robot”, dehumanizing them and making them tools and machines at the service of humans while also appearing human.

The label “servants” clearly indicates that androids are at the service of human beings:

“... the humanoid robot – strictly speaking, the organic android – had become the mobile donkey engine of the colonization program. Under UN law each emigrant automatically received possession of an android subtype of his choice [...] the android servant as carrot, the radioactive fallout as stick.” (Dick, 13)

The Nexus-6 androids are sold as machines and servants, they are also treated as

such by human beings. Such treatment of androids is to prevent human beings from thinking of them as living creatures with feelings instead of mere tools, as we later learn that relations between androids and humans are prohibited.

The way for humans to justify their treatment of androids as machines is to completely label them as such and dismiss their human-like side since they were created to serve humans as machines from their inception.

Androids having a list on constituents listed on a brochure also confirms the humans' belief that they are only machines and nothing more. ““Did you read over the company's brochure and the spec sheets? The Nexus-6 brain unit they're using now is capable of selecting within a field of two trillion constituents, or ten million separate neural pathways.”” (Dick, 24)

As previously mentioned, the Voigt-Kampff test was not proven to fully work on the newer androids, instead, they could be mistaken for “specials” who have a diminished sense of empathy. (The Nexus-6 type.) Humanity is clinging on to the past by dismissing such evolution; androids are becoming smarter with new iterations, yet humanity refuses to accommodate and still labels them as machines. Humanity's refusal to acknowledge and understand the evolution of technology means that they continue using old labels and treat androids as if they never evolved to give humanity the illusion of having control.

The term “Nexus 6 type” is in keeping with androids as machines as well, the “6” in the naming convention referencing the type and serial number of androids. This naming convention is evidently a way to keep humanity above androids; their “evolution” is not the same as humans, rather, their evolution is a technological advancement. Once again, society makes it easier for bounty hunters to dissociate themselves from androids and keeps them from feeling any empathy towards them. The labels put an emphasis on their status of objects, implying the persuasive power of words.

In his work, *Titles, Labels and Names: A House of Mirrors* [2006], Greg Petersen describes our perspective on paintings; as human beings, we cannot dissociate textual descriptions or captions that people wrote about a painting from the painting itself. For example, even if the painting was not given a name at the time of its making, it is difficult now to find a famous painting without a name attached to it. Moreover, the study of these paintings is in the form of words rather than the wordless appreciation of the art:

Much of the world we live in is visual and linguistic in nature: visual to the extent that seeing is associated with knowing, and linguistic to the extent that we can communicate through the use of words and letters. For thousands of years there has been a close relationship between images and language. Both are commonly represented through the use of pigments on a two-dimensional surface. While we know of no literary relationships in early paintings, it is extremely rare today to find paintings without a literary appellation attached. Today we study paintings through words, but only on the most elementary levels do we study words through paintings. (Petersen, 29-30)

Perhaps, another interpretation of *The Treachery of Images* by Magritte would be to say that labelling the painting with the words “This is not a pipe” is only the interpretation of Magritte about his own painting. Words and captions associated with a painting can (mis)lead a person to interpret art differently to how they would if there were no textual aid. It could be considered another form of deceit to associate a description by somebody else to a painting, as it gives a preconceived idea of that very painting and influences the perspective of the observers.

Using Greg Petersen’s view of the world as being “visual and linguistic in nature”, we can determine that in the post-apocalyptic world of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* linguistic knowledge has reached a limit where it can no longer identify the new androids correctly; however, the use of now inadequate words could show a will to refuse, refute or even bury the evolution of androids beyond their status as servants and their newly-found consciousness and intelligence behind these words.

Words shape the world and their use informs us about the world in which they are used; they show the state, the climate and the era people are living in, but also shape what is “real” or what is “fake” without necessarily relying on the physical presence and proof of what is talked about. Human beings who are unfamiliar with the Nexus-6 androids and who never came into contact with this type of android have only seen brochures detailing their existence yet an idea of them is already given to the reader even before they read about one themselves.

Largely because of the labels associated with them, the reader is led to believe that Rick’s and his colleagues’ point of view that “a humanoid robot is like any other machine...” (Dick, 34) which can be disposed of at any time, may be the correct one. The only point of comparison they have at this point of the story is the one given by Iran, a human being, who calls Rick a “murderer hired by the cops”

(Dick, 01) and claims to feel bad for these “poor andys”. (Dick, 01) The reader’s idea of androids at the beginning of the story is limited, only seen through two human beings.

The reader is not told that either of the point of views are valid, instead creating anticipation to see an android so that they can make up an idea of these beings themselves. The reader, just like the characters in the novel is fed a point of view until proven otherwise through interactions with them.

The first Nexus-6 type android we see is the same one as Rick’s in the story: Rachael Rosen from the Rosen association; the association which is behind the engineering of Nexus-6 brain and their commercialization on the Mars colony.

At first, Rick and the reader are led to believe that Rachael is a human and the niece of Eldon Rosen, an executive at the Rosen association. ““My uncle took the call from your superior and by now he probably has--’ ‘You’re a family?’ Rick broke in. ‘ A corporation this large is a family affair?’” (Dick, 37)

From the first time the reader and Rick see her, the label of “human being” and “niece” are attached to Rachel, thus she is treated as such by Rick; we can refer back to Greg Petersen’s idea of words attached to a painting.

As soon as Rick learns that he will administer the Voigt-Kampff test to Rachel, a deeper distrust is perceived. Immediately after, the “human being” label is put into question and the “android” label is a possibility, Rick’s perception of Rachael changes. ““Give me the test.’ ‘Why?’ Rick said, puzzled. Speaking up, Eldon Rosen said hoarsely. ‘We selected her as your first subject. She may be an android. We’re hoping you can tell.’” (Dick, 40)

Upon learning that he will be administering the test to Rachael, Rick also refers to her differently: the pronoun “she” usually used for human women is now replaced by “it”; which is an indicator for unfamiliar animals or objects. Relating to this issue of pronouns, Rick picks up that the owl is electric because Rachael refers to it as “it” and not “she”; suggesting that the animal is a fake one. “It, he thought. *She keeps calling the owl it.* Not her.” (Dick, 50)

Labels are very much associated with perspective: they cannot be dissociated. ““You’re an android,’ he said. ‘That’s the conclusion of the testing,’ he informed her – or rather it -” (Dick, 44) From this point forward, since Rachael Rosen has been tested as an android by the Voigt-Kampff test (which Rick trusts), she is now labelled “android”; as a result, she cannot be seen as anything else by

Rick.

The fact that Rick cannot dissociate Rachel from her identity as an android is in-keeping with Greg Petersen's work which states that words can hardly be dissociated from the painting once it is described in a certain way.

The Voigt-Kampff test serves more as a labeller rather than an actual test to determine whether someone is an android. Rick fully trusts the test and is confident in his labelling; he has a strong "linguistic" confirmation with the test. However, he has little "visual" confirmation that Rachael is indeed an android: he was even fooled upon meeting her for the first time, as androids are visually indistinguishable from human beings.

Rick believes in the system he is part of, he is deeply embedded into it and he believes in the Voigt-Kampff test he has been using as a bounty hunter. To him, the test cannot be erroneous, he perceives the results as truthful, the label given to him by the test is also genuine: Rachael Rosen is merely a representation, a copy of a human being and he has no reason to see her as otherwise. "The elder Rosen said, 'She's not an android.' 'I don't believe it,' Rick said. 'Why would he lie?' Rachael said to Rick fiercely. 'If anything, we'd lie the other way.'" (Dick, 44)

The convincing and powerful nature of labels is highlighted again when John Isidore is convinced that a "genuine", live cat is a "fake", electric one. Used to dealing with electric animals, John Isidore instinctively categorizes the cat as "fake", mirroring the way Rick was misled into believing that Rachael was a human being and not an android. The repetition of the words "fake" and "false" is conveying the idea that John Isidore is convincing himself and the reader that the animal is in fact electric; even though it is not. "Funny, he thought; even though I know rationally it's faked, the sound of a false animal burning out its drive-train and power supply ties my stomach in knots." (Dick, 63)

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* takes place in a world where technology is dominant, but the organic creatures such as human beings and animals still have priority over androids and electric animals precisely because they are organic. The labels also give us an insight on the liminal and transitory state of such a world, a state of duality: a duality between the use of technology by humans and their desire to keep the human race "pristine"; a duality found in "real" vs. electric animals; and a duality found within "humanoid robots" with both their organic and

machine sides. This liminal state of androids, which we can call “between ‘genuine’ and ‘fake’” is also found in other aspects of this society and is not exclusive to androids.

Androids are very closely related to electric animals. In terms of labels, that association is also made apparent; again, the mix of organic and mechanic are characteristics shared by both androids and electric animals, which is why we can underline a relation between them. It becomes easier for the reader to picture the implications of how the androids are perceived even by only knowing about how electric animals are also considered lesser beings than their genuine counterparts.

The Voigt-Kampff test, for example, depicts a representation of the world before androids, before World War Terminus. The reader, through the descriptions given by the test, is given a very different depiction of the world to the one in which Rick lives at the time when the novel takes place.

Keeping the use of the artistic lexical field in mind, the world after World War Terminus is described and perceived as industrial, greyer and colder with muted colours. “In a giant, empty, decaying building which had once housed thousands, a single TV set hawked its wares to an uninhabited room.” (Dick, 12) This world is much more embedded in technology, which explains the negative connotations surrounding androids and electric animals.

As for the world we see through the Voigt-Kampff test, the reader is given a much more vibrant and colourful world as opposed to the present, it is free from industrialization. “‘You rent a mountain cabin,’ he said, ‘in an area still verdant. It’s rustic knotty pine with a huge fireplace.’” (Dick, 42)

The two images give the reader a framework of the characters’ perspectives and why labels such as “robots” and “electric animals” are seen in a negative light: despite their creation and exploitation of them, everything associated with these labels can be seen as a blight on society by “regular” human beings. Falsification of humans and animals is what rendered the world “fake” according to the descriptions and connotations associated with certain terms.

Another group considered “lesser humans” are the “specials” or “chickenheads”: human beings with mental illnesses and lesser intellect than those who are considered “regulars”; they have supposedly been affected by the “dust”, the polluted air resulting from World War Terminus. The “specials” are the ones who were exposed to the dust for too long and as a result, lost their status as “regulars”:



they no longer have the right to migrate to space colonies and are doomed to stay on Earth.

A parallel can be drawn between the “specials” and the “androids” in terms of labels; both the groups are denied their humanity. The word “special” in itself means that something or someone cannot be considered “normal” any more. That the word “special” is either used to underline a positive trait or a negative trait, does not change the fact that alienation is created through this naming convention as is the case with “humanoid robots”.

Neither androids nor specials can be classified as “normal” because they are perceived as somehow lacking the level of humanity required to be considered as such. If for androids their main “failure” is their alleged lack of empathy, for specials, it is their mental and physical disability. “I mean the d-d-dust has d-d-done a lot to you, too, physically. Although maybe n-n-not your brain, as in m-my case.” (Dick, 68) This denial of humanity by society is directly referenced through another label given to “specials”: the “biologically unacceptable”.

Loitering on Earth potentially meant finding oneself abruptly classed as biologically unacceptable, a menace to the pristine heredity of the race. Once pegged as special, a citizen, even if accepting sterilization, dropped out of history. He ceased, in effect, to be part of mankind. (Dick, 13)

The many different labels, however, show the strong need of categorization and the desire to set up a hierarchy. This is something that is innate in every human being; it gives us the illusion of order and helps us determine what “is” and what “is not”. In other words, what matters to an individual and what does not. One can see this in the discussion of paintings and art movements between Rick and Phil Resch.

‘Did you really like that Munch picture that Luba Luft was looking at?’ he asked. ‘I don’t care for it. Realism in art doesn’t interest me; I like Picasso and--’  
‘*Puberty* dates from 1894,’ Rick said shortly. ‘Nothing but realism existed then; you have to take that into account.’ (Dick, 121)

Phil Resch miscategorises Munch’s work to be realist although it is more commonly characterized as expressionist. It is also untrue that “Nothing but realism existed then”. These errors support the idea that they are unreliable in their labelling.

Other labels that are used to define specials are “antheads” and “chickenheads”; the one that is used the most by the characters of the novel is

perhaps “chickenhead”. These terms are ironically associated with animals which are the most important possession you can have to show that you are successful, at least when they are genuine.

Although it is true that animals are important in the novel, it is possible that ants and chicken are the less valuable animals; as we learn in chapter 1, there are genuine animals that are not as valuable as other ones. “‘Buy a cricket,’ Barbour suggested wittily. ‘Or a mouse. Hey, for twenty-five bucks you can buy a full-grown mouse.’” (Dick, 11) Ants and chicken could also be referring to and be used to mock the intelligence of those mentally affected by the dust. The word “chickenhead” is strikingly similar to the expression “birdbrain”, used as a mockery to address one’s stupidity; the similarly insulting term “chickenhead” is extremely pejorative, which is revealing of the place of the mentally affected in their society. If we can compare androids to electric animals, then the specials can be compared to the lowest valued animals; again, it is a hierarchy created through names and labels.

The first time we hear about the appellation “chickenhead”, it is from John Isidore, a special himself who integrated the term into his vocabulary. “Worse still, he had failed to pass the minimum mental faculties test, which made him in popular parlance a chickenhead.” (Dick, 15) John Isidore using a pejorative term to refer to himself shows how much he has internalized the place he was attributed by his society, proving that he is just as much part of it as Rick is, he just has a different role in it.

The fact that he is constantly reminded of his place is what makes him accept his condition as a special and that he will never have the same privileges as a regular.

But the ads, directed at the remaining regulars, frightened him. They informed him in a countless procession of ways that he, a special, wasn’t wanted. Had no use. Could not, even if he wanted to, emigrate. So why listen to that? (Dick, 17)

Terms such as “regular” and “special” are also used by him—John Isidore knows that he cannot be considered a “genuine” human being by others.

The power of labels is undeniable in the shaping of a world, of a society but also of its people; the assimilation, integration, and the use of these very labels by the people that are part of the system is what perpetuates beliefs of categorization and of hierarchies.

N. Dede A. Addy, in her essay, *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students and the Power of Labels* [2015] describes the power of words, even those not considered offensive. They reflect the human need to categorize; each of these words holds a power because they have power to classify:

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me” - or so the old saying goes. And yet, throughout history particular words and labels have been linked to manifestations of power and domination. Some labels may be highly charged, controversial, or derogatory, such as slut, Octaroon, or illegal immigrant. Others may be more mundane, but still associated with material consequences, such as sir, ma’am, boy, criminal, or blue collar. The mere categorization of words as politically correct or incorrect is an indication of their social power. (N. Dede A., 205)

“Social power” is the key phrase here: we can discern in the novel that the characters are internalizing their place in the social hierarchy. Rick is the main character of the story and set up to be the average man, even though he is a bounty hunter: his strive for better social status by obtaining a live animal, the want to immigrate to Mars colonies and his firm belief in Mercerism are the aspects of a perfectly integrated citizen of post-World War Terminus society.

Rick is integrated in his society, showing the social power of labels, how they shape a person and how a person can deeply integrate the meaning of a word. It is more a matter of integrating and being shaped by the meaning of words which are given within a network of people, a society, rather than an individual giving their meaning to a word and working around it as a single entity.

Rick is a bounty hunter: his job is to retire androids in order to get paid; by reminding himself and the reader constantly that he hates androids, he can do his job more efficiently. Conscious or not, this hate for androids perfectly fits the job he was assigned, his role as a bounty hunter. Whether his hate for androids manifested before or after becoming a bounty hunter, it does show his integration of his role in society. “‘You have no difficulty viewing an android as inert,’ the girl said. ‘So you can ‘retire’ it, as they say.’” (Dick, 34) While Rick’s job is facilitated by the use of the word “retire”, this word again shows a certain unease and a repressed guilt by society, or at least a way to put bounty hunters at ease (“as they say”) when disposing of androids. So while Rick is not discriminated against like androids and specials are, labels still affect him in his everyday life.

John Isidore, as mentioned previously, fully integrated his status as a special: thinking of himself useless and unable to take part in society. Just like Rick who constantly brings up his hate for androids, John Isidore constantly reminds himself that he is worthless and that he is not capable of anything as a “chickenhead”. He has assimilated all the stigmas associated with these labels: “I’ve been living here alone too long. I’ve become strange. They say chickenheads are like that.” (Dick, 55)

“As they say” and “they say chickenheads are like that.”, highlight heavily the fact that they are not the ones in control of who they are but rather, it is their labels that are responsible for their assigned identity. The labels and names that are assigned to them are not only roles, they also shape their personality: John Isidore lacks confidence in his job and in life in general, says he does not deserve anything and is isolated; all this is always linked back to his mental capabilities and his being a special. “A special, a chickenhead; what do I know? I can’t marry and I can’t emigrate and the dust will eventually kill me. I have nothing to offer.” (Dick, 60-61)

The heavy influence of labels can again be approached through *The Treachery of Images*: the caption featured on the painting itself, as previously mentioned, can influence the observers but also challenge their point of view of paintings. The reason why John Isidore cannot dissociate himself from the pejorative description given to him is because of this “social power”: the pressure that has been perpetuated on him since he was labelled as “special”.

Challenging a label is only possible if you can take a step back and question your reality; however, this system was perpetuated for so long that the characters have embedded themselves in the society’s idea of what is “real” and what is “fake”. John Isidore only confronts his own idea of his capabilities as a “special” when he must make a call on behalf of his company, he only regains a little bit of confidence after having challenged his perspective of himself. “He felt sure he could. It seemed to him a cinch, the culmination of his whole life – and of the new authority which he had manifested on the vidphone today at work.” (Dick, 145)

Even when gaining confidence with the call he made, John Isidore still feels held back by the identity of “chickenhead” he was given; after all, a label only has meaning and power if everyone else accepts it: one’s identity is not just personal, it is also collective. “I wish I had an IQ like you have; then I could pass the test, I wouldn’t be a chickenhead. I think you’re very superior; I could learn a lot from

you.’” (Dick, 142) John Isidore wishes to dissociate himself from his own identity, what he is, in order to escape the life he was given. The “social power” of labels also pushes individuals to repress their identities, thinking that they are “fake” in the eyes of others.

The denial of identity because of labels not only affects specials, it also affects androids. From chapter 3 of the novel, we learn that androids must imitate humans in order to see a chance of survival in this world. ““This problem has always existed. Since we first encountered androids posing as humans.” (Dick, 32) Androids must assume a fake identity on Earth to avoid bounty hunters as much as they can. For Polokov, Luba Luft and many other androids, it is more an obligation rather than a denial of their identity; however, if what Garland says is true, it is possible for androids to be completely convinced that they are human. For the brief period that he doubts his identity, he is unsure that his memory is fake and questions it.

‘Or – I’ve been impregnated with a false memory system. Maybe I only remember Garland over the whole time. But–’ His face, suffused now with growing torment, continued to twist and work spasmodically. ‘Only androids show up with false memory systems; it’s been found ineffective in humans.’ (Dick, 110)

Like Rick Deckard, he is a bounty hunter, which means that, like him, he sees androids as inferior beings. (or must see them that way.) Upon learning that he could be an android himself, Phil Resch instinctively rejects the idea that he could be “fake”, a copy. ““I think,’ Phil Resch said, ‘that this is how an andy must feel.’ [...] ‘I don’t feel like that, so maybe I’m not an--’” (Dick, 113) The idea that androids can be different from what he believes and what the word implies does not cross his mind; labels are a representation of something precise to people like Phil Resch.

Phil Resch is a bounty hunter, whether he is a human being or an android, whether he had his memories falsified or not, in that state, he is a character closer to Rick Deckard. The same way John Isidore doubts his abilities because he is labelled a “special”, Phil Resch finds himself doubting his ability to give love to an animal because there is a possibility of his being an android, even though he clearly cared for then squirrel before hearing that he could be an android: it is the power of persuasion of a label.

‘...the andy is unable to keep the animal alive. Animals require an environment of warmth to flourish. Except for reptiles and insects.’

‘Would a squirrel need that? An atmosphere of love? Because Buffy is doing fine, as sleek as an otter. I groom and comb him every other day.’ (Dick, 113)

While Phil Resch questions his identity, there are also androids like Pris who are aware of their identity and their place in society but she exhibits the fact that androids have also integrated labels used by humans and their meaning as she looks down on John Isidore. Pris, an android who escaped a space colony, knows that androids are treated poorly and the implications of the word “android” and what they are believed to be; yet upon learning that John Isidore is a special, her attitude towards him changes drastically and she treats him as if he were inferior to her: she acts as if she were a “regular” human:

‘Mercer even lets people like me--’ He broke off. But too late; he had already told her and he could see by her face, by the flicker of sudden aversion, that she knew. ‘I almost passed the IQ test,’ he said in a low, shady voice. ‘I’m not very special, only moderately; not like some you see. But that’s what Mercer doesn’t care about.’

‘As far as I’m concerned,’ the girl said, ‘you can count that as a major objection to Mercerism.’ Her voice was clean and neutral; she intended only to state a fact, he realized. The fact of her attitude towards chickenheads.’ (Dick, 57)

Again, androids are also living under the influence of humans’ perspectives; they exist in a human-dominated society and are thus also affected and shaped by their labels. Pris, just like John Isidore, finds her self-worth affected by her label of “android”, she thinks herself as inferior to humans and as a result, thinks that she is not worthy of attention. “‘What is it?’ he said; he carried the packages and bottle to the kitchen, set them down and hurried back. Tonelessly, Pris said, ‘They’re wasted on me.’” (Dick, 127) The characters are unreliable, not only because we are told that some of them have falsified memories, but also because we do not know if their own sense of self is the genuine one. Even the androids have internalised the idea that they cannot feel empathy towards their own kind, but it is impossible to confirm what is “true” and what is “fake” about what has been said about androids and specials. “‘If he was an android,’ Roy said heartily, ‘he’d turn us in about ten tomorrow morning.’” (Dick, 143)

Even the fact that androids cannot feel empathy towards one another can be denied if we are to trust what Pris has to say: “‘Roy and Irmgard Baty. If they’re dead then it really doesn’t matter. They’re my best friends. Why the hell don’t I hear from them, I wonder?’ She cursed, angrily.” (Dick, 129) But the question is: can Pris be trusted or can the labels given to the reader up until now be trusted?

The narrative pushes the reader to decide what they consider to be “true” or “fake”. In some ways, they too are affected by the bias of labels.

The labels take on a different meaning when the androids are starting to rely on John Isidore; there is an acceptance of differences, maybe not a true acknowledgement of otherness but a step forward in the changing of perspectives.

‘Well,’ Irmgard said, ‘I won’t say anything more. But if we turn this down I don’t think we’ll find any other human being who’ll take us in and help us. Mr Isidore is--’ She searched for the word.

‘Special,’ Pris said. (Dick, 143)

In this passage, the word “special” holds a positive connotation: John Isidore is the only one who would help androids out. It is a moment of subversion of the label and shows how it is possible for them to reclaim slurs to make it their own. (as it is the case with “queer” in our own world for example.)

### 1.3 - IDENTITY AND REALITY IN RELATION TO APPEARANCES.

The last chapter explored “labels” and the power of words and names, how they shape individuals and society in general. Closely linked to labels is the idea of appearances in society. Like labels, appearances are used to categorize people and put them into specific boxes. Beauty for example is defined by the society in which an individual lives; labels and appearances are in that case indissociable. As seen previously, human beings cannot distance themselves from categorization, whether it be memories, objects or even people, categorization is innate in every single human being. Appearances associated with labels and names and how individuals are described through words bring us back to Greg Petersen’s idea of a visual and linguistic dominated world, “...it is extremely rare today to find paintings without a literary appellation attached.” (Petersen, 30)

In the novel, bias based on appearances mainly stems from the alienation and confusion created by technology and pollution. Dust affects intelligence, but we are also told that specials are also physically altered by the hazard. “Loitering on Earth potentially meant finding oneself abruptly classed as biologically unacceptable, a menace to the pristine heredity of the race.” (Dick, 13) The term “biologically

unacceptable” underlines that physical difference and inferiority through physical appearances but it also sets a standard to live up to in terms of looks to be considered a “regular” human being. This alienation through the body also implies a biological “fakeness”, the “regular” human body being the standard that makes them “real”.

John Isidore, as a special, is not only self-aware about his mental capabilities but about his appearance as well; his social identity and his self-worth is also heavily influenced by his body. “‘I c-c-can’t use the vidphone,’ Isidore protested, his heart laboring. ‘Because I’m hairy, ugly, dirty, stooped, snaggle-toothed, and gray. And also I feel sick from the radiation; I think I’m going to die.’” (Dick, 68) Appearances and the way one is seen by others constitute, as a whole, one’s social standing and identity.

Confusion is created through strides made in technology and it is primarily seen in the Nexus-6 androids. We tackled the topic of the “humanoid robot” being the liminal state between robots and humans but labelled completely as machines by their society, denied of their humanity.

The problem of labelling has arisen from the fact that humans are unable to distinguish themselves from androids in terms of appearance, to discern the “real” from the “fake”. The uneasiness and fears that humanity face regarding the Nexus-6 androids are caused by the alleged lack of empathy towards their kind; their intelligence surpassing a vast majority of the special population and their appearance, which is indistinguishable from a human being.

If the concept of mimesis by Plato, as well as *The Treachery of Images* by Magritte are to be applied to androids and their appearance, then it can be said both that androids are inspired by reality and that they are reproductions of human beings. The problem stems from them being too close to being “real”, in that case, the androids approach Aristotle’s definition of mimesis, which would mean that they “perfect reality”. The androids’ close resemblance to humans makes human beings fear that they might lose their grasp of reality, and also lose their identity as human beings in the process, their place in society.

The problem of androids posing as humans and human beings not being able to tell the difference is shown on multiple occasions in the story. One of the most striking examples is Dave Holden forgetting that he might be dealing with an android and being shot as a result: “‘Polokov is mimicking a special, an anthead. Very deteriorated – or so he pretends to be. That’s what suckered Dave; Polokov



apparently looks and acts so much like an anthead that Dave forgot.” (Dick, 73)

Androids’ resemblance to human beings awaken the fear that one could be fooled by a machine; they are smart enough to mimic a “special” and not a “regular” as the former is underestimated by humanity. Dave falling for an android acting as a special is the kind of event that makes humans confront the idea that androids are equal or even superior to human beings, thus discrediting the hierarchy they constructed.

Another tangible fear linked to appearances is that humans could be replaced by a fake counter-part. ““Maybe there was once a human who looked like you, and somewhere along the line you killed him and took his place. And your superiors don’t know.”” (Dick, 88) The existence of the Voigt-Kampff scale is an admission that appearances can no longer be relied on, at least to the naked eye; instead, the test relies on emotional responses and subtle reactions from the subject. Even though it is established that the test can be erroneous, Rick wants to believe in it, again because he does not want to lose control of his reality.

This confusion and fear in identities also exists for androids, they are reproduced, manufactured and look exactly like thousands of other humanoid robots of their series. Rachael is conscious and afraid of that fact.

‘And she can go back to Seattle and live my life. I never felt this way before. We *are* machines, stamped out like bottle caps. It’s an illusion that I – I personally – really exist; I’m just representative of a type.’ (Dick, 164)

Rachael, because of the way she was manufactured, does not feel that she has a proper identity, she only has the “illusion” of having one because she could be replaced anytime without anyone noticing. Her identity is not hers to own, her identity is “just a representative of a type.”

The androids appear as mirrors of human beings in terms of appearance, as “fake” versions and reproductions. In a similar situation are animals and their electric equivalent: the electric animals appear and act as if they are organic, live on the outside but are machines on the inside. In the same way that humans can be fooled by androids passing as humans, they can also be fooled by electric animals; the only tell-tale sign that an animal is electric is their hidden control panel. “Going over to his sheep, Rick bent down, searching in the thick white wool – the fleece at least was genuine – until he found what he was looking for: the concealed control

panel of the mechanism.” (Dick, 08)

Both electric animals and androids are copies of the genuine article and appear that way, but it does not change the fact that they are completely “fake” in the eyes of Rick. To him and his society, the genuine and biological animal is more valuable than the copies made of it because they are alive and are “originals”, just as the copy of *Puberty* by Edvard Munch that he bought for Luba Luft is not as valuable as the original. “He thought, too, about his need for a real animal; within him an actual hatred once more manifested itself toward his electric sheep, which he had to tend, had to care about, as if it lived.” (Dick, 36)

In a world dominated by technology, it has become increasingly difficult to tell what is organic from what is electric. John Isidore finds himself confusing an electric cat with an organic cat. “‘This cat,’ Sloat said finally, ‘isn’t false. I knew sometime this would happen. And it’s dead.’” (Dick, 67) As real animals disappear progressively, fake animals are becoming more common, a “norm” of some sort, and with technology blending in with reality, appearances too are starting to become uniform.

‘He’s got a point; the fakes are beginning to be darn near real, what with those disease circuits they’re building into the new ones. And living animals do die; that’s one of the risks in owning them. We’re just not used to it because all we see are fakes.’ (Dick, 67-68)

Uniformity and reproduction of appearances are themes that can also be seen in *The Treachery of Images* by Magritte. With the word “treachery” or “trahison” in French, the painter implies that there is a way that a reproduction might “deceive” its public into thinking that his “reproduction” might be the only and “true” vision of the pipe because it is represented in a realistic way. “So good it fooled me” (Dick, 67) Appearances are indeed deceiving, one interpretation we can make of the caption “This is not a pipe” is that the painting might evoke the same feelings as the physical object that is represented; it is the power of pictures but also of appearances. The caption is here to help the observer re-evaluate their relation to the picture and see that it is “only” one representation out of many other possible; the same way that labels are applied to those who inhabit the world of the novel so that this world’s inhabitants know that something is claimed to be “fake”.

Falsification not only applies to androids, electric animals or other living beings, the world surrounding the characters can also be seen as a “facade”. The repair shop that fixes malfunctioning electric animals for instance, appears as a

veterinarian coming to collect “ill animals”. “The repair outfit’s truck is of course marked “animal hospital something.” And the driver dresses like a vet, completely in white.” (Dick, 10.) In this case, the repair shop passing as a real vet is to keep the illusion that electric animals owners are genuine animal owners; that way, the owners can save face and not reveal their actual social status of electric animal owner. The fact that Rick had a live animal and replaced it with an electric one makes him more vulnerable to criticism from his peers. “Um, I won’t say anything to anybody here in the building.’ [...] ‘But they’ll look down on you. Not all of them but some. You know how people are about not taking care of an animal.” (Dick, 08.)

The objective of deceiving people by showing them an idealized world is to comfort them with the idea that everything is working as intended and not challenge their reality, as it would also mean challenging their identities and sense of self.

The space colonies are sold as a “halcyon” or “idyllic places” and the television programs celebrate them as being the optimal place to live in compared to the polluted Earth, depicting it as a sort of safe haven or paradise where nothing wrong can happen. The television broadcast reads as a propaganda and an exaggerated depiction of space colonies; a false depiction of colonies but an appealing one for “regular” human beings. The colonies exist not only in order to keep the idea of the country of the United States alive, but also to give an ideal for the people of Earth to cling on to compared to the dying Earth.

‘Back on Earth, Mrs Klugman, in the old days, did you also worry about finding yourself classified, ahem, as a special?’

‘Oh my husband and myself worried ourselves nearly to death. Of course, once we emigrated that worry vanished, fortunately forever.’ (Dick, 15.)

This idealized depiction of space colonies, however, is erroneous according to Pris; in fact, from her perspective, it is the opposite of what has been advertised on earth’s television, describing the Mars colony as “worse” than Earth. “well, anyhow, it’s an awful place. [...] You think I’m suffering because I’m lonely. Hell, all Mars is lonely. Much worse than this.” (Dick, 130.) John Isidore’s perception of the colonies having been shaped by the commercials and other broadcasts, it is now challenged by Pris. “Don’t the androids keep you company? I heard a commercial on--’ [...] ‘I understood that the androids helped.’ ‘The androids,’ she said, ‘are lonely too.’” (Dick,130.) John Isidore is getting the perspective of an android

although he thinks he is getting that of a colonist.

In chapter ten, Rick finds himself in The Mission Street Hall of Justice building, in a place he had never seen or never heard of before. Rick Deckard is used to his city and its building; however, this police station being close to his own and his not knowing about it is discomfoting. When sudden change in something familiar occurs, it makes one question what one knows; one's sense of reality is linked to familiarity and once that familiarity is broken down, reality starts to fall apart with it.

It makes no sense, he said to himself. Who are these people? If this place has always existed, *why didn't we know about it?* And why don't they know about us? Two parallel agencies, he said to himself; ours and this one. But never coming in contact – as far as I know – until now. (Dick, 97-98.)

The whole episode of Rick dealing with the never-before-seen police station feels like a dream sequence, shaping and contradicting Rick's reality at will. In a way, the police building appears to be a mirrored world, an opposite to Rick's world, with him being the one who is in the position of being suspected to be an android and the police interrogating him, something he is used to doing. "And posing as a police officer, a bounty hunter. To gain access to a woman's dressing room in order to ask her suggestive questions." (Dick, 98.) *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* confronts illusion with reality and blends them together; the hall of justice building appears alien to Rick and he comes across strange events that can be considered "fake illusions" in his eyes.

Inserting the coin, Rick dialed his home phone number. And stood for what seemed like an eternity, waiting.

A woman's face appeared on the vidscreen. 'Hello,' she said.

It was not Iran. He had never seen the woman before in his life. (Dick, 99.)

The police station is supposed to be a familiar setting to Rick who works for the police as a bounty hunter, he even reminds others that he knows full well the procedures that he has to go through, perhaps reminding himself of these procedures in order to have the illusion of control over the situation. "When you're arraigned, however--" 'I know,' Rick said acridly. 'I'm familiar with police procedure.'" (Dick, 99)

Illusion and reality colliding can also be linked back to the fusion initiated by the empathy box in relation to the religion of Mercerism. The experience

created by the empathy box is to transport whoever grasps the handles of the empathy box into a convincing and detailed landscape. “The visual image congealed; he saw at once a famous landscape, the old, brown, barren ascent, with tufts of dried-out bonelike weeds poking slantedly into a dim and sunless sky.” (Dick, 18) The landscape is in fact so convincing that it invokes feelings in John Isidore, something so real that it makes one question if the illusion created by a machine is real or not. The landscape also has consistency and volume according to the description.

...he felt the same old painful irregular roughness beneath his feet and once again smelled 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, 18)

The way technology is able to conjure believable landscapes as well as the way individuals can distinctively recognize a familiarity in these places is a testament of how far technology has come in this era. The question of such reproductions is how far can it be considered “real” or “fake”? Just like the androids, this virtual environment finds itself in a liminal state: barely perceptible “fakeness” and at the threshold of reality.

One factor of this landscape that could make both the readers and the characters wonder about the realness of this simulation is the pain felt after being hit by the rock during the use the empathy box. “You felt it, too, he thought. Yes, the voices answered. We got hit, on the left arm; it hurts like hell.” (Dick, 19) Just like the androids, it cements the idea that the “fake”, even though they are reproductions, are able to provoke some kind of emotional response and something physically present. The main point of confusion regarding this pain is the cut and blood left after the event of fusion happened.

Releasing the handles he examined his arm, then made his way unsteadily to the bathroom of his apartment to wash the cut off. This was not the first wound he had received while in fusion with Mercer and it probably would not be the last. (Dick, 21)

This passage shows how a seeming illusion in a virtual landscape has a direct repercussion on reality and on a physical body; technology’s ability to blend reality and illusion together and the dangers that might entail fusion through the empathy box create an unstable reality. The readers even learn that such a process might end in death. “People, especially elderly ones, had died, particularly later on at the top

of the hill when the torment began in earnest.” (Dick, 21)

Mercerism, the religion in the world of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is shrouded in mysteries and appears as an illusion to its followers. The fusion process is achieved through virtual means, but it is not the only aspect seen through technology.

The face of this religion, Wilbur Mercer, is never seen in the real world in any capacity, he only appears in the virtual space as a projection. Having no physical bearings in reality, the characters and possibly the readers, are left wondering whether he is real or not. “... but Mercer, he reflected, isn’t a human being; he evidently is an archetypal entity from the stars, superimposed on our culture by a cosmic template.” (Dick, 60)

Wilbur Mercer, having no physical body in the characters’ reality, holds the place of an astral being and a religious figure as he should. His physical appearance and features are described alongside the landscape that Isidore visits with the empathy box. “One single figure, more or less human in form, toiled its way up the hillside: an elderly man wearing a dull, featureless robe, covering as meager as if it had been snatched from the hostile emptiness of the sky.” (Dick, 18) Wilbur Mercer is very scarcely described, almost in opposition and in contrast to the landscape’s description which is seen as “familiar” by John Isidore.

Wilbur Mercer is supposed to be a religious idol which justifies his almost “featureless” appearance and his “more or less human form”; his appearance is meant to represent a universal idea of a religious leader: an icon. His being an elderly man wearing a robe exemplifies the typical figure of wisdom as well as a spiritual guru. The way that his character is depicted in such an archetypal way makes people more prone to follow him, as his appearance defines his role.

In a similar position to Wilbur Mercer and Mercerism is Buster Friendly and his show; just like Wilbur Mercer, he is never seen in a direct physical form, he is a featureless man, instead seen and heard through TV, holding a twenty-three-hour program. Just like Wilbur Mercer, he is described as an alien, a “superior life form” and seen as an idol by humans, so much so that he is even seen as a religious figure.

Parallels and similarities are drawn between the two by Hannibal Sloat. “Sloat said, ‘Buster is immortal, like Mercer. There’s no difference.’ ‘How can he be? He’s a man.’ ‘I don’t know,’ Sloat said. ‘But it’s true. They’ve never admitted

it, of course.” (Dick, 66) Wilbur Mercer and Buster Friendly have transcended their physical bodies and human condition, that is why they are idolized by human beings and venerated as otherworldly beings.

Androids, while they also have overcome the human condition, are considered reproductions of human bodies and as a result are seen as “fake”; Wilbur Mercer and Buster Friendly on the other hand, are seen as human beings that have evolved to become virtual beings: one through the empathy box and the other through television, ironically in forms that can be considered “fake”. They are seen as superior perhaps because they were able to escape the effects of the dust of Earth, not even needing to escape to the colonies. ““What about Amanda Werner and those other women?’ ‘They’re immortal, too.’ ‘Are they a superior life form from another system?’ ‘I’ve never been able to determine that for sure,’ (Dick, 66) What makes them “real” is not their physical existence, but the way they overcame bodies and existence through technology: they are beyond human existence while also retaining their individuality.

Another way to tackle bodies and physical forms in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is through the notion of gender and more specifically the female body of androids. While this dissertation mainly focuses on looking at the notions of “real” and “fake” in the novel, it goes without saying that another entire dissertation could tackle the topics of gender, femininity and the patriarchal society of this particular world.

Issues surrounding gender, sex and the body in the novel are essentially linked to the notions of “real” and “fake”, firstly because androids are “machines” created by human beings and they do not age the way humans do, instead they are “born” adults.

How old did the poop sheet say Luba Luft was? As he drove he hauled out the now wrinkled notes, found her so-called ‘age.’ Twenty eight, the sheet read. Judged by appearance, which, with andys, was the only useful standard. (Dick, 83)

As told by Rick, human beings rely on their appearances to determine their age; what makes them “fake” here is the fact that their age is artificial. Rather than an age determined by a date of birth, their appearance is the determining factor. Rick uses their appearance to determine their age, androids however only live up to the age of four which once again creates alienation towards them, as their age is only

an illusion and a facade to make them closer to humans.

Later in the novel, Rick assesses Rachael through her appearance “The total impression was good, however. Although definitely that of a girl, not a woman. Except for the restless, shrewd eyes.” (Dick, 163) The importance of age to androids is mostly demonstrated through the character of Luba Luft; Rick comments on her “so-called age” and she is found at the gallery looking at the Edvard Munch painting *Puberty*, which itself tackles the topics of growth and sexual awakening; the passage to being an adult. The way Luba Luft sees androids in a negative light and human beings as a “superior life form” (Dick, 116) could be linked to her wanting to own a reproduction of *Puberty* by Munch; seeing that androids are seemingly lacking what humans have, she could be envious of the humans’ ability to develop, but also their ability to reproduce, directly linked to the “shortcomings” of her android body. Rachael asks Rick the questions that, it is implied, Luba Luft was asking herself when looking at the painting.

‘Androids can’t bear children,’ she said, then. ‘Is that a loss?’ [...] ‘How does it feel to have a child? How does it feel to be born, for that matter? We’re not born; we don’t grow up; instead of dying from illness or old age we wear out like ants.’ (Dick, 168)

Luba Luft talks about *Puberty*, the painting, as if it were the representation of the actual concept of puberty, (something you cannot just buy) it is implied that it is one of the reasons why she asks Rick to buy her a reproduction of the painting.

Throughout the story of the novel, we are shown the importance of the female body to characters such as Rick who comes to the realization that even though he chooses to perceive them as machines, his personal bias and perception of the female body makes him falter in his work as a bounty hunter: “‘I’m going down by elevator with an android I’ve captured. And suddenly someone kills it, without warning.’ ‘No particular response,’ Phil Resch said. [...] ‘A female android.’ ‘Now they’re up to 4.0 and 6 respectively.’ ‘That’s high enough,’ (Dick, 123)

Phil Resch’s interpretation of what Rick’s empathetic response is to the female androids is that it is linked to appearances, he is attracted to the female body, it is not a sentimental attachment to Luba Luft that he felt, it is purely attraction towards her body according to him. ‘It’s sex,’ Phil Resch said. ‘Sex?’ ‘Because she – it – was physically attractive. Hasn’t that ever happened to you before?’ Phil Resch laughed. ‘We were taught that it constitutes a prime problem in



bounty hunting.” (Dick, 124)

The pronoun “it” to refer to objects is once again used here, just like it is when Rick re-assesses his perception of Rachael as an android and not as a human-being. What seems to make Rick think that the female android is more important than the male counter-part is that Phil Resch tries to convince him that he feels physically attracted to them and that this is what made him feel this so-called “compassion” towards female androids. ““If it’s love toward a woman or an android imitation, it’s sex. Wake up and face yourself, Deckard. You wanted to go to bed with a female type of android – nothing more, nothing less.” (Dick, 124)

Phil Resch sees androids, especially female androids as objects and not living beings, they are disposable to him.

‘What’s happened is that you’ve got your order reversed. Don’t kill her – or be present when she’s killed – and then feel physically attracted. Do it the other way.’  
Rick stared at him. ‘Go to bed with her first--’  
‘and then kill her,’ (Dick, 124-125)

Later in the novel, Rachael herself alludes to the fact that she is not a human being when talking to Rick, not a woman, only a reproduction. “She twisted her head to one side, said loudly, ‘I’m not alive! You’re not going to bed with a woman. Don’t be disappointed; okay?’” (Dick, 168) In this scene, Rachael appears to think that she is not as valuable as a human woman because she lacks the ability to bear children, and she herself was not born and will not die “from illness or old age”: this is what it means to be alive according to her.

Identity, in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is exclusive to human beings. They are the template for androids, from appearances to the way they think, “genuine” human beings are the standard to live up to for androids and their value is determined by how close they are to this standard.

Rachael denies her identity as an android because she is conditioned to believe that human beings are the existence to look up to and that androids are inferior because they are copies, she considers the human body to be the “genuine” existence and the androids a flawed copy without considering the flaws of human beings such as illnesses. The mindset that Rachael manifests is also a testament on how her point of view is being affected by the humans’ general perspective; she considers her body to be a disappointment and refers to androids as manufactured “bottle caps”. The same thing can be said about Luba Luft who considers humans “superior beings” without thinking about their flaws.

Eli Park Sorensen, in his essay about the movie adaptation, *Blade Runner and the Right to Life* [2015] looks at the androids (replicants in the movie) as trans-human beings, as a being capable of perfecting the flaws of humans:

The Tyrell Company's motto, "More Human Than Human," literally becomes true—that is, the creation of a perfect human being, without flaws, imperfections (i.e. all that which, in a sense, makes human beings human); a stronger, more intelligent, noble, beautiful, even—ironically—more passionate, and emotional creature. By contrast, the humans in *Blade Runner* are portrayed as clearly inferior, suffering from all kinds of maladies and defects, such as alcoholism (Deckard), ageing (J. F. Sebastian), poor eyesight (Tyrell), decadence (Taffey Lewis), and lack of emotions. (Sorensen, 119)

The androids, while they do have qualities over human beings and as they do “perfect” human characteristics, they cannot be considered part of mankind by the characters. The phrase “more human than human”, while it does suggest humanity in some way, underlines the fact that androids are not humans, because they are beyond human beings in many ways: unable to become ill, to reproduce or be born the same way that humans are. What makes them “fake” from their own perspective is not that they are not good enough, it is that they lack the flaws which is what constitutes a human being, what makes them “genuine”. “Real” to the androids does not mean “perfecting humans”, it means to be “perfectly human”.

#### 1.4 - AUTHENTICITY IN RELATION TO ATTACHMENT.

What makes something or even someone “real” or “fake” goes beyond the mind or the image given by the body. Throughout *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the narrative leaves the reader to wonder whether androids should have the right to life or not, whether they deserve to exist among humans or even whether they should have the same rights as them from a societal standpoint. Characters in the novel have varying perspectives on these matters.

The earliest the readers are presented to this variation in perspective is when they learn that Iran feels bad for the humanoid robots and considers what Rick calls “retiring”, “murdering”. Iran shows pity towards androids; she seems to think of them, if not as equals, then at least that they have the right to life. By calling them “poor andys” and Rick a “murderer” (Dick, 01) Iran seems to recognize the androids’ existence as living beings and give them compassion. This acknowledgment on Iran’s part makes androids “real” from her standpoint while

Rick's perspective of seeing them as "killers" and "machines" makes them "fake".

Emotional attachment plays an important role in deciding whether some characters are valuable or not. Just like labels or appearances, they are only valid and accepted as long as someone recognizes and acknowledges them. The experience of "fusion" makes someone feel like they belong by the acknowledgement that someone else is having the same emotional experience somewhere. It is, however, in no way a personal recognition of identity.

You felt it too, he thought. Yes, the voices answered. We got hit, on the left arm; it hurts like hell. Okay, he said. We better get started moving again. He resumed walking, and all of them accompanied him immediately. (Dick, 19)

In chapter 7, the reader is presented with the direct importance of emotional and relational attachment and its effects on the perception of something close. The cat which is believed to be an electric animal by John Isidore and is actually an organic one, has died. Being used to electric animals, the electric pet repair shop offers a replacement for the cat; the characters are living in a world where everything can be reproduced "like bottle caps" and be replaced without regard to the previous life that was there. This is the reason why John Isidore takes it lightly and even optimistically when he offers a replacement cat to the owner. "But isn't it fortunate, Mrs Pilsen, that we're going to replace him. Am I correct?" (Dick, 70)

The owner, Mrs Pilsen, after being offered a replacement refuses. To John Isidore, a cat is still a cat, even if it is a different one because he does not have the experience that the owners had with their cat and feels no attachment towards it. "There is only one cat like Horace." (Dick, 70) John Isidore interprets this quote to be one that refers to appearance and likeness while the owner refers to her experience with her cat, something that cannot be replicated.

At the beginning of the chapter, John Isidore does not recognize the cat to be an organic one, not only because he is used to seeing electric animals, but also because he has no connection to this particular cat. The statement by Milt, "To him they're all alive, false animals included." (Dick, 67) also points out that John Isidore does not treat electric cats and organic cats differently, so it does not feel out of place for him to replace it.

John, thinking that the issue is one of likeness eventually comes to suggest the replacement of the cat by an exact reproduction. "What about an exact electric duplicate of your cat? We can have a superb hand-crafted job by Wheelright &

Carpenter...” (Dick, 70) The way John formulates his speech is that of a salesman trying to replace a broken tool; he does not have the sentimental proximity required to see the cat as “genuine” or as living being. The Pilsens’ proximity to their cats is expressed through Mrs Pilsen’s answer to John Isidore.

‘Oh that’s dreadful!’ Mrs Pilsen protested. ‘What are you saying? Don’t tell my husband that; don’t suggest that to Ed or he’ll go mad. He loved Horace more than any cat he ever had, and he’s had a cat since he was a child.’ (Dick, 70)

Earlier in the novel, Rick is able to determine that the owl is “fake” because he notices that Rachael calls it “it”. “It, he thought, She keeps calling the owl it. Not her.” (Dick, 50) As mentioned previously, the pronoun “it” can be used to refer to inanimate objects, but it can also refer to unfamiliar animals, as opposed to “she”, “he” or “they” used for pets, animals that are emotionally close to an individual. Throughout the entire story, we can use these pronouns as indication of sentimental proximity rather than an “objects versus human indicator”, deciding whether something is “real” or “fake” based on attachment.

Phil Resch asks Rick whether he uses the pronoun “it” to refer to androids, to gauge if he thinks of them as machines, but also to gauge whether he feels empathy towards them.

‘Do you think of them as “it?”’  
‘I did at one time,’ Rick said. ‘When my conscience occasionally bothered me about the work I had to do; I protected myself by thinking of them that way but now I no longer find it necessary.’ (Dick, 109)

Rick protected his role as a bounty hunter by refraining from feeling empathy and thus feeling attached to androids. Feeling no attachment towards Phil Resch, Rick feels like he can kill him without any remorse: “...if Phil Resch had proved out android I could have killed him without feeling anything, anyhow after Luba’s death.” (Dick, 124) Even though Phil Resch is proven to be a human being and Luba Luft to be an android, Rick thinks of Luba Luft as more alive than Phil Resch before the testing: he feels an attachment to her. “She was really a superb singer, he said to himself...” (Dick, 119) On the other hand, he feels no attachment to Phil Resch, which is why he thinks that he is definitely an android and wants him to be one as well, making him “fake” in the eyes of Rick specifically. “I hope to god you do test out as an android.” (Dick, 119)

Characters like John Isidore are looking for emotional acceptance and recognition to prove that they are “real” in someone’s eyes and are looking for someone to be attached to for the same reasons.

‘She may need help. Can I give her any help? he asked himself. A special, a chickenhead; what do I know? I can’t marry and I can’t emigrate and the dust will eventually kill me. I have nothing to offer.’ (Dick, 60-61)

The fact that the empathy factor is also included in the label of “chickenhead” proves the importance of emotional attachment in every single being. The animals mirroring both human beings and androids is further evidenced by the idea that they both need emotional acknowledgment from the others to exist: “the andy is unable to keep the animal alive. Animals require an environment of warmth to flourish. Except for reptiles and insects.’ ‘Would a squirrel need that? An atmosphere of love? Because Buffy is doing fine...’” (Dick, 113) Irmgard Baty also confirms that emotional acceptance is the only thing that is important for John Isidore and he yearns for that only, he needs to feel accepted to exist. “‘And what we did on Mars he isn’t interested in; he knows us and he likes us and an emotional acceptance like that – it’s everything to him. It’s hard for us to grasp that, but it’s true.’” (Dick, 142-143)

While Irmgard Baty says that emotional attachment is something androids cannot understand, Pris having someone to talk to and listen to what she has to say is important to her, meaning that the need for emotional acceptance is also present in androids, despite the humans’ beliefs and their own shaped by the latter. “Her voice shook but she managed to continue; obviously it meant a great deal to her to have someone to talk to.” (Dick, 130)

Rachael Rosen comments on the bond that identical twins share with each other and puts it in contrast to the way androids of the same model can replace one another and take each other’s life. While androids share “identification” because they look like each other, identical twins share an emotional recognition towards one another, which is why they can exist as separate entities unlike androids. “‘Identical human twins. They don’t--’ ‘But they identify with each other; I understand they have an empathic, special bond.’” (Dick, 164) That “special bond” is alluded earlier in the novel with Horace, the Pilsens’ cat and the bond he shares with his owner, Ed. Mrs Pilsen orders a cat which would look so similar to Horace that he would be fooled by its appearance. “‘Maybe I ought to commission an

electric replacement of Horace but without Ed ever knowing; could it be so faithful a reproduction that my husband wouldn't be able to tell?" (Dick, 71) Despite Mrs Pilsen affirming that Ed never got close to his cat, she does say that "he loved him" (Dick, 71) which implies a strong bond between them.

Milt and Hannibal Sloat confirm that the owner will be able to tell whether the cat is "real" or "fake" no matter how good the copy may seem to be, all because of the bond they shared. "'He'll know,' he said to Mr Sloat. 'In five seconds. But that's what she wants.' 'Owners who get to love their animals,' Sloat said somberly, 'go to pieces...'" (Dick, 71)

Rick himself, at the beginning of the novel tells himself that he hates his electric sheep, he does not have the same affection as Ed with his cat Horace; the reason he hates it is because it is electric and he still must take care of it as if it were an organic sheep, but also because he does not feel the affection coming from it. "Like the androids, it had no ability to appreciate the existence of another." (Dick, 36) The reason the sheep is "fake" to him is because he has no affection for it, just like how he feels about androids at the very beginning of the novel. The reader is told by Milt that John Isidore feels that organic or not, "to him they're all alive, false animals included." (Dick, 67) which makes it possible to feel attached to both synthetic and organic beings.

Rick acknowledges the existence of androids and feels empathy towards them only when he is physically attracted to one: a bond is thus created. Rachael becomes more "human" to him as he gets closer and closer to her because he feels attracted to her and has opened himself to her; emotional proximity has made her "real" to him. "'She did not, however, appear genuinely angry. If anything she had become cheerful and certainly as human as any girl he had known.'" (Dick, 170)

In the end, Rick acknowledges that the only existence that matters to him is that of Rachael Rosen: the androids who look physically similar to her (like Pris Stratton) are just reproductions and "fake" versions of her: "'There is no Pris,' he said. 'Only Rachael Rosen, over and over again.'" (Dick, 195) Rick rejects the existence of Pris Stratton as an individual because he has no bond with her, his world is only made up of Rachael Rosen. The "fake" is not necessarily the one which is artificially made and the "real" one is not necessarily made of flesh and bones, rather, it all depends on the importance given to an individual. As a result, Rachael approaches the status given to human beings because Rick considers Pris

to be Rachael's reproduction. Androids are usually considered copies of humans, not of androids themselves.

Rick having started to feel emotionally attached himself to androids, his own wife, Iran, became alien to him and thus more "fake" than any androids he had encountered because a gap between them had been created. "Most androids I've known have more vitality and desire to live than my wife." (Dick, 82) In that sense, the notion of "fake" becomes synonymous with "otherness" or "othering": the unknown. Often in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* characters are described as "cold" and "grey", though they may refer to the fact that characters are living in different worlds, (the world of androids and the world of humans.) it is also a determining factor of lack of understanding and affection; that is to say distance. "A coldness. Like, he thought, a breath from the vacuum between inhabited worlds, in fact from nowhere: it was not what she did or said but what she did not do and say" (Dick, 58) Rick's tensions with his wife Iran at the beginning of the novel, as well as the distance between them, is indicated by the contrasting colours of the characters, revealing a misunderstanding and the gap between them: "he rose from the bed, stood up in his multicolored pajamas, and stretched. Now, in her bed, his wife opened her gray, unmerry eyes..." (Dick, 01)

The distance between human beings and androids is also sensed by androids when humans approach them. "Rachael said, 'The Nexus-6s would be wary at being approached by a human. But if another Nexus-6 made the contact--'" (Dick, 79) Rachael, when talking about her relation with Pris says that she feels "identification" or even "empathy" towards her, there's a slight proximity that links them together, as they are both androids and that they are of the same model. "You know what I have? Toward this Pris android?' 'Empathy', he said. 'Something like that. Identification; there goes I.'" (Dick, 164) Human beings think of androids as "fake", impostors posing as humans which is why the Nexus-6 androids are wary of humans: anyone could be someone that carries a hate for them and thus be a bounty hunter. That thin link of being androids and the identification it engenders is the only reason why it makes them approachable by other Nexus-6, as there is also a distrust among them that sees their kind as unsympathetic towards their own: "If he was an android,' Roy said heartily, 'he'd turn us in about ten tomorrow morning. He'd take off for his job and that would be it.'" (Dick, 143.)

The closest character the story has to being connected to both parties (human beings and androids) is John Isidore as a special; he is the one who

emotionally accepts androids as soon as he meets them, unlike Rick who has to learn to accept them over the course of the novel. He feels empathy for both human beings and androids: he acts in an indiscriminating fashion towards androids, telling them that it doesn't matter if they are androids. Furthermore, he lacks the initial prejudice against androids, it doesn't matter to him; just like androids are in a biological liminal state between machine and humans, John Isidore represents the emotional bridge between them. ““But what does it matter to me? I mean, I'm a special; they don't treat me very well either, like for instance I can't emigrate.”” (Dick, 142)

John Isidore represents the middle ground linking humans and androids together; he is the character who wants emotional validation the most from both parties. On one hand, John Isidore feels like a naive character but on the other hand, he is one of the few human beings displaying empathy towards androids and genuinely wishes to help them. ““I hope,' Isidore said happily, 'I can help make your stay here on Earth pleasant.' He felt sure he could.”” (Dick, 145) Unlike Rick who says he works alone, John Isidore is drawn towards people.



## 2 - EVOLUTION AND STAGNATION: TECHNOLOGY AND AN ACUTE OBSESSION WITH THE PAST.

### 2.1 - INDIVIDUALISM AND EMPATHY.

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is an anticipation novel that questions the place of humans in society. As noted earlier, the story depicts humans in a declining world as a way to push them to their absolute limit and explores the nature of human psyche. Humans feel threatened by the existence of androids, nature is on the brink of disappearance and technology has rendered humans dependent on it to feel any type of feelings. If Philip K. Dick's point is to indeed question the nature of humans and their ability to feel empathy no matter what, it becomes relevant to bring up Plautus' line from his play *Asinaria*: "Homo homini lupus est" which can be translated as "Man is a wolf to man.". The sentence was famously used by Thomas Hobbes to demonstrate that, by nature, Man acts as unmannerly, hostile and even violent towards those he is unfamiliar with or who are different from him instinctively.

To speak impartially, both sayings are very true; *That Man to Man is a kind of God; and that Man to Man is an arrant Wolfe*: The first is true, if we compare Citizens amongst themselves; and the second, if we compare Cities. In the one, there's some analogie of similitude with the Deity, to wit, Justice and Charity, the twin-sisters of peace: But in the other, Good men must defend themselves by taking to them for a Sanctuary the two daughters of War, Deceit and Violence: that is in plaine termes a meere brutall Rapacity... (Hobbes, 24)

The quote is especially interesting if put it in the context of the novel itself since it relies heavily on parallels to animals and animal imagery, despite how androids are becoming "More Human Than Human", which, as cited earlier, is *Blade Runner*'s Tyrell Corporation's motto. Parallels between Thomas Hobbes' quote and the events of the novels can be drawn as well if we take into account how androids (who come from space colonies and thus from a different "city") and "specials" are treated as lesser. Rick Deckard himself can be compared to a predator and the androids he chases as his prey, it is ironic considering that this is what Rick considers androids to be at the beginning of the novel. "Evidently the humanoid robot constituted a solitary predator." (Dick, 27).

If Nexus-6 androids have indeed surpassed the threshold that makes them more human than human, and humans have lost their ability to feel empathy towards other beings, then Hobbes' point that humans are predatory animals is proven in the novel's diegesis, or at the very least, proven by the humans' behaviour and state of mind at the beginning of the novel.

The "solitary predator" here is thus man, emphasised by Rick's job as a "hunter" and his will to work alone. "Want to wait on the Polokov retirement until the Soviet cop gets here to help you?" Bryant asked. Rick bristled. 'I've always worked alone.'" (Dick, 75.) Hobbes' quote suggests that humans are of charitable nature and peaceful with people they are familiar with, even comparing them to deities. "In the one, there's some analogie of similitude with the Deity, to wit, Justice and Charity, the twin-sisters of peace" (Hobbes, 01) In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, it is claimed that androids cannot enter the process of "fusion" because of their inability to feel empathy and as a result, cannot live in society as humans do.

Sigmund Freud, in his 1930 work *Civilization and its Discontents* also uses Plautus' quote in order to depict the nature of Man in a more one-sided way than Thomas Hobbes. Sigmund Freud argues that men are not even good-natured to those they are familiar with and even inherently bad to their neighbours, only seeing them as points of interest if they are personally beneficial in some way. (Freud gives sex as one example.) Freud even goes as far as saying that human beings do not need love as they are "not gentle creatures":

The reality behind all this, which many would deny, is that human beings are not gentle creatures in need of love, at most able to defend themselves if attacked; on the contrary, they can count a powerful share of aggression among their instinctual endowments. Hence, their neighbour is not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to take out their aggression on him, to exploit his labour without recompense, to use him sexually without his consent, to take possession of his goods, to humiliate him and cause him pain, to torture and kill him. Homo homini lupus [Man is a wolf to man]. (Freud, 24)

While Freud's outlook on the nature of human beings is an extreme one, looking at it from the existential perspective of the characters in Dick's novel as well as comparing it to Hobbes' use of Plautus' quote in that regard, similarities can be found.

The way Sigmund Freud looks at human beings in his essay is similar to the way humans like Rick look at androids, beings lacking empathy for their kind and

who cannot even give love or care for animals. Rick's preferred perspective of androids is also similar to Freud's description as well in the way that they both associate the lack of empathy and love with aggressivity. "For Rick Deckard an escaped humanoid robot, which had killed its master [...] which possessed no ability to feel empathic joy for another life form's success or grief at its defeat – that for him, epitomized The Killers." (Dick, 27) The animal analogies present in Plautus' quotation and in the novel, together support the idea that androids, humans and animals are all linked and that human beings are indeed prone to individualism by extension of this link in the novel.

As mentioned previously, Freud explains human beings' interest in others not as a result of love or sympathy, but as caused by sexual interest or malicious intentions. One major thread essential to the character of Rick Deckard explored earlier in this dissertation is whether he cares about female androids because of his sexual interest towards them as suggested by Phil Resch, or if the other reasons he feels empathy for them are "genuine" or not. Phil Resch implies that, as men, his own nature and thus Rick's nature (whom he thinks should be similar to his) is to look at female androids as sexual objects, thus affirming Freud's belief that Man only sees others in relation to their potential benefit to himself. "It's sex," Phil Resch said. "Sex?" "Because she – it- was physically attractive." (Dick, 124.)

Christopher A. Sims, in his article *The Dangers of Individualism and the Human Relationship to Technology in Philip K. Dick's "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"* looks at the relation between human beings and technology. The author, using Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology* [1954] and Andrew Feenberg's *Questioning Technology* [1999] argues that there is a "right relation" to have with technology and that the humans' unique ability to enhance, alter and continually evolve this technology is what makes them afraid of it. In other words, it is the uncertainty of what may come next from technology that makes humans feel fear towards the consequences that it may entail.

Christopher A. Sims analyses the androids in the novel as the fear of humans being realized: humans losing control of technology and technology gaining its own "agency"; to the humans in the novel, androids existing mean that they lost control of technology and that they don't have power over it any more. The androids gaining sentience and will over themselves pushes the question of simulated feelings as opposed to real individuality of being:

Technology is now under its own control. But does artificial intelligence qualify as independent agency or is it merely a simulation of individual existence? Again we arrive at the opposition of natural over artificial and the cultural predisposition to value the natural over the artificial. (Sims, 69)

This quote is worth investigating both as a way to question technology in relation to agency but also the nature of man and its will to control other beings and whether androids are “deserving of empathy” which relates back to individualism. Freud’s perspective of human nature as manipulating beings who use others as leverage is once again tackled in the novel as people are losing control over technology as instruments that they can use.

Rick said, ‘A humanoid robot is like any other machine; it can fluctuate between being a benefit and a hazard very rapidly. As a benefit it’s not our problem.’

‘But as a hazard,’ Rachael Rosen said, ‘then you come in. Is it true, Mr Deckard, that you’re a bounty hunter?’ (Dick, 34.)

Christopher A. Sims sees in Dick’s novel a call to be cautious of the perspective of “instrumental technology”. He uses Heidegger’s *The Question Concerning Technology* from 1954 to illustrate his point: That is to say for humans to remain cautious of their relation to technology and nature; that technology gives humans a new perspective on nature. Technology must not be seen as something out of the realm of humanity but rather as something that is integrated into their “social network”. Quoting Heidegger, he points out that the dangers of this way of thinking, technology as something they can control, may stem from humanity’s need to feel like “the lord of the earth”. (Sims, 71)

With the way human interactions are portrayed and how humans see empathy throughout the novel, it can be argued that human as a solitary creature is indeed not natural and that instead humans are meant to live in community. It should not be natural for humans to be separated and alienated from each other and unsympathetic towards their kind and others.

Dick in the novel depicts the importance given to empathy and sympathy by human beings but also the past life when nature was still blossoming. The humans in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* are not going back to a natural state but rather steering away from their empathy and becoming machine-like, faked. The beginning of the novel exhibits the relation between Iran and Rick, revealing their disconnect from each other as well as their reliance on technology to feel a certain range of emotions. The passage shows the discrepancy between the reader’s own

world and the novel's diegesis as to underline some sort of absurdity in the situation as if technology could replicate human emotions, Rick even needing a mood organ to wake him up. "A merry little surge of electricity piped by automatic alarm from the mood organ beside his bed awakened Rick Deckard." (Dick, 01) The fact that this very passage is the opener of the novel is to show the impact of technology on humans and their personality, but also on how it affects their relationship in multiple ways: "“You set your Penfield too weak,’ he said to her. ‘I’ll reset it and you’ll be awake and--’ ‘Keep your hand off my settings.’ Her voice held bitter sharpness. ‘I don’t *want* to be awake.”” (Dick, 01)

The first chapter also sets up humans as hopeless in the context of a post-war/ post-apocalyptic world and deserted earth, explaining their disconnection from their world and their wish to escape it, making their use of technology erratic: "“My schedule for today lists a six-hour self-accusatory depression,’ Iran said. ‘What? Why did you schedule that?’ It defeated the whole purpose of the mood organ. ‘I didn’t even know you could set it for that,’ he said gloomily.”” (Dick, 02)

Individualism and the solitary lifestyle of human beings on Earth also find their root in World War Terminus and the literal and metaphorical vacancy it left, a sort of “trauma”. “In a giant, empty, decaying building which had once housed thousands, a single TV set hawked its wares to an inhabited room.” (Dick, 12) In his essay, *Posthuman Wounds: Trauma, Non-Anthropocentric Vulnerability, and the Human/ Android/ Animal Dynamic in Philip K. Dick’s Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* [2014] Tony M. Vinci directly deals with the impact of World War Terminus on the human psyche, talking about this limbo felt in the characters as well as this trauma’s impact on their subjectivity and thus what is authentic to them in the novel.

After the war, those persons deemed human enough to retain legal rights emigrate, leaving behind a decimated human population. (Earth’s residents now number in the thousands). Subject to societal collapse, daily nuclear fallout, and threats of biological and cognitive degeneration, Earth’s inhabitants must cope with personal and cultural wounds caused by severe physical isolation, psychological alienation, and consistent and pervasive practices of discrimination. (Vinci, 02)

Human beings cling onto the idea of “empathy” as a model or a standard to live up to, but their judgement being clouded by their trauma, it is impossible for them to realize that this empathy is no longer or never was innate to begin with: it

is an emotion they have to work up to, learn. They never question whether there is a mutual understanding when dealing with the other because they believe that empathy is a given for humans; however, the fact remains that mankind stood apart from each other because of these traumatic events, proving that their sense of community and togetherness is fragile. “Populations, detached by the war, had roamed, squatted temporarily at first one region and then another.” (Dick, 14) Rick only considers himself and his interests when talking about his relation with Iran, missing the point of mutual understanding and empathy making up a relation. Iran inflicts depression upon herself and does not try to converse with Rick, while Rick disregards Iran’s feelings.

“Damn her, he said to himself. What good does it do, my risking my life? She doesn’t care whether we own an ostrich or not; nothing penetrates. I wish I had gotten rid of her two years ago when we were considering splitting up.” (Dick, 82)

Christopher A. Sims formulates the thought that the problem that mankind runs into is not solely the lack of empathic response and sympathy that humans have towards androids but to all beings in general, especially other humans; they lost something that mankind had from the beginning and strayed away from what made them human, leaving only a shell of what they originally were. “The problem of humankind in this speculated future is not hatred or dehumanization of technology, but rather that humans have moved so deeply into their own individuality that they no longer experience the reality of other humans.” (Sims, 71) Using Christopher A. Sims’ argument about empathy, it can be argued that because of the already established individualism on Earth, the relation among human beings has deteriorated; as a result, it becomes more difficult for other life forms to integrate and for humans to relate to them.

Again, there is always a need for Rick to remind himself that what he does is right because, unlike humans, androids do not have empathy, even though most humans in the story seem be lacking that very emotion. “‘You androids,’ Rick said, ‘don’t exactly cover for each other in times of stress.’ Garland snapped, ‘I think you’re right; it would seem we lack a specific talent you humans possess. I believe it’s called empathy.’” (Dick, 107) In chapter twelve, when the paintings become the focus of the situation, Edvard Munch’s *The Scream* [1893] is described. In earlier parts of this dissertation, it was mentioned that paintings are used to mirror certain characters’ feelings: *The Scream* is seen through the eyes of Phil Resch who

interprets the painting as a representation of “how androids must feel” but he expresses uncertainty at its sight. Phil Resch associates the painting with “torment” and “isolation”. It can be noted that the painting’s description can also be associated with trauma.

Twisted ripples of the creature’s torment, echoes of its cry, flooded out into the air surrounding it; the man or woman, whichever it was, had become contained by its own howl. It had covered its ears against its own sound. The creature stood on a bridge and no one else was present; the creature screamed in isolation. Cut off by – or despite – its outcry. (Dick, 113)

The description makes the figure portrayed in the painting neutral, neither man nor woman “the man or woman, whichever it was...” (Dick, 113) or not even human as it is described as a nondescript “creature” (Dick, 113) Taking apart this description and the theme of individualism in the novel, it is indeed a feeling that can be associated with all the groups listed in the novel, in other words, “regulars”, “specials”, androids but also animals to some extent.

The first character the reader comes to know who explicitly says that he is lonely and isolated is John Isidore, perhaps because of his “chickenhead” status, a reject of society. The fact is, human society in the novel prides itself on empathy and sense of community, or as Rick Deckard puts it “looking out for each other.” However, “specials” are the proof of them pushing for individualism, segmentation and alienation, even going as far as separating the “regulars” staying on Earth and those migrating. “Worse still, he had failed to pass the minimum mental faculties test, which made him in popular parlance a chickenhead.” (Dick, 15)

Looking at John Isidore’s relation to technology, there is an emphasis on him connecting with the rest of the world through it, especially through TV and his empathy box which enables him the process of fusion. “And then, within him, the mutual babble of everyone else in fusion broke the illusion of aloneness.” (Dick, 19) John Isidore finds refuge in technology because he was considered a failure by society, considering that he was not human enough to be considered a “regular”, he is a misfit in the eyes of everyone else.

Christopher A. Sims discusses mankind’s ability to feel empathy and its “faking” through technology by dealing with the theme of mankind’s relation to technology and other humans. He uses the Voigt Kampff test as an example, mentioning the “flattening of the affect” experienced by schizophrenic people, other mentally unstable human beings and their integration in society. The author

wonders if they cease to be human because of their inability to feel empathy towards others, since it is the primary aim of the test to measure empathy: “If empathy is the unique human essence that technology cannot successfully reproduce, does a human whose affect fails to represent the expected emotional response cease to be a human?” (Sims, 72) John Isidore, despite being a special himself and being discriminated against because of his status, considers himself to be one of the lucky ones who are still able to be integrated in some way, by being able to hold a job for example.

And there existed chickenheads infinitely stupider than Isidore, who could hold no jobs at all, who remained in custodial institutions quaintly called ‘Institute of Special Trade Skills of America,’ the word ‘special’ having to get in there somehow, as always. (Dick, 16)

The existence of such institutes proves once again that there is a separation and lack of empathy towards those who cannot integrate. “Regular” human beings are showing hostility by calling them names such as “anthead” or “chickenhead”. Again, such appellations prove that in the novel’s world, Hobbes’ views and even Freud’s are in some ways true: that human nature is to reject those who are not familiar and similar to oneself, pushing people apart and even being hostile towards those who are not useful to society. As explored previously in this dissertation, those who are not “regulars” or integrated are the “fake ones”. “They informed him in a countless procession of ways that he, a special, wasn’t wanted. Had no use. Could not, even if he wanted to, emigrate.” (Dick, 17.)

Individualism as well as solitude manifest themselves in other interesting ways in the novel, as symbols. Kipple in the novel’s diegesis is described as something that takes the place of humans and other objects if the place has not been lived in for long enough. Kipple is here to populate an empty place with “something” and reproduces, multiplies according to John Isidore. The first time the reader actually comes into contact with the concept of “kipple” and is aware of its existence is through John Isidore who is a lonely character living by himself in an abandoned building, making him a character quite close to kipple. Kipple is described by John Isidore as some sort of pest similar to the novel’s dust or moisture which gathers when a place is left vacant and not taken care of by somebody:

‘Kipple is useless objects, like junk mail or match folders after you use the last



match or gum wrappers or yesterday's homeopape. When nobody's around, kipple reproduces itself. For instance, if you go to bed leaving any kipple around your apartment, when you wake up the next morning there's twice as much of it. It always gets more and more.' (Dick, 56)

Kipple is at first a concept seen as a dubious reality and may even be a construct of John Isidore's mind in Pris' perspective: "I see.' The girl regarded him uncertainly, not knowing whether to believe him. Not sure if he meant it seriously." (Dick, 56) In having another character question the veracity of the statement, Philip K. Dick associates once again a symbol of solitude with John Isidore and by extension the "specials". Kipple is only mentioned later by characters like Rick as he is a character closer to populated spaces.

Kipple is only elaborated on and described when John Isidore meets Pris for the first time, but a similar role that kipple holds can be seen earlier in the story in John Isidore's character introduction. "Silence" is also described as an oppressive element, almost supernatural, that occupies vacant spaces and is once again surrounding John Isidore.

Silence. It flashed from the woodwork and the walls; it smote him with an awful, total power, as if generated by a vast mill. It rose from the floor, up out of the tattered gray wall-to-wall carpeting. It unleashed itself from the broken and semi-broken appliances in the kitchen, the dead machines which hadn't worked in all the time Isidore had lived here. From the useless pole lamp in the living room it oozed out, meshing with the empty and wordless descent of itself from the fly-specked ceiling. It managed in fact to emerge from every object within his range of vision, as if it – the silence – meant to supplant all things tangible. (Dick, 16)

Echoing a topic tackled throughout this dissertation, TV is a way for John Isidore to connect with the rest of the world, to feel connected and exist in it, to feel real. While empathy is perceived as something that indicates humanity and a sense of community, the overwhelming presence of silence and kipple is telling of the actual state of society, which is disconnected and has fallen apart, people now being unable to empathize with each other without the help of an outside source.

The silence of the world could not rein back its greed. Not any longer. Not when it had virtually won.

He wondered, then, if the others who had remained on Earth experienced the void this way. Or was it peculiar to his peculiar biological identity, a freak generated by his inept sensory apparatus? (Dick, 16)

John Isidore sees the reality of the world thanks to his "peculiar" outlook on society but is again told that his views are false because of his status as a "special".

Humanity's refusal to accept or acknowledge their reality and the breakdown of their society comes from the fear of accepting their fate. Previously, this dissertation looked at regulars rejecting or minimizing the existence of "specials" and androids on Earth as part of the plan to keep the illusion of humanity's hegemony over all things. "Specials" are not welcome on space colonies yet welcomed but restricted on Earth while androids with any kind of agency are seen as threatening to this illusion.

Silence and kipple then, while they are not necessarily as tangible or as clear a concept as dust for example, they still act as influences that act upon humanity as embodiment of individualism and apathy. Jill Galvan, in her essay *Entering the Posthuman Collective in Philip K. Dick's "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"* [1997] looks at the post-apocalyptic world of the novel and its effect on people, discussing the effect of the "omnipresent dust" (Dick, 06) and the rise of technology while people are losing their grasp of the world.

Jill Galvan also tackles the topic of TV as a way for John Isidore to keep in touch with others, technology thus acting as a way to keep away silence and kipple, validating their dangerous nature.

Television, which Isidore anxiously clings to as a surrogate for human interaction, offers the individual a similar "fix," in that its screen simulations salve-but only temporarily-the anguish of social dislocation. Isidore's broken TV set broadcasts only the channel the government has nationalized, a platform for various plugs for its Mars colonization program. Notwithstanding the monotony of his viewing experience, Isidore realizes that in order to avoid feelings of seclusion, he has no choice but to endure these repetitive ads for emigration (ads which, to add insult to injury, pointedly exclude him due to his "special" status). Without the benefit of television, he cannot break free from his loneliness. He is overcome by a silence... (Galvan, 418)

The author also underlines that because the media that John Isidore is subjected to is directed toward the regulars and alienating otherness, he becomes unable to flee silence or kipple effectively and is thus more affected by the state of the world than the "regulars". His only real escape is the empathy box as it removes him momentarily from that reality of being alone. "And then, within him, the mutual babble of everyone else in fusion broke the illusion of aloneness." (Dick, 19)

Jill Galvan compares this escape to the one provided to Iran by the empathy box at the beginning of the novel, revealing that the escape from reality, from silence is not exclusive to "specials" although it is more difficult for them to feel welcome and easier to be overwhelmed by this feeling of solitude since they are cut off from society. "As holds true for the image that summons Iran to the empathy

box, TV's simulations beckon to Isidore with the promise of company, disguising momentarily the fact of his solitude.” (Galvan, 418)

This dissertation previously tackled human nature and its use in the novel illustrated by Hobbes’ and Freud’s theories on the matter. The fact that characters like John Isidore and Iran feel the need to be connected to a bigger entity, as does Rick with his need to buy a “real” animal for social status, implies humanity’s desire to belong to a community as well as the fear of being left behind. Rick himself becomes aware of his solitude, the silence of the real world as well as the illusionary world created by technology. “Going over to the empathy box she quickly seated herself and once more gripped the twin handles. She became involved almost at once. Rick stood holding the phone receiver, conscious of her mental departure. Conscious of his own aloneness.” (Dick, 153)

Dust, silence and kipple are elements that weigh down on Earth and people as symbols of loss of society and humanity, the world has become only a husk of what it once was, a wind of change is rising. “The morning air, spilling over with radioactive motes, gray and sun-beclouding, belched about him, haunting his nose; he sniffed involuntarily the taint of death.” (Dick, 05) Earth, just like humans in the story, has lost what made its identity in the past, nature, and is seen as “fake” because it changed too much beyond recognition; humanity however, is linked to it because of its familiarity just as they persist in the idea that Man is inherently sympathetic towards his peers. “Perhaps, deformed as it was, Earth remained familiar, to be clung to. Or possibly the non-emigrant imagined that the tent of dust would deplete itself finally.” (Dick, 13) The growing presence of silence also represents the growing presence of death; silence, while it signifies the departure of humans to space colonies, it also signifies the death surrounding the increasingly decaying Earth and slowly affected humans. “Time and tide, he thought. The cycle of life. Ending in this, the last twilight. Before the silence of death.” (Dick, 161.)

Drawing similarities between Man and animals, we can also draw a conclusion that Earth can be seen as a character, a personified and active entity. Aaron A. Cloyd, in his essay, *Electric Nature: (Re) Constructing Wilderness in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* [2015] tackles the very topic of landscape and its importance on the characters, acting as a direct force upon them. More than a background/ set in which the characters act, Earth as a character and a personified entity interacts with the humans, androids and animals and each cannot be considered in isolation. “The empty apartment buildings throughout the narrative

manifest a character-like presence and influence on the merely human characters.” (Cloyd, 77) John Isidore talks about kipple in a personified way, giving it substance and a sense that it is dangerous to the existence of humanity, something that one should be careful about even if these concepts are seemingly nebulous.

‘No one can win against kipple,’ he said, ‘except temporarily and maybe in one spot, like in my apartment I’ve sort of created a stasis between the pressure of kipple and nonkipple, for the time being. But eventually I’ll die or go away, and then the kipple will again take over. It’s a universal principle operating throughout the universe; the entire universe is moving toward a final state of total, absolute kipple-ization.’ He added, ‘Except of course for the upward climb of Wilbur Mercer.’ (Dick, 57)

John Isidore, with the last line, implies that only the virtual landscape is safe from the impending doom of Earth and suggests to the reader a reason why figures such as Wilbur Mercer and Buster Friendly are regarded as such high entities. They are able to escape their mortal coil; they are not affected by kipple because it is a physical phenomenon.

Jill Galvan cites elements such as the environment and technology in general as the main reasons why *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is a post-human world and why humans in the story became so wary of the androids and “specials”. Acknowledging them as part of their society would be to admit that the human race has become irrelevant. “Additionally, it is a world progressively peopled-both literally and figuratively-by technological devices, among which the android, a ‘solitary predator,’ seems as greatly to endanger human survival as the tainted environment.” (Galvan, 413)

Extrapolating on the idea of Earth as a character, it is also left behind and abandoned just like the characters in the novels. Whether it be “regulars”, “specials” and androids, they all feel solitude and are all seemingly lacking something, feeling hollow. The situation presented at the beginning of the novel that the planet is gradually becoming less inhabitable illustrates that Earth too, just like humans, have suffered the traumatic effects of WWT that humans are trying to repress as well. Tony M. Vinci interprets the message of Dick’s novel as a criticism of humans repressing their trauma and displacing it onto their self-proclaimed superiority.

“Dick uses his fictional post-apocalyptic culture to articulate and critique twin practices of trauma-deferment that rely upon the displacement of the ontological-rupturing effects of trauma onto the illusory but stable model of a testable, privileged anthropocentric humanism.” (Vinci, 93)

Emigration to space colonies is limited to “regulars” with a certain social status and with money while all the rest must stay on Earth and die with it, making their fates linked to Earth itself. Hannibal Sloat’s description is similar to the landscapes of Earth as well, far removed from what they used to be.

Too old to emigrate, Hannibal Sloat, although not a special, was doomed to creep out his remaining life on Earth. The dust, over the years, had eroded him; it had left his features gray, his thoughts gray; it had shrunk him and made his legs spindly and his gait unsteady. (Dick, 65)

The danger of kipple is reiterated later in the novel when it is stated that Buster Friendly compares it to radioactive dust, it can be noted that kipple is described as “junk” and “garbage”, terminology that can be applied to machines and technology.

The entire planet had begun to disintegrate into junk, and to keep the planet habitable for the remaining population the junk had to be hauled away occasionally . . . or, as Buster Friendly liked to declare, Earth would die under a layer – not of radioactive dust – but of kipple. (Dick, 75)

What is worth noting about the terminology is that “kipple” in itself can mean anything, the “junk” itself is never specified to be anything in particular and can be whatever object people assimilate it to. Since it is a word that seems to be coming from after the war in the novel’s diegesis means that it is from after the traumatic event. Kipple can thus be applied to virtually any physical presence in the novel and more precisely, something that has no use any more.

Androids are perceived as machines by humans, if they have a use to society they can live, on the other hand, if they present no use or are considered a threat, they become disposable, in other words, junk. “A humanoid robot is like any other other machine; it can fluctuate between being a benefit and a hazard very rapidly. As a benefit it’s not our problem.” (Dick, 34) Before stating that the planet had “disintegrated into junk”, Rick reflects on the fact that jobs involving the disposal of waste and rubbish had bloomed since the fallout and might as well describe his own job as a bounty hunter since he states that “useful androids” have nothing to do with his job. “The deep-pile carpets, the expensive genuine wood desks, reminded him that garbage collecting and trash disposal had, since the war, become one of Earth’s important industries.” (Dick, 75)

“Specials” and androids have been rejected by society as the cannon fodder of humanity’s alleged “pristine” nature, thus keeping a handful of humans

classified as “regulars” who are eligible to migrate to space colonies but they also have an “expiration date” attached to them, as they could also be classified as “special” soon enough. “Every day he declined in sagacity and vigor. He and the thousands of other specials throughout Terra, all of them moving toward the ash heap. Turning into living kipple.” (Dick, 63)

Taking into account the “First Law of Kipple” mentioned by John Isidore, “‘Kipple drives out non-kipple.’ Like Gresham’s law about bad money.” (Dick, 56) it is all the more relevant to see kipple as a symbol of individualism and solitude, especially considering that human beings are becoming “living kipple.” The world depicted in the novel encourages the reader to look at humans as they reconsider their nature and relation to the other and nature. It is appropriate to bring back Freud’s theory on human nature that states that humans only nurture their relations when it is beneficial to them. A member of society becomes “kipple” when they are no longer useful and are considered as a pest, in that case, they are either “retired” in the case of androids or marginalized in the case of “specials”.

If “kipple drives out non-kipple”, it also implies that “regulars” are essentially fated to disappear at some point, with “specials” and androids replacing them over time. The first law of kipple essentially confirms that humans, including “regulars”, are aware that they will eventually disappear and that they are only keeping the illusion that humanity will survive by not acknowledging what they consider puts humanity at risk. The very first sentence of the introductory chapter for John Isidore (beginning of chapter 2.) also illustrates the state of planet Earth and society as it is. “In a giant, empty, decaying building which had once housed thousands, a single TV set hawked its wares to an uninhabited room.” (Dick, 12)

Humans becoming “living kipple” and individuality becoming a core principle of humanity can be further argued with “regulars” being the norm with alienation and discrimination of others being widespread. In the end however, everyone living on Earth would become a single entity, similar to what people are experiencing in fusion (shared emotions and a sense of belonging.) because everyone would become, in time, a “special” and eventually die on Earth without having migrated.

He lived alone in this deteriorating, blind building of a thousand uninhabited apartments, which like all its counterparts, fell, day by day, into greater entropic ruin. Eventually everything within the building would merge, would be faceless and identical, mere pudding-like kipple piled to the ceiling of each apartment. And, after that, the uncared-for building itself would settle into shapelessness, buried under the ubiquity of the

dust. (Dick, 16-17)

Humanity in the novel cherishes their empathy above all, going as far as using it as a descriptor for what makes someone “human”. In this passage however, John Isidore states that eventually the world will become one when everyone and everything will have become kipple, which is featureless and without a personality. While humanity prides itself on its sense of community and emotions, the world has become selfish and individuals are looking out for themselves in hopes of migrating to space colonies; Rick goes as far as justifying his killings in order to buy a live animal and earn social status. *In Speciesism and Species Being in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* [2007] by Sherryl Vint, she describes the individuals of the novel as based upon Descartes’ cogito, “I think therefore I am.”

Descartes conceptualized the human self as separate from nature, including the nature of its own body. He also argued strongly for an absolute split between humans and animals, asserting that animals are merely mechanical beings undeserving of our empathy rather than living and feeling creatures like ourselves. (Vint, 112)

John Isidore on the other hand, points out that the human’s separation from nature and alienation of the other is misplaced as, in the end, everyone will become part of the faceless world buried under the dust. Everything will be neither “real” or “fake” because everything living on Earth will disappear sooner or later.

## 2.2 - PASTORALISM AS GOAL

Pastoralism in its accepted general definition describes a way of life that directly connects people to nature, particularly that of people who are living with mammals used as livestock. Pastoral literature and art also tend to represent shepherds in an idealised landscape, fitting in with the world fantasized by the characters in the novel. Examples of pastoral depictions in art include *the Georgics* [29 BC] by Virgil, which focuses on agriculture and how shepherds are able to influence their environment and contrasts the rural life to the urban life. As for visual art, an obvious example would be *A Pastoral* [1905] by John Reinhard Weguelin, which represents an idyllic landscape and the rawness of nature.

Rick Deckard is first introduced through his will to replace his electric sheep by a live one; it is his main motivator throughout the story and leads him to

the killing of the androids. In the last part of the novel, Rick buys a live goat, which is considered a considerable economic burden and a personal accomplishment. “‘I own an animal now, he said to himself. A living animal, not electric. For the second time of my life.’” (Dick, 147.) The value of a live animal in that world is such that he had to kill three androids to get one, having one also elevates his social status and gives him the hope to one day emigrate. There is also a reverent portrayal of live animals as otherworldly entities that are now removed from this world, the unattainable, as shown ironically through the elevator scene. “‘You made some bounty money today,’ Iran said, accusingly. Rick said, ‘Yes. I retired three andys.’ He entered the elevator and together they moved nearer to god.” (Dick, 148) Rick’s wish to have a live sheep at the beginning is giving him the image of a herder or a shepherd, wishing to retire and leave his current life as a bounty hunter behind. “‘And then after this, he thought, there won’t be any more. I’ll do something else, earn my living another way. These three are the last.’” (Dick, 156)

The novel presents its world as hopeless and irredeemable with Earth and humans living on it fated to disappear if they do not migrate to space colonies. This is why humans present a strong yearning for the past, to retrieve it and recreate it. Animals play a central role in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* because they represent nature and life itself, their “faking” in the shape of electric animals also means the death of nature and the unattainable nature of the past. “Local law prohibited the time-reversal faculty by which the dead returned to life; they had spelled it out to him during his sixteenth birthday.” (Dick, 20) Nature itself is part of a distant past since the nuclear fallout and World War Terminus but humans are trying to recreate it, seeing space colonies as a new start for society which will allow them to recreate Earth colonies from the past by having androids as substitutes for slaves.

Humans, through their individualism and alienation are trying to create this “halcyon” past by rejecting both technology that they consider too advanced and dangerous, androids, but also those who are seen as “impure” due to their exposure to the “dust”, the “specials”.

In the eyes of the society in the novel, what is considered “real” is nature and the past, while the “fake” is technology, their present. Again, to measure empathy through the Voigt-Kampff test, questions about live animals and nature and situations that were only possible before World War Terminus are asked, a time



that androids could not possibly have known about and that even some humans fail to pass. “‘You rent a mountain cabin,’ he said, ‘in an area still verdant. It’s rustic knotty pine with a huge fireplace.’” (Dick, 42) This question is repeated later in the novel to Luba Luft who states that she does not “ever hear that term.” (Dick, 90) when talking about “verdant.” Among the questions of the test, live animals being cooked at a restaurant are clearly situations that are either extremely rare or do not exist any longer as an effect of the fallout, as is suggested by Rachael’s reaction to the question. “‘That’s awful! Did they really do that? It’s depraved! You mean live lobster?’” (Dick, 42)

Ironically, the renewal and reconstruction of nature is only possible through technology. Even if it is “only” a virtual landscape, it enables the characters to access a world they thought was lost to time. John Isidore accesses a virtual landscape that is almost lifelike and gives him the illusion of being in a “real” environment that has tangibility and even replicates smells, making him feel like it is reality. He also feels that the landscape that is replicated and emulates nature is somewhat “alien”. “...once again smelled 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, 18) A function of the empathy box, is also to feel connected to others, something that humans have forgotten over time when interacting with each other; here, then, technology is not used to further humanity but as a means to experience someplace else.

Heidegger argues that humans have to find the “right relation to technology” (Heidegger, 05) and how they manipulate said technology. While strides have been made in technology, humans feel that they have lost control over it, considering androids as a hazard and attempting to destroy them through bounty hunters. Ironically, the Nexus-6 was engineered to serve humans also as a means to recreate the past.

Heidegger explains the mindset that humanity has towards technology: as long as people master it and as long as technology is a tool, it is the “right relation” to have with it. “We will, as we say, ‘get’ technology ‘spiritually in hand.’ We will master it. The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control.” (Heidegger, 05.) The novel however, shows that because humanity has a longing for the past, they are unable to look forward and they end up ignoring their world as it is, making androids “alien” and misunderstood.

Wilbur Mercer is seen as a religious figure that humans, “regulars” and “specials” alike, take in high regard. His looks of an old man wearing an all-white robe signals that he is a leader to follow (as we saw in the “appearances” section of this dissertation), but we can also tackle the landscape people are transported in with the help of an empathy box. The virtual landscape is here as a means to transmit emotions to others when the ascension occurs and the rock hits them, the process of “fusion”. While the scene can be interpreted as a way to feel others’ happiness and obtain a sense of simulated communal interaction, it can also be interpreted as a way for humans to connect through their losses and their post-war trauma. “‘They’ll have our joy,’ Rick said, ‘but we’ll lose. We’ll exchange what we feel for what they feel. Our joy will be lost.’” (Dick, 151.)

The virtual landscapes, the idealized environments hypothesized for the Voigt-Kampff test and the joining of humanity to grieve their past are revealing that wilderness and pastoralism are only distant dreams. John Isidore implied the hopeless situation by stating that that kipple has “virtually won”. (Dick, 16)

Aaron A. Cloyd in *Electric Nature: (Re) Constructing Wilderness in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* tackles the characters’ disconnection from their current environment and their safe haven found in the nature accessed through the empathy box. The author states that the novel, by juxtaposing the vision of an apocalyptic future and past wilderness, participates in the conversation about the environment in the 1960s. One major point that A. Cloyd presents is wilderness as a human construct rather than something remote from humans. He associates nature directly to humans and its state are a direct result of humans’ actions.

Presenting wilderness as another human construct, Dick’s narrative points up the incongruity of the concurrent 1960s interpretations of wilderness as a site untainted by humanity’s ills and thereby resituates the role of wilderness in environmental work. (Cloyd, 83)

Cloyd’s argument about “wilderness as a human construct” makes humanity’s future all the more hopeless as the characters, rather than focusing on their reality that they can influence through their actions, focus on what was while embellishing it. Ironically, through the stories that Pris reads in novel form, writers are looking forward to technology and fantasized about it in their works. “‘Stories written before space travel but about space travel.’ ‘How could there have been stories about space travel before--’ ‘The writers,’ Pris said, ‘made it up.’ ‘Based on what?’ ‘On imagination.’” (Dick, 131.)

In the present of the novel, technology has, again, become what bounty hunters consider a hazard in the form of androids so people are looking back to the past, there is a kind of repressed failure to realize technology as originally intended, under total control. The contrast between this reality where humans have lost control and the expected future described in the novels read by Pris entails a wish to come back to before these times, people fantasizing about the past rather than the future. “To read about cities and huge industrial enterprises, and really successful colonization. You can imagine what it might have been like. What Mars ought to be. Canals.” (Dick, 131.)

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Philip K. Dick seems to base his novel on oppositions between past and future, nature and technology but also humans and androids. The foundations and principles of the United States of the eighteenth century, Thomas Jefferson’s America and the relevance of pastoralism are thus all topics that are relevant to the work. The novel directly alludes to the founding of the United States: “but today was Inter-space Horizons Day, evidently. Anyhow the TV claimed this to be the fifth (or sixth?) anniversary of the founding of New America, the chief U.S. settlement on Mars.” (Dick, 14)

Pastoral art and literature themselves were popular in the Southern states, a plausible reason as to this popularity could very well be associated with conservatism as the subject matters of the former often being used to promote white supremacy and supported slavery. They can be seen as a celebration of plantation life, as rural life encouraged the perspective of white people as gentlemen farm owners while slaves were used as labourers. Again, the novel directly references “the halcyon days of the pre-Civil War Southern states” (Dick, 14) while the androids serve as an analogy for slaves who are not seen as human beings in this era of the United States: “tireless field hands, the custom-tailored humanoid robot” (Dick, 14.)

One text considered as foundational to the ideas of pastoralism and the agrarian origins of the United States, *Letters from an American Farmer* [1782] by Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur. It tells the story of a gentleman who inherited a farm from his father in the British colonies of the US. He generally describes his life on his farm in an idealized manner. The work is targeted at wealthy European gentlemen and is thus giving a description of an idyllic pastoral and agrarian culture as the American way of life:

I felt myself happy in my new situation, and where is that station which can confer a more substantial system of felicity than that of an American farmer possessing freedom of action, freedom of thoughts, ruled by a mode of government which requires but little from us? I owe nothing but a peppercorn to my country, a small tribute to my king, with loyalty and due respect; I know no other landlord than the lord of all land, to whom I owe the most sincere gratitude. My father left me three hundred and seventy-one acres of land, forty-seven of which are good timothy meadow; an excellent orchard; a good house; and a substantial barn. (Crèvecoeur, 09-10.)

Similarities can be drawn between the life idealised by the humans of the novel and the American pastoral life described in Crèvecoeur's work. As such Dick's novel can be read as social criticism of the United States both past and present. Cloyd also underlines how it is a "critique" to draw attention to the growing concerns about the environment in addition to other social issues. "By juxtaposing both visions—environmental apocalypse and wilderness hope—Dick's novel also contributes to the 1960s cultural conversation about environment by way of critique." (Cloyd, 01)

Dick's human society in the novel can be seen as not only a satire of the United States' colonial past of slavery (demonstrated even more strongly in some characters' fantasized worlds) but also the illusion of society that are given to them.

One obvious example is how access to the space colonies is restricted to the wealthy and those who are considered "regular", forbidden for those who are "biologically unacceptable" (Dick, 13) a term used by John Isidore. John Isidore also directly references the fact that space colonies are places for the privileged only. "...and now the watchful owners had either died or migrated to a colony world. Mostly the former..." (Dick, 12)

In Crèvecoeur's writings, the story is clearly targeted towards the specific audience of wealthy Europeans wanting to migrate to the British colonies of America. Meanwhile, various points of view such as the slaves' perspective are disregarded. In a satirical fashion, Dick uses the television as a vector of information targeted toward "regulars", disregarding "specials" and androids. "But the ads, directed at the remaining regulars, frightened him." (Dick, 17.) The perspective of the world shaped by and for "regulars" is reinforced by the androids revealing to John Isidore that human life is given more importance than "artificial life". "B-b-because things like that don't happen. The g-g-government never kills anyone, for any crime. And Mercerism--" 'But you see,' Pris said, 'if you're not human then it's all different.'" (Dick, 140.)

While the perspective of the space colonies fed to regulars is of a "halcyon"

community with the past painted as an ideal, the opposite is stated by Pris who sees the life on a space colony as an android, a lonely and painful life. “You think I’m suffering because I’m lonely. Hell, all Mars is lonely. Much worse than this.” (Dick, 130.) By opposing those two perspectives and giving only an approximation of space colonies through commercials and the image constructed by humans living on Earth, Dick reinforces space colonies as illusions, distant and only a construct in the mind of regulars wanting to migrate to them.

Like the paintings depicting the pastoral landscapes, the pastoralist and agrarian ideologies are only depictions of an ideal targeted toward a specific audience, and its message will come across differently depending on the person, bringing us back to Magritte’s *The Treachery of Images* in that sense. Pris, when talking about the novels to John Isidore puts an emphasis on how stories about space travel imagined by writers turned out to be wrong all the while underlining the absurdity of such predictions catering towards a certain audience. ““On imagination. A lot of times they turned out wrong. For example they wrote about Venus being a jungle paradise with huge monsters and women in breastplates that glistened.”” (Dick, 131)

In *American Pastoralism and the Marketplace: Eighteenth-Century Ideologies of Farming* [1994], Timothy Sweet looks at the notion of “pastoralism” and its evolution through the years. In his introduction, the author clarifies that pastoralism looks to explore the humans’ relation to nature. “An ongoing source of interest in the American pastoral tradition lies in its efforts to articulate political visions by clarifying or prescribing our relations to the land.” (Sweet, 59)

This dissertation previously explored the “right relation to technology” advanced by Heidegger, the idea of technology as a tool to control. Pastoralism, similarly tackles the humans’ relation to nature and questions to what extent should they influence it. This opposition between technology (the man-made world) and nature is also very prevalent in the novel. The man-made environment weighs on the human characters and will be their downfall, leading them to hate the androids whom they lost control over and as a result, makes them want to go back to a time when nature prevailed and where they (the humans) thought they had control.

Timothy Sweet argues that while Crèvecoeur’s work focuses on the freedom given by farming, Jefferson focuses more on the financial stability of America and the perpetuation of a system.

Jefferson grounds his confidence in the stability of the rural class structure on the assumption that after the war the market for agricultural produce will expand, allowing the class structure to reproduce and in the process refine itself. (Sweet, 61)

Jefferson is thus using the illusion of freedom given by the pastoral and agrarian way of life as a facade to keep the rural model and economy alive. In Dick's novel, the illusion that humanity can still survive is given through TV, the process of fusion and the belief that empathy is still an exclusively human feeling.

The pastoral idea is also represented through animals in the story; the pastoral way of life includes animals living as free as possible in a field: "A goat is loyal. And it has a free, natural soul which no cage can chain up." (Dick, 146.) In seeing live animals as representations of "regular" humans and linking them together, Deckard can be seen as a shepherd in osmosis to nature and animals, reinforced by the act of him buying a live goat. Such words as "free" and "natural" also seem in direct opposition to technology and the modern world, more specifically the world after World War Terminus, which Rick wants to escape.

In the following sentence, a "free, natural soul which no cage can chain up." we can make sense that Rick gets closer to his dream of escaping his current status of electric animal owner, the cage being the Earth polluted by dust. "Natural soul" on the other hand, opposes Descartes' idea of "cogito" and "animal machine" by linking the animal to Rick himself. His obtaining the goat can be interpreted as some sort of return to nature, freeing him from the technological and "soulless" city; the idea of "animal machine" is transported onto androids and "specials", since they do not have the right to be free because their empathy is "flattened". Sherryl Vint argues that Dick, in his narrative, goes against the cogito by blurring the line between animals and humans but also between androids and specials. It can be argued that since humans think of themselves as more natural and worthy of living free, they are creating the illusion that there is a clear boundary between themselves and technology.

"Descartes used such distinctions to insist that the cogito, or thinking self, was distinct from all other life. Dick, on the other hand, critiques the cogito and emphasizes the fragility of such demarcations." (Vint, 113)

By extension, by establishing the idea that androids cannot feel empathy towards animals and cannot take care of them, humanity renders the pastoral way of life and thus freedom exclusively to "regulars" and perpetuating the split between organic

and artificial. “From what I’ve been able to learn, it generally fails; the andy is unable to keep the animal alive. Animals require an environment of warmth to flourish. Except for reptiles and insects.” (Dick, 113.) By separating the pastoral past and the technological future, the “regular” human characters are also separating themselves from their present and dismissing it, keeping away from the trauma caused by World War Terminus. Tony M. Vinci discusses the image created by humans as superior to other beings and without weaknesses as a way to cope with this trauma:

then human invulnerability becomes a mode of dangerous narcissism, an unethical practice of denying the complex personhood of both self and other. The subject's consistent reconstitution of its imagined wholeness comes at the "price of denying its own vulnerability, its dependency, its exposure, where it exploits those very features in others, thereby making those features other to 'itself' (Vinci, 95)

Taking into account Vinci’s argument, Pastoralism as a split between nature and technology is ultimately a complete return to nature without any technology; humans essentially wanting a return to zero is depicted as absurd and harmful to “specials” and androids. By revealing Mercer, the figure who helped humans experience a sense of belonging through fusion, to be fake and the landscape to be “a cheap, Hollywood, commonplace sound stage” (Dick, 182) humanity loses its grasp on the dream of pastoralism as well, as empathy is intrinsically linked to the ability to own a live animal and connects them to the wilderness. Additionally, Mercerism served as a justification for “regular” humans’ hegemony over “specials” and androids ““It’s done. Buster Friendly said it out loud, and nearly every human in the system heard him say it. “Mercerism is a swindle.” The whole experience of empathy is a swindle.”” (Dick, 183)

As John Isidore learns that Mercer and the fusions are only staged and as he watches the spider being killed, he feels silence and kipple taking a hold of all his surroundings. Silence and kipple, which as previously discussed, symbolize a lack of empathy (encouraged by individualism.) but also a loss of hope for the recovery of mankind, making pastoralism virtually unattainable.

‘Mercerism isn’t finished.’, Isidore said. Something ailed the three androids, something terrible. The spider, he thought. Maybe it *had* been the last spider on Earth, as Roy Baty said. And the spider is gone; Mercer is gone; he saw the dust and the ruin of the apartment as it lay spreading out everywhere – he heard the kipple coming, the final disorder of all forms, the absence which would win out. (Dick, 184-185)

The fact that even nature in its more basic form is somehow linked to the existence of Mercer, a religious figure, implies that nature, or at least its perception, is a human construct, like technology. This dissertation previously made reference to Cloyd's argument that nature is a human construct as they inevitably act upon their environment, and that nature, through these actions, become part of human culture. (Cloyd, 84) In a similar way, Heidegger describes nature as a human construct once it is "challenged" by human beings; in other words, once nature is transformed by the work of a human in a significant way to create new energies, it becomes a human construct.

In contrast, a tract of land is challenged into the putting out of coal and ore. The earth now reveals itself as a coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit. The field that the peasant formerly cultivated and set in order [bestellte] appears differently than it did when to set in order still meant to take care of and to maintain. (Heidegger, 14,15)

Heidegger argues that agriculture and the working of the land does not directly "challenge" nature as it is not considered a transformation of a material into something else as it only involves the helping of a natural process. However, he also points out that nature is now transformed and agriculture has also become the "mechanized food industry". (Heidegger, 15)

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* similarly addresses nature as a human construct by making Mercer a symbol of return to nature (both a return of human nature and nature in the sense of wilderness) and by ultimately revealing that the wilderness created by the empathy box is only a "cheap Hollywood set". In doing so, Mercer, rather than being a sacred, superior figure becomes a mere actor, making nature not only "fake" in the eyes of the characters, but also completely man-made, like the technology the "regulars" had learned to hate. "And there is even some evidence that the scraggly weeds and dismal, sterile soil – perhaps even the stones hurled at Mercer by unseen alleged parties – are equally faked." (Dick, 180)

Meanwhile, a parallel between the spider being dissected by Pris and humanity can be drawn as the Mercer reveal is happening. The same way that the goat bought by Rick represented his way out of his current life, the spider having its legs severed deprives it of its means to escape. The "freedom" in the following quotation can either be viewed as the fusion and instant of community provided by the empathy box or the hope of retrieval of wilderness glimpsed through it. Either way, humanity now stares directly into their reality of a polluted and doomed



Earth, without a chance to look away from it. “Pris had now cut three legs from the spider, which crept about miserably on the kitchen table, seeking a way out, a path to freedom. It found none.” (Dick, 181) The spider, however, is still alive, proving that this total return to nature being impossible is in no way a fatality. The spider can still walk. “With the scissors Pris snipped off another of the spider’s legs. ‘Four now,’ she said. She nudged the spider. ‘He won’t go. But he can.’” (Dick, 183)

Galvan also argues that Mercerism exists as a way of turning humanity away from their reality by having created a false and idealized image of empathy and togetherness, also encompassing wilderness as a stimuli for humans, catering to their needs. What humanity sees through the process of fusion is a sense of togetherness, a humanity that is above everything else and unbeatable because they are “special”: the opposite of their reality.

The pure artifice of the spectacle holds the viewer more greatly than does its content; it is the commodified illusion, the enchantment of unattainability, that piques the viewer's desire. That desire applies, Bukatman tells us, not just to the thing advertised, but to the advertisement itself: one begins to crave it for its own sake, as much as, or even more so than what it depicts. (Galvan, 417)

Mercerism however, despite being revealed as an act, is claimed to still be alive by John Isidore and Mercer himself. ““They will have trouble understanding why nothing has changed. Because you’re still here and I’m still here.”” (Dick, 187) As Galvan argues, it is not whether what Mercer presents is “genuine” or “fake” that matters but rather what is advertised and what is desired. What Mercerism displayed through empathy boxes was already “faked” in multiple ways; what was not “faked”, however, were the feelings the characters had from the experience of fusion. Even though they still knew that their feelings were manufactured in some way, the feelings that came out were still genuine because the human beings believed they were.

““I lifted you from the tomb world just now and I will continue to lift you until you lose interest and want to quit. But you will have to stop searching for me because I will never stop searching for you.”” (Dick, 187)

Nature as a human construct is amplified through the fact that their belief in its restoration is a driving force and not by the fact that they necessarily can restore it. In that way, Mercerism cannot be dismantled because humanity has already decided that they are above androids because they believe that they can feel empathy while

the androids cannot. In the same way, because they accept that space colonies are their salvation, even though they only see them through TV ads, it becomes a reality as the narrative they choose to believe in.

No matter how Mercerism is dissected, humanity has already bought into the narrative that they are above everything else. Earlier in the novel, Rick also makes his job easier by thinking of the rules laid by Mercerism as absolute, as a way to not face his reality. As argued previously in this dissertation, just as the Voigt-Kampff test is trusted even though bounty hunters know that there is a margin of error, Mercerism is trusted and equally serves, not because it is “real” or “fake”, but because it is convenient to think of it as “real”: “Put another way, a Mercerite was free to locate the nebulous presence of The Killers wherever he saw fit.” (Dick, 27) Vinci argues that the image (or as he puts it, the “myth”) of the empathetic humans versus the non-empathetic androids is an idealized narrative created by the former which allows them to avoid confronting a now post-human world, which in turn, allows them to keep their advantages over the “other”..

In *Do Androids Dream?* the essentializing myth of the empathetic human becomes a safeguard against trauma by coding both the android and the animal as unreal subjects, scapegoats that must suffer so that humans can avoid painful realities. Despite their ubiquity and significance, the android and the animal must be positioned as spectral or unreal quantities nonhuman carriers of human meaning that are forced to maintain ontological border. (Vinci, 95)

By the end of the novel, it becomes a necessity to differentiate nature/ wilderness and the “pastoral”. While the pastoral is only a portrayal of nature in an idealized way in paintings or books, as seen over the course of this part of the dissertation; “nature” and “wilderness” on the other hand have a connotation related to reality. In the penultimate chapter, Rick gets to the outskirts of the city and is faced with a desolated and seemingly endless landscape. Rick reflects on the state of the world and accepts the reality of a dying world. “Once, he thought, crops grew here and animals grazed. What a remarkable thought, that anything could have cropped grass here.” (Dick, 200) Just like Isidore, Rick now sees the impending death of Earth, silence, kipple and dust eventually swallowing what is left. Nature is not the wilderness and pastoralism that has been advertised to “regulars”, instead, nature has become the desolated landscape where no life can bloom. Nature takes on a different appearance, the image given to it by actions performed by humanity.

Rick becomes conflicted with his actions as a bounty hunter. On the one

hand, he claims to now being “the greatest bounty hunter who ever lived” (Dick, 200) and is seeking approval from his peers to prove his existence and look for solace in the face of reality. He seeks approval for his actions by the society he lived in to justify himself in the killing of androids and as a way to avoid the realization that humanity, like the life he thrived for are mere illusions. “Here there existed no one to record his or anyone else’s degradation, and any courage or pride which might manifest itself here at the end would go unmarked.” (Dick, 202)

Nature being inevitably linked to humanity, as animals are, is directly echoed through Rick as he questions his actions up until now as going against his moral compass. Furthermore, Rick distances himself momentarily from Mercerism because he is no longer able to go on justifying his actions through it. Rick has gone against his human nature of being empathetic towards others and alienated himself in doing so. He has become “The Killer” he made reference to at the beginning of the novel. “Mercer accepts everything. Nothing is alien to him. But what I’ve done, he thought; that’s become alien to me. In fact everything about me has become unnatural; I’ve become an unnatural self.” (Dick, 201)

The line uttered by Rick about the “unnatural self” feeds into the technology versus nature theme that the novel tackles throughout. In that regard, Rick acknowledges that through his killing of the androids, he has somewhat become a “machine” himself: a hazard to humanity and to nature; the wilderness takes the shape of the destructed and barren landscape manifesting itself in humans through their solitude. “Thereupon he resumed his trudge up the slope, the lonely and unfamiliar terrain, remote from everything; nothing lived here except himself.” (Dick, 202)

The hope of restoration of nature here is found in reality and not in an illusion created by the empathy box, TV or art. Cloyd argues that wilderness, because it is a human concept, can be influenced by them, similar to the way that nature was undone by human actions, they would be able to restore it.

When Rick steps from his car into the bleak landscape, he does not cross into a site removed from and void of human influence but rather enters a place contingent upon humanity. The specific experience with the toad further substantiates this point, for the toad is an electric reproduction, a product of human work and ingenuity. Rather than experiencing some form of life outside the realm of human beings, Rick participates in a closed circle of human culture and influence. (Cloyd, 84)

Cloyd cites the scene involving the toad as an example of human influence over

nature. Additionally, the toad, which Rick thinks is genuine at first, exemplifies that human beings can still hope for a recovery as long as they look into the present instead of the past without having to necessarily escape Earth, deny their reality or create illusions. “The toad, he saw, blended in totally with the texture and shade of the ever-present dust. It had, perhaps, evolved, meeting the new climate as it had met all climates before.” (Dick, 207.)

## 2.3 - THE BLENDING OF TECHNOLOGY AND NATURE.

Nature and technology have clearly been in opposition in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. Although characters in the novel have instated a clear cut world that technology is synonymous with “fake” while “nature” is “real” and thus to be strived for, technology and nature can in fact be indissociable from each other and from humanity.

In the novel, human actions have led to the destruction of Earth in the form of World War Terminus and the creation of androids who have since gained agency; humanity considers technology as a failure because it has evolved past human control over it, signifying the end of humanity’s hegemony over all existence.

However, as argued before, Heidegger explores the topic of finding a “right relation to technology” but also how this relation affects humanity’s relation to nature. In the introduction of Heidegger’s *The Question Concerning Technology* written by William Lovitt, he argues that Heidegger does not see nature as separate from Man, instead, because they are able to influence and shape their world, technology and nature are both sides of the same coin: reality.

Reality as "nature" is represented as a manifold of cause and effect coherences. So represented, nature becomes amenable to experiment. But this does not happen simply because nature intrinsically is of this character; rather it happens, Heidegger avers, specifically because man himself represents nature as of this character and then grasps and investigates it according to methods that, not surprisingly, fit perfectly the reality so conceived. (Heidegger, 27)

Even though there are overlaps between technology and nature, the novel emphasizes the fact that humans are putting the boundaries between technology and nature themselves. One of the very first example that the novel introduces us to is the empathy box by which humans convey emotions through technology. Empathy boxes remain a means to convey emotions to a human being; whether one considers

emotions coming from a machine to be “fake” does not matter, the fact remains that they are still conveyed. Again, the society of the novel encourages individualism and empathy boxes are the tools to shape individualism as a reality; in other words, feeling emotions through empathy boxes has become natural, a norm. ““So I left the TV sound off and I sat down at my mood organ and I experimented. And I finally found a setting for despair.”” (Dick, 03)

As seen in the part about the terminology, many terms used in the novel that are used to designate what is “fake” and related to machines and technology are still associated with words related to the organic and natural. Among those are terms such as “mood organ”, “humanoid robot” or even “electric animals”.

The last section of this dissertation tackled the final scene of the novel in which Rick believes the toad found in the desolate wasteland to be real, which can be read as a sign of his hope for rejuvenation of Earth. However, Rick and the reader later discover that the toad is electric; in his misapprehension, Rick marvels that such an animal can still live and adapt to such harsh conditions. While live animals are generally associated with “regular” humans and electric animals with androids, here, Rick sees an electric animal as hope and the reader can identify it with humanity. “A big one, he thought; full-grown and wise. Capable, in its own fashion, of surviving even that which we’re not really managing to survive. I wonder where it finds the water for its eggs.” (Dick, 208)

Despite the toad being artificial, it still carries a message of recovery as Rick recognizes the life that it holds and does not dismiss it upon the discovery of its nature. ““The spider Mercer gave the chickenhead, Isidore; it probably was artificial too. But it doesn’t matter. The electric things have their lives too. Paltry as those lives are.”” (Dick, 211) Rick’s statement here is in direct contrast with the hate he used to manifest for his electric sheep at the beginning of the story where he mentions that he has to care for it “as if it lived” (Dick, 36).

The importance of the toad can be linked back to the cat found in chapter seven; its worth is not decided by its nature, but by the emotional attachment given to it. The very conclusion of the novel is Iran stating Rick’s empathy for the toad that he found and even a deep care for it, beyond empathy. “‘Fine,’ Iran said. ‘I want it to work perfectly. My husband is devoted to it.’” (Dick, 214) This end, again, goes against the concepts of cogito and animal machine argued by Descartes, not only because Rick recognizes the life that the electric toad holds but also because

the empathy felt towards it gives it importance and therefore “existence”.

While Rick uses empathy as a divider between humans and androids in the narrative, Descartes splits animals and humans by using “reason”. Descartes also uses speech as a quantifier for “reason” the same way Dick’s characters are using the Voigt-Kampff test to measure empathy to identify and classify either as “specials” or “androids”.

This shows not only that animals have less reason than man, but that they have none at all. For it is clear that we need very little reason in order to be able to speak; and given that as much inequality is found among animals of the same species as among men, and that some are easier to train than others, it is unbelievable that the most perfect monkey or parrot of their species should not be able to speak as well as the most stupid child, or at least a child with a disturbed brain, unless their soul were of a wholly different nature to ours (Descartes, 47)

The “difference” in “souls” that Descartes refers to is still arbitrary and associated with his own perspective of the world, like Hobbes and Plautus had different perspectives on human nature. The toad and the donkey are specifically set up at the beginning and end of the novel to be important to humanity and more specifically Mercer, because they are extinct. “Extinct for years now. The critter most precious to Wilbur Mercer, along with the donkey. But toads most of all.” (Dick, 207) Wilbur Mercer represents humanity’s sense of community and empathy, a joint single mind; while the toad, if it were “genuine”, would have represented a social leap for Rick, he imagines “a star of honor from the UN and a stipend. A reward running into millions of dollars. And of all possibilities – to find the critter most sacred to Mercer.” (Dick, 208) The fact that he learns that it is electric turns the toad into a symbol of personal betterment rather than an animal which is meaningful to an entire community.

The toad, rather than being a huge step forward for humanity represents hope in a smaller scale to symbolize the effort that must be made to revert back the world to an inhabitable state. Humanity tried to go back to nature in many ways by denying technology and in doing so created a hostile environment for androids and “specials”. Recognizing artificial humans and animals is a first step towards the healing of society and finding this “right relation” with nature and technology as Heidegger puts it.

‘Mercer said it was wrong but I should do it anyhow. Really weird. Sometimes it’s better to do something wrong than right.’

‘It’s the curse on us,’ Iran said. ‘That Mercer talks about.’

‘The dust?’ he asked.

‘The killers that found Mercer in his sixteenth year, when they told him he couldn’t reverse time and bring things back to life again. So now all he can do is move along with life, going where it goes, to death.’ (Dick, 212)

The concept of “killers” is mentioned once again here at the end, the same ones from Mercer’s backstory at the beginning of the novel, those who classified him “as a freak, more special than any of the other specials.” (Dick, 20) The “killers” described in Mercer’s backstory are similar to bounty hunters as they have the authority to classify Mercer. Therefore, the line about how it is “better to do something wrong than right” (Dick, 212) could either be referring to his assumptions throughout the story as a bounty hunter being erroneous but also to his picking up the toad and mistaking it for a genuine one, which allows his character to develop.

The “killers”, in contrast to what Rick interpreted them to be at the beginning, those who cannot feel empathy, by the end are more bluntly described as those who deprive living creatures from their lives, something that Rick underlines himself. “‘They took my goat.’ ‘Who did Mr Deckard? Animal thieves? We just got a report on a huge new gang of them, probably teenagers, operating in —’ ‘Life thieves,’ he said.” (Dick, 204) At the beginning, “The Killers” are clearly described by Rick to be the androids, implying that humans do not kill because they “retire” androids. By the end however, “The Killers” are “life thieves” as in the action of taking a life and is in no way associated with the status of the being committing the action. By calling Rachael a “life thief” for killing his goat and recognizing the electric toad’s life, Rick partially eliminates the barrier between “regulars”, “specials” and “androids”.

In *Technology, Art, and the Cybernetic Body: The Cyborg as Cultural Other in Fritz Lang's "Metropolis" and Philip K. Dick's "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"*, the author, Klaus Benesch underlines the otherness that androids represent, both in culture and in nature, the duality and polarity between humans and androids, “real” and “fake”.

First, they lay bare the composite artificial structure of naturalized oppositions such as nature/culture, human/non-human, male/female, etc., and they serve as Utopian projections of a world in which these oppositions have been resolved into patterns of cooperation and partnership. And second, cybernetic bodies seem to provide a site of cultural indeterminacy which calls forth radical ideological concepts and which allows for the constant reenactment of the many fantasies and fears associated with the shaky status of “posthuman” identity. (Benesch, 387)

Benesch describes this duality as a “projection” of the utopian world, with the act of coming together as a resolution. In that case, the blending of technology and nature in the novel, while not a resolution per se, is, as mentioned previously, a step in the right direction. This change can be pointed to the moment Rick has relations with Rachael, which Rick considers has changed him.

“If I had killed you last night my goat would be alive now. There’s where I made the wrong decision. Yes, he thought; it can all be traced back to that and to my going to bed with you. Anyhow you were correct about one thing; it did change me. But not in the way you predicted. A much worse way, he decided.” (Dick, 206)

While Rick decides that it changed him in a “worse way” in the moment, what he has done goes against the current society’s ambitions to separate humans and androids. The fact that their union is forbidden but still happened is a way of breaking this opposition between the two groups that Benesch references. “The last time I hit bed was with Rachael. A violation of a statute. Copulation with an android; absolutely against the law, here and on the colony worlds as well.” (Dick, 205-206) Rick also manifests his empathy for androids by stating that even though the androids’ actions were against the law, they were still in the right as it was to save their lives. ““We have to assume they know about the ones you picked off, Garland and Luft and Polokov; that’s why they’ve taken unlawful flight.’ ‘Unlawful,’ Rick repeated. To save their lives.” (Dick, 153) Rick implies the incompatibility of his job with empathy.

The blending of technology and nature can also be seen in Rick’s assumption that he has fused with Mercer without the help of an empathy box at the end. “I’ve undergone it before, during fusion. While using my empathy box, like everyone else. This isn’t new. But it was. Because, he thought, I did it alone.” (Dick, 203.) While this particular moment in the novel can be interpreted in multiple ways, Rick thinking that he has fused with Mercer is the most overt way of revealing that humanity has fused with technology; he does not need an empathy box any more as he has internalised technology, it is part of him. Rick himself expresses his fusion with Mercer in such a way that “real” and “fake” collide: “‘It’s strange,’ Rick said. ‘I had the absolute, utter, completely real illusion that I had become Mercer and people were lobbing rocks at me.’” (Dick, 205)

Rick, by acknowledging that Mercer has become part of him, even though it was proven by the androids that Mercer and his landscape are staged, has also internalised that “reality” is not necessarily an objective truth, but rather a personal



endeavour, supporting our previous analysis of Mercerism as a human construct. But his fusing with Mercer can also be seen as a delusional perception of reality that comforts him in his decisions, as the empathy box acts as a blindfold for a humanity that cannot connect. “‘They’re saying now that Mercer is a fake.’ ‘Mercer isn’t a fake,’ he said. ‘Unless reality is a fake.’ (Dick, 205.)

The end of the novel is filled with confusion regarding the characters’ realities and identities, all offset by the revelation that Mercer is “fake”. In a way, the blending of technology and nature can also be pinpointed to that event, as it challenges an already well-established and highly regarded entity and would prompt the characters to reconsider their entire reality. Rick confirms a convergence of realities, establishing that both the perspectives of humanity and the androids are correct. “Buster Friendly claims that Mercer is a fake. What do you think about that, Rick? Do you think it could be true?’ ‘Everything is true,’ he said. ‘Everything anybody has ever thought.’” (Dick, 199) Rick’s statement here calls back to the androids’ revelation that Mercer is fake and confirms that all perspectives are valid because they are true to someone somewhere. “‘This is so important, what they’re saying; it proves that everything we believed-- ‘Be quiet,’ Roy Baty said. ‘– is true,’ Irmgard finished.” (Dick, 180)

However, Rick could also be implying that humanity already knew about Mercer and chose to buy into it or refused to see it subconsciously. John Isidore believes that Buster Friendly, who is later revealed to be an android, and Wilbur Mercer, who represents humanity’s empathy are in competition for control. “Our minds, Isidore decided. They’re fighting for control of our psychic selves; the empathy box on one hand, Buster’s guffaws and off-the-cuff jibes on the other.” (Dick, 65) Their status at the end of the novel puts Buster Friendly and Wilbur Mercer on a similar level since one is revealed to be an android and the other to be an actor on a fake set; it is for their followers to decide whether they are “real” or not and whether Buster Friendly is telling the truth or not, putting once again subjectivity in the forefront.

By the end of the novel, Dick deconstructs the boundaries between “real” and “fake” and the world he is depicting becomes more clearly posthuman to its characters. Tony M. Vinci puts a stress on experiencing trauma directly as opposed to the inherited trauma of World War Terminus as a cause of humanity’s reconsideration of their reality and place in their society.

Dick recasts subjectivity as a dynamic mode of becoming-with others that lacks clear demarcations of categories or boundaries, relegating the human as little more than a trace that haunts these new trans-subjects. Pointedly, this transition seems to be made possible, at least in part, by experiencing trauma directly and not having the experience muted by practices of trauma deferment. This trauma enables one to feel for otherness as part of the "human" or posthuman subject. (Vinci, 102)

As a result of this revelation, humanity is forced to take into consideration realities outside the one they were comforted in believing, partly explaining Rick's statement about beliefs and his "becoming" Mercer.

Before finding the toad, Rick was hoping to find a live animal as John Isidore did with the spider; the expectations of finding one played a role on his reality and he does not consider that the toad may be electric when he finds it. "I've never found a live, wild animal. It must be a fantastic experience to look down and see something living scuttling along. Maybe it'll happen someday to me like it did him." (Dick, 192) Rick, by hoping to find something as valuable as a live animal in the wild influences his own reality and clouds his own vision of the world in desperation.

The happenings of both chapters twenty-one and twenty-two, including the fusion with Mercer and the finding of the toad can be read as Rick's delusion, an existential crisis prompted by his empathetic response to androids that he was sent to kill, as well as the loss of his goat. The chapters not only tackle the opposition and blending of technology and nature but also of reality and imaginary.

The selling of the goat has a peculiar sense of artificiality added to it; even though the seller and Rick are dealing with a live animal, it is sold as if it were electric because people are used to dealing with electric animals rather than organic animals that die. The salesman's main selling point for the goat is also its resistance to dying by eating something that is irradiated, which seems to be a very common occurrence in this world, as an "exceptional additional feature."

And there is one exceptional additional feature about goats, one which you may not be aware of. Often times when you invest in an animal and take it home you find, some morning, that it's eaten something radioactive and died. (Dick, 146)

The goat, while extremely precious to humanity and Mercer because it is a live animal, is also sold as an object for this same reason. Rick seems to care for them because of its influence on his social status and not necessarily because of its "ability to appreciate the existence of another." (Dick, 36) When Rick still thinks that the toad is "authentic", he also takes notice that it is not aware of him, but its

value outweighs its capacity to be aware of him. “The eyes held no spark, no awareness of him, and in horror he thought, It’s dead, of thirst maybe. But it had moved.” (Dick, 208)

There is a contrast between the relation of nature and technology at the beginning and end of the novel. While technology is used by humans as a tool to validate their views and the socio-economic aspect of their society, with for example live animals used as tokens for social status, the end of the novel on the other hand is more ambiguous towards this relation and the definition of what is life on a dying planet.

As if to validate technology’s use in a more responsible way, Rick uses the mood organ at the end to get his rest, which acts as a form of closure for his character arc. “‘Will you go to bed now? If I set the mood organ to a 670 setting?’ ‘What does that bring about?’ he asked. ‘Long deserved peace,’ Iran said.” (Dick, 213.) The “peace” in that quote is not only personal but also continues the message of hope brought about by the finding of the toad.

Rachael’s killing of the goat reinforces Rick’s changing perspective on androids. “‘It’s so awful. So needless.’ He turned toward his parked car, opened the door, and got in behind the wheel. ‘Not needless,’ he said. ‘She had what seemed to her a reason.’ An android reason, he thought.” (Dick, 198) Even though the reader is not explicitly given Rachael’s reasons as to why she killed the goat, it is reasonable to assume that it was out of jealousy for it, considering what she told him earlier: “‘You love the goat more than me. More than you love your wife, probably. First the goat, then your wife, then last of all--’ She laughed merrily. ‘What can you do but laugh?’ He did not answer.” (Dick, 175)

By killing the goat, Rachael eliminates what she thinks is most precious to Rick and deconstructs the hierarchy that she believes Rick had set up. Rick also contemplates his “defeat” and one of the reasons for it is the killing of the goat. There is irony in his “defeat” because he succeeded in taking out all the androids he sought to destroy and earning his bounty.

Although he had not considered electric animals as living beings before because of their non-biological nature, as he tells Rachael, “‘Legally you’re not. But really you are. Biologically. You’re not made out of transistorized circuits like a false animal; you’re an organic entity.’” (Dick, 171) he considers the toad to have a life by the end, even though it is not biologically alive, it obtains Rick’s empathy and approval. (Dick, 171) By experiencing the loss of his goat and thinking the

toad to be biological at first, Rick seemingly realizes the fragile nature of both electric and biological beings and their worth.

Sherryl Vint looks at the relationship between “regular” humans and live animals in the novel as purely capitalistic and essentially Cartesian. Similar to the relation between androids and humans in the novel, the Cartesian way of thinking comforts humanity with the idea that humans have “souls” (taking the form of empathy in the novel) and that animals do not, they are also in favour of drawing a line between them and the “other”. As Vint also underlines, Mercerism looks to break boundaries among “living beings”, although there is ambiguity as to what “living beings” refer to and the nature of Mercerism itself, one can interpret that androids and electric animals have life on their own.

As Deckard later learns, Mercerism rejects boundaries between self and other and hierarchies among living beings. Although Deckard is supposed to rationalize his work as a bounty hunter while still theoretically maintaining his reverence for empathy, he comes to realize that doing so requires precisely the sort of affect and cognition split that makes him both a proper Cartesian subject yet also an android. As other critics have argued, by the end of the novel Deckard learns not to draw this line. (Vint, 117)

Kipple is also the anti-thesis of coming together. While the faint possibility of unification of androids, specials and regulars by the end is a sign of hope for the future, kipple on the other hand is without a form and without any distinctive feature or personality, quite literally objects; its eventual merging of the world would leave the world in silence and in a desolate landscape without any life. “Eventually everything within the building would merge, would be faceless and identical, mere pudding-like kipple piled to the ceiling of each apartment.” (Dick, 17)

## CONCLUSION

As argued in this dissertation, despite an obvious protagonist in the form of Rick Deckard, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* plays with multiple perspectives. The dystopia he has created is a deeply unequal society: humans with no mental or physical health problems are told that they are superior and this idea is reinforced with different tools; television, empathy boxes, the Voigt-Kampff and Bonely tests—everything is tailored towards “regular” humans, thus making society advantageous for them but discriminatory for the other. Dick constructs his narrative’s society on a hierarchy based on how human one is considered to be.

“He had been a special now for over a year, and not merely in regard to the distorted genes which he carried. Worse still, he had failed to pass the minimum mental faculties test, which made him in popular parlance, a chickenhead.” (Dick, 15)

Characters like Rick Deckard are taught to see the world in black and white where man-made, “unnatural” beings are seen as “bad” while biological, “natural” beings are a template to follow, “role-models” that are undeniably “good”. Rick Deckard’s line of work requires him to “retire” androids which he considers to be the “bad ones”, “The Killers”. Naturally, his line of thinking makes him think that he is in the “right”. However, the fact that he must justify that he is in a fight of “good versus evil” and “real versus fake”, and bend his perspective by using words such as “retire” instead of “kill”, reveals a breach in society.

Rick’s job as a bounty hunter asks of him not only to assume that he is in the “right” all the time and avoid introspection, but also to bend reality to fit his own, purposefully misinterpreting signs that would put his job and what his entire life has been built on in peril. “In Mercerism, an absolute evil plucked at the threadbare cloak of the tottering, ascending old man, but it was never clear who or what this evil presence was. A Mercerite sensed evil without understanding it.” (Dick, 27)

The world has been plunged into a state of disarray by nuclear warfare spawning from World War Terminus, which could be explaining humanity’s bias against uncontrollable technology and their wish to destroy it completely. However, humanity also does not acknowledge any involvement or responsibility in the

creation of such a weapon, which led to their own demise as well as the nature that they hold in such high regard. In this dissertation, using Tony M. Vinci's work, we determined trauma as being a determining factor in the perceptions of "real" and "fake" by means of "displacement".

In his exploration of American cultural anxieties regarding ontological and political instability after World War II, Dick uses his fictional post-apocalyptic culture to articulate and critique twin practices of trauma-deferment that rely upon the displacement of the ontological rupturing effects of trauma onto the illusory but stable model of a testable, privileged anthropocentric humanism. (Vinci, 93)

Using Vinci's point of view as a base, it can be argued that this "displacement" of responsibilities can also be applied to feelings and flaws. By "displacing" their flaws onto androids and specials, humanity makes themselves out to be the flawless ones. Ironically, the "perfect", "pristine" beings that humanity claim to be only makes them machine-like, "fake". Flaws are supposed to be human: by displacing these flaws onto "specials" and androids, they are making themselves unnaturally perfect and inhuman.

"Loitering on Earth potentially meant finding oneself abruptly classed as biologically unacceptable, a menace to the pristine heredity of the race. Once pegged as special, a citizen, even if accepting sterilization, dropped out of history. He ceased, in effect, to be part of mankind." (Dick, 13)

Refusing their flaws and refusing to see the world that is in front of them has ultimately doomed humanity even further as "silence" and "kipple" are taking over everything, both symbolizing a lack of empathy and community but also an ignorance of their situation and the unwillingness to take action to save Earth. "The silence of the world could not rein back its greed. Not any longer. Not when it had virtually won." (Dick, 16)

Rick Deckard's journey, while it can be seen as a journey of discovery in which he learns that the perspective he has been given by society does not necessarily constitute "reality" as a whole and that other perspectives exist, namely those of "specials" and androids; his journey can also be seen as a downward spiral in which he is brought out of his comforting "illusion" and realizes that he is in fact a murderer, a "killer", which could explain his "defeat" at the end.

The relevance of art, like the retro sci-fi novels and Munch paintings in the story, is to strengthen perspective as one of the core aspects of the novel. The first

part of this dissertation applied René Magritte's *The Treachery of Images* to the novel's concepts of "real" and "fake". While humanity in the novel is trying to assign a clear-cut ideology to these words, they are vast notions that remain unstable, constantly changing depending on who or what you are dealing with. While characters value "reality" over what is man-made and artificial, much of their society is falsified in the sense that it is based on lies and hypocrisy, but also in that it relies on technology to construct their reality.

The notions of "illusion" and "reality" are subjective. "Illusions" are not necessarily "lies", as long as one decides to believe that what others decide to be an "illusion" is their "reality", then it is their "truth".

Rick, in his society, is an everyman figure in a state of "normalcy"; in feeling empathy for androids, he is brought out of his bounty hunter's "reality" and is estranged from the society he was deeply integrated in. The "illusion" is the unfamiliar, the unexplored and only becomes "real" once one acknowledges it as part of their existence.

In the last chapter, the line uttered by Rick about "the absolute, utter, completely real illusion" (Dick, 205) that he had become Mercer reveals that he accepted it as part of his reality but was simultaneously and paradoxically aware that it was, in some ways, a "fake", an "illusion". Rick knows that something that is ultimately "fake" in one's eye can become "real" if convinced otherwise, as is the case with him and the acknowledgement of the androids' perspective.

As argued earlier in this dissertation, the androids revealing that Mercer is only an actor and his environment a stage is insignificant to human society because they accepted it as part of their reality long ago, it is an integral part of their being and identity; reconsidering Mercer as "fake" would mean the collapse of their "reality" and the rebuilding of a new one: "'Mercer isn't a fake,' he said. 'Unless reality is a fake.'" (Dick, 205)

The title "*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*" can be interpreted in multiple ways; first of all, it poses the question of whether the androids are capable of dreaming at all, if they are indeed "real" enough to dream and are not only machines. The title takes the form of a question which underlines the ambiguity of the situation and also the fact that the story is seen through the perspective of human beings; in addition, the title seems to inquire the reader directly about their

perspective on the matter, whether they have a preconceived idea of androids as “real” or “fake” before their reading of the story.

The title also inquires into the androids’ perspectives: Rick Deckard aspires, “dreams” of buying a live animal to replace his electric sheep which he considers “fake”. The question then is that since the androids are considered “fake” and not alive by human society, do they also want, “dream” of the “fake” electric animals which are allegedly similar to them or do they share the human’s point of view that the organic is more valuable?

The question mark in the title shows that there is no certainty, no one answer to the question. The society of the novel presents androids as singular monolithic entities without individuality: they are viewed as “machines” and not individuals.

From the beginning however, the reader is presented with two perspectives, Rick thinking of them as “Killers” (Dick, 27) and Iran thinking of them as victims, calling them “poor andys”. (Dick, 01) Perspectives of androids eventually expand as the narrative continues and as characters keep being introduced. There are also as many perspectives of the androids as there are readers considering their interpretations.

The question in the title however is never mentioned in the novel itself nor is it answered directly. The androids are always considered in relation to humans and rarely, if ever, as individuals on their own. Their perspective is always assumed by the central human characters, Rick and John Isidore, and there are only hints of some androids’ point of view regarding their situation. (Pris’ loneliness and Rachael’s introspection.) Their true feelings are never truly explored as the reader is left to wonder about Rachael’s motivation for killing the goat.

Androids remain an enigma at the end as the narrative revolves around human narrators, perhaps to show androids’ diminished influence on their surroundings and on Earth’s society. The question mark is here to make the readers question the perspectives of “real” and “fake” as multilayered terms which can be viewed differently by any single individual. One being, one reality.

The novel ultimately ends with the protagonist in an ambiguous state; the world around Rick Deckard itself has not changed and he has even contributed in the perpetuation of his society by the killing of six Nexus-6 androids. Although he himself has come to question his reality, he is still a part of his society and an asset



to it: he is still integrated.

Rick Deckard, although his reality has been challenged, still considers Mercer to be alive, despite what the androids revealed about him. His own reality is not easily dismantled, even if Rick Deckard were to challenge his society, he would only be one man, unable to reshape the entire Earth's society by himself as he himself has not been able to fully reassess his own perspective.

The ending itself is arguably a bitter-sweet or even bleak one, while Rick Deckard is indeed "defeated" by the end in the changing of his perspective of "reality" and "illusion", feeling empathy towards androids, he is still able to reintegrate into his society and its "real illusion", a comforting illusion. The Earth remains damaged by the "dust" and the "silence has virtually won." but the perspective given to the reader is Rick's and Rick Deckard remains an unreliable narrator: the "hope" of change given at the end is only an "illusion", a "deception" that everything will be able to change after all, when it is in fact maybe too late.

Like Magritte's *The Treachery of Images*, the ending of the novel is open to interpretation, the reader is left to their own perspective of the story and its characters; on the one hand, the novel can be interpreted as showing that there is indeed hope for change, even if it is made through small steps, on the other hand however, the world itself is depicted as ending with no hope of recovery with a humanity that refuses to see outside its own shell and is doomed to disappear.

The ending is only seen through the protagonist, Rick Deckard. John Isidore who is supposed to represent a liminal state between androids and human beings has been left in a state of despair and of incertitude: "The special floundered, not knowing what to do; a variety of mute expressions crossed his face and then, turning, he shuffled out of the apartment, leaving Rick alone." (Dick, 197) The androids that Rick had to "retire" were also eliminated, while Rachael disappeared: the only perspective left is that of a "regular" human being with no one left to compare it to.

The reader is an outsider who decides what is "real" and what is "fake", they shape the narrative in the way they want it to be, whether they choose to see that ending as hopeful or as bleak is up to them.

## INDEX

## Alphabetical Index

Alienation.....	12, 15, 16, 22, 28, 29, 36, 50, 52, 59, 60, 61
Blade Runner.....	1, 9, 39, 46, 88
Heidegger.....	48, 49, 62, 66, 69, 73, 75, 89
Individualism.....	7, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 59, 61, 68, 74
Kipple.....	53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 63, 68, 71, 81, 83
Labels.....	7, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 40, 88
Mercerism.....	14, 24, 27, 33, 35, 65, 68, 70, 71, 72, 78, 81, 82
Mimesis.....	9, 10, 29
Perception.....	5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 19, 32, 37, 38, 40, 69, 78, 83
Perspectives.....	7, 21, 27, 28, 39, 66, 75, 78, 82, 83, 85, 92
Posthuman.....	50, 55, 76, 78, 79, 89
<i>The Treachery of images</i> by René Magritte.	5, 7, 8, 18, 25, 29, 31, 66, 84, 90

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## RÉSUMÉ - ABSTRACT

### Résumé

*Les moutons rêvent-ils de moutons électriques ?* de Philip K. Dick est une œuvre questionnant les notions de « réalité » mais aussi « d'illusion » en les opposant et en brouillant les frontières entre elles. Les androïdes sont-ils vraiment « vivants » ou ne sont-ils qu'en réalité une technologie dangereuse mettant en péril l'existence de l'humanité de par leur proximité les rendant indiscernable d'un être humain ? Le récit est majoritairement exploré à travers les yeux d'un chasseur de prime engagé par la police, Rick Deckard, étant tâché d'éliminer des androïdes de dernière génération. Malgré la perspective dominante de Rick, une multiplicité de perspectives entrent en jeu, poussant le lecteur non seulement à s'interroger sur la condition humaine et de décider ce qu'ils considèrent être « bon » ou « mauvais » mais aussi ce qui est « vrai » ou faux ».

Mots-clés : Réalité ; Illusion ; Technologie ; Nature ; Perspective ; Condition humaine.

### Abstract

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick is a work that challenges notions of “reality” and “illusion” by both opposing them and blurring the lines between them. Are androids truly “alive” or are they in fact a dangerous piece of technology putting humanity’s existence in peril by their indistinguishable proximity to human beings? The narrative is mostly seen through the eyes of a bounty hunter hired by the police, Rick Deckard, tasked with the elimination of state-of-the-art androids. Despite the dominant perspective being Rick’s, multiple perspectives are brought into play, pushing the reader to not only question the human condition and what they consider to be “good” or “bad”, but also to determine what is “true” from what is “fake”.

Keywords : Reality ; Illusion ; Technology ; Nature ; Perspective ; Human condition.