

**Prophet of the Postmodern:**

The Problem of Authenticity  
in the Works of  
Philip K. Dick

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## ABSTRACT

My project is an examination of the concept of authenticity, as it is problematized in the works of Philip K. Dick; specifically, in his Hugo Award-winning *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) and in his best-selling novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968). Dick believes that authenticity is essential for human existence, but finds the concept problematized by technologies which make possible increasingly perfect reproductions and replications, as well as by the effect these technologies have on the human subject. Furthermore, these technologies are linked to the economic mode of advanced consumerism.

Taking my lead from Fredric Jameson and the contributors to the journal *Science-Fiction Studies*, I view Dick's work as a form of cultural criticism, and an engagement with postmodernism. In this light, the problem of authenticity in Dick's work is revealed as symptomatic of his criticism of mass, consumer culture. My thesis therefore becomes an examination of Dick's relationship to postmodernism, with a special focus on how that relationship affects his dealings with the idea of authenticity.

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## Introduction

### DEFINING TERMS/THE STUDY OF...:

#### 1. Science Fiction

For various reasons, the definition of "science fiction" has long been the subject of discussion, argument, and criticism. Much of this stems from the existence of sf's sister-genre, "fantasy," and a need to differentiate between the two. Often this discussion is also the result of a certain form of elitism, wherein sf needs to be properly defined and categorized, so that it can be segregated away from the rest of literature and, presumably, left to die. Whatever the reason, the act of refining the definition of "science fiction" has been a cornerstone of the study of science fiction, ever since that study began.

One of the first critical reviews of science fiction literature is Kingsley Amis' *New Maps of Hell: A Survey of Science Fiction* (1960). In this early work, Amis identifies a characteristic of science fiction, a characteristic which will be developed by later critics, one that is important to the study of sf: "Its most important use, I submit, is as a means of dramatizing social inquiry, or providing a fictional mode in which cultural tendencies can be isolated and judged" (63). Here, Amis clearly connects science fiction with social and cultural inquiry. The idea that sf functions best as a critical mode will be taken up by other theorists in the future; in particular, it shows up in the works of Darko Suvin, whose *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (1979) is often treated as a canonical text in the study of sf. Damien Broderick comments that "Suvin's contribution has been absorbed so generally that it can seem transparently given" (*Reading by Starlight* 32).

Suvin, editor of the journal *Science-Fiction Studies* from 1973-1980, distinguishes some of the crucial elements of science fiction. In particular, he identifies the role of the *novum* in sf, and puts forward the concept of "SF as the literature of *cognitive estrangement*" (4).

The *novum* is "a strange newness" (4), a novelty or innovation "validated by cognitive logic" (63). Suvin explains:

The aliens--utopians, monsters, or simply different strangers--are a mirror to man just as the differing country is a mirror for his world. But the mirror is not only a reflecting one, it is also a transforming one, virgin womb and alchemical dynamo: the mirror is a crucible ... this genre has always been wedded to a hope of finding in the unknown the ideal environment, tribe, state, intelligence, or other aspect of the Supreme Good (or to a fear of and revulsion from its contrary). At all events, the possibility of other strange, co-variant coordinate systems and semantic fields is assumed. (5)

In other words, the *novum* is whatever makes the world of the story into a science-fictional world, be it faster-than-light travel, intelligent alien life forms, human-like androids, etc.

His second contribution, the concept of "cognitive estrangement," he explains this way: "confronting a set normative system ... with a point of view or look implying a new set of norms ... in SF the attitude of estrangement ... has grown into the formal framework of the genre" (6-7). Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. explains,

Sf text presents aspects of a reader's empirical reality '*made strange*' through a new perspective '*implying a new set of norms*.' This recasting of the familiar has a '*cognitive*' purpose, that is, the recognition of reality it evokes from the reader is a gain in rational understanding of the social conditions of existence. (115)

In *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction*, Damien Broderick explains,

The strategy of estrangement uses one thing as a figure or stand-in for another (as metaphor does: 30 Heads of State), which is the mechanism of poetry and allegory. Usually, prose fictions employ a strategy of metonymy, based on causality, contiguity, or 'combination'--the syntagm or unfolding word-string--or synecdoche (part standing for whole: 30 head of cattle). The allegorising of sf, however, also differs from most poetry, which is both strategically and tactically metaphoric. Sf's special strategy yields a preeminent ontological saturation or intensity, of a kind that everyday metonymic narrative can never sustain--and yet it remains

anchored in the natural or empirical. (34)

Suvin's book, then, formulates science fiction (at least *good sf*) as a *critical* genre. This concept was later advanced by Carl Howard Freedman, who, in his book *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, states that "[j]ust as Lukacs argues that the historical novel is a privileged and paradigmatic genre for Marxism, so I argue that science fiction enjoys--and ought to be recognized as enjoying--such a position not only for Marxism but for critical theory in general" (xv). Further,

I maintain that science fiction, like critical theory, insists upon historical mutability, material reductability, and utopian possibility. Of all genres, science fiction is thus the one most devoted to the historical concreteness and rigorous self-reflectiveness of critical theory. The science fictional world is not only one different in time or place from our own, but one whose chief interest is precisely the difference that such difference makes. (Freedman XVI)

Science fiction, then, has a long history in some corners of the academic realm as a privileged mode of social and critical inquiry. It is in this tradition that I will be examining the works of Philip K. Dick, hoping to show the truth of this claim regarding science fiction and to also show Dick's privileged position within science fiction itself--in particular, in his relationship to postmodern culture.

## 2. Postmodernism

As is the case with science fiction, much of the discourse surrounding postmodernism is focused on defining exactly what it is. Just as I have sought to use "canonical" texts to define science fiction, so here a renowned study will be used for the explaining of the term: Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism*.<sup>1</sup> To simplify things to an extent Jameson would no doubt frown upon: the book's basic thesis is that postmodernism is the form that the superstructure takes when the base (to use a Marxist formulation) has become almost

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1 Here is, perhaps, the place to address the concern that a tautological argument is being set up; that by using Marxist texts to define both major topics they will inevitably agree. The inclusion of Brian McHale is one attempt to broaden this paper's discourse; however, this problem is also by-and-large unavoidable, as the most interesting and fruitful discussions of both postmodernism and science fiction from a cultural studies and/or critical theory background all seem to be Marxian to some degree.



completely mechanized (and computerized) multinationalism. This is evident when Jameson parallels three fundamental moments of capitalism (market capitalism, monopoly/imperialism, multinationalism) with three cultural periods (realism, modernism, postmodernism) (35-36). Jameson's view of postmodernism is "one that seeks to grasp it as the cultural dominant of the logic of late capitalism" (46), which means that it is only useful to identify art as postmodern if it seems to have a relationship with consumerist, multinational society. "Late capitalism," as Jameson calls it, includes features such as "transnational business, international division of labour, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and the stock exchanges ... new forms of media interrelationship ... computers and automation, the flight of production to advanced Third World areas ... crisis of traditional labour, the emergence of yuppies, and gentrification on a now-global scale" (xix). These changes (from modernity to postmodernity) in the economic "base" lead to similar changes in the cultural superstructure. Damien Broderick provides a helpful list of "postmodern tropes" which he has isolated from Jameson's *Postmodernism*:

a certain flatness, a lack of mimetic or illusory "depth"; loss or attenuation of discrete subjectivity and memory, yielding an odd blend of flattened affect and "a peculiar kind of euphoria"; the abandonment by the artist of any pretence to a unique style localized in history, in favor of pastiche, jargon, and nostalgia; schizophrenic *écriture*, especially jumbled collage and a radical breakdown in reality-testing; the "hysterical sublime."  
(Broderick 10)

Christopher Palmer adds, "The term 'postmodern' is introduced partly in response to the preoccupation of late capitalism with fabrication, exchange and sale of images rather than artefacts; the commodification of culture. The economic and the cultural have become intermingled. Further, it is often alleged that postmodernity does something quite drastic and unprecedented to history: it erases it" (4). All of this extensive quoting is to show that those features generally associated with postmodernity, from Lyotard and Baudrillard to Pynchon and DeLillo, can in fact be seen as "symptoms" of late capitalism. This will be better explained when dealing directly with Dick's work.

Before turning to Dick's work, though, a specific look should be taken at

postmodern *literature*. In *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale identifies the major split between modernist and postmodernist fiction as a movement from an epistemological dominant to an ontological one (9-10). The main difference between the two, the epistemological and the ontological, is that the former assumes a stable world, and questions the role of man and systems within it, while the latter denies the existence of a stable, *authentic* world.

Far from being two different conceptions of postmodernism, Jameson's and McHale's theories can work together, in that the economic base of advanced consumerism and multinationalism creates a superstructure, an ideology, where the focus or dominant turns to ontological questions rather than epistemological ones (which were prevalent when the economic base was monopoly/imperialist capitalism). After all, McHale is diagnosing literature, an aspect of culture, which Jameson (and Marxists like him) connect with the economic realm. Dick taps into the fact that "[t]he ontology of the human and the ontology of the world mutually construct each other. When one is fake, the other is contaminated by fakery as well; when one is authentic, the authenticity of the other is, if not guaranteed, at least held out as a strong possibility" (Hayles 423). It is, perhaps, Dick's focus on the concept of authenticity that allows Damien Broderick to make that claim that "following Fredric Jameson and Brian McHale, Dick is the inevitable exemplar of postmodern ontological fiction" (*Philip K. Dick and Transrealism* 10).

### 3. *Authenticity*

One of the paradigmatic issues of postmodernism is the problem of authenticity, even if that specific term is not always used. In its Derridian, post-structuralist strain, postmodernism calls into question the validity of truth-claims, reveals that the connection between language and what it signifies is largely arbitrary, and seeks to show that what were formerly viewed as universal truths are, in fact, cultural or linguistic constructs-- what some theorists call ideology. In feminist criticism, postmodernism leads away from the formerly "gendered" discourse and towards the likes of Judith Butler and "queer theory," with its de-emphasis of something as basic as anatomy as providing an important

distinction between people. In the commercial realm, mass production, the creation of suburbs, and technology such as the Internet moves away from products that are handmade or unique, and moves towards a world of replication and sameness. Jameson says of this economic aspect of postmodernism that "the culture of the simulacrum comes to life in a society where exchange value has been generalized to the point at which the very memory of use value is effaced, a society which Guy Debord has observed, in an extraordinary phrase, that in it 'the image has become the final form of commodity reification'" (Jameson 18). All of these aspects of postmodernism lead to a distrust or devaluation of the "authentic," the idea that something is "original, first-hand, prototypical"; "real, actual, genuine; really proceeding from its reputed source or author"; "of undisputed origin; possessing original or inherent authority" ("authentic, *a.* (and *n.*)," OED). Walter Benjamin, in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," a classic essay which deals with just this issue, states that "the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity ... the whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical--and, of course, not only technical--reproducibility. Confronted with its manual reproduction, which was usually branded as a forgery, the original reserved its authority; not so *vis a vis* technical reproduction" (222). This is to say that the authentic thing has inherent value or meaning--it has a privileged connection to the "real" that is not present in fakes, forgeries, copies, simulations, simulacra, and so on. The crisis of foundationalism brought about by postmodernity calls into question the authenticity of God, of true communication, of the male/female split, etc., and the search for such "authenticity" can be branded as logocentrism. The problem, however, is that authenticity, or some connection to the Real, or Truth, (or the Sublime) is seemingly necessary for communication, or is at least highly desired by humans, who feel the need for a deeper truth than the world of surface images we live in. For instance, Derrida, in his later writings, turned towards discussions of God--even the "high priest" of postmodernism needed to look for meaning somewhere.

The works of Philip K. Dick follow a similar pattern; within them can be found a powerful criticism of late capitalist society, and a discourse on the problem of authenticity. Just as Dick calls into question the authenticity of every aspect of the world--history, mankind, reality itself--so too does he seem to come to cherish the idea of

authenticity more and more, so that his last few novels turn to an investigation of god. Even in this final instance, though, Dick calls such an Ultimate authenticity into question.

So, to recapitulate our findings: (1) that "good" science fiction acts as a form of social and cultural critique, however estranged and weird it may seem; and (2) that postmodernism can best be understood as *the* dominant social system, from the 1950s onward. The following, then, will be an attempt to show that the works of Philip K. Dick are intrinsically occupied with the problem of authenticity, and form a particularly strong critique of late capitalist society, that they engage in the postmodern tropes identified above, and in doing so make Dick the paradigmatic author of both late twentieth-century science fiction and postmodernism itself.

### PHILIP K DICK

Kim Stanley Robinson, an award-winning science fiction author, had this to say about science fiction in his PhD thesis, entitled *The Novels of Philip K. Dick*:

If ... the distortions and estrangements that constitute the elements of science fiction are made systematically, with an underlying metaphorical purpose, the genre can become a powerful instrument of social criticism. Used in this way its distortions become somewhat like the exaggerations and the use of the grotesque in satire, which is surely one of the genres from which science fiction was born.

Philip K. Dick's science fiction is perhaps the best example of the estranging element of the genre being organized and used for this critical purpose. (Robinson X)

Christopher Palmer, author of *Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern*, agrees with Robinson, seeing Dick as a SF writer who writes about the postmodern condition and its affect on the human subject: "Dick's fiction constitutes a radical representation of the conditions of contemporary society, conditions that affect the sense of time, the sense of self which an individual is required to attain in order to be an agent in contemporary society, the sense of objects as they are produced by contemporary society" (Palmer 10). Further: "All these factors and conditions constitute a critique of postmodern society as a threat to the liberal humanist individual, who depends on a sense

of sequential time, on the differences between himself and others--or himself and other beings with consciousness--and on the real existence of objects" (Palmer 24). Dick uses the estrangements of sf to perform a critical act, like satire, on contemporary, postmodern society.

There is a short story by Philip K. Dick entitled "Pay for the Printer" (1954) which can be seen as paradigmatic of not only his opus, but of his relationship to the kind of critical social criticism identified by Robinson. "Pay for the Printer," like many science fiction stories that came before it and would succeed it, depicts the world recovering from nuclear holocaust. In this future society mankind is barely able to scrape by, with all industry having been destroyed during the war, a war which is never truly described.

Luckily for humanity, help has come from the heavens: the Biltong, an alien race with strange and useful powers, is attracted to the Earth by the flashing lights of the erupting nuclear warheads. These gelatinous creatures have the ability to copy--*print*, in the story's language--anything put before them, and in affable fashion they offer their talents to stricken humanity. Communities blossom around these Biltong, which seem rather immobile, despite having travelled to Earth from afar (or perhaps the Biltong originally set down in well-populated areas). The important thing is that the Biltong become the center of each post-apocalyptic enclave, and serve the function of (re)producing everything that can no longer be produced by man. Man seems to have lost the knowledge of how to create, since the war has destroyed so much industry and, presumably, the upper echelons of society. Even more importantly (which is to say, more sinisterly), the story also seems to indicate that man loses this knowledge because the Biltong are so *convenient*. Since the altruistic alien race is willing to make a copy of virtually anything that it is provided with, mankind simply *forgets* how to do it on its own.

As the story begins, the reader learns that the Biltong are dying. They have been on Earth too long, have copied too much for the thankless humans, and are most likely reacting badly to the fallout still present in the atmosphere. Before any of the Biltong are physically represented in the text, the signs of their decay are made evident. The physical world--that is, the world of buildings, of material objects, of things--is beginning to

decompose. The power of entropy is present, and solid things are beginning to crumble, and, to use a popular term from Dick's later work, turn to *kipple*. The reader learns that this is due to the plight of the Biltong who, now dying, can no longer make perfect replicas, but instead only frail and warped copies. As the story progresses, it is revealed that this is not a local problem, but that it is happening to Biltong everywhere.

Without the Biltong's printing ability, the people of Earth do not know how to continue. It is evident that while the nuclear holocaust that gave rise to this world was awful, the death of the Biltong will be even more debilitating. Once the realization is made that the Biltong will leave Earth, since it would be suicidal to stay, one of the character's states: "Then our civilization goes with them" (252). It is worth noting that civilization did *not* go away with the dropping of the bombs years earlier.

The only hope in the story comes from a man named Dawes, who has done the unthinkable--he has actually *built* something himself: "Printing means merely copying. I can't explain to you what building is; you'll have to try it yourself and find out. Building and printing are two totally different things" (252). And yet what he has built is crude. A knife, a cup--nothing more than prehistoric men were capable of. The knife gets an interesting reaction from the other characters: "The knife was as crude as the cup--hammered, bent, tied together with wire. 'You made this knife?' Fergesson asked, dazed. 'I can't believe it. *Where do you start?* You have to have tools to make this. It's a paradox!' His voice rose with hysteria. 'It isn't *possible!*'" (249). This incredulous behaviour does not bode well for humanity, nor does Dawes' admission that things as complicated as cigarette lighters will be out of man's reach for a long time. Still, there is a primitive hope, that man stripped of his material resources can somehow survive.

"Pay for the Printer" utilizes many of the motifs that recur throughout Dick's work. It has the benign aliens, the Biltong, who do not, as in other science fiction, serve as an "other" for humanity (this spot is reserved, in Dick, for androids). While Dick does not use aliens as often as other genre writers, when they do show up in his work they tend, like the Biltong, to be helpers--for instance, the slime-mould Lord Running Clam in *Clans of the Alphane Moon*. The fact that Dick's aliens are often compassionate and helpful leads to the realization that his humans, for the most part, are not.

Present here, as well, is the handyman-as-hero. Dawes, the one man capable of

making things himself, can be connected to the handyman heroes who populated the rest of Dick's work—such as Frank Frink in *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), whose handicraft skills help reinvigorate a fallen world. Also worth mentioning is the concept of a world battling entropy (especially prevalent in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968)). Most importantly, though, is Dick's criticism of the culture of consumerism and mass production.

While this story does not yet engage with postmodernism, it is an example of cultural criticism (by way of fantastic allegory), criticism directed at mass production and technology. Dick's work tends towards the fully postmodern in his novels, where subjectivity, identity, schizophrenia, and other postmodern tropes discussed above can be more fully dealt with. Here, though, in "Pay for the Printer," Dick's mode of criticism--which he will use against postmodernist society in his other works--is in full force.

It does not take much of an interpretive stretch to see that the Biltong are acting in much the same ways that factories did in the 1950s. The Biltong mass produce things, making inferior copies. It brings to mind a statement made by Robinson, in a BBC documentary entitled *Philip K. Dick: A Day in the Afterlife*:

What you would notice if you were Philip K. Dick is that there's nothing natural in the world anymore. Everything that I see is plastic and glass and gaudy colours, and strangely made. Human beings begin to take on an odd look. Our clothes are the same sort of plastic oddness, and therefore our eyeballs begin to take on kind of a glassy look. The entire world begins to take on a kind of a fake, artificial "made" quality, and the question then naturally jumps to your mind: well, who made it? Why is it so crummy? Why is it so degraded and falling apart? (*Philip K. Dick: A Day in the Afterlife*)

It is the tyranny of sameness, by way of the subjugation of authenticity. What is authentic is difficult to make, like the knife and cup produced by Dawes, but it has an almost transcendental quality, as can be seen in Fergesson's disbelieving reaction to them. The rareness and sublimity of the authentic will be returned to again and again throughout Dick's opus.

Similarly, it is not much of a stretch to see that a Marxian idea of alienation is at

work, where mankind is so alienated from its labour that the possibility of survival is hamstrung. Mankind becomes useless, since it has become disconnected from the production of the things it requires to survive, and any chance of a revolutionary break--seemingly necessary in such a post-apocalyptic society--is drastically diminished. In showing this act of alienation, Dick's work "recognizes a fundamental contradiction of late capitalism. In the words of economist Ernest Mandel: 'Capitalist automation as the mighty development of both the *productive forces of labor and the alienating and destructive forces of commodity and capital* thus becomes the quintessence of the antinomies inherent in the capitalist mode of production'" (Bukatman 52-53).

As mentioned, Dick's brand of social criticism becomes postmodern in many of his novels. To give three examples: In *The Simulacra* (1964), characters are plagued by "Nitz advertisements," fly-sized machines that infiltrate cars and homes--the same way flies would--and buzz out inane commercials (41). This is a particularly clever invention of Dick's, comparing advertisements to pests, in both the annoyance they cause and their pervasiveness. In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1964), Dick uses a common science fiction trope--the precognitive psychic (or "precog"). Whereas in other works of SF precogs are known to use their powers to produce enigmatic prophecies, or to warn against doom, or are used as a means to send the main character on a perilous adventure to beat fate, in *Palmer Eldritch* the main occupation for precogs is as advisors to the commercial sphere. In our world, corporations must employ focus and research groups to see if a new product will sell; in *Palmer Eldritch*, a precog can use his or her psychic powers to see within seconds if the same item is viable. Lastly, in *Ubik*, the novel's protagonist, Joe Chip, is unable to leave his apartment until paying his door five cents for the service; an argument ensues, as to whether the charge represents a mandatory fee or a gratuity (23-24). Joe even threatens to undo the door's hinges with a knife, and in response the door threatens to sue.

Each of these three examples (the Nitz advertisements, the capitalistic precogs, the greed of the automated door to Joe Chip's apartment) are good examples of the sort of criticism Dick levels against capitalist society. They are postmodern--or at least, more postmodern than the criticism in "Pay for the Printer"--to the extent that they go beyond criticizing the mere mass production of modernism and show the total saturation of



commercialism and consumerism in everyday life. The realm of capital can no longer be separated from any other aspect of human life. In *Palmer Eldritch* and *Ubik*, Dick shows religion reduced to a consumer item: in the former, salvation comes in the form of a drug, Chew-Z, with the slogan "GOD PROMISES ETERNAL LIFE. WE CAN DELIVER IT" (150); in the latter novel, the forces of entropy and decay can only be delayed through the application of "Ubik," which appears as an aerosol spray and even a magic elixir, and is advertised throughout the novel in the epigraphs to each chapter. Dick thus reflects on the form of late capitalism which has invaded and annexed all other areas of life.

Such criticisms by themselves, however, might not truly qualify the novels for the label "postmodern," if it were not for the fact that in each of these works the criticisms of consumer culture are accompanied by a narrative focus on problems of ontology. So in *The Simulacra* the government is revealed as a sham; the First Lady is an actress, and the President is not only *not* elected democratically, as everyone believes, but is also a simulacrum. The characters of the novel continually have their faith in the system undermined, as more and more of the world is revealed to be a fabrication. As Patricia Warrick has argued, "Dick's fiction is structured as a series of reversals designed to defeat the reader's expectation that it is possible to discover what the situation 'really' is" (Hayles 431). *Palmer Eldritch* and *Ubik* both contain an event (the taking of Chew-Z in the former, an explosion on the moon in the latter) which alters both the characters' and the reader's perception of what is real; after this event, both the reader and the characters are never sure if they are living in a world of perception or in a "real" world. Dick's criticisms of advanced consumerism are accompanied by a focus on ontology, seemingly in accordance with Jameson's and McHale's understanding of postmodernity and postmodern writing. As Broderick puts it, Dick's work constitutes "the preeminent staging of postmodern tropes identified by Fredric Jameson," (10). So it is that "the prevalence of paranoia and schizophrenia in Dick's works illustrates the impact of capitalism on the human subject" (Enns 68), and the nature (or symptoms) of this impact leads to ontological problems and the staging of postmodern tropes.

This thesis, then, will show that Dick's work engages in a specifically postmodern cultural criticism that is closely engaged with the problem of authenticity. What is held up as authentic, or considered valuable by Dick, is always something that, to some

degree, resists the forces of consumerism, or is somehow unaffected by mass reproduction. Dick's methods will be examined in detail in the following chapters, which comprise close readings of his most critically successful novel, *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), and his most commercially successful novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968). Not only are these novels Dick's most important works, but a progression can be witnessed in them, a progression from the problems of authentic history found in *High Castle* to the problems of authentic humanity found in *Androids*. The novels are not merely different takes on the problem of authenticity, but show how Dick found the entire concept increasingly problematic—and transcendent—as his career progressed.

## Chapter 1

### The Man in the High Castle

"Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be."

-Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

*The Man in the High Castle* is Philip K. Dick's masterpiece. It contains his most fully fleshed-out characters, a mastery of style, and a unity of theme and action that are often absent from his work. Kim Stanley Robinson notes that the writing of *High Castle* took at least a year, which is a marked change from Dick's usual writing habits--before he averaged about two novels a year, and for the next four years after *High Castle* his output was even more prolific. In this book, which would go on to win him the Hugo Award, the science-fiction genre's highest honor, Dick "combined the attention to characterization, and quality of prose, that he had given to the realist novels, with the estrangements of his science fiction, and the result was one of the very first great American science fiction novels" (Robinson 39). As well as being an engrossing piece of popular fiction, *High Castle* is a deeply ontological exercise, and one of Dick's most postmodern works.

America has been defeated by the Axis powers. This concept is the basis for Dick's *High Castle*. However, rather than using this particular *novum* to launch into a "what if?" scenario, Dick uses it instead to stage an estranging effect on his readers, and in doing so causes them to question the very idea of history, of fiction, of human action, and--most important to this study--the concept of *authenticity*; which is to say, Dick's novel coerces the reader into considering ontological problems, which fits Freedman's previously-stated claim that "the science fictional world is not only one different in time or place from our own, but one whose chief interest is precisely the difference that such difference makes" (Freedman XVI).

The US has been partitioned: the East coast is run by a Nazi-controlled government, while the West coast has become the Pacific States of America (the PSA), part of the Co-Prosperity Alliance, governed by the Empire of Japan. Of the four central characters, three--Robert Childan, Frank Frink, and Mr. Tagomi--are living in the PSA; in

San Francisco, to be exact. The fourth, Juliana Frink, lives in the Rocky Mountain States, a buffer-zone between the coasts that is "loosely banded to the PSA" (9). These characters are separated by class--Tagomi is a bigwig in the Japanese Trade Commission, Childan is a middle-class business owner, and the Frinks are blue collar--and also by their use of language. Tagomi and the Kasouras, the Japanese characters of the novel, speak an English that is heavily affected by Japanese idioms ("Intuition about people. Cut through all ceremony and outward form. Penetrate to the heart," etc.), whereas the American characters speak an English that is more or less significantly altered, depending on how immersed each character is in the Japanese-American culture. This is, perhaps, the most admirable stylistic achievement of Dick's fiction:

But in *The Man in the High Castle* Dick intends to write an English transformed by a Japanese occupation; not just the pulp language of Mr. Moto, but an expressive, compressed, epigrammatic English, evocative as a haiku or Zen koan. He varies this voice depending upon the viewpoint character of any given scene. In Tagomi's scenes we see it at its purest. Childan is deliberately trying to think Japanesed English, so he slips in and out of it; Frink doesn't try, but he is profoundly influenced by the I Ching, and he falls into it as the dialect of his time. (Robinson 49)

With Juliana Frink, removed, as she is, from the PSA, the "Japanesed English" disappears completely. This defamiliarized English is not an attempt at an "authentic" Japanese accent; rather, Dick presents the reader with something familiar--a common language--and creates an estranging effect, making the familiar seem alien. This deformation of style corresponds to the way Dick manages his central theme in *High Castle*: the engagement with history. *High Castle* is a perfect example of a postmodern treatment of history (see, for example, Jameson 2005, 345). Dick further explores history by adding two extra complications: the first is a novel-within-the-novel, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*; the second is Robert Childan's American Authentic Handicrafts Inc. and the proliferation of fake or "inauthentic" pieces of history found there.

*The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* is a novel written by Hawthorne Abendsen, the man in the high castle of the novel. A character in *High Castle* informs the reader that the title of Abendsen's book is a quote from the Bible; in particular, the line seems to allude to

Ecclesiastes 12:5<sup>2</sup>. This novel depicts an alternate history, one in which the Allies, not the Axis, were victorious in WWII. In a bit of postmodern reflexivity, Paul Kasoura and his wife discuss the nature of the novel:

'Interesting form of fiction possibly within genre of science fiction.'

"Oh no," Betty disagreed. "No science in it. Nor set in future. Science fiction deals with future, in particular future where science has advanced over now. Book fits neither premise."

"But," Paul said, "it deals with alternative present. Many well-known science fiction novels of that sort." (108)

This conversation, of course, leads the reader to think about *High Castle*; it, too, is a science fiction novel, depicting an alternate history, and Paul's comments seem to acknowledge this with a sly wink to the reader.

The initial description of *Grasshopper* informs the reader that in it, Franklin Roosevelt was *not* assassinated. Since Dick is already representing an alternate history, and since, in the reader's time, Roosevelt was not assassinated, the most likely first assumption is that the history depicted in *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* is the reader's own. The question remains: which is the *authentic* history? While this question could first be put to the text itself--as in, which fictional history fits this fictional world?--the continuous complications presented by Dick lead the reader to pose this question to their own history, thus engaging in the distrust of meta-narratives common to postmodernism in general.

*The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, with its seemingly familiar take on history, is one of the key ways in which Dick acts out this investigation into, and ultimate realization of, postmodern and consumerist ideology. As *High Castle* progresses, more and more of the content of the novel-within-the-novel is described, and it becomes evident that the history of that novel is also different from the reader's own, is yet another alternate history. The world is divided between the US and the UK, who engage in a sort of "Cold War" reminiscent of the US/USSR conflict post-WWII. In *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, Winston Churchill, in the victorious aftermath of WWII, becomes ensconced in his

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2 Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets

position of power, is able to maintain his place as Prime Minister, and "the older he gets, the more autocratic and rigid he gets ... until by 1960, he's like some old warlord out of Central Asia; nobody can cross him" (161). Joe Cinnadella, explaining the novel to Juliana, tells her that the British "start setting up ... what are called 'detention preserves.' Concentration camps, in other words. For thousands of maybe disloyal Chinese. They're accused of sabotage and propaganda" (*High Castle* 160). According to *Grasshopper*, "under British rule, the darker races were excluded from the country clubs, the hotels, the better restaurants," whereas in the US "the color problem had by 1950 been solved" (159). By the end of the novel, the US is defeated, and the new, authoritarian Britain rules the world.

At the end of *High Castle*, Juliana confronts Hawthorne Abendsen, the author of *Grasshopper*. As she travels to his home, the fabled "High Castle," she asks herself: "What is it Abendsen wanted to say? Nothing about his make-believe world ... he told us about our own world" (248-249)--a realization that Dick hopes his readers will come to as well. Upon arriving in Cheyenne, Juliana discovers that the "High Castle" is, in fact, "a single-story stucco house with many shrubs and a good deal of garden made up mostly of climbing roses" (251), one of the many ways in which expectations and surface are shown to be false in the novel. She learns that Abendsen wrote his book by using the *I Ching*, calling on the Book of Changes for how to write all aspects of it (256). When Juliana questions the *I Ching* regarding its motivation for writing the book, she receives the hexagram for Inner Truth (257). Juliana and Abendsen take this to mean that *Grasshopper* is true, that the Axis really did lose the War. However, the reader knows that even if the novel-within-a-novel is correct in that regard, it still has the facts wrong.

The confusion between authentic histories is further advanced if a reader has some knowledge of Dick's autobiography. Dick wrote *High Castle* by using the *I Ching* at every step. If it was not already clear, this bit of information makes it abundantly evident that Abendsen is to *Grasshopper* what Dick is to *High Castle*. Dick and Abendsen are conflated, as when Joe warns Juliana not to get mixed up with Abendsen: "I don't want you getting mixed up with him--you know. That would be dreadful. Wreck everyone's existence" (*High Castle* 164). What at first seems like a comment about social mores turns out to be infused with ontological power. Patricia Warrick writes that "an

equation is established in which Dick's novel is to the real world what Abendsen's novel is to Dick's fictional reality. The winner of any war is locked into the necessity of continuing to fight to maintain his superior power position. The effort eventually destroys him. On a moral level, he has already been destroyed because of the horrendous acts he committed to win. The winner paradoxically is the loser" (Warrick 87).

But the questions about history begin even earlier in the narrative, with the first-page introduction of Robert Childan and American Artistic Handicrafts Inc. Childan's shop contains "no contemporary American art," he tells us; "Only the past could be represented here, in a store such as this" (5). It would perhaps be more informative, for this discussion, to change the wording, just a little bit: "the past could *only* be represented here," since the novel goes to great lengths to show that the artefacts in Childan's store--or anywhere, for that matter--cannot contain history themselves, but rather can only hope to represent the past, no matter how imperfectly. On top of that, many of the historical items in Childan's store, if not all of them, are forgeries.

Robert Childan makes his living by selling "authentic" American artefacts to his wealthy Japanese clients. What is deemed to be "authentically" American is, in itself, a form of social criticism. Guns, especially the recurring Colt .44, seem to be a big part of America's past, but it is a Mickey Mouse watch that is deemed the "most authentic of dying old U. S. culture" (44); a statement which certainly acts as a criticism, if America's culture is intimately linked to a cartoon mouse. Other items in Childan's store include a scrimshaw, vegetable-dyed goat-hair rugs, and a framed signed picture of Jean Harlowe--all of which, it turns out, may be forgeries. Childan's store literalizes Palmer's (already-stated) assertion that late capitalism is preoccupied with "fabrication, exchange and sale of images rather than artefacts; the commodification of culture. The economic and the cultural have become intermingled" (Palmer 4).

At the outset of the novel, Frank Frink is fired from his job in the W-M Corporation, where he was employed as a forger. Frink himself manufactures the fake American artefacts found in Childan's store. His specialty is small arms from the frontier period, and the Colt .44 will turn up again and again in the novel, linked, by the reader's knowledge of its origins, to Frink, and thus to the concept of fakery. After Frink is fired, he decides to tell Robert Childan that many of his artefacts are fake; he does so, in

disguise, by revealing to Childan the nature of one of his Colt .44s. Childan later learns that there is a whole industry at work turning out fakes (58).

Dick uses the idea of "fake" historical artefacts to interrogate the idea of "real" or "authentic" historical artefacts, and to call into question the very existence of what he calls "historicity" (Dick's term-- "when a thing has history in it") itself. In essence, he deconstructs the idea of "historicity." He does this by including historical artefacts that are either counterfeit in their design (the Colt .44)--and are thus new rather than "historical"--or which make dubious claims to historical importance (such as the Zippo lighter, discussed below). This is most clearly done in an important exchange between Wyndham-Matson and his mistress. Wyndham-Matson is Frank Frink's boss; he is the character who has the most authority over (and responsibility for) the reproduction of "fake" historical items. After Wyndham-Matson is threatened with blackmail regarding the fraudulent nature of his historical artefacts, he engages in a demonstration for his paramour, in an attempt to show that "this whole damn historicity business is nonsense" (63). He does this by asking her to compare two identical lighters:

The girl gingerly picked up the two lighters and examined them.

"Don't you feel it?" he kidded her. "The historicity?"

She said, "What is 'historicity'?"

"When a thing has history in it. Listen. One of those two Zippo lighters was in Franklin D. Roosevelt's pocket when he was assassinated. And one wasn't. One has historicity, a hell of a lot of it. As much as any object ever had. And one has nothing. Can you feel it?" He nudged her. "You can't. You can't tell which is which. There's no 'mystical plasmic presence,' no 'aura' around it ... It's all a big racket; they're playing it on themselves. I mean, a gun goes through a famous battle, like Meuse-Argonne, and it's the same as if it hadn't, *unless you know*. It's in here." He tapped his head. "In the mind, not the gun ... I'd have to prove it to you with some sort of document. A paper of authenticity. And so it's all a fake, a mass delusion. The paper proves its worth, not the object itself!"

"Show me the paper."

"Sure." Hopping up, he made his way back into the study. From the



wall he took the Smithsonian Institution's framed certificate; the paper and the lighter had cost him a fortune, but they were worth it--because they enabled him to prove that he was right, that the word "fake" meant nothing really, since the word "authentic" meant nothing really. (63-64)

This excerpt is significant to the novel as a whole, and to the concept of authenticity in particular. What Wyndham-Matson explains is that "history" cannot be captured in a physical way. A thing cannot "have history in it." In the world of *High Castle* (and to a large extent our own), an item from any historical period can be almost perfectly duplicated, such as Frink's Civil War-era Colt .44, or Wyndham-Matson's Zippo lighter (though these two objects differ in their inauthenticity, which will be discussed shortly). When confronted with the original, historical object, and its exact duplicate, an unknowing observer cannot possibly tell the difference. Wyndham-Matson himself cannot even tell the difference without a paper of authenticity, issued by the Smithsonian Institution (and thus authorized by a higher authority); but, as should be obvious to Wyndham-Matson, such a paper could be easily forged or duplicated. George Slusser says of this section of the novel: "The lighter, then, makes historical claims to a world whose sense of history is dubious at best. But by making them, it raises the question of what it means to make claims to historical status" (Slusser 204). This is to say that the novel's revelations regarding history should push the reader into questioning their own connection to history. The fact of the matter is that, once duplication and reproduction have been perfected, there is no objective way to discern the original from the "fake." "Historicity" cannot be felt, or weighed, or sussed out in any other fashion.

What this means is that "historicity" is a false sort of authenticity. Authenticity cannot survive duplication--the copy will always be lacking. This is not the case with "historicity," since Wyndham-Matson's demonstration clearly shows that the original and the duplicate cannot be differentiated. As such, "historicity" is revealed to be non-existent--it makes overtures towards authenticity, but this sort of authenticity does not exist in the object, only in the mind of the subject.

Wyndham-Matson's demonstration can be compared to some of the points made by Walter Benjamin in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In it, Benjamin states, "The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all

that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to manner ... the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of history" (223). Benjamin and Wyndham-Matson are certainly discussing the same thing, though their conclusions are somewhat different. Both agree that a reproduced item cannot have authenticity; where they disagree is in their conception of the original item's connection to history. Benjamin believes that the original is intimately linked with its historical context, and that the reproduced item is divorced from it. Wyndham-Matson's (postmodern) point is that history ("historicity") does not exist either in the reproduction *or* the original. "Historicity" exists inside of the mind, as is evident later in the novel when Tagomi considers returning the Colt .44 he has used to kill a Nazi thug ("trade the gun in on more historicity sanctioned item. This gun, for me, has too much subjective history ... no one else can experience it from the gun. Within my psyche only" [223]). "Historicity" simply does not exist--it is an epistemological problem, a trick of the mind, but one with ontological implications--and therefore cannot be used as a signifier of authenticity. This is to say that "historicity" cannot be a stand-in for "aura" which, in Benjamin's formulation, is a sort of transcendent authenticity. In *High Castle*, the more appropriate stand-in for Benjamin's aura is "wu," something that is lacking in Wyndham-Matson's fake historical artefacts.

What the discourse on Benjamin indicates, and what Wyndham-Matson's role as a mass producer of fake artefacts reinforces, is that the problem of authenticity is exacerbated by the forces of capitalist mass production (and, in the current era, computer-driven and globalized reproduction). This is to say that the problem of originals, of duplication and "aura," always existed, but with the advances in technology the problem becomes endemic, an unavoidable part of postmodern culture. Baudrillard's specific formulation of the Simulacra, Debord's "society of the spectacle," Derrida's distrust of origins, and, of course, Dick's fictions, are all similar, in that they grapple with a concept here defined as authenticity. If Jameson is right--and Dick's work seems to bear it out--their common ground is historical (that is, economic) reality. Palmer says of this economic reality,

In the modern regime of mass production, all products, being identical, are copies: fakes if you like. There is no distinction between a working model of a toaster (say) and an 'authentic' toaster ... Since all versions of a type of toaster are identical, none has identity ... It is therefore possible to feel that you have no toaster; you have not a thing but an instance. Certainly, this impression depends on the situation in which you find yourself; if this situation is such that you have to interrogate things for vital meanings, their lack of thingness is bound to bother you. If you are not certain that you yourself are a person (that is, possessed of the continuity that makes for self), then the situation is worsened. (19)

This last sentence is mostly relevant to the science-fictional ruminations of Dick (especially in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*), but the rest of Palmer's comments point to the fact that the economic realities of the postmodern historical moment lead to the sort of questions posed by postmodern theorists (Baudrillard, Derrida) and postmodern authors. This mode of production leads to the posing of ontological questions, as noted by McHale, and to the postmodern literary tropes enumerated by Jameson. It is obvious, from Wyndham-Matson's argument, and from the presence and discussion of fake (inauthentic) historical objects in the novel, that this relationship, between economic reality and postmodern meditations, was one to which Dick himself was deeply attuned.

It needs to be mentioned that Tagomi's Colt .44 and the Zippo, however, are not exactly the same--that is to say, they differ in their inauthenticity. The Zippo lighter purports to be related to a specific historical event--the assassination of Roosevelt--while the fake Colt .44 is purported to be of a certain age and era. The level of fakery, in these instances, is different. With the Zippo, for instance, a specific event of historical significance is pointed to. The instance itself is a fictitious one (from the reader's point of view), adding a further layer of inauthenticity to the mix. The Zippo lighter which was *not* found on Roosevelt when he was assassinated, however, may actually be a normal, mass produced Zippo, as "original" as the historically-authorized one. With the Colt .44, on the other hand, no specific event is pointed to, and so in some way an entire historical era is accused of inauthenticity. The Colt .44 certainly is not an actual Civil War-era Colt.

.44, but is a contemporary fake. Despite the difference in provenance, the two items jointly problematize the past. Whether it is a big historical event, or a bygone era, the idea that an item can actually refer to, or contain, history is cast into question. For the Colt .44, this question arises from the nature of its construction--that it is a replica--while with the Zippo it is more a matter of its actual lineage--the authenticity of its "historical testimony." However, considering that Wyndham-Matson is the boss of the very company that produces historical forgeries like the Colt .44, it stands to reason that he grasps how the problem of "historicity" attached to the Zippo can be turned into a profitable line of consumer replicas, preying on the consumer's inability to identify "historicity" as a false sort of authenticity.

Childan's response to the revelation that his store is filled with forgeries is explicitly stated:

Bit of knowledge like that goes a long way. Akin to primal childhood awakening; facts of life. Shows, he ruminated, the link with our early years: not merely U.S. history involved, but our own personal. As if, he thought, question might arise as to authenticity of our birth certificate. Or our impression of Dad.

Maybe I don't actually recall F.D.R. as example. Synthetic image distilled from hearing assorted talk. Myth implanted subtly in tissue of brain. (*High Castle* 142-143)

Childan connects history to memory, the macro and the micro. Hopefully, this link leads readers to consider their own history. Once memory fades, history only lives on in records and objects; but, with the advances in technology, both records and objects can be manufactured. Once history is bereft of transcendental signifiers, all that remains is history as ideology. This is as true in *High Castle* as it is in the real world.

Since "historicity" is revealed to be fictive, something else must be sought after to function as a gauge of authenticity. This "something else" is found in the piece of Edfrank jewellery, and is identified by Paul Kasoura as "wu," in a passage that must be quoted at length:

Here is a piece of metal which has been melted until it has become shapeless. It represents nothing. Nor does it have design, of any

intentional sort. It is merely amorphous. One might say, it is mere content, deprived of form.

...I feel a certain emotional fondness ... It has separated from [the universe] and hence has managed to come to homeostasis ... Robert, this object has *wu* ... It is complete, Robert. By contemplating it, we gain more *wu* ourselves. We experience the tranquility associated not with art but with holy things ... This is alive in the now ... I have come to identify the value which this has in opposition to historicity ... To have no historicity ... It is a religious experience ... an entire new world is pointed to, by this. The name for it is neither art, for it has no form, nor religion. What is it? I have pondered this pin increasingly, and yet cannot fathom it. We evidently lack the word for an object like this ... It is *authentically* a new thing on the face of the world." (175-176, *emphasis added*)

By itself, *wu* is obviously a deficient stand-in for "historicity," since it is an equally vague and subjective term, and while it seems to be observable, at least to Paul Kasoura, there is even less possibility that it could be empirically verified. John Hunting says of *wu*:

[It is] a quality of balanced alignment with the universe. *Aura* belongs to history and is liable to imitation and fraud; *wu* is an absolute aesthetic value, a universal outside of history, an intrinsic quality that cannot be imitated ... While the scepticism about *aura* results in a debunking of the mystery of the 'authentic' piece, there seems to be a counter-urge at work which will replace the commercial mystery of historical authenticity with an equally mysterious and even less empirically certifiable absolute, *wu*. (Huntington 175)

In the novel, the real conflict is between "historicity" and *wu* as opposing criteria of authenticity. Even if *wu* is a different sort of subjectivity, the way in which it differs needs to be examined.

One of the important aspects about the *wu*-instilled jewellery is the method of its creation. It is handwrought, and its shape came about naturally, without human interference: "Most of the pieces were abstract, whirls of wire, loops, designs which to some extent the molten metals had taken on their own" (*High Castle* 132). It is because it

is not made from moulds, designed, or mass-produced, but instead shaped, in a sense, by the forces of nature that the Edfrank jewellery is imbued with *wu*. But it is not simply a case of letting the metal take its own form--the jewellery does come from an artisan, and the shape, which may occur naturally, is still guided by the *hand* (versus the *machines*) of man. Paul Kasoura says: "an artificer has put *wu* into the object, rather than merely witnessed the *wu* inherent in it" (176), which makes it different from Wyndham-Matson's forgeries. "It's in here ... In the mind, not the gun" Wyndham-Matson says of "historicity," but Kasoura claims that the opposite is true with *wu*, that it exists outside of the mind, that it can exist within an object and, furthermore, that the hand of the artificer can place it there. This represents an apotheosis of handicraft, of the blue-collar artistry that Frink and his partner represent, against the mass-produced faux-historic items that are churned out in an industrial fashion by the WM Corporation, solely for the purpose of profit.

The conflict between the consumer-oriented industrial mode and the "authentic," *wu*-filled art of Edfrank Custom Jewellers is most dramatically played out in the scene quoted above, the interaction between Paul Kasoura and Robert Childan regarding the Edfrank jewellery. After that piece of dialogue, Kasoura goes on to make an offer to Childan: "Pieces such as this ... can be mass-produced. Either in base metal or plastic. From a mould. In any quantity desired" (179). Such a process, Kasoura indicates, would make Childan rich. Throughout the novel, Childan has been depicted as a money-hungry opportunist--in fact, he seems intent on cheating Edfrank of their jewellery--as well as a strident racist, and so the reader expects Childan to jump at the opportunity. Instead, Childan asks: "What about *wu*? Will that remain in the pieces?" (179). Kasoura does not answer, and this makes Childan inexplicably hesitant. He decides, briefly, on accepting the offer, but is overcome by a sense of shame. In a remarkable turnabout, the profiteer Childan states, in his defamiliarized English, "I--am proud of this work. There can be no consideration of trashy good-luck charms. I reject ... The men who made this ... are American proud artists. Myself included. To suggest trashy good-luck charms therefore insults us and I ask for apology" (183). While Childan's words can be interpreted as a face-saving gesture, a mere mimicry of the Japanese culture he loathes yet emulates, he is later found to be showing the Edfrank jewellery "ruthlessly to each of [his] customers"

(225).

The significance of Childan's decision is not that he merely turns away from profit to embrace something without a sense of personal advancement, but that he allies himself with Edfrank and, more importantly, against the forces of consumerism and mass-production, which Dick associates with Nazism (which will be discussed below). This is a code that runs through the narrative: Childan, as we have just seen, is given the opportunity to align himself with consumerism, and refutes it, and Frink and McCarthy start their story by leaving WM Corporation, and create the *wu*-imbued jewellery. Even one of the lesser characters, Baynes, who is working against the Nazis, distances himself from consumerism. He has a cover job which he has given his alternate identity, a job in plastics, but he says of it: "no consumers' commodities" (38). It seems important for Baynes to make this clear, especially to the enthusiastic Nazi to whom he is speaking. Tagomi and Juliana, the other main characters, are not described in relation to consumerism, but it is these two characters who directly (and violently) confront Nazism, and so the code, in their case, is not necessary.

To return to the Edfrank jewellery: as we have seen, Paul Kasoura states that "an entire new world is pointed to, by this," and Childan agrees. When showing a piece of Edfrank jewellery to Tagomi, he claims: "This is the new life of my country, sir. The beginning in the form of tiny imperishable seeds. Of beauty . . . .I sense accurately in these the contracted germ of the future" (225). This seems to be part of what separates *wu* from "historicity"; while "historicity" makes claims to a dead past, *wu* points to the future. Both *wu* and "historicity" are seen as different ways of engaging with history, with *wu* deemed by Dick to be the more authentic impulse, connecting it, perhaps, to Utopian yearning.

The other impulse in the novel is symbolized by the Nazis. Their relationship to history is different than either *wu* or "historicity"--theirs is the will to action, to death, and so an impulse that is anti-historical. Patricia Warrick points out that some have found Dick "guilty of a political blunder in assuming a victorious Japanese fascism would be radically better than a German one" (Warrick 74). Indeed, this sort of critique shows up in much of the criticism written about *High Castle*, and is often accompanied by the claim that Dick fetishizes Japanese culture. While Dick is most likely guilty of this

second charge, at least to a certain degree, the first charge is often overstated. Though the Japanese do not persecute the Jews as the Nazis do, it is shown to be business-as-usual for Jews to be deported to Germany. While slavery may not exist in the Pacific States, a hierarchy based on race certainly does; for instance, when Robert Childan journeys to the Nippon Times Building (22-29), he uses a pedecab driven by a "*chink*." His derogative use of this term seems to be less a comment on Childan's own racist beliefs (though there is certainly that) and more a statement of the position of the Chinese in the fictional society. As well, Childan fears seeing a slave--not a slave from the PSA, but a "black" who may have arrived on a ship from the South or from Germany. The implication is that, though slavery might not be a legal institution in the PSA, it is certainly acceptable, and slaves are still seen as the lowest form of society. Elsewhere in the novel, comment is made about the "honkytonk jazz slums that made up most of the flat part of San Francisco, rickety tin and board shacks that had sprung up from the ruins even before the last bomb fell" (6). Perhaps even more insidious is the off-hand comment regarding the "quaint old history-book days" (11), which may be a nostalgic description of the old days but which might also indicate that history books have been abolished. All is not well in the Japanese-held USA, despite what some critics seem to think.

Another statement from Warrick is informative: "until the reader understands Nazism in the novel as more than Germany under Hitler, until he sees it as a symbol for all fascist drives to overpower and control ... he has not explored the fullness of Dick's fictional history. It is a work condemning every totalitarian drive--economic, political, and military" (74). Warrick instructs the reader to see the Germans (and, to elaborate on this idea, the Japanese as well) as largely metaphoric, or symbolic characters. This is to say that, while the Germans *are* Germans, and the Japanese *are* Japanese, both are imbued with meaning beyond their nationality. The Nazis are actually detached from their history, since there is no attempt at understanding them in historical terms. The Nazis are not seen as a result of social or economic circumstances in Europe or understood as a political or cultural movement; instead, the Nazis are emblematic of the drive to totalitarianism and death. In this sense, they are similar to the historical artefacts found in Childan's shop. Since Dick's work is one of an alternate history to begin with, it should be seen as no great crime that he plays with the roles of the historical characters



within it.

As Warrick states, the Nazis are envisioned as representative of a totalitarian drive within humanity, one that leads, inevitably, towards death. Warrick's position is that they are set up in opposition to the Japanese, and to the ideas of Taoism in particular. This is, perhaps, an overly simplified reading. In the novel, the Nazis are portrayed as more of a force than as a group; though they are represented by a few individual characters (Reiss, vom Meere), they exist in the novel more as an external threat (none of the action takes place in German-occupied land). The Japanese, on the other hand, are represented less as a group, and more as individuals--in particular, Mr. Tagomi, and the Kasouras. Both of them--the Kasouras in particular--are thought of as diverging from the dominant Japanese national character. There is a good deal of 60s Orientalism involved as well. Dick is more interested in the philosophical and spiritual ideas of the Japanese, which were gaining ground in the US during the 60s, than in their actual political systems. Thus the focus on the *I Ching* and Tagomi's Zen-like demeanour. The Japanese are not unlike the Biltong from "Pay for the Printer," discussed in the introduction. The opposition, then, is less one between the German principle and the Japanese principle, and more an opposition between the ever-present threat of Nazism and the individual, non-German characters of the novel. Or, to be more specific, the conflict is between one drive towards the Real (the totalitarian drive to death in the Nazis) in opposition to another (the quest for authenticity, for *wu*, as enacted by the novel's main characters).

The Nazi quest for the Real is an inexplicable movement towards death, death as an absolute. Baynes thinks of the Nazis:

Their view; it is cosmic. Not of a man here, a child there, but an abstraction: race, land. *Volk. Land. Blut. Ehre.* Not of honourable men but of *Ehre* itself, honour; the abstract is real, the actual is invisible to them. *Die Gute*, but not good men, this good man. It is their sense of space and time. They see through the here, the now, into the vast black deep beyond, the unchanging. (*High Castle* 41)

The Nazi view moves beyond the realm of things, of images, towards something Real, something Absolute; or, the Nazi project attempts this movement, but the "Real" it leads to is always death. This can be seen as a sort of "false" authenticity; though death is

certainly a total Reality, it is also obviously a negative one. The Nazi drive to death is never-ending, as is obvious in a joke told in *High Castle* (the jokester being identified as a fugitive Bob Hope, hiding away in Canada): "This German major is interviewing some Martians. The Martians can't provide racial documentation about their grandparents being Aryan, you know. So the German major reports back to Berlin that Mars is populated by Jews" (79). Reiss, one of the few Nazi characters in the novel, even agrees with this sentiment: "That Herr Hope is right, he thought. With his joke about our contact on Mars. Mars populated by Jews. We would see them there, too. Even with their two heads apiece, standing one foot high" (129). Two chapters from a proposed sequel to *High Castle* were published in *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick* (1996), edited by Lawrence Sutin; in them, Dick describes the Nazis of *High Castle* discovering a reality, one the seems similar to our (the readers') own. It is quite evident that the Nazis will invade our reality as well, and another Holocaust will follow. The promise of the Nazi project is an infinite regress of genocide; an eternal Holocaust. Carl Freedman writes:

In a way that strongly resonates with what Horkheimer and Adorno call the dialectic of enlightenment, the novel sees Nazi atrocity as the extreme but perfectly logical extension of something typically and profoundly Western: the valorization of ceaseless activity, of agency, of expansion and acquisition and domination--in sum, of that relentless imperialism of the subject, which would conquer and colonize all that is not itself, even at the ultimate and paradoxical price of reducing itself to insubstantiality and at last to nothingness. (Freedman 171)

Furthermore, "It is not despite but rather because of the fact that the Nazis can have no definable goal short of universal holocaust, that they express more completely than anyone else in Western history the common but fatal preference for doing as against being, for the active as against the passive or copulative" (Freedman 171). Joe Cinnadella explains this notion to Juliana, during their trip to Denver: "Listen, I'm not an intellectual--Fascism has no need of that. What is wanted is the deed. Theory derives from action. What our corporate state demands from us is comprehension of the social forces--of history" (161). This drive to action is part of the Nazis' manic search for the Real, even if they cannot identify it as such. Even the concept of "action over theory" can

be seen as part of this quest, since physical action can be misapprehended as more "Real" (or authentic) than intellectual activity. "They want to be the agents, not the victims, of history" (41)--but to what end? The Nazis seek to leave a mark on history, to prove that they have existed, that they have done something real, but that mark will necessarily be a caustic burn.

The main characters of the novel--Tagomi and Juliana especially, but in some ways Frank and Childan--seem to represent the other side of that equation, and their search for authenticity will send them in a dramatically different (and life-affirming) direction. Their actions will lead to a form of regeneration, of both the individual characters and the world (and history) they inhabit. They are emblematic of the *wu* side of the equation. The Nazi drive towards death, however, is almost all-encompassing.

The Nazis are so infected by this world view that it can be felt in their physical presence--Juliana notes that Joe Cinnadella, the Danish Nazi assassin disguised as an Italian truck driver, "breathes--death" (37). She is aware of this essence of death around him, even though she is unaware of his disguise. Strangely--and in keeping with Warrick's notion that the Nazis represent a drive to fascism within all of us--Juliana is attracted to Joe all the same. Such an attraction can be deemed Freudian.

Dick was no stranger to Freud, and to the concepts he popularized, though he seems to have taken a greater interest in Jung. In this vein, Tagomi thinks of the world view of the Nazis in psychological terms: "We cannot enter the monstrous schizophrenic morass of Nazi internecine intrigue; our minds cannot adapt" (*High Castle* 191). Baynes speaks of the Nazis with Jungian language: "They are overcome by some archetype; their egos have expanded psychotically so that they cannot tell where they begin and the godhead leaves off. It is not hubris, not pride; it is inflation of the ego to its ultimate--confusion between him who worships and that which is worshiped. Man has not eaten God; God has eaten man" (*High Castle* 42). Clearly, this description links the Nazis with the idea of *consumption*. The last line of Baynes' description evokes, to a Dick scholar, the author's later work, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), in which Martian settlers partake in a reverse-Eucharist, and find that it is themselves who have been transubstantiated into God--in particular, the Palmer Eldritch of the title. Palmer Eldritch is, in fact, an industrialist, a commercial tycoon. He comes back to the universe with a

product called Chew-Z, which he uses to enslave the Martian colonists. He is given God-like qualities, but these qualities seem connected to his position at the top of the consumer-chain. The colonists of Mars have nothing to do, and spend all of their money on frivolous entertainments, such as Chew-Z. Dick is able to link the literal idea of consumption--i.e. the eating of Chew-Z, and the religious reverse-transubstantiation it includes--with the more metaphorical and economical idea of consumerism.

As mentioned, this dynamic is already at work in *High Castle*, with the Nazis. Writing about the novel, Eric S. Rabkin states that Nazis "treated individual humans as merely interchangeable elements of a mass-produced set, Jewry, and developed genocide as a verity of industrial extermination" (Rabkin 183), and John Rieder, discussing the meeting attended by Tagomi in chapter six, regarding the top-ranking members of the Nazi party, notes that "the list of the Nazi contestants for power is a veritable catalogue of the modes of reifying or rejecting authentic humanity" (Reider 229). The Nazis are further connected to the powers of capitalism and consumerism through repeated mentions of IG Farben, the German conglomerate that collaborated with the Nazi party and was later dissolved (in our own history) by the Allied powers after WWII, with many of its directors indicted at the Nuremberg Trials. In *High Castle*, IG Farben still exists, and thrives. The company is identified as a "big German chemical cartel" (20), or as "the great cartel in New York" (37). One of the fascist-leaning truck-drivers states: "You've got to hand it to the Germans; monopoly's not a bad idea" (37), while Juliana wishes death on them in appropriately consumeristic terms: "They will eat one another at last" (247). This overwhelming drive can be read as the Nazi quest for authenticity.

This metaphoric link between Nazism and the forces of capitalism necessarily puts the motives and drive of capitalism into focus. If the connection holds true, then it is also a criticism regarding consumerism. Like Nazism, unrestrained capitalism always seeks action; it too seeks to be the agent, not the victim, of history, and its quest for profit can be seen as equally nihilistic, especially under late capitalism, where corporations can be accused of engaging in a scorched-earth policy, wherein they expand the reach of their corporate power and increase the output of their consumer items, while at the same time exploiting third world labour and causing untold damage to the environment. This connection is, perhaps, illustrated by "Project Farmland": "The Mediterranean Sea bottled

up, drained made into tillable farmland, through the use of atomic power--what daring!" (25). Project Farmland shows a marriage between industrial and Nazi ethos, and with the same efficiency with which the Nazis carry out their final solution to the "African Problem" they manage to rape the Earth for a matter of economy.

In opposition to this ahistorical Nazi drive towards consumption and death are the novel's main characters. Each character in the novel is forced to make a decision, one that aligns them against the Nazis and the forces of consumerism. Frink's choice comes early, in his decision to form Edfrank Jewellery with Ed McCarthy. Childan's has already been discussed, and comes when he rebukes Kasoura's suggestion to mass-produce Edfrank jewellery, creating *wu*-less pieces of commercial art, and instead becomes a champion of the first new American art since the War. Tagomi and Juliana, on the other hand, have to directly confront the Nazi forces, and both manage to do so, allowing for the chance of life in the face of death.

Juliana's confrontation occurs before she encounters Abendsen at the end of the novel. After an extensive shopping spree (during which Juliana is disappointed when she has to settle on a *synthetic* fiber coat [203]), the man she has been travelling with, Joe Cinnadella, is revealed to be a fake--a Nazi assassin, intent on killing Abendsen. Appropriately, considering that Nazism in *High Castle* is a psychological, internal force, Joe has to take off his more "human" mask to reveal himself as a Nazi. This revelation causes Juliana to experience a sort of mental break, wherein her dialogue and the limited third person narration matches her momentary insanity: "She said, speaking slowly and painstakingly, 'Hair creates bear who removes spots in nakedness. Hiding, no hide to be hung with a hook. The hook from God. Hair, hear, *Hur*;' Pills eating. Probably turpentine acid. They all met, decided dangerous most corrosive solvent to eat me forever" (*High Castle* 212). Juliana's madness comes from a direct confrontation with Nazism, and its drive towards death. The indications she has felt regarding Joe's identity--that he "breathes death"--is now revealed to her in all its horror, and Juliana's rational mind is unable to cope. A similar reaction is seen when Tagomi is directly confronted by Nazism. Juliana responds by killing Joe, in an almost inadvertent fashion. She is so oblivious to her own actions that she walks out naked into the corridor of the hotel. When she is returned to her room she seems almost surprised to find Joe there,

dying (213). Her actions seem almost influenced from afar, like Abendsen's writing *Grasshopper* via use of the *I Ching*.

The encounter with Nazism drives Juliana momentarily mad, but by overcoming the assassin she is able to save Abendsen. She gains a new demeanor, and travels on to meet Abendsen by herself. Their meeting has already been discussed; Abendsen admits that he wrote *Grasshopper* by using the *I Ching* every step of the way. Furthermore, Juliana, seemingly emboldened after defeating the assassin, asks the *I Ching* why it wrote the novel. The answer is "Inner Truth":

"It means, does it, that my book is true?"

"Yes," she said.

With anger he said, "Germany and Japan lost the war."

"Yes."

Hawthorne, then, closed the two volumes and rose to his feet; he said nothing.

"Even you don't face it," Juliana said. (*High Castle* 257)

Now the ontological dimension of the novel itself is called into question. What is the "authentic" version of history, as far as *High Castle* is concerned? While this question is never answered--can never be answered--Juliana herself seems to gain a certain degree of "authenticity" herself. Abendsen's wife states that Juliana is "terribly disruptive," but her husband replies: "So is reality" (258). Patricia Warrick reminds us that Juliana is a "chthonic spirit" and a "direct, literal invention of God's," and asks us to "understand her symbolically" (Warrick 80). This is to say that Juliana seems to share something with the *I Ching*, and the Edfrank Jewellery; like them, she is described as a natural thing, beyond her pure physical form, and also like them there seems to be a bit of theophany in her character. That such attributes are ascribed to a female character by an author who typically portrays women as castrating shrews is remarkable.

Juliana's revelation, that the world of *High Castle* is a fiction, is one of the instances in which the epistemological problems of the novel turn into full fledged ontological problems, and the narrative becomes fully postmodern. As John Reider puts it: "in *High Castle* the fabric of reality is metafictional rather than metaphysical" (Reider 228). It is a sort of post-structuralist trick, where everything regresses, in a pattern not

unlike the *supplement*, into further levels of fiction, of semiotics. Though this is the ultimate postmodern shift of the novel, a more powerful instance occurs earlier, involving Tagomi and a piece of Edfrank Jewellery.

Tagomi's direct confrontation with the Nazis occurs during a meeting between Baynes, a German agent in disguise, and Tedeki, an influential Japanese General. The meeting concerns Operation Dandelion, a secret plan within the Nazi government to drop the nuclear bomb on Japan's home islands. The Nazis, having learned of this meeting, send a group of armed assassins to Tagomi's office, in an attempt to murder Baynes and Tedeki. Tagomi, a peaceful Taoist, is forced to violently defend the two men, and to do so he reaches for a "perfectly preserved U. S. 1860 Civil War Colt .44, a treasured collector's item" (*High Castle* 192). Tagomi's gun was purchased from American Artistic Handicrafts Inc., and since the reader knows that Frink specializes in Civil War-era firearms, and that one of Childan's Colts has already been declared a forgery, it is safe to assume that this, too, is an inauthentic historic piece. And yet, while it may not be an artefact, it is shown to work correctly--authenticity be damned. When the Nazi thugs burst into Tagomi's office, they are met by gunfire: "The SD man's jaw burst. Bits of bone, flesh, shreds of tooth, flew in the air" (199). This description is probably the most violent in all of Dick's works. The level of description is used to bring forward the true horror of what has just happened, and how serious the act is to Tagomi. After his confrontation with the SD thugs, Tagomi becomes increasingly sick and disoriented, much as Juliana became maddened by the revelation that Joe Cinnadella was in fact a Nazi assassin.

This is not the first time Tagomi reacts negatively in the face of Nazism. At an earlier point in the novel, Tagomi is called to a meeting of PSA officials, for the purpose of familiarizing them with the possible replacements for Martin Bormann, the recently-deceased Reichskanzler. The meeting consists of a presentation on the personality and crimes of the Nazi elite. The proceedings make Tagomi sick. "I think I am going mad" (95) thinks Tagomi, as he listens to a litany of crimes against humanity. He suffers an attack, and is forced to leave the meeting early. Afterwards, he thinks, "There is evil! It's actual like cement. I can't believe it. I can't stand it. Evil is not a view ... All our religion is wrong" (96). Tagomi's engagement with Nazism threatens to kill him, or at

least drive him, like Juliana, temporarily mad: "We cannot enter the monstrous schizophrenic morass of Nazi internecine intrigue; our minds cannot adapt" (191). After he kills the SD man, his unease is palpable. Baynes thinks, "A kindly man like Mr. Tagomi could be driven insane by the implications of such a reality," a reality in which "we are all doomed to commit acts of cruelty or violence or evil" (201) (this sentiment is echoed by Mercer in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*). Tagomi's despair and sickness are the consequences of a good man having to confront the nihilistic drive towards death embodied in the Nazi character and implicit in all of us.

Following this confrontation, Tagomi finds himself lost, unable to cope. It is then that he visits American Artistic Handicrafts Inc., and meets the now-changed Robert Childan. Childan impresses upon him a piece of authentic, *wu*-filled Edfrank jewellery, a silver squiggle (229). "Yes, there is something new which animates these" (225) Tagomi realizes, and yet he is unable to find its name, to recognize the *wu*. But it *is* there, within the jewellery, and not only in his mind, unlike the "historicity" in the Colt .44, an item which he is unable to return.

After meditating on the Edfrank jewellery, Tagomi finds himself in a San Francisco unlike his own, though similar enough that it is not until he sees the Embarcadero Freeway that he realizes the difference. *This* San Francisco is clearly not one in which the Japanese are dominant; in fact, when he enters a diner and demands a seat from one of the white patrons, he is rebuked with "Watch it, Tojo" (232). The existence of the Embarcadero Freeway seems to indicate, by way of meditating on the Edfrank jewellery, that even though Tagomi cannot recognize *wu*, it has worked its magic on him, and he has been transported, however briefly, into *our* San Francisco--there is a direct link between the "authentic" jewellery and the authentic world of the reader. Like Juliana, his direct confrontation with Nazism leads to sickness, and the potential cure to that sickness takes the form of another quest for authenticity. Both Juliana and Tagomi are shown that their world is not the real world, or at least not the only world. The fictiveness of their own time is shown, and the reader is shown that SF has value for "its role in establishing the "historicity" of the present--in the sense of denaturalizing the present by showing it to be neither arbitrary nor inevitable but the conjunctural result of complex, knowable material processes" (Freedman 55-56). Tagomi realizes after his



revelation: "Now one appreciates Saint Paul's incisive word choice ... seen through a glass darkly not a metaphor, but astute reference to optical distortion. We really do see astigmatically, in fundamental sense: our space and our time creations of our own psyche, and when these momentarily falter--like acute disturbance of middle ear" (233). The real world, the world of *wu*, of authenticity, is revealed when the psyche falters--the psyche which contains its false sense of history, of "historicity." It is this world that the Nazis strive for, in their never-ending cycle of death and violence, and it is this world that the other characters seek, through their humanist impulses that set them against the forces of consumerism and Nazism. It is this world that gives shape to the Edfrank jewellery, and from this world that the *I Ching* speaks. For the purpose of *High Castle*, this "Real" world can be the world of the reader, since the book is obviously a work of fiction and can thus see the reader's world as its grounding reality. But, the problems of history and authenticity encountered by the characters of *High Castle* are every bit as real in our "Real" world.

Tagomi seems irreparably damaged by his encounter with Nazism, but that experience, and his experience with the Edfrank jewellery, lead him to have Frank Frink released (238). Frink, whose vengeful employer had reported him as a Jew, was one signature away from being deported to Germany. Instead, Tagomi, who was so affected by the jewellery that Frink made, chooses to have him released, and in doing so saves the life of a man whom he has never met. This small act, almost insignificant in the grand scheme of things, shows that the life-affirming humanist actions found in the main characters of *High Castle* can still exist in the world of simulacra and simulation, and Nazi ascendancy.

In *High Castle*, then, one can identify the postmodern tropes already identified: "a certain flatness, a lack of mimetic or illusory 'depth'; loss or attenuation of discrete subjectivity and memory, yielding an odd blend of flattened affect and ... the abandonment by the artist of any pretence to a unique style localized in history, in favor of pastiche, jargon, and nostalgia; schizophrenic *écriture*, especially jumbled collage and a radical breakdown in reality-testing; the 'hysterical sublime'" (Broderick 10). These tropes are so salient because Dick is not only engaging postmodernism, but speaking from within it. In *High Castle*, postmodernism is clearly linked to the process of mass-

production and duplication--the staging ground of consumer society.

Eric S. Rabkin writes of Dick's works: "That which cannot be manufactured--a forest, love, an anti-bureaucratic 'irritable action'--becomes ultimately valuable in worlds where nearly everything--people, goods, time, even reality--can be replicated or even mass-produced" (Rabkin 185). That which cannot be replicated or mass-produced contains within it this kernel of authenticity, this hint of the Real world. It is true that *wu* is hardly an objective quality; like Benjamin's *aura*, it seems only identifiable by its absence, and is perhaps mystical, almost transcendent. This is a problem that will plague Dick's work; unlike in *High Castle*, Dick's other characters will continually end up worse than they began, unable, as individuals, to beat the system, while at the same time the concept of authenticity will become all the more precious, and yet even harder to define. As should be obvious from this discussion of *High Castle*, in a postmodern world, the concept of authenticity becomes more and more abstract, more removed from the physical realm, until it becomes a sort of theophany, and breaking-through into the real world by the divine--and even then, Dick will always distrust it. Until that point, though, it is instructive to look at what Dick holds up as authentic--the humanist drive and, most importantly, the blue-collar work of the artisan, the skill and ability to create something new with one's own hands. As Jameson writes: "Handicraft skill ... becomes the privileged form of productive labour. Yet it is the related theme of reproduction and the production of copies that makes Dick's work one of the most powerful expressions of the society of spectacle and pseudo-event" (*Archaeologies* 347). After *High Castle*, Dick's work will become more and more occupied with reproduction and the production of copies, and the outlook will become increasingly bleaker. As the forces of consumerism and the postmodern world overwhelm the protagonists, the idea of authenticity becomes more and more transcendent, and is looked on with even more scepticism than is present here. The next logical step in this investigation, then, is Dick's most famous work, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

## Chapter Two

### Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

"Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert."

- Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto*

In *The Man in the High Castle*, Philip K. Dick struggled with the concept of authenticity as something that becomes suspect, or degenerates, in the face of mechanical reproduction and the postmodern condition. In that novel, his suspicion of authenticity was primarily directed at history, identity, and consumer items. After problematizing the idea of authenticity in relation to these things, Dick was forced to make the authentic increasingly transcendental, in the form of the *wu*-infused Edfrank jewellery, the omniscient *I Ching*, and the self-reflexive novel-within-the-novel *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. In the next novel of this study, Dick continues his struggle with the concept of authenticity, this time focusing on the idea of humanity itself. By upping the ante in this way, Dick makes the truly authentic even harder to pin down in the material world, and accordingly is forced to make it even more transcendent.

Dick is perhaps most well known as the novelist behind Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, a film based on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Initially a commercial failure, *Blade Runner* has gone on to reach cult status, and has been re-released on more than one occasion, most recently at the end of 2007 in an "Ultimate Collector's Edition." While the popularity of this Dick-inspired work may lead some viewers to hunt down the source material, the unfortunate fact is that *Blade Runner* is only loosely based on the novel, deemphasizing most of the philosophical and moral dilemmas that Dick dwells on, and phasing out entirely the concept of fake animals and the televisual religion, Mercerism. Since the primary conceit--the *novum*--of *Androids* is the existence of manufactured, inauthentic humans, it is worth quoting Darko Suvin's brief description of the role of the android in Dick's opus:

[T]he totally unethical and therefore inhuman person is often an android, what Dick, with a stress on its counterfeiting and artificial aspect, calls a *simulacrum* ... An interesting central anthropological tenet is adumbrated

here, halfway between Rousseau and Marx, according to which there is an authentic core identical with humanity in Homo Sapiens, from which men and women have to be alienated by civilizational pressures in order to behave in an unauthentic, dehumanized way, so that there is always an inner resistance to such pressures in anybody who simply follows his or her human(e) instinct of treating people as ends, not means. (Suvin, *The Opus*, 12)

While the androids in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* should not be dismissed as "totally unethical," Suvin's comments do point toward their double function: first, to create an adventure-type storyline upon which to construct the novel, but also, more importantly, to act in a symbolic way, both to call into question the concept of "authentic humanity" by positing its opposite, and to show the sort of humanity that is suited to an inauthentic, unnatural world.

In *High Castle*, the reader takes for granted the dichotomy between the "Real," authentic history of the reader's world, and the "fake" or fictional history of the novel. As the novel progresses, that dichotomy is tested, and eventually breaks down; in other words, it is deconstructed. This same process occurs in *Androids*. In this novel, a dichotomy exists between "Real," authentic human beings and "fake" andys--biological androids that are virtually indistinguishable from their authentic counterparts. Shetley and Fergusson, speaking of the film version, *Blade Runner*, write: "Just as the mechanical reproduction of artwork destroys the sense of authenticity and uniqueness upon which aura depends, the mechanical reproduction of replicants [androids] threatens the sense of individuality that undergirds our notion of the human" (Shetley and Fergusson 69). This dichotomy between man and android exists, initially, in the mind of the reader, who, confronted with the prospect of artificial humanity, cannot help but compare it to "authentic" humanity. As N. K. Hayles writes, "Dick linked the 'authentic human' with the 'real,' a construction that also implies its inverse" (423). Just as in *High Castle*, this duality is deconstructed as the narrative plays out. Though this duality is problematized almost from the first for the reader, the process takes much longer for Rick Deckard, the novel's protagonist, who has a harder time giving up the distinctions that define not only his job but the ontology of the world he lives in.

*Androids* "presents a USA disintegrated psychologically more than materially by the Third World War" (Pagetti 23), and is set on a future Earth, where the sun no longer shines, and "everything has the aspect of reality but is really 'a simulation'; everything is covered by or immersed within the signs of cultural entropy--'kipple'-- which leads humans towards the same 'flattening of affect' that identifies androids" (Easterbrook 27). The forces of entropy dominate, resulting in an abundance of kipple, which is described by the chickenhead character John Isidore as "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" (*Androids* 57). Christopher Palmer notes that entropy "is seen as a kind of ground of existence, something into which life constantly collapses back when exhausted, but also as a force always ready to infiltrate and take over," and that, "[f]rom a historical point of view, entropy may be interpreted as the returning repressed of modernity's investment in constant change, change which devours itself and leaves modernity without a point of reference" (Palmer 60-61). The radiation caused by the past nuclear war has mutated humanity, resulting in "specials" like Isidore--men of (supposedly) reduced mental or physical capacity. Even a "regular" like Deckard will not go outside without an Ajax model Mountibank Lead Codpiece, for fear that he will discover, at his next monthly medical checkup, that he can no longer "reproduce within the tolerances set by the law" (5-6). All told, mankind is left fighting against the forces of entropy which, in Dick's world, are in no way immaterial or abstract. All things are reduced to kipple, which multiplies, just as Mercer always descends into the tomb world. Because men are sterile and many emigrate from Earth, humanity is failing to regenerate itself. As a result, the world is falling into decrepitude. However, the inauthentic humans, the androids, do not suffer the same fate, and so threaten to supplant humanity (Palmer 62).

Rick Deckard is a bounty hunter. His job: to seek out and exterminate androids (andys) who have infiltrated the human population, from which they are virtually indistinguishable. The one characteristic that separates men from their mechanical doppelgangers is humanity's capacity for empathy, which only the Voigt-Kampff test,

administered by bounty hunters, can certify. However, it is not only humanity itself that is subject to replication and electronic simulation. Many of the world's animals have become extinct, and those that remain are a rare commodity. Owning an animal is an important status symbol; not only does it show off the owner's wealth, since animals are so expensive, but it also proves how empathetic the owner is. This second distinction is just as important as the first, since empathy is what separates man from android.

Deckard's neighbour tells him: "You know how people are about not taking care of an animal; they consider it immoral and anti-empathetic" (10). One affirms one's humanity by owning an animal, and so man is defined by his commodities. So important are animals, as a symbol of both wealth and empathy, that virtually every character carries around *Sidney's Animal & Fowl Catalogue*, so as to correctly appraise the worth of real animals (and, presumably, their own humanity).

Animals are thus of such importance that many people, Deckard included, care for electronic animals in the absence of an original. Deckard owns the electronic sheep of the title. He admits: "Owning and maintaining a fraud had a way of gradually demoralizing one. And yet from a social standpoint it had to be done, given the absence of the real article" (7). Remarkably, the electronic animals require the same amount of care. Deckard tells his neighbour: "It's a premium job. And I've put as much time and attention into caring for it as I did when it was real ... You feel the same doing it; you have to keep your eye on it exactly as you did when it was really alive" (9-10). It is even noted that the repair trucks for mechanical animals are made to look like they belong to a veterinary hospital (10). The fraud is so thoroughgoing that the fake animals are, on the surface, real, and a great deal of time and resources are spent maintaining the illusion. Deckard, who seems especially obsessed about animals, is even fooled twice by electronic animals: first, at the Rosen Foundation, where he mistakes an ersatz owl for the real deal, and then at the end of the novel, when he believes he has discovered an authentic toad. That he is so easily deceived despite the fact that both species of animal are known to be extinct is distressing, to say the least, when his business is telling the real from the fake, and a mistake of such magnitude in his line of work could lead him to retire a human being.

It is not only animals and humans that are fakes. Isidore's narrative notes, in

passing, that even milk and eggs have been replaced by their "ersatz substitutes" (22); later, it is noted that a desk is made of "imitation oak" (76). Even more sinister is the existence of the Penfield Mood Organ, introduced in the first sentence of the novel. The Penfield Mood Organ is a device that regulates and controls the emotions of its users. Deckard uses his not only to wake himself up, but to invokes a "creative and fresh attitude towards his job," which the Penfield accomplishes through "*artificial* brain stimulation" (5, emphasis added). In a rather comic introduction to the novel, Deckard argues with his wife, Iran, because she has scheduled for herself a "six-hour self-accusatory depression" (2). She has decided on this course of action--unthinkable to Deckard--after listening to the sound of all the empty apartments surrounding them: "I realized how unhealthy it was, sensing the absence of life, not just in this building but everywhere, and not reacting--do you see? I guess you don't. But that used to be considered a sign of mental illness; they called it 'absence of appropriate affect'" (3). It is, of course, ironic that Iran chooses to remedy her estrangement from real humanity by engaging in an artificially-induced emotion; but such is the postmodern condition. Furthermore, her statement is revealing, since the 'absence of appropriate affect' which she feels--and which she indicates Deckard feels but is entirely unaware of--will later be identified as a defining characteristic of androids. The Penfield Mood Organ is one of Dick's more clever inventions; seemingly satirizing the culture of self-medication (Benzedrine, Valium), it also acts as a criticism of the dehumanizing aspects of postmodernity:

[D]ick's criticism of the loss of human desire, or freedom, is particularly expressed within the narrative through the use of the Penfield Mood Organ. The name of the device is suggestive for two reasons. First of all, the brand name is synonymous with its mention, which alludes to the capitalistic nature of this sensation-synthesizing device. Secondly, the term "mood organ" insists that the technological tool is a prosthetic that displaces the organic organ that might control these kinds of responses naturally. (Attaway 12)

The name of the mood organ should be read as a reference to Wilder Penfield, the Canadian neurosurgeon whose investigations into the causes of epilepsy led him to

experiment with neural stimulation. Penfield also "frequently acknowledged the similarities between brains and media technology," (Enns 71) which certainly would have appealed to Dick. In keeping with Dick's major concerns, in *Androids*, "Penfield" is used like a brand name--it could just as well be the Pfizer Mood Organ.

Perhaps it is because Iran seems more aware of the lack of humanity in her world that she slips deeper and deeper into her dependence on the Penfield Mood Organ. Unlike Deckard, Iran is also a chronic user of the empathy box. She is as alienated from humanity as any other character in the novel; perhaps more so, considering that she never once leaves the apartment complex. N. K. Hayles, in speaking of the sort of inauthenticity rife in *Androids*, writes, "The ontology of the human and the ontology of the world mutually construct each other. When one is fake, the other is contaminated by fakery as well; when one is authentic, the authenticity of the other is, if not guaranteed, at least held out as a strong possibility" (Hayles 423). It is no coincidence that a world cluttered with fake food, imitation resources, and electronic emotions, is peopled with simulated humanity, both in the form of androids and "authentic" humans, like Iran, who seem to have forfeited those emotions which make us truly human: "Most androids I've known have more vitality and desire to live than my wife. She has nothing to give me" (*Androids* 83).

In *Androids*, there is a suspicion that nothing is "real," that everything is a copy, a replication, and that the original may no longer exist; it is like Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum, and so it is no surprise that Baudrillard, speaking of Dick's work, has written:

Dick does not create an alternate cosmos nor a folklore or a cosmic exoticism, nor intergalactic heroic deeds; the reader is, from the outset, in a total simulation without origin, past, or future—in a kind of flux of all coordinates (mental, spatio-temporal, semiotic). It is not a question of parallel universes, or double universes, or even of possible universes: not possible nor impossible, nor real nor unreal. It is *hyperreal*. It is a universe of simulation, which is something altogether different. And this is so not because Dick speaks specifically of simulacra. SF has always done so, but it has always played upon the *double*, on artificial replication or imaginary



duplication, whereas here the double has disappeared. There is no more double; one is always already in the other world, an other world which is not another, without mirrors or projection or utopias as means for reflection. The simulation is impassable, unsurpassable, *checkmated*, without exteriority. We can no longer move "through the mirror" to the other side, as we could during the golden age of transcendence.

(Baudrillard 16)

The world of *Androids* is fake all over, and so the quest for authenticity is all the more important. Deckard's mission to track down and retire the six andys, for all its potential as an action-driven narrative (a potential that *Blade Runner* picked up), quickly turns into an existential, even ontological quest, where Deckard is forced to face the idea that authenticity may only be a transcendent or religious idea, and in no way a physical one.

First developed as "Synthetic Freedom Fighters," andys were later modified to become the "mobile donkey engine of the colonization program" (*Androids* 13). As it is explained in an early chapter of the novel, anyone who could afford to emigrate was given an andy as a servant: "[t]hat had been the ultimate incentive of emigration: the android servant as carrot, the radioactive fallout as stick" (13). Andys are not robots; they are made of living tissue, physically indistinguishable from humans. The only way to distinguish the andy is through applying the Voigt-Kampff test, which tests for empathy in the subject. It is understood that andys do not feel empathy, that empathy is a distinctly human characteristic, a sort of secularized version of the soul:

Empathy, evidently, existed only within the human community, whereas intelligence to some degree could be found throughout every phylum and order including the arachnida. For one thing, the emphatic faculty probably required an unimpaired group instinct; a solitary organism, such as a spider, would have no use for it; in fact it would tend to abort a spider's ability to survive. It would make him conscious of the desire to live on the part of his prey. (*Androids* 26)

The lack of empathy in androids is compared to the "flattening of affect" found in some human schizophrenics (33). It is worth noting the similarity in this term to Jameson's

"waning of affect," which he considers typical of postmodern literature.<sup>3</sup>

The specific andys that Deckard has to face have come to Earth from Mars, and they had to kill to do so. After lengthy descriptions of Earth's radiation and the "kipple effect," the reader is left wondering why andys would choose to come to Earth at all. According to one of the androids, Pris: "'We came back ... because nobody should have to live there. It wasn't conceived for habitation, at least not within the last billion years" (132). She also notes that andys, as well as humans, are lonely on Mars (131). Pris's comments should be taken with a grain of salt, since she is attempting to hide her true nature, and lies continuously to Isidore, but this is the closest the novel comes to offering some reasoning.

The nature of the main problem--that andys are indistinguishable from humans--needs to be addressed. *Why* are there androids that are so similar to humans that they can be confused? Why does this problem exist? The obvious reason is that Dick needs it to be so, for his narrative to even take place--for him to ask the questions he asks. Still, it is telling that when he does directly address this issue, he lays the blame on the nature of capitalism itself:

"This problem," Rick said, "stems entirely from your method of operation, Mr. Rosen. Nobody forced your organization to evolve the production of humanoid robots to a point where--"

"We produced what the colonists wanted," Eldon Rosen said. "We followed the time-honored principle underlying every commercial venture. If our firm hadn't made these progressively more human types, other firms in the field would have." (Androids 47)

On Earth, the androids are ruthlessly tracked by bounty hunters like Deckard.

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<sup>3</sup> Here it is also worth noting the similarity between another of Jameson's postmodern terms, "schizophrenic ecriture," and Dick's own description of autism in *Martian Time Slip*. Jameson refers to schizophrenia as "a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers ... personal identity is itself the effect of a certain temporal unification of past and future with one's present ... the schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time" (Jameson 26-27). Now, Dick's theory of autism, via Dr. Glaub: "It assumes a derangement in the sense of time in the autistic individual, so that the environment around him is so accelerated that he cannot cope with it, in fact, he is unable to perceive it properly ... Just extremely high-pitched mishmash ... This concept of time-rates may open a doorway to minds so fatigued by the impossible task of communicating in a world where everything happens with such rapidity..." (*Time-Slip* 44-45). There is ample reason to believe that Jameson's theories of postmodernism are at least partly derived from a reading of Dick, but at the very least they seem to be working from the same viewpoint.

They cannot fuse with Mercer, which is a supposed proof of their inhumanity; as such, they hate the empathy religion. But, rather than using the androids as malevolent, alien invaders, Dick seems to suggest that Earth is a more suitable home for them than it is for humanity. Deckard seems to intuit this, when he comes to the realization that it is he, and not the androids, that is allied with the forces of entropy: "I'm part of the form-destroying process of entropy. The Rosen Association creates, and I unmake" (86). It seems only suitable that a world consisting only of copies should be populated with copied humans. "What counts as real? What counts as human?" asks Hayles. "Haunting Dick's fiction, these questions point toward his conviction that the android, that 'ersatz human,' is not simply an object within the fictional world he constructs but somehow is deeply bound up with reality construction itself" (Hayles 422). This is to say that the android is as much of this world as it is of Dick's fictional one. In the hyperreal, where Dick's fiction and our reality merge, the problems posed by the android are real: "Exposing the fractures in possessive individualism, the figure of the android allows Dick to combine a scathing critique of the liberal subject with the psychological complexities of trying to decide who qualifies as an 'authentic' human" (Hayles 423). Further: "Replication as a poetically metaphysical representation of the rationalizing post-industrial world signals, in Dick's work, the seductive devaluation of the human" (Rabkin 187). Dick's androids work to problematize an easy definition of humanity, one that has been called into question by the hyperreality of the postmodern world.

While the real world may not have to deal with androids that are indistinguishable from humans, it does have to deal with the concept of humanity in a world of increasing mechanical- and computerized-reproduction, untamed consumerism, and all the rest. While Dick was in no position to speak about human cloning, the philosophical problems of his androids are directly relatable. Human cloning may or may not be achieved in our lifetime, but the possibility is certainly very real. From most classical standpoints, this raises a serious question about the nature of humanity. If it can be mechanically reproduced, then of what value is it? If it cannot be reproduced, then in what way is humanity made up of more than its genes and tissues? A religious response would be to point to the soul, but a more secular viewpoint might have to find something else within the makeup of humanity to hold up as "authentic," and Dick has already made an attempt

at this, by identifying empathy as humanity's saving grace.

As already stated, the only method in *Androids* used to accurately identify andys is the Voigt-Kampff test, which judges the empathy of its subject by measuring the response-time of questions and unconscious movements-- "the so-called 'shame' or 'blushing' reaction to a morally shocking stimulus" (41). Andys, we are told, do not have empathy, even for each other: "'An android,' he said, 'doesn't care what happens to another android. That's one of the indications we look for'" (*Androids* 89).

By identifying empathy as the one human trait that cannot be reproduced, Dick points to empathy as our most human, our most authentic, of characteristics. A reader may choose to accept this distinction, but it is problematized from the first page, even before the novel establishes empathy as the true mark of humanity, and is further exacerbated by the Voigt-Kampff test, the tool used by bounty hunters to discern andys from humans.

The Voigt-Kampff test, which tests for empathy, is the bounty hunter's first (and seemingly only) tool for discovering andys within the general populace. It works by having the subject respond to a number of questions, each one worded so as to induce an empathetic response. The most extended description of the Voigt-Kampff test comes in chapter five (44-53). In it, Deckard performs the Voigt-Kampff test on Rachel Rosen, who, he has been told, is the daughter of Eldon Rosen, the owner of the Rosen Association. Rachel is actually an andy, an advanced Nexus-6 android, and the test is actually a set up to corner Deckard and end his investigation.

The reader may be surprised to discover that virtually all of the questions posed in the Voigt-Kampff test revolve around animals. Deckard confronts Rachel with vignettes centering on violence towards animals, such as a killing jar used by a butterfly collector, a bearskin rug, or a bullfight. These images of violence are intended to elicit a negative empathetic response. Attaway notes that "[t]o the contemporary reader, however, many of the scenarios that are supposed to inspire horror from the average "human" are everyday occurrences, such as calfskin wallets, boiling lobsters and fur coats" (Attaway 10). A reader would probably assume that Dick, in an act of sf world-building, has decided that in a world where authentic animals have become almost extinct, the empathetic bond between man and animal would be greatly advanced. The properly

authentic human reaction to Deckard's examples--for instance, the bullfight--is not disgust, but a genuine sense of dismay, a *moral* and *empathetic* reaction.

The test proves here--and later, with Luba Luft (88-92)--to be fairly easy to confuse or evade. It is only due to Deckard's own intuition that Rachel is caught; the test itself--developed by the Pavlov institute (25)--fails to identify Rachel as an android. Pavlov, of course, is most well known for his research into conditioning. Attaway says of the test's origins:

Dick's subtle reference to Pavlov suggests that the "empathetic response" according to which human beings are defined in this dystopic society is actually the capacity to be physiologically programmed. The ability to produce a conditioned response indicates the test subject's humanity.

Unlike androids, human beings can be trained. (Attaway 9)

Jill Galvan also notes that "what passes for 'empathy' among humans derives far more from a cultural construction than from any categorical essence," and that the Voigt-Kampff test emphasizes the "contrived nature" of this human quality (Galvan 415). The test itself, designed to identify androids, paradoxically calls into question the existence of empathy in humans. Humanity's capacity for empathy is further challenged by the televisual religion, Mercerism, and the "empathy box" which is its physical manifestation.

Isidore, the novel's most enthusiastic Mercerite, explains the importance of the empathy box: "'But an empathy box,' he said, stammering in his excitement, 'is the most personal possession you have! It's an extension of your body; it's the way you touch other humans, it's the way you stop being alone'" (58). Users of the empathy box--followers of Mercerism--take a hold of the device's handles, and "fuse" with Wilbur Mercer, a "tottering, ascending old man" (27) on an eternal, Sisyphian climb up a forbidding hill. During his climb Mercer is attacked by unknown assailants, who cast rocks at him. Mercerites all fuse together into the being of Mercer, thus sharing his trial. When he is struck by rocks, they themselves feel it, and can be physically injured. Sharing this experience with others is treated as the ultimate in empathy. Isidore explains: "Wilbur Mercer is always renewed. He's eternal. At the top of the hill he's struck down; he sinks into the tomb world but then he rises inevitably. And us with him.

So we're eternal, too" (67). Carlo Pagetti compares Mercer's journey to Christ climbing Golgotha (23), while Jennifer Attaway compares the empathy box to the modern-day PC, in that it is "a site of communion, a way in which human beings merge into a virtual embrace" (Attaway 11). Of course, Dick was not foreseeing the internet with his invention, but the similarities are clearly there--especially worth noting is the fact that while the empathy box, like the PC, allows many people from all over the world to interact, it also removes interaction from the physical realm; it mediates human interaction through an electronic device, leaving its users, no matter how connected, ultimately alone. Dick's immediate inspiration for the empathy box was probably the television; Anthony Enns calls it a "television religion" (Enns 81), and Jameson refers to Mercerism as a "televsual spectacle," while noting that, for Dick, the comparison to television is probably a bad thing (*Archaeologies* 371). Either way--PC or TV--the point is that the empathy box is a technological, electronic tool, and that it paradoxically creates distance and alienation between its users while offering up total communion. This is in keeping with Scott Bukatman's view that technology "drastically compromises an insulated human community in two ways: it separates the individual from human contact; but more significantly, it makes her dependent upon--addicted to--the life of the machine" (Bukatman 418). Iran and Isidore are isolated from the rest of humanity, and are therefore addicted to the one thing that seems to make them a part of it: the empathy box. But the empathy box can offer only the illusion of togetherness.

Jameson puts it this way: "The crucial point about 'empathy', however, is that in Mercerism it is enacted in the form of 'fusion' with the other, or, rather, with the televisual image of the other. Philosophically, in other words, it has seemed impossible to imagine any identification with the other short of a merging together of the two subjectivities" (*Archaeologies* 367). As previously noted, when the concept of authenticity becomes more and more problematized, what is actually held up as authentic becomes more and more drastic; similarly, when the technologically advanced society of replication and mass-reproduction makes authentic human interaction more and more problematic, when mankind becomes totally alienated, then the idea of identification with the other is pushed to such extremities that only total merger of personalities seems acceptable--the type of "fusion" offered by Mercerism. But the fact remains that the followers of Mercerism are

physically alone when clutching the handles of their empathy boxes. The total merger of personalities does nothing to unite the people—they remain as solitary as ever. As Bukatman puts it: "A citizenry alienated by the industrialist-capitalist mode of production is granted an illusion of belonging and participation; the fragmentation of the productive and social realms is replaced by *the appearance* of coherence and wholeness" (Bukatman 37).

What should not be ignored, though, is that Mercerism is not just a tool for human interaction, but the only remaining religion on Dick's future Earth. It is entirely fitting that the religion of *Androids* is a technological one, given that humanity is becoming increasingly inauthentic. People worship the image; gripping the handles of the empathy box is like genuflecting before the crucifix. Mercerism preaches the tenets of an empathy religion which give mankind an ethical standpoint from which they can interact with their world. Early in the novel, Deckard claims that his neighbour should sell him one of his colts, arguing that for him "to have two horses and me none, that violates the whole basic theological and moral structure of Mercerism" (8). In this way Mercerism *does* emphasize a certain degree of moral human interaction. It also allows Deckard a moral justification for his line of work:

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. Put another way, a Mercerite was free to locate the nebulous presence of The Killers wherever he saw fit. For Rick Deckard an escaped humanoid robot, which had killed its master, which had been equipped with an intelligence greater than that of many human beings, which had no regard for animals, which possessed no ability to feel emphatic joy for another life form's success or grief at its defeat--that, for him, epitomized The Killers. (27)

When taken into consideration along with the general good character of John Isidore, this comment indicates that, for Dick, intelligence itself is not a positive thing. This is perhaps because intelligence is something that can be replicated, or technologically created, as in the computer chip (or, in Dick's fictitious world, the andy). A Mercerite

does not *comprehend* evil, he senses it. Isidore lives up to this ideal when he interacts with Pris: "Now that her initial fear had diminished, something else had begun to emerge from her. Something more strange. And, he thought, deplorable. 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" (*Androids* 59). Later, when interacting with the group of andys: "they're all strange. He sensed it without being able to finger it. As if a peculiar and malign *abstractness* pervaded their mental processes" (137). In this way Isidore can sense The Killers without understanding them. Note, too, the similarity between how Isidore views the andys and how the characters of *High Castle* view the Nazis. As is shown in the sections of *High Castle* involving Juliana Frink and Joe Cinadella, the inhumanness of the Nazis can be sensed, and Dick seems to attribute part of their wrongness with abstraction. Still, this aspect of the andys is only sensed. Cognition, rather than supporting the initial sense of danger, seems to problematize it, and as Deckard's narrative plays out he cannot help but begin to cogitate on the real differences between humans and andys, and the nature of his work.

As has been shown with the example of Deckard's wife, Iran, human characters in the novel work to undermine the concept of a transcendent or pure human quality. One of the most problematic characters, for Deckard, is Phil Resch, a bounty hunter whom he briefly comes to believe is an android. He is convinced of Resch's inhumanity by the cool calculation of his demeanour--in a sense, he shows the lack of appropriate affect. It is Resch himself who begins to conclude that he might be an android (111), and Deckard is so appalled by the fact that Resch enjoys killing that he doubts the other bounty hunter's humanity (120). When Resch is proven to be human, Deckard is left in a state of shock. The confusion, he decides, stemmed from Resch's lack of empathy towards androids. For Resch, this does not seem like a problem, but Deckard realizes that he now empathizes with the artificial constructs (123). He even asks Resch if he thinks androids have souls (118), and soon realizes that the problem is not with Resch, but with himself: "I'm capable of feeling empathy for at least specific, certain androids ... There's nothing unnatural or unhuman about Phil Resch's reactions; *it's me*" (124). His encounter with Phil Resch, with whom he retires the andy Luba Luft, leads him to the following introspection: "So much for the distinction between authentic living humans and



humanoid constructs. In that elevator at the museum, he said to himself, I rode down with two creatures, one human, the other android ... and my feelings were reverse of those intended. Of those I'm accustomed to feel--am *required* to feel" (125). Deckard is required to feel the right way due to his job--but the wording also points out that his ideas about humanity and androids, and the concept of empathy upon which those ideas are based, could in fact be nothing more than conditioned reactions.

Prior to being cleared by the Voigt-Kampff test, Resch, in an attempt to prove his own humanity, notes that he owns and cares for a squirrel. He asks Deckard if he's ever heard of an andy that cares for a pet. Deckard responds: "In two cases that I know of, andys owned and cared for animals. But it's rare. 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" (114). This statement is enlightening, not as a comment on Resch's humanity, but on Deckard's, for it is Deckard who has had to replace his organic sheep with an ersatz one, after the original died due to his own malfeasance.

The idea that the ownership of animals is largely to validate the humanity of the owner is reinforced by further evidence in the novel. Deckard identifies Rachel as an andy because she refers to an animal (in this case, an owl) as "it" rather than "her" (51). More importantly, as Deckard interacts with andys more and more, he begins to question his own humanity, realizing, implicitly, that andys may be just as "human" as he himself is. The growth of this existential dilemma is matched by his obsessive desire to own a real animal. Deckard eventually decides to buy a goat, despite the fact that it will cost all of the money he will make for retiring all six andys: "The expense, the contractual indebtedness, appalled him; he found himself shaking. But I had to do it, he said to himself. The experience with Phil Resch--I have to get my confidence, my faith in myself and my abilities, back. Or I won't keep my job" (148). What Deckard needs to do, in affect, is reaffirm his humanity after he encounters various situations that call the distinction between andys and humans into question, and the only way he knows how to do that is to buy a real, authentic animal, to function as an external symbol of both his success and his reified empathy. This is one of the more poignant, though subtle, suggestions that Deckard may in fact be an android, and this is born out even by the

wording used to describe his mental process: "Possibly his encounter with the bounty hunter Phil Resch had altered some minute synapsis in him, had closed one neurological *switch* and opened another. And this perhaps had started a chain reaction" (152, *emphasis added*). That Deckard anxiously tries to reaffirm his humanity by buying a consumer item, and spending all of his money, is worth noting. Also, as has already been noted, the Voigt-Kampff test, which supposedly can tell man from machine, revolves around questions regarding animals. This seems to support the idea that animals, in Dick's world, have come to be a sort of transcendental symbol of human empathy.

That a fully-fleshed character like Deckard could be an android--and the text never seriously dwells on this possibility for long--is held up by the fact that the androids in the novel often act in an empathetic and "human" way, despite the supposed hard-and-fast rule of the Voigt-Kampff test, and, conversely, that none of the human characters (except the "chicken head" Isidore) seem particularly empathetic. Indeed, Deckard displays his lack of empathy early in the novel, when, after hearing about Holden's near-death experience, he looks into the logistics of purchasing an ostrich: "Dave Holden, he reflected, is out of action. That could mean a great deal [of cash] ... depending on how many assignments show up during the coming month" (28).

Many of the andys Deckard encounters in the novel--most notably Rachel Rosen, Pris Stratton, and Roy and Irmgard Baty--possess qualities which, if not truly empathetic, are at the very least deeply emotional and seemingly human, while no truly empathetic relationships exist between humans. Pris Stratton--assumed by Isidore to be a human--refers to Roy and Irmgard Baty as her "best friends" (130). While this may seem a ruse to aid her in her masquerade, the text seems to treat them as friends, despite the fact that the reader has been told again and again that andys do not work well in groups. The three fugitive andys come together in Pris's apartment, where they hope to make a last stand against Deckard. Certainly there are reasons to suspect that their empathetic response is not as finely attuned as it should be in a human; for instance, there is the portion of the novel where they torment and torture a spider, seemingly proving that andys are incapable of true empathy. Were this the only action available to the reader by which to judge the andys, then certainly they would be found wanting; however, there is ample reason to suggest that they are capable of a certain degree of empathy. Most obvious is

the relationship between Roy and Irmgard Baty, who act as though they are married. After Deckard retires Irmgard, Roy Baty cries out in sorrow:

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Baty," Rick said, and shot her.

Roy Baty, in the other room, let out a cry of anguish.

"Okay, you loved her," Rick said. "And I loved Rachel. And the special loved the other Rachel." (197)

Deckard is able to accept that Roy, an andy, is capable of love, even though love, presumably, requires empathy. Furthermore, Rick acknowledges the relationship between the two by referring to Irmgard as "Mrs. Baty," a categorization that would be off-limits to andys. This is no doubt due to the action of the novel, which has deconstructed the binary of human and android to the extent that Deckard himself no longer believes in the firm distinction. It is also due to an earlier conversation with Rachel Rosen.

Contrary to the laws of Earth, Deckard sleeps with Rachel, feeling himself driven to do so as he begins to question his own authenticity. After doing so, Rachel informs him that this was part of a plot on her part. She believes that Deckard, having slept with her, will now be unable to retire Pris Stratton, since Pris is the same model as Rachel. Since Deckard, being a human, is fully empathetic, then it stands to reason that, having attached himself so intimately with Rachel, he will hesitate when he needs to kill Pris. The remarkable thing about Rachel's plan is that it is not motivated by self-preservation; rather, Rachel is actually able to look out for the other, for Pris Stratton:

"You know what I have? Toward this Pris android?"

"Empathy," he said.

"Something like that. Identification; there goes I." (165)

This is in stark contrast to the message that Deckard received from Mercer, only a few short pages before--that the basic condition of life is "to be required to violate your own identity" (156). This is not to say that Rachel is merely proving her inhumanity by conforming to her identity, rather than violating it--rather, it is more likely a simple example of the android forming the sort of emotional bond that is supposed to be the privilege of humanity, while the human must face the reality that again and again he must violate the emotions and morals that are supposed to define him as a person.

Perhaps Rachel's most human moment is when she enacts her vengeance against the bounty hunter. After Deckard has killed her "sister" Pris, as well as Irmgard and Roy Baty, Rachel goes to Deckard's apartment and pushes his new organic goat off of the roof, killing it. Iran comments that the killing was "needless." Deckard responds, "'Not needless,' he said. 'She had what seemed to her a reason.' An android reason, he thought" (201). Deckard is still confused, though; far from having an "android" reason to kill his goat, Rachel is clearly acting out of spite, brought on by Deckard's killing of her friends, and also, it seems, lashing out as a jilted lover. The reason for Rachel's action is extremely understandable from a human standpoint. By this point in the novel, however, Deckard seems incapable of separating the human from the android, and so cannot understand her behaviour on a basic emotional level. In the last chapters of the novel, it is Wilbur Mercer who acts to guide Deckard through his ontological doubt.

Mercer's interactions with Deckard and Isidore, at the end of the novel, have two important implications: First, Mercer asserts his authenticity, by virtue of appearing to Deckard without use of the empathy box (195) and fulfilling the role of a saviour/deity, *just as he has* admitted to Isidore his own falsity; second, the content of Mercer's discourse shows us that Deckard's duty of retiring andys is less legal obligation than a formal, ontological one.

To begin with, there is Deckard's use of the empathy box, before he leaves to confront the remaining three andys:

"How can I save you," the old man [Mercer] said, "if I can't save myself?"  
He smiled. "Don't you see? *There is no salvation.*"

"Then what's this for?" Rick demanded. "What are you for?"

"To show you," Wilbur Mercer said, "that you aren't alone. I am here with you and always will be. Go and do your task, even though you know it's wrong."

"Why?" Rick said. "Why should I do it? I'll quit my job and emigrate."

The old man said, "You will be required to do wrong no matter where you go. It is the basic condition of life, to be required to violate your own identity. At some time, every creature which lives must do so. It is the ultimate shadow, the defeat of creation; this is the curse at work, the curse

that feeds on all life. Everywhere in the universe." (156)

When Mercer tells Rick that he must do his task, even though he knows it to be wrong, it calls to mind the comment made by Baynes in *High Castle*, that "we are all doomed to commit acts of cruelty or violence or evil" (*High Castle* 201), an uncompromising take on the moral system in which humans function.

The above interaction is soon followed by the disclosure that Mercerism is a "swindle," and that Wilbur Mercer is actually a drunken actor named Al Jarry (184). After this revelation, Isidore uses his empathy box, and finds himself in the tomb world. After he is "saved" by Mercer, the prophet admits his fraudulent nature:

"I am a fraud," Mercer said. "They're sincere; their research is genuine. From their standpoint I am an elderly retired bit player named Al Jarry. All of it, their disclosure, is true. They interviewed me at my home, as they claim; I told them whatever they wanted to know, which was everything."

"Including about the whiskey?"

Mercer smiled. "It was true. They did a good job and from their standpoint Buster Friendly's disclosure was convincing. They will have trouble understanding why nothing has changed. Because you're still here and I'm still here." (189)

The next in this chain of events is Mercer's appearance before Deckard, even though the latter has not merged with Mercer through use of the empathy box. Mercer actually appears embodied in the real world, and reiterates his message to Deckard: "What you are doing has to be done" (195). Following this message, he warns Deckard about the specific dangers he is about to face, and because of his advice Deckard is able to survive his assault on the andys, and retires them in a fairly anti-climatic fashion.

Through his embodiment in the real world, and his prophetic advice to Deckard, Mercer is revealed to be "real," an authentic religious figure; a deity, of some sort. And yet he admits to being a fabrication, a phony. This is in keeping with the world Dick has created, where the distinction between authentic and "inauthentic" humans is irrevocably destroyed by the end of the novel. It is also perfectly fitting that the deity of Dick's world--a truly postmodern world where the synthetic and the artificial have eclipsed the

authentic, where salvation is found not at the Church but through the television-like empathy box--is a fake, an image. It is like one further degeneration, of the authentic into the inauthentic, that even the religious figurehead of *Androids* is revealed as a simulation. What is more, Mercer's message to Isidore intimates that this disclosure--that Mercerism is a "swindle"--will not affect the world in any way. Like Iran, the people of the world are addicted to the fakery, are accepting of it. This is reinforced by the conclusion of the novel, when Iran accepts the artificial toad as though it were real. John Huntington writes about this moment: "The toad may turn out to be electric, and the novel may end on a note of satiric comedy as Iran, herself reinvigorated, orders artificial flies for the toad; but the re-engagement with a relative reality, however bogus, while a confession of the failure to achieve absolute reality, is also a lively escape from the black hole of absolute despair" (Huntington 176). If Mercer *is* a deity, a religious figurehead for his world, then it stands to reason that he is at once both real and fake, authentic and inauthentic--thoroughly postmodern. As Deckard puts it, "Mercer isn't a fake ... Unless reality is a fake" (207). The Christian God, in a sense, is outdated, and ill-suited for a world where real cannot be distinguished from fake, where "morality" is now a term based on arbitrariness rather than ethics.

The second implication of Mercer's late-novel revelations, mentioned earlier, is that Deckard's job as a bounty hunter is more formal than ethical. There is no ethical basis for Deckard's "retiring" the andys. Since the deconstruction at work in the novel has shown that humans (Iran, Phil Resch) can act like androids and androids (Roy Baty, Rachael) show empathy similar to humans, and since the one defining factor, empathy, has been drawn into doubt, Deckard is left with no real moral position with which to justify his job. Mercer, however, informs him that he must do wrong in any event. In essence, Deckard is not upholding the law, but the ontology of the world he lives in. Even if the distinction between humans and androids is arbitrary, it must be sustained; the existence of the androids threatens a narrow *definition* of humanity. If androids live, and are indistinguishable from man, then it is man who suffers the most from this comparison. It is not unlike Wyndham-Matson's discourse on historicity in *High Castle*, where his comparison of a "real" historical lighter and its replica leads him to insist that "the word 'fake' meant nothing really, since the word 'authentic' meant nothing really"

(*High Castle* 63-64). That "fake" humans (andys) *can* exist, indistinguishable from humans, calls into doubt the "authenticity" of humanity itself. Deckard's job is to safeguard humanity by extinguishing doubt. The andys are threatening not because they are murderous machines: "The machine, by declaring its right to live as an autonomous self, challenges the very categories of life and selfhood--and, in turn, the ontological prerogative of its creators" (Galvan 413). Phil Resch seems to understand this, claiming that bounty hunters "stand between the Nexus-6 and mankind, a barrier which keeps the two distinct" (*Androids* 124). While Deckard is able to hold up his end of the deal, it is not without significant effect to him personally.

When fighting against the illusion and facing the reality of his morally ambiguous task, Deckard suffers from mental malaise and nearly incapacitating existential doubt and fear: "For Mercer, everything is easy, he thought, because 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" And further: "I've been defeated in some obscure way. By having killed the androids? By Rachel's murder of my goat?" (*Androids* 204). It is following this soul-searching that Deckard becomes fused with Mercer, despite the fact that he has not used an empathy box. This fusion can be seen, metaphorically, as a fusion between Deckard and fakery, an immersion in simulation and the inauthentic. It is this merger, paradoxically, that saves Deckard. Like Juliana in *High Castle*, who discovers that her world is fictional, and finds this revelation freeing, Deckard is only able to continue after becoming one with the televisual deity. He is eventually pulled out of it by his discovery of the electric toad--which may be seen as a rather sharp attack on the consumerism of the novel, since existential angst and spiritual revelation are short-circuited by the thought of material gain.

If the definition between man and machine has become so flimsy, then a breakdown in reality, a dismissal of the "real," and an acceptance of the inauthentic are all necessary. Carlo Pagetti says of Deckard, at the end of the novel: "He survives, after all, not to fulfill an impossible redemption, but to accept the true essence of life. Life is a sequence of illusions, just as the holy toad on the hill is not a divine gift, but an artificial toy. To realize that ... is perhaps the beginning of a new consciousness, the search for the

truest self: the death of Wilbur Mercer is emphatically not the death of man" (Pagetti 24). The characters of *High Castle* may be satisfied to learn that theirs is not an authentic reality, but it remains to be seen how this knowledge will actually improve their lives; in *Androids*, by accepting, and to some degree by embracing the inauthenticity of their lived experience, Deckard and Iran arrive at a more mature understanding of the problems of postmodernity, of living in a world of simulacra and simulation; and this is seen, in the final pages, in Deckard's acceptance that "electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are" (214), and by Iran's acceptance of the electric toad (216), which is all the more inauthentic for being a simulacrum of an animal that no longer exists.

The characters of *Androids* are surrounded by the simulated and the unreal. There is the Penfield mood organ, the empathy box, and the androids themselves, all of which saturate the (presumed) empirical and authentic world with one of inauthenticity and replication. Some critics have seen these forces within the novel as symptoms or tools of a repressive industrial-commercial system; critics such as Galvan, who sees that "Mercerism and the ideology of empathy that is its mainstay, far from appealing to innate human characteristics, function merely as the means by which the government controls an otherwise unwieldy populace" (Galvan 416), and Pagetti seems to concur, to some degree, when noting that "in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) society must defend itself against the overwhelming power of an industry of mechanical devices that introduces to the marketplace automata so perfect as to be confused with men and take their place" (Pagetti 22). Galvan's claim, in particular, seems to be motivated by the brief mention in the novel that Mercerism is sanctioned by the UN: "...even the U. N. approved. And the American and Soviet police had publicly stated that Mercerism reduced crime by making citizens more concerned about the plight of their neighbours. Mankind needs more empathy, Titus Corning, the U. N. Secretary General, had declared several times" (*Androids* 66). Mercerism, the Penfield mood organ, the androids themselves--in this interpretation, all of them are tools whereby the powerful keep the weak docile, separate, and in line.

Such a "conspiracy theory" is certainly in keeping with Dick's point of view, but it is more instructive to see the exploitation and alienation of mankind *not* as the primary goal of these forces, but as secondary (and perhaps even unintended) consequences.



These artificial tools are designed to make life easier--to make humans more empathetic, more happy and at ease, and, in the instance of the andys, to allow them to pass their work on to others. However, one of the important results from these technological advances is the further alienation of man from his nature. Replication supplants *making*; the symbol surpasses the original. The world is replaced by its simulacrum, in the Baudriallardian sense, and mankind is soon to follow. It is in this way that *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* speaks about life under late capitalism, about the postmodern condition. This is the effect of cognitive estrangement; initially seeing the world of *Androids* as a totally fantastic fabrication, the reader soon recognizes their own. Deckard comes to realize the inauthenticity of his own world, but unlike Juliana's realization in *High Castle*, the novel does not end there, and instead shows the reader how Deckard will attempt to continue on. The realization, in this instance, is not enough; simply recognizing the fake for what it is no longer interests Dick--he needs to work with it, to examine the fake and to learn to live with it: "In effect, the narrative repudiates the idea of a confined human community and envisions a community of the post human, in which human and machine commiserate and co materialize, vitally shaping one another's existence" (Galvan 414). Dick's truly postmodern heroes, like Deckard, cannot simply recognize the falsity of their own existence; instead, having come to this realization, they must learn to live with it.

## Conclusion

Sometime during December, 2005, Philip K. Dick went missing. This Philip K. Dick was not the author, long dead, but an android, a simulacrum made in his image. Apparently, the head of the android took off from Las Vegas, and never arrived at its destination. It is a strange coda to the life of a strange author, in whose work the line between man and machine was often crossed, and events, such as the one just described, took on philosophical, ontological meaning.

Why is Philip K. Dick important today? Why have his ideas, his stories, gained traction more than 20 years after his death? What is it about Dick's work that makes it poignant?

A journalist for the *Village Voice*, Erik Davis, famously described Dick as "an oracular postmodern." Such a description is fitting, if first suitably qualified. While Dick may have foreseen the way the world would look, so many years in his future, he was in no way a futurist; like most SF writers, he did not foresee cell phones, the GPS, or the Internet. And so, as stories of a potential future, Dick's work generally falls short on the specific details.

And yet Dick's work seems more timely than ever. This is because, while he missed the details, he was frighteningly accurate when discerning the big picture. Dick's worlds are ones where the forces of consumerism have colonized every aspect of culture: where doors ask for money before opening for you; where advertisements take the form of flies and infest your car or your house; where God advertises on television. His is a world where, as in *High Castle*, history loses all narrative force, and is reduced, instead, to a series of symbols, of signifiers, which have no direct relationship to the past; or, as in *Androids*, Dick portrays a world where animals, and even humanity, can be replicated as consumer items.

Dick could not have imagined the microchip, or the digital era. In fact, he was often humorously off the mark--in *Ubik's* futuristic world, one does not listen to, what would have been contemporary to Dick, a record player, but instead, a highly advanced, *really nice* record player. What Dick *did* see was a world where the advances of technology were motivated primarily by capitalism, and where mankind, surrounded by duplicates, by copies, would become alienated. His books are filled with average people,

and their dilemma is that they live in a world where the individual has been devalued, and where a man struggles to exert individuality in the face of an overwhelming and nearly omnipotent system, one that is often technologically advanced and/or driven by the forces of consumerism. The problem of authenticity, which plagues his work, is one that we encounter today. As N. K. Hayles puts it:

Dick's narratives extend the scope of inquiry by staging connections between cybernetics and a wide range of concerns, including a devastating critique of capitalism, an idiosyncratic connection between entropy and schizophrenic delusion, and a persistent suspicion that the objects which surround us and indeed reality itself are fakes. (422)

His fictions may not look like our world, but they *feel* like it--this is to say that the *cognitive estrangement* of SF, posited by Suvin, is especially felt to be true when a reader of the postmodern age encounters Dick's fiction.

That Dick was a pulp fiction writer, and that popular feature films have been adapted from his work, only strengthens the connection between Dick and the postmodern world. Even when the films stray far from the original--and this is almost always the case--they often retain a portion of Dick's engagement with postmodernity. In *Minority Report* (Spielberg 2002), technological advances have made it possible for police to foresee crime, and so stop it before it happens. When the head police officer is accused of "future crime," he has to prove that the technology can be fooled. In effect, technology is shown to have reduced the freedom of the individual, and the narrative strives to fight against this. (Spielberg, being less pessimistic than Dick, or perhaps more open to popular sentiment, allows his hero to succeed against the system, whereas Dick, in more truly postmodern fashion, sees the system as impenetrable.) While *Total Recall* (Verhoeven 1990) is almost completely unrelated to its source material, it does nod toward the ever-present distrust, in Dick's work, of reality-as-a-given, by insinuating, to the astute viewer, that the entire narrative of the film may have been no more than a technologically-induced hallucination--that the whole experience has been, in a word, inauthentic.

Furthermore, several popular films of the last several years can be described as "philDickian," since they share similar ideas with Dick's novels and short stories and

seem to share his concern with consumerism, replication, and, most importantly, the problem of authenticity. Chief among these is *The Truman Show* (Weir 1998) which, like Dick's *Time Out of Joint*, revolves around a character who discovers that the world he thought was real has actually been constructed for him by outsiders; the novum of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Gondry 2004)--a process whereby memories can be manipulated or removed--is almost identical to the one in Dick's short story *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale*; and *Dark City* (Proyas 1998) features yet another fake world which, unbeknownst to its inhabitants--and reminiscent of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*--has been constructed for the purpose of finding out what makes one authentically human. In the last ten years or so, it seems Dick's ideas have gained a certain amount of traction.

Dick's work is gaining ground now, because the concerns of our world are starting to mirror the concerns of Dick's fictional realities. *Androids* may have posed questions about humanity that only mattered in a SF world--the question of humanity being created, as it were, by a sort of tautological argument, whereby "humanity" is questioned only when androids exist--but now, with advances in genetics and cloning, these questions seem more pertinent. We will never live in a Dickian world, where virtual reality can be confused for reality, but we do live in one where the spectacle of war has replaced its reality, and where the horror of a terrorist attack is mostly lived virtually, through the television screen. We live in a world where pictures can be digitally altered so convincingly that news organizations post them on their websites as originals, and where organic food has become so rare that it has to be advertised as such, to differentiate it from the morass of synthetic food products, or foods that are grown by artificial processes, that flood the marketplace. In fact, "organic food" acts as a sort of simulacrum, pointing to the fact that the organic has almost disappeared, even from the realm of food. And while Earth has not yet entered into World War Terminus, the world is suffering the ill effects, not of nuclear, but environmental meltdown.

While Dick's work was not didactic, and offers no real world answers to the problems of authenticity, his work remains as an early engagement with these problems. Furthermore, Dick's work is important to the genre of SF, particularly American SF. By dealing with cultural and ontological issues, Dick's work helped to move American SF

away from the "Space Opera," and paved the way for academic criticism of SF as more than a pop culture or children's literature phenomenon. Dick's opus can be seen as providing the foundations for a more mature SF, and for making inroads into the academic community that resulted in the fruitful relationship the genre and the critics now share.

Dick's influence can be felt outside of the genre of SF as well. Many authors who are considered paradigmatic of postmodernism, such as Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo, seem in some way influenced Dick--and, if these similarities are merely coincidental, then it goes to show that Dick had tapped into something poignant about postmodernism, and that all of these authors are similarly related to the deep structure of postmodernism.

Many of the academic concepts associated with postmodernism are evident in Dick's work, and, most importantly, can be more easily grasped by using Dick's work as a primary example of these concepts. Guy Debord's concept of the society of the spectacle, Baudrillard's discussions of simulacra and simulation, Jameson's discussions of the capitalist basis of postmodernism--a prime and literary example of each can be found in Dick's work, meaning that it has a possible use as an explanatory tool for critical theory. Not only does his work relate to these concepts, but Baudrillard, Jameson, and Zizek have all named Dick in reference to their theories.

Dick's legacy is deep, and this is due to how astute his observations were on the state of postmodernity and, as has been argued, his distrust of authenticity. Dick's belief that the idea of "authenticity" was problematic, that the empirical world can not be taken as a given, and that reality is generally something constructed, brings to mind the work of Jacques Derrida. Peter Fitting believes that, for these very reasons, Dick's work can be read as a discovery of ideology (in the critical, Marxist sense of the term):

Contemporary theorists contest this empirical positivism and argue that both the knowledge of reality and that of the subjects who 'know' are socially constructed. Their theories raise the question of ideology and maintain that the practices and systems of representation that produce our understanding and perception of ourselves and of our reality play an essential part in the maintenance and reproduction of our existing

(capitalist) relations of production ... I will argue that the scenes of discovery around which so many of his novels turn are, in a spontaneous and unconscious way, a representation of the discovery of ideology itself. (Fitting 93)

If mankind is posed with the problem of inauthenticity--if we are surrounded by fakes, by copies--then the question must be raised: what *does* count? On what can we base our understanding of reality? In *The Man in the High Castle*, Dick questions the notion of history, of its authenticity as a narrative by which human life can be understood. He does this by inserting fake historical items into the narrative, and questioning how any item can be thought to have history within it. He also does this through a self-reflexive postmodern trick, in which the history of *High Castle's* world is revealed to be fictive, and, by extension, positing that the reader's history may be no more authentic than the fictional one. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Dick questions the concept of authentic humanity. Again, he does this by creating fake humans, andys, which call the concept of humanity into question; but, more to the point, he does this by undermining the so-called "humanity" of his characters by showing how artificial their lives are. Thus the Penfield mood organ and the empathy religion of Mercerism. These complications serve to question an authentic, original core to humanity, one that could not, under any circumstances, be reproduced technologically. Dick seems to ask us if we are any more than the sum of our parts, and the postmodern malaise which he seems to suffer results in his own answer being a resounding "no."

If history and mankind can be deconstructed, and thus shown to be constructs to begin with, and not absolutes, then the question remains: who is constructing them? As Fitting posits above, Dick seems to be tapping into the concept of ideology, of dominant beliefs and culture being a creation of the dominant system--in this case, consumer capitalism. In keeping with this interpretation, Dick's fiction abounds with characters discovering that the world they live in is a ruse, that there is always something or someone behind it, unseen. And, for Dick, this system can never be overcome.

Still, it is instructive to see what Dick holds up as praiseworthy or, in effect, "authentic." He privileges the craftsman, those people who work with their hands and create original pieces of work. The EdFrank jewellery is one such example; the metal

squiggles that take shape on their own, but paradoxically are crafted with *wu* inside of them. Dick, too, privileges religion, as long as it is not ideological; and so the I Ching, lacking a dominant ideology and viewed more as a tool by its users, is seen as a largely positive force, seemingly beyond questions of authenticity. On the other hand, while the humanistic element of Mercerism is viewed in a positive light, the systemic, possibly ideological use as a tool for social control is viewed more sceptically, leaving Mercer as a paradoxical and ambiguous figure. While the concept of empathy, in *Androids*, is increasingly problematized, it is considered, even in its absence, as the most humane and therefore authentic of human emotions.

In the face of overwhelming postmodern despair, Dick does seem to feel that there is little hope for humanity. The system will not be overthrown; however, if one clings to those truly authentic things--love, empathy, spirituality, handicrafts--one may still live a life that is relatively untouched by the forces of consumerism, which threaten to overcome Dick's worlds and our own.

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