Breaking Down the Reflex-Machine in Three Works by Philip K. Dick

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Abstract

This thesis expands upon Philip K. Dick’s philosophy surrounding ‘androidization’, a process of degradation leading to the devolution of individuals into what he termed as ‘reflex-machines’. Often used interchangeably with Dick’s reference to the human-android, existing criticism has applied the ‘reflex-machine’ label broadly to characters throughout his work. This thesis aims to clarify the implications of such a state through a close reading of his three works, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *A Maze of Death*, and *A Scanner Darkly* while detailing the processes that comprise the androidization which produces it. In doing so, it proposes that androidization is made up of a series of stages. This distinction is vital for understanding what Dick suggests for the potential recovery of the individual from the state of a reflex-machine and his hope for humanity at large. Split into two parts, this essay first examines the production of the reflex-machine with the support of theories by Louis Althusser, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, Michel Foucault, and Jean Baudrillard. It then considers the solutions that Dick proposes for the individual undergoing androidization by referencing theories by Carl Jung, as well as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.
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1. Introduction

The science-fiction of Philip K. Dick continues to hold a persistent presence in contemporary Western society as his themes of questioning what is real of the external world and what exists of an authentic self loom heavily over its collective postmodern conscious. This is apparent in the current trend of television programs revisiting these subjects, like Westworld (2016-present) and Black Mirror (2011-present), as well as in the continued success of films inspired by the author’s own work, such as Blade Runner 2049 (2017). Writing primarily in the 1950’s through the early 1980’s, many considered Dick to be highly prophetic for his time, and the cultural climate of today only further cements this position. The Western world hovers in a place of uncertainty and paranoia as politicians propagate conflicting notions of truth using fearmongering tactics, corporate influence fuels political corruption, and social media proves to be a powerful tool for mass surveillance. As a society in the technological age, privacy is bartered for practicality. It is this willing acceptance of manipulation that Dick feared, and these fears are prevalent throughout his literature.

Dick’s fictional worlds present pseudo-realities constructed and maintained by postmodern systems that occlude the subjects imprisoned within from authentic reality perception and the potential for self-actualization. Stripped of identity and moral agency, these subjects degrade into what he termed ‘reflex-machines’, akin to androids in their lack of empathy or capacity for independent thought. He proposed that this was accomplished through a process of ‘androidization’, referring to both the passive devolution of individuals into reflex-machines and the active systemic manufacturing of them. His work often implies that androidization is the consequence of a society molded by the cutthroat corporate culture and rampant commodity fetishism of capitalism. Once the individual had reached the state of a full reflex-machine, he
insisted that recovery was unlikely. However, before this point, he believed that it remained possible to salvage what existed of the authentically human. Therefore, there are levels of deterioration to androidization just as there are levels to its production.

Existing criticism addressing Dick’s concept of reflex-machines rarely use the term specifically but do discuss the breakdown of the individual appearing in his work as the result of capitalist processes leading either to paranoia or a loss of moral agency. These are important aspects of the many facets that come to shape the reflex-machine which will also be addressed in this thesis. However, such criticism neglects to make the distinction that there are various levels to androidization. For example, in “Managers as Androids”, Nidhi Srinivas uses Dick’s work *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* to frame the discussion, with its protagonist, Deckard, being the primary exemplar of androidization in his lack of empathy and blind obedience. However, Deckard never reaches the stage of what Dick considered to be an irreversible reflex-machine and this distinction is vital when considering the author’s implications for recovery. Through an analysis of the representations of androidization appearing in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), *A Maze of Death* (1970), and *A Scanner Darkly* (1977), I aim to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Dick’s concept of androidization, the many mechanisms that affect it, and the potential for recovery that he proposes for the individual trapped within the systems that perpetuate the process.

Split into two parts, this essay will first explicate Dick’s process of androidization through an analysis of the postmodern themes of reality manipulation that appear within his work. This will be accomplished using theories by Louis Althusser, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, Michel Foucault, and Jean Baudrillard to supplement Dick’s own philosophy. In *The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick*, a collection of journal entries and letters by the author
published posthumously, he lists the process of reality manipulation that leads to the degradation of the individual:

I now see our fallen state as consisting of four basic deformations: (1) *Irreal world*, which we accept as real ... (2) *Perceptual occlusion*, which prevents us from accurate reality-testing, so that we ourselves reinforce the convincingness of the irreal world. (3) *Pervasive deterministic enslavement*, which reduces us to the level of reflex machines lacking true volition. … (4) *Amnesia*, which cuts us off from our true memory-systems, which in turn robs us of our authentic identities. (*The Exegesis* 414)

Positioned within this thesis, these deformations will be observed through a postmodern lens with a focus on the processes that lead to the individual’s loss of authentic agency. Having conducted the bulk of the novels’ respective analyses, the second part of this essay will then examine their conclusions to consider the solutions proposed by Dick to combat androidization. Through the support of theories by Carl Jung, as well as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Dick’s literature reveals an ultimately humanist hope for the future of the individual.
2. Part One: The Production

Dick dedicated his life to an exploration of the nature of subjective reality and the forces that contribute to its construction. He pondered the internal, psychological processes that influence individual perception and distrusted the power held by societal systems or institutions enabling them to manipulate such perceptions to their advantage. As he once stated, “They have a lot of it [power]. And it is an astonishing power: that of creating whole universes, universes of the mind” (“How to Build” 262). Throughout his work, these systems operate through the production of reflex-machines driven to paranoia by processes evocative of Foucauldian theories of power. For instance, Foucault’s concept of ‘docile bodies’, which he described as bodies “that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault 136), is strikingly similar to Dick’s conception of the android, or reflex-machine: “Becoming what I call … an android, means … to allow oneself to become a means, or to be pounded down, manipulated, made into a means without one’s knowledge or consent -- the results are the same” (“The Android” 191). Additionally, Dick’s reflex-machines are maintained by Foucauldian panoptic societies where subjects are individualized to the point of isolation and kept in “a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault 201). Unceasingly surveilled by unseen forces, these individuals uphold their own oppression.

The Foucauldian methods of control appearing throughout Dick’s fiction typically serve to reinforce an oppressive system which further manipulates its subjects through mass conditioning by forces or institutions that enforce a dominating ideology. Such institutions were defined by Althusser as ‘ideological state apparatuses’ (ISAs). Often peddling a capitalist ideology, these ISAs act to preserve his characters within systems of occlusion that construct Baudrillardian simulacra, copies of the real which mask and pervert “a basic reality”, eventually
bearing no resemblance to one at all (Baudrillard 1560). They thereby come to dwell within “a real without origin or reality” (1557), or what Baudrillard defined as a ‘hyperreality’. Dick’s literature implies that hyperrealities are instead dependent upon false signs and ideology generated to proliferate an exploitive consumerist culture, a representation supported by Althusser’s statement that “all Ideological State apparatuses … contribute to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation” (1346). By bringing together these philosophical models, he demonstrates the process by which the individual may be made docile and descend to the level of a reflex-machine in either a deliberate act of subjugation or through an inadvertent proliferation of a system dependent upon androidization for success.

2.1 Mass Production of Simulacra within The Three Stigmata

Dick’s subjects frequently find themselves trapped within societal systems reflective of his own anxieties surrounding the consumer culture of capitalism and its role in the individual’s self-occlusion. This is particularly true of the subjects appearing in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. The novel follows the CEO, Leo Bulero, and head marketing consultant, Barney Mayerson, of P.P. Layouts, a company known for manufacturing miniature models intended to supplement the joint hallucinogenic experience that users undergo when taking the psychotropic drug, Can-D. Can-D is primarily marketed and illegally trafficked to off-world colonists, all of whom have become dependent upon it to cope with their exile from Earth. When taking the drug, the users enter a simulacrum of a city on Earth modeled after the design of their miniature layout in the real world. There, they assume the personas of Perky Pat and Walt,
reminiscent of Barbie and Ken dolls, in order live out their repetitive bourgeois lifestyle for a brief time. The novel’s conflict arises with the reappearance of the mysterious figure Palmer Eldritch, who claims that he holds the key to immortality through the use of a new drug, Chew-Z, that he is now marketing to rival Can-D.

While the off-world colonists on Mars yearn for Earth, Leo Bulero is no more satisfied with life as a Terran in a world ravaged by overpopulation and global warming. Both Leo and the colonists make use of Can-D to escape their hopeless realities, but to many of the colonists, the pseudo-reality that they enter is interpreted as an authentic representation of Earth. For colonist Sam Reagan, “the miniature artifacts of the layout no longer merely represented Earth but became Earth” (%28Stigmata%29 263). The Can-D experience that the colonists are sold is therefore a consumerist hyperreality that is no longer reflective of the real world, but deludes the subjects into accepting it as such, offering only a series of false signs which they fetishize to the point of considering the hallucination a religious experience in their desperate quest for meaning in their meaningless world. By actively profiting from the colonists’ suffering, Mayerson and Bulero act as Althusser’s ‘agents of exploitation’ appearing within capitalist systems and represent the apathy that Dick so resented within such systems (%28Althusser%29 1347). Consequentially, seeing no escape but through the simulacrum, the colonists then proliferate their own delusion by struggling to avoid the Baudrillardian metaphysical despair that comes from admitting that the images they revere are ultimately hollow signs concealing nothing at all (%28Baudrillard%29 1559). The price that the colonists pay for such an escape is a complete loss of the self.

The Can-D experience promises various forms of connection, both with Earth and one another, through the joint experience of co-inhabiting Walt and Pat. However, what the colonists find is a struggle to exist within a single mass-produced identity. Within the simulacrum, the
colonists shed their individual, authentic identities to the point of forgetting them entirely, only regaining a vague recollection when confronted with clues they have left for themselves on the outside: “He saw a note tacked up, in his own hand: THIS IS AN ILLUSION. YOU ARE SAM REGAN, A COLONIST ON MARS. MAKE USE OF YOUR TIME OF TRANSLATION, BUDDY BOY.” (Stigmata 269). It is through Dick’s depiction of the Can-D hallucination that he conveys his stance on the importance of retaining an authentic presence while also critiquing the ease at which one may lose oneself to Adorno and Horkheimer’s culture industry, subverting the individual through the suppression of individual consciousness and “the stunting of the mass-media consumer’s powers of imagination and spontaneity” (Adorno 1113) as the Perky Pat simulation endlessly repeats the same day for its inhabitants. When colonist Fran Schein questions the importance of retaining some hint of her original self within the world, Sam refutes her and delivers Dick’s message: “it’s important that you’re Fran. In Essence” (Stigmata 271). The author thereby offers a critique of the way in which capitalism may degrade the subject from the status of an individual to a consumer through the mass-marketing of simulacra and profitable pseudo-identities.

To Dick, the essence of the individual correlates to their authentic and autonomous presence in the world (The Exegesis 658). This follows a vein similar to Walter Benjamin’s conception of ‘aura’ as an emanation of authenticity, “the quintessence of all that is transmissible in it from its origin on” (Benjamin 1054). Benjamin’s theory of the decay of the aura and authority of art by its mechanical reproduction clearly influenced Dick’s stance on the importance of preserving an authentic essence under capitalism. This is exhibited through the character of Emily, Barney’s ex-wife, in The Three Stigmata. A ceramic artist, Emily struggles to make a living by petitioning her designs to P.P. Layouts for miniaturization and mass production.
At the behest of her husband, who is desperate for Emily’s pots to dominate the market, she hesitantly agrees to undergo an experimental treatment of evolution therapy. Unfortunately, rather than evolving, the treatment has the opposite effect. In her pursuit of success in the capitalist market, she devolves to lose her talent altogether. Her husband only recognizes the importance of her work’s essence as he begins to evolve from the therapy, but does so too late: “had he ever really looked at Emily’s pots as anything more than merchandise for which a market existed? No. What I ought to have seen in them, he realized, is the artistic intention, the spirit she’s revealing intrinsically” (Stigmata 293). As Benjamin states, “What withers in the age of the technological reproducibility of art is the latter’s aura” (Benjamin 1054). He claims that this is the result of two circumstances: “the desire of the present-day masses to ‘get closer’ to things spatially and humanly and their equally passionate concern for overcoming each thing’s uniqueness by assimilating it to reproduction” (Benjamin 1055). While the mass-marketing of Emily’s pots rob them of their aura, leading to the eventual loss of her own potential for authentic creation, the mass-marketing of the Pat and Walt identities to the colonists strips them of their essence in result of their desperate desire to feel closer to Earth. This is what Sam attempts to communicate to Fran, and it is likewise what Dick proposes is the inherent danger of mechanical reproduction within the culture industry of capitalism.

In his essay, “Reality as Ideological Construct”, Fitting compared the Can-D hallucination to the influence of television at the time. This is a valuable connection to make, as in both instances subjects are fed certain ideologies to be followed and illusory spectacles to be desired. Television is just one technology of the culture industry; as stated by Adorno and Horkheimer, “The whole world is made to pass through the filter of the culture industry. The old experience of the movie-goer, who sees the world outside as an extension of the film he has just
left … is now the producer’s guideline” (1113). Such representations are false promises which keep the subject in a constant longing for fulfillment that is always deferred and ultimately unattainable, but is temporarily satiated by their consumption, repressing their desire to seek it beyond the mass culture that they are sold (Adorno 1117).

Dick’s warning over the manipulative quality of simulacra is further emphasized with the introduction of Chew-Z to the novel. While Can-D allows the users to experience the simulacrum communally, Chew-Z traps them within a solipsist vacuum controlled by its manufacturer, Palmer Eldritch, where they are made to believe that they have the absolute freedom to construct their world. Additionally, Chew-Z is marketed as a tool for attaining immortality. Depending on the dose, the users may go on indefinitely within Eldritch’s world with no time passing on the outside. The subject remains trapped within the static prison of their own mind, kept from the potential for personal growth or agency to influence the real world. The Chew-Z simulacrum therefore presents Dickian fears of abandoning authentic human connection and self-growth for the promise of absolute power, though such a promise is often only an illusion of power. Referencing a Deleuzo-Guattarian conception of the ways that the subject is manipulated under capitalism, Katherine Hayles writes that “Capitalism encourages the inflation of desire, marketing its products by seducing the consumer with power fantasies. But when the realization sinks in that this is merely a capitalist ploy, the subject shrinks in inverse proportion to how much it had earlier inflated” (Hayles 170). Correspondingly, the simulacra of The Three Stigmata ensure the deflation and helpless spiral of its occupants.

The illusion of freedom is a common trope appearing throughout Dick’s work. For the colonists of the novel, this is presented as a choice over their preferred prison-world. While Can-D manipulates its users through the peddling of a consumerist ideology, Chew-Z uses
Foucauldian methods of isolation and constant panoptic surveillance by Eldritch to maintain control. As Foucault writes, “The crowd … is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities. From the point of view of the guardian, it is replaced by a multiplicity that can be numbered and supervised; from the point of view of the inmates, by a sequestered observed solitude” (Foucault 201). Dick implies that the gradual acceptance of such blatant oppression is a process that begins with grooming the individual through ideological manipulation, but which is maintained by the subject’s growing dependency upon the instant gratification that the simulacrum provides. Recalling Adorno and Horkheimer, “Pleasure always means not to think about anything, to forget suffering even where it is shown. Basically, it is helplessness. It is flight; not, as is asserted, flight from a wretched reality, but from the last remaining thought of resistance” (1119). When Barney Mayerson is drafted to Mars, he contemplates his role in the colonists’ addiction and closed loop of helpless pleasure-seeking: “We gave them an out, something painless and easy. And now Palmer Eldritch has arrived to put the finish on the process” (Stigmata 369). Dick therefore proposes that the first step to shaping a reflex-machine is by manipulating the individual’s sense of autonomous freedom and desire within their world.

The Can-D simulacrum thus reveals the beginning stages of andoidization that leads to becoming a full-fledged reflex machine. In shedding their individual identities for those sold to them by P.P. Layouts, the colonists subscribe to limited freedom and spontaneity within the pseudo-world. They relinquish their individual autonomy for a limited, but pleasant, hyperreality to escape the external reality that they have come to associate with feelings of hopeless despair. Within the husks of Walt and Pat, they are forced to conform to a collective purpose, representative of ideology, or risk being overpowered by the will of the majority controlling the body that they collectively operate, alluding to Dick’s stance that the culture-industry requires
mass conformity to function. In his article “Resisting the World”, David Golumbia states that at the very least Can-D allows for some level of participation by its users in their reality construction, while Chew-Z “determinedly eliminates the participation of its users” (11). The opposite appears to be true. The lure of Chew-Z is its promise of total control in the construction of the subject’s own perceived reality, but at the price of severing their connection to the communal world: “Isolated. The communal world is gone” (Stigmata, 387). By disconnecting not just from oneself, but also from the potential for authentic human connection, the subjects begin to lose their capacity for empathy, thus instigating their androidization and leading to a gradual dissolve of moral agency in the process. With this, Dick reflects on the responsibility of the individual within the simulacrum and criticizes dissociating in order to thrive or cope within the corporate culture of capitalism, a concern that he more extensively explores with his later novel, A Scanner Darkly.

2.2 Self-Delusion and Perceptual Occlusion within A Maze of Death

*The Three Stigmata* presents characters that are actively aware of the simulacra they inhabit until the line between reality and the pseudo-world blur with the introduction of Chew-Z. As Barney Mayerson is told upon awakening from the hallucination, “You gave yourself an overdose of Chew-Z and now for you there’s no return to your own time and world, either” (Stigmata 398). However, although Barney continues to exhibit lasting side-effects from the delusion, he is still able to recognize the distortions and therefore retain some level of agency over how he decides to confront them. *A Maze of Death* sends its characters deeper down the rabbit hole as they completely abandon their external reality to exist within a hyperreality of their
own design. This hyperreality comes to entrap them in a precession of simulacra lacking any authentic meaning, Dickian essence, or “divine referential” in the real world (Baudrillard 1559). *Maze* therefore represents the next phase in the individual’s decline as its characters fully renounce the real for the artificial and remain in a state of amnesia, unable to recall a reality apart from the hyperreality generated by their simulacrum.

The novel revolves around the newly arrived colonists of the unpopulated planet, Delmark-O. Disconnected from the outside world, which they believe to be the result of a failed radio system, they explore their new environment with rising paranoia over the reason for their assignment there. This leads to the madness and eventual death of each colonist, as well as the immanent destruction of the world when the fabric of their reality begins to tear at its seams. Upon their death, they wake to the recollection that they had submerged themselves in a computer-generated simulation in order cope with the fact that they are hopelessly floating through space on the Persus 9, a ship that is trapped within the orbit of a dead star with no foreseeable possibility for escape. In a repetitive cycle, they create and submerge themselves in new simulations as they wait for death or the unlikely occurrence of someone discovering them. Completely oblivious to their delusion, the colonists of Delmark-O act as the realization of Palmer Eldritch’s plan with Chew-Z coming to fruition. However, unlike *The Three Stigmata*, there is no malevolent force behind their occlusion. Instead, it is self-made and maintained as they program the ship’s computer to ensure its preservation.

*Maze* begins with the prayer of soon-to-be colonist, Ben Tallchief: “This damn inventory-control job bores me … I’m a useless standby module. Could you help me find something more creative and stimulating?” (*Maze* 7). It is this drive for a sense of authentic purpose that leads Ben to accept his transfer to the planet of Delmark-O, but it is equally the reassurance that his
prayer was answered that keeps him from questioning the proposal. Within the simulation, it is customary to follow the religion based on the teachings of theologian A.J. Specktowsky. In fact, the colonists’ conformity to the simulation’s religious ideology is ensured by the programmed notion that it is “against Terran law to doubt the power of prayer” (*Maze* 52). The collective ideology of the pseudo-world’s inhabitants is therefore straightforwardly maintained by the social pressures of a state dependent upon prayer or outside forces for agency and the repressive apparatuses that act to keep it in check. When eventually one colonist, Milton Babble, confesses to his skepticism over the religion, the others react in surprise and anger as the belief system that shapes their world is challenged. Refuting colonist Seth Morley’s experience with the “Walker-on-Earth”, a supposed aspect of their deity, Babble states:

> But you had it in your mind – because it was taught to you throughout childhood – that if a stranger came to you and offered unsolicited help, that that stranger had to be a Manifestation of the Deity. But look: what you saw was what you expected to see. You assumed that he was the Walker-on-Earth because Specktowsky’s Book is virtually universally accepted. But I don’t accept it. (*Maze* 86)

With this, Dick considers the power that ISAs hold in shaping subjective, as well as collective reality.

Blindly accepting any ideology stunts the potential for growth within a society, as well as within the individuals that inhabit it. When discussing *The Three Stigmata* in his article, Golumbia writes that “the critique of Eldritch is a critique of capitalism and of ideological manipulation; of the idea that there is one Truth which can, as it were by stipulation, be forced
upon all who hear it … it isn’t the falsity, or the deceptiveness, of the ideologically-imposed
Reality, but the very attempt to *posit* such a reality that is called into question” (12). *Maze*
reinforces this position. Dick is not simply criticizing capitalism but is above that condemning
the assertion that there is one absolute reality to claim at all. The danger lies in the blind
acceptance of one ideology or one absolute truth. The moment that an individual rigidly accepts
one dominating ideology as a signifier of their identity, they stunt their potential for personal and
societal growth; they become “inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the ISAs”
(Althusser 1360). Ill-intentioned or self-serving forces, such as those appearing in *The Three
Stigmata*, are unnecessary for the occlusion of the individual. To Dick, all institutions that
propose the assertion of one absolute belief system are inherently dangerous for the progression
of any society.

Within *Maze*, the ruling ideology that was purposefully constructed to keep the colonists
in check was one established by a religious ISA, with the church exercising its influence through
the state. By programming their simulation in this way, the colonists secure their delusion by
censoring any thinking that may lead them to question their reality within the simulacrum.
Before entering into their simulated worlds, the colonists additionally program the ship’s
computer to maintain their ignorance at all costs. In this case, the simulation is controlled by the
computer through the mass-surveillance of various artificial insects. From bees with cameras, to
flies projecting music that varies depending on the listener, the potential for technology to act as
both a monitoring device and an apparatus for manipulation is a reoccurring element throughout
the novel. The *Maze* simulacrum is therefore upheld by a technological panopticism and
censorship where no human element is needed for its control. Consequently, the ship’s computer
intervenes with ruthless efficiency when one colonist, Morely, finally rebels. While with *The
Dick raises concerns over the deluding property and corrosive nature of extensive drug use, specifically acting as a critique of the pharmaceutical industry, in Maze he reveals his anxiety over technology’s potential as a tool for mass delusion, but also over the consequences of relinquishing control to the governing of reflex-machines.

To Dick, the right technology in the wrong hands may act as a powerful tool for both ideological and repressive means of control. In his speech, “How to Build a Universe”, he addresses such concerns, stating, “But the problem is a real one … today we live in a society in which spurious realities are manufactured by the media, by governments, by big corporations, by religious groups, political groups-- and the electronic hardware exists by which to deliver these pseudoworlds right into the heads of the reader, the viewer, the listener” (261). Here, Dick was referring to television specifically, but it was the potential of technology operating as an apparatus for isolation, manipulation, and surveillance that ultimately concerned him. Through all forms of media or Althusserian communications ISAs which make up the culture industry, Foucault’s disciplinary society may be further realized and naturalized for the public. Dick feared for the systematic isolation of individuals in their desire to cling to the ideologies sold to them, and the censorship that may develop through a technological panopticism which manufactures competing realities fostering collective paranoia. Moreover, he strongly believed that certain systems create paranoid subjects driven to eventual insanity, or at least to questioning their sanity so that they may seek out authorities on the matter to be further molded by the ruling ideology (“Drugs, Hallucinations” 168). Carl Freedman and Anthony Enns both touch on the ways that capitalism inevitably leads to such paranoia through the commodification of the individual in much of Dick’s work in their articles, “Towards a Theory of Paranoia” and “Media, Drugs, and Schizophrenia”, but Maze also envisions the ways in which paranoia may be inspired
through the isolation of the individual in their inability or unwillingness to step outside of their subjective realities through earnest communication.

The primary catalyst leading to the eventual collapse of the simulation and the destruction of the individuals within is the colonists’ inability to step outside of their paranoid egos and work towards a collective goal. As colonist Seth Morely states, “There’s something the matter with all of you … A kind of idiocy. Each of you seems to be living in his own private world. Without regard for anyone else” (Maze 76). Dick implies that this shift in the characters occurs as a direct effect of their illusory world. As Seth Morley proposes, “Maybe they were all right before they got here, and something here made them change” (Maze 40). This follows the trend appearing in The Three Stigmata that by positing an escape from the responsibility of confronting unpleasant truths about the world, simulacra delude the subjects within and subvert them into degraded versions of themselves, often acting in complete abandon of moral agency. In the case of the colonists of Maze, this has reached the level of being unable to access what Dick refers to as the ‘koinos kosmos’ (communal world), as they remain trapped within their individual ‘idios kosmos’ (personal world) (The Exegesis 925).

Completely absorbed by the simulacrum and unaware of their delusion, the colonists instinctively feel that something is amiss but are unable to discern the cause. Possessed by the self-serving drives that the simulacrum has fostered as tools to survive, they become incapable of effective communication or action as a collective unit, and therefore succumb to the paranoia produced by such helpless isolation. This paranoia comes to shape their world as the perceived landscape of the simulacrum is suggested to adapt to the expectations of its occupants. As the colonists speculate, this results in an isolating perceptual occlusion from their collective reality: “Spektowsky speaks about us being “prisoners of our own preconceptions and expectations”.”
And that one of the conditions of the Curse is to remain mired in the quasi reality of those proclivities. Without ever seeing reality as it actually is” (*Maze* 102).

In a vicious cycle, isolation gives rise to paranoia which further isolates individuals from the communal world. Unable to trust one another or their empirical reality, the colonists lose control of their world as it unravels. To cope with the high anxiety fostered by such simulacra-generated paranoia, they continue the Dickian pattern of despondent discontent leading to self-delusion as they engage in a variety of escape mechanisms unique to each of them. From drinking to pills, sex, and religious fanaticism, the individuals are presented as fully consumed by the compulsive desires which only briefly satiate their impulses. The result is an endless spiral of delusion as they fall continuously further away from reclaiming agency and autonomy within their world. Moreover, it is such ego-driven fanaticism paired with the complete isolation from the *koinos kosmos* that further degrades them to the status of reflex-machines, which is clearly represented within the following passage of colonist Glen Belsnor’s dream: “In the colony the people moved back and forth, wearing long red robes. It became midday and then it became midday for a thousand years … they crept about in a feeble, insect-like manner. And some of them, he saw, were blind … They were fading away from the inside” (*Maze* 95). Broken down by the simulacrum, the characters persistently feed their delusion and become progressively more inauthentic with every submergence as they continue to be mechanically reproduced in new virtual bodies, psychologically degrading with every new descent. Within *Maze*, we therefore find the subjects advancing even closer to the final stage of the reflex machine.

2.3 *The Reflex-Machine within A Scanner Darkly*
As Dick writes in his *Exegesis*, “Scanner is the weary final point” (406). It is with *Scanner Darkly* that we arrive at his irretrievable reflex-machine. Of his novels, *Scanner* is perhaps the most down-to-earth, no longer depicting remote colonies in space or hallucinatory simulacra, but instead revealing a world state not vastly different from our own. *Scanner* follows the protagonist, Bob Arctor, drug addict and undercover narcotics agent, as he spirals into a dissociative state from his continued use of the psychoactive drug Substance D. From the confines of his scramble suit, which conceals his identity and allows him full anonymity, Bob observes himself and his friends through a surveillance system of scanners hidden throughout his home. Unable to recognize himself on his monitor, he attempts to trace the source of the drug and report back to headquarters on his own suspicious behavior. What gives *Scanner* so much of its realism is its foundation in Dick’s own experiences with the dope scene in the early 1970’s, which he recounts in the introduction to his novel *The Golden Man*, writing, “Parts of that scene were funny and wonderful and other parts were hideous” (89). Ultimately, as he reports, many of those whom he based the characters of *Scanner* on met tragic ends. He reflects on these individuals in an afterward in the novel’s final pages that acts as a memorial.

Throughout the novel, Dick presents two paths to becoming a reflex-machine on opposite ends of the class conflict appearing within it: either by suppressing one’s empathy to succeed as a corporate drone, or by driving oneself to madness through escape mechanisms in order to cope with their reality. They ultimately converge to unravel a system which produces both and benefits from the divide. It is between the worlds of the dopers and the straights that we find Bob Arctor navigating the two distinct realities that are shaped by the contrasting ideologies held by each side. This is exhibited at the beginning of the novel when Bob is first introduced, appearing not as himself but within his scramble suit as Fred, while presenting to a large crowd at the
Anaheim Lion’s club, a “bubblehead gathering”, as he calls it, signifying his contempt. Fred begins to dutifully read from the script provided for him using fearmongering methods of persuasion to villainize the dopers as “those who would destroy this society” and reinforce them as the Other, as “animals—who prey on our young, as if in a wild jungle abroad, as in some foreign country, not ours” (Scanner 879). The crowd rallies and grins nervously, glad for the scapegoat offered to them, but fearing the proposed threat to their collective social identity; “Sock it to ’em!” one shouts, “Get the commies!” cries another (Scanner 880). Bob’s speech straightforwardly acts as a representation of the social climate in America during the 1970s, reflecting on the impact of Nixon’s war on drugs in its othering of addicts at the time as a threat.

Bob narrates his perspective on the Lion’s Club event with absolute disdain: “Looking at the audience, he realized how much he detested the straights. They thought this was great ... They were entertained” (Scanner 879), stating finally that “Substance D can’t destroy their brains; they have none” (Scanner 880). While the dopers are likened to animals by the straights, the straights are comparatively portrayed as mindless androids by the dopers. Finding himself unable to continue with his script, Bob strays from his speech, instead imploring the audience to empathize rather than demand retribution. At the start of the novel, Bob is therefore still able to question and rebel against the authority dictating his actions. Even acting as Fred, he remains capable of maintaining some level of autonomy and moral agency. He later recalls his life as a straight with a quintessential nuclear family: “It had been too safe ... nothing new could ever be expected. It was like, he had once thought, a little plastic boat that would sail on forever, without incident, until it finally sank, which would be a secret relief to all” (Scanner 914). When Bob finally dissociates entirely and becomes unable to identify himself while working as Fred, he mirrors this dialogue from Fred’s perspective as a straight when snooping through his own home:
“What a waste … of a truly good house. So much could be done with it. A family, children and a
two, could live there. It was designed for that … Such a waste! They ought to take it away
from him” (Scanner 1018).

In the case of Scanner, the role that Bob plays, or ideology that he accepts, transforms the
reality that he experiences similarly to the colonists of Maze. As Kenneth Burke proposes in
“Definition of Man,” “An ‘ideology’ is like a spirit taking up its abode in a body: it makes that
body hop around in certain ways; and that same body would have hopped around in different
ways had a different ideology happened to inhabit it” (Burke 495). Reality changes for the
individual depending on the ideology that they adopt. Therefore, Bob may be seen as split
between, and eventually torn apart by, two separate realities. Dick confirms this in his Exegesis
when he states that Bob “lives in two different mutually exclusive worlds, competing with each
other” (312). Although Bob at first categorizes himself as a doper, he questions how much of the
label is a quality of what is his authentic-self: “What is identity? He asked himself. Where does
the act end?” (Scanner 883). Althusser would say that the act does not end, nor does it have a
real beginning; individuals are interpellated as subjects before coming into the world, given a
name, a religion, and a culture to follow depending on where and to whom they are born
(Althusser 1355). Bob is therefore given an illusory freedom of choice over his desired
subjection similarly to the colonists in The Three Stigmata when asked to pick their desired
escapist simulacrum.

As Bob leaps between the two realities of the dopers and the straights, both equally
unfulfilling constructs of a system-produced social ideology, he degenerates to a state of
existential dread and schizophrenic paranoia, unable to ascertain which parts of himself are
authentic and questioning how much of his perception of the empirical world can be trusted:
What does a Scanner see? … Into the head? Down into the heart? Does a passive infrared Scanner like they used to use or a cube-type holo Scanner like they use these days, the latest thing, see into me—into us—clearly or darkly? I hope it does … see clearly, because I can’t any longer these days see into myself. I see only murk. Murk outside; murk inside. I hope, for everyone’s sake, the Scanners do better. (*Scanner* 1019)

His paranoia is further heightened by the constant surveillance of the scanners hidden throughout his home, generating a hyperawareness of his actions through a process of panopticism where only the possibility of being watched is needed to modify a subject’s behavior. Consequently, he is hurled towards psychosis, becoming increasingly unable to trust his perception of either reality that he has been living while succumbing to the paranoia generated by the very institution that he works for.

Dick believed that “fake realities will create fake humans. Or, fake humans will generate fake realities and then sell them to other humans, turning them, eventually, into forgeries of themselves” (“How to Build” 263). It is a vicious cycle, a closed loop in which the victims maintain and proliferate the systems that lead to the Baudrillardian existential despair that hyperrealities generate. Bob continues his undercover work as a narc although it runs against his moral compass. Not only does the work strip him of moral agency and lead to his complete loss of self, it also demands his dependence on Substance-D, otherwise known as Slow Death, only to penalize him when the cognitive damage from the drug use begins to interfere with his efficiency, asserting that he had a choice: “Nobody held a gun to your head and shot you up. … You knowingly took an addictive drug, brain-destructive and disorienting” (*Scanner* 1055).
Ironically, it is then a slow death that Bob subscribes to by continuing such work. His only way of coping within such an environment is through his dissociation as Fred, a defense mechanism that, through ideological conditioning, he has come to believe is natural. He explains, “This was Fred. But then later on Fred evolved into Bob Arctor … And the terrible colors seeped back into him whether he liked it or not. This change in him was an economy of the passions. Firemen and doctors and morticians did the same trip in their work. … as technicians on the job and as humans off. An individual had just so much energy” (Scanner 908).

Sitting across from his superior, also an anonymous figure within a scramble suit, Bob represses all emotion, becoming the perfect worker and docile subject. Even when reporting on himself and those he loves, he disconnects and assumes a neutral, impassive persona, only to be overwhelmed by feelings of indignation, shock, and horror when he reconnects with his humanity as Bob (Scanner 910). His degradation is a gradual process beginning with the dissociation that stems from his struggle with relinquishing moral agency. Scanner therefore further reflects on the androidization of the individual under capitalism. Nidhi Srinivas explores this concept when arguing for the need of moral agency by managers within bureaucratic systems in his own analysis of Dick’s work, stating, “Bureaucracies render human actions ‘adiaphoric’, morally indifferent … measurable on technical not moral criteria” (Srinivas 611). It is through the willing acceptance of an ideology that requires him to relinquish his moral agency, repress his humanity in its capacity to empathize, and lose his sense of self, that Bob is finally reduced to a full reflex-machine. As Dick stated in his essay, "Man, Android, and Machine", “A human being without the proper empathy or feeling is the same as an android built so as to lack it, either by design or mistake.... He stands detached, a spectator, acting out by his indifference.
John Donne’s theorem that ‘No man is an island,’ but giving that theorem a twist: that which is a mental and a moral island is not a man” (211).

While the colonists of Maze have only begun to observe the effects of degradation from the continuous use of their escapist hyperreality, in Scanner we follow Bob to its end. Torn in half by a parasitic system, and now unable to register anything that is not directly before his direct line of vision, Bob is escorted to New-Path, a rehabilitation clinic that we come to find is farming the source of Substance-D, the plant that Dick aptly names: “Mors Ontologica. Death of the spirit. The identity. The essential nature” (Scanner 1079). New-Path acts to reconstruct the individual from the ground up: “Once inside, his wallet, his name, everything that identified him, was stripped away in preparation for building up a new personality not drug-oriented” (Scanner 899). When admitted, Bob is therefore assigned a new persona: Bruce. His docility is ensured through a dual process where first he is demoralized and broken down by a humiliating barrage of insults in a deprecating activity called “the Game” and then rebuilt during “Concept Time”, where he is conditioned into accepting passivity and submission as an optimal state of being; as one patient explains, “following the line of least resistance, that’s the rule of survival. Following, not leading” (Scanner 1070).

Dick’s portrayal of Bob’s stay at New-Path offers a particularly Foucauldian critique of Western society’s approach to those who are deemed mentally ill and the measures taken to ensure their normalization. At the same time, he reflects cautiously on the ways in which vulnerable subjects may be torn down and reconstructed within repressive institutions to become perfect docile subjects for the self-enforced maintenance of the system that drove them there. One character specifically toys with this concept in Scanner: “I wonder, he thought, if it was New-Path that did this to him. Sent a substance out to get him like this, to make him this way so
they would ultimately receive him back?” (Scanner 1088). This ultimately appears to be the case. When Bob is considered broken enough to be trusted, he is put to work farming the source of the drug that brought him to that point. Having reached the level of a reflex-machine, we are told that “he will never again in his life, as long as he lives, have any ideas. Only reflexes” (Scanner 1080). Dick therefore questions the possibility to retrieve the individual from such a state, referring to it as a type of spiritual death. The remaining portion of this essay will consider what Dick proposes for recovering the individual before reaching this proposed point of no return, and what he believes can be done after such a point has been reached.
3. Part Two: Rehumanizing the Reflex-Machine

With a deeper understanding of the processes that comprise Dick’s concept of androidization, his novels reveal a predominantly postmodern lens through which to interpret his deformations of the individual. The reflex-machine may thereby be read as a production of the following stages: (1) the individual accepts the ideology-constructed simulacrum as real, (2) the individual is further occluded perceptually through the escape mechanisms and preconceptions endorsed by the simulacrum, (3) the individual is reduced to a docile subject by adopting the apathy and egomania required to succeed within capitalist systems that present an illusion of free will, (4) the individual remains in a stagnant loop in which they can no longer recall or envision life apart from their simulacra-generated hyperreality. While Part One of this essay unpacked these stages by discussing the gradual degradation of the characters affected by them within Dick’s novels, Part Two will consider their potential for resistance or rehabilitation through an analysis of the characters’ individual responses to their respective reality problems.

As will be revealed, there are various ways of reclaiming agency and ensuring authenticity depending on the level of one’s androidization, and each previously discussed novel offers clues to the individual’s recovery. *The Three Stigmata*, which addresses the perversion of desire and its investments under capitalism, suggests salvation for its characters through a Deleuzo-Guattarian desiring-production, “productive of desire and a desire that produces” (Deleuze 348), that stems from the unconscious drive to make productive connections that construct reality. The novel implies that by recognizing the influence of one’s systematic conditioning, it becomes possible to reclaim an authentic desire-driven agency within it. *Maze* similarly considers the necessity for the individual to step beyond their superficial ego or ideologically constructed identity in order for productive change to occur within the self, as well
as for society at large. Finally, *Scanner* offers a small hope for the future with a call for rehumanization through the author’s humanism.

### 3.1 Productive Desire and Creation within The Three Stigmata

*The Three Stigmata* reaches its climax in Barney’s final confrontation with Palmer Eldritch when at his lowest point, seeing no way out of the simulacrum, he by request nearly undergoes literal objectification in the form of a plaque on the wall. A similar objectification appears as the colonists of the novel embody the dolls of Perky Pat and Walt, longing for objectification as their passive bodies lie in a comatose state on the outside. The individual’s complacency in their objectification as a consumer is therefore representative of the Freudian death-instinct, “the task of which is to lead organic life back into the inanimate state” (Freud 20). This is supported by Eldritch’s response to Barney’s request for objectification: “Listen, Mayerson, being a stone isn’t what you really want. What you want is death.” (*Stigmata* 408).

Barney’s death-instinct appears as the result of his subjectification within a system whose ideology enforces the notion that fulfillment may be reached by achieving a state of blissful unconcern which reinforces a trend to seek mind-numbing escapisms to momentarily satiate this drive. Ultimately the subject within such a system comes to lead a passive life, that is, when not on the clock, because as Bob stated in *Scanner*, an individual only has so much energy.

Barney emerges from the depths of his Chew-Z experience with a new will to live. However, he finds that although he has left the simulacrum, Eldritch’s influence remains a persistent presence in his life, continuing to physically manifest in those around him. As Barney states, “recovery from the drug is excessively retarded and gradual; it is a series of levels, each
progressively less an induced illusion and more compounded of authentic reality.” (Stigmata 400). Barney thereby tackles his reality problem by first accepting that there is potentially no full recovery of a reality unaffected by Eldritch’s manipulation. This mirrors Dick’s rumination over the individual’s potential to shed their ideological conditioning, implying that even when such influences are recognized, the possibility for shedding them entirely is uncertain. However, being critically aware of the forces at play in shaping one’s individual reality, and by effect, identity construction, is the first step to reclaiming agency within it. One can only exercise such agency by learning to differentiate authentic desire from the propaganda of what should be desired that is generated by the culture industry. Dick defined free will as an expression of authentic desire: “when we are conscious of wanting to do what we do” (“The Android” 186). Desire inspires the action to realize it and thereby shapes the world. It is revolutionary. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in Anti-Oedipus, “If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire … is capable of calling into question the established order of a society: not that desire is asocial; on the contrary. But it is explosive; there is no desiring-machine capable of being assembled without demolishing entire social sectors” (118). Contrary to the notion that desire originates from a lack, an approach reinforced by the capitalist system, desire is instead inherently and materially productive.

Rather than persisting in his attempt to escape his reality on Mars through extensive drug use, Barney confronts it by actively influencing his immediate environment. He sets to work on his garden, an endeavor that his fellow colonists had long since abandoned in favor of the simulacrum. In doing so, he invests his time in a process of authentic creation with a focus on nurturing an organic over an artificial environment. Additionally, he begins a relationship with a colonist from a neighboring hovel, exchanging the potential for a simulated relationship with his
ex-wife within the Chew-Z simulacrum for an authentic connection outside of it. With this, he looks to the future rather than resigning himself to a static existence longing for an unattainable past. Instead of succumbing to despair over what he is unable to change, Barney shifts his attention to influencing that which he can. By crafting his own meaning in the face of a hopeless reality, he redirects his desires to productive creation over passive longing. Meanwhile, Leo Bulero continues on his mission to confront Eldritch although he too remains partially under his influence. While Leo potentially represents the moral responsibility of managers under capitalism, his primary incentive for pursuing Eldritch was originally to secure his monopoly of the drug trade which kept his business thriving. With Chew-Z gone, Can-D would continue to dominate the market. Therefore, while Leo appears to be the hero of the novel, and is even called such within it, it is instead Barney who is revealed to be the true rebel in his silent refusal to participate in the system. Dick thereby reveals his faith in the revolutionizing potential of the everyman when acting from a place of authenticity.

3.2 Destruction and Reinvention within A Maze of Death

The potential for positive change is reliant upon the reevaluation and tearing down of old systems to allow for the creation that stems from authentic desire. Destruction is therefore an equally necessary and productive force for the progression of any society. As Dick states, “do not assume that order and stability are always good, in a society or in a universe. The old, the ossified, must always give way to new life and the birth of new things” (“How to Build” 262). Maze supports this view as the colonists repeatedly build and tear down the shallow worlds around them. As Katherine Hayles states when discussing Dick’s novel, The Simulacrum, such
worlds and their landscapes are “shaped by the dead forces of cause and effect and completely unresponsive to human desire” (Hayles 169). The simulacra of Maze present a perpetual loop of creation and destruction, but one existing apart from the reality where the body resides which by effect remains stagnant. Such ideology-dependent realities may therefore appear productive, but misleadingly so, as they are ultimately passive distractions that keep the individuals within from confronting or participating in the shaping of their authentic reality. As one colonist states, “Now we’re back to reality … once again, we have to face things as they are. It doesn’t feel too good, does it?” (Maze 184). The colonists agree, and although they acknowledge their latest simulation as being the most hostile thus far, they prepare for another submergence with a “rapidly fading memory” of their previous experience (Maze 186). The novel concludes with colonist Mary Morley preparing once again for her transfer to Delmark-O within a new simulation, depicting the loop repeating itself yet again. This cycle reveals the extent of the colonists’ degradation through their eventual inability to recall their previous simulation, stunting any creative production that may occur not only outside of, but now also within, the simulacrum.

The fact that the simulacra of Maze inevitably collapse presents a hopeful perspective on the potential for the colonists to confront their world and elevate from their degradation. Still, their continuous resubmergence is tragic and dangerous for their potential for self-actualization and agency in shaping their reality on both an internal and external level. The one colonist who refuses to resubject himself to another simulation, Seth Morley, instead desperately considers ending his and his fellow colonists’ lives in order to end the cycle. However, he is intercepted by an image of the Intercessor, an aspect of the deity within their Delmark-O simulation, who offers Morely a chance at reinvention, stating, “You will be free; you will die and be reborn,” (Maze 187). He accepts the proposal and disappears from the ship, choosing to reincarnate as a desert
plant on a new world. Whether his escape represents yet another submersion in a new simulation by the ship or a path to salvation through reinvention is uncertain, but ultimately his fate and the colonists’ inevitable demolition of their pseudo-worlds presents yet another representation by Dick of the human death-instinct. Within his fiction, the death-instinct may then be interpreted as a productive drive towards the potential for rebirth or reinvention. As he once stated, “objects, customs, habits, and ways of life must perish so that the authentic human being can live. And it is the authentic human being who matters most, the viable, elastic organism that can bounce back, absorb, and deal with the new” (“How to Build” 262). We thereby encounter a notably modernist call for a less rigid identity construction as personal ideologies remain open to reevaluation. By effect, the individual’s sense of self is not dependent upon their ideology and their existence in the world is no longer threatened by the dialectic necessary for self-actualization and societal reinvention.

Unburdened with what Althusser describes as the obligation to act according to one’s ideological subscription (Althusser 1353), the individual is granted further agency in their desire driven production. Additionally, they avoid the Jungian inflation by which they dangerously embody the archetype associated with their chosen ideology, thereby losing their authentic self in the process. Dick therefore appears to call for a process evocative of a more literal interpretation of Jungian individuation where, “The aim … is nothing less than to divest the self of the false wrappings of the persona on the one hand, and of the suggestive power of primordial images on the other” (Jung 269). To attain full authenticity, he proposes that the individual must work to attain a self-realized state which rebels against self-alienation. As Jung states, “Self-alienation in favour of the collective corresponds to a social ideal; it even passes for social duty and virtue, although it can also be misused for egotistical purposes” (Jung 267). Jung’s theory held very
specific implications for his concepts of the ‘ego’ and ‘self’, and here was referring specifically to the collective unconscious rather than a literal collective society. However, if taken literally within this discussion as the individual isolating themselves from the communal world and the glorification of the ego-possessed persona within capitalist societies, it offers a pertinent conceptualization of Dick’s plea for authentic self-actualization. This perspective is illustrated in the literal self-alienation that results in the self-serving persona of the ego-inflated subject reflected in Bob’s alter-ego, Fred, in Scanner, and it is similarly represented by the colonists of Maze in their inability to see past their subjective realities. To Dick, self-alienation and ego-inflation are catalysts for becoming a reflex-machine but can be avoided by reclaiming agency within the world and seeking self-actualization through one’s access to the koinos kosmos.

3.3 The Human Hope within A Scanner Darkly

The bleak insinuation of Scanner is that having reached the state of a reflex machine, recovery is unlikely. Paranoid, isolated, and absent of volition, the reflex-machine has only enough energy to focus on the immediate task before it, recharging its batteries through mind-numbing escapisms that only lead to further disorientation. As Dick writes, “Spray a bug with a toxin and it dies; spray a man, spray his brain, and he becomes a reflex machine, like an ant. Repeating his last instruction.” (Scanner 1087). However, contrary to Fitting’s statement that there is no solution proposed in Scanner (Fitting 230), Dick provides a glint of hope in its final pages, writing, “But maybe, if he [the reflex-machine] is placed in the right spot, in the right stance, he can still see down, and see the ground. And recognize that it is there. And place something which is alive, something different from himself, in it, to grow,” (Scanner 1087). As
Bob continues to farm the source of Substance-D, for a moment, he recognizes it, plucks the plant, and tucks it into his shoe: “A present for my friends, he thought” (Scanner 1096). With this, Dick presents a chance for a small rebellion, although the extent of Bob’s awareness over it is questionable. This suggests that the novel’s hope is not primarily for Bob, but for those that Bob passes the evidence to upon his return. Dick’s hope was similarly for the future generation rather than his own:

I wish to disclose my hope, my faith, in the kids who are emerging now … The android, like any other machine, must perform on cue. But our youth cannot be counted on to do this; it is unreliable. … We can tell him and tell him what to do, but when the time comes for him to perform, all the subliminal instruction, all the ideological briefing, all the tranquilizing drugs, all the psychotherapy are a waste. He just plain will not jump when the whip is cracked. (“The Android” 191)

The idea that the responsibility of revolutionary action should be shifted from one generation to the next must be regarded critically. Such a mindset may be inhibiting as it robs the individual of potential agency, stunting the change that they wish to see. However, Dick appears to contradict his apparent optimism for the future generation with the character of Tony Dunkelwelt in Maze: “Of his eighteen years, almost all had been spent aboard the Persus 9. For him, the possession of polyencephalic worlds had become a normal way of life” (Maze 185). Knowing only a life of simulacra, Tony deteriorates along with his fellow passengers, never thinking to question what has to him become natural. This insinuates a concern for the children born to simulacra that negates Dick’s proposed hope for them. However, what can be salvaged
from *Scanner* is his support of rebellion through nonconformity and a stubborn preservation of moral agency. This boils down to the exercising of free will from a place of authentic desire that does not rely upon ideologies upholding societal or political systems to supply a moral dogma. As Srivinas states, “A necessary characteristic of our humanity is the capacity to make moral choices. But these choices can oppose socially enforced norms of morality. Moral agency frequently requires rejecting social codes of morality” (611). The authentic human is the individual who refuses to relinquish their agency and accepts the consequences that follow.

Ultimately, Dick was a humanist, and a rather hopeful one. As Vest states in *Postmodern Humanism*, “Dick’s fiction is not, however, a pitiless rendering of postmodern blight. The most striking aspect of his writing is its tremendous compassion” (195). Bob’s deterioration in *Scanner* is not a reflection of “Dick’s despairing view of the human condition” (230), as Fitting asserts, but is instead a warning against androidization in his representation of the final stage of the reflex-machine, which is far from what he proposes is authentically human. Dick salvages the postmodern condition of his characters with the proposition that the individual may be recovered through the drives and qualities that he believes to be innate to humanity, such as a pre-social morality and a desire for perpetual reinvention, but are sublimated through systematic manipulation. As exhibited by Bob’s final act in *Scanner*, the authentic human may be subdued and made docile, but never fully repressed.
4. Conclusion

This essay has posited that androidization is a gradual process of degradation that leads to becoming a full reflex-machine. Such an understanding may prove pertinent for future criticism when addressing the opposition between the human reflex-machine and the posthuman android. Specifying the level and severity of a character’s androidization communicates certain implications over their potential for action within their fictional world and may therefore provoke further research into the appearance of these stages in much of Dick’s other work. For example, considering these stages within the scope of gender or race studies may prompt a renewed discussion over the potential agency of characters undergoing androidization and the reality manipulation specific to their position in society. Moreover, the clarification of such stages provides varying degrees of hope for recovery and salvages the human within much of the postmodern and posthuman discourse surrounding his literature while clarifying his largely humanist philosophy.

Dick frequently alludes to the recovery of the individual requiring “outside intervention” (*The Exegesis* 422), generally implying intervention from an absolute reality into our own. However, his theories fluctuate and rarely settle on a stable conclusion. This is because he passionately promoted the use of an unceasing dialectic to confront the nature of reality. As he states, “It's the dialectic thought-*process* in me that's important, not any one (or body of) conclusions.” (*The Exegesis* 468). This thesis proposes that the outside intervention necessary for recovery may be interpreted as the individual’s confrontation with the Other, breaking free of their perceptual occlusion through a strong connection with the communal world (*koinos kosmos*) in order to build a self-actualized personal world (*idios kosmos*). In doing so, the individual reaches a state of perpetual becoming and the external world follows suit, crafting
productive societies that evade Dick’s fear of stagnation. In his work, *Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern*, Christopher Palmer considers the skepticism surrounding such a modernist approach when he states that “from 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” (61). However, what keeps such a process from moving towards entropy, decay through disorder, is specifically the individual’s envelopment in the communal world. Isolated, perpetual change leads to chaos, but through an inclusive dialectic its production is stabilized.

Dick’s work offers tools for resisting androidization within a seemingly bleak reality but makes no promise that an immediate upheaval of such a reality, or a return to a fully prelapsarian state, is likely. He acknowledges that such a process takes time, and that it begins with the individual’s reclamation of autonomous agency within their world. His characters are repeatedly disillusioned only to find themselves in hopeless circumstances that limit their potential for revolutionary action but discover that for productive change to occur, it must originate from an authentic source. He therefore recovers his postmodern lamentations with an ultimately humanist plea. As Vest explains, “His fiction demonstrates that, no matter how impractical humanism may appear to readers accustomed to the diminishing liberties, massive bureaucracies, and capitalist exploitations of twentieth-century history, humanist values are crucial to maintaining the sense of authenticity Individuals must experience in order to endure their complicated lives” (194).

Dick’s literature remains a highly relevant body of work as these issues have continued into the twenty-first century, now exacerbated by the panopticism of the new media’s reach. The current state of the world is mired in ideological divides as individuals subscribe to and act through the archetypes generated by the ISAs which continue to shape the twenty-first century’s collective
reality. The way to combat this is through the acknowledgement of such systems and the impact that they have on one’s self while retaining the courage to preserve the human in an increasingly mechanized postmodern world.
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