

# The Real and the Fictive in Philip K. Dick's Novels

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The Real and The Fictive in Philip K. Dick's Novels

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## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, science fiction is a very popular genre, offering readers a perspective of what our world and humanity might become, and which technologies might be available in future. Often those societies are rather dystopian, with more or less obvious influence from the time they were written in. Dunst and Schlenzag wrote that “science fiction forms a ‘third reality’ that brings together materiality and metaphors, agency and ideas in a way that disrupts our cherished distinction of object and subject, real and imaginary” (8). Precisely that notion of the third reality where distinction between real and imaginary is disrupted is one of the strongest themes in the fiction of Philip K. Dick, one of the most important science fiction writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In his essay *How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later?*, Dick wrote that the two topics which fascinate him the most are “*What is reality?*” and “*What constitutes the authentic human being?*” (Dick in Sutin 182). He dealt with those questions by creating worlds in which reality seems to slowly fade and become replaced by another and by creating memorable characters whose humanity is questionable. Those two questions are present throughout his fiction, but they are especially relevant in his three novels: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. Reality is a major theme in both *Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, where the characters and the reader seem to struggle with discerning the reality from a simulated one. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* he “juxtaposes human with artificial life forms” (Hayles, “Schizoid” 442) – humans and androids, but also real animals and electric animals. In that novel, androids seem to possess more human virtues than actual humans, making the readers struggle with declaring what constitutes an authentic human being.

Apart from novels and short stories, Dick wrote many essays in which he shared his thoughts on the society, literature and science fiction, future, and reality, which are evident in

his novels as well. In the same essay Dick also wrote: "I will reveal a secret to you: I like to build universes that do fall apart. I like to see them come unglued, and I like to see how the characters in the novels cope with this problem. I have a secret love of chaos" (Dick in Sutin 184). Combination of his love for chaos along with the never-ending search for the answer about what is real and human and what is not resulted in stories where the real and the fictive are intertwined. Thus, in this paper, the focus is on three novels *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and the relationship between the real and the fictive, which is intricate and often indistinguishable.

When it comes to the notion of reality, French sociologist Jean Baudrillard's contribution is immense. Baudrillard wrote that the postmodern society has entered "hyperreality - a *world without a real origin*" (Lane 86) and argued that there is no difference between the real (fact) and the imaginary (fiction). Thus, Baudrillard's ideas, from his book *Simulation and Simulacra*, correlate with Dick's fiction in a sense that both write about the loss of the real, which creates an unstable relationship between the real and the fictive.

## 2. Great minds think alike - Baudrillard and Dick

Baudrillard's concepts of simulation, simulacra and hyperreality, along with his critique of the postmodern society and media made him one of the "authorities" of postmodernism when it comes to reality. Leitch even calls him "a prophet crying out in the wilderness of postmodernity" (1729). In *Simulation and Simulacra*, Baudrillard explained why he believes that the postmodern society has lost a contact with the real, claiming that "we live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning" (55) and also that "the great event of this period, the great trauma, is this decline of strong referentials, these death pangs of the real and of the rational that open onto an age of simulation" (31). According to

him, the society became too reliant on models, which led to precession of simulacra, meaning that those models precede and determine the real and reality can only imitate the mode, along with the problem that there is no real anymore. In his words: “it is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real ... Never again will the real have the chance to produce itself - such is the vital function of the model in a system of death, or rather of anticipated resurrection, that no longer even gives the event of death a chance. A hyperreal henceforth sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and for the simulated generation of differences” (Baudrillard 4). Leitch further explained Baudrillard’s ideas by writing that “simulacrum seems to have referents (real phenomena they refer to), but they are merely pretend representations that mark the absence, not the existence, of the objects they purport to represent” (1730).

Moreover, he wrote about the three orders of simulacra – the first one corresponds to the pre-modern period, where the image was simply a counterfeit of reality and an illusion, he called it natural. In the second order, the productive order, industrial revolution is crucial, since the line between the sign and the image began to blur due to the mass production. That is the order of copies. While the second order still makes it possible to discern between what is real and what not, that becomes nearly impossible in the third order, which is the postmodern period or the simulation, which controls reality. Now the representation determines the real and there is a loss instead of the reality being determined by the model, it is the other way around, which means that the contact with the reality is lost. Thus, postmodern society has entered the state of hyperreality – “a world without a real origin” (Lane 86). He wrote about the four phases of the image in simulacra. In the first phase, image reflects a profound reality, in the second, it masks reality, while in third it masks the absence of reality. Finally, in the fourth phase, it has “no relation to any reality whatsoever, it is its own pure simulacrum” (Baudrillard 6). Ultimately,

‘simulation is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal’ (Baudrillard 3).

Apart from losing the sense of the real, Baudrillard believed that the object has more importance than the subject: ‘neofiguration is an invocation of resemblance, but at the same time the flagrant proof of the disappearance of objects in their very representation: hyperreal. Therein objects shine in a sort of hyperresemblance (like history in contemporary cinema) that makes it so that fundamentally they no longer resemble anything, except the empty figure of resemblance, the empty form of representation. It is a question of life or death: these objects are no longer either living or deadly’ (Baudrillard 32). This can be found with Dick’s characters and certain items in the novels.

### 3. What is reality?

‘It was always my hope, in writing novels and stories which asked the question “What is reality?”, to someday get an answer. This was the hope of most of my readers, too. Years passed. I wrote over thirty novels and over a hundred stories, and still I could not figure out what was real’ (Dick in Sutin 183). Dick’s constant search for that answer is perhaps the reason why there is such a strong focus on reality in his fiction. Moreover, he experienced uncanny visions which he interpreted as revelations about the world around him. He spent the rest of his life trying to make sense of that event so one could argue that by writing about uncertain realities, he wanted to explore and give sense to the unusual events in his life.

Dick offered an answer to his question: ‘reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn’t go away’ (Dick in Sutin 183). He claims that this is the closest he ever got to an answer. Perhaps this is what reality is for him, but it is not true for his characters, for whom stopping believing in a reality they are in does not make the true reality reveal itself. Kyle

described reality as “a gigantic shifting maze and human beings are rats running through it” (151), which is a suitable description for Dick’s characters. Ultimately, in *Ubik* and *Three Stigmata*, they do not reach the exit of the maze and remain uncertain of their position in the reality, along with the reader.

While writing about reality, Dick also wrote: “as soon as you begin to ask what is ultimately real, you right away begin talk nonsense” (Dick in Sutin 184). One might ask, if an author who spent many years writing and exploring the idea of reality says that it is nonsense, can the two questions even be answered?

It is not surprising that the topic of reality is interesting to many authors and that there are numerous authors who discussed reality in Dick’s fictional worlds. Baudrillard focused on science fiction in general in his essay *Science Fiction and Simulacra*. According to him, the three orders correspond to the types of science fiction. The first one is natural, utopia. He calls the second order productive, and it corresponds to the classic science fiction. Third, simulation simulacra, is based on control, bringing the need for describing that disappearance of fact and fiction. He takes Dick’s fiction as an example of that situation: “in Dick, the reader is, from the outset, in a total simulation without origin, past or future ... It is not a question of parallel universes, or double universes, or even possible universes: not possible of impossible, not real nor unreal. It is hyperreal. It is a universe of simulation, which is something altogether different” (Baudrillard, Evans 311, 312). In the case of *Ubik* and *Three Stigmata*, as their reality starts to change, it would not be hard to call those realities a simulation, but what is with their “original” reality? If Baudrillard’s claim that the society has entered a state of hyperreality, a world without an origin, is correct, that would indeed mean that the society is from the outset in a simulation. All further shifts in reality would then indeed be going from one simulation to another and here would be no difference between the reality and simulation.



Taking that thought even further, in Dick's fiction, shifting realities result in an inability to determine whether the reality they are in is the one where the characters started their story or if it is something different. It is more open to interpretation, while Baudrillard goes a step further than the blurred lines of reality – he finds it impossible to find what is real: “the impossibility of rediscovering an absolute level of the real is of the same order as the impossibility of staging illusion. Illusion is no longer possible, because the real is no longer possible. It is the whole political problem of parody, of hypersimulation or offensive simulation, that is posed here” (Baudrillard 15). This can complement the idea of the original reality being hyperreal - its origin cannot even be traced as what is real cannot be traced anymore. Thus, the characters would not even be lost in the maze of the reality, their own existence could be brought into question. That is where the second topic which interests Dick, about humanity, overlaps.

To understand reality through Baudrillard's perspective, this explanation of the reality of society is useful: ‘It is no longer possible to manufacture the unreal from the real, to create the imaginary from the data of reality. The process will be rather the reverse: to put in place “decentered” situations, models of simulation, and then to strive to give them the colors of the real, the banal, the lived; to reinvent the real as fiction, precisely because the real has disappeared from our lives. A hallucination of the real, of the lived, of the everyday – but reconstituted, sometimes even unto its most disconcertingly unusual details, recreated like an animal park or a botanical garden, presented with transparent precision, but totally lacking substance, having been derealized and hyperrealized” (Baudrillard, Evans 311). This is precisely the case in the novels *Ubik* and *Three Stigmata* which deal with shifting and constantly changing realities. As a result, the reader truly cannot be sure what is real.

Apart from Baudrillard, Lejla Kucukalic also focused on reality in Dick, stating that his novels “feature forms of reality that are not essentially true: life after death in *Ubik*, artificial animals and people in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, and *Perky Pat* sets for the reality-

play in *Three Stigmata* of Palmer Eldritch—all forms of verisimilitude and examples of the "believable dreams" that Dick creates" (136). It is precisely believable dreams, or, more often, believable nightmares, that the characters experience in *Ubik* and *Three Stigmata*. Apart from the ones she listed, there are more examples of not essentially true forms of realities, which shall be discussed further in this paper.

Finally, the real would, at least in case of the two novels, *Ubik* and *Three Stigmata*, signify that which is the starting point, the world where the characters started, before any temporal regressions and shifts. The fictive would be everything which is not that reality, despite being caused by various reasons, such as drugs or temporal regressions. The fictive is the simulation. There should only be one real, while there are multiple fictive realities, or simulations, in the two novels, which present themselves as real. The difficulty with determining what is real and what is not is also attributed to the fact that in Dick's fiction, "reality" is a mental construct which may be undermined any time (Fitting "Ubik" 52). However, there are enough hints throughout the novel which point to the fictiveness of the reality, which help reader with clarifying the "reality problem."

#### 4.1 Ubik

When it comes to novels which deal with uncertainty of reality, *Ubik* (1969) is a perfect example. Wittkower called *Ubik* "a fantastic grotesque, a 'macabresque' with obscure allegorical subtexts, decked out in the guise of ordinary SF" (57). Indeed, it is a work of fiction which starts as a quest for uncovering which and whose reality is the real one and soon becomes the quest for own lives, filled with uneasiness, anxiety, and paranoia, which flows from the characters to the reader. The story follows Joe Chip, a precog who works at Runciter Associates, anti-psi organisation, which employs people with psychic talents - inertials. They are

countering the talents of people who are psychic. His boss and close friend, Glen Runciter gets a job offer on Luna and decides to take eleven of his best inertials with him. What he does not suspect is that his rival, Raymond Hollis, set up that job to ruin his company. Before they go, Joe is introduced to Pat, a woman whose talent to alter the present barely anyone understands. Nevertheless, they take her with them on the mission. After they notice that something is wrong, a bomb goes off and kills Runciter. Now, apart from psis in this novel, another interesting idea is that of the technology of cold-pac, which enables people to enter half-life. Half-life is a state people enter if their family have enough money and they have enough mental capacity. It can be seen as a life after death. People can still contact them, but that shortens their "life". Runciter wife Ella is in such a state, and Runciter consults her about issues in the company, as she still runs it in half-life. After the bomb, Joe and others try to put Runciter in half-life and save him, but they fail, and he is permanently dead. Soon, they notice that items they have do not match the year they are in and one by one, they start seeing Runciter in various manifestations – over the telephone, in television commercials and a graffiti in toilet, which tells them that it is them, not Runciter, who are dead. After that, both the characters and the readers try to uncover what happened to their reality since the characters are not sure who is dead, where exactly are they and in which year, "pushing scepticism to dizzying extremes" (Wittkower 27). The only thing that can save them is a mysterious item called Ubik if they can find it in the correct form, unless the yet unknown enemy finishes killing them one by one.

#### 4.2. Ontological detectives in search for their reality

Columbia claimed that "manipulations of reality and appearance are surely the most prominent formal devices in Philip K. Dick's science fiction" (83) which is precisely the case in this novel. To answer the question of what reality in *Ubik* is, one would have to be sure of the reality as a starting point in the novel and to follow that reality until it ends or shifts to

another. However, before one could venture on such a journey, it is difficult not to feel it is futile due to the critics such as Lem who commented that “waking reality undergoes profound disassociation and duplication ...dissuading agency consists in chemical substances (of the hallucinogenic type – thus in the Three Stigmata); sometimes in “cold-sleep” technique (as precisely in *Ubik*)... The end effect is always the same: distinguishing between waking reality and visions proves to be impossible” (59). However, just because there might not be a straightforward answer, one should not feel it is futile to try to understand the realities. In Dick’s case, until the characters reach an ending, they go through a series of unreal and ontologically dubious experiences, which are thrilling to the reader, but deeply unsettling for the characters and very often lead to ambiguous endings. But the ambiguous endings are as interesting as the straightforward ones and more thought provoking, guaranteeing that his fiction stays with the reader after finishing it, which is exactly what happens in Dick’s fiction.

To begin with, Palmer summarised the experience with realities in the following words: “firstly you discover that the world in which the story is set is different from your own in ways that make you see your own world as different from itself, that is, from what you thought it was; then you discover that the world in which the story is set is also different from itself, because it is in a state of crisis, possibly disintegration, and is split into opposing, competing units anyway. No one is any longer at home in it” (25). In the first part, it is vital that the reader notices the differences between their world and the world of fiction, and for that part, Dick’s own ideas about science fiction are useful. He wrote: “central to SF is the idea as dynamism. Events evolve out of an idea impacting on living creatures and their society. The idea must always be a novelty. ... Good SF tells a reader something he does not know about a possible world. Thus, both the news (novel idea) and possible world (setting) are inventions by the author and not descriptions. ... Characters need not differ from characters in non-SF; it is what they encounter and must deal with that differ[s]” (Dick in Sutin 43). For Dick, the new idea is

what differentiates the world of the readers from the world in the novel. In the case of *Ubik*, that new idea would be half-life and cold-pac technology and people with psi talents.

In *Ubik*, the starting reality becomes problematic when Joe meets Pat – Patricia Conely, a young and attractive woman with a fascinating psi talent. She is introduced to Joe by G.G. Ashwood. She and her talent are one of the reasons which blur reality. Generally, there are people who have psi talents and there are anti-psi people who they negate the ability of the first ones. Her talent is described as the one counteracting precogs. Now, precogs see variety of futures and pick one. “Anti-precog, on the other hand, negates that abilities and makes each future the same” (Dick *Ubik* 32). Pat, however, does something different than usual anti-precog: “Pat controls the future, that one luminous possibility is luminous because she’s gone into the past and changed it. By changing it she changes the present, which includes the precog; he’s affected without knowing it and his talent seems to work, whereas it really doesn’t” (Dick *Ubik* 32). When Ashwood brought her to Joe, he wrote a sign on the evaluation for Runciter meaning she is dangerous. Taking a woman they barely know with a talent they understand even less proved to be a mistake. When Runciter gathers his best men for the job, he decides to take her as well and upon meeting others, she demonstrates her powers by changing the present and making herself Joe’s wife. Joe briefly experienced walking outside before being back in office: “you must have gone back into time and put us on a different track” (Dick *Ubik* 58). He remembered that they married a year ago, but the rest was unclear. Miss Spanish, another anti-psi, perfectly sums up what had happened: “someone just now moved us, all of us, into another world. We inhabited it, lived in it, as citizens of it, and then a bast, all-encompassing spiritual agency restored us to this, our rightful universe” (Dick *Ubik* 62). First shift in the reality was Pat changing the present. So how natural is that ability and how far it can go? That would indeed make her one of the most powerful entities, with no one (yet) known who can counteract her. Studniarz explains that “with the “half-life” condition and Pat Conley’s gift of

"eradicating the present" and producing an alternative one, the fabric of the presented world seems to burst at the seams, its ontological stability is seriously threatened, but the already mentioned explosion of the bomb rips apart the fabric of the fictional universe completely, triggering what might be called the play of simulacra, signs of the real substituted for the real, concealing the fact that there is no reality'' (126). Pat's ability strongly threatens the idea of one stable reality in *Ubik*, but it is the latter events that really solidify the unstable reality.

Even though according to Pat herself and the quote from Miss Spanish, they are back to their original reality and she just wanted to show her ability, not alter the present, the sole ability of substituting the present with another one cannot be forgotten. Shabrang and Hemmat wonder about her ability: 'in a world where multiple presents are possible, it is impossible to determine what is reality and what is illusory'' (110). One might ask, is the reality they come back to the same one from the beginning, even though she changed an aspect of it? One could argue that each time she changes something, it is significant enough to say that it is not the same reality as it was. In the novel, Pat's ability is important, but possibly neglected due to the rest of the events, so for the sake of further analysis, her shifting the reality shall be seen as a return to the original reality, but her abilities remain open to interpretation and definitely endanger the idea of a strict division between reality and fiction.

What starts the collapse of the reality is the infamous explosion on Luna where the employees and Runciter are affected. Only Runciter seems to be deadly injured, and everyone rushes to get him to the ship and in cold-pac. The characters are suspicious of how easy they could go back to the ship and how Runciter was only one who was hurt. This is the beginning of paranoia which is constantly present in this novel. Horn's notion of the characters as 'ontological detectives'' (3) is fitting, as the characters cannot lose the feeling that there is something wrong and they act upon that feeling, constantly questioning everything that is happening around them, no matter how insignificant it may seem. They decide to bring Runciter

to the Beloved Brethren Moratorium in Zurich, where his wife Ella is kept in half-life. They start noticing unusual things – from the cigarettes which crumble in their fingers due to being too old, to sour milk which should be fresh, cream in dense clots and mouldy coffee to the old phone book in a new ship. This is the first step toward the second state of reality, according to Palmer, and that is when the characters start realising that their world is different from itself and starts disintegrating. It is the beginning of the feeling of no one being any longer at home in the reality they are in and all theories they have to explain what is happening to them do not feel correct. While they are anxiously hoping that Runciter could be contacted in half-life, Al says: ‘we’re lucky to be alive; it could be us, all of us, in that cold-pac there. And Runciter sitting out here in this lounge with these nutty colours’ (Dick *Ubik* 91). What they do not know is just how much Al is correct.

Apart from items which are from the past, money is becoming obsolete as well. Joe realises that he has a coin which is forty years old, their phonebook was two years old and at that point, items regress with seemingly no sense or pattern. Despite finding out that Runciter cannot be revived in half-life, Joe hears his voice when he picks up the telephone. This is the first of many Runciter’s manifestations which happens throughout the novel. Thus, the two hints which signal to the characters that there is something wrong with their reality are the items which regress (and their surroundings later) and Runciter’s manifestations. The manifestations are highly perplexing, since Runciter, despite having strong cerebral activity, cannot be reached, and is pronounced dead, but what should they think when he starts reaching out to them? When van Vogelsang, a man from the Moratorium joins Joe in the hotel room and tries the phone, he only hears static, leaving Joe unsure whether it really happened. ‘I’d feel better about it if von Vogelsang had heard it too. At least that way we could be sure it was there, that it wasn’t an hallucination on your part. Or, for that matter, he thought, on all our parts’ (Dick *Ubik* 116), Al said when Joe explained what had happened. He and the rest simply ‘must keep coping with

what they perceive to be reality, even as they are overwhelmed by mistrust of their own perceptions” (Rosa 66). Ultimately, they only know what they are experiencing, both individually and as a group and the rest is uncertain. In a world of simulation, “the biggest nightmare for the individuals is the validity of their world and the fear of it being only an illusion cast upon them. The work is in congruence with the third order of simulacra – we witness the manipulation of models at every level. There are simulations of simulations, which, we find, might be based also on an artificial model” (Lipecký 8). Thus far, the characters would be in the third phase - an illusion, only pretending to be a faithful copy, while elements of the actual reality they are in are slowly showing in a form of regressed items.

Fitting noticed that there is “reality problem” - the efforts of a group of people to grasp an elusive, changing, sometimes hallucinatory and often hostile reality” (*Ubik* 47). In *Ubik*, the changing reality is what makes it so challenging for the characters and the readers to form theories about the events taking place. The reality becomes even more hostile when Joe does not remember that there was a woman with him last night. Then, the body of Wendy, a co-worker whom he had feelings for is found in the closet. The most awful realisation is the state she was found in: “a huddled heap, dehydrated, almost mummified. Decaying shreds of what seemingly had once been cloth covered most of it, as if it had, by degrees, over a long period of time, retracted into what remained of its garments” (Dick *Ubik* 105, 106). Joe concludes that it was probably the radiation from the explosion which caused such a grotesque end. However, that implies that the rest of the group could meet the same end.

Next, Pat finds an add on a matchfolder which mentions Runciter in cold-pac and a box number in Des Moines, Iowa. The group concludes that there are two processes active and “going in opposite directions. One is a going-away; going out of the existence. The second process is a coming-into-existence. But of something that’s never existed before” (Dick *Ubik* 113). Characters are aware that one force is related to Runciter but not how. Lem thought that



Dick subjects characters to “the pressure of a terrible testing, and in his fantastic experiment only the psychology of the characters remains non-fantastic. They struggle bitterly and stoically to the end, like Joe Chip” (59). The characters act very human – paranoid, uncertain and worried for their lives when they find out what happened to Wendy.

The group decides to “test” their reality by picking a town at random to see if it will accept the Runciter money. In the store, they overhear a lady complaining that she bought a dead flower and a year-old newspapers. That means that it is not only them who are experiencing the regressions, but the others too. A new but completely worn out and forty years obsolete tape recorder they buy also mentions Des Moines in the instruction manual, so that becomes the next destination. Later in the novel, Joe considers asking a taxi driver to drive him to the end of the city and going further in order to go to the limits, but he knows that that would yield no results, since “effect of the imaginary concealing that reality no more exists outside than inside the limits of the artificial perimeter” (Baudrillard 11).

On the topic of reality Dick wrote: “I suppose that the clear line between hallucination and reality has itself become a kind of hallucination” (Dick in Sutin 162). Experience with elevators is the closest it gets to a complete hallucination in the novel. First Al sees an elevator which regressed one hundred years, but the others do not notice it. Dick wonders: “if reality differs from person to person, can we speak of reality singular, or shouldn't we really be talking about plural realities?” (Dick in Sutin 183). From the beginning, everyone in the group has the same experience, especially when they are together, but solitary hallucinations add to the paranoia and doubt. Wittkower wrote: “Dick distinguishes the individual’s private world (idios kosmos ) from the group’s shared world (koinos kosmos); individual perception often wins out over collective views” (282) and he is correct, the characters can barely even trust each other’s perceptions, so the only solution is to trust in one’s own perception. Following Dick’s thought “If reality differs from person to person, can we speak of reality singular, or shouldn't we really

be talking about plural realities?’’ (Dick in Sutin 183), in *Ubik*, all characters are ultimately left only to themselves, so despite being joined in a simulation, half-life, they are living in their own reality. They even had a theory that in order to survive, they should stay with the group, but when the time of death was near, each character ultimately wanted to be alone and died alone.

Another interesting idea Dick included, which also perplexes the characters, is remembering archaic expressions or how an antique item functions, without even knowing the item. With the temporal regressions, that could imply that they gain knowledge about the time they are in and it seems like that knowledge is a positive change which can help them survive. However, for the characters, it only creates suspicion at first. Joe even manages to speak about training planes without knowing anything about them he concludes: ‘I’m beginning to phase mentally with this time-continuum in earnest!’’ (Dick *Ubik* 148). Al attributes the changes and the vision of the elevator to dying, but it genuinely seems that they are becoming a part of the new reality. He is also the next one to see Runciter’s manifestation in a form of a graffiti in a toilet, saying: JUMP IN THE URINAL AND STAND ON YOUR HEAD. I’M THE ONE THAT’S ALIVE. YOU’RE ALL DEAD’’ (Dick *Ubik* 128). It is perhaps ironic and absurd that Dick decided that the crucial piece of information would be a graffiti in the toilet. There is no grandiose revelation, just the dullness of the realisation that their reality is further falling apart since it is them in cold-pac and the manifestations are really Runciter trying to reach all of them and help. So far, everything after the blast on Luna has been ‘only a simulacrum, the product of several (dying) minds fused together’’ (Studniarz 128). However, there is Runciter, who is still (fully) alive and trying to reach them.

Instead of finding the rest of the group to share information, Joe found empty hall and the commercial on the TV where, in a housewife’s bathroom, he saw a similar graffiti, following the news about Runciter’s funeral in Des Moines, a place all hints have been pointing to. Considering the fact that Joe just found out that it is not Runciter who is alive, announcement

of his death is still confusing, since “the media is now performing without having to make any necessary reference to reality” (Shabrang, Hemmat 111). Baudrillard focused a lot on media in his works, and he wrote: “the media and the official news service are only there to maintain the illusion of an actuality, of the reality of the stakes, of the objectivity of facts. All the events are to be read backward” (27). Thus, there is no need for Joe to believe what he hears, especially since he has a reason to doubt his reality, but he does and decides to go to Des Moines. As Dick said, “each of us is going to have either to affirm or deny the reality that is revealed when our ontological categories collapse” (Dick in Sutin 153). Joe decided to affirm the reality revealed to him, along with the consequences. Another instance of media not serving its purpose and bearing no relation to reality is when Joe is listening about Runciter’s funeral and wondering who authorised the transfer of his body to Des Moines and the newscaster said that it was his wife’s decision, making the scene look like a dialogue, despite that not being possible. As if that was not enough, the TV changes stations to show an advertisement featuring Runciter who talks about Ubik –a life-saving item which Joe must get as soon as possible in order to survive. Runciter says: “you see, world deterioration of this regressive type is a normal experience of many half-lifers, especially in the early stages when ties to the real reality are still very strong. A sort of lingering universe is retained as a residual charge, experienced as a pseudo environment but highly unstable and unsupported by any ergic substructure. This is particularly true when several memory systems are fused, as in the case of you people. But with today’s new, more-powerful-than-ever Ubik, all this is changed!” (Dick *Ubik* 134). It is interesting and absurd at the same time that the most helpful information came to Joe from a TV commercial, along with a warning how to use it and a guarantee that the price is economical and available to anyone. In the end, Runciter says: “so look for it, Joe. Don’t just sit there; go out and buy a can of Ubik and spray it all around you night and day” (Dick *Ubik* 135). Baudrillard wrote that “the loss of meaning is directly linked to the dissolving, dissuasive action of information, the

media, and the mass media'' (55). In *Ubik*, despite their reality feeling so unreal, the characters still trust media, despite doubting everything else. The commercial serves its purpose, to promote consumerism, but in this case, it is very helpful to Joe, who ''feels ''all at once like an ineffectual moth, fluttering at the windowpane of reality, dimly seeing it from outside'' (Dick *Ubik* 136).

When Joe reaches his apartment, to get his free sample of Ubik which was waiting for him, just like Runciter on add promised, newspapers read 12<sup>th</sup> September 1939. His kitchen appliances regressed. When he got to his mailbox, he found Ubik, but it had already regressed: ''an irony that is just plain too much: the substance created to reverse the regressive change process has itself regressed'' (Dick *Ubik* 145). As characters try to save themselves, each time the solution is just out of reach. Lem described that in *Ubik* ''the world behaves as if it has fallen prey to a malignant cancer which through metastases attacks one area of life after another'' (57). The real solution to the problem is useless and even Runciter's note on the reverted bottle of Ubik, saying that he should continue trying, does not make Joe feel optimistic.

In *Ubik*, ''no reality is "real", but caught in the process of constant erosion, exposing yet another ontological layer gaping beneath or pole-vaulting to the next ontological level extending above'' (Studniarz 129), especially as every new discovery has the potential to change everything they know so far and force them to change their approach. Thus, the ''ontological detectives'' cannot afford to relax in this simulated world. Due to another Runciter's manifestation, they discover that Pat was lying – she did not try to use her talent, so they conclude that she, with G. G. Ashwood is working for the rival, Hollis. Pat confirms his theory and decides to take Runciter to his room, as he starts feeling like he would die soon, making it seem like she is the one causing the deaths. When he reaches his room, he sees Runciter, who explains that he is indeed alive, and all the manifestations were him trying to reach them. The rest kept dying one by one and now he and Joe come to the realisation that

there is no purpose of having Pat to bring them to 1939; it seemed like they are faced with ‘malignant rather than purposeful force ... an irresponsible entity that’s enjoying what it is doing to us’ (Dick *Ubik* 193). But the biggest problem is the fact that Runciter admits that the regression and decay is what all half-lifers experience, just like his wife Ella did, so it is something natural for half-life. The characters were aware of the two forces in the half-life, but now Joe expanded the theory: there are two forces at work: one helping us and one destroying us. You’re working with the force or entity or person that is trying to help us. You got the Ubik from them’ (Dick *Ubik* 196). For the first time in the novel, the perspective changes to Runciter in the Moratorium. He is the one who realises that the destroying force is Jory – a teenager in half-life, the reason why Runciter could not talk to his wife last time he visited. Since Jory died young, his vitality is making him stronger than anyone else and he had managed to nullify Ella’s capacity to communicate, so he is a threat in the world, but also has an impact to the outside world. Before he manages to warn Joe, Jory meets Joe and he explains that he is ‘eating’ what remains of people that enter half-life and he plans to be able to live himself. Everything around them is a product of Jory’s mind: ‘I constructed a tangible reality corresponding to minimal expectations’ (Dick *Ubik* 206). Jory has done this many times, but he cannot stop the regression. Thus, it seems like half-life, at least at that Moratorium in Zurich is completely ruled by Jory; ‘Jory can be interpreted as the evil power of capitalism that creates a hyperreal world in which everything is a projection of the constructed realities of capitalism’ (Shabrang, Hemmat 112). Going back to Baudrillard’s thought that ‘simulation is infinitely more dangerous because it always leaves open to supposition that, above and beyond its object, law and order themselves might be nothing but simulation’ (15) here the only authority is Jory and he overrules everything else.

However, Ella Runciter, the force which is helping them, makes her own laws as well and stands in the opposition to Jory. It is mostly she, with other half-lifers trying to oppose Jory,

who created Ubik and gave a lifetime supply coupon to Joe. She explains that this battle ‘‘has to be fought on our side of the glass’’ (Dick *Ubik* 215). But when Joe gets to the pharmacy, it seems like it is another battle lost for Joe – Jory had already regressed Ubik. He tried to summon 1992, but he could only summon a woman from the Ubik commercial with Runciter, who sprays him with Ubik and tells him there is more. Finally, Joe thinks to himself: ‘‘we are served by the organic ghosts, who, speaking and writing, pass through this our new environment. Watching, wise, physical ghosts from the full-life world, elements of which have become for us invading but agreeable splinters of a substance that pulsates like a former heart. And of all of them, he thought, thanks to Glen Runciter. The writer of instructions, labels and notes. Valuable notes’’ (Dick *Ubik* 222). Now it is their side of the glass that has Joe as the ultimate opposition to Jory and as long as he is sprayed with Ubik, success is possible, since it prevents Jory from eating him. While battle on that side is being fought, on the other side, Runciter notices them slowly fading and dying.

Even Runciter says that he is the only one in the *real world* who is trying to save him, implying that half-life is indeed a lesser, fictive version of the reality. However, taking Baudrillard’s idea that there is no real anymore, neither is Runciter in the real world. The ending confirms it – Runciter finds money with Joe Chip on it and thinks ‘this was just the beginning’’ (Dick *Ubik* 224). Until that moment, everything seemed clear and all the events had a plausible explanation, but that discovery shifts the reality again into instability. The reader never finds out if Joe manages to defeat Jory, but this scene can be interpreted in many ways. Hayles explained that ‘‘Ubik must be none other than Philip K. Dick. It is ultimately Dick who "created the lives and the places [the characters] inhabit," who "put them there" in this text. Confused about where Ubik comes from, Joe at first assumes that Runciter has smuggled it to him, but Jory insists that no objects can come into the half-life world from the outside, only words’’ (Hayles ‘‘Schizoid’’ 187). On the other hand, Shabrang and Hemmat conclude that ‘‘the

division between these two worlds are illusory and the real outside world of Runciter and the simulated world of Joe Chip are both simulations. Runciter and Joe Chip live in their separate simulated worlds and both are detached from reality” (115). On the other hand, Studniarz believed that “Runciter and Joe Chip dwell in their separate simulated worlds, and both are similarly divorced from reality” (130). He also had an interesting theory that the addressee of the *Ubik* advertisements in the beginning of the chapters is the reader – it is the reader who is in the stable reality outside, but still threatened. Ultimately, what can also seem plausible is that Jory has expanded, which was his wish: “I used to wait until they had been in half-life awhile, but now I have to have them immediately. If I’m going to be able to live myself” (Dick *Ubik* 204). That might mean that he could cross into the world of living again.

Finally, “because of the all-permeating technology able to alter and to create new realities, instead of a stable universe, the reader finds himself in degrading multiverses, where he cannot be certain about anything” (Lipecký 5). In *Ubik*, all-permeating technology which causes uncertainty is the cold-pac technology. First and foremost, it blurs the lines of life and death itself, despite being normal in the society of *Ubik*. Second, Baudrillard describes four phases of the image – first one as a reflection of basic reality, second as a mask, third as the absence of basic reality and finally fourth which is pure simulacrum and bears no relation to the reality (Baudrillard 11). That fourth, pure simulacrum is due to the virtual reality and technology, which is the case in *Ubik*. However, it is difficult to argue that it bears no relation to the reality, since Jory tried to make it similar to 1992, but it regressed to 1939. The characters even had meta-knowledge of that time. From the beginning of their half-life experience, the characters felt like something was wrong and the reality, no matter how close it was to their world, was wrong. For them, there is no more original reality and all they are left with is the simulation.

Apart from reality, both Dick and Baudrillard also share similar thoughts on the society, especially related to consumerism. Critique of consumer society is present in all three novels

and Baudrillard viewed consumerism and media as one of the reasons why the society is hyperreal: “hyperreality and simulation refer to the unreal nature of the contemporary society in the era of mass communication and mass consumption” (Shabrang, Hemmat 109). In *Ubik*, the critique is especially visible with Ubik itself – a miraculous item which is supposed to be salvation. Before each chapter, there are ads for an item called Ubik. Each time, Ubik stands for another product – kitchen appliances, beauty products and similar. All of them share a similar short form with a warning in the end – that Ubik is only safe when used as directed. There are no directions, so that specific idea in each add can mean that Ubik can also be problematic in case a person does not use it properly.

Baudrillard’s relationship between models and hyperreality can be explained taking Ubik as an example. Baudrillard claimed that in the postmodern, hyperreal society the model precedes the reality and not the other way around: “sign (as an image of what we want) is created before the thing” (Leitch 1731). In the case of Ubik, it is the model of Ubik, the idea of something which is useful for people, barely even being important what it is, that is created. First there is a need for the item, brought to the consumers by the ads and mass media. Based on that, they desire the product, without seeing it and testing it, purely because they believe they need it. The same is for the characters. First Joe is introduced to Ubik, believing that it will bring salvation. From that point on, almost everything he does is to find Ubik to save himself. When Runciter and he finally meet and talk, Runciter admits that he does not know what Ubik is and from where it comes; he only knows that it is crucial that Joe finds it and uses it, perpetuating the need for an untested item. Joe even gets a free sample, like a proper marketing trick to make people buy it after trying it. The many forms of Ubik can be related to the name, *ubique* – which means everywhere. Palmer sees Ubik as “both a commodity and a deity. Commodities and deities both promise everything, but deliver a lot less than that, so we can see where this materialization of the spiritual is coming from, as far as satire is concerned”



(18). Shabrang and Hemmat said that ‘‘Ubik illustrates a consumer society and in this society, to live means to consume’’ (113), which is precisely accurate, since, without consuming Ubik, the character cannot survive. However, there is a fatal flaw in this consumer society. Recurring scene of the characters trying to pay for something and then noticing that their money has changed. They often have issues with not being able to pay because the money is not government issued. In such a scene, Al notices that there is Runciter’s face on the money and Danny says: ‘‘it’s funny money; it’s not real’’ (Dick *Ubik* 112). Due to the temporal regressions, Joe is unable to buy Ubik. The money is both real and fictive – sometimes he can buy something with regressed money, other times he cannot, and what are the rules– how can one spend money if it keeps getting obsolete? ‘‘Characters are trapped in a techno-consumerist society which is that of the simulation and hyperreality’’ (Shabrang, Hemmat 115) since all they need is to spend money, which keeps getting obsolete, to buy what will save them in a world of simulation.

*Ubik* blurs the lines between another opposition in the novel – subject and object. The same topic interested Baudrillard as well: ‘‘The objects are no longer commodities: they are no longer even signs whose meaning and message one could decipher and appropriate for oneself, they are tests, they are the ones that interrogate us, and we are summoned to answer them, and the answer is included in the question. Thus, all the messages in the media function in a similar fashion: neither information nor communication, but referendum, perpetual test, circular response, verification of the code’’ (Baudrillard 52). Furthermore, he believed that there is a loss and disappearance of the subject and object, with Lane suggesting that ‘‘human subject has become an idle spectator’’ (35). Shabrang and Hemmat agreed that ‘‘in *Ubik*, characters turn into an object so the subject is disappeared’’ (Shabrang, Hemmat 113). They believed that this is due to the cold-pac technology, which made deceased people more like objects than actual people. First, humans are kept in a bin under a number and Runciter originally forgot the number of his wife. He overhears when the owner describes another person as ‘‘functioning

perfectly’’ (Dick *Ubik* 9), which is how one can describe a machine, not a person. Even Runciter asks about his wife: ‘‘Ready to be cranked up for a talk?’’ (Dick *Ubik* 11). People must pay to be kept in half-life, so presumably people with lower income cannot have the same quality Runciter can, or perhaps they cannot even have it at all. Van Vogelsang, the owner, comments that ‘‘burial is barbaric. Remnant of the primitive origins of our culture’’ (Dick *Ubik* 10). Taking into consideration what is happening in half-life, one could ask if it is really better than just dying. Instead, the characters experience ‘‘fundamental ontological insecurity, in which death is strangely lifelike and vice versa’’ (Dunst, Schlensag 49).

Shabrang, Hemmat wrote: ‘‘in *Ubik*, characters are searching for objective reality but they are unable to find a definite answer to what reality is since in a world where the lines between nature, technology, life and death are blurred, it is impossible for one to ascertain the difference between reality and illusion’’ (108). In the end, this is precisely what happens. Psi talents attribute to the problem in the reality, while half-life blurs the line between life and death, but also what is real. Finally, one can agree with Baudrillard - ‘‘the reality of simulation is unbearable’’ (27).

### 5. 1. The Thee Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch

In *Three Stigmata*, it is the drug abuse in the colonies that causes the instability in reality. It is a novel where ‘‘the starting point lies with the character’s *need for illusion*. It’s not the disintegration of their reality which leads the characters to act, but a fundamental dissatisfaction with that reality’’ (Fitting ‘‘Reality’’ 227). Humans live on Earth (or Terra, how it is called in the novel), and on the colonies, where people are being almost forcefully sent to populate colonies and make them the new home since Terra is barely habitable due to the heat. The

reality is bleaker than in *Ubik* and dissatisfaction on the colonies leads to drug abuse claimed to bring an experience like being back on Terra.

Two main characters are Leo Bulero, the chairman of the board of the directors of P.P. Layouts, a company which specialises in producing miniature layouts which people use with the drug Can-D. In the company, he employs precogs, people with precognitive abilities whose job is to say which item will become popular in the future. One of the precogs is Barney Mayerson, the main Pre-Fash marketing consultant and one of the people who Leo trusts the most. People are getting draft notices to go to the colonies to populate them. People who get drafted have ninety days to pass a mental test in a form of Dr. Smile, a psychiatrist in a suitcase which communicates and measures mental capacity and stress. Barney gets a draft notice but hopes to avoid it. He also gets involved with Roni, his ambitious assistant, also a precog. Soon, a ship crashes on an asteroid and the news claim it to be Palmer Eldritch, an inventor who went to Prox system ten years ago and never returned. Leo's interest leads him to Roni's precog talents telling him that he will kill Eldritch, but also where to find him. Intrigued, Leo goes in search of him and ends up injected with Chew-Z, new rival drug to his Can-D, which is illegal, but the UN allows it. Palmer Eldritch is a central mystery in the novel, a man who brought back alien lichen which are supposed to be more efficient and have less side-effects than Can-D. However, when Leo enters what can best be described as a simulation or hallucination from which there seems to be no exit, he realises that Chew-Z is a bigger threat than just endangering his business; everyone who tries it might be in danger. Leo manages to save himself, but fires Barney, who decides to volunteer to go to the colonies and gets sent to Mars to a hovel where there are six couples, users of Can-D who decide to switch to Chew-Z. On the trip he meets Anne, a Neo-Christian with the hopes of convert people to it. Soon, he tries Chew-Z, a part of a secret plan between him and Leo to present Chew-Z as dangerous and destroy its sales, but instead overdoses and experience it for what it is - a hellish experience with no end. Ultimately,

he backs away from the plan and leaves Leo to destroy Eldritch, or the thing which lives in him, before it spreads and takes over Mars and possibly, even more.

## 5.2. The reality-bending drugs

“So I ask, in my writing, What is real? Because unceasingly we are bombarded with pseudorealities manufactured by very sophisticated people using very sophisticated electronic mechanisms. I do not distrust their motives; I distrust their power. And it is an astonishing power: that of creating whole universes, universes of the mind. I ought to know. I do the same thing. It is my job to create universes, as the basis of one novel after another. And I have to build them in such a way that they do not fall apart two days later” (Dick in Sutin 184). In *Three Stigmata*, one of Dick’s novels which also deal with uncertain realities, pseudorealities are manufactured to make it easier for the people who live in the colonies.

The world of *Three Stigmata* is divided into two physical parts – one being Terra, where Leo and Barney are from, along with P. P. Layout and the colonies, where living is, according to some “patriotic duty”. Going back to Palmer, the world of this novel is different to the reader due to precogs –people with powers of precognition and also due to the Can-D, a drug which allows people to inhabit dolls of Pat and Walk and make use of the layouts they furnish with items bought from P. P. Layouts. The world itself is dystopian in setting – heat makes it less and less habitable and people live in apartments with numbers – the bigger the number, the further away from the centre.

What makes the world in the novel different from itself is the use of the drugs – Can-D and Chew-Z. “The conquest of space, following the conquest of the planet, promotes either the de-realizing of human space, or the reversion of it into simulated hyperreality” (Baudrillard, Evans 311). It is due to the interplanetary travel that probably started the reversion into simulated

reality, but the hyperreality of the population can be best seen with colonies as an example. Baudrillard claims: “the simulacrum is never what hides the truth - it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true” (3) The situation on Mars and other colonies is that of a simulation – imitation of the world on Terra, with only activities being gardening and using drugs to escape into a daydream about being back on Terra. What is interesting is that there are some people who believe that using Can-D physically transfers them back to Terra. That experience to them is more real than the reality. Thus, for them, the simulation is indeed true, and it barely even hides the fact that there is no reality left. For them, it is not only that “the reality of simulation is unbearable” (Baudrillard 27); what should be their reality, the one after the drug wears down, is unbearable too. Baudrillard idea that “paradoxically, it is the real which has become our true utopia – but a utopia that is no longer a possibility, a utopia we can do no more than dream about, like a lost object” (310) is evident in this novel, since the people on the colonies only want to have life on Terra back. One of the characters, Mary Regan, a colonist on Mars admits: “the way out is through one or the other of the translating rugs. Otherwise, as you can see, it would be impossible. We’d simply wind up killing one another in our pain” (Dick *Stigmata* 132).

The drugs themselves are similar: they are mainly intended for the colonists, said to be making their life easier and they are perceived as simulacrum, which “seems to have referents (real phenomena they refer to), but they are merely pretend representations that mark the absence, not the existence, of the objects they purport to represent” (Leitch 1730). The experience of both drugs seems like it refers to the life on Terra, seeming more real than the reality they left behind, but they mask the absence of a reality altogether.

The moment where the reader discovers that the world in which the story is set is also different from itself is when characters use Can-D and then Chew-Z for the first time. Both

drugs have a complicated relation with reality, making the real and the fictive overlap during and even after using the drug.

The characters need a stimulus to feel better about their life and they find the solution in drugs: “it will be to put decentered situations, models of simulation in place and to contrive to give them the feeling of the real, of the banal, of lived experience, to reinvent the real as fiction, precisely because it has disappeared from our life” (Baudrillard 83). What they are doing while being in Pat or in Walt is, as a matter of fact, nothing special. They drive to the beach, talk about currently fashionable clothes and drive in a car. It is nostalgia which makes them want to relive those experiences, despite the fact that “simulated worlds and artefacts represent a deviation from – or false or inauthentic form of – “real” objects, experiences or environments” (Lipecký 2). What they are experiencing is being on Terra as it was many years ago without environmental problems, but that is Terra probably before their time.

Ultimately, even though Lipecký did not write about Three Stigmata, the following idea perfectly describes the experiences on drugs in the novel: “the search for the authentic moves to a different domain: simulated worlds, if not misused, offer freedom. They can be places not limited by space, time or other laws of physics. In other words, they offer the possibility to carry out projected dreams, which would otherwise be impossible in the real world. The question is when is this process out of hand, or how can a paradise be turned into a prison?” (5). However, in Dick, simulation rarely offers freedom. If anything, the dreams turn into nightmares and the process is almost always out of hand. It becomes a prison with no way out and no end. Can-D and Chew-Z do precisely that, both with their own deviation, but with similar result – making it difficult for the characters and the readers to determine where their reality ends and the simulation begins, and also if the simulation ever ends.

### 5.3. Can-D, the (il)legal religion of the colonies

Can-D is introduced as a drug used by the colonists with a miniature layout, reminding of a doll house people expand to have a better experience. Pat and Walt are the characters that the users inhabit; men become Walt and women Pat. Pat's influence is incredible: "the doll, which had conquered the planets of the Sol system. Perky Pat, the obsession of the colonists" (Dick *Stigmata* 10). People live in collective hovels on the colonies and often use the drugs together. When there are more people who share the experience, they need to mentally agree on what to do for the doll to function. The most problematic aspects of Can-D are the price, which is relatively high and the side-effects and withdrawal, which leaves the users feeling ill and unable to continue working for some time.

P. P. Layouts, Leo's company, creates miniatures and layouts, which are shipped to the colonies. Golumbia claimed that "the Importance of the drug and layout: they allow the colonization of extraterrestrial sites" (91), but there are two flaws in that claim. First is that it does more damage to the colonists since it makes them addicted and not capable for work. Second, it that it makes no sense that it is illegal (Golumbia 91), because the layouts do not serve a purpose other than being used with a drug but are still being sold without a problem. That is because the UN is aware of the drugs being sold and they allow it. One drug seller admits: "the UN in this region is perfectly aware of the Can-D traffic; I pay a regular stipend to them, to avoid interference" (Dick *Stigmata* 135). The fact that the UN knows about the drugs being sold without legal consequences shows that the importance of selling an item and earning money is more important than the well-being of an individual. The issue is that on Mars, it is not clear what the colonists do besides trying to grow a garden, often rather unsuccessfully and hope that the native pests do not destroy it, which is what Barney noticed when he got there: "half-abandoned gardens and fully abandoned equipment, the great heaps of rotting supplies" (Dick *Stigmata* 142). The UN even ships alcohol for free to the colonists, presumably to make

their life easier by offering escape, but the use is never directly mentioned. Perhaps it was no longer efficient enough, which led to Can-D.

Furthermore, ‘Baudrillard first asks the question whether human society is fundamentally about survival, or about the generation of "meaning" either at the individual or collective level’ (Lane 39). For this society, general survival on colonies means a survival for the Terrans, since humanity is slowly losing a habitable planet. On an individual level, it is unclear what survival and will to live are. One of the characters explains their motivation on Mars: ‘you learn to get by from day to day. You never think in longer terms. Just until dinner or until time for bed; very finite intervals and tasks and pleasures. Escapes’ (Dick *Stigmata* 133). Since their reality feels like a simulation, how could they find willpower to find a meaning of life? Collectively on Mars, the highlight of the day is using Can-D. The illusion over reality.

Can-D is like ‘an escapist and spiritual fantasy’ (Fitting ‘Reality’ 226), but to some, it is so much more than that. Some users, fanatically calling themselves believers, have a strong and somewhat controversial claim: ‘Sam himself was a believer; he affirmed the miracle of translation – the near-sacred moment in which the miniature artifacts of the layout no longer merely represented Earth but *became* Earth. And he and the others, joined together in the fusion of doll-inhabitation by means of the Can-D, were transported outside of time and local space. Many of the colonists were as yet unbelievers; to them the layouts were merely symbols of a world which none of them could any longer experience’ (Dick *Stigmata* 37). Thus, for believers, the translation was not a drug induced illusion or hallucination; it was an experience more real and more significant than the reality: ‘it’s experienced as real’ (Dick *Stigmata* 126). A fictive event which had the significance of a precious, real moment, more valued than one’s own reality. By using Can-D, they could experience life on Terra again: ‘Perky Pat and her layouts were an entrée back to the world they had been born to’ (Dick *Stigmata* 24), but perhaps the most problematic aspect is the fact that they believed that they were actually transported to



a place, physical Earth, not that they were hallucinating that they were inside a miniature layout and two dolls. Naturally, how does one explain an experience where more people can inhabit and control dolls that are living on one place they cherish and miss the most? It comes as no surprise that for some users, what it feels like it that 'it's like religion; Can-D is the religion for the colonists'' (Dick *Stigmata* 24).

The first time using Can-D is introduced in the novel, it is in the hovel on Mars, called Chicken Pox Prospects on Fineburg Crescent, where three couples live: Sam and Mary Regan, Norm and Fran Schein and Tod and Helen Morris. Sam and Fran have developed a mutual interest and decided to explore it as Pat and Walt. One absurd aspect is that they could engage in sexual activities without the drug and the layout, but they decide to do it with Can-D, despite Fran saying: "let's not do anything while we're there on Terra that we wouldn't do here ... Just because we're Pat and Walt and not ourselves that doesn't give us license" (Dick *Stigmata* 41). There are two interesting points in this quote, first being the fact that Fran described the experience as *being there on Terra*, meaning that she is one of the believers. Second, for them, the pure fact that they want to experience being together, despite inhabiting dolls, means that they cherish the simulation more than the reality. In the end, others join them in the experience and as their time runs out, they decide to fulfil their fantasy "in the real", while others are still under the influence.

When Sam was using Can-D, he entered Walt and saw the reminder to make the most of the time and to call Pat, signed Sam Regan himself. However, the message started with "THIS IS AN ILLUSION. YOU ARE SAM REGAN, A COLONIST ON MARS. MAKE USE OF YOUR TIME OF TRANSLATION, BUDDY BOY. CALL UP PAT PRONTO!" (Dick *Stigmata* 43, 44). Sam, as Walt, could not recall who Sam, as it was signed in the note, was. When he remembered, he thought: "maybe he did remember that other world, that gloomy

quasi-life of involuntarily expatriation in an unnatural environment (Dick *Stigmata* 44). For Walt, the other world is the reality Sam comes from, who would rather not remember any of it.

Despite how the characters feel about Can-D, some think that it could be used for something else than Terran fantasy: “while translated, one could commit incest, murder, anything, and it remained from a juridical standpoint a mere fantasy, an impotent wish only” (Dick *Stigmata* 42). This aspect of translation is not explored in the novel, but it nevertheless could exist and depict even a more disturbing aspect of the simulated experiences. They can be imagined as places to release frustration and act in the way people cannot in the real world. It is important to note that not all of Dick’s character have the same views on Can-D. Some are believers, some are earning a living because of it and some claim: “I believe that whether it’s a play of imagination, or drug-induced hallucination, or an actual translation from Mars to Earth-as-it-was by an agency we know nothing of – I think we should abstain. In order not to contaminate the experience of communication ... it should be a purifying experience. We lose our fleshy bodies, our corporeality, as they say. And put on imperishable bodies instead, for a time anyhow. Or forever, if you believe as some do that it’s outside of time and space, that it’s eternal” (Dick *Stigmata* 41). It is no wonder that there are so many different interpretations, given that it is truly a unique experience.

*Three Stigmata* deals with consumerism as well. Leo offered Can-D to a girl by asking: “have you ever chewed Can-D? You should. Despite the fact that it’s habit-forming. It’s a real experience” (Dick *Stigmata* 23). With this proposal, he tries to neglect the fact that it is addictive but put the experience in the first place. Naturally, his company’s future, layouts, depends on the sale of Can-D. Co-existence between layouts and the drug is evident in this quote: “obviously (PP) is an illusion because there is no Perky Pat and Walt Essex and anyhow the structure of their fantasy is limited to the artifacts actually installed in advance” (Dick *Stigmata* 89). Layouts expand the experience, with one character even arguing that “the power

to ensure translation did not come from the Can-D but from the accuracy of the layout” (Dick *Stigmata* 41). It is not clear where exactly the power comes from, but layouts are ideal consumerist traps – to have a better experience, people should buy more and more. The colonists compare their layouts with other people’s layouts and form their savings to buy more elements. They are spending money on a simulation. Those objects in a layout which they buy are in fact simulacra – copies which have lost their original or which have no reality, according to Baudrillard. They are merely items which belong to the past life on Terra, but it does not seem like a life which is available even to people on Terra. Sam and Fran experience going to the beach together, picking swimsuits and enjoying walks on the beach. That is not possible, since the only place that is left like that is Antarctica, an elite relaxation destination. Thus, the experience does not belong to *any* available reality, it is something lost which can never be recovered again and people buy Can-D to enjoy in something they could only theoretically do in the past. It is based on imaginary Terra, not even the one they left behind.

Baudrillard’s analogy of Disneyland can also be related to the drug experience in the novel: “Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle” (10). In this case, Can-D is presented as imaginary to the colonists to make them believe that their life on colonies is real, or more accurately, is valid and worth living. The problem is that it is not, which is why the colonists are living a dreadful life, that of the hyperreality and the order of simulation, only trying to be a substitute for Terra. Perhaps one day, life on Terra will be better, but at this moment, it is pretend Terra – with no one believing the illusion.

Coincidentally, Dick also had an analogy featuring Disneyland: “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. So we wind up with fake humans inventing fake realities and then peddling them to other fake humans. It is just a very large version of Disneyland” (Dick in Sutin 185). P. P. Layout are the ones who invented the fake reality and sell them to the colonists who prefer the version of themselves in the layout - their authentic self is less important, especially since they share the experience with others in the layout, meaning that the decisions they make are not even completely theirs, since there needs to be a consensus between the users to act as the doll. The colonists could be even perceived as empty shells with no meaning or purpose but to fulfil the consumer society ideals created by people back on Terra.

In *Ubik*, there was the question of private and shared experience. With Can-D, “it is done in company with others who really go along. So it can’t be entirely an illusion. Dreams are private; that’s the reason we identify them as illusion” (Dick *Stigmata* 126), there is the same ontological problem like with the group experiencing regressions in *Ubik*. If more people are experiencing the same, can it be an illusion or is it something else? Dunst and Schlensag wrote: “the user can never entirely know afterward whether the world they inhabit is real or an illusion. Instead of a shared illusion, users spiral off into ontological doubt” (49). It seems that Dick’s specialty was not only creating realities which shift and cause problems for the characters, but the true specialty lies in creating a world the readers have problems entangling, but still immensely enjoy the efforts put into it.

Second time the characters use Can-D, Barney starts chewing the drug, but realises that he cannot do it. Anne does and she notices how the rest feel about Can-D: “*They’re tired of it too*” (Dick *Stigmata* 148). That depressing realisation makes it all futile, all the money spent and all the hopes that it will make them feel better. Even the only salvation they have is not

real, despite all their efforts to find something to make their life bearable. It is no surprise that the characters turned to the other drug available when they saw the opportunity – Chew-Z.

#### 5.4. Chew-Z, the alien trap

While Can-D is depicted as a distraction from the dreadful reality, it is still harmless in comparison with Chew-Z, a mystery drug brought from Prox system by Palmer Eldritch. He is an inventor who had been missing for ten years after going to Prox system. His return was controversial from the start and people were not even sure if it is even him who returned. Soon, a mysterious rival company employs Barney's ex-wife, Emily, whose new husband Richard came selling her pots for mining. All pointed to Eldritch. He had brought alien lichen with him which were turned to the drug, Chew-Z. However, the UN allowed the drug and the rivalry begins, since Leo wants to do everything in his power to stop his company from failing.

Before Leo was injected with Chew-Z, he did not know anything about the drug, besides it being related to Eldritch. Thus, it is not surprising that he was having trouble making sense of what happened to him. First, Eldritch explained that he got the lichen illegally from the Proxers, who allegedly want to attack Earth. Then he showed him just how powerful Chew-Z is. Leo met Monica, a young girl with the suitcase, dr. Smile, which Leo asks to call his company to save him. Leo soon realises that "this place was a nonexistent world, analogous to the unreal 'Earth' to which the translated colonists went when they chewed his own product, Can-D"... "He and this girl – they were not real, either. At least not here" (Dick *Stigmata* 80). This is the moment where Leo understand that Chew-Z is so much different form Can-D, where there is a clear line between what is real and what is fictive, despite some perceiving it as a religious and out-of-body experience. With Chew-Z, the beginning, and the end of the experience, as well as the line between the real and the fictive is almost non-existent. Leo goes

from believing that Proxers are indeed the future enemies and that "Chew-Z is the agent by which we're going to be delivered over to them" (Dick *Stigmata* 80) to believing that "it's all just a drug-induced hallucination" (Dick *Stigmata* 81). Then he finally sees a gluck, something which "did not originate on Terra nor from a Terran mind" (Dick *Stigmata* 82), concluding that it is not an illusion or a way to induce fear, but it is something completely new and different.

Describing his product, Eldritch said that he did not find God in the Prox system, but he found something better: "God promises eternal life. I can do better. *I can deliver it*" (Dick *Stigmata* 86). This strong claim is how they advertise Chew-Z later in the novel. Eldritch claims that Chew-Z was for Proxers like tobacco is for humans, but it has much stronger impact on humans. He explains that Leo and himself are inside a construct he created, so Eldritch has full control over it. Eldritch himself claims "that it isn't fantasy, that they enter a genuine new universe", with the fact that there is "the lack of time lapse" (Dick *Stigmata* 89), meaning that no time passes on the outside – the users can spend years in the new universe and no time will pass when they return to their bodies without any side effects, unlike Can-D. Moreover, with Can-D, people have to return back to their life, but here, they can stay in the universe they create as long as they wish. It would be a perfect simulation with the user having freedom to do as he wishes, for as long as they want.

As Leo is trying to make sense of the world, Eldritch is calm and allows him to try to escape and Leo believes he reached P. P. Layouts. Baudrillard's quote: "it is with this same imperialism that present-day simulators attempt to make the real, all of the real, coincide with their models of simulation" (3) can be used to describe Eldritch –he created a perfect simulation of the office Leo did not doubt until he saw the creature, losing all his hopes.

The plan Eldritch has is to use the facilities and the systems of distribution Can-D has and replace it with Chew-Z. Having no alternative, Leo agrees. Even killing Monica cannot help Leo escape. While there, he meets two creatures, also Terrans, but decades in the future.

They all evolved from E Therapy, which is said to enhance a person's cognitive abilities. Before that, he saw a Proxer and the two future Terrans say: "that was those Proxers, working with the Renegade" (Dick *Stigmata* 102). The Renegade is Palmer Eldritch, so from this quote, it can be assumed that there will be remnants of him in the future in some form. Terrans point to a monument, worshiping place for the Proxers. When Terrans try to shake hands with him, his hand passes through them, and Alec explains: "this guy isn't real. He's a *chooser*, from chewing that diabolical drug that Eldritch picked up in the Prox system. He's a phantasm" (Dick *Stigmata* 103). Leo's body is on Luna but he is an intrusion in this future planet called Sigma 14-B because with Chew-Z, it is possible to "visit" a place where a person physically was in the past. Terrans confirm that Leo is the one killing Eldritch and even call him "the ghost of Sigma 14-B" (Dick *Stigmata* 104). Finally, he returns to his body in Luna, realising that the time did not pass in the reality and that Chew-Z is indeed different from Can-D, summarising his experience: "he's a damned magician" (Dick *Stigmata* 110). "Rather than taking the product inside him, he has been imprisoned inside the product" (Hayles "Schizoid" 170), with no way to exit it. Lipecký wrote that "the problem with simulacra lies in the fact that the more advanced the technology of replication and production is, the harder it is to distinguish between a simulacrum and the authentic. The authentic becomes degraded, and also the world around becomes degraded due to the omnipresent forces of entropy typical for postmodern works" (9). The technology of Can-D is advanced, but Chew-Z is completely different and even more complex. Another problem is that its origin is not even human and understood before Leo experiences it. In that simulation, it is almost impossible to determine what is real and what is not. When he was back in the office, the only reason why he realised it was still Eldritch is precisely because Eldritch had wanted that and created a glitch to remind him. If he did not do it, it might have been days or years before Eldritch decided that it was enough. It would even be possible to leave a person there for an eternity before ending it.

Barney's experience with Chew-Z is equally terrifying. From the moment he arrived on Mars in the Chicken Pox Prospects hovel, Barney had been trying to find purpose and decide what to do with the elaborate plan he and Leo had. In exchange for using Chew-Z and poisoning himself with a toxin provided by Leo, he would it prove Chew-Z has health risks and be taken back to Terra. After his hovel wanted to switch from Can-D, their former drug dealer was appalled: "Chew-Z is garbage; it's habit-forming, toxic, and what's worse leads to lethal, escape-dreams, not of Terra but of – "She gestured with the pistol. "Grotesque, baroque fantasies of an infantile, totally deranged nature" (Dick *Stigmata* 134, 135). However, the whole experience on Mars has an unreal feel to it. Since the experience on Mars is the one which reminds of a hyperreality, he is not able to go back to what was real: "when the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning" (Baudrillard 12). Before he volunteered to go to the colonies, he tried reconciling with his ex-wife, Emily, whom he realised he still loved. After she rejected him, he felt like there was nothing left for him on Terra.

The first time in the novel when Eldritch shows himself, not his manifestations during Chew-Z, is when he comes to Barney's hovel. First he is only a projection, but then he shows himself, with his three stigmata: "the prosthetic eyes, hands and teeth, allow him – in a variant of the Wolf in the Little Red Riding Hood – to see (understand), grab (manipulate), and rend (ingest, consume) his victims better" (Suvin 14). Suvin describes him like a predator with augmentations, but despite it being a society with technological advancements, his stigmata are ominous and make him less human.

Chew-Z is described as a world of "wishes and fantasies" (Fitting Reality 226) and when Barney tries it, he realises just how powerful nostalgia can be. In his simulated universe, he is back with Emily, with Eldritch guiding him to try to reconcile with her. He is giving him a second change, only to have Richard, her husband, suggest that she still loves him. Richard turns into Eldritch who is again supportive and trying to guide him. However, he is woken up



by Anne and believing he is back to reality tries to drink the toxin, but cannot find it. The plan to sabotage Eldritch is jeopardized. That, and seeing stigmata in Anne is enough for Barney to start questioning whether he is back to the reality or still under the influence of Chew-Z. He describes the experience like ‘‘an illusionary world in which Eldritch holds the key position as god, he gives you a change to do what you can’t really ever do – reconstruct the past as it ought to have been’’(Dick *Stigmata* 176). The simulation reminds of a game where Eldritch gives hints to the users how they can achieve their goals. He leads them and helps them fulfil their deepest wishes, fantasies and regrets from the past. In the case of the characters, after coming to Mars all that is left is nostalgia for the life they had in the past. Sadly, that past is no longer attainable and as non-existent as the fictional world they are in. Both are real and fictive at the same time, but more importantly, both are hyperreal and there is nothing that will make their life better, other than consuming in hope of a short-term relief. To Barney, that experience was not a positive one: ‘‘it’s absolutely not like a dream. It was worse, he realised. More like being in hell, he thought. Yes, that’s the way hell must be: recurrent and unyielding. But Eldritch thought in time, with sufficient patience and effort, *it could be changed*’’ (Dick *Stigmata* 176). Yet, he experienced ‘‘ the craving within him, the yearning. To do it again, as soon as possible’’ (Dick *Stigmata* 175). Others in the hovel claim that they did enjoy it, but they felt a creepy presence, like they were not alone in the world which is supposed to be their creation.

Despite Eldritch warning him, Barney makes a mistake of taking another dose too soon and puts his life in danger. He as well becomes ‘‘imprisoned inside the product’’ (Hayles ‘‘Schizoid’’ 170). Barney does and finds himself two years in the future with Leo, who explains that Chew-Z is now banned. Now Leo believed Barney to be a phantasm from the past. Barney desperately want to find Emily and thinks that Eldritch is ‘‘the owner of these worlds ... he cannot succeed without him (Dick *Stigmata* 191), so Barney calls out to Eldritch for help. Furthermore, he thinks of him as ‘‘eternal, outside of time and spliced-together segments of all

other dimensions ... *he can even enter a world in which he is dead*. Palmer Eldritch has gone to Prox a man and returned a god” (Dick *Stigmata* 192). This is another religious allusion in relation to Eldritch. In the beginning, the commercial was claiming that Chew-Z can deliver eternal life, not God. Many characters were wondering if he managed to find God in the Prox system and now, Barney is describing him as a deity, not a normal human. When he asks him to help him find his wife, Eldritch indeed answers his ‘prayers’ but instead of helping explains that he overdosed and now that he had seen his future, even Eldritch cannot help him; Barney became a ghost. Finally, Eldritch explains more about Chew-Z: “the recovery from the drug is excessively retarded and gradual; it’s a series of levels, each progressively less and induced illusion and more compounded of authentic reality. Sometimes the process takes years” (Dick *Stigmata* 196). If Barney waited before the second dose, he would not experience what he did, but instead he “never got back to clear-cut reality” (Dick *Stigmata* 196).

Since Leo is on his way to save Barney and destroy Eldritch, Eldritch translates into Barney and makes them “one homogeneous organism” (Dick *Stigmata* 203) – his plan is for Leo to kill Eldritch, but with Barney inside. That way, the future will come true and Eldritch will indeed die. Monument will be justified, but the real threat still alive. Eldritch shares his vision: “I’m going to be everyone on the planet Mars. I’m going to be all the colonists as they arrive and begin to live there. I’ll guide their civilization; I’ll be their civilization! (Dick *Stigmata* 204). This is a first moment where Eldritch’s nature and true intentions show.

Barney is saved by Leo, who unlike Barney, decided to risk his life to try to save him. Now, all Barney needs to do to save everyone and to ensure that Eldritch is defeated is never to take that drug again, or the events resume. However, Barney gives up on the plan they had and decides to focus on making a life for himself on Mars, leaving Leo on his own, betrayed again. The experience changed him and how he believes that he understands Eldritch, or the thing which became Eldritch. He explained that it is old, with immense knowledge collected through

time. However, loneliness makes it want to connect with people. Barney explained to others “don’t be afraid of it. It’s just trying to live, like the rest of us are. .... Anything that old would have to seem unpleasant to us.” “the thing has a name which you’d recognize of I told it to you. Although it would never call itself that. We’re the ones who’ve titled it ‘’ (Dick *Stigmata* 213). Novel ventures back in religious themes, which is perhaps due to Dick’s interest in religion. Palmer wrote: “behind a social ideology there may be nothing more than another fabrication, but behind a secular illusion there is, perhaps, a spiritual reality” (Palmer 6). And it is precisely that spiritual reality behind the illusions. Baudrillard was also interested in the idea of a god: “there has never been any God, that only the simulacrum exists, indeed that God himself has only ever been his own simulacrum” (8). Even God himself is hyperreal and what comfort would that be for the people who believe? Shabrang and Hemmat commented that the characters in *Ubik* “are still in search of a transcendental signified to give meaning to their life and sustain their identity and their reality; however, since in hyperreal world the God is himself a simulacrum and he is not real, they replace him with *Ubik* which is the emblem of commodity fetishism” (Shabrang, Hemmat 116). In *Three Stigmata*, Eldritch found God, or more probably, God found him and is on his way to change human race. Eldritch as a god is confusing and not what someone would expect. He is trying to help, which is evident in Barney’s drug experience, but his intentions to become a planet are not so harmless. Users feel disturbed by his presence, and there is more than one issue: “the fantasy worlds that Chew-Z induces are in Paler Eldritch’s *head*. As I found out personally. And the trouble is, that once you get into one of them you can’t quite scramble back out; it stays with you, even when you think you’re free. It’s a one-way gate, and for all I know I’m still in it *now*” (Dick *Stigmata* 185). Even after Leo is away from Eldritch, he still occasionally doubts his reality. Even though the users get some freedom, it is ultimately Eldritch who controls the construct.

Talking to Anne, a Neo-Christian, Barney tried to explain how he saw the thing that is Eldritch: “he can’t help us very much. Some, maybe. But he stands with empty, open hands; he understands, he wants to help. He tries, but ... it’s just not that simple. Maybe even he doesn’t know. Maybe it puzzles him too” (Dick *Stigmata* 216). Anne does not believe in a puzzled God but admits that she saw the stigmata in Barney and concludes: “it’s a price that we must pay. For our desire to undergo that drug experience with that Chew-Z. Like the apple originally” (Dick *Stigmata* 219). Perhaps this entity is as close as a hyperreality can get to having a god. Flawed, lost and uncertain, asking people to “perish for it” (Dick *Stigmata* 220), but at the same time wanting its users to experience satisfaction and fulfilment.

In the final scene of the novel, Leo is going after Eldritch in a ship with Felix Blau. While they are driving, Leo is still worried everything might be a simulation, especially when both of them notice the stigmata in each other, despite not taking Chew-Z. Leo decides that he is the one who will save everyone – he feels like he had lived enough years and gained experience due to the E Therapy. His confidence was high until Felix called him Leo three times, to which he responds: “Leo? How come you call me Leo”? (Dick *Stigmata* 230), like the characters did while in a simulated world. Then he explains that “it was just a temporary slip” (Dick *Stigmata* 230), signalling that something is wrong again. The novel ends with them driving towards Terra. The final scene can be interpreted in many ways. First one would be that Eldritch became even stronger, as he managed to get to Felix, who had never even used Chew-Z before. It could be Eldritch in Leo again, since Leo’s inner thoughts had a strange correlation with Eldritch – a wish to help and save people, along with the feeling of being ancient and having immense knowledge. The characters are driving to Earth, so it could truly be Eldritch changing his mind from Mars to Earth and deciding to conquer Earth as well. Or Leo is still in a simulation which has not stopped from the beginning. He would not be able to discern his natural reality from the fictive one that is Eldritch’s mind. What is certain is that Dick once

more blurs the lines between reality and fiction, leaving it up to the reader to decide. Lipecký concluded that “there is no ultimate truth, only a never-ending chain of models of reality. Dualism is not the answer anymore, and the boundaries between artificial and real have disappeared. Virtual environments and simulated events have become a part of our primary reality. The drug-induced experience is real, just as are dreams, altered states, or the feelings of androids, for example” (Lipecký 10). Taking this idea, but shifting it to Baudrillard’s belief that hyperreality is “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality” (Lane 86), then the characters are stranded in a world which is only reminiscent of what they believe to be real, but is in fact hyperreal from the beginning. Leo could spend the rest of his life wondering if he is still in a simulation, while Barney could continue seeing the stigmata in people. If one was to take the futures are correct, then the characters would be living with phantasms as a normal occurrence. The Proxers would worship Eldritch’s monument and scientists would try their best to explain the unnatural phenomena. But everyone, at least those who tried the drug might be left with a lifetime of ontological doubt, since what is real and what is fictive had been so intertwined that there is no longer an option to state where reality ends and fiction begins.

#### 6. *What constitutes the authentic human being?*

Second question which troubled Dick, *what constitutes the authentic human being?* is another which he wanted to answer. Apart from his novels, Dick’s essays are an excellent source of his thoughts and beliefs. In two essays, "The Android and the Human" (1972) and "Man, Android, and Machine" (1976), he wrote about the relationship between androids and humans. In the first one, he asks himself: “what is it, in our behavior, that we can call specifically human? That is special to us as a living species? And what is it that, at least up to now, we can consign as merely machine behavior, or, by extension, insect behavior, or reflex behavior?” (Dick in Sutin 130). Many of his novels have androids as characters and humans which have

either physical or mental differences from humans. Some could say that Dick's novels feature enhanced versions of humans, regular humans, and androids. In his fiction, he explored the relationship between human and android, often attributing one's expected traits to another and blurring the line of that is real, or human and what is fictive, or android, man-made.

Firstly, Dick himself wrote: "I have, in some of my stories and novels, written about androids or robots or simulacra -- the name doesn't matter; what is meant is artificial constructs masquerading as humans. Usually with a sinister purpose in mind" (Dick in Sutin 128, 129). The crucial information is that androids *masquerade* themselves as humans and that their purpose is not only to serve humans. He continues: "I suppose I took it for granted that if such a construct, a robot, for example, had a benign or anyhow decent purpose in mind, it would not need to so disguise itself ... The constructs do not mimic humans; they are, in many deep ways, actually human already. They are not trying to fool us, for a purpose of any sort; they merely follow lines we follow, in order that they, too, may overcome such common problems" (Dick in Sutin 129). After stating that they have a sinister purpose, Dick portrays them as humans, with their own problems, thus writing two contradictory thoughts in a single essay. Are androids only a mask, a simulacrum of humans with negative connotations or are they more like humans that we think? These contradictory thoughts could imply that Dick could not give a straight answer to his question. Thus, in his fiction, he created humans which at times act human-like and androids who possess more human traits than the humans themselves. The result is blurring of another line in his fiction – a line between human and non-human, with humans seen as *real* and non-human, android, or even *simulacra*, as Dick called it, as fictive.

Dick described what it means to be an android: "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. But you cannot turn a human into an android if that human is going to break laws every chance he gets. Androidization requires obedience. And, most of all,

predictability ... The android, like any other machine, must perform on cue'' (Dick in Sutin 133). However, from the beginning of the novel, Dick's androids are not obedient. They kill their masters on Mars to go back to Earth with hopes of staying undetected and live a life. However, it is precisely that disobedience, according to Dick, which makes them more human: ''as one of us acts godlike (gives his cloak to a stranger), a machine acts human when it pauses in its programmed cycle to defer to it by reason of a decision'' (Dick in Sutin 148). Once more Dick describes androids with contradictions, but perhaps that is correct for humans as well.

To connect his ideas in these essays to his fiction and try to answer the original question, one does not have to search further than his novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* The protagonist, Rick Deckard and his actions are placed in the opposition with thoughts and acts of androids and John R. Isidore, a semi-functioning human in a dystopian society. The society itself can be seen as hyperreal, given that they simulate real emotions through a machine and live under false ideals and notion of empathy. Once more Baudrillard's concepts overlap in Dick's fiction and offer another perspective on the society and the characters.

### 7.1. Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is perhaps one the most well-known Dick's novel with the main protagonist being Rick Deckard, a bounty hunter who retires – kills androids who escape from Mars and come to Earth. After World War Terminus, most of the population, especially those who were deemed physically and mentally capable of doing so, emigrated to Mars, since Earth became almost uninhabitable due to the radioactive dust. Deckard remained with his wife, Iran, leading a deeply unmotivated and dreadful life. He is only motivated by his job. The rest of the society on Earth is using Penfield, a mood organ which creates any emotion and mood they want, watch television, tend to their electric animals,

since there are barely any left and finally, fuse with Wilbur Mercer, their god-like figure to engage in collective suffering and sharing emotion.

Deckard gets a job offer to retire six androids, new and dangerous Nexus-6 models. They are hiding on Earth and Deckard decides to take the job to buy a real animal, since having real animals means that the owners are empathic, which differentiates them from androids and increases their status. Bounty hunters use the Voight-Kampff test to determine if someone is an android. The test measures empathic response to certain statements since androids are biologically almost indistinguishable from humans and only a bone marrow test can show if someone is an android. Deckard's first task is at the Rosen Association, a company which designs and produces androids. There, Deckard is supposed to test the newest Nexus-6 models. He meets Rachel Rosen, an android first presented to him as Rosen's niece. First, he develops an interest in her and later even feelings. In return, his perspective towards androids is changed.

Most people emigrated to the colonies, but some stayed, either because of nostalgia and hope that the dust might settle, or because they were not allowed to, such as John R. Isidore. People like him are seen as special, biologically unacceptable. The exposure to the dust made them mentally incapacitated. He lives in a building with thousand apartments, almost entirely in ruins. He works at a company which fixes broken electric animals and shows profound care for any animal, real or electric. His life changes when Pris Stratton, an android, moves in his building. Despite having troubles understanding who exactly she is, he develops feelings for her. However, she is one of the androids Deckard needs to retire. Throughout the novel, Deckard's attitude towards androids keeps changing and, in the end, he manages to retire all six Nexus-6 androids in 24 hours, becoming one of the most efficient bounty hunters. To do so, he went from finding a fake bounty hunter organisation, run by androids to sleeping with Rachel, feeling conflicted towards the end of the novel. He even managed to buy a real goat, which



Rachel killed, making him and his wife devastated. Despite his success, he feels like he cannot do his job anymore, finding respect for even android and electric life.

## 7.2. How to be human in a world of human-like androids?

In the novel, the opposition of the real and the fictive is evident in many dualities – androids and humans, humans and chickenheads, electric and real animals, real and simulated emotions, Mercerism and simulated faith and even a real society and what is left of that society - a hyperreal one. To all of these, a question of what constitutes an authentic human is crucial. Kinder provides excellent analysis in his article: “Violat[ing] Your Own Identity:” Animals, Humanity, and the hyper-reality of Empathy in Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* and Scott’s *Blade Runner*”. In it, he develops the idea that “Dick’s novel provides a commentary on the postmodern ambiguity of “humanity,” which is accomplished through Deckard’s commodification of animal life, as well as the use of mood organs and empathy boxes” (1). That postmodern ambiguity of humanity is especially problematic when put in opposition with the differences between humans and android.

The setting of *Androids* is dystopian, even more than the first two novels. In the beginning, Deckard and Iran are quarrelling about using Penfield, an artificial brain stimulator also called a mood organ. Penfield is used to dial and artificially create any emotion or mood they want. One can even dial a mood to dial, a mood to watch television, despite what is on, or dial a six-hour self-accusatory depression, like Iran does. “What, then, is to be made of the status of emotions, if all emotion can be dialled in and simulated through a mood organ, thus ruining the human spontaneity of emotion?” (Kinder 5). What can be made from that is that if emotion, something so natural and innate, can be simulated and viewed as normal, what else can be simulated and replaced? Kinder further problematises “the definition of “being human”

in a world that increasingly relies on simulation to the point where differentiating between “real” and simulation is both almost impossible and certainly futile” (10). Iran explains a profound moment she experienced: “So although I head the emptiness intellectually, I didn’t feel it. My first reaction consisted of being grateful that we could afford a Penfield moon organ. But then I realised how unhealthy it was, sensing the absence of life, not just in this building, but everywhere”... “So I put it (self-accusatory depression) on my schedule twice a month; I think that’s a reasonable amount of time to feel hopeless about everything, about staying here on Earth after everybody who’s smart emigrates, don’t you think?” (Dick *Androids* 3). Her need for the self-accusatory depression is justified, but is nevertheless a fictive emotion, created by the machine. How much sense does it make to force such a deep emotion, instead of it coming naturally and how far can creating emotion go? There is no simple answer, but Penfield would respond to the third order – simulating emotions using technology.

The reason she feels that emptiness is because majority emigrated, since Earth is becoming uninhabitable due to the environmental issues after a World War Terminus. Even a commercial on television claims: “emigrate or degenerate! -the choice is yours!” (Dick *Androids* 5). Everything on Earth is covered by dust, which causes major health issues and long-term exposure can even cause people to be called *specials*: “Once pegged as special, a citizen, even if accepting sterilization, dropped out of history” (Dick *Androids* 12). John Isidore, another major character, is one of those people. He is a special, due to his physical and health problems and a chickenhead, due to not passing “the minimum mental faculties test” (Dick *Androids* 14) and stands in the opposition with Deckard, due to his empathy towards all life, real and artificial. Despite being a chickenhead, he also feels the void around him, especially in the desolated building where he lives alone, hoping for a company.

Like in *Three Stigmata*, there are people who are still on Earth and those who were able to emigrate. The ones left on Earth, at least according to Isidore, Deckard and his life, seem to

be living in the remains of the previous society, leading a life wishing to be back in the previous Earth, but do not seem to have any motivation to live on Earth either. What they are motivated by is the mood organ, electric animals, and fusing with Mercerism, with last two supposed to be proving that they have empathy, a crucial aspect in the differentiating between human and android. However, those three are not enough since humans act in a way which would be expected from androids. The absurdity of the new society is evident in the fact that “no one today remembered why the war had come about or who, if anyone, had won.” (Dick *Androids* 11). They accepted the world as it is and continue living their mostly empty lives, focusing of material and on empathy, which they only understand in theory. Thus, one might conclude that the society is, in fact, hyperreal. The society’s need for using simulations, be it in a form of simulated emotions or the whole Mercerian experience, is leading the society to a point where their humanism is less authentic than that of the machines which they created. The media have a role in this novel as well. Isidore and Iran watch Buster Friendly, a TV host who is on TV 46 hours a day, making Isidore believe that he is immortal, while he is simply an android. He is a source of information and the society believe him blindly, as Isidore does: “never in his life had he heard of such a thing. Buster Friendly, for instance, had never mentioned it” (Dick *Androids* 117). Thus, again does again “all media and the official news service only exist to maintain the illusion of actuality” (Baudrillard 71).

Apart from the mood organs, society is extremely focused on Mercerism, a religion which they follow. Although it was not really specified as a religion, all points to it being a religious-like experience. The sole purpose of it existing can best be explained through Hayles’s words: “in *Do Androids Dream*, a compelling “proof” of the official ideology that androids occupy a category ontologically distinct from that of humans is the fact that androids cannot experience fusion with Mercer, a quasi-religious figure who appears when a human grips the handles of the empathy box” (Hayles *Posthuman* 175). Indeed, it is claimed (by humans,

naturally), that it is only humans who can have this experience, meaning that they have empathy and are different from androids: “an android, no matter how gifted as to pure intellectual capacity, could make no sense out of the fusion which took place routinely among the followers of Mercerism-an experience which he, and virtually everyone else, including subnormal chickenheads, managed with no difficulty” (Dick *Androids* 24).

It is unclear why they want to differentiate themselves so badly from androids. Perhaps the growing manufacturing has led to “the subject also gone, since identical duplication puts an end to his division” (Baudrillard 67), so humans feel threatened by the fact that androids are biologically identical counterparts who can easily replace them. Admitting that they are human means acknowledging that the human race is no longer unique and that something mechanical and man-made is of same value as human. Thus, Mercerism is convenient and everyone should have their empathy box and connect to it to experience what others are feeling. During that simulation, which is the closest explanation for it, people can see Wilbur Mercer, a martyr who is trying to climb a hill while being hit by rocks. Occasionally, when people detach from the handles after being hit, they have actual cuts and it is even said that when Mercer gets closer to the top of the hill, older people can die from the stress of the experience. Mercer shares his wisdom and teachings, most of which are related to the idea that it is important to connect to emotions and life around them and to condemn killing anyone else but killers. Isidore and Iran are both religiously following Mercerism, with Isidore explaining: “but an empathy box 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” (Dick *Androids* 53). However, since Isidore feels lonely throughout the novel, Mercerism does not solve that problem permanently. Hayles noticed a paradox: “the paradox is written into Mercerism through the ambiguities it generates between self and other. The moment a human grasps the empathy box, his consciousness fuses with that of unknown and unnamed others. He is both alone and in company, cut off from his

surroundings and in emotional communication with other human beings” (Hayles *Posthuman* 177). Later in the novel, when Deckard gets a real goat, Iran wants to connect with others as soon as possible to share her emotion; she feels like “it would be immoral to keep it for ourselves.” (Dick *Androids* 136). However, Kinder thinks that “fundamental aspects of human life in *Do Androids Dream* are directly at odds with the foundations of Mercerism” (Kinder 2) due to owning money for status, killing androids for money, without even thinking about them being similar to humans while claiming that they are empathic. What Dick “reveals is the rift and conflict between the theory and practice of Mercerism—through the economic consumption of animals and the simulation of the very emotions that are integral to the promotion of the ideology used to justify the subjugation of androids” (Kinder 10).

However, in the end, Mercerism is shown as fake, exposed by the androids because it claims that empathy is the reason why they cannot be human. If Mercerism is a hoax, created in a studio and Mercer is played by an old alcoholic, they could be seen as human. However, Isidore still believes in Mercer and has a vision of him giving him a spider previously mutilated by androids. At first, Deckard seemed to be having problems grasping the concept completely, until the end, when he not only understands, but *becomes* Mercer. After retiring all androids, he went to the outskirts and tried to climb up a hill, ending up having a similar experience like Mercer, making him more understanding towards Mercerism and life in general.

The most problematic aspect is the purpose of Mercerism in the first place, which is to differentiate between androids and humans. The person who acted Mercer’s role admitted to doing so, but that does not stop the characters from believing. Mercer himself gave Deckard the crucial advice which made him continue with the killings and re-thinking his beliefs: "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"

(Dick *Androids* 141). Deckard changes, so the first violation to his identity is when he starts feeling empathy towards androids. The second time is when he retires the androids despite feeling like it is a wrong thing to do, violating his identity once again.

Empathy is like a motif which is present in every opposition. Its significance is in the fact that humans possess it and androids not and almost everything humans do is to prove to others, and to themselves as well, that they are empathic. It is said that “empathy, evidently, existed only within the human community, whereas intelligence to some degree could be found throughout every phylum and order including the arachnids” (Dick *Androids* 24). Thus, humans own empathy boxes and connect through Mercer and own animals, electric or preferably real to show empathy. The problem is, they are neglecting the empathy for other humans and for electric animals and even androids. Nobody claimed that empathy for them means less empathy in general; if anything, empathising with androids and electric animals seem to show even a greater scope of empathy. But that does not happen, at least not in the case of Deckard. Dick wonders: “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. We mean, basically, someone who does not care about the fate that his fellow living creatures fall victim to; he stands detached, a spectator, acting out by his indifference John Donne's theorem that "No man is an island," but giving the theorem a twist: That which is a mental and moral island is not a man” (Dick in Sutin 148). This thought perfectly corresponds to him, while a chickenhead such as Isidore is capable of feeling that “the world needs more empathy” (Dick *Androids* 59).

Owning animals is perhaps the best way to show empathy. It is ironic in the first place that by trying to be empathic, people end up being materialistic and only focused on what the others will say and think. Deckard explains: “to say, “Is your sheep genuine?” would be worst breach of manners than to inquire whether a citizen’s teeth, hair, or internal organs would test out authentic” (Dick *Androids* 5). If someone would not have an animal, they could be

subjected to criticism by others: ‘‘You know how people are about not taking care of an animal; they consider it immoral and anti-empathic’’ (Dick *Androids* 9).

Electric animals look as similar to the real ones as possible: ‘‘This had always amazed him, these "disease" circuits built into false animals; the construct which he now held on his lap had been put together in such a fashion that when a primary component misfired, the whole thing appeared-not broken-but organically ill’’ (Dick *Androids* 57). People take them to veterinarians when sick despite being real or electric. Animals can be seen as simulacra, which refer to the real phenomena, but in turn mark only the absence, since the real animals have been extinct. For example, owls were the first ones that went extinct, but when Deckard gets to the Rosen Association, they offer him an owl, falsely claiming that it is a real one. Thus, the electric owl really does mark the absence of real owls, since they can never exist again. The electric animals are the only way to exist for some species. If it can be called existing.

One of the biggest problems is that ‘‘animals are treated as commodities rather than as part of living nature with whom humans share being’’ (Vint 119). They are more like a status symbol, not something which requires care. There is a Sydney’s catalogue which people browse for buying real animals. If they are extinct, there is an E next to the animal. The prices of real animals are incredibly high. Deckard only owns one animal; an electric sheep and he does not want to admit to others that it is an electric one since the real one died. Deckard explains that once, he had a sheep, but it died, so he had an exact copy of the sheep made. Since then, he had been maintaining for it, but it is not exactly the same: ‘‘you feel the same doing it; you have to keep your eye on it exactly as you did when it was really alive. Because they break down and then everyone in the building knows. I’ve had it at the repair shop six times, mostly little malfunctions, but if anyone saw them-for instance one time the voice tape broke or anyhow got fouled and it wouldn’t stop baaing-they’d recognize it as a *mechanical* breakdown.” (Dick *Androids* 9). Furthermore, he says: ‘‘owning and maintaining a fraud had a way of gradually

demoralising’’ (Dick *Androids* 6). He is strongly driven by the idea of buying an animal. From the beginning, he is portrayed as looking through the windows in the store, often going through Sydney’s catalogue, trying to haggle for a better price or asking about the cost of making an artificial animal of a real one he had just seen. He never really wanted to care for the animal; almost exclusively his thoughts were just purely about wanting to own any real animal so that the others could see it.

Isidore works as a driver at the veterinarians. Once, he mistakes a living for an electric animal and hears its cries: ‘‘Funny, he thought; even though I know rationally it’s faked the sound of a false animal burning out its drive-train and power supply ties my stomach in knots’’ (Dick *Androids* 57). Isidore possesses an incredible amount of empathy and he feels terrible after that animal dies, finding out how much the owner cared for it. He is comforted by the following words: ‘‘The fakes are beginning to be darn near real, what with those disease circuits they’re building into the new ones. And living animals do die; that’s one of the risks in owning them. We’re just not used to it because all we see are fakes’’ (62). Seeing fakes and not being able to distinguish the real from the fake is precisely the occurring topic in the novel. People get confused when they find a real animal since they are so rare. Other problem is the fact that the fakes, the simulacra are extremely faithful and convincing copies. The technology is so advanced that it is possible to create animals and robots so similar to the real ones that it takes specially trained people to determine which are real and which not. That is the same problem with androids – it is hard to distinguish the real from the fake, like Lipecký explained: ‘‘the problem with simulacra lies in the fact that the more advanced the technology of replication and production is, the harder it is to distinguish between a simulacrum and the authentic’’ (9).

Baudrillard wrote about animals and claimed that ‘‘in order to be raised in a healthy manner, it is now necessary to be always concerned with the mental equilibrium of the animals.’’ And he foresees the time when one will send animals, like people, to the country, to restore



their mental equilibrium” (86). Animals should have the power to help humans feel better, but sadly, it is not what happens in the beginning. Baudrillard also wrote: “animals were only demoted to the status of inhumanity as reason and humanism progressed” (87), which is also true. Animals have lost their sense and purpose, mostly because they lost their habitat and are kept as a commodity. Both views correspond to Vint’s ideas that “the humans in the novel cannot be effectively distinguished from the androids precisely because their humanity, their species being, has been alienated through a disruption of their relationship to nature: the animals thus provide the key to healing this alienation, but only in humans can develop the proper attitude toward them, a non-commodity form, non-exchange-value ethic of care” (122). This also corresponds to Baudrillard’s ideas since he blamed the reversal of the use-value as one of the reasons for the creation of the hyperreal society. Thus, in order to regain humanity, humans must be in touch with nature and animals, which is evident in the end of the novel, where Deckard begins to realise the importance of animals and admits that “the electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are” (Dick *Androids* 191). In the end, Deckard almost dialled long deserved peace in his mood organ, just like Iran suggested, but ended up falling asleep on his own before he could dial it, meaning that he did find peace, real one.

Deckard thought about correlation between animals and androids: “he thought, too, about his need for a real animal; within him an actual hatred once more manifested itself toward his electric sheep, which he had to tend, had to care about, as if it lived. The tyranny of an object, he thought. It doesn't know I exist. Like the androids, it had no ability to appreciate the existence of another. He had never thought of this before, the similarity between an electric animal and an andy. The electric animal, he pondered, could be considered a subform of the other, a kind of vastly inferior robot. Or, conversely, the android could be regarded as a highly developed, evolved version of the ersatz animal. Both viewpoints repelled him” (Dick *Androids* 34). Both man-made and part of his everyday life, Deckard is fairly influenced by those two.

The androids were called "the Synthetic Freedom Fighter", which served in the war (Dick *Androids* 12), later used as "the mobile donkey engine of the colonization program" (Dick *Androids* 12). Emigrants got one when getting to colonies: "the manufacture of androids, in fact, has become so linked to the colonization effort that if one dropped into ruin, so would the other in time" (Dick *Androids* 36). There were even commercials on television, advertising them as commodity. Pris explains how it was to live on Mars: "We came back because nobody should have to live there. It wasn't conceived for habitation, at least not within the last billion years. It's so old. You feel it in the stones, the terrible old age. Anyhow, at first I got drugs from Roy; I lived for that new synthetic pain-killer, that silenizine. And then I met Horst Hartman, who at that time ran a stamp store, rare postage stamps; there's so much time on your hands that you've got to have a hobby, something you can pore over endlessly. And Horst got me interested in pre-colonial fiction" (Dick *Androids* 119). Even for androids, the life was difficult. The drugs offered some escape, like they do in *Thee Stigmata*, but ultimately, that does not make it easier. People were reading science fiction before colonisation period to enjoy the visions of the colonies different from what they are experiencing. People pay for the books to be brought from the deserted libraries on Earth, using literature as a form of escapism. In the end, nobody is happy and not only is "the reality of simulation is unbearable" (Baudrillard 27); but also "the reality described by Dick is devastating" (Pagetti 27). For androids, that is especially accurate since, while on Mars, they participated "in the social realm of human relations (legally) only as objects. In this view they are not objects improperly treated as if they were social beings but are social beings improperly treated as if they were objects" (Hayles *Posthuman* 169), while on Earth they are being hunted down and killed.

The efficiency of a bounty hunter's job lies in the correct administering of the Voight-Kampff test, a test used to measure empathic response. Androids give "formally correct, but simulated answers" (Dick *Androids* 39). The issue with the test is that it is a possibility that it

might be wrong – schizophrenics might be identified as androids and if all androids cannot be correctly identified, how will they be able to find all of them? Eldon Rosen claims: "your police department-others as well-may have retired, very probably have retired, authentic humans with underdeveloped empathic ability ... Your position, Mr. Deckard, is extremely bad morally. Ours isn't" (Dick *Androids* 43). However, there were more tests throughout the years and ultimately, they change as the new models change. The reason why such test is the best option is because in a way, they are human: "legally you're not. But really you are. Biologically. You're not made out of transistorized circuits like a false animal; you're an organic entity." And in two years, he thought, you'll wear out and die. Because we never solved the problem of cell replacement, as you pointed out" (Dick *Androids* 155). Androids can last up to four years. Their mind is not the issue; their body is. It is counterintuitive how 'androids are like a commodity, but actually virtually indistinguishable from humans (Hayles 'Schizoid' 429) and 'unless their identity as android is known, each is treated like a human instead of an inert object of technology' (Sims 72). Another option for testing is a bone marrow test. What complicates everything is that sometimes even the androids themselves do not know that they are androids due to the memory implants, resulting in disbelief and doubt.

Androids possess self-awareness which even humans do not possess at times: "An android," he said, "doesn't care what happens to any other android. That's one of the indications we look for" (Dick *Androids* 80), explained Deckard to Luba Luft, an android who Deckard was supposed to retire. She was working as an opera singer and possessed immense talent. She feels like a simulacrum: "I really don't like androids. Ever since I got here from Mars my life has consisted of imitating the human, doing what she would do, acting as if I had the thoughts and impulses a human would have. Imitating, as far as I'm concerned, a superior life form" (Dick *Androids* 106). Imitating, being a persuasive simulacrum is the best she can do, considering that she will never be seen as human, as original and real. In an essay, Dick admitted

that “their behavior frightens me, especially when it imitates human behavior so well that I get the uncomfortable sense that these things are trying to pass themselves off as humans but are not ... a thing somehow generated to deceive us in a cruel way, to cause us to think it to be one of ourselves” (Dick in Sutin 147). Thus, Luba’s behaviour is deeply unsettling, at least for Dick, despite all her efforts only being a means of survival.

Luba started complaining when Deckard administered the test. Upon hearing how cold Deckard talks about retiring them, she told him: "then you must be an android" (Dick *Androids* 80). The idea of Deckard being an android brings back ontological uncertainty, for Deckard himself and for the reader. Deckard took the test years ago, but it could be a memory implant, as Luba suggests. However, he takes the test at one point and he is human. That uncertainty is further developed when he finds “a phantom, hallucinatory, non-existent police agency allegedly operating out of the old departmental headquarters on Lombard” (Dick *Androids* 94), operated by androids who simulate the exact job Deckard does – claiming that he is on their list as androids. Finally, Deckard manages to retire androids from his list, but that part of the novel is the perfect example of what Dick does the best – make readers re-think everything they thought they know until that moment, expecting another twist with what the and the fictive.

The biggest twist in the novel is the character of Rachel. She offered help to Deckard but before retiring the last three androids, they met in a hotel room. They had a plan that she would help him kill the other androids, but after sleeping with him, she admits that she is an android who sleeps with the bounty hunters in hope that they would no longer be able to kill. She explains that she had done that nine times before, leaving Deckard feeling tricked and used and, above all, deeply disturbed. Despite that, he kills them all, including Pris - identical model like Rachel is. As a revenge, Rachel kills his real goat. Dick mentioned her in one of his essays: “I write about them (androids) constantly. Sometimes they themselves do not know they are androids. Like Rachael Rosen, they can be pretty but somehow lack something” (Dick in Sutin

147). Like other androids, she possesses the coldness and the intellect, but what is really lacking is, as one android described: "it would seem we lack a specific talent you humans possess. I believe it's called empathy" (Dick *Androids* 98).

Despite being challenged, even Isidore managed to notice that there is something different in Pris, the android who moved into his building: "the girl shook off the request effortlessly and he noticed that, perceived it without understanding it. 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" (Dick *Androids* 54). This was how he managed to perceive androids. Later, with Roy Baty, his insincere smile bothered Isidore. Isidore's "hunch" is apparent later, when Roy and Irmgard Baty, also androids, join Pris to hide: "they're all strange. He sensed it without being able to finger it. As if a peculiar and malign abstractness pervaded their mental processes. Except, perhaps, for Pris; certainly, she was radically frightened. Pris seemed almost right, almost natural. But – " (Dick *Androids* 124). That "but" is something which he has troubles understanding, but he later realises, feeling proud of himself what they are: "you're androids," Isidore said. But he didn't care; it made no difference to him. "I see why they want to kill you," he said. "Actually you're not alive." Everything made sense to him, now. The bounty hunter, the killing of their friends, the trip to Earth, all these precautions" (Dick *Androids* 129). Isidore is one of the most interesting characters in the novel, showing profound care, empathy and understanding. Pagetti believed that "the most human of the human beings is perhaps the semi-deficient Isidore" (29). That is confirmed when Isidore, after realising they are androids, says: "But what does it matter to me? I mean, I'm a special; they don't treat me very well either, like for instance I can't emigrate." (Dick *Androids* 129). Not only does Isidore not have a problem with them being androids, he feels the similarity between them. At the same time, he equals

them with a human, and compares himself with androids. Both are true, with him being “the most Mercerist of any character in the novel” (Kinder 8) – all life is and should be equally valuable and have equal rights, evident in a conversation: “but you see,” Pris said, “if you're not human, then it's all different.” “That's not true. Even animals—even eels and gophers and snakes and spiders—are sacred” (Dick *Androids* 128). Perhaps believing that all life is sacred helps him being sure that he is worthy as well, despite others degrading him. However, he is incapable of understanding that androids, to come from Mars had to kill their masters, so perhaps his attitude would change, since that would make androids The Killers, justifying killing them.

Isidore’s attitude even managed to make Roy, the most intimidating of all androids say: “If he was an android,” Roy said heartily, “he'd turn us in about ten tomorrow morning. He'd take off for his job and that would be it. I'm overwhelmed with admiration.” His tone could not be deciphered; at least Isidore could not crack it. “And we imagined this would be a friendless world, a planet of hostile faces, all turned against us” (Dick *Androids* 130). Isidore is shown as a lesser version of human, not being able to emigrate and often ridiculed. The androids are, naturally, below him, since he is a human after all, but he can be compared to them. How androids think that humans perceive them is sad, but true: “It's a chance anyway, breaking free and coming here to Earth, where we're not even considered animals. Where every worm and wood louse is considered more desirable than all of us put together” (Dick *Androids* 98).

Furthermore, Dick wrote: “the constructs do not mimic humans; they are, in many deep ways, actually human already” (Dick in Sutin 129). This could point to the dual nature of the androids, where they are human-made and artificial, but sometimes act and seem strangely human, which is the reason why it is so difficult to draw a line between the real and the fictive. Hayles believes that “the androids and simulacra of Dick's fiction include characters who are empathic, rebellious, determined to define their own goals, and as strongly individuated as the humans whose world they share” (Hayles *Posthuman* 164). One could argue that the androids

are even more strongly individuated, since they are not using mood organs for emotions and they do not use a fake and fictive religion to justify their humanity, their acts are human enough to make division between humans and androids hard to determine.

Humans, or at least Deckard and the other bounty hunter, Phil Resch, are portrayed as lacking basic human traits, such as empathy. Resch also slept with Rachel but did not change his attitude afterwards. Deckard tells him that "you don't kill the way I do; you don't try to Hell," he said, "I know what it is. You like to kill. All you need is a pretext. If you had a pretext you'd kill me" (Dick *Androids* 110). Thus, Resch is "worse" human, not even allowing the thought of androids being human. Deckard realises: "I'm capable of feeling empathy for at least specific, certain androids. Not for all of them but-one or two." For Luba Luft, as an example, he said to himself. So I was wrong. There's nothing unnatural or unhuman about Phil Resch's reactions; it's me" (Dick *Androids* 113). He is still troubled by the sudden realisation, caused by the simple fact that he was attracted to female androids.

Furthermore, Kinder sees "the usage of the mood organ as a norm, while the android threatens the difference between 'real' and 'imaginary', according to Baudrillard" (5), which is ironic. When humans use simulated emotions, that does not make them closer to androids but when androids show profound understanding, intelligence and even care for each other, or at least for their survival, which is more than humans do, androids are still inferior in every way and in no way perceived as human. Lipecký wonders whether "artificial worlds or beings mere simulacra without any rights compared to their real world counterparts? (6). The answer, sadly, is yes, at least from the perspective of humans. It is interesting that they do not even know that androids come to Earth but are still so determined to present themselves in the opposition to androids. Hayles noted that defining the human by juxtaposing it with artificial life forms" (Hayles "Schizoid" 422), but also that it is always humans who make a decision of who qualifies as an "authentic" human (Hayles *Posthuman* 162). Androids could not have any

impact in deciding who is authentic human and who not. From that perspective, how valid and objective could the answer to the question of what constitutes an authentic human be?

Kinder's statement that "the hyper-reality of empathy—an emotion that is integral to Mercerism—reveals the problematic in hierarchically structuring a society based on strict definitions of emotive abilities" (6) can be seen as a part of the answer to the question of an authentic human. Due to discrimination in the society, which does not even perceive androids as human, it is difficult to accept that kind of human behaviour as positive and empathic. Even Rachel at one point admitted feeling something like empathy towards Pris and towards the rest of her kind, even though they can turn each other in without feeling guilty.

On the other hand, the lack of connection between humans is also reminiscent of the android coldness. It is especially evident in Deckard's and Iran's relationship. At one point, he thinks: "most androids I've known have more vitality and desire to live than my wife. She has nothing to give me" (Dick *Androids* 75, 76). His wife seemed fully dependant on the use of the mood organs and without interest for anything other than television. However, in the end, there is a development in their relationship and a step towards mutual understanding. One could say that they manage to resemble proper humans. To conclude, In his conveniently named chapter, *If the Universe Isn't Real, How Should We Treat Other People?*, Butler wrote a very interesting sentence: "Dick's fictions demand that we recognize and demonstrate our own humanity, by showing our concern for the other?" (Butler in Wittkower 290). This is precisely what Deckard was lacking from the beginning and what Isidore always had, but Dick also presented hope that is possible to gain at least some level of humanity. Thinking about androids, Deckard wonders: "do androids dream? Rick asked himself. Evidently; that's why they occasionally kill their employers and flee here. A better life, without servitude." (Dick *Androids* 145). After all, they are led with deeply human motivation – to live a normal life.



Kinder explains that the novel explores not the process of, but the immediacy of the dehumanization and androidization of humanity” (Kinder 1). What humans are doing is putting themselves in opposition with androids and even chickenheads and claiming that they are empathic, which makes them human and the rest not as human as them. However, “androids (as well as “chickenheads”) are, in a traditional sense, the most human, while the “humans” are left to rely on machinery to simulate and perpetuate their own version of humanity” (Kinder 2). In the end, an authentic human would have traits from humans, androids and chickenheads and create a true empathic being that cares for all life.

To conclude, “consistently in his fictions, androids are associated with unstable boundaries between self and world” (Hayles *Posthuman* 160). Despite difficulties with establishing what exactly makes a human being, there is a solution – “Deckard needs to overcome the idea of human self as separate from nature and master over it and the triumph of commodity logic as human’s relationship to the world” (Vint 121). Judging by the ending, hope is possible and accepting the world as it is can lead to a better life.

### 7.3. Real and ‘fake’ humans in *Ubik* and *Three Stigmata*

Dick’s blurred lines of real and fictive include even humans, as seen in *Androids*, where a human, Isidore was not perceived as completely human due to his mental capacities, which were much lower than the rest. Thus, despite being human, he did not have the same rights to emigrate as “proper” humans did.

The division of real and fake humans is evident in *Ubik* and *Three Stigmata* as well. In both novels, there are people with psi talents divided into special categories according to their specific talent. In *Three Stigmata*, there are only precogs, people with precognitive talents, and *Ubik*, which was written later, has more developed and diverse psi talents. There are precogs,

anti-precogs, anti-animators, anti-telepaths and anti-parakineticists. People with psi talents are useful and people are able to make a living out of their skills. In the societies, there seem to be no prejudice towards people with talents, but they really do not fall in the same category as other humans in the novel. However, they and their skills are problematic, as they blur the line of the reality, so it would be possible to wonder whether they can be seen as *enhanced* humans or the ones which do not fall under the same category as real humans.

First, in *Ubik*, Runciter's company employs people with anti-psi talents which then nullify the talents of people with psi talents, which belong to the company of Hollis, their rival and a man behind the explosion on Luna. Joe explains that "the anti-psi factor is a natural restoration of ecological balance" (Dick *Ubik* 30). In other words, anti-psi "prey on the psis, and the psis are life forms that prey on the Norms. That makes you a friend on the Norm class. Balance, the full circle, predator and prey" (Dick *Ubik* 31). Psis can intervene in the life of normal people and then they would need the powers of the anti-psi to help them nullify the effects of psis. And people pay very well for that. That way, it is a full circle – anti-psi help psis make a living.

While precogs see varieties of future and pick one, anti-precog makes all futures equally real: he "aborts his talent to choose at all" (Dick *Ubik* 33), Pat can change the present by changing a past decision and by doing so, her abilities are one of the reasons why the reality is unstable. Despite other talents reminding of superpowers, hers is by far the most unnatural one. There is no information in the novel what and how other people feel toward precogs or whether they are looked down upon or if people feel intimidated by them. They are different from the rest and in *Ubik*, at least, it is evident that, despite the talents not seeming dangerous to the rest of the humanity, changing the decisions already done brings free will into question. From this perspective, at least some talents would put psis above normal humans because of the capability to influence people.

In *Three Stigmata*, there are only precogs and they are used in the business of “consulting the future” whether an item will be popular or not. On one occasion, Leo asked Roni to predict future, despite it not being her job. It is also not clear how much do the precogs use their ability, especially outside work, since they could be using it for almost anything they want. Barney mentioned that he has a feeling about the future and that it makes some decisions easier. However, it may seem that Barney is not making full use of his talent, like Roni is, who, when she found out that Leo will kill Eldritch in the future, decided to blackmail Leo into getting a promotion.

Because of technological advancement, there are precogs who are created during an E Therapy, a controversial procedure done by German scientist Denkmal in Switzerland, described as “an acceleration of the natural evolutionary process” (Dick *Ubik* 66). When Richard makes a business deal with a man from Chew-Z, he decides to take Emily and him to the session, believing that it will increase their status and make them a precog. The therapy stimulates the brain and after the procedure, people should have precognitive skills, along with an enlarged forehead, which is why others mockingly call them bubbleheads. A problematic aspect of the therapy is the fact that people can regress during it, but Richard decides to take the changes thinking it would probably be him regressing and not Emily, but it is the other way around. The scene where Richard gets the therapy is fascinating, since the reader can track the development of his thoughts to the more profound one – when he realises that he had done wrong for Emily, but it was too late.

A precog who completed the therapy successfully is Leo Bulero. He is extremely proud of that but disapproves when someone calls him a bubblehead. One might ask, what are the precogs created by the E Therapy, real or fake precogs? They are artificially created, paying for being enhanced. If one asks “why do we value natural more, is technology natural?” (Sims 68), the answer would not be so simple. Yes, the talent is real, but if the problem is it being

natural or artificially made, then the answer might be that fake precogs are indeed simulacra. ‘‘The argument runs that a "simulated" hold-up will be punished for either falling short of success or being too successful, but never for being a simulation itself’’ (Lane 123), meaning that the performance of a simulation is extremely important. They perform excellently and are almost indistinguishable from the real precogs, with only difference being physical. Some day in the future, as Leo saw, almost everyone will look like that, meaning that there will be more fake than real precogs. The E Therapy being more widely accessible would mean that ultimately, the ‘‘normal’’ humans would cease to exist and everyone would be precog, placing a precog as the normal and as the real, and leaving space for something new which could stand in opposition to that as fictive.

One of the most ambiguous characters in these three novels is Palmer Eldritch. Since he returned from Prox system, nobody was sure if he came back as a god, alien or human. Ultimately, it seems like he is a combination of all three, with his cybernetic enhancements, or the three stigmata. Those enhancements are as well something not natural to the humans, but they are used to prolong life. Nobody has the perspective of people with enhancements being unnatural, but with Palmer Eldritch, the stigmata are symbolic and ominous, making him seem even more inhuman.

*Three Stigmata* depicts another dubious life form -phantasms. To the people who see them, they are ghosts, almost fictive and imaginary, but the characters who experience it feel as real and doubt that the rest is fictive. That is problematic since the characters do not know what they can believe when they see the future, as Leo and Barney did. On the other hand, those from the future explain that they were seeing phantasms for a long time since there needed to be a long withdrawal time. So, for them the phantasms were fictive, remnants from the past.

## 8. Conclusion

Among Dick's 44 novels and 121 short stories, the questions of "what is reality?" and "what constitutes the authentic human being"? (Dick in Sutin 182) strongly appear in three - *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. Both in his fiction and in his essays, Dick never provides a simple or a straightforward answer, blurring the lines of the real and the fictive and leaves it to the reader to interpret his fiction. The postmodern critic Jean Baudrillard focused on reality, or the lack of it in the society and despite barely commenting on Dick's works, the correlations between their ideas are uncanny. Taking his notion of hyperreality and the loss of reality and using it to analyse the novels provides a different perspective on the events and characters already lost between the realities.

In *Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, the quest for reality ends with more questions than answers, leaving the reader wondering which reality the characters are in long after the books are finished. Dick gives hints throughout the novels which help with dividing the real and the fictive and provides an explanation for the events, just to create an ending which will baffle the reader once more. After feeling that the events have untangled, Dick once again shifts the readers into uncertainty, as he, for the final time, completely destroys the difference between the real and the fictive.

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Dick created characters which are human, but so deeply lacking humanity that the androids they create seem more human. He makes the reader wonder how to perceive the characters so fixated on differentiating themselves from the androids and discriminated humans, like chickenheads, that they fail to notice that they are the ones who are beginning to lack the real human traits. Androids deserve more to be called human than the actual humans in the novel. Ultimately, there would be no separating human and android when establishing what makes an authentic human since an authentic human would be

comprised of both android and human traits, along with the chickenhead, Isidore, being the most human while still discriminated against by both humans and androids.

To conclude, if a reader wants to experience a story with flawed human characters, often lacking humanity to the point where androids seem more human in a society set in a future dystopian world where it is impossible to establish the lines between the real and the fictive, human and android and even life and death, Philip K. Dick's fiction is the perfect choice. James and Mendelsohn stated that "beyond the end of the seventies, the prescient spirit of Dick invited a new generation of sf innovators towards a postmodern gesture: deep ontological doubt, a profound questioning of every reality claim" (62). It is precisely that deep ontological doubt and profound questioning that make his novels so thought-provoking and impossible to put down until the books are finished. Judging by Dick's thought: "the very best science fiction ultimately winds up being a collaboration between author and reader, in which both create - and enjoy doing it: Joy is the essential and final ingredient of science fiction, the joy of discovery of newness" (Dick in Sutin 78), that is perhaps what Dick enjoyed the most – providing a puzzle which the readers have to piece together and interpret, constantly wondering whether they are on the right track, but still immensely enjoying the process.

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