

Gabriel Cutrufello

“Reprogramming [In]Human Reality in Philip K. Dick's "The Electric Ant”

Published in 1969, “The Electric Ant”¹ is a continuation of Philip K. Dick’s thematic exploration of what constitutes an authentic “human” and an inauthentic “android” explored in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, published in 1968. Furthermore, the story also explores what Scott Bukatman calls “seeing through the spectacle,”² a theme rampant in Dick’s later work such as *Ubik*. The spectacle as limiting device for reality becomes a contested sight of subjectivity in Dick’s work. It is the totalizing system in which the individual resides; however, unlike the shifting reality presented in Plato’s “The Allegory of the Cave,” there is no eventual solid ground state outside of the spectacle to define oneself. In “The Electric Ant,” a solution to this problem is not presented; rather, the problematic nature of battling a totalizing system of the spectacle is rendered.

The imagery employed in “The Electric Ant” is a complex merging of Dick’s own technological vision of science-fiction artifacts, brain-mapping work of the late 1950s and the metaphors used at the time to describe it, and a unique use of the interplay between light and dark that calls to mind Plato’s “The Allegory of the Cave.”³ Through the merging of these disparate elements, the story becomes a sympathetic presentation of the “android” individual struggling to emerge into its own subjectivity through a literal recreation of its reality. The reified construct of the electric ant, Garson Poole becomes the struggle to redefine the individual outside of the relationship to a corporate entity.

Mr. Garson Poole, successful president of the Tri-Plan Electronics Corporation, discovers by accident that he is an electric ant — slang for an organic robot. Once he learns of this fact, he begins a literal, inward journey of discovery as he seeks to alter the “reality-supply construct” located in his chest. Experimentation with this device creates a variety of results, which range from the deletion of physical aspects of his reality to new insertions of unexpected people and things. The final upshot of Poole’s experiments is his complete physical destruction which results in a paradoxical destruction of everyone else’s shared reality.

Coming on the heels of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, “The Electric Ant” offers a similar series of questions about the nature of being “human.” At times, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* seems erratic in its choice of characters with whom to sympathize. Indeed, the focus shifts radically from Deckard to Rachel and at one point to the psychopathic android Roy Batty. “The Electric Ant” does not offer such ambiguity. Since the short story format does not allow for many characters, the immediate and sustained focus on Poole makes it his story. Furthermore, Poole is not the first electric ant that has accidentally discovered his true nature. When he first awakes in the hospital, the doctor explains, “We get an electric ant every week or so . . . one who, like yourself, has never been told, who has functioned along side humans, believing himself – itself – human” (215). Poole is but one of many electric ants who accidentally find out their true identities. The electric ants are designed to “function” along side humans, but they are programmed to never know their true identity. Poole is immediately positioned as a stand-in example for others. Although the story is his, it is presented as a struggle that goes beyond him as an individual.

While it may be unusual to grant the focus of a short story to an inanimate object, Poole, like the androids in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, “may have been constructed for . . . [a] purpose(s), but, if it gains recognition of its own self, it becomes something other than a mask, a tool. It can even change sides, make its own decisions” (Barlow 87). Since Poole

discovers his true nature at the beginning of the story, it is not only Poole's story of discovery of himself; instead, it is a struggle to redefine his relationships to the other characters in the story and to reality. After finding out the truth, Poole ruminates on this new information:

He wondered if Danceman or Sarah [his friends and coworkers] . . . knew. Had they . . . purchased him? Designed him? A figurehead, he said to himself . . . I must never really have run the company; it was a delusion implanted in me when I was made . . . along with the *decision* that I am human and alive. (emphasis added; 215)

Poole's worries of who purchased and designed him are concerns that deal with someone who has no voice in life. He was designed and constructed for a purpose that was not of his choosing, but now that he knows his true nature, he ponders the concept of *decision*. Even though this is a reflection on when he thought he made decisions, it becomes the emergence of the importance of decisions to him. He probably never gave his ability to make decisions much thought before, because being human grants one the right to make their own decisions. Since he realizes that his ability to make decisions in the past was an illusion, that ability becomes very important to him.

The imagery of the android as the struggling character is not new to the science-fiction of Dick. It is a thematic device present in most of his writing. The few times he did speak in public, the topic usually wound its way to his musings on the android. In a 1972 speech given at a conference in Canada, Dick has this to say on the topic of the android and the human:

What is it, in our behavior, that we can call specifically human? . . . And what is it that . . . we can consign as merely machine behavior, or by extension, insect behavior, or reflex behavior? . . . The reduction of humans to mere use – men made into machines . . . employ[s] the greatest evil imaginable. . . . Androidization requires obedience. And, most of all, *predictability*. (187)

For Dick, "androidization" and the struggle for a life as an authentic human are real primary focuses of his fiction and philosophical work. Often in his writing, we see an inversion of the human/android dichotomy. The android takes on very human qualities, while the human character becomes more android-like.

The reverse of this representational dichotomy in "The Electric Ant" seeks to sharply define aspects of the authentic human personality and the inauthentic android personality. In "Dick on the Human: From Wubs to Bounty Hunters to Bishops," Ryan Gillis echoes Dick by stating, "The human separates himself from the android by his empathy . . . his soul, and that empathy, human hope for salvation, is expressed in human willingness to defy the programming that would reduce him to an ideological automaton" (270). Garson Poole, physically an electric ant, possesses the mental attributes of the human. The struggle to retain these human qualities is the mark of the true human in "The Electric Ant."

In "Androids as a Device for Reflection on Personhood," Marilyn Gwaltney asserts that the qualities of being a person are those of rationality and self-consciousness. Like the human, the android must have these very qualities if they are to fulfill their particular function. They must be able to correct their mistakes and to creatively engage with new situations. It is imperative that they act as autonomous beings. It is the act of choosing one goal out of many that helps to create identity. For instance, the character Rachel, from *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, has the greatest sense of self in the novel. Unlike the other androids who are

seen as somehow defective and lacking in empathy, she “was ‘given’ memories and treated like a natural human person, which accounts for her personhood” (Gwaltney 35). Poole is also treated like a person and is unaware, until his accident, of his true nature as an “electric ant.” It is his treatment and his memories of his pre-accident experiences as a “human” that help to drive his search for a true sense of himself and reality. The paradox is that Poole’s memory of his initial, inauthentic experience of reality spurs him towards an authentic experience outside of the corporate created spectacle.

The beginning of the story shows us hints of Poole’s personhood and his unpredictability. The descriptions of Poole’s responses to the disturbing news are thoroughly human, yet the descriptions of the responses of the doctor and nurse are flat and lacking in empathy or compassion for the suffering of Poole; indeed, he does suffer even if he is a machine. The various descriptions of Poole during this conversation clearly denote his humanness: “Frigid perspiration rose to the surface of his skin.”; “. . . Poole said savagely.”; “Poole said acidly. . .”; “Poole said, with furious, impotent anger” (215-16). His reactions are most certainly human; accordingly, he is angry, scared, frustrated, and enraged. This is not the behavior and disposition of the android personality. Conversely, the doctor and nurse are never given proper names, and their dialogue is not described. “Said” is the only word used to depict their speech. This encounter is routine for them, and they are merely following along with a narrative they have lived several times before. Their presentation in the story is that of repetitive, flat, characters who lack empathy.

The introduction of Poole in a manner that directly compares his thoughts and feelings with those of humans positions the android in a new metaphorical light. Casimir believes that the android “becomes a metaphor of the blurring of the dichotomy . . . it stands also for the discursive space where a crisis occurs . . . a crisis in the representation of the ‘living’ or what it means ‘to be alive’” (279). Poole signifies the main problem of what defines “alive.” If something can react unpredictably and feel, then is it alive? If someone fails to display empathy are they considered alive? This becomes one of the questions in “The Electric Ant” that leads to the bigger question — How does one cease to be an android?

The initial comparison of the human qualities of Poole and the lack of human qualities of the doctor and nurse “throws into ironic relief the . . . [humans’] incapacity for feeling” (Hayles 162). The reader’s sympathies ally with Poole, because he is the true “human” in the story. The flesh and blood humans take on the characteristics of Dick’s “android human” – reflex driven and lacking in feeling and empathy. All of this serves to focus the attention on Poole and his struggle to re-create his concept of himself. His rebellion of his “inauthentic” status is a human rebellion, even though physically he is described as “Natural skin cover[ing] natural flesh . . . But, beneath that, wires and circuits, miniaturized components, gleamed” (216). He is a strange figure – a mixture of mechanical and biological elements. His body becomes a sight that he can exploit in his struggle; it is the physical representation of “seeing through the spectacle.” Poole sees through the façade of the physical markers of his humanity to the true nature of his existence as an “ant.”

Despite his obvious lack of biological life, Poole still feels a sense of being “alive” – “I’m a freak, he realized. An inanimate object mimicking an animate one. But – he felt alive. Yet . . . he felt differently, now. About himself. Hence about everyone . . .” (217). Poole gains a sense of himself as a person because of his experience of being treated like a person, but it goes further than that. Although he is a mechanical simulation of a person, he is not a copy of any one individual. In his essay “Simulacra and Science Fiction,” Baudrillard proposes that “models no

longer constitute an imaginary domain with reference to the real; they are, themselves, an apprehension of the real . . . nothing distinguishes this [simulation] from the real itself” (309). Poole is not a copy created from a human template. He is a simulation that is unique and individual; thus, his personhood is also derived from his existence apart from any human referent.

He has his tentative personhood, but his first attempts at understanding his physical inner-self baffle him, and he calls on the help of his company’s supercomputer to help him decipher the “maze of circuitry” in his body. He finds that he has no central processing unit, no matrix that tells him how to react to a certain situation; instead, inside is a “reality-supply construct” from which he is told “All sense stimuli received by your central neurological system emanate[s] and tampering with it would be risky if not terminal” (Dick 218). This new discovery by Poole allows for a way for him to escape his existence as an object:

. . . if I control that, I control reality. At least as so far as I’m concerned. My subjective reality . . . but that’s all there is. Objective reality is a synthetic construct, dealing with a hypothetical universalization of a multitude of subjective realities . . . With this he did not merely gain control of himself; he gained control of everything. And this sets me apart from every human who ever lived or died . . . (218-19)

This second discovery allows the possibility to re-program reality. His status as an electric ant gives him an ability never before held by any human. Poole still thinks of himself as existing within the boundaries of what defines a human. Since he feels that the new power will “set him apart,” he must be a part of humanity to be set apart from it. This implies a connection to others caught in corporate constructs of reality. In Poole’s eyes, he still wants to operate within the boundaries “human,” because he can not think of himself in any other way. Without physically altering the tape, he can not escape the binding notions programmed into him; however, the programming on the tape, altered or not, remains the only “language” he can use to define a new reality for himself.

The imagery of the technology of the “reality-supply construct” is central to the story, and it deserves some in-depth study. Its physical description and its exact mechanics are important to understanding how Poole recreates his reality. It is described as:

Tiny . . . no larger than two spools of thread, with a scanner mounted between the delivery drum and the take-up drum. Under the enlarging-lens system the plastic tape assumed a new shape: a wide track along which hundreds of thousands of punch-holes worked their way. The way I figure it, he thought, is that the punched holes are *on* gates . . . solid is no, punch-hole is yes. (218-19)

This technological artifact of Dick’s is indicative of the representation of technology at the time. The single most important technological device in a complex machine such as the electric ant is, by today’s standards, almost comically low-tech. This representation exists as a holdover from the Golden Age of pulp science-fiction. Judith Merrill describes it as “the pure extension of the most mechanistic realism: tomorrow’s future today . . . At the time, it was exciting stuff indeed.

Perhaps it gave us only more hardware . . . but it was tomorrow's hardware" (62-63). Often, stories of this and earlier eras are full of complex machines, robots and spaceships for example, that use low-tech glass tubes, diodes, and fuse boxes. This almost antiquarian description is firmly rooted in the end of World War I and the explosion of technology in the home. Paradoxically, the simplicity of this binary, analog device is the surest way to work with the metaphor of light and dark in the story.

But science-fiction's technological tropes of the time were not the only inspiration for this device. In his article "The Swiss Connection," Anthony Wolk notes that during the writing of *We Can Build You*, first published in serial version during 1969 to 1970, Dick cites the influence of James Olds. Olds authored the book *The Growth and Structure of Motives* in 1956 in which he proposes an analogy of how the brain records memories. It is a "recording strand in the brain that is a preformed contact chain of neurons . . . each neuron . . . becomes specified or fixed at each moment of time" (Wolk 122). The "reality-supply construct" is an inversion of this image. It exists as a chain, but instead of a blank chain that records events, it is a pre-punched chain that creates events. It exists as a construct within a construct. Poole the electric ant is controlled by this analog device. He is shown to have no free will as long as the device continues to feed him reality. This realization leads him to the conclusion that he can alter his subjective reality—setting him apart from other humans, because he has the technology physically available to him. The physical status as an electric ant is the only way an individual could accomplish such a radical and bold maneuver. Poole, as an electric ant, becomes the contested site of true crisis within the story. The flesh and blood human has no way to physically manipulate his reality; he could never play with the chain of neurons in his head the way Poole plays with the device in his chest.

However, this analog device that creates reality for Poole is also the site of a metaphorical play between light and dark. The metaphor is alluded to in the opening lines of "The Electric Ant" when upon awaking in the hospital and seeing the sun through the window Poole thinks, "It's not yet out . . . and neither am I" (214). It returns in earnest when he opens his chest and begins to experiment with the "reality-construct device." A dark slot is a no, or lack of stimulus in Poole's environment; a punch-hole means that light passes through and something is added to Poole's reality. The two opposites define each other, and the inversion of either one (from light to dark) drastically changes Poole's reality. Heidegger's reading of the metaphor of light and dark in Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" is an instructive way to read the metaphor of light and dark as represented in the "reality-supply construct."⁴

Like Poole, the prisoners of the cave see only the shadows projected in-front of them and take them for reality. Poole's reality is constructed of an inversion of this – the light let through the holes in the punch tape defines his reality. As mentioned before, Poole comes to the conclusion that reality is a subjective experience; just as in the cave, the reality of the shadows as truth is subjective. Heidegger links the imagery of light in the allegory with this idea by stating, "We see two things: light first lets the object through *to be viewed* as something visible, and also lets-through the view to the visible object. Light is what *lets-through*" (41). Light in "The Allegory of the Cave" and in "The Electric Ant" operates in the same way; it is the vehicle for information. The analog device in Poole uses light to transmit information. The strip merely blocks light (information) from being received by the scanner. If light allows for things to be seen, then dark is "only a limit case of brightness . . . a brightness that no longer lets anything through, that takes away visibility of things, that fails to make visible" (Heidegger 42). The un-

punched sections of the tape do not let information through. By blocking out some of the holes in the tape, Poole temporarily “erases” things from his reality.

Unlike the allegory, Poole has no one to take him out of the “inauthentic reality” of the cave and show him a truer version of reality. This he must do for himself. Poole’s first and second experimental attempts with the “reality-supply construct” are ones of erasure. Using the enlarging lens he selects a section of punched-holes and blots them out with opaque enamel. He goes to confront Danceman about his true nature, and during the confrontation experiences the effects of his manipulations when “Through the big glass side of the bar, the skyline of New York flickered out of existence” (220). Poole experiences the absence of the sky line, but Danceman does not. Poole expected this and returns to his apartment to conduct more experiments.

His second experiment is to insert an opaque strip into the reel; creating a twenty minute dead space where the scanner will receive no information. The effect is not what Poole had envisioned at all. He sits and watches the surrounding apartment fade out of existence and finds himself mentally existing in a blank void. When he regains awareness of his physical surroundings, two technicians are working on him. They explain that inserting the opaque strip jammed the scanner’s intake and the device shut-off. During both of these experiments with erasure, no one else is affected by Poole’s new relationship with reality. He experiences objects fading out of existence, but those around him report no similar visions.

The next two experiments are ones of illumination; Poole literally allows more light than is intended to pass through to the scanner. The effects of these experiments are beyond even what Poole imagines. His first attempt is to punch new, random holes into the tape to see what will appear. Sarah is in the apartment during these attempts, and during the first one, she sees what Poole sees; a flock of ducks and a homeless man briefly appear and then wink out of existence. The conversation that follows intimates the end of the story:

“They weren’t real,” Sarah said. “Were they? So how –“
“You’re not real,” he [Poole] told Sarah. “You’re a stimulus factor on my reality tape. A punch-hole that can be glazed over . . . If I cut the tape,” he said, “you will be everywhere and nowhere. Like everything else in the universe. At least as far as I’m aware of it.” (226)

The final paradox of the reality-supply construct is laid bare. In some ways it has no effect on anyone except Poole; however, when he attempts to *add* light input, then it affects others. This interesting paradox illustrates Guy Debord’s theory that “Workers do not produce themselves: they produce a force independent of themselves . . . All time, all space, becomes *foreign* to them . . .” (23). Poole begins to add to the spectacle, to produce new images that were not originally intended to appear. At this point, he becomes aware of just how absolutely foreign all of reality is to him, and he wants to move on to his final experiment.

To account for this, Heidegger’s interpretation of light and dark come into play. If light is the vehicle for information, then this new information affects all of the information around it. Sarah and Danceman exist as light information for Poole, so adding new information (allowing more light through) affects them. Blocking the light from the scanner erases information, and this absence can not affect Sarah or Danceman who are composed of light information. The implied notion is that the addition of information is transformative, and the deletion of knowledge is not. All of the characters exist within Poole’s “reality-supply construct” or “cave;”

adding a shadow will not alter their view of reality. However, adding a new a source of light in the cave will transform their experiences.

Eric Rabkin sees these additions to and intrusions of characters' realities as typical of Dick and his philosophical explorations of reality when he states, "Dick has made it impossible for us to find a ground-state reality. When realities become formally replicated, none remains trustworthy and each loses at least some of its value. The invasion of one reality by another is an ontological invasion . . . ontological invasion causes '*mors ontologica*'" (185). If Poole is to recreate his reality, then this '*mors ontologica*,' or death of the mind, is the final outcome that he and the other characters must face. The absence of this ground-state reality comes in the form of the subjective dictates of the "reality-supply construct." As it exists, it is modifiable and this implies that the reality presented by the spectacle is modifiable.

Poole's final experiment is to cut the tape completely and allow all of the light to enter the scanner. He will experience all of the perceptual information it is possible to know simultaneously; however, Poole was warned by the maintenance men that doing this will cause the device to overload and destroy him. For him, the risk is acceptable – "What I want, he realized, is ultimate and absolute reality, for one micro-second. After that it doesn't matter, because all will be known; nothing will be left to understand or see" (225). He is willing to risk his destruction to have this moment. And as has been shown previously in the story, he is risking everyone's reality. The act of letting all light into the scanner will surely affect all of the characters and their realities.

What is the driving force for Poole to seek this all encompassing knowledge, and to enter into a state that will more than likely destroy him? To understand Poole's final desire, an examination of Poole as a commodity trying to navigate its way to subjectivity is essential. Repeatedly throughout the story, Poole is reminded of the cost of repairs to his body. The hospital charges him for their services, even though they do not treat "electric ants" there. The maintenance facility charges him forty frogs to replace his hand.⁵ After he disrupts the "reality-supply construct," the maintenance men charge him ninety-five frogs for the repair. Even in contemplating his suicide he realizes he can't go through with it, because "it would be a costly waste which [the] owner would have to absorb" (217). Poole is always presented as a commodity item; moreover, one that was costly to create and costly to maintain. His desire for absolute knowledge is a desire to escape his existence as a commodity.

In effect, he is attempting a de-reification by way of subsuming all reality within himself. It needs a certain set of circumstance since this transformation is atypical. In his article "The Death of the Subject," Scott Durham quotes Peter Fitting in an effort to identify this moment as an "'agonizing experience of an illusory and disintegrating reality'" (191). How then does Poole try to accomplish his ultimate goal of subjectivity? If reality is "illusory" and "disintegrating," then it leaves a space for this type of transformation, but it is a transformation whereby the commodity object proceeds to encompass reality in its entirety. As in *The Simulacra* where Kongrosian, through his telepathic power, begins to literally take the world inside of himself,⁶ so too does Poole when he realizes that the addition of light input changes reality for all those around him. In a sense, when he experiments with reality he begins to subsume it — to make it an interior part of him. This is the only response to a reality of the spectacle that for so long encompassed and delineated everything he thought, did, and experienced; he will now do to it what it had done to him. His position as a commercial object is a "highly commercialized space in which the boundaries between autonomous individual and technological artifact become increasingly permeable" (Hayles 162). The paradox appears again; Poole's existence as a reified

commodity is the locus of his power to change reality. The blurred function of the commoditized individual comes into question.

In the moment before his destruction, Poole does experience everything:

He saw apples and cobblestones and zebras. He felt warmth, the silky texture of cloth; he felt the ocean lapping at him and a great wind . . . Sarah was all around him, so was Danceman . . . Butter relaxed into liquid on his tongue, and at the same time hideous odors assailed him . . . He drowned . . . I am living, I have lived, I will never live, he said to himself. (227)

This is only a brief quote from the description of Poole's experiences, but it is truly a Dickeyan notion of this experience. By simultaneously recreating his reality and destroying himself, the electric ant realizes that he is alive, has lived, and paradoxically never lived. These experiences happen at once for Poole. If only for a brief moment, he reprograms his life; he utilizes the physical tools of the corporate constructed spectacle to manipulate his experience of it.

Poole's experience ends abruptly in the story, and smoke pours from his mouth. As an electric ant he is destroyed. At this point, the story shifts and for the last few paragraphs follows Sarah's reactions. She phones Danceman to tell him that Poole is no more. Danceman replies, "So we're free of it" (228). The remark serves as a cryptic reference to the power that Poole really did hold over them; either as president of Tri-Plan Corporation or as a "space of crisis" that recreates reality. Danceman understands that on some level the created becomes the creator, and this thought disturbs him. But he speaks too soon, Sarah suddenly notices that she can see through her hands, the floor is disappearing, and the lifeless body of Poole is becoming vague. In the last lines of the story, the reader is left with this image of Sarah: "The wind of early morning blew about her. She did not feel it; she had begun, now, to cease to feel. The winds blew on" (228).

The story stops there, leaving Sarah forever suspended in a state where she is unfeeling and the winds rushing past her. Having completed his journey and achieving a form of his own subjectivity, Poole makes objects out of everyone else; subject to his desire for absolute freedom. This freedom could only come at the cost of the structure that contains Poole. The tool he used to free himself was paradoxically designed to keep him enslaved in a prescribed reality. The moment he learns of his true nature changes everything for him. He began to make decisions, decisions that were anathema to the dictates of the corporation that designed him. He set about to damage an expensive piece of equipment and he succeeded.

Vandalism is one of the most heinous crimes an individual can commit against a company. In "The Electric Ant," the individual is construct property of the corporation. Poole's only means of escape is the self-inflicted vandalism of his own constructed body. For Poole, his self-destruction is preferable to the continued state of product trapped in the spectacle. The pervasive metaphorical use of light and dark identify and place Poole's actions into a familiar arena for the reader and conceptualize the struggle of the reified object. However, the arena of the struggle is always within the spectacle, so no true escape is presented; rather, the problems of dealing with it are illuminated. Poole does not create a new reality to exist in; he uses the programming available to him and alters it, but he never moves outside of the prescribed options present in it. He may have made himself a useless object for the corporate spectacle, but he still can not utterly remove himself from its space.

Notes

1. Philip K. Dick, "The Electric Ant," 1969, Robots, Androids, and Mechanical Oddities: The Science Fiction of Philip K. Dick ed. Patricia S. Warrick and Martin H. Greenberg (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U.P., 1984) 213-28.

2. Scott Bukatman, Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Post-Modern Science Fiction (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) 48.

3. It is not outside of the critical tradition of Dick's work to draw on "The Allegory of the Cave." Dick was a Philosophy Major at the University of California Berkeley; although, he did drop out after his first semester. Patricia Warrick, in Chapters 9 and 10 of her book *Mind in Motion: The Fiction of Philip K. Dick*, explains that Dick often used ". . . a wide range of literature that yielded material to him: the Bible, works of Aeschylus, Plato, Vergil (sic), . . . a use that he hid under the cryptic allusions in most of his science fiction." (200) Katharine Hayles also refers to Dick's philosophical background when arguing his own unique use of the "schizoid android" in Chapter 7 of her book *How We Became PostHuman*. Also see Emmanuel Carrère's *I Am Alive and You Are Dead: A Journey into the Mind of Philip K. Dick* for an interesting and poetic look at the intersection of Dick's science-fiction work and his delusional and his philosophical take on existence.

4. It is not my intention, by introducing Heidegger at this point, to enter into the debate in the critical community over whether or not to compare Dick's work to metaphysical philosophers. Warrick shows that Dick based some of his ideas on philosophical writers, and Heidegger's reading of "The Allegory of the Cave" is an insightful look into the mechanics of the story. I am interested only in Heidegger's study of the interplay between light and dark in the allegory, and how their mechanics relate to the very similar light and dark of Poole's "reality-supply construct." For more on the relationship between Dick and Existentialist Philosophy see Anthony Wolk's "The Swiss Connection: Psychological Systems in the Novels of Philip K. Dick."

5. Dick often employed biological forms for monetary exchange in his work. It exists as his idiosyncratic vision of the future of money. In "The Electric Ant" forty frogs is equivalent to a week's salary – pg. 216.

6. Philip K. Dick, The Simulacra 1964 (New York: Vintage, 1992) §14:194. In a final confrontation with Nicole, Kongrosian is in the pitiful situation of beginning to switch his organs with the objects around him. His transformation is the same as Poole's; they both need to take-in all of reality, but at the expense of their lives.

"Something terrible's happening to me . . . I no longer can keep myself and my environment separate; do you comprehend how that feels?" . . . "I'm turning inside out!" Kongrosian wailed. "Pretty soon if this keeps up I'm going to have to envelop the entire universe and everything in it, and the only thing that'll be outside of me will be my internal organs – and then most likely I'll die."

Works Cited

- Barlow, Aaron. "Philip K. Dick's Androids: Victimized Victimizers." Retrofitting *Blade Runner*: Issues in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Ed. Judith B. Kerman. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1991. 76-89.
- Baudrillard, Jean. "Simulacra and Science Fiction." Trans. Arthur B. Evans. Science Fiction Studies 55 (1991): 309-13.
- Bukatman, Scott. Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Post-Modern Science Fiction. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.
- Carrère, Emmanuel. I Am Alive and You Are Dead: A Journey into the Mind of Philip K. Dick. 1993. Trans. Timothy Bent. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004.
- Casimir, Viviane. "Data and Deckard: Cyborg as Problematic Signifier." Extrapolation 38 (1997): 278-91.
- Debord, Guy. The Society of the Spectacle. 1967. New York: Zone Books, 2004.
- Dick, Philip Kindred. "The Android and the Human." 1972. The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings. Ed. Lawrence Sutin. New York: Vintage, 1995.
- . Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? 1968. New York: Del Rey, 1996.
- . "The Electric Ant." 1969. Robots, Androids, and Mechanical Oddities: The Science Fiction of Philip K. Dick. Ed. Patricia S. Warrick and Martin H. Greenberg. Carbondale: Southern Illinois U.P., 1984. 213-28.
- . The Simulacra. 1964. New York: Vintage, 1992.
- Durham, Scott. "P.K. Dick: From the Death of the Subject to a Theology of Late Capitalism." 1988. On Philip K. Dick: 40 Articles from Science-Fiction Studies. Ed. R.D. Mullen, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Arthur B. Evans, and Veronica Hollinger. Greencastle: SF-TH Inc., 1992. 188-98.
- Gillis, Ryan. "Dick on the Human: From Wubs to Bounty Hunters to Bishops." Extrapolation 39 (1998): 264-71.
- Gwaltney, Marylin. "Androids as a Device for Reflection of Personhood." Retrofitting *Blade Runner*: Issues in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Ed. Judith B. Kerman. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1991. 32-39.
- Hayles, Katherine. How We Became PostHuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Heidegger, Martin. The Essence of Truth. Trans. Ted Sadler. London: Continuum, 2002.
- Levack, Daniel J.H. comp. PKD: A Philip K. Dick Bibliography. Rev. ed. Westport: Meckler, 1988.
- Merril, Judith. "What Do You Mean: Science? Fiction?" SF: The Other Side of Realism. Ed. Thomas D. Clareson. Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1971. 53-95.
- Rabkin, Eric S. "Irrational Expectations; or, How Economics and the Post-Industrial

- World Failed Philip K. Dick.” 1988. On Philip K. Dick: 40 Articles from Science-Fiction Studies. Ed. R.D. Mullen, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Arthur B. Evans, and Veronica Hollinger. Greencastle: SF-TH Inc., 1992. 178-87.
- Warrick, Patricia S. Mind in Motion: The Fiction of Philip K. Dick. Carbondale: Southern Illinois U.P., 1987.
- Wolk, Anthony. “The Swiss Connection: Psychological Systems in the Novels of Philip K. Dick.” Philip K. Dick: Contemporary Critical Interpretations. Ed. Samuel J. Umland. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995. 101-26.