Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF PHILIP K. DICK

Philip K. Dick grew up in San Francisco, a city that would play a major role in his novels and short stories. For most of his childhood, he was raised by his mother. He began writing science fiction stories when he was 12 years old, and his teachers noted his talent for building suspense and telling a gripping tale. He began writing science fiction stories professionally in 1951. From then on, he sold dozens of stories to science fiction magazines, and published several novels, none of which were particularly successful. His fortunes changed in 1963, when he published what was to become one of his most famous novels, *The Man in the High Castle*, a work of speculative science fiction about a world in which the Nazis won World War II. The novel won Dick the Hugo Award, the highest honor for American science fiction. Over the course of the next two decades, Dick wrote dozens of novels and hundreds of short stories. Although many of these developed a cult following, none were as critically or commercially successfully as *The Man in the High Castle*. Dick's mental condition deteriorated in the 1970s, due largely to his experimentation with LSD, mescaline, and other drugs. He died in 1982, poverty-stricken and depressed. Ironically, 1982 was also the year that the first high-profile cinematic adaptation of one of his books, *Blade Runner* (an adaptation of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*), was released, to considerable acclaim. In the 80s and 90s, the literary world as a whole (not just the sci-fi community) began to take Dick's novels seriously. To date, more than two dozen of his short stories or novels have been made into movies, including *Minority Report* (2002), *Blade Runner* (1982), *Paycheck* (2003), *Total Recall* (1990, remade in 2012), *A Scanner Darkly* (2006), and *Next* (2007).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Philip K. Dick's books reflect his feelings about the state of society in the 1960s and 70s. One of Dick's main preoccupations in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is the threat of consumer culture in America. Following the 1950s, America attained an unprecedented level of prosperity, and the average family could purchase more commodities than ever before. While this economic development was justly celebrated, it also led to a growing homogenization of American culture—everybody competing to buy exactly the same vacuous products. In the futuristic society of Dick's novel, consumerism runs rampant, with every family competing to buy the best, most exotic pets. Dick's novel also reflects the realities of the Cold War in the 1960s. Following the detonation of an atomic weapon in Hiroshima in 1945, the world entered a nuclear age: for the first time, countries had the power to blow up entire cities. Throughout the 60s, the United States was locked in a "Cold War" with the Soviet Union, the world's other dominant superpower. Both sides stockpiled massive numbers of nuclear missiles, even one of which could have inflicted a catastrophic amount of damage if it was ever launched. In Dick's futuristic society, there's been some kind of global war, the result of which is the destruction of the environment and irradiation of the entire planet—disasters which Dick's sci-fi predecessors before 1945 couldn't ever have imagined.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Philip K. Dick has been compared to many other science fiction and fantasy authors who blur the distinction between reality and illusion, such as Jorge Luis Borges, Italo Calvino, Ray Bradbury, and Robertson Davies. A dark, absurdist sense of humor pervades *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*—there's a strong sense that some shadowy authority figure presides over the action, but it's never revealed who this figure might be. In this sense, Dick's novel resembles the works of Franz Kafka and Thomas Pynchon. Kafka's novels and short stories, such as *The Metamorphosis* and *The Trial*, thrust ordinary characters into similarly bleak and darkly absurd or amusing situations. Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965) is, like Dick's book, a satire of 60s culture, structured as a mystery novel and centered around a shadowy organization. Finally, Dick's novels inspired the grim, paranoid tone of such important works of cinematic science fiction as *The Matrix* (1999) and *Brazil* (1985).

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?
- **Where Written:** San Francisco, California, USA
- **When Published:** Fall 1968
- **Literary Period:** Cold War / postmodern science fiction
- **Genre:** Science fiction, detective story, noir
- **Setting:** Futuristic San Francisco
- **Climax:** The death of Roy Baty
- **Antagonist:** None—Dick blurs the line between heroism and villainy
- **Point of View:** Third-person limited

EXTRA CREDIT

Famous classmates: Philip K. Dick has a well-deserved reputation as one of the greatest science fiction authors of all time. One of the few authors who can compete with Dick's

reputation is Ursula K. Le Guin, whose books *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and *The Dispossessed* (1974) have been extravagantly praised for their intelligent and postmodern motifs. By a bizarre coincidence, Le Guin and Dick were members of the same graduating class in high school—but they never met each other.

A Prophet: In 1974, Philip K. Dick claimed to have a prophetic vision. Following his vision, he sensed that his infant son was very sick. Despite the fact that his son seemed healthy, he rushed the child to the hospital, where the doctors found that the child had a potentially deadly disease, which they were able to treat just in time. Following this incident, Dick concluded that the Biblical prophet Elijah had saved Dick's child's life. For the final 8 years of his life, Dick wrote autobiographical novels about his prophetic vision, such as *Valis*. At times, he seemed to acknowledge that he was delusional—he hadn't really had a prophetic vision at all—but most of the time, he was adamant about the reality of what he'd experienced.

PLOT SUMMARY

The novel is set in the year 1992 in San Francisco, following an enormous war, **World War Terminus**, that's destroyed most of the natural world and left Earth's surface dangerously irradiated. People with talent and intelligence are sent to colonize other planets, such as Mars, while those who can't pass the proper tests are left on Earth to eventually die. Because the war destroyed almost all animals, having a pet is the ultimate sign of luxury. Furthermore, science has succeeded in building androids so realistic that it's become virtually impossible to distinguish them from human beings. These androids are used as workers or assistants on other planets, but some escape and live on Earth, disguised as people. The law enforcement officers on Earth try to hunt down these androids and "retire" them—i.e., kill them. Police officers run elaborate psychological tests on suspects. One such test, the **Voigt-Kampff**, is designed to measure humans' natural empathy—androids, who supposedly have no empathy, can't pass the test.

As the novel begins, Rick Deckard, a seasoned police officer, is contemplating buying a real animal to impress his neighbors—he and his wife Iran Deckard own an electric sheep. Meanwhile, we're introduced to a mentally challenged man named John Isidore, a "special," who lives alone in an abandoned apartment building in San Francisco. Isidore is a follower of a strange religion called Mercerism. Followers of Mercerism celebrate empathy by gripping the handles of an "**empathy box**," allowing them to feel the emotions and sensations of other people. Mercerism was founded by a man named Wilbur Mercer, who appears before his followers as an old, robed man climbing up a steep hill.

Rick is summoned to his police station. His colleague, Dave Holden, has just been shot and hospitalized by an android, Polokov, whom Dave was trying to track down. Polokov and five other androids have escaped from Mars, where they were sent to perform basic labor, and come to San Francisco. The androids' model is Nexus-Six, a particularly realistic and unpredictable kind of android. The Rosen organization, the business that manufactures the androids, wants Rick to "retire" them quickly and quietly.

Rick flies to the Rosen Association Building in Seattle, where he meets with Eldon Rosen, a company executive, and his niece, Rachael Rosen. Rachael asks Rick to run the Voigt-Kampff test on her, and Rick does so. Slowly, he realizes that Rachael is really an android. When he accuses Rachael, she and Eldon deny this, and suggest that the Voigt-Kampff test is a poor one. But Rick stands his ground, and it becomes clear that Rachael really is an android after all. Eldon calmly explains that Rachael had no idea she was anything but human—she'd had artificial memories implanted in her brain.

Meanwhile, John Isidore, who works for an electric animal repair company, meets a mysterious woman named Pris Stratton. Pris seems unfamiliar with culture on Earth—in particular, she doesn't know who Buster Friendly, a famous TV personality, is.

Back in San Francisco, Rick crosses paths with a Soviet police officer who claims to be trying to hunt down androids, too. Rick realizes that the police officer is really Polokov, and Rick shoots him. Next, Rick tracks an android named Luba Luft to the opera house. Rick meets Luba and learns that she, like Rachael, believes that she's a human being. Suddenly, Luba points a laser gun at Rick and calls the police. A police officer named Crams takes Rick to a police station Rick has never seen before. At the station, Crams and his colleagues, Garland and Phil Resch, interrogate him. When Rick is alone in the police station with Garland, Garland whispers that Resch is really an android, but doesn't know it—when Resch finds out the truth, he'll probably kill himself. Then Resch walks back into the room and kills Garland, telling Rick that Garland is an android. Resch seems to have no idea that he's anything but a human being. Together, Resch and Rick sneak out of the police station—which, according to Resch, is built and inhabited entirely by rogue androids. Rick is disturbed and confused by what he's seen—he can't help but wonder whether *he* is really a human.

Back at the opera house, Resch and Rick track Luba to a museum, where Resch kills Luba in an especially brutal, sudden manner. Rick and Resch decide to administer human-android tests on one another. Rick determines that Resch is human—he's just a particularly cold, psychopathic kind of human. Resch determines that Rick really is human.

Meanwhile John Isidore gets to know Pris. She explains that she and her android friends have come from Mars, a barren, sad place. She invites her two remaining android friends, Roy

Baty and Irmgard Baty, to live with her and John.

Rick has made 3,000 dollars by killing three androids. He immediately spends his money on a real pet goat. Afterwards, he and Iran grip their empathy box together and hear Mercer telling them that it's impossible to live morally in modern times. Rick gets a call from Rachael Rosen, and they agree to meet in a hotel room.

In the hotel, Rachael and Rick get drunk. Rachael tries to convince Rick not to retire the three remaining androids. Rick and Rachael have sex, and afterwards, Rachael reveals the truth to Rick: she's known that she's an android for a long time, and has been secretly having sex with every android bounty-hunter in the city to ensure that they develop empathy for their prey. No bounty hunter has ever continued killing robots after having sex with her—except for Resch. Furious, Rick threatens to kill Rachael, but then realizes he can't.

Rick tracks down the androids to John Isidore's apartment. In the apartment, Pris, Roy, and Irmgard watch a TV program in which Buster Friendly exposes Mercerism as a hoax—Wilbur Mercer is just a movie extra posing behind film sets. John finds this news upsetting, but claims that Mercerism will live on. Rick arrives at the apartment and kills Roy, Irmgard, and Pris. His final words to John Isidore are "Don't take it so hard."

Rick has killed six androids in 24 hours—a record. He'll have plenty of money to buy pets now. Instead of returning to Iran, he flies out to the deserts of Oregon (areas that used to be beautiful forests). In the desert, Rick takes futuristic drugs and has a vision in which he fuses with Mercer and climbs a steep hill, but can't quite make it to the top. In the desert, Rick is amazed to find a **toad**—a rare, exotic animal. He takes the toad back to Iran, but Iran quickly recognizes that it's just an electric fake. Confused and exhausted, Rick goes to sleep. While he sleeps, Iran calls the pet store and orders electric flies for the toad to eat. She explains, "My husband is devoted to it."

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Rick Deckard – The protagonist of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Rick Deckard is an experienced police officer and bounty hunter, who, during the course of the novel, is sent to hunt down and kill ("retire") six androids that have escaped from Mars. Rick is an introspective thinker given to questioning what his friends and family take for granted. As Rick pursues the androids, he begins to question the morality of what he's doing—in other words, he begins to wonder if androids aren't "people," after all. Furthermore, Rick begins to suspect that *he* may be an android himself. And yet in spite of his doubts and objections, Rick is a "man of his time"—someone who thoughtlessly subscribes to the main dogmas of his own society. Like all of his peers, he spends all his money buying expensive animals, seemingly for no other reason than a desire to impress his neighbors. In the end, Rick seems to cast aside most of his doubts about the morality of retiring androids: thus, he murders Roy Baty, Irmgard Baty, and Pris Stratton. Yet he seems to have acquired some minimal respect for the value of machines' "lives," and in the final chapter, he describes them as paltry but real. Rick is a classic noir "antihero"—a conflicted, not entirely sympathetic character, who is nevertheless our guide through Dick's bizarre futuristic world.

John Isidore – John Isidore is a slow-thinking young man whose genes have been damaged by radiation, described both as a "special" man and as a "chickenhead." He lives in an abandoned apartment building in San Francisco. John is an active participant in the rituals of Mercerism, a religion that puts him in touch with Wilbur Mercer and supposedly boosts his empathy. Because of his low IQ and poor health, John is unable to leave the Earth for another, better planet. Alone in his apartment, Mercerism is the only thing that gives his life meaning, and the only thing that gives him even a simulacrum of human contact. At times, it's suggested that John is the only moral character in the novel—the only one who sincerely believes that all life (even that of androids) has value, and that other people deserve his respect. In the end, John remains a proud practitioner of Mercerism, despite all the evidence that Mercerism is only a hoax.

Al Jarry / Wilbur Mercer – Wilbur Mercer is a media personality and religious leader who commands millions of followers around the world. His religion, Mercerism, is based around the idea that empathy is mankind's quintessential quality. For this reason, his followers are supposed to join together, feeling each other's emotions and experiencing each other's sensations. Mercer's religion, as Rick Deckard realizes, is morally bankrupt because it has no true "rules" at all—everything is permissible, because Mercer accepts that it's impossible to live a moral life anymore. Toward the end of the novel, it's revealed that Wilbur Mercer isn't a real person at all. Although he appears before his followers as an old, bearded man in a robe, Mercer is just a character, played by a small-time actor named Al Jarry, pretending to bring dead animals back to life. It's left up to the characters to decide whether Mercer's fictitiousness discredits Mercerism altogether—it's possible to argue, as John Isidore does, that the emotional tone of Mercerism has some "truth" to it, even if Mercer himself is a lie.

Rachael Rosen – An android who struggles with problems of empathy, reality, and humanity throughout the novel. Rachael Rosen is introduced to us as the niece of Eldon Rosen, a powerful executive in the Rosen organization. After a few chapters, however, we come to realize that she's an android, implanted with false memories of her "childhood" in order to make her believe that she's human. Rachael is a thoughtful, observant android, and seems to have her own agenda, independent of either Eldon's or Rick's. She seduces Rick and

ends up having sex with him, but afterwards, she reveals that she's had sex with many other bounty hunters, with the goal of rendering them incapable of murdering another android. In this way, it's suggested that Rachael has been aware of her android identity for some time now—far longer than either Rick or Eldon believed. As the novel concludes, it appears that Rachael is finally becoming human—ironically, this means that she's cruel, destructive, and petty, pushing Rick's new pet goat off a tall building.

Phil Resch – A police officer at the police station where Garland and Officer Crams work, Phil Resch is one of the most confusing characters in the novel—it's impossible to be sure whether he's an android or a human being (and this is, of course, Dick's point). Phil shows signs of being an android—he's cold, emotionless, and seems to kill without any compunction at all. And yet Phil is also a human being, at least according to the results of Rick Deckard's **Voigt-Kampff test**. As Rick understands it, Phil is a very cruel, unfeeling kind of human being: he relishes the chance to shoot Garland and later, Luba Luft. In all, Phil's character reminds us of the ambiguity of identity in *do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*—when people like Phil behave like robots, it's not so easy to tell the difference between a robot and a person.

Iran Deckard – Iran is Rick Deckard's melancholy, taciturn wife. She spends all of her time in their house, and seems to be interested in few things other than buying expensive animals and watching television. In a way, Iran is identical to her husband, minus his doubts about the society they live in—so she uses the **mood organ**, which is designed to calibrate (i.e., control) her emotions at all times of the day. In spite of her vacuity and empty-headed interest in conspicuous consumption, Iran shows moments of surprising tenderness—at the end of the novel, for example, she seems to care for her husband, even if her love is limited by futuristic consumer culture.

Miss Luba Luft – A female android and talented opera singer living in San Francisco, Luba Luft has no idea that she's an android—as far as she knows, she's a human being who's lived in San Francisco her whole life. In spite of Luba's harmlessness, Rick Deckard is tasked with retiring her immediately—a task he finds very difficult (in the end, it's Phil Resch, Rick's sadistic coworker, who shoots her). In spite of her ignorance of her own nature, Luba Luft could be considered one of the wisest characters in the novel. Her question to Rick, "Have you taken your own test?" prompts Rick to reconsider his own humanity, and provides a powerful reminder of the relativism of humanity and reality.

Eldon Rosen – A powerful executive at the Rosen organization, a large business that manufactures androids. Eldon Rosen only appears in one scene of the novel, but his presence casts a shadow over the entire book. Rosen seems utterly indifferent when Rachael Rosen (who is supposedly his niece) discovers that she's really an android—he has absolutely no sympathy for his company's products. In this way, his behavior sets the tone for a dark, bleak novel in which, contrary to Wilbur Mercer's wishes, nobody seems to have much empathy at all.

Roy Baty – An android, and the leader of a group of androids that escapes from Mars in order to come to San Francisco. Roy Baty is a frightening, intimidating figure, who clearly feels no guilt about murdering human beings. And yet there's also something sympathetic about Roy. He tries, again and again, to "become" human by ingesting drugs designed to make him feel emotional responses, but seemingly none of these drugs work.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Buster Friendly – A loud, comic TV personality who's famous throughout Earth. Friendly is a somewhat sinister figure—he appears to compete with other famous people, such as Wilbur Mercer, for prestige. Toward the end of the novel, it's Friendly who "outs" Mercer as a fraud, jeopardizing Mercerism around the world.

Bill Barbour – Rick Deckard's neighbor and friendly rival, who owns more animals and seems to be richer than Rick.

Harry Bryant – Rick Deckard's immediate superior at the police station. Bryant has little respect for Rick at the start of the novel, but grows to respect him more as Rick retires android after android.

Dave Holden – Rick Deckard's coworker at the police station—another bounty hunter tasked with retiring androids. After Polokov puts Dave in the hospital, Rick takes over Dave's case.

Pris Stratton – A young female android who hides out with John Isidore, but doesn't have any love or respect for him. Pris is frequently cruel and unkind to others, despite the chastisement of Irmgard Baty and Roy Baty.

Mrs. Pilsen – A customer of the fake animal company for which John Isidore works.

Polokov / Sandor Kadalyi – The first android that Rick Deckard retires (notably, in self-defense). Polokov is responsible for sending Dave Holden to the hospital, and he attempts to do the same to Rick Deckard, pretending to be a Soviet police officer named Sandor Kadalyi.

Officer Crams – Seemingly an android, Officer Crams works for a police station in San Francisco that's run almost entirely by incognito androids. He arrests Rick Deckard for murdering Polokov.

Garland – An android who poses as a police officer at the police station where Phil Resch and Officer Crams work. Garland is a cold, unfeeling android—exactly the kind of android Rick Decker has been preparing himself to kill. Garland is "retired" by Resch.

Irmgard Baty – The wife of Roy Baty—an android.

Gitchel – An android who escapes from Mars alongside Roy Baty.

Anders – An android who escapes from Mars alongside Roy Baty.

Hannibal Sloat – John Isidore's boss, an unkind, callous man.

Ann Martsen – Rick Deckard's secretary at the police station.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

HUMANITY, ANDROIDS, AND EMPATHY

In 2007, the journalist Adam Gopnik wrote a long essay on Philip K. Dick in which he proposed that all of Dick's novels are structured around the same question: "What is human?" Sure enough, this question hangs over every chapter of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* In a way, the other four themes of the novel represent four different ways of answering this question (for example, humans are human because they're capable of making memories; because they alter their environments; because they can buy and sell things, etc.).

Even though there are many ways to answer the question, "What makes us human?", *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is most interested in one potential answer—humans are human because they're capable of feeling empathy. (The word "empathy" appears nearly 100 times in the book.) In the future, police officers distinguish between humans and androids by administering the **Voigt-Kampff** test, which is designed to measure one's empathetic reaction to a series of emotional situations. Humans are supposed to respond by displaying empathy—i.e., they're supposed to feel a sense of connection to the people or animals in the hypothetical situations—while androids are supposed to respond with a sense of coldness that borders on psychopathy.

The disturbing "joke" of *Do Androids Dream* is that, for all the talk about the importance of empathy, there doesn't seem to be very much of it going around. The human characters in the novel are cold and short with one another, even when they're friends or spouses. Rick Deckard, the novel's protagonist, is distant with his wife, Iran, and on the one occasion that he shows romantic interest in another woman, Rachel Rosen, his interest is quickly replaced by disgust. Then there are other characters, such as Philip Resch, who are technically human, but are also cruel and totally lacking in empathy. On the flip side, the androids in the novel, such as Pris Stratton, show occasional signs of an emotional connection to other androids. After Pris learns that one of her friends has been "retired"—i.e., murdered by Rick Deckard—she's devastated.

One of Dick's most provocative points about empathy and human nature is that empathy isn't an emotional reaction at all—rather, it's a way of uniting humans together against some kind of "other." In Dick's vision of the future, millions of people subscribe to a mysterious religion called Mercerism, which requires its members to grip an "**empathy box**" that enables them to experience the sensations and feelings of their fellow human beings. As the android Irmgard Baty perceptively points out, the purpose of the empathy box isn't to make human beings kinder or more sensitive—if it is, then the empathy box has clearly failed. Rather, the purpose of the box is to remind human beings that they have a common identity (even if this identity is an illusion) and that they are different from—and superior to—androids. This is a disturbing idea, because it suggests that humans can only respond to Dick's question, "What is human?", with a vague and incomplete answer: "*Not* an android." It's as if in the future—a world in which there's scarcely any empathy left—humans have begun hunting and killing androids in a desperate attempt to remind themselves of their own humanity. The irony, in short, is that humans confirm their humanity—their empathy—by shooting androids, which is just about the most un-empathetic act imaginable.

This doesn't necessarily prove that humans are *incapable* of empathy—only that there's nothing automatically empathetic about being a human being. In the end, then, Dick simply doesn't have a good answer to his own question. By the same token, the characters in his novel are all trying, in one way or another, to understand what it means to be human, and coming up short. But in Dick's futuristic world—where humans are on the verge of extinction, and where an android can, for all intents and purposes, be human—it becomes increasingly important to *try* to understand what it means to be human.

PERCEPTION, REALITY, AND POWER

According to Gopnik, the *other* overarching question of Philip K. Dick's fiction is, "What is real?" In the futuristic version of the U.S. in which *Do Androids Dream* is set, that question is almost impossible to answer. Powerful corporations manufacture electric animals and people who seem to be "alive," but aren't. To make matters worse, nearly everyone in the future uses drugs that blur the line between reality and hallucination—even Rick Deckard, a police officer, uses a kind of "snuff" while he's on the job. For this reason, as the novel nears its end, it becomes almost impossible to tell which parts of the novel are "really" happening, and which parts are merely imagined. For all intents and purposes, it could be argued that a hallucination is "real," at least as far as the person who hallucinates it is concerned. This

prompts a whole series of questions about the relationship between perception and reality. In effect, *Do Androids Dream* poses a futuristic version of the old Zen mantra, "If a tree falls in the forest and nobody's around, does it make a sound?"—if a character is an android, but nobody knows it, is he human? In other words—is perception reality?

As far as the characters in *Do Androids Dream* are concerned, the answer to this question is a resounding "No." Even if something in the novel seems to be real in every way—even if it's almost indistinguishable from reality—it can be dismissed as a "fake," a simulacrum of the truth. For this reason, bounty hunters like Rick Deckard hunt down androids posing as real humans—even though, in the end, the only way to truly confirm that they're androids is to test their bone marrow. By the same token, residents of the United States spend large sums of money on "real" pets, even though it's much cheaper to buy a fake pet that looks, sounds, and even smells like the real thing. In the future, precisely because it's become so easy to mimic the real, reality is a priceless commodity, and a source of power.

This leads us to one of Dick's most important points about the nature of reality: things are only real if enough people—or enough powerful people—*say* that they're real. The futuristic law enforcers of San Francisco, to name only one example, assert their power by testing humans to determine whether they're real or fake. Their only real source of control over their suspects is a test designed to distinguish reality from the mere perception of reality. Maybe the best example of this idea is the **mood organ** that Rick's wife, Iran, uses. The mood organ can control human's emotions: there's a setting on the organ for the emotion of optimism, for the desire to watch TV, etc. Even though these so-called emotions seem less "real" than emotions as we think of them (i.e., the emotions that we feel without the aid of a mood organ), they're real by virtue of the fact that a powerful corporation develops them, names them, and sells them to customers. In fact, the mood organ's emotions may be *more* real than natural emotions (as far as society is concerned), because they've been validated by a big, powerful business and millions of consumers. *My* sense of optimism is fragile and indefinable, but the mood organ's sense of optimism is the "real deal"—something everyone can (supposedly) agree upon.

In this way, *Do Androids Dream* suggests that reality might be perception, after all. This helps to explain the book's ambiguous ending, in which Deckard stumbles upon a **toad** (an incredibly rare animal) in the middle of the desert and has a semi-religious experience. The fact that the toad turns out to be a machine makes no difference: Rick's experience in the desert is the same. If power is the ability to classify what's real and what's not, then reality is just a fable that's been agreed upon.

MEMORY

By forming new memories, humans build relationships with each other, mature emotionally, and gain knowledge and wisdom. Without memories, ideas of selfhood and humanity become more difficult to define. But in *Do Androids Dream*, memory isn't a reliable tool for humans looking to understand their environments. On the contrary, characters' memories seem hazy, and on the rare occasions when characters *do* remember the past clearly, their memories often turn out to be artificially implanted. Then there are "collective" memories of an entire civilization; these kinds of memories, too, are hazy and unreliable. It's worth understanding the novel's interpretation of memory, and the ramifications for the characters, a little more closely.

To begin with, *Do Androids Dream* makes it clear that memory is extremely unreliable, and this gives the novel a disturbed, paranoid tone. In the future, scientists have learned how to implant characters in people's brains. In this way, scientists can fool androids into believing that they're human beings by giving them artificial memories of a childhood they never had. On multiple occasions, characters who believe that they're human learn that they're actually androids—their memories are just clever illusions. Even the characters in the novel who seem not to be androids, such as Rick Deckard, seem to have few, if any, memories of the past worth sharing. For this reason, it's often unclear to readers how well Rick knows other characters in the book: we don't necessarily know if he's meeting someone for the second time or the 500th. Because he's so familiar with the concept of artificial memory, Rick seems to live in a "perpetual present"—the only information he can trust is what he's experiencing *right now*.

All of this points to the fact that memory is a (and maybe *the*) critical part of being human—androids realize that they're not human in the same instant that they learn that their memories were implanted, and by the same token, Rick doubts his own humanity because he finds it hard to trust his memories of the past. Much the same could be said of humanity as a whole: people know that there was a great war in the recent past, **World War Terminus**, but they have no idea what exactly prompted this war, or how it ended. Because humanity's memory of its collective past is cloudy and unreliable, life in the present becomes paranoid, unpredictable, and—it must be said—inhuman. Without a common heritage—a common memory, in other words—humans are alienated from one another, and find it impossible to move forward with their lives.

In the end, Dick isn't telling us anything we didn't already know about remembering. Memory, we can all agree, is inherently unreliable: the more time passes, the more our memories of the past distort. In this way *Do Androids Dream* takes the imperfection of memory to its logical extreme: a world in which almost all memory has disappeared, and the memories that

remain are unreliable.

ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, humans have an uneasy relationship with the natural world. After decades of nuclear war, the natural world is in ruins: lush forests have become inhabitable deserts. Because the state of nature is so dire, pets are extremely valuable, and it's a mark of social status to own a sheep, a goat, or a horse. The relationship between humans, animals, and the environment is even revealed as an important theme in the title of the book itself.

In no small part, the characters' obsession with pets is indicative of their deep love and nostalgia for the natural world. It's the basic law of supply and demand: because less of the natural world is available to the human race, animals—i.e., specimens of the natural world—become considerably more valuable. Pets are humans' last point of contact with the environment. Contact with the environment is very important for the characters because civilization has become ubiquitous and nauseating. Life in San Francisco, for instance, is loud and stressful. It's no coincidence that Rick Deckard has a semi-religious experience—arguably the only part in the novel that could be called a moment of enlightenment—while he's far from civilization, wandering through the deserts of Oregon (areas that used to be covered with trees). In short, animals represent a tiny "window" to the natural world—a place for which the inhabitants of the dirty, corporate United States seem rightly nostalgic.

And yet humans' relationship with the environment is less symbiotic than Deckard's experience in the desert would suggest. Humans don't just want to enjoy the natural world; they want to dominate it, asserting their own power and ingenuity in the process. By the same logic, humans don't just want to have contact with animals; they want to *own* them, thereby proving that they have time and the money to spend on the natural world. In the end, Dick steers us toward the cynical conclusion that it's human nature not only to love the environment but also to control it and thus ultimately destroy it. One of the few times in the novel when the android Rachel Rosen demonstrates a recognizably human emotion (spitefulness and cruelty) is when she pushes Rick Deckard's goat off the roof, killing it. There's something disturbingly human about Rachel's act of vengeance: humans feel a tragic instinct to assert their power by conquering and destroying the natural world. In the book, the deserts surrounding San Francisco are concrete proof of mankind's need to control the environment. Moreover, the fact that characters want to colonize other planets—asserting their control over new, unfamiliar environments—suggests that humans haven't learned from their mistakes.

COMMODIFICATION AND CONSUMERISM

Although *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is a work of science fiction, it can also be interpreted as a satire of contemporary American society—a society where everything is for sale and where the mass media ensure that everybody craves the same things.

In his novel, Dick depicts a futuristic society in which the art of "keeping up with the Joneses" has gone out of control. In the future, we learn, families still compete with one another to assert their wealth and taste. The difference is that in present-day America (and 1960s America, when Dick was writing), people assert their wealth by buying cars and big houses, but in the future, it's all about buying exotic pets. In a short but revealing conversation with his neighbor, Bill Barbour, Rick Deckard feels a strong sense of envy when Barbour brags that he has enough money to buy a horse: a particularly expensive, desirable pet. Rick's desire to keep up with Barbour and his other neighbors then inspires much of his behavior. After he "retires" three androids and receives a big bonus for doing so, Rick goes to the pet store and buys a goat without so much as a second thought. Even though pets are just the latest form of conspicuous consumption—i.e., not a necessity by any stretch of the imagination—Rick has been trained to believe that he "needs" a pet animal to feel happy, a pretty plausible caricature of the beloved American tradition of outshining one's neighbors.

Where does Rick get the idea that he needs to buy an animal? In part, his desire reflects his nostalgia for the natural world (see "Animals and the Environment" theme). And yet Rick's behavior also suggests his imprisonment in a society in which the mass media train everyone to want the same things. From the first page of the book, Dick shows us how, in the future, corporations and shadowy government institutions control the thoughts and desires of ordinary people. Rick's wife, Iran, depends upon a **mood organ**—i.e., a product she's purchased—to feel emotions of any kind. Her desires are, quite literally, identical to those of other people who have purchased the organ. Later on, we also learn that people in the future subscribe to a religion that emphasizes the importance of empathy—i.e., feeling exactly the same things as others—and also involves using a purchased product (the **empathy box**). While there's nothing wrong with empathy, it's telling that futuristic societies deify conformity of thought. As Irmgard Baty notes, the idealization of empathy makes it easier to control the masses: when people are encouraged to think the same things, it's more convenient to control what they buy and do. This is the heart of Dick's critique of American culture: the omnipresence of television and radio has pushed people to conform to a consumerist dogma. At its best, social conformity makes humans want to buy certain products; at its worst, it turns them into slaves.

Arguably the biggest irony of *Do Androids Dream* is that the characters are frightened of robots becoming people, when they should be worrying about people turning into robots. Television and mass communication have convinced characters like Rick and Iran Deckard that the only way to be happy is to buy what everyone else is buying, even if these commodities have no practical purpose whatsoever. Dick's satire of contemporary American culture is dead-on and—like most of what's frightening about the novel—not too far removed from reality.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE MOOD ORGAN

In Dick's vision of the future, people rely on a "mood organ" to feel emotions of any kind. The mood organ can be placed on various "settings," each one of which corresponds to a different, very specific emotion, such as "eager to watch TV," "slightly optimistic," "weary," etc. It's bizarre to imagine a world in which people depend on machines to feel—in this sense, the mood organ is a disturbing symbol of humans' growing reliance on machines, even as they simultaneously become more *like* machines (unable to feel emotion without using another machine). More to the point, however, the organ symbolizes the growing conformity of modern society, in which the mass media ensure that everyone is thinking and feeling the same things.

THE EMPATHY BOX

The empathy box is a cornerstone of the religion of Mercerism, which, in the world of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, has millions of followers. Mercerists join together with each other by touching the empathy box—when they do so, they're rendered capable of feeling each other's thoughts, feelings, and pains—the most literal kind of empathy imaginable. Despite its name, however, the empathy box doesn't seem to make people particularly empathetic in real life—on the contrary, the world of the novel is bleak, frightening, and cold. In this sense, the empathy box could be said to symbolize the failure of community in the future. Despite people's best efforts, they're alienated from each other. Furthermore, the empathy box resembles the **mood organ**, in that they're both tools designed to build group conformity by playing on the idea of individual human emotion. In this way, the empathy box might as well be a television, a radio, or an iPhone—a sinister symbol of the homogeneity of mass culture.

THE TOAD

At the end of the novel, Rick Deckard discovers a toad crawling through the desert. Although Rick believes that the toad is alive, and therefore highly valuable, he discovers that it's actually just a machine, placed in the desert by an unknown explorer. As Rick describes the toad—a resilient creature capable of surviving anywhere, even a post-nuclear desert—it becomes increasingly clear that the animal is a symbol for humanity, which has somehow braved the ravages of its own world wars. Importantly, Rick then continues to value the toad even after he learns that it's robotic. This is a crucial turning point in the book—it suggests that Rick has come to find humanity even in androids, or else has become even more lost in the question of just what is "real" and what is "fake."

WORLD WAR TERMINUS

Long before the plot of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* begins, humanity launched a horrible world war with itself, during which much of the planet was destroyed, presumably by some kind of nuclear holocaust. World War Terminus—a bloody, destructive, but ultimately mysterious conflict (nobody remembers why it started) symbolizes humans' inexplicable tendency to destroy themselves and their environment for the sake of selfish desires.

THE VOIGT-KAMPFF TEST

One of Dick's most famous ideas in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is the Voigt-Kampff test, designed to root out closeted androids by testing their innate sense of empathy. The test presupposes that all human beings have an innate sense of empathy, and androids don't. Again and again, Dick shows this assumption to be incorrect. In a way, the Voigt-Kampf test is another symbol of a futuristic society's struggle to control and classify human nature—a struggle made easier by mechanization and technology. Like the **empathy box** or the **mood organ**, the Voigt-Kampff test is designed to celebrate and protect human nature, but it ends up just revealing the feebleness of any rigid definition of what is "human."

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Ballantine Books edition of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sleep?* published in 1996.

Chapter 1 Quotes

Examining the schedule for January 3, 1992, he saw that a businesslike professional attitude was called for. "If I dial by schedule," he said warily, "will you agree to also?" He waited, canny enough not to commit himself until his wife had agreed to follow suit.
"My schedule for today lists a six-hour self-accusatory depression," Iran said.
"What? Why did you schedule that?" It defeated the whole purpose of the mood organ. "I didn't even know you could set it for that," he said gloomily.

Related Characters: Iran Deckard, Rick Deckard (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 4-5

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, we're introduced to the mood organ, a futuristic device that implants a strong emotion in its user: depression, alertness, etc. The people who use the mood organ can even schedule precise emotions throughout the day, so that they can be guaranteed a strong feeling of alertness at 11 am, or a light melancholy at 10 pm. (Notice also that the only "real" emotion in the passage is gloom, suggesting that perhaps the emotions generated by the machine are actually more desirable and even more real than ordinary human emotions.)

The disturbing thing about a mood organ is that it renders all humans' emotions the same--if two unlike people both use the mood organ to feel melancholy, then their senses of melancholy will be identical in every way. In general, then, the mood organ is representative of a futuristic society in which the consumption of machines and other commodities has created a bland, homogeneous population.

As he started toward his car Barbour called after him hurriedly, "Um, I won't say anything to anybody here in the building."
Pausing, Rick started to say thanks. But then something of the despair that Iran had been talking about tapped him on the shoulder and he said, "I don't know; maybe it doesn't make any difference."
"But they'll look down on you. Not all of them, but some. You know how people are about not taking care of an animal; they consider it immoral and anti-empathic. I mean, technically it's not a crime like it was right after WWT. But the feeling's still there."

Related Characters: Rick Deckard, Bill Barbour (speaker), Iran Deckard

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 13

Explanation and Analysis

In Rick's society, humans demonstrate their morality and empathy--essentially proving that they *are* human, and thereby different from androids--by taking care of animals. Pets of any kind are incredibly rare, due to the environmental devastation caused by WWT, a nuclear apocalypse that happened at some point in the recent past.

First, notice the subtle competition between Rick and his neighbor, Bill Barbour, in this passage. Bill lectures Rick about being a good pet-owner, but in reality, Bill is bragging to Rick about being able to *afford* an exotic pet. In other words, being a "good" person in Rick's society presupposes having the money needed to buy an animal.

Second, it's important to note that humans think of pet-care as an almost nostalgic act; a reminder of a time before WWT, when there were trees and animals in abundance. To own a pet is to gain access to humanity's vanished past. In general, then, animals exemplify many of the key themes of the novel: consumerism, memory, empathy, and the environment.

Chapter 2 Quotes

In addition, no one today remembered why the war had come about or who, if anyone, had won. The dust which had contaminated most of the planet's surface had originated in no country and no one, even the wartime enemy, had planned on it. First, strangely, the owls had died. At the time it had seemed almost funny, the fat, fluffy white birds lying here and there, in yards and on streets; coming out no earlier than twilight as they had while alive the owls escaped notice. Medieval plagues had manifested themselves in a similar way, in the form of many dead rats. This plague, however, had descended from above.

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 15-16

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Dick explains some of the history of World War Terminus, the mysterious global disaster that led to the current state of Rick Deckard's society. At some point in the past, the powerful nations of the world fought a long, brutal war--but as Rick points out, nobody can remember which side won the war. The message is clear: in trying to protect their own people and win glory for their side, the world's superpowers have in reality brought misery to everyone. As a result of (presumably) nuclear fallout, animals have been virtually wiped out; owls fall out of the sky, and at this point, as we see, even once-common animals like sheep are considered rare and exotic.

Dick describes the aftermath of WWT with a nearly Biblical fervor--his descriptions of owls falling out of the sky evokes Moses' Egyptian plagues and even the signs of the Apocalypse. (Dick will allude to the Biblical Apocalypse throughout his novel--later on, we learn that all successful humans have found the money to fly to other planets, dividing the species into two ironic groups, the "saved" and the "damned.")

He found himself, instead, as always before, entering into the landscape of drab hill, drab sky. And at the same time he no longer witnessed the climb of the elderly man. His own feet now scraped, sought purchase, among the familiar loose stones; he felt the same old painful, irregular roughness beneath his feet and once again smelled the acrid haze of the sky — not Earth's sky but that of some place alien, distant, and yet, by means of the empathy box, instantly available.

Related Characters: Al Jarry / Wilbur Mercer, John Isidore

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 22

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, John Isidore, a mentally challenged young man living by himself, participates in a strange religious event--albeit one that's mass-marketed in his society. John grips the sides of the empathy box, a strange, futuristic device that allows millions of people to feel the same sensations as the box's controller. In this case, the controller is Wilbur Mercer, a pseudo-religious figure who stands for the most popular religion of the future, Mercerism.

As should be clear from the passage, the tenets of Mercerism are vague, if existent at all. John senses that he's climbing a big hill along with Mercer, his leader--but why John, or Mercer, needs to climb the hill remains unclear. It's equally unclear how John's out-of-body experience qualifies as empathy (as the name of the device would suggest). It's often said that empathy is the ability to "put yourself in someone else's shoes," i.e., experience life from their point of view. In the future, however, technology allows people to interpret empathy in a hilariously literal way. Put another way, "empathy" has seemingly come to refer to the literal ability to experience someone else's senses, without any of the emotional or moral connotations of the word. At the same time, this mass-marketed empathy is the defining feature of Mercerism, and, as we later learn, is the defining trait that humans use to identify themselves as different from androids.

Chapter 3 Quotes

Empathy, he once had decided, must be limited to herbivores or anyhow omnivores who could depart from a meat diet. Because, ultimately, the emphatic gift blurred the boundaries between hunter and victim, between the successful and the defeated. As in the fusion withMercer, everyone ascended together or, when the cycle had come to an end, fell together into the trough of the tomb world. Oddly, it resembled a sort of biological insurance, but double-edged. As long as some creature experienced joy, then the condition for all other creatures included a fragment of joy. However, if any living being suffered, then for all the rest the shadow could not be entirely cast off. A herd animal such as man would acquire a higher survival factor through this; an owl or a cobra would be destroyed.
Evidently the humanoid robot constituted a solitary predator.

Related Characters: Al Jarry / Wilbur Mercer, Rick Deckard

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 31

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Rick contemplates empathy and its relationship with the ideology of Mercerism (the most popular religion in Dick's futuristic society). As Rick sees it, empathy is a survival mechanism and nothing more. The biology is simple: if life forms are "programmed" to feel empathy, then they have an automatic incentive to stick together and take care of each other. Over the millennia, humans have evolved to feel a strong sense of empathy for one another, simply because empathy is good for the species.

The problem with Rick's account of empathy, of course, is that it's incredibly cold and callous. For Rick, empathy doesn't have any relationship to morality or compassion--it's just another "tool" to help people survive. Put another way, Rick treats empathy as if it's a purely logical behavior--when in fact, feeling empathy is arguably one of the least logical behaviors of which humans are capable.

In spite of Rick's rather cynical account of empathy, it's clear that empathy has become more and more important to humanity precisely because it's grown scarcer and more commodified. Mercerism, the most popular religion, is based on one principle and one principle along: humans can feel empathy (and, by the same token, androids cannot--thus they are like "solitary predators"). Paradoxically, empathy seems to have become more important to civilization, and yet also cheaper.

Chapter 5 Quotes

"Babyhide," Rick said. He stroked the black leather surface of the briefcase. "One hundred percent genuine human babyhide." He saw the two dial indicators gyrate frantically. But only after a pause. The reaction had come, but too late. He knew the reaction period down to a fraction of a second, the correct reaction period; there should have been none.
"Thanks, Miss Rosen," he said, and gathered together the equipment again; he had concluded his retesting. "That's all."
"You're leaving?" Rachael asked.
"Yes," he said. "I'm satisfied."

Related Characters: Rachael Rosen, Rick Deckard (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 59

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Rick conducts a Voigt-Kampff test upon Rachael Rosen. The Voigt-Kampff, we're told, is one of several tests used to determine whether the test subject is a human or an android. Supposedly, the test is capable of measuring empathy (the emotion that distinguishes humans from non-humans). A skilled technician like Rick can interpret his subjects' heart-rate, pupil dilation, etc., to determine their humanity.Here, we see, Rick determines (or believes that he determines) that Rachael is a robot, because she reacts to his emotional provocations a split-second too late.

The conceit of the Voigt-Kampff test is especially bizarre because--at least by readers' standards--empathy cannot be measured or rationalized. In other words, it seems somehow insufficient to measure a person's empathy by studying facts and figures (such as heart-rate). And yet because Rick--and, it would seem, everyone else in his society--understands empathy in the narrowest, most clinical sense, he believes that empathy really *can* be measured numerically. Taken to its extremes, this test essentially gives bounty hunters like Rick the power to decide whether someone is human or not.

To Eldon Rosen, who slumped morosely by the door of the room, he said, "Does she know?" Sometimes they didn't; false memories had been tried various times, generally in the mistaken idea that through them reactions to testing would be altered.
Eldon Rosen said, "No. We programmed her completely."
"But I think toward the end she suspected." To the girl he said, "You guessed when he asked for one more try."
Pale, Rachael nodded fixedly.

Related Characters: Eldon Rosen, Rick Deckard (speaker), Rachael Rosen

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 59

Explanation and Analysis

Rick Deckard has just administered a Voigt-Kampff test for Rachael Rosen, and concluded that Rachael is an android. Surreally, Eldon Rosen, the president of the powerful Rosen Corporation, then chats with Rick about Rachael's identity as a robot--in front of Rachael herself.

In a split second, Eldon and Rick go from treating Rachel like an equal to suddenly treating her like an obedient pet. Discovering that you're an android, one would think, is just about the most traumatic event imaginable, and yet because she's not fully human, Rick and Eldon feel comfortable talking about her calmly and briskly, seemingly unconcerned with hurting her feelings. Their behavior, we should note, is alarmingly *un*-empathetic--despite the fact that Rick's only reason for deciding that Rachael isan android is her lack of empathy. Rick entirely alters the way he treats Rachael--he goes from being respectful to being cruel and dismissive--simply because of her score on a test.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ Maybe Buster is jealous, Isidore conjectured. Sure, that would explain it; he and Wilbur Mercer are in competition. But for what?
Our minds, Isidore decided. They're fighting for control of our psychic selves; the empathy box on one hand, Buster's guffaws and off-the-cuff jibes on the other. I'll have to tell Hannibal Sloat that, he decided. Ask him if it's true; he'll know.

Related Characters: John Isidore (speaker), Buster Friendly, Hannibal Sloat, Al Jarry / Wilbur Mercer

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 75

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, John Isidore contemplates a growing rivalry between two famous media personalities, Buster Friendly and Wilbur Mercer. Wilbur Mercer is a supposedly religious figure: he presides over a popular religion called Mercerism, which is practiced by millions of people. Buster Friendly has no religion, and yet he interacts with his fans in much the same way as Mercer--via television and other media. Friendly and Mercer, it's suggested, have a "celebrity feud"--as John insightfully points out, they're both competing for an audience's attention.

The equation of Mercer, a religious leader, and Friendly, a TV personality, suggests the cheapening of religion in John's society, and the elevation of entertainment to a form of worship. In a world where media and entertainment have become all-important, religion itself is just another diversion--just another program to watch after work. Furthermore, the rivalry between Mercer and Friendly cheapens Mercer's signature product: empathy. If Mercer himself is just another entertainer, vying for high ratings, then his product, empathy, is just another gimmick designed to attract people's attention. As Dick has already shown, this society's definition of empathy is cold and clinical--which perhaps is why *true* empathy and compassion are so desperately sought after.

Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ "An android," he said, "doesn't care what happens to any other android. That's one of the indications we look for."
"Then," Miss Luft said, "you must be an android."
That stopped him; he stared at her.
"Because," she continued, "Your job is to kill them, isn't it? You're what they call — " She tried to remember.
"A bounty hunter," Rick said. "But I'm not an android."
"This test you want to give me." Her voice, now, had begun to return. "Have you taken it?"

Related Characters: Rick Deckard (speaker), Miss Luba Luft

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 101

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Rick is in the process of hunting down and killing a suspected android named Miss Luba Luft. To Rick's great surprise, Miss Luft asks him what seems like a fairly obvious question--has Rick taken his own test? In other words, couldn't Rick be an android, too?

Miss Luft's question is important, because it tells us a lot about the structures of power and control in Rick's society, and about the nature of identity and humanity in Dick's vision of the world. It's suggested that Rick avoids considering the possibility that he's an android--despite the fact that he's frequently interacting with androids who think they're human. One could argue that Rick's refusal, thus far,

to consider his own humanity suggests that he really *is* an android--he's been programmed to never think about his own nature.

There's also a second, more interesting possibility. Perhaps the reason Rick doesn't need to take the Voigt-Kampff Test is because he's in a position of power. Although the supposed definition of an android is a being that's incapable of feeling empathy, we've already seen that this definition is virtually nonsensical. The *true*, implicit definition of an android is a being who lacks power in society--a being who cannot defend himself when the authorities accuse him of being inhuman. Regardless of whether or not he's made of metal and plastic, Rick cannot be an android because he is a powerful person--the rules of Voigt-Kampff simply don't apply to him.

Chapter 11 Quotes

Garland said, "That damn fool Resch."
"He actually doesn't know?"
"He doesn't know; he doesn't suspect; he doesn't have the slightest idea. Otherwise he couldn't live out a life as a bounty hunter, a human occupation — hardly an android occupation." Garland gestured toward Rick's briefcase. "Those other carbons, the other suspects you're supposed to test and retire. I know them all." He paused, then said, "We all came here together on the same ship from Mars. Not Resch; he stayed behind another week, receiving the synthetic memory system." He was silent, then.
Or rather it was silent.

Related Characters: Rick Deckard, Garland (speaker), Phil Resch

Related Themes:

Page Number: 122

Explanation and Analysis

In this disorienting passage, Rick has been arrested by a group of supposed police officers and taken to a police station Rick has never seen before. In custody, Rick meets two officers, Garland and Resch. While Resch is out of the room, Garland reveals that they're both androids--but only he (Garland) knows this. As far as Resch is concerned, everyone in the station is a human being.

Coming on the heels of Rick's realization that he might be an android himself, Garland's revelation is especially surprising. There's no outward difference between Resch and Garland, and yet Resch is convinced that he's a human being, while Garland is sure that he's a robot. Dick implies a question--if an android acts like a human being and believes itself to be a human being, *is* it a human being? Dick strongly suggests that the answer *should be* yes--as even after Rick discovers that Garland is an android, he can't help but think of Garland as a "he," though he quickly corrects himself ("*It* was silent). This connects again to the shifting definitions of humanity within the novel, and how far empathy extends--whether it's enough to bridge the blurry divide between human and android.

"You androids," Rick said, "don't exactly cover for each other in times of stress."
Garland snapped, "I think you're right; it would seem we lack a specific talent you humans possess. I believe it's called empathy."

Related Characters: Garland, Rick Deckard (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 124

Explanation and Analysis

Rick has been arrested and brought into a police station. There, one of the officers, Garland, reveals that he (Garland) is an android--along with everyone else in the station. Garland claims that he (or it) is incapable of feeling the emotion of empathy.

Garland's comments seemingly confirm the importance of empathy in humanity. Rick investigates potential androids by measuring their empathetic responses to emotional triggers. While it had previously seemed that Rick was wrong to reduce all of human nature to one numerically-measured emotion, Garland's comments would suggest that humanity really *is* a matter of experiencing empathy. And yet ironically, Garland's definition of empathy (a "talent" possessed by human beings) isn't any less clinical or cynical than humanity's definition of the word. If empathy is what distinguishes robots from humans, one would imagine that a human would be much better equipped than a robot to talk about empathy. And yet no human character in the novel *embodies* empathy--we hear a lot of lip-service paid to empathy, but witness no actual empathetic behavior. It's thus suggested that empathy has been arbitrarily defined as the quality that separates humans from androids--because humans needed *some*kind of divider to maintain their power and sense of identity.

Preoccupied, Phil Resch drove by reflex; his progressively more gloomy train of thought continued to dominate his attention. "Listen, Deckard," he said suddenly. "After we retire Luba Luft — I want you to — " His voice, husky and tormented,broke off. "You know. Give me the Boneli test or that empathy scale you have. To see about me."
"We can worry about that later," Rick said evasively. "You don't want me to take it, do you?" Phil Resch glanced at him with acute comprehension. "I guess you know what the results will be; Garland must have told you something. Facts which I don't know."

Related Characters: Phil Resch, Rick Deckard (speaker), Garland

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 128

Explanation and Analysis

Resch and Rick have escaped from the police station where Rick was being held captive. Resch claims to be a human being, despite the fact that Rick has been informed that Resch is really an android. As Resch drives Rick away from the station, he asks Rick to test his humanity later on. Resch shows every sign of believing himself to be a human being and yet suspecting that he's really an android--he can tell from Rick's face that Rick knows the truth (although it turns out that he's wrong).

Throughout the chapter, Dick challenges our understanding of whether or not Resch (and, for that matter, Rick!) is an android. Dick illustrates the futility of any formal "definition" of humanity--there simply isn't a reliable test, let alone a reliable authority figure--that can weigh in on who is and isn't human. Resch is an interesting figure, because he is ultimately found to be technically human, but also a sadistic person without empathy or compassion--so what, then, is the definition of humanity?

Chapter 12 Quotes

"I see a pattern. The way you killed Garland and then the way you killed Luba. 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. That's why you picked up on the possibility of Garland being an android; it made him available for being killed."

Related Characters: Rick Deckard (speaker), Phil Resch, Garland

Related Themes:

Page Number: 137

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Rick--now teamed up with Resch--has just witnessed Resch killing Luba Luft, one of the robots on Rick's "kill list." Rick believes that he's determined that Resch is a human being, at least in the narrow, clinical sense of the term "human" covered by the results of a Voigt-Kampff test. And yet in spite of the fact that he's "passed" the test, Resch shows every operative sign of being an android: his behavior around others is unfeeling and even psychopathic, to the point where he feels no guilt or anxiety when firing a gun at Luba Luft.

To the extent that Resch *does* feel emotion, he paints a frightening picture of human nature. Resch derives genuine pleasure from killing Luft. Thus far, Dick has suggested that the difference between a robot and a human is emotion. But here, the emotion that defines humanity isn't empathy (as Rick believes) but cruelty. If humans are defined by their ability to enjoy hurting others, then maybe it's better to be an unfeeling robot.

"If it's love toward a woman or an android imitation, it's sex. Wake up and face yourself, Deckard. You wanted to go to bed with a female type of android — nothing more, nothing less. I felt that way, on one occasion. When I had just started bounty hunting. Don't let it get you down; you'll heal. What's happened is that you've got your order reversed. Don't kill her—or be present when she's killed — and then feel physically attracted. Do it the other way."

Related Characters: Phil Resch (speaker), Miss Luba Luft, Rick Deckard

Related Themes:

Page Number: 143

Explanation and Analysis

After Resch kills an android named Luba Luft, he discusses Luft with the horrified Rick. Resch points out that Rick feels guilty about ending Luft's "life," but only because Rick was attracted to Luft. Resch gives Rick instructions on how to avoid the sense of guilt Rick is currently feeling: get the "physical attraction" out of his system and then kill, not the

other way around.

Notice that Resch has no objection to feeling physically attracted to a robot--another reminder of the gray area that separates humans from androids. Furthermore, the fact that Resch has no qualms about ending Luft's life, in spite of the fact that he's been shown to be confused about the differences between a human and a robot, suggests that his cruelty to robots extends to people as well. Whether or not he's passed the Voigt-Kampff, Resch is still clearly a cruel, non-empathetic person.

Chapter 13 Quotes

"Stories written before space travel but about space travel."
"How could there have been stories about space travel before — "
"The writers," Pris said, "made it up."
"Based on what?"
"On imagination. A lot of times they turned out wrong. For example they wrote about Venus being a jungle paradise with huge monsters and women in breastplates that glistened." She eyed him. "Does that interest you? Big women with long braided blond hair and gleaming breastplates the size of melons?"
"No," he said.

Related Characters: John Isidore, Pris Stratton (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 151

Explanation and Analysis

In this self-referential passage, Dick pays homage to the generations of American science fiction writers who used their gifts to paint elaborate pictures of exciting futuristic worlds. Pris, an android who's been hiding out with John Isidore, tells John about the science fiction writers of the past. Many of these writers were optimistic for the future: they painted the future as a time for adventure and excitement, often of a sexual nature. When Pris asks John if the writers' vision of the future appeals to him, John immediate says that it doesn't.

John's "No" might suggest his sexual immaturity. But perhaps Dick is also using John to critique the naiveté of his sci-fi contemporaries. While many science fiction authors of the 60s and 70s looked ahead to a bright, dazzling future, in which technology would solve humanity's problems, Dick found it impossible to be so optimistic. Like John, Dick said "No" to gimmicky, childish science-fiction fantasies. Instead of using his novels to entertain and titillate his readers, Dick used sci-fi to paint a dark, disturbing view of the future while also critiquing the moral and social problems of the present day.

Chapter 14 Quotes

"The chickenhead," Pris said, "likes me."
"Don't call him that, Pris," Irmgard said; she gave Isidore a look of compassion. "Think what he could call you."

Related Characters: Irmgard Baty, Pris Stratton (speaker), John Isidore

Related Themes:

Page Number: 159

Explanation and Analysis

John Isidore has agreed to shelter two robots hiding out from Rick Deckard: Pris and Irmgard. Pris has previously been kind to John, but here she insults him, and Irmgard immediately defends John from Pris's bullying. Surprisingly, Irmgard defends John on the grounds that John could bully Pris just as badly.

In spite of the fact that Rick thinks that robot are incapable of feeling true emotion, Irmgard seems to exhibit signs of "compassion" and even empathy. Irmgard's advice to Pris is a variation on the "golden rule" ("Do unto others as you have them do to you"), often said to be the most basic moral principle of human society. In all, the passage suggests that robots are more capable of emotion and compassion than humans would like to believe.

Chapter 15 Quotes

"Maybe they did just what we're doing," Roy Baty said. "Confided in, trusted, one given human being who they believed was different. As you said, special."
"We don't know that," Irmgard said. "That's only a conjecture. I think they, they — " She gestured. "Walked around. Sang from a stage like Luba. We trust — I'll tell you what we trust that fouls us up, Roy; it's our goddamn superior intelligence!" She glared at her husband, her small, high breasts rising and falling rapidly. "We're so smart — Roy, you're doing it right now; goddamn you, you're doing it now!"

Related Characters: Irmgard Baty, Roy Baty (speaker),

Miss Luba Luft

Related Themes:

Page Number: 166-167

Explanation and Analysis

Roy and Irmgard Baty, the two leaders of the escaped androids, try to decide what to do. They're aware that Rick Deckard is tracking them down and "retiring" their group, one by one. Roy proposes that the remaining androids take to the road in an attempt to avoid Rick; Irmgard disagrees and proposes that they continue staying with John, the simple-minded human who's offered them shelter so far. Roy is reluctant to trust another human being, but Irmgard insists that Roy is wrong to rely excessively on his own intelligence and abilities--in order to survive, they need to "lean on" others.

As before, Irmgard shows every sign of feeling human emotion--in a time of crisis, her instinct is to trust and cooperate with other people. Irmgard's explanation of *why* it's necessary to cooperate with John might be overly logical and rational, but no more so than the explanations offered by Rick Deckard or Phil Resch (whom we believe to be real human beings). In short, the androids show signs of becoming, or at least striving to become, human.

Rick said, "I took a test, one question, and verified it; I've begun to empathize with androids, and look what that means. You said it this morning yourself. 'Those poor andys.' So you know what I'm talking about. That's why I bought the goat. I never felt like that before. Maybe it could be a depression, like you get. I can understand now how you suffer when you're depressed; I always thought you liked it and I thought you could have snapped yourself out any time, if not alone then by means of the mood organ. But when you get that depressed you don't care. Apathy, because you've lost a sense of worth. It doesn't matter whether you feel better because if you have no worth —
"

"What about your job?" Her tone jabbed at him; he blinked. "Your job," Iran repeated. "What are the monthly payments on the goat?" She held out her hand; reflexively he got out the contract which he had signed, passed it to her.

Related Characters: Iran Deckard, Rick Deckard (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 174-175

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Rick Deckard admits to his wife, Iran, that he's begun to empathize with the androids whom he's been tasked with hunting down and "retiring." Up to this point in the novel, Rick has defined empathy as the ability to feel a bond with other human beings--here, though, he expands his definition of empathy to encompass a bond with androids and animals. As a way of staving off his guilt and anxiety (and showing off his new bounty hunting rewards), Rick has purchased an expensive pet. He continues to play by "society's rules"--when he's sad, he sees no solution other than shopping, just as his friends and neighbors do.

Rick's interaction with Iran in this passage is important because it brings up the idea of apathy in contrast to empathy. While the human characters in the novel define themselves according to their ability to empathize with others, they're more notable for their disillusionment with emotional connection of any kind whatsoever. Rick has previously felt disconnected from his depressed wife, and here, when he reaches out to her and opens up about his feelings, she interrupts him to discuss money. Both characters, struggling to feel an emotional bond with anyone or anything, can only attempt an apathetic, futile solution to their problems--shopping therapy.

Chapter 16 Quotes

In addition, this android stole, and experimented with, various mind-fusing drugs, claiming when caught that it hoped to promote in androids a group experience similar to that of Mercerism, which it pointed out remains unavailable to androids.
The account had a pathetic quality. A rough, cold android, hoping to undergo an experience from which, due to a deliberately built-in defect, it remained excluded. But he could not work up much concern for Roy Baty; he caught, from Dave's jottings, a repellent quality hanging about this particular android.

Related Characters: Dave Holden, Rick Deckard, Roy Baty

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 185

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Rick Deckard learns that one of his final android victims, Roy Baty, has previously experimented with drugs in an attempt to replicate a human experience. Roy claims that he's been trying to hallucinate in an attempt to feel a psychic bond with other beings--much like the bond experienced by humans when using the empathy box in Mercerism. In short, Roy has been trying to become human; taking his cues from Mercerism, he believes that humanity consists of the ability to "connect" with others.

Roy's attempts to become human are pathetic, but not for the reasons that Rick Deckard lists here. As far as Rick is concerned, Mercerism is a legitimate religion and "empathy" is a legitimate way to define human nature. The real tragedy of Roy's existence is that he's bought into society's shallow, nonsensical definition of what it means to be human, then "failed" to adhere to such a definition. (Note also that Rick seems utterly unconcerned with Roy's misery--for someone who deals in empathy every day, he's remarkably *un*-empathetic here.)

Chapter 17 Quotes

❝ Putting his laser tube away Rick said, "I can't do what Phil Resch said." He snapped the motor back on, and a moment later they had taken off again.
"If you're ever going to do it," Rachael said, "do it now. Don't make me wait."

"I'm not going to kill you." He steered the car in the direction of downtown San Francisco once again. "Your car's at the St. Francis, isn't it? I'll let you off there and you can head for Seattle." That ended what he had to say; he drove in silence.
"Thanks for not killing me," Rachael said presently.
"Hell, as you said you've only got two years of life left, anyhow. And I've got fifty. I'll live twenty-five times as long as you."

Related Characters: Rachael Rosen, Rick Deckard (speaker), Phil Resch

Related Themes:

Page Number: 201

Explanation and Analysis

Rachael, an android, has just slept with Rick. Rachael then reveals that she chose to have sex with Rick in the hopes that Rick would become incapable of retiring any more androids--that the memory of his sexual experience would fill him with remorse every time he pointed a gun at another android.

Rick is furious with Rachael for conning him, but he's also too emotionally attached to her to retire her (hence Rachael's ironic statement, "Thanks for not killing me"). Angry but no longer capable of hurting an android, Rick lashes out at Rachael by bragging about his longer lifespan--Rachael, he reminds her, has less than 2 years to live.

The passage sums up the relationship between robots and humans--a relationship that illustrates the so-called "narcissism of petty differences." At the end of the day, there's no real difference between androids and humans: they're equally miserable, equally alienated, and equally frustrated with their mortality. But instead of recognizing their common nature, humans have chosen to wage war against androids as a way of distracting themselves from their *own* weaknesses ("I'll live 25 times as long as you"). In short, humans distance themselves from androids in an attempt to glorify their own human nature.

Chapter 18 Quotes

❝ "No, it's that empathy," Irmgard said vigorously. Fists clenched, she roved into the kitchen, up to Isidore. "Isn't it a way of proving that humans can do something we can't do? Because without the Mercer experience we just have your word that you feel this empathy business, this shared, group thing. How's the spider?"

Related Characters: Irmgard Baty (speaker), Al Jarry / Wilbur Mercer, John Isidore

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 209-210

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Irmgard Baty sums up the complicated relationship between humans and androids. Irmgard is watching John Isidore, who's been sheltering her in his home, as he interacts with Wilbur Mercer via an empathy box. Irmgard, who knows very well that society defines androids by their inability to feel empathy, points out that the human race *needs* to persecute robots in order to feel more secure in its own identity. Humans define themselves according to their ability to feel empathy. And yet in the aftermath of a huge war, there doesn't seem to be very much genuine empathy going around. In a pathetic attempt to *prove* their own capacity for empathy, humans participate in religious ceremonies with Mercer. The problem is that Mercer's empathy box and the mood organ are commodified and

mass-produced--and there's not much true compassion that comes from such devices.

Chapter 20 Quotes

"Rick," she said, "I have to tell you something. I'm sorry. The goat is dead."

For some reason it did not surprise him; it only made him feel worse, a quantitative addition to the weight shrinking him from every side. "I think there's a guarantee in the contract," he said. "If it gets sick within ninety days the dealer — "
"It didn't get sick. Someone" — Iran cleared her throat and went on huskily — "someone came here, got the goat out of its cage, and dragged it to the edge of the roof."
"And pushed it off?" he said.
"Yes." She nodded.
"Did you see who did it?"
"I saw her very clearly," Iran said. "Barbour was still up here fooling around; he came down to get me and we called the police, but by then the animal was dead and she had left. A small young-looking girl with dark hair and large black eyes, very thin. Wearing a long fishscale coat. She had a mail-pouch purse. And she made no effort to keep us from seeing her. As if she didn't care."

Related Characters: Iran Deckard, Rick Deckard (speaker), Bill Barbour, Rachael Rosen

Related Themes:

Page Number: 226-227

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Rick Deckard, who's just finished retiring the final androids on his list, returns to his home. There, his wife Iran gives him some bad news: his prized goat (which he's paid for using the bounty from retiring the androids) has been pushed off the roof. Based on Iran's description, we can tell that it was Rachael, furious with Deckard for killing more androids after her attempts to dissuade him from doing so, who killed the goat.

Rachael's behavior is petty, spiteful, furious--and, in short, eminently human. Throughout the novel, there have been many attempts to define human nature. While most of the characters in the book believe that to be human is to feel empathy, Dick suggests that being human is a much uglier, nastier business. Rachael's decision to kill the goat is arguably more recognizably human than any of the acts of empathy we witness in the novel.

Chapter 21 Quotes

It would have been rewarding to talk to Dave, he decided. Dave would have approved what I did. But also he would have understood the other part, which I don't think even Mercer comprehends. For Mercer everything is easy, he thought, because Mercer accepts everything. Nothing is alien to him. But what I've done, he thought; that's become alien to me. In fact everything about me has become unnatural; I've become an unnatural self.

Related Characters: Rick Deckard (speaker), Al Jarry / Wilbur Mercer, Dave Holden

Related Themes:

Page Number: 230

Explanation and Analysis

Rick Deckard has successfully retired all the androids on his list. He wishes he could talk with Dave Holden, his colleague who was severely wounded while trying to retire the androids. Rick believes that Dave would be able to alleviate some of his guilt and anxiety at having killed beings that, at times, seemed totally human. And yet Dave is unavailable.

Strangely, Dave's absence--i.e., the absence of a benevolent authority willing to forgive Rick for everything he's done--prompts Rick to study his society more critically, and reach a surprising discovery. Forced to sit with his sins, Rick comes to realize the true corruption of Mercerism: Mercer forgives everything and approves of everything, no matter how evil it is. Mercerism is the appropriate religion for Rick's society--a society in which acts of cruelty and even murder are excused on the grounds that the victims weren't "truly" human. In Mercerism, everything is permitted, but nothing is "right."

It's important to note that Rick comes to such an epiphany when he's on his own, cut off from the rest of society. Throughout the novel, the characters have defined humanity as the ability to connect with other people, but by *refusing* to connect with others, Rick comes to a genuine moral insight.

Chapter 22 Quotes

I'm a special, he thought. Something has happened to me. Like the chickenhead Isidore and his spider; what happened to him is happening to me. Did Mercer arrange it? But I'm Mercer. I arranged it; I found the toad. Found it because I see through Mercer's eyes.

Related Characters: Rick Deckard (speaker), John Isidore, Al Jarry / Wilbur Mercer

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 237

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the novel, Rick goes into the desert, where he has a semi-religious experience. Like so many followers of Mercerism, Rick experiences the world through the eyes of Wilbur Mercer himself. While he's in the desert, Rick comes upon what he believes to be a monumental discovery: a "real" toad, an incredibly rare animal. Rick considers his discovery of the toad a miracle--proof that Mercerism might be a valid religion after all. Rick's renewed faith in Mercerism comes at an unusual time: Mercer has just been exposed as a fraud; a TV personality performing before a studio audience.

Rick seems to be approaching a counterintuitive conclusion: even "fake" objects and beings can produce a kind of emotional truth in their audiences. So even though Mercer himself might be a fraud, his pseudo-religion might be capable of producing genuine comfort (or even a genuine miracle, though the toad, as we'll see later, is "fake," too) in its followers. By the same token, a "fake" human being can experience and elicit a "real" emotional connection in another person; which is to say, Rick is capable of feeling genuine emotional bonds with other people, whether or not they (or he!) are androids.

> "Do you want to use the mood organ? To feel better? You always have gotten a lot out of it, more than I ever have."
> "I'll be okay." He shook his head, as if trying to clear it, still bewildered. "The spider Mercer gave the chickenhead, Isidore; it probably was artificial, too. But it doesn't matter. The electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are."

Related Characters: Iran Deckard, Rick Deckard (speaker), John Isidore, Al Jarry / Wilbur Mercer

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 241

Explanation and Analysis

Back in his home, Rick Deckard is disappointed to discover that the "miraculous" toad he found in the middle of the desert is just an electronic toy, and therefore not very valuable at all. Rick is frustrated--he'd thought that his toad would bring him lots of money, and that its discovery was a kind of religious miracle.

Yet in spite of his frustration, Rick still seems to experience an epiphany in this passage. Rick has been trained to believe that things are "real" if and only if they pass a rigorous test: if they can be purchased for a high price in a store; if they pass a Voigt-Kampff test, etc. Here, however, Rick seems to change his mind. Even a fake spider has its own kind of life. Rick characterizes the life of a robotic spider as "paltry"--but of course, the life of a "real" animal (or a real human being!) is just as paltry in the grand scheme of things.

What Rick realizes about animals applies to robots and people, too. Even robots, it's implied, have lives, thoughts, and feelings. Dick subtly implies the shift in Rick's thinking by noting that Rick refuses to use the mood organ. Rick refuses to accept socially-approved definitions of emotion, humanity, or life. Instead, he chooses to feel his own emotions and construct his own definitions of life and human nature.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

Rick Deckard wakes up in bed next to his wife, Iran. He whispers to Iran that she's set her "alarm clock" too low—a jolt of electricity is supposed to wake her up, making her feel wide awake. Iran whispers that she just wants to sleep, and she teases Rick about being a "crude cop." Rick replies that he's not a cop, and has never killed a human being.

The novel begins with a sense that something isn't quite right. We've all used alarm clocks, but it's rather disturbing that this alarm clock has to shock its user into wakefulness. The machine has a clinical, inhuman feel to it. It's similarly disorienting to hear that Rick is a killer and yet hasn't killed any humans—it'll be a few chapters before we understand what he means.

Rick gets out of bed and thinks about buying a real sheep, as opposed to the electric one he and Iran own. As he thinks, he fiddles with a small machine, a "**mood organ**," that can control the chemical balance of his brain. This mood organ could make Rick furious, if he set the dial high enough. Rick mutters to Iran, who's climbing out of bed, that he's going to follow his "mood schedule" for the day, which is January 3, 1992. Iran looks at her own schedule and notices that she's supposed to go through a "six-hour self-accusatory depression."

Right away, we see where the title for Dick's novel comes from—in his vision of the future, people own artificial pets instead of the real thing. What's even more disturbing is the idea that in the future, emotions can be controlled with machines. One reason this is so disturbing is that all humans will be exactly the same when their emotions are controlled by the same machines—i.e., one person's interpretation of "depression" will be identical to every other person's. Another reason is that it suggests that humans now can't *feel strong emotions at all without the help of a machine.*

Iran continues talking about her mood settings. She mentions 481—the mood setting that corresponds to a sense of "awareness of the manifold possibilities." Rick uses this setting for his work all the time. Iran complains that she doesn't like watching TV in the morning, and Rick tells her to dial 888, the setting that makes people want to watch TV. Rick sets his **mood organ** to "a fresh and creative attitude," a setting that Rick usually feels anyway.

Although most emotions are controlled by machines, there's a glimmer of hope—some people, like Rick, are capable of feeling emotions without mechanical help. This means that Rick is the only character so far who's recognizably human.

Rick finishes breakfast and heads outside, where he sees a flock of sheep—the pets of his neighbors—grazing. Rick's electric sheep grazes, too—Rick thinks that his neighbors have probably purchased electric sheep in secret, too, in order to fool each other. Rick breathes in a cloud of dust and smog. Ever since **World War Terminus**, or WWT, he thinks, the air has been horrible in San Francisco. Rick has to wear an "Ajax" brand lead codpiece in order to stay healthy and fertile. Rick has a medical checkup with his Police Department coming up soon. Healthy people are encouraged to "emigrate" away from the Earth. Rick, however, doesn't leave Earth because of the nature of his job.

As with most sci-fi novels, there's a lot of expository information in these first few chapters. Here, for instance, we see why it's so important to own mechanical sheep—most real sheep have been wiped out by some kind of environmental catastrophe. The mention of Rick's "Ajax lead codpiece" is also an amusing bit of satire. Codpieces were used in medieval times to accentuate the size of men's genitalia, and "Ajax" is the name of a famous Greek warrior—basically this product is meant to reinforce a man's masculinity while also serving a health purpose in preserving his fertility (which is ironic in this case, as Rick and Iran don't have any children). It's also ironic in retrospect, as the dangers of lead poisoning weren't fully understood in the 60s, so the lead codpiece would probably cause more problems than it fixed.

Rick greets his neighbor, Bill Barbour. Bill owns a horse, which is pregnant with foals. He explains that he bought "fertilizing plasma" to impregnate her. Rick is jealous of Bill's horse, and wishes he could afford to buy a real animal instead of an electric one. He suggests to Bill that he buy Bill's horse, paying Bill in monthly installments. Bill refuses, explaining that he put in a lot of effort to buy his horse—he even had to fly to Canada. Sadly, Rick shows Bill his electric sheep, pulling back the wool to reveal a metal frame. Bill is saddened by this sight. Rick explains that he used to own a real sheep, Groucho, but it died of a strange disease. To avoid embarrassment, he replaced the sheep with a machine. Bill promises not to tell the neighbors about Rick's sheep—he knows that the neighbors look down on anyone who doesn't take care of an animal.

This is one of the funnier, more overly satirical scenes in the novel, and it reminds us that Dick isn't just writing about the future—his purpose is also to critique the present-day culture of the United States. Here, Dick makes fun of the beloved American tradition of "keeping up with the Joneses." In the future, we learn, people brag about their wealth and power by buying animals—an appropriately arbitrary form of conspicuous consumption that isn't too far removed from reality. Just as in the present, people are judged for refusing to participate in the "game" of competition—the only thing worse than being unable to afford a sheep is not caring about it.

Bill suggests that Rick buy a cheap animal, such as a cat or a mouse. Rick ignores him and walks toward his hovercar, prepared for work.

Bill's suggestion is appropriately condescending—Bill has more money than Rick, and they both know it.

CHAPTER 2

The chapter begins in a huge, decayed building, in which there's a single TV, turned on. Before **WWT**, the building had been upscale and full of people. Now, the owners have left Earth to live on a "colony world." WWT was costly and dangerous, despite the predictions of the Rand Corporation—which, like the building tenants, has left the world altogether.

The Rand Corporation was a real corporation that conducted a large amount of research on military science during the 50s and 60s. Some intellectuals criticized the Rand Corporation for enabling the U.S. to conduct a nuclear war with the U.S.S.R—In Dick's future, they were right.

We learn a little more about **WWT**. Nobody knows who started the war, or how it ended. But the results of the war are still apparent: the sun no longer shines on Earth because of the dust and toxins in the air. Also as a result of the war, there was much more attention paid to off-world colonization. Scientists invented organic androids that could work as engineers and servants to humans on other planets. The governments of Earth encouraged their people to leave the planet as soon as possible. By staying behind on Earth, humans made it almost impossible for themselves to leave the planet later—staying behind, it was believed, meant poisoning their bodies and endangering the fertility of the species. Now, a small group of people remain on Earth, and they are virtually forbidden to leave.

More expository information: thanks to the support of organizations like the Rand Corporation, it's heavily implied that the U.S. conducted a full-scale war with the U.S.S.R. using nuclear missiles (presumably the only things that could cause that amount of devastation). Dick's futuristic society is rigorously stratified—it's a mark of social status to live on Mars, or "off-world." But as we've seen, even the people who live back on Earth make a great show of their social rank—they do so by buying animals, proving that they're still connected to the natural world of the Earth.

John Isidore sits in the abandoned building, shaving his face and watching the TV. He's lived in this building for years—ever since the beginning of **WWT**. Now, John is late for work. On TV, a reporter interviews a woman who now lives in New York, Mars, and has a fancy android servant. John thinks ruefully about his own life—he's classified as "special," meaning that he has distorted genes. He's also failed an IQ test, ensuring that he'll never be allowed to leave the Earth. The slang term for people like John is "chickenhead." John works as a delivery man for the Van Ness Pet Hospital, under his boss, Hannibal Sloat.

One of the key ingredients of life in Dick's version of the future is TV. TV trumpets the importance of leaving Earth, encouraging talented people to leave the planet altogether. More generally, though, TV ensures that everybody in the world wants the same things and agrees on the same version of "reality." TV, we come to see, is just another version of the mood organ—a device that designed to trigger the same emotional stimuli in different kinds of people, and thus keep everyone conforming.

Before he leaves for work, John touches his "**empathy box**." He grips the handles of this machine and feels an electric current. John senses a "merging" with other people—people speaking different languages and thinking different thoughts. He has the powerful sense that he's united with these other people by a desire to be better—to "climb." John imagines himself climbing up the side of a hill with, and *as*, a man named Wilbur Mercer. Suddenly, John feels a pain in his left arm—a rock has hit Mercer's arm, and now everyone gripping the handles feels it.

It's important to understand what's going on here. John thinks that he's communicating telepathically with millions of other followers of Wilbur Mercer, seemingly the guru of a new religion (whether or not John is actually able do so is up for debate). Mercer encourages his followers to "climb"—we could interpret this to mean that Mercer wants his followers to be unsatisfied with their current status in life, and want to be better. In other words, Mercer is just another TV spokesman. Even if he comes dressed in religious language (even being "stoned" like a Christian saint), Mercer's presence serves the same purpose as the mood organ—encouraging people to "want together." The importance of empathy in the future, we sense, is enormous—precisely because it's so rare, as everyone seems so alienated from each other and from their own emotions.

Still gripping the handles of the **empathy box**, John, taking on Mercer's personality, remembers "his" foster parents: they took care of him after they found him floating in a raft. John can barely remember the details. His childhood was happy, and he played with real animals all the time. As a child, "John" discovered that he could bring animals back from the dead. When he was 16, he discovered that bringing the dead back to life was illegal, according to "local law." In secret, John continued to practice his power, until law enforcement officers—whom he calls "Killers"— arrested him and implanted a radioactive chemical in his brain, which made it much more difficult for John to exercise his power.

This section is almost impossible to understand clearly, further adding to the hallucinatory quality of the novel, and the sense that the line between reality and perception is very blurred. John is supposed to be experiencing empathy, but this is something totally different: he has somehow become *Mercer, and can experience Mercer's memories. This is important not only because we see how Mercer is presented as a Christ-figure (able to bring the dead back to life, unjustly punished by the authorities) but also how unreliable memory is in this novel. If memory is what makes a person have a continuous self and defined personhood, then what happens when memories are falsely implanted? All this further complicates the novel's main theme of "what makes a human?" In this scene Dick also gives us the sense that a shadowy authority is ruling over everything that happens—an authority that's all the more intimidating because we don't know what it is.*

John releases the handles of the **empathy box** and finds himself back in his room. He sees that his arm is bleeding, and he dries the blood with Kleenex. Afterwards, he leaves the building.

John's experiences with the empathy box are vivid and cinematic, while his life is dull and dreary. It's important to note here that what happens in the hallucinations of the empathy box are somehow "real" as well—John can be struck by a rock when he "becomes" Mercer, but when he lets go of the box and becomes John again, the wound is still physically there. This is yet another example of Dick blurring the line between perception and reality.

CHAPTER 3

Rick Deckard stops at a pet shop on his way to work. This is a common way to kill time in San Francisco—the pet shop contains hundreds of exotic animals, most of which (ostriches, for example) are very rare.

In the future, life is centered around animals. Basic supply and demand: because there are fewer animals, they automatically become more interesting and more valuable.

Rick arrives at his police station and greets his superior, Harry Bryant. Rick learns that his colleague, a man named Dave Holden, was shot and injured recently. Rick's secretary, Ann Martsen, suggests that the killer was a Nexus-Six android, a robot designed by the Rosen Association. Rick thinks about the Nexus-Six model. On Earth, both the United States and the Soviet Union work together to fight Nexus-Six robots. But because the Rosen Association is based on Mars, not Earth, there's almost no legal way to recall the Nexus-Six robots.

This is the setup for the plot of the novel. We could say that the plot itself is pretty standard stuff: there was an attempted murder; the detective has to track down the attacker, etc. (this is a noir novel, as well as a sci-fi novel). But Dick, as we've seen, isn't just interested in the plot: he's interested in establishing a mood and exploring big philosophical questions as well. The Rosen Association seems basically invincible, another shadowy corporation controlling the desires and emotions of the populace.

Rick continues thinking about the Nexus-Six model. One reason these robots are so dangerous is that it's hard to "test" that they're robots at all—for all intents and purposes, they're human beings. However, there is one test, the **Voigt-Kampff Empathy Test**, that's designed to root out Nexus-Sixes. Because these robots are designed for intelligence, their emotional capacities are very low. Rick's job is to track down Nexus-Six robots and "retire"—i.e., kill—them (Rick finds it easier to perform his duties when he thinks of it as "retiring").

Here Dick poses the great philosophical problem of the novel—how do we tell what is and isn't human? What is human nature, and how can we measure it? For the time being, it seems that Dick has an answer in mind: empathy. The quintessential human emotion, according to Rick, is the ability to feel someone else's pain and emotion. It's very important to note that Rick feels comfortable with killing androids precisely because he believes in this definition of human nature—in other words, his belief in the importance of empathy allows him to suspend all empathy with regard to androids.

Empathy is the key to testing an android's humanity, Rick thinks. There's a strange religion called Mercerism, which requires its followers to unite in a sense of strong, overpowering empathy. Empathy, Rick believes, is the quintessential emotion of all non-carnivorous life forms—without empathy, species would have gone extinct long ago. Nexus-Six robots can't feel empathy of any kind.

Empathy is enormously important in this fictional world. One reason this might be the case is that everyone seems so isolated and alienated from each other. Just as animals have become more valuable because there aren't many of them left, empathy has become a precious commodity because it's in short supply.

In Mercerism, Rick thinks, there's a strong emphasis placed on opposing "killers," and Mercer, the founder of Mercerism, opposes killing of any kind. His followers hate the notion of killing, too—thus, to call anyone a Killer is a terrible insult.

One paradox of Mercerism, a religion of empathy, is that it opposes killing, and yet its focus on empathy enables Rick and others to kill without feeling guilty—because androids aren't empathetic, they aren't truly alive, and thus aren't truly being killed.

Rick takes a pinch of Siddons snuff (an unexplained drug) and thinks about the pet shop he visited. He calls the store and inquires about down payments on ostriches. The salesman asks Rick if he'd be willing to trade anything for the ostrich, such as a car. Rick says he might be, and gives a fake name to the salesman. Then, he dials the number of the false-animal shop where he got his fake sheep. He learns that a fake ostrich costs 800 dollars. Rick prepares to study Nexus-Six robots. He considers the fact that his injured colleague, Dave Holden, now can't work anymore, so Rick will have more work to do "retiring" androids.

Rick takes drugs constantly during the course of this novel—it's hard, as a result, to tell what parts of his experiences are really happening and which parts are just delusions. And yet even if he's hallucinating, Rick still immediately thinks of buying an animal to better "fit in" to his society and impress others. In other words, in a society where the idea of reality is vague and seemingly under attack, the only "true" experiences are crassly corporate, mediated by the exchange of money for a good or service.

CHAPTER 4

Rick thinks about Dave Holden's sudden hospitalization—an android shot him with a laser. Bryant informs Rick that Dave was trying to retire a group of ten androids, six of which are here in California now. Bryant wants Rick to fly to Seattle, where he can interview some executives in the Rosen organization and ask them about their androids. Bryant makes it clear to Rick that he considers Rick vastly inferior to Dave—Dave was far more experienced with hunting down androids.

Rick has a lot to live up to—and in a cheaper kind of sci-fi novel, this would be Rick's primary motivation (impressing Bryant, getting a better job, etc.), but Dick is more interested in other kinds of questions: What is real?; What is human?, etc.

Bryant and Rick discuss the **Voigt-Kampff test**. It's true, Bryant admits, that a few real human beings can't pass this test. Soviet psychologists, working with schizophrenic humans (a good example of the kind of person who can't pass the test) have tried to develop an extra-precise version of the test, but with inconclusive results. As a result, Rick's work in Seattle will be a challenge—he'll have to use the test, but also his own gut instincts, to distinguish androids from humans. If he gets something wrong (i.e., kills a human instead of an android), the Rosen organization will keep it quiet.

Right away, Rick is forced to acknowledge that there are problems with the Voigt-Kampff test, and with the very idea of measuring whether or not someone is human. Humanity isn't a binary: there are gray areas, and no single characteristic necessarily makes someone human. The absence of a clear test of what is and isn't human symbolizes the moral ambiguity of this novel.

Rick flies out to Seattle in his hovercar, and lands on the roof of the Rosen Association Building. As he lands, he sees a young woman waiting for him. The woman introduces herself as Rachael Rosen. Rick notices her long eyelashes, which are probably artificial.

This is a subtle bit of foreshadowing. Rachael's eyelashes are artificial, but so is the rest of her body (as we'll learn later)—and so is almost everything in this society.

Rachael asks Rick about Rick's career as a "bounty hunter"—someone who retires androids. Inside, Rachael shows Rick a raccoon named Bill, which the Rosen organization bought recently. Rick thinks about his need for an animal, and asks Rachael if she'd sell him a pet. Rachael explains that he could never afford one from the Rosen organization. Rachael introduces Rick to Eldon Rosen, her uncle, who runs the Rosen corporation. He's a dapper, elderly man.

Rachael seems to be toying with Rick. She knows that Rick, like everyone else in San Francisco, is interested in buying animals—and thus, she dangles animals in front of Rick. But she also tells Rick that he can't afford a raccoon or any other pet from Rosen. In this way, Rachael is basically bribing Rick to help the organization.

Rick follows the Rosens into their building, where he explains that he'll be running a series of **Voigt-Kampff tests** on Rosen employees to root out potential androids. Rachael asks Rick to give her the test. Rick, puzzled, agrees. Eldon tells Rick that Rachael is Rick's first subject—a potential android. It's up to Rick to decide whether she's human or not.

This is a clear challenge to the legitimacy of the Voigt-Kampff test. We're not sure (at least not yet) if Rachael is human or not—and as the novel goes on, we'll become less and less sure that any of the characters are human, or just what "human" means in the first place.

CHAPTER 5

Rick proceeds with his **Voigt-Kampff test** for Rachael Rosen. He shines a bright light into her eye to measure pupil dilations, and asks her a series of questions about hypothetical social situations. He measures Rachael's biological reaction to each situation, for example, "You are given a calfskin wallet on your birthday." At first, Rachael shows some biological reaction to the questions, indicating empathy. But after a while, she becomes quieter, not reacting to the questions in the way she ought to. Rick asks her questions about her past, and she says that she's 18 years old. After some time, Rick concludes, "you're an android." Rachael angrily denies this, and Eldon agrees with her.

Here, we see how the test works. It's designed to measure the patients' physical responses to emotional stimuli (basically like a lie detector test—another controversial test of questionable accuracy). This is significant in and of itself, as the only way for Rick to measure a person's thoughts and feelings is to measure their mannerisms and reflexes. This points to the unknowability of the human mind and spirit—Rick is forced to use the Voigt-Kampff, a flawed test, because there's simply no better way to understand human nature. This would explain why Rick can get his test results so wrong.

Rick talks to Eldon Rosen about his androids. Because of Eldon's engineering, androids have become so advanced that it's difficult to distinguish them from human beings. Eldon shoots back that Rick's incompetence has probably resulted in innocent humans being mistaken for androids and murdered. Rick realizes that Eldon and Rachael have tricked Rick into revealing the inconclusiveness of his own test—by testing Rachael, Rick has proved that the **Voigt-Kampff** is invalid.

Here, it becomes clear that Rachael and Eldon were trying from the start to invalidate the Voigt-Kampff test altogether. By invalidating the Voigt-Kampff test, Eldon asserts his power (and his corporation's power) over not only Rick, but also the entire law enforcement office of San Francisco. It's telling that the characters in this chapter assert their power by questioning what is and isn't human—you could even say that defining human nature is the only true source of power in this novel.

Eldon tells Rick that he wants Rick's help. He and Rachael offer Rick an owl—an especially rare animal. In return for this gift—a bounty—Rick will help the Rosen corporation hunt down the Nexus-Six androids. Rachael assures Rick that the **Voigt-Kampff test** will be sufficient for testing Nexus-Six robots. Rick agrees to these terms—he'll hunt down all of the Nexus-Sixes, on the condition that, should he die, the owl will be passed on to his heirs. Eldon and Rachael "yield" to this last term, but Rick seems unsure that the corporation will honor the agreement if Rick dies; he mutters, "You own that goddamn owl."

Rachael was indeed trying to use Rick's desire for expensive pets to bribe him, and it seems to be working—Rick is so desperate to be perceived as prosperous and empathetic in that he'll do anything to get the owl. It's strange to think of so much attention being paid to an animal with no "practical" use to its owner—but because owls are in such short supply, they've become exceptionally valuable.

Rick then has a suspicion, and tells Rachael he wants to ask her one more **Voigt-Kampff test** question. He tells Rachael that his suitcase is made from "human babyhide." He notices on his dials that Rachael has a near-immediate emotional reaction to this news—but Rick knows from experience that a real human would respond to this information a tiny fraction of a second sooner. Rick realizes the truth: she really is an android.

In this scene Dick once again returns to the "mystery novel" aspect of the book, as the protagonist has a sudden intuition that allows him to make a big discovery. But considering everything we've just seen discussed about the weaknesses of the Voigt-Kampff test, it's not clear that Rachael is *an android at all.*

Rick walks out with Eldon and Rachael and abruptly asks Eldon if Rachael knows she's an android. Eldon explains that she had no idea: she's had memories artificially implanted in her brain. Rachael, who seems distraught by this revelation, tells Rick that she guessed that she was an android when Rick asked her the final question in the test. She tells Rick that the owl is a machine, too. Eldon kindly strokes Rachael's shoulder and tells her that she has nothing to fear from Rick—she's not going to be retired. Rick, still amazed, leaves the Rosen organization building, thinking that he has six Nexus-Six robots to retire.

Perhaps this is a self-fulfilling prophecy: Rachael becomes an android in the moment that she accepts that she's an android. In the absence of a perfect test of human nature, proving one's humanity is much more a product of one's behavior than one's biological "essence." The book proposes a question: if an android looks, talks, and acts like a human in every discernible way, is that android human? Although Rick and Eldon would say no, on a philosophical level the question is more complicated.

CHAPTER 6

John Isidore goes down the stairs of his deserted apartment building to the floor below, where he hears the voice of Buster Friendly playing loudly on a TV behind one of the doors. He knocks on the door and can sense that someone is inside but is afraid to answer. John tells the person that he's brought a cube of margarine for them, that his name is J.R. Isidore, and that he's a truck driver for the veterinarian Hannibal Sloat.

Although idea of someone else living in the apartment building that John assumed was abandoned is likely a red flag for the reader—anyone could be behind the door—John unhesitatingly approaches this person. His offering of a margarine cube and eagerness to introduce himself to this stranger demonstrates how genuinely empathetic John is, even at a potential detriment to himself.

A frail girl timidly opens the door, so afraid that she appears physically sick and almost deformed. She tries to smile at John, who realizes that the girl must have thought she was living in an abandoned building. The girl confirms that this is true. John tries to reason with her that it's good to have neighbors. The girl asks if John is the only other person who lives in the building. John notices that she is attractive, that she is wearing nothing but pajama bottoms, and that her room is in disarray since she's just moved in. He tells her that he is, indeed, the only one in the building besides her, and promises not to bother her.

Again, though John has been living alone for a long time, it's clear that he has retained his ability to connect and empathize with others, as he quickly picks up on the girl's fear and discomfort at having her presumed solitude interrupted by a stranger. The girl's strange appearance and strained smile, meanwhile, is a subtle signal to the reader that she may have something to hide—perhaps that she is not a fellow human.

The girl doesn't acknowledge John's promise, which saddens him. He thinks that perhaps she doesn't understand why he brought the cube of margarine and reasons that the girl seems confused and afraid. Trying to get the girl to open up, John asks if she likes Buster, whom he used to watch every morning and night before his own TV broke. The girl doesn't know who Buster Friendly—a well-known TV comic—is, which prompts John to ask her where she came from.

John's empathy is further highlighted here, as he effortlessly puts himself in the girl's shoes and reasons that she is confused and scared. The girl's ignorance of Buster Friendly once again signals for the reader that she may not be human—after all, TV is an omnipresent part of their society and people generally all conform to liking and wanting the same things.

The girl refuses to answer John and tells him that she'll be unable to have company over until she's settled in. John, confused, thinks that maybe he's become a strange "chickenhead" after living alone for so long. He offers to help the girl unpack, but she says that the things in the apartment were already there when she arrived. Looking at the rotted, ruinous state of the room behind the girl, John offers to help her go around to the other units and find better furnishings. The girl says that she can do this on her own.

The girl clearly doesn't want John around, but it's likely that his relatively low IQ prevents him from picking up on this and taking the hint—despite his capacity for empathy, he seems to have trouble understanding certain social situations. Meanwhile, his worry that he is a "chickenhead" (a derogatory term for "specials" like John) suggests that he is aware of himself and his shortcomings, and worries that they are a barrier between himself and other people.

John cautions the girl that all of the abandoned apartments are overrun with the possessions of people who used to live there—the entire building has been "kipple-ized." "Kipple," he explains, is clutter like junk mail or gum wrappers that seem to multiply on their own. According to the "First Law of Kipple," John says, kipple drives out everything else, and there has been no one in the apartments to prevent this from happening. The girl nods, understanding what he means. John tells her that the apartment she's picked is "too kipple-ized" to be habitable, and that no one can win against kipple. People can create a delicate state of equilibrium between kipple and order, but universe's natural tendency is to move toward a state of "absolute kippleization"—except, that is, for "the upward climb of Wilbur Mercer."

John's explanation of kipple plays into the novel's critique of humanity's relationship with our environment. Whereas humans in the novel alternate between revering the natural world and wanting to dominate their surroundings, the process of kippleization (similar to the scientific concept of entropy) suggests that people's environment ultimately has more control over them than vice-versa.

At this, the girl says that she doesn't see the connection between kippleization and Mercer. John, puzzled by the girl once more, counters that she's missing the whole idea of Mercerism—doesn't she take part in fusion or own an **empathy box**? The girl admits that she didn't bring her empathy box with her, having assumed she would find one in the apartment building. This excites John, who incredulously exclaims that one's empathy box is one's most personal possession—it is an extension of an individual that connects them to others. "Mercer even lets people like me—" he begins to say, but stops when he notices the girl's sudden look of disapproval. John sheepishly tells her that he nearly passed the IQ test but that he's not particularly special, although Mercer doesn't care about this.

To the reader, it's clear that the girl probably never had an empathy box and is just trying to placate John. The girl's aversion toward Mercerism implies that she may not be able to connect with the tenants of the religion, perhaps because she lacks the profound capacity for empathy that John has exhibited. Whether or not the girl is human still remains unclear, since androids can so effectively blend in amongst people.

The girl neutrally states that she sees this as an objection to Mercerism. John tells her that he'll go back upstairs now, but she stops him and takes him up on his earlier offer of helping her find furniture for her apartment. John can help her after he gets home from work, she says. John asks the girl if she'll cook them dinner if he brings ingredients, but she curtly replies that she has too much to do and that they can have dinner another time. John notices that the girl's former fear is gone and that she now seems cold and unfeeling.

The emphasis on the girl's "neutral" manner of speech, straightforward critique of Mercerism, and cold response to John once again subtly hint that she may not be human. It's unclear at this point whether she's genuinely interested in spending time with John or if she merely wants something from him.

Before John leaves, he again tells the girl his name and begins to repeat the introduction he already gave her. Interrupting him, the girl introduces herself as Rachael Rosen. John asks if this means she is related to the Rosen Association, "the system's largest manufacturer of humanoid robots used in our colonization program[.]" A strange expression comes over Rachael's face, but it quickly dissipates and she denies knowing anything about the Rosen Association. She mocks John's "chickenhead imagination" and **empathy box**. When John begins to protest, she tells him to call her by her married name, Pris Stratton, because she never goes by anything else. Changing her mind, Pris decides that John should call her Miss Stratton instead, since they hardly know each other. She shuts the door, leaving John alone in the dingy hallway.

Given that the reader already knows Rachael Rosen is an android, it's clear that the girl isn't human. What's unclear at this point is whether this being is Rachael Rosen, Pris Stratton, or both—regardless, John seems unaware that the girl isn't a person like him. This invokes one of the most complex questions of the novel: if an android passes as a human being, does this effectively make them human?

CHAPTER 7

John Isidore is now alone in his apartment—Pris Stratton has just left. He goes to his hovercar and drives to work, where he spends the day delivering animals. He goes to a so-called pet hospital, which is really designed to care for electric animals. John listens to the "moans" of sick animals as he drives them to the hospital—in reality, these are just electronic sounds designed to resemble cries of pain. John thinks that he's been given this job because of his low IQ. And yet he's sympathetic to the sounds of the fake animals, in a way that his boss, Hannibal Sloat, is not.

John's low IQ is both a problem and an asset in this world. On one hand, he's incapable of leaving the planet, meaning that he's going to die of radiation poisoning before too long. And yet John's lack of intelligence also seems to give him a higher emotional intelligence—he still responds to the emotional cues of the electric animals, even though they're technically fake. This further suggests that the rest of John's society has lost all real empathy, and instead is just clinging to a version of empathy that can be bought and sold.

As he goes through his day, John listens to a radio show hosted by Buster Friendly, a famous and ubiquitous media personality. Friendly satirizes Mercerism on his show, and he plans to reveal an "exposé" of the religion soon. John is hurt by Friendly's jokes about Mercerism. He wonders if Friendly might be competing with Mercer for control of people's minds.

John can't see the forest for all the trees. He recognizes that TV is a crass medium, on which different personalities compete for attention, and yet he refuses to understand that Wilbur Mercer is just another one of those personalities—a man who tries to control millions of followers by giving them fixed emotional cues.

John crosses paths with his boss, Hannibal Sloat. He tells Hannibal his theory about Friendly competing with Mercer for psychic control of the population. Hannibal snorts and says that the two men are essentially the same. John insists that Mercer is a great man: Mercer believes that life is cyclical, even for animals. Hannibal ignores John and calls him a "chickenhead." John, hurt, tells Hannibal that they're not so different: they've both been harmed, physically and mentally, by the dust and radiation in the atmosphere.

Even if Hannibal is right, strictly speaking, his knowledge doesn't seem to give him much happiness. This makes us wonder if there isn't something admirable in john's naïve trust for Wilbur Mercer. Even if Mercer himself is a fraud, perhaps there's something worth imitating in Mercerism's emphasis on empathy.

John goes to meet with Mrs. Pilsen, the woman whose fake cat got sick, and explains that the cat is about to "die." Mrs. Pilsen frets that her husband will be angry with her if he finds out about their cat's pain. She asks if it's possible to replace the cat with another electronic cat. John and his colleague tell Mrs. Pilsen that they can have a replacement cat ready in ten days.

John's customers don't seem different from many middle- and upper-class Americans in the present—customers fret over their possessions and products, and how they will be perceived by others based on what they own.

CHAPTER 8

Rick Deckard is back in Harry Bryant's office to discuss his meeting with the Rosens. Bryant tells Rick that Dave Holden is still alive, though he's in critical condition. Rick will try to hunt down Polokov, the android who shot Dave—Polokov works as a trash collector now. Rick promises to retire Polokov today. Bryant also mentions that there's a Soviet police officer on his way to San Francisco—his name is Sandor Kadalyi. Kadalyi is in the U.S. representing the Soviet Union, which also has a strong interest in retiring Nexus-Six androids.

In Dick's version of the future, the Soviet Union is still in existence (in actuality, the Soviet Union would collapse a year before the novel is set). By this point in the book, Rick has a clear assignment: hunt down the androids and retire them, one by one. And yet Rick is already beginning to have some doubts about the morality of his assignment.

Rick travels to the Bay Area Scavengers Company, where Polokov is likely to be. Junk collectors and scavengers are common in San Francisco—if they didn't haul away trash, the entire world would quickly be buried in it. Rick asks a switchboard woman at the company where Polokov is. The woman says that he'll be at work near Daly City. Rick next flies to Polokov's apartment, which is empty. Frustrated, Rick returns to the police station, where Bryant tells him that Kadalyi will arrive shortly. He also mentions that Rick's next victim may be a Miss Luft, a supposed opera singer from Germany.

In the future, most of the world is garbage, quite literally. In the present, garbage collectors are often looked down upon, but in the future their job becomes a more crucial necessity. Rick runs through the steps of hunting down Polokov, increasing the suspense of this chapter.

At the station, Rick gets a call from Rachael in Seattle. Rachael tells Rick that she's considering working with Rick—he could benefit from an android's insights. Rick says this is a bad idea, and hangs up.

We can sense that Rick and Rachael haven't seen the last of each other. But for the time being, Rick is still committed to the idea that humans and androids are separate species—and shouldn't mix in any way whatsoever.

As he's climbing into his hovercar, Rick sees Mr. Kadalyi, the officer from the Soviet Union. Kadalyi proudly shows Rick a new laser gun he's acquired from Mars. Slowly, Rick realizes that Kadalyi is actually Polokov. Rick tells Polokov that he's disabled the laser gun, so that Polokov can't shoot him. Polokov tries to break Rick's neck, but Rick is too quick: he shoots Polokov with his pistol, blowing Polokov's head open. Shaken, Rick calls the police station and says that he's retired Polokov.

Rick can only force himself to shoot Polokov—seemingly a living, breathing human being—because Polokov is going to shoot him first. For the time being, Rick doesn't really have to confront his own doubts about the morality of bounty hunting: for now, it's a kill-or-be-killed situation, and Rick chooses the former.

Rick gets a call from Iran. Iran tells Rick that she's sad and tired, and Rick impatiently says that he has androids to retire as soon as possible. He remembers considering divorcing Iran two years ago, and regrets not following through with his plan. Rick hangs up the phone and thinks about Rachael Rosen. He doubts that he'll need her help to track down the androids, but he'll reevaluate the situation after dealing with Miss Luft. He researches some information about opera before going to see her.

Rick's confrontation with Polokov seemingly hasn't affected him at all in his views about androids being the enemy. This points to the fact that Rick really believes the dogma about androids—he sincerely believes that androids aren't people, don't have feelings, etc. But the fact that Rick is considering working with Rachael suggests that he's having some doubts about this dogma.

CHAPTER 9

Rick arrives at an old opera house, in which he can hear Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. He remembers that Mozart died of kidney failure shortly after writing his opera. Rick enters the main room of the opera house and notices Luba Luft, the next android on his list, impersonating Pamina, one of the characters in the opera.

It's no coincidence that Rick is thinking about Mozart's opera The Magic Flute, *in which a group of characters try to distinguish between fantasy and reality, often with little success. Rick also meditates on the fragility of human life here—he seems a little too introspective to be successful as a cold-blooded killer.*

After the opera finishes, Rick goes to Miss Luft's dressing room. There, he tells Miss Luft that he'd like to give her a test of empathy. She asks him if he thinks she's an android, and she insists that she's not. Rick explains that androids don't care about other androids, and Miss Luft explains that this would make Rick an android: he callously hunts down and kills them, after all. She challenges him to take his own empathy test.

Miss Luft is the first character to challenge Rick's ideas of human nature. She asks him a natural question, one that Rick seemingly hasn't thought of yet: what if you *were an android? The irony, which we've already noticed, is that in tracking down androids (i.e., beings without empathy of any kind), Rick himself is becoming a cold, nihilistic being—something inhuman.*

Rick proceeds with the **Voigt-Kampff test**, and Miss Luft reluctantly listens to his questions. She goes off on long tangents about her memories of childhood—tangents that have little, if anything, to do with Rick's questions. She criticizes Rick for asking too many questions about sex. She threatens to kill him if he reaches for his pistol. Rick is confused—he wonders why Luft is being so calm, when she knows that Rick is a bounty hunter. Then he realizes that Luft *believes* that she's human—she thinks she has nothing to fear.

This is a crucial section, because it further complicates the philosophical problem that Dick presented us with earlier. The question is no longer, "Is a robot human if it looks and acts human?"—the question is now, "Is a robot human if it looks and acts human, and if it thinks *it's human?" The concept of memory as an aspect of humanity is once again introduced here, connected to what is "real" and what is "fake"—are Luft's memories "fake" to* her *just because they were placed there by a corporation?*

Suddenly, Miss Luft points a laser gun at Rick and calls the police. A few moments later, a police officer (a "harness bull") enters the room and reaches for Rick's identification. Rick explains that he works under Harry Bryant, but the officer, Officer Crams, claims that he's never heard of this person. Rick realizes that the officer is an android, too.

As the novel goes on, it becomes clear that many of the androids in the book have no idea of their own nature: they have human bodies, and even human memories (as Eldon Rosen explained earlier). This lends a new urgency to Dick's philosophical questions about androids and humanity.

Officer Crams and Miss Luft march Rick to his hovercar, where they find the body of Polokov. While Luft hangs back, Crams orders Rick into his car. Crams drives the car toward the Hall of Justice, claiming that he's driving to the *new* Hall of Justice, in the neighborhood of the Mission. Rick realizes that Crams is driving Rick to his death. Rick asks Crams to admit that he's an android, and Crams denies anything of the kind. Rick, still sure he's going to die, waits for Crams to shoot him.

The chapter ends with a cliff-hanger—it looks like Rick is going to die, murdered by an android who thinks he's a human being, and might even think that Rick is an android. This shows the relativism of the police officers' definition of human nature: under identical circumstances, an android and a human could both consider each other *androids, and kill each other for this reason.*

CHAPTER 10

Rick and Crams have just arrived at the Mission Street Hall of Justice. Rick has never been to this location before. Inside, Crams introduces himself to the desk sergeant, and takes Rick to a room, where he's to be interrogated. Crams tells other officers that he's found a body in Rick's hovercar. A senior police officer asks Rick about the **Voigt-Kampff** equipment he's carrying around, and tells Rick that he gets one phone call.

Rick isn't dead yet—he's being treated like an ordinary criminal. Notably, Rick doesn't tell anyone that he's a police officer, at least not yet. He knows that he's a human and a cop, but he's waiting for the right time to use this information to his advantage.

Rick uses his phone call to talk to Iran. When he dials Iran on the "vidscreen," he's surprised to find another woman in his house. He hangs up abruptly.

The alienation between the characters in this novel is enormous—Rick tries to talk to his wife but ends up talking to someone else, an apt symbol for the inadequacy of technology (which is supposed to bring people closer together).

Still in the police station, Rick is taken to speak with an officer named Garland, and another officer named Phil Resch. Resch, another bounty hunter, has been called in to verify that Rick is who he says he is. Resch confirms that Rick is an officer, and that Polokov is an android. Rick admits that he didn't have a chance to test either Polokov or Miss Luft for android characteristics.

This is one of the trickiest chapters in the novel, and it's designed to complicate our understanding and expectations about who is and isn't human. Garland is an authority figure, but his own status as a human being is far from certain. This is an important point in and of itself: the reason that Garland questions Rick's humanity but Rick doesn't question Garland's is, quite simply, that in this situation Garland has power and Rick has none. This suggests that being human isn't just a matter of passing a test or having the right biology—it's a matter of having power.

Garland spells out the situation: Rick claims that he works for a police agency based out of Lombard Street. Garland has never heard of this police agency in his life. He claims that he's never heard of the **Voigt-Kampff test**, and that Rick has probably been killing innocent human beings, not androids. Resch suggests to Garland that Rick demonstrate the Voigt-Kampff test on Resch himself.

The complications in defining humanity increase still further in this section. We don't know what's going to happen when Rick runs the Voigt-Kampff—for that matter, we don't really know if Rick is an android after all, or if everyone is, or if no one is.

CHAPTER 11

Rick proceeds with his **Voigt-Kampff test**, applying it to Phil Resch, another bounty-hunter. Resch nods and goes to get his "Boneli gear"—the equipment he needs to run his own android-human test. While Resch is out of the room, Garland turns to Rick and says, "That damn fool Resch." Rick realizes that Resch himself is an android—an android who thinks he's a human bounty hunter, paid to retire other androids. Garland adds that he, Garland, is also an android, one of the Nexus-Sixes who came from Mars. The reason that Resch thinks he's human while Garland knows he's an android is that Resch, another Nexus-Six, stayed behind for another week and received a full artificial memory system on Mars. Rick, shocked, asks Garland what will happen when Resch finds out the truth about himself. Garland casually says that Resch might kill himself—Garland has no way of knowing.

There's a sudden plot twist in this chapter: Resch, a character that we'd assumed was human, turns out to be an android after all. Or is he? Our only source for this information is Garland, who seems to be an android, too. Synthetic memories have become so convincing that it's impossible to distinguish between one's genuine memories of the past and the simulation of a memory of the past. What's more important to understand is that Dick is offering up a second definition of human nature, independent of any test: being human is about being sympathetic and genuinely empathetic. In this sense Garland, whether he is or isn't an android, is still somehow inhuman.

Rick begins to fill in the other details of his day so far. The reason another woman answered when he called Iran, Garland tells him, is that the entire building is wired with fake phones, designed to preserve the illusion that this is an ordinary police station. The purpose of this police station is to allow androids to track down bounty hunters who are trying to retire other androids. Rick is surprised that Garland can speak so frankly about Resch's hypothetical suicide, and accuses Garland of being cold and unfeeling. Garland admits that Rick is right—androids have no empathy.

One reason this chapter is so confusing is that we've underestimated the scope of the simulation. Not only can a corporation invent a fake memory, it can build an entire building designed to simulate reality for a handful of characters—it's like The Truman Show. *For the time being, Garland doesn't challenge Rick's understand of what it means to be an android—i.e., Garland is cold and unfeeling, just like an android is supposed to be.*

Resch returns, carrying his own human-android testing equipment. Resch and Rick sit down. As Rick sits, Garland points a laser gun at Rick. Resch is too fast for him, however—he draws his own laser gun and shoots Garland in the head, killing him instantly. Resch mutters that he had always suspected Garland of being an android. To preserve the illusion, Rick lies and tells Resch that while Resch was away, Garland told him that he (Garland) was an android, intent on killing Resch. Resch tells Rick that they—probably the only two humans in the building—are going to sneak out. He also tells Rick that Rick will need to find Luba Luft again and retire her before the androids at the law enforcement office warn her.

Resch saves Rick's life, complicating Rick's mission still further. Although Resch isn't one of Rick's intended victims, we can imagine that Resch's action will make Rick question the morality of killing androids—if androids can save other people's lives, then this could be said to make androids human. Notably, Rick doesn't tell Resch what Garland just told him—he doesn't tell Resch that Resch might be an android. Even more importantly, Rick doesn't seem to be thinking about whether or not he *is an android.*

Resch tells Rick that in order to sneak out of the building, he'll need to handcuff Rick. Resch does so, and Rick tells him about the androids that have come to Earth from Mars. Resch nods and tells Rick that there used to be a human named Garland—but at some point, he was replaced with an android. Androids, Resch has heard, can be implanted with false memories that make them believe that they're human. As Resch says this, his face begins to convulse. He makes Rick promise to give him a human-android test when they finish retiring Luba Luft. Rick replies, "We can worry about that later." Together, Rick and Resch walk out of the building and drive away in Resch's hovercar.

It's strangely poignant to see Resch talking about false memories, unaware that he might be talking about himself. And yet Resch shows some signs of suspecting that he might be an android, as he asks Rick to run a test on him later on. Ironically, Resch's suspicion that he might not be fully human might be the most identifiably human thing about him—surely it's a part of human nature to question one's own nature and try to come to terms with it.

CHAPTER 12

Rick and Resch have arrived at the opera house. They learn that Miss Luft has left the building to go to a museum. At the museum, Rick notices a strict, severe-looking teacher yelling at her schoolchildren—this, he thinks, is what an android *should* look like. Resch and Rick notice Luba Luft walking through the museum, looking at the paintings. Rick goes up to Luft and points a laser gun at her. Luft snaps that Resch isn't human, and neither is she—they're both androids. Resch replies, "Well, we'll deal with that at the proper time." Together, Rick and Resch march Luft out to the hovercar.

Now Rick and Resch the same token, they're the one's asking questions about Luba Luft's humanity, not the other way around. This reiterates one of the novel's key points: the characters assert their power by questioning other people's humanity. Even to ask the question, "Are you an android?" is to assert one's power over another.

As Rick and Resch walk Luft out of the museum, Luft asks Rick to buy her a postcard of one of the paintings in the museum. Rick pauses, and then agrees. He buys Luft a big book of the painter's collected works. Luft tells Rick that he's very nice—an android would never have done such a thing. Luft confesses that she hates androids—she's been imitating a human for so long that she's become convinced that humans are superior to robots. She teases Resch about being an android, and Rick has to convince Resch not to shoot her with a laser gun while they're still in the museum.

Luba Luft is in a position of weakness—she's an android, and is being arrested. And yet she finds ways to assert her own power, teasing Resch for being an android himself. We get the sense that Luft could be teasing Rick just as easily—he's no more certain about his identity than Resch is. Resch's behavior in this scene further supports the idea that even if he's human, he's a particularly cold and violent one.

Rick and Resch march Luft to an elevator, and when the doors close, Resch shoots her in the stomach. Luft screams in pain and falls to the floor. Rick, feeling shocked by Resch's actions, then burns the book of paintings he had just bought for Luft, as Resch looks on, perplexed. Rick tells Resch that he'll give Resch the **Voigt-Kampff test** soon, and Resch will see that he's an android. Because Resch came to Earth a little later than the other Nexus-Sixes, Rick hasn't been hired to retire him. Rick also tells Resch that this will be his last job—he's getting out of the business, and perhaps he'll even go to Mars.

Resch's destructiveness is shocking, as he shoots Luft in a way that seems more like murder than "retirement." Rick's experiences in these last few chapters—not just with Resch's violence, but with questions of what is and isn't human—have clearly made an impact on him, and this is poignantly shown by the fact that he burns the book of paintings when Luft is dead. If androids can appreciate art and human kindness, then what makes them less human than a killer like Resch?

The elevator doors open, and Rick tells Resch to stay with Luft's body—Rick will call the police. Resch accuses Rick of hating him. In response, Rick points out that Resch is basically a heartless person who enjoys killing. He enjoyed retiring Luft, and he enjoyed the excuse to shoot Garland. Resch offers Rick his laser gun—to put Rick at ease, he explains, in case Resch fails the human-android test. Rick replies, "How'll you kill yourself without it?"

Rick asserts his own humanity in this scene by showing a measure of sympathy for Resch (offering him an easy way out if he turns out to be an android after all), even if it's the bitterest, coldest sympathy imaginable.

After Rick calls the authorities, Resch and Rick climb into the hovercar. Inside the car, Rick takes out some of the **Voigt-Kampff** equipment that he carries in his briefcase. He attaches adhesive pads to Resch's cheeks and aims a light at his eyes. Then, he asks Resch the usual half dozen questions.

The suspense builds: will Resch pass the test and turn out to be a human, or not? At the same time, however, we're beginning to have doubts about the very idea of using a test to measure humanity.

The novel cuts ahead to just after Rick has finished the test. Resch is relieved by what he's found out, and asks Rick for his gun back. Rick explains that Resch was right about Garland: Garland was trying to split up Rick and Resch. Rick wonders aloud why the **Voigt-Kampff test** doesn't measure humans' empathy *to* androids. Previously, Rick had believed that empathy toward robots was an oxymoron, but lately he's wondered if it *is* possible to feel empathy for a machine.

Rick is finally confronting the irony of his profession: he has to suspend his own empathy in order to retire androids, creatures that are being killed precisely because of their inability to feel empathy. Rick is changing his mind about androids and about his own profession: he's realizing that the distinction between robot and human isn't remotely as clear as he'd believed.

Rick tells Resch that he wants Resch to administer the **Voigt-Kampff test** on him. Rick points the machines at his own eyes, and then says, "I'm going down by elevator with a female android I've captured. And suddenly someone kills it, without warning." Resch reports that the dials have spiked up suddenly, showing that Rick has an emotional response to the android's pain. Rick concludes, "That's high enough."

It's strange that Rick gives the Voigt-Kampff test to himself, instead of allowing Resch to read him questions—and the test Rick gives himself also shows just how deeply he was affected by Luft's death. Rick is treating his job as a bounty hunter more and more loosely: he's becoming introspective, asking himself unanswerable questions. The way Rick phrases his conclusion ("high enough") suggests that being human isn't a binary—it's something more like a spectrum, on which all humans are at different, immeasurable points. (This also questions the idea of just how objective Rick is being in testing himself).

Resch tells Rick that on Mars and other off-world colonies, there are android mistresses, designed to have sex with humans. Resch points out that Rick feels guilty about killing Luft because he was physically attracted to her. Rick realizes that Resch is an excellent bounty hunter—and he wonders, for the first time in his life, if he's cut out for bounty hunting any longer.

Rick is finally getting a full perspective on his own profession. Rick's attraction to his victims makes it nearly impossible for him to continue retiring them—he can't help but think of them as people. Resch, by contrast, is an ideal bounty hunter—nearly as cold and unfeeling as the androids themselves are said to be.

CHAPTER 13

John Isidore is driving his hovercraft from his job. At the apartment building where he lives, he calls to Pris Stratton, his new neighbor. He tells Pris that he's brought food to cook for dinner. Pris tells John that he sounds more adult and mature than before.

John has a friend, seemingly for the first time. He's no longer limited to the empathy box for human contact, but now has a real person to empathize with. The irony, of course, is that Pris isn't a "real" person at all.

Inside the apartment building, John tells Pris that he feels sorry for her, since she seems to have no friends. Pris explains that she had friends, but bounty hunters have killed many of them—she may be the only one left. John doesn't understand what this means. He wonders if Pris might be delusional or psychotic.

John doesn't have any friends either, so he manages to feel real empathy for Pris's situation. Although John doesn't understand Pris's explanation, we do, and it's now made explicit that she's one of the Nexus-Sixes.

John proceeds to cook dinner—peaches, cheese, bean curd, etc. As John works, Pris—much to John's surprise—puts her arm around John's waist. Then, she begins to cry. Pris tells John that she used to live on Mars, where she befriended a group of androids. On Mars, an android named Roy supplied her with a powerful painkiller, silenizine, which made her somewhat happier. She also developed an interest in "pre-colonial" fiction—i.e., stories about Mars and other space colonies, written before there was any space exploration. These stories are hugely popular on Mars, because they show how life could have been, had things turned out better. In the end, Pris and her new android friends decided to leave Mars because it was so barren and cold.

This is a very interesting section for a number of reasons. First, it shows that Pris wants to become fully human (like Luft did), even though she's an android. To this end, Pris ingests drugs (like every human in San Francisco, it seems)—furthermore, she shows signs of emotional weakness in front of John. Pris also shows signs of being interested in the past, another recognizable human behavior. This part is Dick's homage to his profession—the "pre-colonial fictions" are, of course, sci-fi novels. The difference between one of Pris's novels and the one we're reading, however, is that the pre-colonial fictions are celebrated for their naïve optimism, while Dick's books are anything but optimistic.

There's a knock at the door. A voice says, "It's Roy and Irmgard. We got your card." Pris quickly writes a note, telling John to go to the door at once to confirm these people's identities. John opens the door and finds a small woman and a large, intelligent-looking man. The man and woman walk into the apartment at once. The woman embraces Pris, while Roy, who's very quiet and somber, smiles darkly.

This scene shows that Pris has a community of friends after all—a small one, but real. More subtly, it also shows that Pris (and, presumably, other androids) doesn't have a very good ear for distinguishing other people's voices—this will become important in the final chapters of the book.

CHAPTER 14

Roy and Irmgard have just entered John Isidore's apartment. Roy, Pris, and Irmgard speak in private for a moment before addressing John. Pris says, almost sarcastically, that John has been taking care of her. Roy tells Pris that Polokov, Garland, Anders, Gitchel, and Luba have been killed. Pris finds this devastating. As far as Roy knows, he, Pris, and Irmgard are the only three androids left from their initial group. Roy suggests that Pris "move in" with John, but Pris finds this ridiculous, since John is a "chickenhead."

As soon as Pris gets other friends, she starts treating John much more rudely, perhaps because she knows that she doesn't really need him anymore (or she doesn't want the other androids to know that she's been befriending a human). The irony is that while this behavior isn't particularly empathetic (just the opposite), it is recognizably human.

John overhears Roy talking with Pris and Irmgard. Nervously, he tells Pris to do what Roy says, since Roy is the "natural leader." He tells Pris that he'd love to live with her from now on. Pris sneers and says, "The chickenhead likes me." Irmgard reminds Pris, "Don't call him that—think what he could call you." Pris shrugs and agrees to move in with John for a while.

This is a revealing interaction between Irmgard and Pris—it reminds us that, just as not all humans are the same, so not all androids have the same personality. Irmgard correctly recognizes that it's wrong for Pris to make fun of John, since Pris herself is an outcast from the rest of society.

Later in the day, John leads Pris to his TV room. He notices that Pris seems moody and frightened—Pris explains that she's experiencing side-effects of a drug that Roy gave her. She claims that she and Roy are schizophrenics, hallucinating that they've lived on Mars and that bounty hunters will kill them. John, remembering the principles of Mercerism, tells Pris that the government never kills anyone—human or otherwise.

Pris is clearly lying to John so that he won't give her away, but there's also a sense that she wishes this easier explanation were the true one. John's naïveté is heartbreaking, as he truly believes the government wouldn't kill anyone or anything, even though we know that this is absolutely untrue.

Roy enters the room, carrying an electric alarm he's built himself. The alarm will sound whenever anyone other than the four of them enters the building. At this time, the alarm will send a "mood of panic" throughout the building, making it difficult for a bounty hunter to do his job. This mood will affect John, as well as the bounty hunter. John is impressed with Roy's ingenuity. He tells Roy he wishes he had Roy's IQ, since then he'd be able to "pass the test" and not be a chickenhead.

John idolizes Roy—Roy is intelligent, strong, intimidating, and well traveled. The only thing that John has that Roy lacks is, of course, humanity. This should make us wonder, Is humanity really a "thing" in itself? As far as the bounty hunters in the novel are concerned, the answer is yes. But based on what we've seen, there's no fundamental difference between being a robot, being a "special," and being a "normal" human.

Pris tells Roy that John will never turn them in. Even though he could get a large reward by going to the police, he needs them for emotional comfort. John is, in short, special. Roy, Irmgard, and Pris decide to vote on whether or not to stay in the apartment.

Pris speaks of John's emotional needs cynically—she thinks of it as a weakness. Despite her earlier shows of emotion, Pris often acts like the stereotypical cold, merciless android.

CHAPTER 15

Immediately after the events of the last chapter, Roy, Irmgard, and Pris vote on whether or not to stay in the apartment. Roy votes to kill John. Irmgard votes to stay in the apartment. Finally, Pris votes to stay with John. She adds that Roy's mistake is to trust in his own intelligence and superiority too greatly—they should place a little trust in another human being in order to survive.

Irmgard balances out Roy's point of view in an interesting way. Roy is arrogant, and thinks that he can survive on his own. Irmgard, on the other hand, thinks it's important to rely on other people. This could be interpreted as a primitive form of empathy on Irmgard's part, showing that the distinction between empathetic androids and psychopathic humans isn't really so great.

Meanwhile, Rick Deckard finishes a day of work and flies to the animal store. The department has paid him his bounty of three thousand dollars. A salesman at the store offers to sell Rick a goat—a luxurious animal. Rick agrees to buy the goat, and he pays his entire bounty as a down payment.

Rick questions some aspects of his life—the distinction between humans and androids—but doesn't question other parts at all, such as the need to buy real animals. He's still a mindless consumer, indoctrinated in the fiction that he can only be happy if he buys the right things.

Rick returns to his home, where he finds Iran waiting for him. He tells his wife that he retired three androids that day, and bought a goat. Iran seems confused by the goat, and she asks whether it's real. Rick assures her that goat is real, and Iran kisses him, overcome with pleasure. Iran tells Rick that to show gratitude for their good fortune, they should "fuse with Mercer." It would be immoral, she adds, to keep so much pleasure to themselves.

It's telling that Iran doesn't show gratitude toward her husband until Rick tells her that the goat is real. In other words, there's nothing discernible about the goat that makes it desirable—just the fact that it's real. We see that Iran and Rick are Mercerists too, just like John. This makes sense, since Mercerism itself is a form of consumer culture (as we've already seen).

Rick and Iran grip the handles of the **empathy box**. As Rick does so, he realizes what Iran gets out of Mercerism. He tells Iran that his meeting with Phil Resch, a sadistic bounty hunter, has made him realize a few things—most importantly, that he (Rick) has viewed androids just as callously and sadistically as Resch. Rick admits that he's beginning to empathize with androids—something he never thought possible. Perhaps he'll be able to transfer to a desk job, so that he'll never have to retire another android again.

Rick is beginning to see the connection between the disparate parts of his own culture. Society needs Mercerism because it needs a way to celebrate its common humanity. By the same token, society needs to persecute and retire androids, because in doing so, it confirms its own humanity, based on a definition of human nature grounded in empathy.

The phone rings, and Iran answers it—it's Harry Bryant. Bryant tells Rick that he's tracked down two of the remaining androids: Rick needs to go to the address as soon as possible. Bryant also congratulates Rick on retiring three androids in only one day—he's impressed. Rick tells Bryant, "Three is enough." Bryant refuses to accept this, however, and he orders Rick to go to the address immediately.

Rick shows every sign of being done with bounty hunting—and it seems that he's no longer able to deal with the psychological ramifications of such work—but his duty forces him to continue on.

Rick hangs up the phone and grips the **empathy box** with Iran. He sees a vision of Mercer, an old and frail man. Mercer tells him, "There is no salvation." It's a basic condition of life, Mercer insists, to violate one's principles—this is the curse of life.

It's telling that we're only now getting a sense for what Mercerism actually teaches, other than "empathy is good." Mercer's job, we can sense, isn't to pass on specific religious beliefs, but rather to forgive people for doing evil.

Rick stops gripping the **empathy box** and leaves his home. He mentally prepares to retire the androids, and realizes that he'll probably fail. On the way to the address, he dials Rachael Rosen's number, and asks her to come to San Francisco as soon as she can—he needs her help in order to retire the androids. Rachael is reluctant to help Rick retire more androids. She points out that Rick is obviously reluctant to retire anyone—in other words, he wants Rachael to discourage him from continuing with his assignment.

As Rick becomes more and more unsure about the efficacy and the morality of his mission, he becomes more likely to communicate with Rachael. This shows that he's beginning to think of Rachael—and all androids—as free entities with independent thoughts and feelings. Interestingly, Rick treats Rachael as a moral guide—because he's having doubts about the rightness of his mission, he turns to her.

Rick changes his approach slightly: he tells Rachael to come down to San Francisco to "rent a hotel room" with him. He explains that he's heard "something" about human men interacting with android women—if Rachael comes to him that night, he'll give up on the remaining androids for good. Rachael agrees to fly to San Francisco.

Rick is also sexually attracted to Rachael. This is a clear sign that Rick thinks of androids as people—if he didn't, he'd never be able to "get a room" with her.

CHAPTER 16

Rick Deckard is sitting in a beautiful hotel room in the St. Francis hotel. He reads the files for two androids, Roy and Irmgard Baty. Roy, he learns, worked as a manual laborer on Mars. Perhaps Roy dreamed of a better life, Rick thinks—but then he asks himself, "Do androids dream?" The file says that Roy is "pretentious" and "given to mystical preoccupations." Roy stole various drugs, designed to give his fellow androids the experience of Mercerism. Rick finds this strangely sad—it's as if Roy was trying to become as human as possible.

We already knew about the electric sheep, but here we see where the other half of the title of the novel comes from. Rick's point is that even androids have recognizably human emotions—they have hopes and aspirations. And yet this, by itself, isn't enough to convince Rick that Roy is human. Roy wants *to be human, hence his ingestion of drugs, but this doesn't change the fact that he was created by a corporation.*

Rachael Rosen walks into the hotel room, carrying a bottle of bourbon. Without greeting her, Rick explains that he's tracked down the "leader" of the androids, along with his two remaining followers. Rachael, who seems "unsteady," opens the bourbon. She points out that Rick promised to give up on his mission, but now it seems like he's planning on killing Roy and his followers as soon as he can manage. Rick takes a good look at Rachael as if he's meeting her for the first time. He notices that she's very beautiful—her body is simultaneously childish and mature.

Previously, Rick had thought of Rachael as an object, a machine designed by the Rosen organization. Now, Rick is thinking of Rachael as a living, breathing person, with unique thoughts and feelings. And yet there's something slightly uncanny about Rachael's body—she's both childish and adult, reflecting the disparity between her lifetime of memories and her short actual lifespan.

Rachael tells Rick that the last Nexus-Six that Rick retired was the same model that she is—beside the face and voice, Rachael and Luft are identical. Rachael also tells Rick that the remaining androids are, without a doubt, "huddled together." Impulsively, Rick kisses Rachael. Rachael quietly asks Rick if he's feeling empathy toward the remaining androids, and Rick admits that he is. Together, he and Rachael drink bourbon.

It's not exactly clear why Rachael is interested in Rick. It's true that she's capable of forming emotions, but this doesn't mean that she's attracted to humans (or to Rick especially, whom she barely knows). Rachael seems more interested in Rick's feelings about the case, and about androids, than she is in Rick's looks or personality.

Rachael quickly becomes drunk. She tells Rick, laughing, that she can't go with him to find Roy Baty—but she'll be waiting for him to come back. Rick tells Rachael that he just bought a goat. He says that after he retires Roy, he'll return to his wife and new pet. Rachael takes off her boots and shorts, and climbs into bed. She tells Rick to look in her purse—she's brought him something to disable the androids. Rick finds a small metal device. Rachael explains that this device can be used to stun an android into a state of catalepsy, if only for a few seconds. As Rick feels the device in his hand, he realizes that in just a few hours, he'll be retiring an android who looks exactly like the beautiful android sitting in the bed right now.

Rick gets emotionally intimate with Rachael, at least by futuristic standards. He tells Rachael a personal piece of news—he's just bought a goat. Rick is finally putting together the dilemma of the bounty hunter: to be a good bounty hunter, he has to talk to androids and understand them. And yet the more Rick understands androids, the more likely he is to empathize with them and spare their lives. Unlike Resch, the psychopath, Rick can't kill beings that he regards as living.

Rachael tells Rick, "I love you," but Rick doesn't reply. Rachael offers to retire one of the androids herself, provided that Rick has sex with her. Rick agrees to this, and he climbs into bed.

Rachael understands exactly what Rick is going through—she's practically making a contract with him in this scene (much as she did when she first met Rick, chapters ago).

CHAPTER 17

Rick and Rachael have just had sex in their hotel room. Rick tells Rachael he enjoyed himself—he'd gladly have sex with her again. Rachael calmly tells Rick that her life span is about two more years. Rick can only say, "I'm sorry."

Rick has begun to sympathize (and empathize) with the androids, and yet he still struggles to express his emotions to Rachael in this scene. This points to the overall absence of empathy in Rick's society.

As they walk out of the hotel and climb into Rick's hovercar, Rachael tells Rick the truth: she has sex with bounty hunters to ensure that they're too empathetic to retire any more androids (she's done this at least eight times already). One the men she had sex with was Phil Resch—the only bounty hunter who continued to kill androids after making love to her. Rick is shocked by what he's hearing, and his whole body feels numb. Rachael goes on to tell Rick that she knew Polokov, Luba Luft, and the other androids Rick and Phil retired—indeed, Rachael and Luba had been friends for two years before her death.

In this plot twist, we come to realize that Rachael has been aware that she's an android for some time (we'd previously thought that Rick and Eldon had "outed" her in Seattle). Ironically, in spite of the fact that Rachael seems manipulative and duplicitous in this scene, her mission to protect other androids is arguably the only truly moral act in the entire book: she's sacrificing herself for the sake of other beings.

Rick tells Rachael he's going to kill her, along with the other androids—Rachael will be "practice" for him. Rachael begs Rick to shoot her in the "occipital bone" of her skull. Rick realizes that he's incapable of hurting Rachael, however—he has too much empathy for her. Rachael smiles and nods. She explains that every other bounty hunter has come to exactly the same conclusion. She turns on the radio in the hovercar and listens to the "babble" of Buster Friendly.

This is a frustrating scene for Rick, because even though he's now angry at Rachael for tricking him, he knows he can't kill her. The fact that Rick is angry with Rachael at all is proof that he's come to regard her as a person morally responsible for her own actions—and therefore, for all intents and purposes, a human being.

CHAPTER 18

Back in John Isidore's apartment, Pris and John are watching TV. Buster Friendly is about to make an announcement. Roy Baty watches as well. As John prepares for the announcement, he thinks to himself that his life has gotten much better since befriending Roy and the others—he has real friends, now.

John could be the only "good" character in the novel. Unlike nearly everyone else, he seems unconcerned with consumerism, defining humanity, etc. His mind is simple, but he has what seems to be a genuine sensitivity to other people.

Buster Friendly begins his announcement. As John watches, he notices a spider crawling on the floor of the apartment. He picks up the spider and shows it to the android. Pris takes the spider and cuts off one of its legs, very calmly, despite John's pleas that she not "mutilate" the animal.

John, a Mercerist, believes in the inherent value of all life, whether human or not. (As we can see, he seems to believe in the value of android life, too.) Ironically, Pris, an android, seems to have little respect for other lives, whether they're human or animal.

On TV, Buster Friendly shows the audience photographs of Mercer, the founder of Mercerism. The photographs of Mercer prove that he uses fake backgrounds for his performances and speeches, designed by Hollywood special effects artists. Mercer himself, Friendly suggests, is just a "bit player" walking around in a sound studio. As Pris watches, she continues to remove the spider's legs. Friendly concludes that Mercer is a fraud: he's just an actor in a costume, not—as he's always claimed—an "archetypal superior entity."

This scene is important as much for what Buster Friendly doesn't say as what he does say. Friendly focuses on the logistical side of Mercerism—he shows that Mercer is played by an actor, that his backgrounds are fake, etc. Friendly doesn't criticize the ideology of Mercerism in any way—this suggests that Friendly isn't really that different from Mercer at all; he's just another TV personality jockeying for control of the masses. The question for the rest of us is, can a religion be valuable even if it's not literally true?

Buster Friendly goes on to attack the principles of Mercerism. As he speaks, Irmgard—who, it's now revealed, is Roy's husband—points out that empathy is the quintessential human emotion. As such, it's very important for humans to prove to themselves that they're capable of empathy, and in doing so, they remind themselves of their superiority to androids. She also notes that the **empathy box** makes it very easy for humans to be controlled by a "would-be Hitler."

Irmgard's words in this scene are some of the wisest in the whole book. She recognizes that the point of the empathy box isn't to find actual empathy; it's to distinguish Mercerists from other people and—crucially—from androids. She also intuitively grasps the relationship between Mercerism and consumerism—when people are taught to think together, it's easy for them to be manipulated into doing (and buying) the same things.

Pris has now removed four of the spider's legs. She puts the spider on the ground and watches as it tries to move. She points out that Buster Friendly's exposé won't spell the end of Mercerism by any means—people will continue to believe in the ideas of Mercerism for a long time. She also says, "Buster is one of us—an android."

Just as with the fake police station, in this scene we again see just how deep the simulation goes in this society. The man "outing" Mercer as being "fake" is himself an android—and yet, ironically, also someone millions of humans relate to.

John Isidore, who's been listening to Buster Friendly and the androids, feels sick. He sees the spider, now dead, and listens as Roy reminds him, "Maybe this was the last living spider." Stubbornly, John tells Roy that Mercerism isn't dead yet. John stands up and starts to hallucinate, breaking dishes and furniture in the apartment seemingly against his own will.

John becomes brave and even heroic in this scene. Despite all evidence to the contrary, he maintains that Mercerism is alive and well. This is a profound point, actually—even after people cease to believe that religion is literally true, they continue to subscribe to it because of their respect for the religion's values. In the same way, John continues to celebrate the value of all life, whether a spider or a human.

In his delirious depression, John has a vision in which he sees animals—donkeys, spiders, etc. He cries out for Mercer, and Mercer appears before him. He demands of Mercer, "Is the sky painted?" Mercer smiles and admits that he's a fraud—a "bit player" named Al Jarry. Nevertheless, Mercer gives John a "gift"—the spider that Pris killed, with its legs restored. Suddenly, the alarm sounds. Roy shouts that there's a bounty hunter in the building.

It's not clear what's going on here—if John's vision comes from the empathy box or not (we find out in the next chapter that it does). But for the time being, the scene's ambiguity is the whole point. Even if Mercer isn't literally there, he continues to influence John's life, and even performs a minor miracle by resurrecting the spider. John's perception of the world is his only reality, and this means that Mercer is, in a narrow sense, "real" to him.

CHAPTER 19

John Isidore finds himself gripping the handles of the **empathy box**—he just had a profound vision. Irmgard grabs John and tells him to send the bounty hunter away from the apartment. John nods. He also notices that the spider is alive now, and crawling across his table.

This is a puzzling moment. On one hand, it's clear that John's vision was just a hallucination—it wasn't real. And yet the spider is still alive—something "miraculous" has happened (Dick never explains what). The point seems to be that reality and illusion can't be easily separated, and they will only grow more confused as the novel approaches its end.

John goes downstairs. There, he finds a strange man holding a flashlight (a man whom we recognize as Rick Deckard). John is more interested in his spider than in the man with the flashlight, and he tells the man that he's "lost" his spider. The man introduces himself as Rick Deckard, a police officer, and explains that he's looking for three people. John explains, immediately, that he's looking after his "three friends"—the last three in a large group, most of whom are now dead. Rick asks John to show him to the room where the androids are staying. John replies, "If you kill them you won't be able to fuse with Mercer again." Rick shrugs and walks past John, into the building.

Here, the two protagonists of the novel, John and Rick, cross paths. But there's no sense of connection between them—instead, Rick talks over John and ignores John's babbling about his spider. It's only appropriate that in a novel about futuristic alienation, the two main characters of the novel remain fundamentally separated. Rick, still angry from his argument with Rachael, is eager to kill some androids—he couldn't care less about the future of Mercerism.

Inside the building, Rick turns off his flashlight. He recognizes that John, whom he calls "the chickenhead," knows that Roy and his followers are androids. Suddenly, he sees someone move. Rick draws his gun and orders the figure to stop. The figure introduces himself as Mercer. Mercer explains to Rick that one of the people Rick is trying to kill is behind him. This person, Mercer explains, is the "hard one" and should be retired first.

The miracles (or hallucinations) keep coming: even though Rick doesn't seem to be using the empathy box, he has a vision of Mercer, who gives Rick information that Rick couldn't know by himself. There's no way to rationalize this moment—it's inexplicable, a reminder that the world can't be reduced to easy categories like "real," "fake," "human," and "android."

Suddenly, Rick turns around and finds himself staring at a woman who resembles Rachael Rosen. He fires at the woman, and she explodes into tiny pieces. Then he hears a woman's voice from behind a door, asking, "Who is it?" Rick, imitating John's stutter, says that it's John, coming back from his job. The woman who called to him opens the door. Suddenly a man fires at Rick, missing narrowly. This is what Rick wanted—now that Roy and Irmgard (the two figures behind the door, he deduces) have fired at him, he'll have an easier time retiring them, since he's no longer legally required to give them a **Voigt-Kampff test** first.

Dick now gives us some more traditionally suspenseful action sequences, although it's clear that Pris is "the hard one" because she looks like Rachael—whom Rick just recently found he couldn't kill.

Rick hears Roy and Irmgard running away from the door. He kicks down the door and runs into the apartment, shooting Irmgard in the back. Roy, in another room, screams in anguish. Rick calls, "Okay, you loved her. And I loved Rachael." He rushes toward Roy and shoots Roy with his laser gun—Roy's body explodes. Rick stands in the carnage, breathing heavily. He has killed six androids in only one day. Now he'll have enough money to last a while, he realizes.

Roy never actually admits to loving Irmgard—Rick projects love onto him—but the pain Roy expresses at Irmgard's death certainly shows some kind of strong connection. Ultimately, Dick doesn't reveal whether or not androids are capable of feeling recognizable human emotions—but he also shows how difficult it is for humans *to show recognizable human emotions, particularly in this futuristic society of isolation and apathy.*

Rick turns and finds John Isidore crying. Rick's only consolation to John is, "Don't take it so hard." Then he walks past John, finds a phone in the building, and calls Harry Bryant.

John doesn't appear again in the book—Rick ignores him almost entirely. He's failed to show true empathy for John, and John is left alone again, without even the comfort of his wholehearted belief in Mercerism to comfort him.

CHAPTER 20

Rick has just told Harry Bryant that he's successfully retired the remaining androids. Bryant is impressed with Rick's work. He congratulates him and tells him to get some rest. Rick hangs up the phone and bids John goodbye. Rick remembers what Mercer told him—all humans are guaranteed to "do wrong" during their lives.

Mercer is like an ironic priest-figure—instead of scolding Rick for his sins, Mercer forgives everything Rick has done. Rick wants someone to chastise him for killing another being—whether it's Mercer or Bryant doesn't matter. Yet all he hears is praise.

Rick returns to his apartment, where he finds Iran waiting for him. Iran tells Rick that their goat has died. Rick, oddly, doesn't find this surprising. Iran explains that someone pushed their goat off the roof of their building—a young, attractive woman. Iran also tells Rick that Buster Friendly has launched an exposé on Mercerism, revealing it to be fake. Rick, too weary to be upset about any of this information, thinks to himself that he needs to get away from his home soon. Perhaps he could go somewhere far away, where he can see stars at night.

In a strange way, Rick's reaction to the news that Mercerism is fake isn't so different from John's reaction—neither one of them cares very much. They've both experienced vivid hallucinations of Mercer recently, suggesting that even if Mercer himself is a fraud, his religion has a kind of spiritual truth, even if it's the most crassly commercial kind of spiritualism. It's also important to note that Rachael's revenge against Rick is petty and spiteful—killing his goat—but it's also very human.

CHAPTER 21

The next morning, Rick calls the Mount Zion Hospital, where Dave Holden, the bounty hunter, is being cared for. A nurse tells him that Dave isn't receiving calls, no matter how urgent they might be. Rick finds this disappointing—he wanted Dave to approve of his actions, and to praise him for retiring six androids in only one day. It occurs to Rick that Mercerism is an "easy" religion, because Mercer accepts absolutely anything as natural and "right."

The chapter begins on a note of alienation—Rick tries to communicate with a fellow bounty hunter (the only kind of person who could understand what he's going through), but can't. Rick is becoming increasingly disillusioned with his society, and feels lost.

Rick drives his hovercar out of San Francisco, toward the Oregon desert, an area that's now very dangerous, due to the radiation. In the desert, he gets out of his car and begins to climb a tall hill. As he climbs, a stone hits him on the cheek. Rick has a strange sense that Wilbur Mercer is waiting for him at the top of the hill. Before Rick reaches the top of the hill, he slips and falls. Dejected, he climbs back down to his hovercar.

Rick's behavior in this scene mirrors the vision that John had at the beginning of the novel, and one that seems to be crucial to Mercerism: climbing a tall, insurmountable hill, but being struck by rocks and falling short. If Mercerism has any actual substance, it's this sense of constant struggle—something like the Greek myth of Sisyphus constantly pushing the boulder up the hill. The distinctions between reality, hallucination, and man-made falsehoods are now almost gone. In some sense, Rick has become *Mercer, even though Mercer himself was never real.*

In his hovercar, Rick snorts some snuff and then calls the police station. He tells his secretary, Ann Martsen, that someone killed his goat. Ann, watching Rick on the screen, is shocked that his cheek is bleeding. She mentions that Mercerism has been exposed as a fraud, but Rick insists that it's not. Mercerism is only fake, Rick claims, if reality is fake too. Rick even feels that he has become permanently "fused" with Mercer, and cannot unfuse himself. Before Ann hangs up, she tells Rick to call Iran soon—Iran has been wondering where Rick is.

Rick insists that Mercerism has some substance to it, especially now that he has seen first-hand that reality itself is full of fictions, some of which lead to more falsehood, but some of which lead to a higher emotional truth. As with John's experience in the empathy box, Rick might have been somehow hallucinating his "fusing" with Mercer, but there is also physical evidence (his bleeding cheek) that suggests his experiences were "real."

Rick thinks about Rachael. It's illegal for humans to have sex with robots, he remembers. Rachael is probably back in Seattle by now. In a way, Rachael was right—having sex with her changed him forever, but not in the way she'd expected. He picks up the phone in his car to call Iran.

Rick recognizes the paradox of his relationship with Rachael—she actually inspired him to kill the remaining androids. At the same time, Rachael has made Rick question the stability of the real world—his conclusion, depressing as it might be, is that nothing is ever fully "real."

CHAPTER 22

Rick sees a **toad** near his hovercar. This is an incredible sight, as toads are considered extinct creatures. Furthermore, there's a massive reward for discovering an animal previously considered extinct. Rick wonders if Mercer arranged for him to find the toad, as toads are the animal most sacred to Mercer. Then, Rick decides that this can't be true: he *is* Mercer, meaning that *he* arranged to find the toad.

In the final chapter of the novel, Rick finds some kind of connection with nature. He has achieved a strange empathy with Mercer (seemingly "becoming" Mercer on some level) and now finds the toad—but, notably, his first thoughts are of the reward and prestige he will get for finding it.

Carefully, Rick catches the **toad**, placing it in a cardboard box he finds. The toad is big and fat and strangely cool to the touch. He feels a strong sense of connection to the toad, and realizes that he's seeing the world through Mercer's eyes. Excited to show Iran what he's found, Rick drives back to San Francisco.

Rick thinks that he's found a valuable animal that will make him rich and powerful—and that will make him feel a real sense of connection and empathy. But this wouldn't be a Dick novel if it didn't have a bittersweet, ambivalent ending.

Iran sits in the apartment next to the **mood organ**. There's a sudden knock—it's Rick, with his cheek cut and his clothing dusty. He tells Iran that he has a surprise for her, contained in a cardboard box: a **toad**. Toads, he explains, are tough creatures—they can survive anywhere, even a desert.

The perspective shifts abruptly in this final section: we're seeing the world from Iran's point of view. Rick is clearly tired and haggard—he's had a long, long day. And yet Iran focuses on Rick's gift, not Rick himself: like Rick, she's excited about the prospect of owning an exotic pet.

Iran inspects the **toad** carefully. She finds an electric switch on the toad's abdomen—it's just a fake animal. Rick is crestfallen. He can't imagine who would place a fake toad in the middle of the desert. He remembers the spider that John Isidore mentioned to him, and thinks that the spider was probably fake, too. But even electric animals, Rick thinks, have "their paltry lives."

This passage represents Rick at both his bitterest and his most optimistic. On one hand, Rick sees that there is no "reality" behind his religious epiphany—the world is strange and meaningless, or to the extent that the world has a meaning, the meaning is just a cruel joke (for example, that someone placed a fake toad in the middle of the desert for Rick to find). And yet at the same time Rick comes to have a grudging respect for the value of all life, and an appreciation even for things that aren't technically "real." Rick no longer presumes to judge what's human and what's android, or what's real and what's fake, and this leads him to a larger state of mind than he started the novel with.

Rick tells Iran that he's going to sleep, since he needs rest. Iran nods and tells him that she'll set the **mood organ** to 670, the setting for "long deserved peace." While Rick sleeps, Iran calls the pet store and orders artificial flies for the artificial **toad**. The store salesman suggests that Iran bring in the toad for periodic "tongue adjustments," and feed it a mixture of crawling and flying bugs. Iran agrees to all these treatments for the toad, explaining, "My husband is devoted to it."

As the novel ends, we move away from Rick's point of view. Iran, passive throughout the novel, becomes the actor while her husband rests. Iran isn't a particularly loyal or loving wife (Rick clearly doesn't get along with her that well), but she shows her respect for her husband in small, almost pathetic ways, like ordering flies for his new pet. On one level it's suggested that Iran is being naïve or false in claiming that Rick is "devoted" to the toad, but Rick did have a very real experience finding the toad, and has now come to acknowledge that it has a life and reality of its own, so on another level it is still very valuable to him. In this uneasy ending Rick has found some kind of "long deserved peace," but this peace is still an emotion manufactured by a company, and Rick has still abandoned John, his fellow human, to presumably a worse fate.

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